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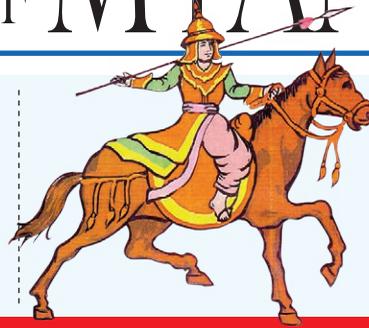
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State Counsellor, armed group representatives discuss peace issues



Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, centre, in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday prior to her meetings with representatives of armed groups. PHOTO: MNA

STATE Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi held talks with the Peace Process Steering Team (PPST) of armed groups in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday over several issues related to the peace process.

In addition to discussing the current armed conflicts in northern Myanmar and its impact on the peace process, the two sides also talked about reaching concrete results in the upcoming

2nd session of the Union Peace Conference- 21st Century Panglong, domestic and international aid for the development of ceasefire areas in the country, cases of some members of the signatory groups to the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA), making efforts for bringing in the non-signatories to NCA to the peace making process and national reconciliation.

The State Counsellor expressed her willingness to hold the upcoming peace conference with unity and cooperation with the stakeholders of the peace process.

She also expressed her delight at the positive outcome of the national-level peace dialogues in Kayin State, which she termed "a big success."

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi said, she is optimistic that

solutions would emerge from the meetings with non-signatories to the NCA. She also stressed the importance of self-confidence for all participants in order to achieve common goals, expressing her personal commitment to achieve peace in the country.

The State Counsellor called for development of the areas of signatories to the NCA.

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Civilian honoured for assisting in seizing 14 million Yaba pills

(Following is the unofficial translation of the message of thanks to the public released by State Counsellor's Office on 22nd January 2017)

As the Union Government has been taking measures for considerable change, one of the priorities of the Union Government among others is the prevention and elimination of the danger of drug abuse posed by narcotic drugs. Drug abuse and trafficking have grown for years in Myanmar as civil armed conflicts are deeply involved in the narcotic drugs problem of Myanmar. There are still challenges posed by the lack of regional stability, which undermines the rule of law and administrative power.

In establishing the National Reconciliation and Peace Centre, an emphasis has been placed on considerable reduction of drug problems through peace efforts. It has also been found that the production of new narcotic drugs has an enormous impact on the socio-economic life while drug control policies are being adopted. As measures are being taken to reduce the abuse of narcotic drugs among the new generation of youths,

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Authorities to install GPS devices in YBS buses

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သဒ္ဓါထက်သန် မြန်မာအားမာန် ကမ္ဘောဇဘဏ်



Royal delegation from Bhutan led by Royal Queen Mother Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck is welcomed by officials at the Yangon International Airport. PHOTO: MNA

Queen Mother of Bhutan arrives Yangon

Her Majesty the Royal Queen Mother Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck and first wife of former King Jigme Singye Wangchuck arrived Yangon yesterday. The Bhutan delegation led

by the Queen Mother of Bhutan was welcomed at the Yangon International Airport by officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The delegation visited the

Mitta Development Foundation, the philanthropic organization, in Hline Township. In the afternoon, the delegation visited the Shwedagon Pagoda.— *Myanmar News Agency*

Electrical short circuit causes fire in Buthidaung

A fire broke out yesterday in Buthidaung, northern Rakhine, destroying a home and causing about K250,000 in damages.

The fire caused by an electrical short circuit destroyed the home owned by U Maung Maung Yay, an executive committee member of the Rakhine National Party in Ward-4 in Buthidaung Township.

Police are investigating the case in order to take legal action against those who are responsible for the fire.— *Myanmar News Agency*



PHOTO: STATE COUNSELLOR'S OFFICE INFORMATION COMMITTEE

KIA Armed Group's 2nd Officer Seized

THE second officer of KIA armed group was arrested in Mainaung Village, Moe Hnyin Township, Kachin state on Friday.

Upon receiving information that Naw Khun, the second officer of the KIA's Lotkhun area, had arrived at the monastery in Mainaung village at 8:15 am on Friday, regional government troops and locals converged on the monastery and placed him under arrest.

Naw Khun, the second officer of the KIA. PHOTO: MNA

According to the investigation, it was learnt that Naw Khun ran KIA operations and activities from the house of a man named Khaungzei.

Later that evening, Myan-

mar Police and members of the village administrative committee searched the house of Khaungzei, seizing one drone and one laptop computer, it is learnt.— *Myanmar News Agency*



State Counsellor, armed group representatives discuss peace issues

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The meeting held at the National Reconciliation and Peace Centre in Nay Pyi Taw was also attended by vice-chairmen of the NRPC Union Minister U Kyaw Tint Swe and Chairman of the Peace Commission Dr Tin Myo Win, National Security Adviser to the Union Government U Thaug Tun, Secretary of the NRPC Deputy Minister

U Khin Maung Tin and Deputy Minister of the President's Office U Min Thu.

Leaders of the PPST in attendance were Saw Mutu Sae Poe, Khun Okkar, U Khaing Soe Naing Aung, Yebaw Than Khee, Adviser Sai Khun Sae and Vice Chairman of the Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee Pado Saw Khwe Htoo Win.— *Myanmar News Agency*

National-level political dialogue for regions held in Dawei

National-level political dialogue for ethnic groups kicked off in Dawei, Taninthayi Region, yesterday, with an opening address by Chief Minister of Taninthayi Region Dr Le Le Maw.

In the first day of the dialogue, eight representatives read out the political papers and economic papers discussed by personnel from political parties and civil societies in the national-level dialogues held in Dawei District, Myeik District and Kawthoung District in the region.

More than 700 people including ministers from the

Taninthayi Region Government, members of the Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee, members of the Peace Commission, members of the supervisory committee for political dialogues for regions, members of the JMCS, representatives of the ethnic groups, members of the peace groups, MPs, representatives from the political parties, departmental officials and representatives of the civil societies.

The three-day will end on 25th January.— *Taninthayi Region Information and Public Relations Department*

Civilian honoured for assisting in seizing 14 million Yaba pills

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similar measures have been taken to control production, trafficking and money laundering at the same time. An emphasis has been placed on drug trafficking on a retail and wholesale basis to keep narcotic drugs out of reach of young people.

In any strategic plan, cooperation of the people is essential. Only when all strata of people participate in the efforts, when the advice and suggestions of the people are available, can practical and effective strategies and policies be developed. It is important to eliminate the dark clouds of narcotic drugs for the new generations who own the future of the country so that they can shoulder the duties of the country healthily and safely with a firm determination.

Ko Yarzar Hein, 35, is a motor-cycle mechanic living in Utshitpin town, Padaung Township. Upon suspicion of an oil tanker car parked near the San Pet Let recreation camp in the jungle, he informed Police Officer Kyaw Soe Oo of the Traffic Control Police, Utshitpin. Under the instruction of Police Officer Kyaw Soe Oo, Ko Yarzar Hein kept close watch on the site nearby the house of U Khin Zaw Oo in the jungle from 2 Decem-

ber to 10 December. For 8 days, in the disguise of a worker with a full ration, he simultaneously watched the house of the driver U Kyaw Kyaw and the oil tanker car. Using information given by Ko Yarzar Hein, police forces and Ko Yarzar Hein blocked the street to search the 6-wheeled blue truck at Nyaungyo Immigration Gate, seizing 14 million WY brand orange amphetamine tablets at 4 am on December 10, 2016 and arrested three, including U Kyaw Kyaw.

Ko Yarzar Hein made a marvelous effort to launch an anti-drug eradication effort of his own accord, without being influenced by anyone to do so, seizing such an enormous amount of drugs at the risk of his life for the benefit of the country and the public. He did this, being well convinced of the evil effects of the drugs without fear. Hence, Ko Yarzar Hein has been chosen as the person who was worth congratulating for December 2016.

All Myanmar nationals are wholeheartedly urged to contribute their efforts in nation building like Ko Yarzar Hein with conscientiousness and nobility.

Aung San Suu Kyi
State Counsellor
(Unofficial Translation)

Refresher course for sub-commissions for by-elections opened

A refresher course for election sub-commissions at different levels in regions & states to hold by-elections was opened at Grand Amara Hotel in Nay Pyi Taw at 9 am yesterday.

At the ceremony, U Hla Thein, the chairman of the Union Election Commission said: "In the by-elections to be held on April 1, 2017, over 2 million people eligible to vote are required to choose 19 parliamentarians out of 95 candidates and by-elections will be held in accord with electoral standards — transparency, freedom and justice — which will be trusted and accepted by the public. Hence, the present refresher course was conducted with the intention of upgrading the capacities of election sub-commissions at different levels to the climax in holding by-elections in 2017.

The project of conducting the present course was aimed at reaching over 1,500 members of election sub-commissions. We express our

thanks towards Resident representative of International IDEA, Mr Mark McDowell, and members for their cooperation to conduct this course.

Mr Mark McDowell also clarified the process of election under the cooperation with Union Election Commission with curriculum to be conducted in the course explained by secretary of the UEC.

The electoral refresher course will be conducted twice among the two groups under the 7 syllabuses for election sub-commissions at different levels in Regions & States to hold by-elections in 2017. Today's course was attended by 46 trainees representing election sub-commissions at different levels in Regions & States with the second training to be attended by 40.

The trainees will conduct on to wards and village-tracts' sub-commissions, in-charges and members of the voting booths, according to the UEC.—*Myanmar News Agency*



Union Election Commission Chairman U Hla Thein addresses the refresher course for election sub-commission. PHOTO: MNA

Union Election Commission Chairman receives Swiss Ambassador to Myanmar

UNION Election Commission Chairman, U Hla Thein received the delegation led by H.E. Mr Paul R Seger, Switzerland ambassador to Myanmar at the Office of UEC in Nay Pyi Taw at 2 pm yesterday. At the reception, Commission members—U Aung Myint, U Soe Rei, U Hla Tint and secretary U Tin Tun were present.

In the meeting, situations on preparation of the UEC for the by-election 2017, cooperative process concerning (Code of Conduct for Political Parties and Candidates—CoC) for Hluttaw candidates and political parties to abide by, under the sponsorship of UEC & Switzerland Embassy were discussed.—*Myanmar News Agency*



Union Election Commission holds talks with Mr Paul R Seger, Switzerland ambassador to Myanmar. PHOTO: MNA



State Counsellor receives Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

STATE Counsellor and Union Minister for Foreign Affairs Daw Aung San Suu Kyi received Mr. Wouter Robert Marie Jurgen, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Netherlands, yesterday afternoon at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs office in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. During the meeting they discussed matters related to promoting the bilateral relations and co-operation between Myanmar and the Netherlands.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Nobel-Myanmar Literary Festival 2017's 2nd day of aesthetic literature held

Yee Yee Myint & Ohnmar Thant

NOBEL-Myanmar Literary Festival 2017's 2nd day of aesthetic literature was held yesterday morning at the National Theatre on Myoma Kyaung Street, Yangon.

In 2nd day paper reading session, Mya Win (philosophy) read out the paper, "Notes of Myanmar's atmosphere," with the paper "Rendering Shakespeare's plays into Myanmar," by Taw Kaung Min, the paper "Literary elements received from poems for Myanmar children," by Dr Moe Hein Zaw (Myanmarsar) and the paper "aesthetic novels from Nagani Press House," by Myint Swe Oo.

In the programme, "Literary Talk," Min Htet Maung discussed, "Today's Myanmar Poem, Myanmar Poem for Tomorrow," with Maung Lin Yeik, Ko Ywe, Maung Day and Eindra participating in the discussion. In the programme, "Yatha Pyokhin" literary talk, Maw Lin led the discussion with Maung Khin Min (Danuphyu), Thitsarni, Nyein Min and Myay Lat Maung Myint Thu

participating in the discussion.

In 3rd day session, on January 24, Yarhetpan (Taungoo saung), Dr Aung Gyi, Ko Tar and Sayar Nyein Min will read out respectively, papers—"creation of characters in Min Lu's short stories," "Rendering of Mao Tse Tung's poem," "translating two poems" and "creation of aesthetic literature." In the literary talk programme, "creation of literary element in translations" "creation of a novel" and "currents of aesthetic literature" will be discussed.

