

## MARINE SAFETY NEWS

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### QUOTE OF THE DAY

*"Marriage is not a joke. It is not like food that you can spit out when it is too hot to chew."* - Philippine Proverb

### YOUR PROUDEST MOMENTS

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## Amnesty for Muslim rebels set

The government will grant amnesty to Muslim guerrillas who are facing or have been convicted on rebellion-related charges under a newly signed peace pact, which calls for the 11,000-strong rebel force to be deactivated, an official said on Sunday.

Presidential peace adviser Teresita Deles said the amnesty, which still need congressional approval, would only cover fighters of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and exclude guerrillas who broke off from the group and continue to endanger peace.

According to the pact that was signed by Philippine government and rebel negotiators in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on Saturday, the granting of the amnesty and pardon was aimed at facilitating "the healing of the wounds of conflict and the return to normal life."

The conclusion of the Malaysian-brokered

talks has been the most significant progress made over 13 years of negotiations to tame a tenacious insurgency that has left more than 120,000 people dead and derailed development in Muslim-populated southern regions that are among the most destitute in the Philippines. Under the peace deal, the Moro insurgents agreed to end violence in exchange for broader autonomy.

An existing five-province Muslim autonomous region is to be replaced by a more powerful, better-funded and potentially larger region to be called Bangsamoro.

Despite the milestone, both the government and the rebels acknowledged that violence would not end overnight in a region that has long grappled with a volatile mix of crushing poverty, huge numbers of illegal firearms, clan wars and weak law enforcement. (AP)

## Army's modernization now on 'medium term' phase

The Philippine Army (PA) on Monday announced that its modernization program is now on its "medium term" phase.

Army spokesman Capt. Anthony Bacus said that this will commence on 2014 and will end on 2016. Initial stage of the PA modernization program took place during the previous administration and this includes acquisition of modern body armor, assault rifles, and armored personnel carriers. However, he cannot give details on the particular projects, involving this phase, as the group that will plan the acquisitions are still to convene.

"The concerned offices cannot yet give the details because talks are still to convene for these projects," Bacus stressed. But the PA spokesperson disclosed that these programs will involve improvement on firepower, communications, and night fighting capability of the Army. "(This has) an estimated fund of P8 billion," he added.

This sum includes acquisition of a shore-based missile system worth PHP6.5 billion. Patrick Velez, Department of National Defense vice-chairman for the bids and awards committee, said once acquired, the weapon will be placed under the control and supervision of the Army. The shore-based missiles will be carried out through "limited source bidding."

No other details were given for security reasons. (PNA)

## Binay retains 'very good' rating in latest SWS survey

Vice-President Jejomar Binay ended 2013 with a "very good" rating in the fourth quarter survey of the Social Weather Stations (SWS).

The survey showed that 75% of the respondents were satisfied with the vice-president's performance, while 13% believe otherwise. SWS said Binay scored +62 net satisfaction rating in its December 11-16, 2013 survey. This is the seventh "very good" rating for the vice-president since 2010, with SWS also noting that he scored seven "excellent" ratings since assuming office.

"I thank everyone for appreciating the service I have rendered as vice-president, as presidential adviser on overseas Filipino workers' concerns and as head of the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council," Binay said in a chance interview. "Your confidence and faith in what I do inspire me more to give my best for our people," he added.

The poll also indicated that among the country's top government officials, remains to have the highest satisfaction rating. In the same survey, Senate President Franklin Drilon got a +26 rating (52% satisfied, 26% dissatisfied). House of Representatives Speaker Feliciano Belmonte scored +16 (41% satisfied, 25% dissatisfied). (PNA)

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### QUOTE OF THE DAY

*"It's kind of fun to do the impossible."* - Walt Disney

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## Tusk, Van Rompuy condemn violence, call for dialogue in Ukraine

Prime Minister Donald Tusk and EU Council President Herman Van Rompuy condemned the escalation of violence in Ukraine and called for dialogues to resolve the crisis. Tusk declared in Warsaw on Saturday the country's readiness to give humanitarian and medical aid to Ukraine.

"We are prepared for such an action if the need arises," Tusk said at a joint press conference with Van Rompuy after their meeting in the capital. "The continuing radicalisation of moods and escalating conflict is not good for Ukraine, for Europe and for Poland, Ukraine's most important European neighbour," Tusk noted.

"It is most important to put a stop to all violence," he went on, adding: "It is the (state) authorities that are responsible for breaking the chain of violence. Despite quite dramatic circumstances the demonstrators in Kiev and other cities have displayed a surprisingly high degree of responsibility. According to reports and observations available to us there have been practically no instances of hooliganism or unprovoked aggression on the part of demonstrators."