Nobel Myanmar Literary

Festival will be held till January 24, in which exhibition of the best aesthetic Myanmar novels—100 published during 100 years, exhibition of Nobel Literary Prize winners, paper reading sessions, reading clubs of aesthetic literature, recitation of poems, exhibition of cartoons, caricatures and drawings, literary talks are being held and various kinds of books are being put on sale.

It is learnt that those present at the festival are being entertained with foodstuff and coffee and monhinkha.



Bookshops are crowded with visitors on the second day of the Nobel-Myanmar Literary Festival in Yangon. PHOTO: HLA MOE



YBS bus runs near Sule Pagoda in Yangon. PHOTO: PHOE KHWAR

Authorities to install GPS devices in YBS buses

WITH the aim of controlling undisciplined drivers on public buses, the Yangon Region government will install GPS navigation devices in Yangon Bus Service (YBS) buses, according to the Yangon Region Transport Authority.

Owners of public transport buses have already been notified about the YRTA's new plan to

take action against bus drivers failing to follow the designated bus routes in collaboration with relevant township police stations, said a spokesperson of the YRTA. The installation of a GPS device will be about Ks250,000, with the regional government planning to bear the cost of installation fees.

Action will be taken against

those who destroy the GPS units installed under the existing Public Property Protection Act. Bus line owners will be responsible for paying compensation for damage to the GPS devices.

The YBS, a new bus transport network system, started operations on 16 January of this year around the commercial capital of Yangon.—200

Star tortoise population over 2,300 in Minsontaung Wildlife Sanctuary

THE current population of Myanmar star tortoises (*Geochelone Platynota*) in the Minsontaung Wildlife Sanctuary reached over 2,300, according to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation.

These star tortoises have been classified as a critically en-

dangered species and are being nurtured in the sanctuary located in Natogyi Township, Myingyan District, Mandalay Region, by the government under its systematic conservation plan.

The rare species is native to the dry and deciduous forests in the country. It can be found

in Mandalay, Sagaing and Magway regions. This kind of tortoise normally eats grass, weeds, leaves, flowers and other fibrous plants as well as earthworms and snails. The tortoises normally lay eggs up to four times a year.

Forest fires, the destruction of their habitats and illegal commercial trading are the main reason star tortoises have been brought close to extinction. There are three protected areas for the rare and beautiful star tortoises in the country: Lawkananda Wildlife Sanctuary in Bagan; Shwesettaw Wildlife Sanctuary in Minbu Township and Minsontaung Wildlife Sanctuary in Natogyi Township. The Myanmar star tortoises are characterised by the highly distinctive star or radiating patterns on their upper shell. Males are distinguished from the females by a much thicker and longer tail.—*Taintaman*



Myanmar star tortoises, a critically endangered species, are found mostly in arid climates. PHOTO: TAINAMAN

New building aims to educate nuns, needy children in outlying Yangon

A NEW three-storey religious building will be a site to educate nuns and out-of-school children living in North Okkalapa, a satellite town in Yangon, according to a donor family. The 70 feet-long and 30 feet-wide non-formal education school building was built with the contribution of a local family. The total costs for the project was over Ks130 million,

with the donor family planning to establish a new home for the aged and a clinic next year.

It will be a home for over 50 nuns, said U Htay Lwin who plans to create several rooms fixed with school equipment at the middle floor and ground floor to educate young nuns and children under school curriculum designed by the government.

Dhamma school trainings, English language courses and sewing courses are planned to be given to the target audiences at the new building free of charge.

The new building was officially opened on Sunday with Union Minister for Religious Affairs and Culture Thura U Aung Ko attending the opening ceremony.—*Soe Win (SP)*

Crime NEWS

Two suspects for violent attacks arrested in Buthidaung

SECURITY forces arrested two men in Buthidaung on Sunday on suspicion of their involvement in armed attacks in northern Rakhine.

Acting on a tip-off that the two suspects were on Taungkyaw Road between Maungtaw and Buthidaung townships, police from Nyaungchaung arrested Zarmud Tusaung, 26, from Myintlut and Mammud Zubai, 27, from Aungpa Village in Maungtaw Township.

During interrogation, the two suspects confessed that they were checking routes to conduct violent attacks after recruiting young men.

They also confessed that they are cooperating with the Rohingya Solidarity Organisation (RSO) in the neighbouring country.—*Myanmar News Agency*



Zarmud Tusaung.



Mammud Zubai.

PHOTO: STATE COUNSELLOR'S OFFICE INFORMATION COMMITTEE

KIA soldier arrested with weapons, ammunition

A private from Kachin Independence Army (KIA) Battalion 36 was arrested and his weapons seized yesterday morning by government troops near Kyugoke/Pangsang in northeastern Shan State during an area security operation.

Tatmataw troops on an area security mission arrested Private Man All in a cottage on a

farm three miles south-east of Kyugoke/Pangsang with three M-22 firearms, four cartridges, 310 bullets, eight RPGs, two hand-grenades, four bullet-proof shirts and four bullet-proof helmets.

Government troops are making area clearance operations in nearby areas, it is learnt.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Car hits tree on Ygn-Mdy Highway

A white Toyota Mark-II driven by Saw Gee Do en route from Yangon to Nay Pyi Taw hit a tree on the road-divider when he lost control after falling asleep at the wheel early yesterday morning between mileposts 111/1 and 111/2 in Pyu Township on Yan-

gon-Mandalay Highway.

No one was injured in the accident, but the car's roof was damaged. Pyu Township Police have taken action against the driver under section 279 of the Penal Code.—*Than Oo (Lemyethna)*

Thayawady District has the highest rate of illegal teak logging

DURING 2016, Police seized illegal timber worth over Ks 90 million in Thayawady District, making it on the top of four districts in Bago Region. Police arrested 157 smugglers, according to the Police Force in Bago Region.

During 2016, the authorities seized about 61 tonnes of teak and 26 tonnes of other hardwood in Bago District; about 45 tonnes of teak and 17 tonnes of other hardwood in Taungoo District; 9 tonnes of teak and about 41 tonnes of other hardwood in Pyay District; over 400 tonnes of teak and over 14 tonnes of other hardwood in Thayawady District, it is learnt.

"We are weak in controlling of the illegal logging in forest ar-

eas in Bago Region. We are also understaffed and so, I submitted the lack of security strength to control the smuggling.

Now, we are investigating the illegal logging cases. And we are taking necessary measuring to be able to take deterrent action against illegal loggers," said U Kyaw Min San, Bago Region Minister for Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation.

In 2015, authorities seized over 114 tonnes of teak, over 21 tonnes of Pyingadoe and over 17 tonnes of other hardwood worth over Ks 40 million according to the prevailing market prices.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

LOCAL Business

Muse border trade value slumped by over US\$360million

The value of trade through the Muse border trade camp as of 13th January in this fiscal year 2016-2017 slumped by US\$364.904million when compared to that in the same period of last year, according to Commerce Ministry statistics.

Out of sixteen border trade camps, the Muse border trade camp has the largest border trade volume, with a trade value of US\$3,768.691m. But that was a decline from US\$4,133.595m in the similar period of last year.

The trade values between 1st April and 13th January in this fiscal year were \$3,768.691m from Muse, \$138.210m from Lweje, \$454.749m from Chin-ShweHaw, \$71.022m from KanPikeTee, \$3.765m from Kengtung, \$57.422m from Tachilek, \$690.837m from Myawady, \$86.310m from Kawthaung, \$151.175m from Myeik, \$10.597m from Htee Khee, \$2.286m from Mawtaung, \$0.180m from Maese, \$3.514m from Sittway, \$4.104m from Maungtaw, \$43.246m from Tamu and \$27.116m from the Reed border gate, according to the Commerce Ministry.

Myanmar is conducting bor-



A file photo shows merchants check the goods at 105-mile Muse Trade Zone, northern Shan State.

PHOTO: PHOE KHWAR

der trade with China through Muse, Lweje, Kanpiketee, Chinshwehaw and Kengtung while the country is trading with Thailand through the Tachilek, Myawady, Kawthaung, Myeik, Hteekhee, Mawtaung and Maese

border gates. The cross-border trade camps between Myanmar and Bangladesh are Sittwe and Maungtaw, while the country trades directly with India via the Tamu and Reed border gates.

The border trade value as

of 13th January in this fiscal year hit \$5,513.224m, which is up by \$ 61.323m compared to that of last year, with export values of \$3,377.985m and import values of \$ 2,135.239m, it is learnt. —*Mon Mon*

Watermelon market booming with Chinese New Year

THE watermelon market in Muse 105 mile is on the rise due to increased demand from China, resulting in a doubling of the price. The price is likely to continue to rise up until April, according to the Myanmar Watermelon and Cucumber Growers and Exporters Association.

A tonne of watermelon fetched only about 2,000 Yuan last year, whereas this year, the watermelon price ranged from 3,000 Yuan to 5,200 Yuan per tonne, said U Naing Win from the aforementioned association.

The watermelon market is heavily dependent on the Chinese market. Efforts are being made for the watermelon market to penetrate other foreign markets, it is learnt.—200

MIFFA and GIZ to cooperate in three year project for sustainable Freight Transport and Logistics in GMS

Myanmar International Freight Forwarders' Association (MIFFA) and the German Development Agency GIZ will join hands for three-year project for "Sustainable Freight Transport and Logistics in the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS)" that hopes to increase sustainable freight transport and logistics, said Ms.

Wilasinee Poonuchaphai, the project director of GIZ.

This three-year project is from Feb 2016 to Jan 2019. The project aims at enhancing the small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) and improving fuel efficiency through the links with 150 local enterprises. In addition, the project works with

local companies, freight associations, driving schools and SMEs in order to share fuel-saving technologies, access to financial assistance and assurance of safe transport for dangerous goods. The project also aims to build a capacity for the local companies to improve the legal framework of the transport industry.—200

Ks15 billion to be spent on Yangon's agricultural development over next three months

THE Yangon Region government will spend Ks15 billion on development of the region's agriculture sector within the last three months of this fiscal year, Yangon Region Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein said at a recent workshop held at UMFCCI office tower.

Regional authorities plan to spend Ks8 billion on shifting from traditional practices to mechanised farming and Ks7 billion will go to programmes to re-

pair irrigation systems to supply water, the Chief Minister said.

A detailed master plan for the programmes is planned to be developed this month after meeting with relevant officials from all segments to implement the plan as quickly as possible, said Dr Soe Tun, deputy chair of the Myanmar Rice Federation.

The regional government will urge companies which have acres of farmlands and vacant

land plots in Yangon to operate agriculture businesses there.

Although there are more than 2.5 million acres of farmland across Yangon, agricultural businesses are farming only 1.2 million acres of land because of flooding, insufficient water supply for irrigation, technical and monetary challenges, according to the Yangon Region Ministry for Agriculture, Livestock, Forestry and Energy.—*Phyo Lwin Aung (AMIA)*

FPB trading volume nearly tripled on 23rd January

THE trading volume of First Private Bank (FPB) almost tripled on 23rd Jan compared to that on 20th January, when FPB commenced its stock trading on the Yangon Stock Exchange (YSX).

FPB traded 5,744 shares on 20th January, whereas the stock trading volumes rose dramatically to 14,538 on 23rd January, according to stock trading data provided by YSX. There are currently four listed companies trading on YSX: First Myanmar Investment (FMI), Myanmar Thilawa SEZ Holdings (MTSH), Myanmar Citizens Bank (MCB) and FPB.

A total of 23,224 shares worth Ks553,601,800 were traded on 23rd January despite zero trading volume of MCB. FMI traded 2,333 shares worth Ks 31,906,500 where 6,353 shares of MTSH worth Ks27,403,300 were traded. And the trading volumes totalled 23,224 shares, which were up from 19,050 shares on 20th January. The share prices on 23rd January were Ks 14,000 for FMI, Ks 4,300 for MTSH, Ks9,100 for MCB and Ks 34,000 for FPB. —*Ko Htet*

Freight transportation charges of Yangon-Muse on the rise

WITH the typical traffic congestion on Lashio-Muse Road, freight transportation charges of Yangon-Muse have risen, according to a responsible person from Myanmar Highway Freight Transportation Services Entrepreneurs Association. The traffic congestion on Lashio-Muse Road has caused delays in transportation to the point where a one-day trip is has become a two-day effort, said Ko Aye Ko, a merchant engaged in Muse trade.

Because of the heavy traffic congestion, commodities often do not enter the Muse market on time. As a result, truck drivers are adding extra charges for freight transportation services, said the merchant from Muse 105 Mile trade camp.

Previously, freight transportation to Yangon-Muse cost around Ks60,000 per tonne. Now, the typical traffic congestion has scaled up the charges to about Ks100,000 per tonne. Similarly, the freight transportation charges of Muse-Mandalay increased nearly by half, according to the Muse Highway Freight Transport Services Entrepreneurs Association.—200

Malaysia arrests four linked to Islamic State cell in Philippines

KUALA LUMPUR — Malaysian police said on Monday they had arrested four people, among them three foreigners, with links to an Islamic State cell based out of the southern Philippines.

Muslim-majority Malaysia has been on high alert since an attack last January by Islamic State-linked militants in Jakarta, the capital of neighbouring Indonesia. The cell, operating out of the province of Mindanao, was led by a former university lecturer, Mahmud Ahmad, who is known to be a Malaysian member of Islamic State, Malaysian Inspector-General of Police Khalid Abu Bakar said in a statement.

The cell had planned to use the east Malaysian state of Sabah as a transit point for South Asian and Southeast Asian militant recruits looking to join Islamic State in the Philippines, Khalid said.

He said one of the arrested suspects, a Philippine man, had been instructed to recruit new followers from Bangladesh, Malaysia and Indonesia, as well as Rohingya Muslims from Myanmar, and arrange for their travel to Mindanao. The suspect, a watch-seller,

was arrested in Sabah along with a Malaysian woman who was planning to marry and travel with him to the Philippines, Khalid said.

Police also arrested two Bangladeshi men in the Malaysian capital, Kuala Lumpur, who had allegedly been recruited by the Philippine suspect.

“The two are suspected of having links with Daesh groups in Bangladesh,” Khalid said, using another name for Islamic State. Khalid said Mahmud’s cell had joined up with the Philippine militant group, Abu Sayyaf, and pledged its allegiance to the group’s leader and the country’s most-wanted man, Isnilon Hapilon. Last June, militants who claimed to be fighting for Islamic State said in a video they had chosen Isnilon to lead the group’s Southeast Asian faction. The video, posted on social media, marked Islamic State’s acceptance of allegiance by Southeast Asian supporters and called for them to launch attacks in the region.

Malaysia has arrested more than 250 people between 2013 and 2016 over militant activities linked to Islamic State.—Reuters

No swearing as Philippine leader sweet talks Miss Universe hopefuls



Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte and Philippine Tourism secretary Wanda Teo (5th R) pose with Miss Universe candidates at the presidential palace in Manila, Philippines on 23 January, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

MANILA — Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte delivered a speech without his usual swearing on Monday, telling dozens of Miss Universe contestants they should advance the empowerment of women.

The firebrand leader normally makes rambling, off-the-cuff speeches peppered with curses and threats to kill criminals. He has insulted several world leaders, calling both former US President Barack Obama

and Pope Francis “son of a bitch”.

But he was on his best behaviour on Monday, welcoming more than 80 Miss Universe contestants to the presidential palace in the capital, Manila. The Philippines will on 30 January host the pageant for the third time. “I usually do not read my speeches, I’m not up to it really, but this time ... they told me that I must behave in my language,” he told the women. Duterte’s

critics have accused him of being sexist and disrespectful towards women. On one occasion, he commented publicly about the length of the vice president’s skirt and her knees.

He was widely condemned during his election campaign for making a boorish comment about the rape and murder of an Australian woman missionary in 1989. On Monday, he urged the contestants to use the pageant to “advance women

empowerment to a greater audience”. “This is chance for you to make an impact, to inspire change, and even be the change that you wish to see in the world,” he said.

The reigning Miss Universe is Filipina-German Pia Alonzo Wurtzbach, the third winner from the Philippines. The competition’s live broadcast on 30 January is expected to draw half a billion viewers worldwide, organisers have said.—Reuters

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

China urges Trump administration to grasp importance of ‘one China’

BEIJING — The new US administration must fully understand the importance of the “one China” policy and appreciate that the issue of Taiwan is highly sensitive for the Beijing government, China said on Monday.

US President Donald Trump, who was inaugurated on Friday, said in December the United States did not necessarily have to stick to its long-standing position that Taiwan is part of “one China”.

Earlier, Trump broke with decades of precedent by taking a telephone call from Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen.

According to Beijing’s one China principle, Taiwan and mainland China are inalienable parts of a single “China”. Beijing views Taiwan as a wayward province, to be brought under its control by force if necessary.

However, proudly



US President Donald Trump speaks during the Inaugural Law Enforcement Officers and First Responders Reception in the Blue Room of the White House in Washington, US, on 22 January, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

democratic Taiwan shows not interest in being ruled by Beijing.

“We urge the new administration to fully understand the high sensitivity of the Taiwan issue and to continue pursuing the one China policy,” Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying told a regular briefing

in Beijing.

Hua called the policy the “political foundation” of future relations between the United States and China.

She said any US government had the obligation to stand by the promises made by both main US political parties and “strictly” maintain non-diplomatic

relations with Taiwan.

Hua also reiterated China’s position on the South China Sea, saying the United States should not meddle in issues of China’s sovereign territory.

Both “history and reality” prove good relations between China and the United States were positive for the Asia-Pacific region, she said.

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

US Secretary of State nominee Rex Tillerson has previously suggested that China would not be allowed access to islands in the region, prompting Chinese state media to say the United States would need to “wage war” to cut off China’s access.—Reuters

Japan to try to convince Trump of TPP's merits: gov't spokesman



Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga attends a press conference in Tokyo on 23 January, 2017. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

TOKYO — Japan will “take every opportunity” to appeal to US President Donald Trump about the merits of remaining a party to the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade deal he has promised to dump, the government’s top spokesman said on Monday.

“The TPP’s 12 signatories, including the United States, have agreed that it is of great strategic and economic significance and will bring prosperity and stability to the region,” Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga told a press conference.

“We want to take every opportunity to tenaciously appeal to (the Trump administration) and seek understanding on the facts about the TPP and its specific meaning for the United States,” he said.

Trump has vowed to pull out of the deal, calling it a “potential

disaster” for the United States. According to the revamped White House website, the new Trump administration’s trade strategy “starts by withdrawing from the Trans-Pacific Partnership.”

The TPP, signed by 12 Pacific Rim nations in February last year, cannot come into force in its current form without ratification by the United States, which on its own accounts for over 60 percent of the signatories’ total gross domestic product.

Japan, the second-largest economy signed up to the TPP, completed its domestic procedures to ratify the pact Friday.

Suga said he feels Trump’s statements on trade come from “an understanding of the high importance of free trade to the United States, and the important thing is for the new president and Prime Minister Abe to talk (about it) directly.”

A specific date for a bilateral summit is yet to be fixed, but it should take place “as soon as possible,” Suga said. Abe and Trump held an unofficial meeting in New York in November last year shortly after Trump’s election victory.

Suga also said the government will “pay close attention” to the effects of the Trump administration’s policies on Japanese companies.

Trump said in his inaugural address Friday that the United States “must protect our borders from the ravages of other countries making our products, stealing our companies and destroying our jobs.” —Reuters

China jails former top parliament body official for graft

BEIJING — A Chinese court on Monday jailed for life for corruption a former vice-chairman of the top parliamentary advisory body, the latest senior official to fall foul of President Xi Jinping’s sweeping campaign against graft.

China’s campaign against deep-rooted official corruption has intensified since Xi took power four years ago, with dozens of senior government figures and state company executives having been jailed.

Su Rong had been one of the 23 vice-chairmen of the largely ceremonial but high-profile Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference until authorities began an investigation into him in 2014.

Su previously served as Communist Party boss for the

poor inland provinces of Jiangxi and Gansu.

In a short statement, the court in the northern city of Jinan said Su was guilty of bribery, abuse of power and being unable to explain the source of a “massive amount” of assets.

Su took bribes worth 116 million yuan (\$16.92 million) between 2002 and 2014, the court said.

Su said he accepted the verdict and would not appeal, the court added.

It was not possible to reach a legal representative for comment.

The ruling Communist Party’s anti-corruption watchdog had previously accused him of selling “ranks and titles”.

Separately, the watchdog

said courts had jailed two former officials for corruption who had fled abroad to try and avoid justice. Both had returned to China.

China has vowed to pursue an overseas search dubbed Operation “Fox Hunt” for corrupt officials and business executives, and their assets, part of Xi’s war on deep-seated corruption.

China has been keen to get international support for its fight against corruption, but many Western countries have been reluctant to help, wary of China’s poor legal safeguards for suspects and concerns about mistreatment. Last week, China pledged to banish abuse in graft investigations and urged foreign diplomats to help “weave a cooperative network against corruption”. —Reuters

North Korea nuclear threat means South must not delay anti-missile system

SEOUL — Acting South Korean President Hwang Kyo-ahn said on Monday the deployment of a US anti-missile defence system can not be delayed in the face of a growing North Korean nuclear missile threat and despite Chinese hostility to the move.

South Korea and the United States say the deployment of the Terminal High Altitude Area Defence (THAAD) system is designed to protect against North Korea’s nuclear and ballistic capabilities.

But China says THAAD’s powerful radar could penetrate its own territory, leading to calls from some South Korean opposition leaders to delay or cancel its

deployment. “(North Korea) has been expanding its nuclear capabilities and developing the technology to create nuclear weapons. They are also miniaturising nuclear weapons,” Hwang told reporters.

“Right now is not the time to talk to try to resolve North Korea’s nuclear issues.”

North Korea has carried out a series of nuclear and missile tests in defiance of UN sanctions. North and South are technically still at war because their 1950-53 conflict ended in a truce, not a peace treaty.

Asked about China’s response to THAAD, Hwang said there were “some concerns” and

that more time was needed to address these. “The relationship between South Korea and China was not made in a day. We have engaged in diverse cooperation since the beginning of our diplomatic ties,” Hwang said.

South Korea’s finance and trade ministers have said they suspect China is taking indirect, retaliatory action against THAAD, but have not addressed the issue outright.

Hwang was speaking in place of President Park Geun-hye, who has been impeached by parliament amid an influence-peddling scandal and stripped of her powers as she awaits a court decision on her fate. —Reuters

Australia police probe firearms death during making of hip hop video

SYDNEY— Australian police are investigating the death of an actor who suffered chest wounds from firearms used on the set of a music video on Monday, as media said the man was accidentally shot.

In a statement, Australian hip hop band ‘Bliss n Eso’ said its members were not present at the Brisbane site of the incident, which took place around around 0300 GMT during the filming of one of the band’s music clips.

“During the filming of that scene several firearms were used,” said Queensland state police detective inspector Tom Armitt.

“As a result of the use of

those firearms one of the actors has received wounds to the chest and has subsequently died from his injuries.”

The matter was being treated as a criminal investigation, he added. “I can’t tell you whether they are live or real firearms,” Armitt said.

Members of the film crew attempted to resuscitate the man before paramedics arrived, Armitt said.