Most of the clashes were provoked by "militia,

Berkut and other forces subordinated to the authorities," Tusk added. Neither of the protesting groups questioned Ukraine's integrity and the democratic opposition did not postulate a division of the country.

It was imperative that the authorities and opposition resumed talks. "It is in everybody's interest to stop aggressive actions and to look for solutions that will save Ukraine from a wave of violence and reprisals," Tusk opined.

Nobody can substitute for "the leaders of Ukrainian public opinion and Ukrainian authorities in their task of defining the common objective, i.e. opening dialogue. Poland and the EU will do all they can to help define the subject of an agreement and the format conducive to an effective dialogue," Tusk said.

Van Rompuy condemned the escalation of violence in Ukraine and called for dialogue. "A genuine dialogue with the civic society and political opposition is the only solution to the present situation, the right and democratic way to overcome the crisis," he said and also offered condolences to the families of victims, adding that "those responsible must be brought to justice." (PAP)

## Knesset speaker calls off visit to Poland

Speaker of the Knesset Yuli-Yoel Edelstein has called off his Monday-scheduled visit to Poland due to the death of his wife, Ambassador of Israel to Poland Zvi Rav-Ner has informed PAP. Edelstein was to head an Israeli delegation arriving in Poland in connection with the International Holocaust Remembrance Day observed on January 27.

The ceremonies are also to be attended by the Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Israel David Lau and the Sephardi Chief Rabbi of Israel Yitzhak Yosef. Official ceremonies marking the Holocaust Remembrance Day will be held at the grounds of the former Nazi extermination camp Auschwitz-Birkenau. The ceremony will be also attended by MPs from the Czech Republic, Greece and Germany. Later in Krakow, the Israeli guests are scheduled to take part in an Israeli-Polish inter-parliamentary meeting as well as in a bilateral meeting. (PAP)

## Sejm approves Senate's amendments to Sunday work

The Sejm has approved the Senate's amendments to the Labour Law that expand the range of jobs that can be performed on Sundays and on holidays, including cross-border services. Currently, foreign businesses operating in Poland which offer global services in regions with different time zones and holiday calendars cannot ask employees to come to work on Sundays and on holidays.

The amendment should help preserve current jobs, some 200,000, in the business services sector and create new ones, according to the authors of the amendment. The bill will now be sent to the president for signature. The Sejm also approved most of amendments introduced earlier by Senate to the state budget for 2014. Only two amendments were rejected, while 11 were approved. Another amendment allocates PLN 10 million for the construction of a monument to victims of the presidential plane crash near Smolensk on April 10, 2010. (PAP)

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## QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Facts are many, but the truth is one." -  
Rabindranath Tagore

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## 65th Republic Day celebrated

NEW DELHI (AFP/PTI) - India marked its 65th Republic Day on Sunday with a parade of military hardware in New Delhi, as the president warned the country's politicians against underestimating public anger over corruption.

Thousands of spectators turned out for the annual military and cultural parade along New Delhi's ceremonial Rajpath boulevard, along with political leaders and chief guest Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

Security was tight in the capital with police and troops sealing off large parts of the city for the 65th Republic Day.

On the eve of Republic Day, traditionally celebrated with shows of patriotic fervour, President Pranab Mukherjee warned politicians against corruption and false electoral promises ahead of general elections due by May.

"Corruption is a cancer that erodes democracy, and weakens the foundations of our state," Mukherjee said in an annual address aired live on national television.

### We will carefully consider president's speech: AAP

NEW DELHI (PTI) - After initially being in denial, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Sunday acknowledged that President Pranab Mukherjee's remarks that "populist anarchy" cannot be a substitute for governance may be a reference to them, saying the party will carefully consider whatever he has said.

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal made no direct comment on the president's speech but re-tweeted a post by noted filmmaker Shekhar Kapur.

"Dear Mr President. Activism and Anarchy are not the same. Anarchy was 1984 when mobs went on rampage killing Sikhs. Provoked by State n Police," Kapur tweeted.

Shortly after the address, AAP leader Yogendra Yadav had said the president's speech was not about the AAP.

"I have full belief that President must have greater things in his mind. When he talks about anarchy, he looks towards the nation. He must be thinking about what is happening in Gujarat, Punjab and the entire country," Yadav had said.

By the evening on Sunday, the AAP took a different line. "Whatever president said, we don't want to make comments in this regard as he is the first citizen of this country. If he has said something about us, we would carefully listen to him and consider it," Ashutosh, AAP leader and journalist-turned politician, told reporters in New Delhi.