No further details were immediately available. Long-running Australian band Bliss n Eso have had several local hits, including their latest single, “Dopamine”. Their sixth album is due out later this year. —Reuters



Australian police talk outside a bar as they investigate whether live firearms were used in the filming of a music video during which an actor was fatally wounded in the chest in Brisbane, Australia, on 23 January, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

Opinion

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Rumours are more dreadful than wildfires

Khin Maung Oo

IT is true that a certain wildfire can make it into the top-ten list of the most dreadful events that could ever take place in the life of an individual. After all, who would have known that a mere cigarette which was perhaps not properly extinguished could become the tiny spark required to light up a whole forest? Or a careless mistake of a random citizen could be the very cause that would result in angry red and orange flames so bright that any passerby would think that it was day time. And who knew that man's greatest discovery—fire would be the undoing—making things disappear? Indeed, a wildfire, that could plunge a city into the state of a ghost town, is undesirable. Yet, if there are no more left to catch

fire or provided that it can be extinguished from the ground and by spraying water from the aircraft, it can be brought under control.

However, as we rummage through our thoughts concerning wildfires, sooner or later, we would slowly be reminded of a particular saying that rumours spread like wildfire. A rumour, as known to each and every one of us, is a message, whether phony or genuine, which could bring total destruction to a person's life, or a society.

It is quite obvious that a wildfire could bring about an unbelievable catastrophe to the lives of many people. That is because any person caught up in this wildfire would, without a doubt, lose everything and some-

times he may be at the mercy of Death. Indeed, it is a sad and painful event. However, as long as you have the determination and capabilities, you can always begin your new journey, which might even turn out to be better. Rumours, on the other hand, can probably harm both the physical and mental state of every individual. Suppose that there was a false rumour about a dignified person that he had compromising affairs with his juniors. He, for certain, would be under the burden of a ten-ton pressure or perhaps eventually loses his sanity before he knew that he was no longer himself. And so, I believe that it can be said that rumours are the very things that could swallow us slowly and steadily and drown us in a pool of misery.

Nowadays, with advanced technology, destructive elements are coming to use Photoshop to spread rumours, aiming at instigating riots, conflicts and misunderstanding among people. The impacts of these rumours sometimes may be great. These rumours are mostly concerned with racial and religious affairs. Rumours are easier spread than erased. That is because even some educated people tend to believe them as they are being influenced by prejudices. Mischievous people spread and will be spreading malicious rumours for their own benefit, all the time. Truth will come out one day. But, we, all who love the truth, are responsible to unmask these evildoers who use digital technology to spread their wicked propaganda.

Pyatho: the month of Equestrian Tournery Festival

**Maha Saddhamma Jotika Dhaja Sithu
Dr. Khin Maung Nyunt**

THE peak of Myanmar cold Season is Pyatho (January). So cold, chilled to the bone due to the icy wind of the North that you have to keep ash for your warmth. "Pya" means "ash". "Tho" means "keep". Astrologically named Makara [Capricorn]. Pyatho's zodiacal symbol is makan. "Makan" is a mythical sea monster resembling a crocodile with a prehensile snout. Tazin [orchid], Gamone [aromatic herbal plant] and Kwa Nyo [Clematis Crabiana] bloom profusely in this month. Kwa Nyo is traditionally designated as the flower of Pyatho month. Kwa Nyo is a creeper, native to Popa area but grow wild or grown across Upper Myanmar and hilly regions. Thick fleshy leaves and bunches of bluish petals with yellow centres come out from its graceful creepers, producing very soothing fragrance. Nocturnal deep azure firmament is sprayed with myriads of constellations. The moon and "Hpou Sha" constellation rival in beauty and glory.

In such a pleasant cold month as Pyatho, equestrian tournament was held in the courtyards of Myanmar King's Palace. Equestrian Tournery Festival was a sort of military parade of land forces, including horses, elephants, chariots, food soldiers, archers, swords men, spearmen lancers, shields and so on. About 15th century, guns and cannons were introduced to Myanmar Land forces.

The earliest mention of equestrian festival in Myanmar history was found in the literature of Pinya Period [1298-1364 A.D]. A kyo song composed by un-

known composer in the region of King Thihathu [1298-1324 A.D], described a love-forsaken court lady longing for her lover who was an officer of some military rank, seen riding his white horse to Equestrian Tournery at Naypyitaw.

Traditional Equestrian Tournery Festival had three programmes – display, contest and recruit. In display and contest 37 different modes of horsemanship and 37 different ways of playing and throwing lances were demonstrated and contested by select equestrian soldiers. Men of letters of Myanmar historical periods had described them in verses of different forms. Also in Myanmar performing arts- classical music, song and dance equestrian Tournery and festival were vividly portrayed.

Maha Dhamma Thingyan, royal adviser to King Bagyidaw [1819-1837 A.D], composed 37 Luta verses and 37 songs on 37 modes of horsemanship and 37 modes of lance playing and throwing and submitted it to the King. He also rhymed them in Than Bauk couplets.

At the tournament, 17 ways of horse-riding used in war, and Myanmar traditional martial arts were contested such as equestrian combat, combat or elephants' back, horses' back, horse riding, horse race, lance throwing. Myanmar people in the past called equestrian Tournery as "Set Thwin Pwe" or "Set Hto Pwe" because equestrians contested in lance-throwing to hit the circular targets on the poles. The King or Chief Queen awarded the winners with scarves woven with gold or



silver threads and a bunch of Thazin or Kwa Nyo.

King Thibaw [1878-1885 A.D], the last Myanmar King held Equestrian Tournery Festival in 1878. It was the last festival of its kind. In the Chronicle of Konbaung Set Maha Yazawun Taw Gyi Vol.3 it was graphically recorded as follows: -

"In that year [1240 Myanmar Era] second waning moon of Pyatho [January] to make preparation for holding of equestrian tournery and festival, in accordance with the traditional display of cavalry, elephantry, chariotry, archery and demonstration of princely martial arts is staged by the precious kings of the past, circular target posts were set up in a strait line in the courtyard on the left side of Myey Nan Palace Building. The heights of circular target posts ranged from 5 cubits, 20 cubits, 25 cubits, 30 to 50 cubits. In the north side of the royal Thet Kadan staircase a royal pavilion

was built. It was decorated with royal emblems and was ready for the events."

On the third waning moon of Pyatho, Princes, Ministers, Minister of the Interior, commander of Palace Guard, Knights, Commanders and army officers dressed in their military uniform robe caparisoned steeds. Each with 10 lances participated in the contest. Riding the horse at high speed each by turn, threw a lance at a time at the circular targets on the posts, until all ten had been thrown. Princes dressed in the army uniform of their rank "also contested. His Majesty wearing priceless military uniform and gem studded helmet and Chief Queen and the court came out to the royal Pavilion from where he watched the equestrian tournery. His Majesty and the Chief Queen awarded the winners, each a scarf woven with gold or silver threads, and a bunch of Thazin flower for every lance that hit the centre of the circular target on the post. When the tournament of the equestrian lancers was over, officers of Cassay Horse [Manipuri Regiment] and Akabat Horce [Assamese Regiment] of cavalry and their equerries gave demonstration of their skill in weaponry and horse-man ship such as cutting banana stems, co co nut, lime fruit and water pot with swords, spears etc while riding at high speed and also different techniques of horse riding. After seeing them their Majesties and the court entered the Palace....."

Gu Lee was a princely sport always connected with Equestrian Tournery and Festival. It is called Polo in our time. In Myanmar history and literature the word "Gu Lee" has been spelt and pro-

nounced different. "Gu-Lee", "Pa-Lee" etc. This game was one of the favorite games Myanmar royalty, nobility, and aristocracy played any time of the year. But being an equestrian game which required skill in horse riding, it was included in the pro-programmes of Equestrian Tournery. All countries with horse tradition claim the origin of this game, Mongolia, China, Persia, Tibet and most central Asiatic countries deserve such claim because they all have Gu-Lee game. How and when Gu Lee came to Myanmar no one can tell. One can only surmise from what anthropologists and historians say. Ethnically Myanmar are of Mongoloid Stock; they still have physical and cultural traits not dissimilar to those of the Mongolians. The time when their ancestors migrated gradually from Central Asia riding horses and driving caravans in quest of new pastures in Myanmar their Mongoloid tradition and custom including equestrian game like Gu-lee game were introduced into Myanmar. But historians say that Gu Lee game appeared in Myanmar chronicles and literature only in the 15th century. One of the 37 nat-spirits in Myanmar Pantheon was Shwe Nawrahta, a high-ranking military officer at the court of King Shwe Nan Kyaw Shin of Inwa Peirod. He was an excellent gu lee player. Legend has it that when he became nat spirit after his violent death, songs were sung praising his mastery of gu-lee game. His idols are made with a long handled mallet for driving a wooden ball. Also in the ditty of Nat Pakhan U Min Kyaw there are lines describing U Min Kyaw playing Pato [Gu-Lee] as he drank and rode his horse.

(To be continued)

Senior General receives Thai Army Chief



Defence Services Commander-in-Chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing holds talks with Royal Thai Army Commander-in-Chief General Chalermchai Sitthisad in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MNA

DEFENCE Services Commander-in-Chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing received a delegation led by Royal Thai Army Commander-in-Chief General Chalermchai Sitthisad yesterday morning at Zeyar Thiri Beikman in Nay Pyi Taw.

Also present at the meeting were Defence Services Deputy Commander-in-Chief (Army) Vice-Senior General Soe Win, General Mya Tun Oo, Chief

of General Staff (Army, Navy and Air), high-ranking officers from the Commander-in-Chief's Office, General Singhasak Uthaimongkol, Head of Neighbouring Countries Coordinator Centre (Royal Thai Army) and high-ranking officers of Royal Thai Army Forces and Senior Colonel Apichart Choopavang, Thai Military Attaché (Army) (Royal Thai Army) to Myanmar.

During the meeting, they discussed matters related to con-

tinuation of sports, cultural and medical co-operation. They also discussed exchange of information for effective co-operation in the fight against religious extremists and terrorism in the borders areas between the two countries. They also discussed matters concerning co-operation in prevention of forest fires, afforestation and treading firmly on the path of peace process on the part of indigenous armed groups in Myanmar.—*Myanmar News Agency*

Discussion on Security of the State, Rule of Law held

WITH a view to finding out necessary facts for the emergence of a society that can enjoy the essences of democracy well equipped with stability and rule of law, a discussion was held in Yangon, it is learnt.

Present at the discussion held at the Yangon branch of Union Solidarity and Development Party on Thanlwin Street, Bahan township in Yangon

yesterday were chairmen, secretaries and responsible officials from 22 political parties, chairmen and officials from Non-Governmental Organizations, specially invited guests and media men from home and abroad.

In the discussion, Sithu U Myat Thu (a) Tetkatho Myat Thu made an opening address with the title of World Terror-

ist Attacks talked by U Ko Ko Hlaing, National Security and Democracy Transition by Dr Min Zaw Oo, National Security and Legal Perspective by U Sit Aye, Approach to Rule of Law from the security point of view by U Khin Yi respectively.

Replies have been made upon the queries raised by those present at the discussion.—*Zaw Gyi (Panita)*

Warm clothes delivered to members of the Tatmadaw in northern Shan State



Commander Maj-Gen Phone Myat accepts warm clothes for soldiers. PHOTO: SUPPLIED

DONORS has provided warm clothes worth of K 36.7 million to members of the Tatmadaw serving in northern Shan State.

IGE Group of Companies and Muse Development Public Company (MDPC) handed over the 13,000 sets of warm clothes yesterday to the North-East Command through the Commander of North-East Command Maj-Gen Phone Myat.

The donation event was held at the command in Lashio Township, Major General Phone Myat, military officials and families, responsible person from IGE and MDPC in attendance.—*GNLM*

Tatmadaw always holds out an olive branch to armed groups: Senior General Min Aung Hlaing

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing met with the Peace Process Steering Team of the signatories to the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement led by Chairman Saw Mutu Sae Poe of the Karen National Union in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday afternoon.

At the meeting, the senior general said that the NCA is a process developed for four years based on the proposals of ethnic armed groups, that the current Union Peace Conference-21st Century Panglong was held based on the process and that the Tatmadaw has always opened the door for peace.

Afterwards, leader of the PPST Saw Mutu Sae Poe said that he believed that armed conflicts that were the highest expression of political issues could only be solved

only through political means and promised his organisation would cooperate with the Union Government and the Tatmadaw till peace was achieved. He also discussed current situations faced by ethnic armed groups.

Present at the meeting were Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services and Commander-in-Chief (Army) Vice-Senior General Soe Win, Chief of General Staff (Army, Navy and Air) General Mya Tun Oo, senior officers from the Office of the Commander-in-Chief (Army) and members of the PPST including the chairman of the KNU, Patron of the PLNO U Khun Okkar, Vice Chairman of the ALP U Khaing Soe Naing Aung, Chairman of the ABSDF U Than Khe, and Khun Sai of the RCSS/SSA.—*Myanmar News Agency*



Senior General Min Aung Hlaing shakes hands with Chairman Saw Mutu Sae Poe of the Karen National Union in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MNA

Rail safety programme launches in Yangon

WITH the support of the Japanese International Cooperation Agency, a one-week rail safety programme was officially launched in Yangon on 23 January to raise awareness of the risks related to railway accidents.

In cooperation with REM-UAE Laboratory and Consultant Co Ltd, railway authorities are carrying out the new programme at railway stations in several different ways, aiming to prevent possible railway-related deaths and injuries caused by high-speed trains in the future, U Zaw Lwin from the MR said

The Myanma Railways put forth continuous efforts to provide better service to its commuters through several railways improvement projects including repair of railroads, replacement of carriages and installation of

modern signals and communication systems to run all railways yards and workshops to full capacity.

Under the programme, the authorities put warning letters and stickers at all railways stations as well as locomotives, distributing pamphlets among commuters. The launching ceremony of the rail safety programme on Sunday was held on platform No. 7 at Yangon Central Railway Station.

U Hla Myint, who mainly relies on rail transport, welcomed the government movements to improve the capacity of railway networks.

About 73,000 people use the circular train service provided by the state-owned Myanma Railways on a daily basis.—*Myitmakha News Agency*

White House vows to fight media 'tooth and nail' over Trump coverage



US President Donald Trump hands Chief of Staff Reince Priebus (R) an executive order that directs agencies to ease the burden of Obamacare, after signing it in the Oval Office in Washington, US on 20 January, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

WASHINGTON — The White House vowed on Sunday to fight the news media “tooth and nail” over what it sees as unfair attacks, with a top adviser saying the Trump administration had presented “alternative facts” to counter low inauguration crowd estimates.

On his first full day as president, Trump said he had a “running war” with the media and accused journalists of underestimating the number of people who turned out Friday for his swearing-in.

White House officials made clear no truce was on the horizon on Sunday in television interviews that set a much harsher tone in the traditionally adversarial relationship between the White House and the press corps.

“The point is not the crowd size. The point is the attacks and the attempt to delegitimize this president in one day. And we’re not going to sit around and take it,” Chief of Staff Reince Priebus said on “Fox News Sunday.”

The sparring with the media has dominated Trump’s first weekend in office, eclipsing debate over policy and Cabinet appointments.

It was the main theme at the Republican president’s first visit to the CIA, at the press secretary’s first media briefing and in senior officials’ first appearances on the Sunday talk shows.

Together, they made clear the administration will continue to take an aggressive stance with news organizations covering Trump.

“We’re going to fight back tooth and nail every day and twice on Sunday,” Priebus said.

He repeated White House press secretary Sean Spicer’s assertions on Saturday that the media manipulated photographs of the National Mall to make the crowds on Friday look smaller than they really were.

Aerial photographs showed the crowds were significantly smaller than when Barack Obama took over as president in 2009.

The Washington subway system said it had 193,000 riders by 11 am (1600 GMT) on Friday, compared with 513,000 at that time during the 2009 inauguration.

Spicer’s categorical assertion that “this was the largest audience to ever witness an inauguration - period” was widely challenged in media reports citing crowd count experts and was lampooned on social media as well.

Asked on NBC’s “Meet the Press” why the press secretary was uttering provable falsehoods, White House senior adviser Kellyanne Conway fired back. “If we are going to keep referring to our press secretary in those types of terms I think that we are going to rethink our relationship here,” she said.

Conway responded to criticism that the new administration was focusing on crowds rather than on significant domestic and foreign policy issues by saying: “We feel compelled to go out and clear the air and put alternative facts out there.”

Priebus and Conway focused on a press pool report that said the bust of civil rights icon Martin Luther King Jr had been removed from the Oval Office af-

ter Trump took office. The report on Friday night was quickly corrected, but Trump called out the reporter by name during a visit to the Central Intelligence Agency on Saturday. Spicer also berated the reporter later in the day.

With the 8 November election results shadowed by US intelligence reports of Russian meddling on his behalf, Trump has bristled at reports suggesting his popular support is soft and that the election was not legitimate.

Trump, who lost the popular vote to Democrat Hillary Clinton by nearly 3 million votes, made no mention of Russia in his first visit to the CIA on Saturday. He praised his nominee to head the agency, Mike Pompeo, and ranted against the “dishonest” media, a favorite target during his presidential campaign.

The president accused the media of fabricating his tensions with the US intelligence community, despite his frequent posts on Twitter that derided the agencies.

Trump drew criticism from Democrats as well as former CIA Director John Brennan for his remarks at the agency, where he spoke before a memorial wall with stars representing personnel killed in action.

“President Trump ought to realize he’s not campaigning anymore. He’s president,” Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer said on ABC’s “This Week.” “Instead of talking about how many people showed up at his inauguration, he ought to be talking about how many people are going to stay in the middle class and move into the middle class.”—Reuters

NEWS IN BRIEF

Kremlin says expects to agree date for Trump-Putin phone call soon

MOSCOW — The Kremlin said on Monday it expected to soon agree a date for the first phone call between President Vladimir Putin and US President Donald Trump, but that it had no information for now about when the two men might hold their first meeting.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said in a conference call with reporters that contacts between Moscow and Washington about the date of the first phone call were being handled by the Russian Foreign Ministry.

It was too early to talk about the details of any possible cooperation between Russia and the United States in fighting Islamist militants, Peskov said. Trump has named defeating Islamic State as a priority for his administration. —Reuters

Toyota president urges Japan-US effort for N America prosperity

NAGOYA — Toyota Motor Corp President Akio Toyoda said on Monday it is important for the United States and Japan to “cooperate toward prosperity” of the North American region following US President Donald Trump’s inauguration last week.

Toyota Motor said earlier this month it would spend \$10 billion in the United States over the next five years after Trump criticized the Japanese automaker for building a production plant in Mexico.

Trump vowed in his inauguration speech to renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement with Mexico and Canada, a threat to global automakers using plants in Mexico as an export hub to ship vehicles to the US market.

Speaking at a ceremony in Gifu Prefecture, Toyoda also welcomed the presence in the Trump administration of new Vice President Mike Pence, with whom he met before Pence took office.

“It’s encouraging there is the vice president, who listens to and understands us,” Toyoda said. Pence served as governor of Indiana, where Toyota has an assembly plant.—Kyodo News

UK’s May to defend free trade and Iran deal in talks with Trump

LONDON — British Prime Minister Theresa May will express her beliefs on the value of free trade and also her support for the Iran nuclear deal when she meets US President Donald Trump later this week, her spokeswoman said.

“You can expect the prime minister to be very clear during her US visit on the benefits of free trade and championing them and wanting to look at what more can be done to increase that,” the spokeswoman told reporters on Monday.

Asked about the 2015 nuclear accord between Iran and world powers, which Trump has threatened to either scrap or change, the spokeswoman said: “Certainly we have been a strong supporter of the Iran deal, of securing that, and I would expect the prime minister to be clear on that during her visit to the US”.—Reuters

Vucic meets with Hahn, Kurz in Davos

DAVOS — Serbian PM Aleksandar Vucic met with EU Enlargement Commissioner Johannes Hahn and Austrian FM Sebastian Kurz in Davos on Friday.

Vucic, who is attending the World Economic Forum, has had a series of significant meetings in Davos over the past three days, including with EU foreign policy and security chief Federica Mogherini and NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg, and also spoke on the phone with German Chancellor Angela Merkel.—Tanjug

Most German companies expect little to no impact from Brexit — poll

BERLIN — A large majority of German companies expect Britain’s divorce from the European Union to have little to no effect on their business, according to a poll published by the Cologne Institute for Economic Research (IW) on Monday.

More than 90 percent of the 2,900 companies surveyed either said they expected no damage at all or very little harm, the survey entitled “Brexit, so what?” found.

Only two to three percent said they expected Brexit to have a major impact on their investments and workforce.—Reuters

Expectations low as Syria's warring sides meet

ASTANA — Syria's warring sides met for talks in Kazakhstan's capital on Monday, flanked by intermediary nations seeking to engineer steps towards a goal other negotiations have failed to reach: an end to the six-year-old conflict.

Sponsored by Russia, Turkey and Iran, the meeting marks the first time the opposition and representatives of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad have come together since United Nations-brokered talks in Geneva were suspended early last year.

As fighting continued in Syria and organizers played down chances of a breakthrough, the two sides sat opposite each other at a round table in a hotel conference room in Astana before a day of talks got under way.

The rebel delegation did not plan to negotiate face to face with government representatives but

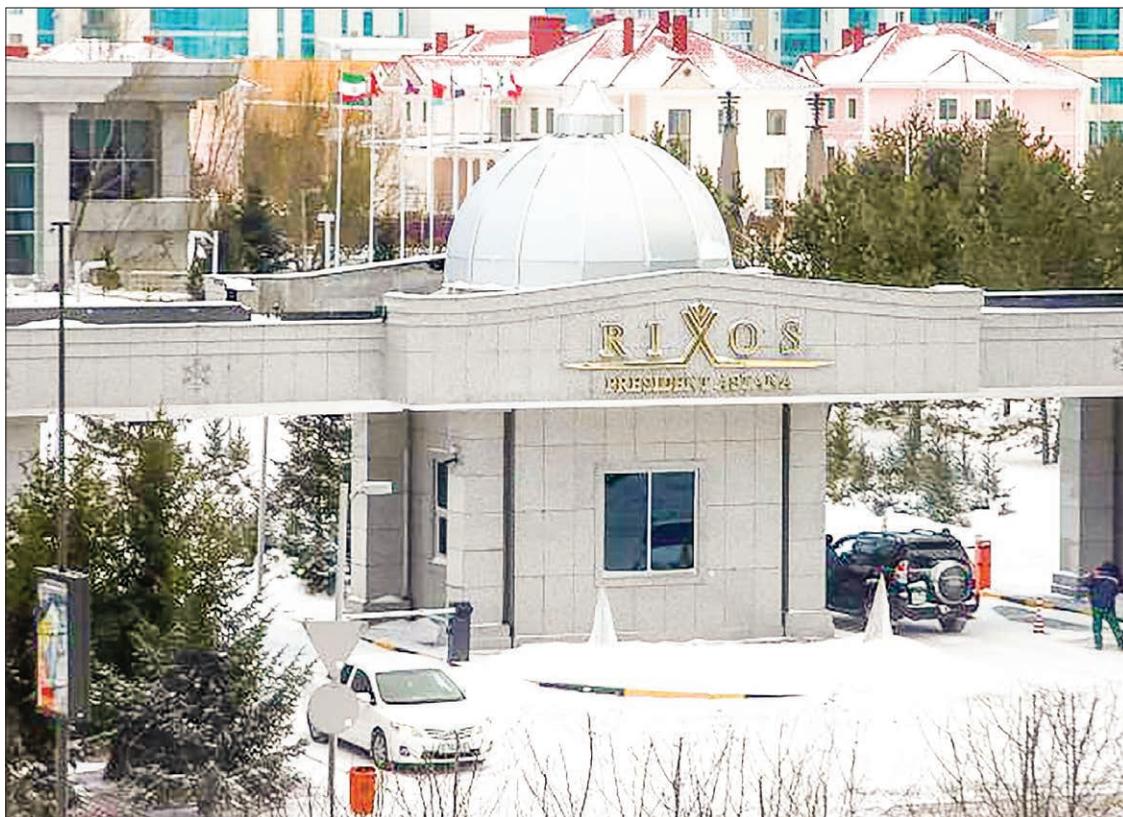
via intermediaries, a rebel source said.