"If Indians are enraged, it is because they are witnessing corruption and waste of national resources. If governments do not remove these flaws, voters will remove governments," he said on Saturday night.

On Sunday, strains of Bharat Ratna awardee Bismillah Khan's shehnai, Bhupen Hazarika's musical legacy, rhythm of Maharashtra's Koli tribe dance and scientists shown working in numbing cold Antarctica enchanted the crowd.

The vibrant tableaux on the historic Rajpath began with cultural heritage of Uttar Pradesh followed by scenes from rural, nomadic and tribal India, among others.

The UP tableau 'Subah-e-Banaras' was fronted by a giant figure of shehnai maestro Ustad Bismillah Khan and was complemented by scenes of city's daily life at the ghats of river Ganga.

However, the celebrations were marred in Manipur where suspected militants triggered four powerful bomb explosions.

### Manmohan Singh a 'dear friend', says Japanese PM

NEW DELHI (PTI) - Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Sunday hosted a private dinner for his Japanese counterpart Shinzo Abe, who described him as one of his mentors and a "dear friend".

The dinner at the PM's official residence at 7 Race Course Road was attended by Abe and his wife Aki, who joined Singh and his wife Gursharan Kaur.

Abe had hosted a similar dinner for Singh and his wife during the Indian leader's visit to Japan in May last year.

Tomohiko Taniguchi, Councillor in Japan's Cabinet Secretariat and part of Abe's delegation, said the premier's trip to India was to pay tribute to the "tremendous accomplishments" of Singh.

He told reporters that Abe regards Singh as a "dear friend".

Talking about the significance of Abe's visit, he said: "First of all it is to pay tribute to the tremendous accomplishments of Prime Minister Singh, who Shinzo Abe has for many years regarded as one of his mentors. Knowing that Prime Minister Singh is soon ending his political career, Shinzo Abe wanted to pay a tribute to him."



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Monday, January 27, 2014

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*"Have compassion for all beings, rich and poor alike; each has their suffering. Some suffer too much, others too little." - Buddha*

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## World Bank pledges MMK1.9 trillion for Myanmar

The World Bank announced on Sunday a MMK1.966-trillion development assistance fund for the country's projects to improve access to energy and healthcare.

The institution's president Jim Yong Kim, on his first visit to the former pariah state, said half of the funds will be used to expand power supplies, in a country where more than 70% of the population does not have access to reliable electricity.

"We are increasing our support for the huge reform effort underway in Myanmar because we want to help the government bring benefits to poor people even more quickly," Kim said in statement.

"Expanding access to electricity in a country like Myanmar can help transform a society - children will be able to study at night, shops will stay open, and health clinics will have lights and energy to power life-saving technology. Electricity helps bring an end to poverty," he added.

The financial aid also includes a MMK196.6-billion assistance to help the Southeast Asian nation achieve universal health coverage by 2030, the bank said, noting that only one in four people in the state has access to

quality healthcare.

The Washington-based institution closed its Yangon office in 1987 and ceased new lending after the then-ruling junta stopped making payments on debts worth hundreds of millions of dollars left from previous programmes.

Last year, Nay Pyi Taw cleared its arrears to the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank with the help of a Japanese bridge loan, enabling the two lenders to resume assistance to the country.

President Thein Sein has overseen a series of dramatic reforms since taking office in 2011, including the release of political prisoners and the election of Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi to Parliament.

In response, the West has begun rolling back sanctions and foreign firms are lining up to invest in the country, eyeing its huge natural resources, large population and strategic location between China and India.

The country was once known as the "rice bowl of Asia" because of its agricultural riches. But economic mismanagement during nearly 50 years of direct military rule left the nation deeply impoverished. (AFP)

## Nay Pyi Taw hosts second development forum

The Second Myanmar Development Co-operation Forum started in capital Nay Pyi Taw on Monday to continue the country's effort to seek assistance with local and international partners for development.

President U Thein Sein and World Bank President Jim Yong Kim attended and spoke at the opening of the two-day forum, Xinhua News Agency reported.

The first development co-operation seminar was held in January last year, in which the Nay Pyi Taw Effective Development Co-operation Accord was approved.

Development partners then agreed to prioritise implementation of specific sectors, including achievable programmes under the economic and social reform framework.

The forum is organised by the Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development.

## Parliament to tackle standard minimum wage in June

The Pyidaungsu Hluttaw is scheduled to tackle the proposed standard minimum wage in June as the government launched a committee that will study the rates suggested by local employees and their employers.