Alexander Musienko, an adviser to Russia's ambassador to Kazakhstan, cast the talks as a step in a long process. "Undoubtedly one cannot resolve issues like this in just one day," he told reporters on Sunday.

There were no senior government figures among the delegations and Kazakhstan's foreign ministry said it expected the meetings to be over by midday on Tuesday.

Pro-Assad Russia and Turkey, which has supported anti-Assad rebels, remain at odds over fundamental issues such as whether Syria's president should stay in power or, as the rebels are demanding, step down.

The head of the Syrian government delegation, Bashar al-Jaafari, said his group's aim was to bolster a shaky ceasefire



A car is parked in front of Rixos President Hotel, the venue that hosts Syria peace talks, in Astana, Kazakhstan, on 23 January, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

as a precursor to a broad-based political solution.

Speaking to Reuters, Yahya al Aridi, a spokesman for the opposition delegation, also said political talks were not on the Astana agenda.

Underlying the mutual mistrust the talks will need to overcome, Jaafari played down Turkey's role as a party to the talks, saying they were between Syrians only.

"Turkey is violating Syrian sovereignty so there is no Syrian-Turkish dialogue," he said, a reference to Turkish support for anti-Assad armed groups in the north of Syria.

That message was reinforced on Syrian state TV which assured audiences that the Syrian delegation had met no Turkish officials.

Some observers said the meetings in Astana, which UN Special Envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura is attending, could

help jump-start the UN-led negotiations.

"The Astana process is a little bit of an unknown quantity," said a senior UN Security Council diplomat, speaking on condition of anonymity. "But provided that it helps get a genuine UN-led process up and running again ... then it can play a constructive role."

The talks pointedly exclude the West, though Kazakhstan, with the backing of Moscow and Ankara, extended an invitation to the new US administration last week, which Washington declined.

Iranian officials have said they strongly oppose US involvement, though Russian state television said George Krol, the US ambassador to Kazakhstan, would be present as an observer.

Turkey and Russia — each for their own reasons — both want to disentangle themselves

from the fighting. That has pushed them into an ad hoc alliance that some people believe represents the best chance for progress towards a peace deal, especially with Washington distracted by domestic issues.

The opposition arrive in Astana aware that the fall of their former urban stronghold, Aleppo, has shifted the momentum in the fighting in favor of Assad.

On Sunday, war planes bombed rebel-held areas of western Syria, killing 12 people in one location, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said, while insurgent shelling of Aleppo killed six.

"The ceasefire is clinically dead, but the Russians and Turks want to keep it alive to send a message to the international community that they are the ones in charge of the Syrian situation," said Observatory director Rami Abdulrahman.—Reuters



Reporters work in the media center set for Syria peace talks, in Astana, Kazakhstan, on 23 January, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

Gulf-backed Yemeni forces push into Red Sea coast city — officials

ADEN—Yemeni army forces backed by Gulf Arabs fought their way into the Red Sea coast city of al-Mokha on Monday, military officials said, pushing out Iran-allied Houthi militia.

A military coalition led by Saudi Arabia intervened in Yemen's civil war nearly two years ago to back President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi after he was ousted from the capital Sanaa by Houthi forces.

The so-called National Army loyal to Hadi entered the port area on Mokha's southwestern edge, an army official said.

"Houthi forces began withdrawing this morning, and the city is nearly abandoned after most of its residents departed," the official said, speaking on condition of ano-

nymity. "The city and the port under the control of national army."

A spokesman for rival army forces fighting for the Houthis could not be immediately reached for comment.

At least 10,000 people have died in the mostly stalemated Yemeni conflict, which has unleashed a humanitarian crisis in the already desperately poor Arabian Peninsula country. While government forces in the south and east nominally hold most of Yemen's territory, Hadi has struggled to enforce state authority among various militias, militants and tribes. The Houthis control most of Yemen's population centres in the northwest including Sanaa.

Army forces and a group of militias called the Southern Re-

sistance launched an offensive on the Red Sea coast this month to deprive the Houthis of ports and to isolate them in the inland capital.

The smaller coastal town of al-Dhubab has been recaptured in the thrust, which has been backed by scores of air strikes and a small contingent of troops and tanks from the United Arab Emirates.

Gulf Arab countries are concerned the Houthis are a proxy for their arch-rival Iran - a charge Tehran denies.

They and Hadi's government say their campaign aims to protect the Bab al-Mandeb strait, the strategic waterway at the foot of the Red Sea through which nearly 4 million barrels of oil are shipped daily to Europe, the United States and Asia.—Reuters

Commander in Cameroon's fight with Boko Haram dies in helicopter crash

DOUALA (Cameroon) — A top general in charge of Cameroon's fight against Islamist militant group Boko Haram died in an accidental helicopter crash on a patrol mission, the government said on Monday.

The crash happened on Sunday evening in the Bogo district of the Far North region, where Cameroonian troops and a regional task force have been fighting the Islamist group for two years.

General Jacob Kodji was commander of the 4th joint mil-

itary region and head of a counter-Boko Haram unit called Operation Emergence 4. Three other officers also died in the crash, the cause of which was unknown, the government said in a statement.

Boko Haram is based in northern Nigeria and launches frequent cross-border raids in a bid to carve out an Islamic caliphate. Its eight-year insurgency has killed more than 15,000 and displaced two million people in the Lake Chad region.—Reuters

Diplomat says China would assume world leadership if needed

BEIJING — China does not want world leadership but could be forced to assume that role if others step back from that position, a senior Chinese diplomat said on Monday, after US President Donald Trump pledged to put “America first” in his first speech.

Zhang Jun, director general of the Chinese Foreign Ministry’s international economics department, made the comments during a briefing with foreign journalists to discuss President Xi Jinping’s visit to Switzerland last week.

Topping the bill at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Xi portrayed China as the leader of a globalised world where only international co-operation could solve the big problems.

Speaking days before Trump assumed the presidency, Xi also urged countries to resist isolationism, signalling Beijing’s desire to play a bigger role on the global stage.

Elaborating on that theme, Zhang said China had no intention of seeking global leadership.

“If anyone were to say China is playing a leadership role in the world I would say it’s not China rushing to the front but rather the front runners have stepped back leaving the place to China,” Zhang said.

“If China is required to play that leadership role then China will assume its responsibilities,” he added.

At his inauguration on Friday, Trump struck a nationalist and populist tone, pledging to end what he called an “American carnage” of rusted factories and crime.

China is the world’s second-largest economy and others also rely on it for their economic growth, Zhang said.

“We still hope that the United States and other Western economies can continue to make an even bigger contribution to the world economic recovery. We’ve heard Trump announce that the United States will achieve four percent growth and we’re very happy about that,” he added.

While Trump said American workers have been devastated by the outsourcing of jobs abroad, he did not mention China by name in his inaugural speech. However, he has threatened to put punitive tariffs on imports of Chinese goods.

Zhang said he thought Trump would not be able to achieve his economic growth goals if he was also fighting trade wars.

“A trade war or an exchange rate war won’t be advantageous to any country,” Zhang added.

Separately, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said Xi had sent a congratulatory message to Trump upon his assumption of office, but gave no other details. —Reuters



Francois Fillon, member of Les Republicains political party and 2017 presidential candidate of the French centre-right, attends a political rally in Nice, France, on 11 January, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

French presidential candidate Fillon to meet Merkel in Berlin

BERLIN — Former French prime minister Francois Fillon will seek some support from fellow conservative Angela Merkel in Berlin on Monday in the most unpredictable presidential election in decades.

Fillon, the only candidate in the April-May presidential election to be received by the German chancellor so far, will have lunch with Merkel before meeting her finance and defense ministers to discuss his plans for Europe.

Fillon is the frontrunner in opinion polls but his ratings have dropped slightly and surveys predict an increasingly tight race

between him, far-right National Front leader Marine Le Pen and independent centrist Emmanuel Macron.

While Alain Juppe, a more centrist, staunchly pro-European Union candidate whom Fillon beat in the conservative primaries, was said to be Merkel’s favorite candidate, the lunch meeting is a sign of support for Fillon.

But she looks unlikely to give him explicit backing — the lunch meeting is not open to the media and no joint statement is planned afterward.

Merkel, up for re-election her-

self in September, publicly backed conservative Nicolas Sarkozy when he sought re-election in 2012. He lost.

On the issue of economic reform, where Fillon proposes steep spending cuts, he is viewed by Merkel’s government as an ally, but on other issues, from Russia and Turkey to migration and Europe, Fillon could prove a more difficult partner. An aide to Fillon mentioned immigration and Russia as “two difficult topics,” while insisting both agree on the need to take joint initiatives to boost the euro zone. —Reuters

Philippines tells outsiders not to use ASEAN as “proxy” for rivalry

MANILA—The Philippines told countries outside Southeast Asia on Monday not to use the region as “a proxy for their rivalry” as it wanted to preserve unity and establish a mechanism to resolve disputes in the South China Sea.

The Philippines is chairman of the 10-member Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) this year and will host its annual meetings, some of which are joined by outside powers including China and the United States.

The issue of territorial disputes in the South China Sea pitting China against several Southeast Asian countries has in recent years emerged as a source of friction in the bloc.

Some ASEAN countries have taken positions on the issue in line with China, while others have been more suspicious of China’s assertiveness, reflecting US thinking.

Philippine defence minister Delfin Lorenzana told delegates from more than 20 countries at a security conference in Singapore that outside powers should not pursue their competition in the region.

“As the host to the leaders of the US, China, Japan, Russia and India, we will have to remind our friends, firmly if necessary, not to use ASEAN as a proxy for their rivalry,” Lorenzana said.

“We will reaffirm the unity and solidarity of ASEAN amidst this emerging super-power competition.”

ASEAN is drawing up a code of conduct in the hope of making sure all claimants follow legal and diplomatic processes in settling territorial disputes.

Lorenzana said he hoped the code would provide the framework for lasting solutions to the disputes over the waters. About

\$5 trillion worth of goods passes through the South China Sea every year.

“We want a rules-based, lasting solution to this issue,” he said.

China has built several artificial islands in the exclusive economic zone of the Philippines, which an arbitration tribunal last year ruled unlawful.

With billions of dollars of potential Chinese trade and investment at stake, the Philippines has a difficult balancing act in upholding its sovereignty claims while staying on the better terms President Rodrigo Duterte has established with historic rival China.

On Monday, China agreed to cooperate with the Philippines on 30 projects worth \$3.7 billion focusing on poverty reduction, the two countries said after a meeting in Beijing. —Reuters

Senate Democrat says he will oppose Tillerson for State Department

WASHINGTON — The most senior Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee said on Monday he would not support President Donald Trump’s nominee for secretary of state, Rex Tillerson.

Senator Ben Cardin said he was not persuaded to support Tillerson’s nomination even after the former Exxon Mobil chief executive spent an hours-long hearing earlier this month seeking to assure lawmakers that he was fit for the job.

Cardin said Tillerson should have described recent Russian and Syrian military actions in the Middle East as “war crimes” when he was asked about those countries during his confirmation hearing.

“The power of the Secretary of State to call out wrong, to name and shame, and to fight each day on behalf of the American people and freedom-seeking people the world over is an enduring symbol,” Cardin said in a prepared statement.

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad has relied on Russian help to try to suppress rebel opposition to his rule that sprang up in 2011.

During his 11 January confirmation hearing, Tillerson deplored military action in Syria but stopped short of calling Russian President Vladimir Putin a war criminal.

Despite opposition from Democrats, Tillerson is expected to win confirmation.

Republican Senators John McCain and Lindsey Graham said in a statement on Sunday they would vote to approve Tillerson despite their concerns over his relationship with Putin.

Republican Senator Marco Rubio, who grilled Tillerson during the hearing, has not said yet how he will vote.

The committee is to vote on Tillerson later on Monday. A vote in the full, Republican-controlled Senate is expected shortly afterward. —Reuters

'It's made in Vietnam!' At inauguration, origin of red Trump hats shocks many

WASHINGTON — One of the biggest cheers President Donald Trump received from supporters watching his inaugural address on Friday was his call to "buy American and hire American."

It was a moment rich in irony.

Many of those supporters were sporting Trump's trademark red "Make America Great Again" baseball caps that were made in China, Vietnam and Bangladesh.

Some were horrified when they discovered their Trump hats were foreign made.

Rob Walker, 44, who had driven to Washington from Georgia with his wife Abby, 36, had stopped at a truck stop on the way to buy a "Make America Great Again" cap.

"Oh God, I hope it's not made in China," Abby said, flipping the cap over to check. She looked at its label. "China! Don't tell anyone!"

The Trump hats available for purchase on Trump's official campaign website are made in the United States and cost between \$25 and \$30, according to the label inside those caps.

But they are also more expensive than the \$20 versions sold by street vendors



The crowd on the National Mall reacts during the inauguration of US President Donald Trump in Washington, US, on 20 January, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

in Washington on Friday.

Joshua Rojas, 25 and Alyssa Young, 28, had traveled from Texas to watch the inauguration. Young was wearing a pink "Make America Great Again" hat.

"I loved it as soon as I saw it. I bought it right over there from one of the vendors for \$20," she said.

So was it made in America?

"I don't know where it was made actually," Young said. "Let me check." She took off the hat to check the label. "Oh no," she cried. "It's made in Viet Nam!"

Austin Araco, 22, from

Arkansas, was attending his first inauguration and wearing a Trump hat.

"I bought this hat the day he won the election," said Araco. "From his website, of course. I wanted to make sure I supported his fund. I don't want to buy a knock-off. I bought the hat for \$30, shipping included."

Victoria Scott, 13 and her brother Andrew Scott, 12, each bought a "Make America Great Again" hat before the inauguration. Victoria's hat cost \$25 - and was made in China.

She did not seem to mind. Andrew then checked

his hat. "Bangladesh?" he said after checking the tag. His father corrected him. "You mean Bangladesh."

Robert Morrison from Queens, New York, was carrying his "Make America Great Again" hat — bought from a street vendor for \$20 — and wearing a New York Yankees cap. Both were made in China. In his speech, Trump struck a fiery, protectionist tone.

"From this moment on, it's going to be America First," he said. "We will follow two simple rules: Buy American and hire American."—Reuters

China, Philippines agree to cooperate on 30 projects worth \$3.7 bln

BEIJING — China has agreed to cooperate with the Philippines on 30 projects worth \$3.7 billion focusing on poverty reduction, the two countries said after a meeting in Beijing on Monday.

Chinese Commerce Minister Gao Hucheng announced the deals without giving details, saying it was an "initial batch" of projects that still needed to be finalised and paperwork still needed to be processed by the banks involved.

Philippine Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez said he had a "very productive" meeting with Gao and they had discussed large projects in rural areas, as well as some smaller projects.

The deal is the first announcement from a two-day visit by a Philippine cabinet delegation to China that comes three months after President Rodrigo Duterte visited Beijing to pave the way for new commercial alliances. China has welcomed Duterte's foreign policy shift away from traditional ally the United States and towards doing more regional deals for

loans and business under his "pro-Filipino" policy.

Relations between the Philippines and China "fully recovered" after Duterte's visit, and "China supports president Duterte to lead the Philippines people in developing their economy," Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying told a regular news briefing on Monday.

Chinese Vice Premier Wang Yang told the Philippines' delegation that the two countries were friends and there was enormous potential to develop trade and business ties, state news agency Xinhua said.

Both countries should continue to push for the healthy development of relations, Wang added.

Chinese officials pledged \$15 billion of investment to the Philippines during Duterte's visit in October, according to the Philippine finance department.

Asked whether US President Donald Trump's economic policies would affect commercial ties between China and the Philippines, Dominguez said: "It's better to be with good friends."—Reuters



Philippine Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez and China's Commerce Minister Gao Hucheng address reporters after their meeting in Beijing, China, on 23 January, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

2 animal handlers injured in lion attack at media facility near Tokyo

CHIBA (Japan) — A lion attacked and seriously injured two caretakers on Monday at a facility housing animals used for filming in Chiba Prefecture near Tokyo, local emergency services said.

A woman in her 50s and a man in his 20s received bites to their heads and legs when they were washing the lion in a cage at the facility for Shonan Animal Production around 11 am.

Another woman in her 20s was present when the incident took place. Another employee of the agency said they were apparently cleaning the lion ahead of filming or photo shooting. The lion,

reportedly a 10-year-old male, was chained and did not escape.

The facility also houses dogs, cats and horses, according to the agency's website.—Kyodo News

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV ANDAMAN STAR VOY. NO ()

Consignees of cargo carried on MV ANDAMAN STAR VOY. NO () are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 24.1.2017 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.P where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

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AGENT FOR: M/S CONTINENTAL SHIPPING
LINE PTE LTD

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV HONG HAI 88-ALCI VOY. NO (117)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV HONG HAI 88-ALCI VOY. NO (117) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 23.1.2017 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of B.S.W-1 where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

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AGENT FOR: M/S RK SHIPPING & TRADING
PTE LTD

Phone No: 2301928

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV PACITA VOY. NO ()

Consignees of cargo carried on MV PACITA VOY. NO () are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 24.1.2017 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of H.P.T where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

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US entertainer Bruce Springsteen speaks during a media conference ahead of his first Australian show in Perth, Australia, on 22 January, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

Bruce Springsteen says the “new resistance” against Trump has begun

SYDNEY — American rock star Bruce Springsteen, who supported Hillary Clinton during the recent presidential election campaign, said on Sunday his band joins a global “new resistance” against US President Donald Trump.

“It feels a long ways away, but our hearts and our spirits are with all the millions of people that marched yesterday, and the E Street Band, we are part of the new resistance,” Springsteen told

reporters in Perth, at the beginning of his Australian tour.

Trump’s inauguration on Friday and his defiant pledge to end “American carnage” was followed by a weekend of mass protests across the United States and internationally. Hundreds of thousands of people filled the streets of Washington and other capitals around the world on Saturday for “sister marches,” mocking and denouncing the new US leader the day after his inauguration.

Speaking before a 3.5 hour set at Perth Arena, Springsteen described Trump as a “demagogue”, but added he hoped Trump’s infrastructure program succeeds in bringing jobs to places where layoffs have hit hard.

Since his inauguration, the Trump administration has reiterated plans to abandon an ambitious Asia-Pacific trade pact, the Trans Pacific Partnership, and renegotiate other trade deals.—*Reuters*

Box Office: M. Night Shyamalan’s ‘Split’ Dominates US Box Office With \$40.2 Million

LOS ANGELES — M Night Shyamalan’s “Split” has turned into a horror hit with a surprisingly strong \$40.2 million in its opening weekend at 3,038 North American locations.

“Split,” starring James McAvoy as a man with 24 different personalities, performed far above recent expectations for Universal and Blumhouse. It easily topped the 2015 launch of Shyamalan’s found-footage horror movie “The Visit,” which scored an opening weekend of \$25.4 million.

“Split” doubled Vin Diesel’s launch of “xXx: Return of Xander Cage,” which is heading for a second-place finish for Paramount with \$20 million at 3,651 sites -- in line with recent forecasts. Fox’s historical drama “Hidden Figures” maintained its impressive performance in third with \$16.3 million at 3,416 theaters for a domestic total of \$84.2 million.

Michael Keaton’s biopic “The Founder” showed little traction for the Weinstein Company with a modest \$3.8 million weekend at 1,115 locations.

Shyamalan produced and directed “Split” from his own script in which McAvoy’s multiple characters capture three young women and hold them hostage. The movie, which costs under \$10 million, generated the fourth-highest opening for a Shyamalan title following “Signs” with \$60 million, “The Village” with \$50.7 million, and “The Last Airbender” with \$40.3 million.

“Split” carries a 76% rating on Rotten Tomatoes, with McAvoy’s performance receiving strong reviews. Shyamalan

is self-financing the project and re-teamed with horror specialist Jason Blum and his Blumhouse Productions after collaborating on “The Visit,” which grossed nearly \$100 million worldwide on a \$5 million budget.

“Xander Cage” stars Diesel as a skilled government operative character who debuted in the 2002 movie “xXx.” The film also stars Samuel L Jackson, Donnie Yen, Deepika Padukone, Ruby Rose, Kris Wu, and Nina Dobrev.

DJ Caruso directs from a script by F Scott Frazier, which centers on Diesel’s Xander Cage coming out of self-imposed exile in a race to recover a seemingly unstoppable weapon known as Pandora’s Box.

“Xander Cage” has an \$85 million budget with backing from Chinese companies Huahua Media and Shanghai Film Group, which limits Paramount’s exposure to about 50%. Paramount and the two companies announced a three-year \$1 billion co-financing deal on Thursday.

“Hidden Figures,” which won the first two weekends of 2017, held well with a 22% decline during the three days. The drama may be a major beneficiary from Tuesday’s Academy Awards nominations.

Illumination-Universal’s fifth weekend of “Sing” led the rest of the pack in fourth with \$9 million at 3,193 locations for a 33-day take of \$249.4 million. Lionsgate’s awards contender “La La Land” finished a close fifth with \$8.4 million at 1,865 sites to push its total to nearly \$90 million.—*Reuters*

Singer Madonna defends ‘blowing up the White House’ remark

WASHINGTON — Pop singer Madonna, who said in a profanity-laced speech at Saturday’s Women’s March in Washington, DC, that she had thought about “blowing up the White House,” said on Sunday that she was speaking metaphorically.

Madonna’s speech, which was criticized on social media, led some television networks to abruptly stop their live feeds of the march, which drew hundreds of thousands of people in demonstrations across the United

States to protest the election of Donald Trump as president.

“I am not a violent person,” the singer songwriter said on Instagram. “I spoke in metaphor and I shared two ways of looking at things — one was to be hopeful, and one was to feel anger and outrage, which I have personally felt.”

The 58-year-old led the crowd on Saturday in chants of, “Yes, we’re ready” to take on policies promoted by Trump, who alienated many women dur-

ing the election campaign with comments’ about rivals’ attractiveness and promises to outlaw or diminish abortion rights.

Trump’s comments in a decade-old video declaring that women would allow him, as a celebrity, to kiss and grope them without their consent further outraged many women.

But Madonna preceded the chants with coarse words for critics of the march.

“To our detractors that insist that this march will never add up to anything, fuck you,” the pop star said. She then repeated the expletive.

Her words drew immediate criticism on social media. On Youtube, where the speech was posted live and in recorded formats, several users called the singer “evil.”

Others expressed outrage over her comment that she had thought about blowing up the White House. On Twitter, some users demanded that she be investigated for making terrorist threats.

Turnout for Saturday’s march was unprecedented, as organizers took credit for mobilizing 5 million marchers worldwide.—*Reuters*



Madonna performs at the Women’s March in Washington US, on 21 January, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

Pink hats take over Sundance festival as Handler leads Women’s March

PARK CITY, Utah — More than 2,000 people took to snow-covered streets during the Sundance Film Festival on Saturday in solidarity with Women’s March demonstrations around the United States, organized to show opposition to US President Donald Trump’s agenda.

A sea of bright pink knitted hats, a symbol of the movement, stood out on the streets of Park City, Utah, as talk show host Chelsea Handler led the Women’s March there. Protesters chant-

ed “Not My President,” “Love Trumps Hate” and “Fight Like a Girl.”

The demonstration took place during the 10-day Sundance festival for independent film, which takes over the small mountain resort town every year.

A day after the president’s inauguration, the Women’s March drew hundreds of thousands of people to the streets of Washington, across the United States and the world to voice opposition to Trump’s often angry, populist

rhetoric and comments seen as demeaning to women and minorities.

Martina Costello, from Park City, said she was marching because she wanted her children to see “change is possible.”