According to Naw Aung, member of the group that deals with the issue, the Parliament will talk about the proposal on the said date, as the body has started consultations with local and foreign companies and their employees on the proposed minimum wage.

Committee researchers have completed the survey on the issue in the areas of Yangon, Mandalay and Bago and similar studies in other regions are still ongoing, Daily Eleven reported.

The official said that they will undergo further talks to clarify the topic.

## Flooding woe set to continue

Forecasters warned of more heavy rain in south west England and further flooding on the Somerset Levels on Sunday.

The Met Office has issued an amber warning of severe weather for the south west and the Environment Agency has issued more than 100 flood alerts and 10 more serious flood warnings in the region, which mean flooding is expected and immediate action is required.

Somerset County Council has declared a "major incident" for all areas affected by flooding in the county.

Deputy chief executive Pat Flaherty said: "Our priority has to be to keep people safe.

"We are doing everything we can to do this and we believe that declaring a major incident shows just how urgent the situation is for many of our residents and communities.

"The reason we are taking this action is the long-term nature of the issues we are facing and to enable a consistent approach to the way that we deal with them."

The county council will continue its help and support for people affected by flooding which includes a boat service for the cut-off community of Muchelney and Thorney, providing a pontoon bridge at Langport, supporting farmers providing a vital tractor service to communities, keeping roads open and evacuating residents when necessary.

Sedgemoor District Council has also declared

a "major incident" on the Somerset Levels.

Many communities are still coming to terms with the flooding that hit Somerset at the beginning of January and now face further problems.

The chief forecaster for the Met Office said: "More heavy rain will spread east across the area on Sunday. Given the current disruption on the Somerset Levels, the public should be prepared for further flooding."

They added that rain across the UK would be accompanied by strong winds, and rainfall accumulations of 10 to 20mm were expected.

The Environment Agency said that communities across southern England should again prepare for possible flooding as the Met Office forecasts further heavy rain for Monday through to Tuesday.

A spokeswoman said: "With the ground already saturated, rivers and groundwater levels remain very responsive to rainfall, particularly on the Somerset Levels."

"Environment Agency teams continue to operate up to 62 pumps 24 hours a day to drain an estimated 65 million cubic metres of floodwater off an area of the Levels spanning 65 square kilometres."

There is also potential for further river flooding across the south west and southern counties.

## Balls: Labour not anti-business

Ed Balls has insisted Labour is not anti-business in the face of a furious backlash over his plans to re-introduce the 50p top rate of tax.

The shadow chancellor also said he was "proud" of the Labour government's public spending as he defended its record ahead of the financial crash.

Labour is pledging to reverse the income tax cut introduced by the Coalition for Britain's highest earners as it draws up plans to balance the books if it takes power in 2015.

The move has proved popular with voters but

business leaders have warned it would put the economic recovery at risk.

Mr Balls told BBC 1's Andrew Marr Show: "We are a pro-business party. This is not an anti-business agenda but it's an anti-business as usual agenda."

He ruled out any further additional increase in the top rate under Labour but refused to give any outline of what proportion of his deficit reduction plan overall would come for tax hikes compared to public spending cuts.



### WORLD NEWS

#### UKRAINE

The Ukrainian opposition vowed to press on with protests on Sunday despite an offer of top posts made by President Viktor Yanukovich, as protesters seized another official building in the capital. Thousands of protesters, some clutching baseball bats and wearing gas masks, were again starting to fill the centre of Kiev for new protests as tensions showed no sign of ending in the deadly crisis gripping the country.

#### THAILAND

A Thai anti-government protest leader was shot dead on Sunday as demonstrators besieged polling stations in Bangkok and forced most to close, hampering advance voting for next weekend's disputed election.

#### EGYPT

Nearly 50 people died in weekend clashes between supporters and opponents of Egypt's military, as media outlets on Sunday hailed rallies urging the army chief to run for the presidency.

#### CHINA

Prominent Chinese legal activist Xu Zhiyong was sentenced to four years' jail on Sunday for his role in organising anti-corruption protests, furthering a crackdown on a rights movement he championed and sparking international criticism.

#### AFGHANISTAN

A Taliban suicide bomber blew himself up near an Afghan military bus in Kabul on Sunday, killing four people in the latest attack in the Afghan capital in the final year of NATO combat operations.

#### USA

A gunman carrying homemade explosives shot dead two people at a popular shopping mall near Washington before killing himself, US police said.

#### EGYPT

Egypt will hold a presidential poll this year before parliamentary elections, interim president Adly Mansour said on Sunday, in a move seen to benefit army chief Abdel Fattah al-Sisi.