“This gives me chills, it almost brings tears to my eyes,” she said. Handler, who hosts her own Netflix talk show, led the rally after the march, saying the “silver lining” to Trump’s election is the movement that has risen against him.—*Reuters*

Kyoto tea makers tap overseas market amid low domestic demand

KYOTO — Confronted with slumping domestic consumption, producers of luxury Uji green tea and the Kyoto prefectural government are banding together to make a sales pitch abroad.

As part of their overseas campaign, they invited a group of about 40 French entrepreneurs and journalists to a full-course dinner of foie gras and other dishes infused with Uji tea at a posh Paris hotel in late November.

The Kyoto government organized the banquet prepared by a three-star chef for the guests — members of an Uji tea fan club — to promote the tea's high quality and long history. Uji in the southern part of Kyoto Prefecture is one of Japan's most famous tea-growing areas.

According to the Japanese Association of Tea Production, green tea consumption in Japan fell to about 78,000 tons in 2015 from around 116,000 tons in 2004 as coffee's popular-



Supplied photo shows a French dish infused with luxury Uji green tea. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

ity has grown and consumer tastes diversify.

During the Paris event, Kyoto government officials say, the French guests asked about tea production methods, how best to enjoy the prized tea brand and even requested guided tours of tea farms. A sepa-

rate Uji tea-tasting event in Paris was so popular that the prefectural government plans to invite members of the fan club to tea farms and conduct similar promotional campaigns in the United States and the Middle East.

Chotaro Horii, head of

the Kyoto Tea Cooperative who participated in the Paris dinner, said, "Many tea producers are depressed because of slumping consumption. By gaining global recognition for Uji tea, we want Japanese people to rediscover its quality."

—Kyodo News

Oxford historian Garton Ash to receive Germany's Charlemagne prize

BERLIN— Oxford University historian Timothy Garton Ash, an outspoken opponent of Britain's vote to leave the European Union, is to receive the 2017 Charlemagne Prize conferred annually by the German city of Aachen.

Pope Francis was last year's winner of the prize, awarded annually to those who have contributed most

to the ideals of post-war Europe. The prize organizers described Garton Ash as "an extraordinary British academic, who has commented on and accompanied the journey of the European Union with passion and precision, providing the community with thoughtful depth". It singled the historian out for his engagement and com-

mitment to a unified Europe, and his call to press forward towards an EU with "practical construction that is strong enough to weather the storm".

Garton Ash published a column on Saturday in Britain's Guardian newspaper criticizing US President Donald Trump for his "irascible, bullying, narcissistic character" and said

his arrival in the White House heralded "a new era of nationalism" marked by such personalities as Russian President Vladimir Putin, Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan and Xi Jinping of China.

The price is named for Charlemagne, the eighth to ninth century Frankish ruler who carved out a European empire. —Reuters

Russian art on display in N China

TAIYUAN — A collection of over 300 works of art from Russia's State Historical Museum has gone on show in north China's Shanxi Province.

The items on display in Shanxi museum include oil paintings, sculptures, costumes, jewelry, gold and silver ware and glass objects from the 18th and 19th centuries.

"Every item shows rich and diverse heritage including the artists' thoughts, aesthetics and world view," said Aleksei Levykin, curator of the

State Historical Museum.

The collection shows the lives, beliefs and aesthetics of Russians in the period, helping Chinese visitors get to know Russian culture, said Shi Jin-ming, curator of Shanxi Museum.

Last November, a collection of items from Shanxi was exhibited in Moscow. The exhibition, free to the public, began Saturday and will last until 7 May when the exhibit will move on to Jiangsu and Guangdong provinces.—Xinhua

Hokuriku's sole whisky distillery gets face-lift with crowdfunding

TOYAMA — A sake brewery with over a century of history has turned to crowdsourcing to help revamp its whisky distillery — the only one in the Hokuriku region near the Sea of Japan — and bring in tourists.

Wakatsuru Shuzo located in Tonami, Toyama Prefecture, has been raising money via crowdfunding and other sources to refurbish the dilapidated distillery, which has fallen on hard times since the company branched into whisky-making more than 60 years ago.

"I'd like people to see where we make genuine whisky," said Takahiko Inagaki, the 29-year-old board director of the parent company and leader of the project.

Inagaki, who worked for a computer company in Tokyo for three years after graduating from university, decided to return to the family business, originally founded in 1862, because he wanted to try his lot at creating something by hand.

But the impetus for the plan was pure coincidence. Sampling a 1960 whisky made by the company that happened to be in storage, he was struck by the flavor. "It was extremely multilayered, revealing the taste of the time," said Inagaki of the

unblended whisky distilled before he was born.

The distillery, which is on the same site as the sake brewery, has been manufacturing whisky since 1952, when Inagaki's great-grand father Kotaro received his license. Over time, however, the facilities had fallen into disrepair. There were even leaks and broken windows.

Determined not to let the distillery become obsolete, Inagaki decided to renovate it and host tours of the only whisky distillery in the region.

Part of the repairs costs — estimated at around 65 million yen (about \$567,000) — was covered by crowdfunding, as Inagaki was interested in "making it happen by cooperating with like-minded people."

The company had planned to raise about 25 million yen on the Internet, but greatly surpassed its goal, pulling in some 38 million yen in around three months from September through November 2016. Renovations are scheduled to conclude in June this year.

"Whisky takes several years from production to shipment," said Inagaki. "I hope people will become fans (of our product) after seeing where it is made."—Kyodo News

mitv Myanmar International Programme Schedule

(24-1-2017 07:00am ~ 25-1-2017 07:00am) MST

07:03	Am	News
07:26	Am	Myanmar Social & Charitable Association (Ep-2)(Jivitadana Hospital)
07:52	Am	Delicacies From Magwe
08:03	Am	News
08:26	Am	Gold: King Of All Metals
08:57	Am	Dances of Myanmar "Bwe Traditional Dance"
09:03	Am	News
09:26	Am	Bagan Choral Dance
09:32	Am	Choral Dance (Duel)
09:39	Am	A Tea Business Pankwan (Part-1)
09:50	Am	Today Myanmar: Yangon Bus Service

10:03	Am	News
10:27	Am	Caves of Myanmar
10:52	Am	Coin Collectors

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

Prime Time

07:03	Pm	New
07:26	Pm	A Day Out With Sarah (Ep-3)
07:52	Pm	Tea
08:03	Pm	News
08:26	Pm	Taste Of Myanmar (Shan Style Clay Pot)
08:45	Pm	A Visit To Today's Along-Daw-Katthapha

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

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

Dimitrov beats injury-hampered Istomin to reach quarter-finals

MELBOURNE — Grigor Dimitrov reached his first grand slam quarter-final in over two years on Monday by defeating an injury-hampered Denis Istomin 2-6, 7-6(2), 6-2, 6-1 to end the Uzbek wildcard's fairytale run at Melbourne Park.

Istomin, who sensationally knocked out six-times champion Novak Djokovic in the second round, laboured with an apparent left thigh injury after winning the first set and 15th seed Dimitrov took full advantage of his opponent's struggles.

Running 117th-ranked Istomin all over the Margaret Court Arena on a scorching hot day, Dimitrov raced through the last two sets and closed out the match in two hours and 24 minutes.

Dimitrov will play 11th seed David Goffin for a place in the semi-finals.—Reuters



Bulgaria's Grigor Dimitrov hits a shot during his Men's singles fourth round match of Australian Open against Uzbekistan's Denis Istomin at Melbourne Park, Melbourne, Australia on 23 January, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

Konta eyes childhood dream after setting up Serena clash

MELBOURNE — Johanna Konta earned the chance to fulfil a childhood dream when she advanced to an Australian Open quarter-final contest against Serena Williams by dismantling Ekaterina Makarova 6-1, 6-4 on Monday.

The 25-year-old ninth seed, Britain's last hope of a singles title after Andy Murray and Dan Evans were bundled out on Sunday, took 69 minutes to send her Russian opponent packing in temperatures approaching 35 degrees Celsius.

It secured her a first meeting with 22-times grand slam champion Williams, who won the first of her six Melbourne Park crowns when Konta was an 11-year-old growing up in the Sydney suburbs.

"She's one of the players still playing who I looked up to as a young girl wanting to be a professional tennis player," said Konta.

"It's an incredible honour and I will cherish every moment out there."



Britain's Johanna Konta celebrates winning her Women's singles fourth round match against Russia's Ekaterina Makarova at Melbourne Park in Melbourne, Australia on 23 January, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

It was with her run to the semi-finals as world number 47 at Melbourne Park last year that Konta first gave notice that she had the game to take on the best in the world.

Extensive work with a sports psychologist had helped Konta rid her game of the mental collapses in big moments that marred the early years of her career and on Monday she explained how she was now able to cope.

"When you get to a position where you might see a glimmer of what you have dreamed of as a little girl or what you hoped for, what you've worked so hard for, it can feel kind of an all-or-nothing

moment or, 'What if I never get this chance again?'" she told reporters.

"You have also got to have a good perspective on things, and you've got to keep, I guess, the simple things in mind of what's important to you.

"Are you healthy? Is your family healthy? Do you have people around you that you love? Do you have people around you that love you?"

"I know it might sound really mundane and simple, but you've got to go back to things that have got substance, and then in the end just trust in the work that you do."—Reuters

Mourinho understands lures of China

LONDON—Manchester United manager Jose Mourinho says he would have no problem seeing Wayne Rooney opt for a lucrative move to China in the final years of his career but thinks the club's all-time leading scorer still has much to offer in the Premier League.

Rooney overtook Bobby Charlton as United's most prolific goalscorer when he netted a late free kick against Stoke City in the Premier League on Saturday.

While there was no suggestion Rooney wanted to move to the Chinese Super League (CSL), Mourinho said he fully understood why a player might want to end his career overseas.

"I don't like to be critical with players that are going to China ... Could anyone be critical with Zlatan (Ibrahimovic) last summer if he decided to go to China or the US?" he told British media.

"No, and I think with Wayne it's the same... It's him, his family and his decision. But, of course, I see him with an important contribution for us.



Manchester United manager Jose Mourinho. PHOTO: REUTERS

"In Wayne's case, I have no idea. He never mentioned anything to me. The future belongs to him and what he wants from his career, the way he wants to end it and enjoy this last part of his career belongs to him."

The CSL recently witnessed two high-profile additions as Argentine striker Carlos Tevez joined Shanghai Shenhua and Brazilian midfielder Oscar joined Shanghai SIPG.—Reuters

Toure criticises referee after Man City denied penalty

LONDON — Manchester City midfielder Yaya Toure has risked angering the English Football Association by criticising referee Andre Marriner's refusal to award his team a penalty in their 2-2 Premier League draw with Tottenham Hotspur on Saturday.

City were leading 2-1 in the game when Tottenham right back Kyle Walker shoved winger Raheem Sterling in the penalty area, but Marriner turned down the appeals for a penalty and Tottenham equalised a minute later.

Walker said after the match that he was lucky not to have conceded the penalty.

"We feel a little bit robbed because we dominated the game," Toure said. "It was a fantastic game for us... When you see how many chances we had, particularly in the first half, it was unbelievable against a big team like Tottenham.

"The manager and the players were frustrated because we feel like we've been robbed.

"I'll go home and watch the highlights and I'll probably break the glass and be angry because we've lost two points like that. If (Marriner) looks again he'll see something was very wrong."

The draw kept City in fifth place in the table and Toure also suggested that Sterling should have gone to ground the minute he felt the contact from Walker to make sure the penalty was awarded.

"If you have a bit of experience like me, you'd maybe dive in that situation and that's maybe what you have to do," he added.

"He (Sterling) is too honest, he wants to be proper in these sort of games. If the lad's like that, you can't tell him he's wrong, if that's what he tries to do.

"When you see it, he can't miss from there, he was so close and after that Walker pushes him in the back."

The midfielder also called for a speedy adoption of video technology, which was tested for the first time by FIFA at last month's Club World Cup.

"If video can be involved in football it is going to be brilliant," he said.

"If the ref looks at the highlights he is going to feel something is unfair. We all do wrongs in life but this is difficult to take. It is two points going away. Something has to be done."—Reuters