Our Three Main National Causes

* Non-disintegration of the Union
* Non-disintegration of National Solidarity
* Perpetuation of Sovereignty

President U Thein Sein sends message of felicitations to Japanese Emperor

NAY PYI TAW, 23 Dec—On the occasion of the birthday of His Majesty Akihito, Emperor of Japan, which falls on 23 December 2011, U Thein Sein, President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, has sent a message of felicitations to His Majesty Akihito, Emperor of Japan.

MNA

President U Thein Sein sends message of felicitations to Japanese PM

NAY PYI TAW, 23 Dec—On the occasion of the birthday of His Majesty Akihito, Emperor of Japan, which falls on 23 December 2011, U Thein Sein, President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, has sent a message of felicitations to His Excellency Mr Yoshihiko Noda, Prime Minister of Japan.

MNA

Notification No.57/2011 issued

NAY PYI TAW, 22 Dec—The Union Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar issued Notification No.57/2011 dated 21 December. The translation of the notification is as follows:

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Union Government
Notification No.57/2011
Nay Pyi Taw, 11th Waning of Nadaw 1373 ME
(21 December 2011)

1. The Union Government has exempted Myanmar citizens living abroad from paying their income tax in foreign currency out of their total income earned under the title of the salary of foreign currency according to Income Tax Law Section 5 Sub-section (b).

2. This notification is effective as of 1 January 2012.

By order,
(Tin Myo Kyi)
Secretary
Union Government

Union Minister meets beef cattle/ milch cow breeders, milk product businessmen and meat and fish exporters and importers

NAY PYI TAW, 22 Dec—Union Minister for Cooperatives and for Livestock and Fisheries U Ohn Myint met milch cow and beef cattle breeders, milk products businessmen and meat and fish importers and exporters at the Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries here this afternoon.

The Union Minister, speaking on the occasion, said in comparison with neighbouring countries, Myanmar levied much less tax on importation of milk and dairy products and thus the prices of domestic dairy products were much lower than production cost, that as the foreign demand of cattle was high, the animals were traded illegally; there were also difficulties in domestic consumption, meat production and transportation; that slaughter license system to some extent hindered the development of meat production; that Livestock and Veterinary Department would provide semen of milch cows and beef cattle for free if necessary. He called for discussions and suggestions for emergence of international-standard slaughters, and meat processing factories in regions and states and recycling of residues as value-added products.

Next, milch cow and beef cattle breeders, milk product businessmen and meat producers explained potentials for expansion of works, difficulties in importing slaughtering equipment, difficulties in exporting sheep, goat and cows alive, difficulties domestic milch cow breeders are facing due to decline in milk price, effects of imported condensed milk powder and other dairy products on domestic milk industry and assistance of the government.

The meeting was also attended by Deputy Minister for Livestock and Fisheries U Khin Maung Aye, departmental heads of the ministry, dairy cow and beef cow breeders and meat and fish importers and exporters.

Union Minister for Cooperatives and for Livestock and Fisheries U Ohn Myint giving a speech to milch cow and beef cattle breeders, milk product businessmen and meat and fish exporters and importers.

MNA

Union Minister for Cooperatives and for Livestock and Fisheries U Ohn Myint giving a speech to milch cow and beef cattle breeders, milk product businessmen and meat and fish exporters and importers.

MNA

Significant night temperature

(22-12-2011)

Haka (2º C)
Putao (3º C)
Pindauung (3º C)
Heho (3º C)
Rakhine State Chief Minister attends library opening ceremonies

NAY PYI TAW, 22 Dec—Rakhine State Chief Minister U Hla Maung Tin addressed opening ceremonies of Pyinnya Kyaw Library (1) and (2) in Gonchoin village and Seddaung ward of Kyaukpyu Township yesterday.

An official accepted donations of Myanmar Library Foundation to the libraries presented by the assistant director of the State Information and Public Relations Department.

Officials formally opened the libraries and the chief minister and guests looked round it.

He then met matriculation students and teachers at Nos (1) and (2) Basic Education High School in Kyaukpyu. —MNA

Teak plantations inspected

NAINTU, 22 Dec—Head of Namtu Township Forest Department U Kyaw Hsun Moe and party inspected thriving hardwood plants on 25 acres of land in Panhaik forest reserve on 13 December morning.

On 14 December, they looked into the block for establishment of teak seed production plantation on 16 acres of land on the bank of Namtu River. Officials then met local farmers who will reclaim the land for 50 acres temporary nursery for commercial teak plantation in block-12 of the forest reserve.

Township FD

Environmental conservation coordinated

Kengtung, 17 Dec—To be able to ensure rural development and poverty alleviation, Shan State (East) Environmental Conservation Group held a coordination meeting at the office of Additional Head of Shan State (East) Forest Department in Kengtung on 30 November.

Deputy Director U Tun Myint of Forest Department discussed matters related to environmental conservation.

District IPRD

Distrcit News

Monsoon paddy harvested on model plot

TAMU, 22 Dec—With the supervision of the Sagaing Region level officials, a model plot of Hmawby-2 monsoon paddy of farmer U Pa Phe was held in Mannaw field in Indang Village-tract in Tamu Township on 1 December.

The model plot produced 85.93 baskets of paddy per acre.

Township MAS

Course for bus line account clerks in Mon State concludes

NAY PYI TAW, 22 Dec—Mon State All Bus Lines Supervisory Committee and BF Group conducted an on-job refresher training for clerks in Mon State. Committee Secretary U Maung Chit delivered an address at concluding ceremony of the course held in Mawlamyine this morning. (Pictured)

The secretary awarded outstanding trainers and officials presented completion certificates. —MNA

Yangon International Trade Exhibition 2011 opens

YANGON, 22 Dec—Chief Minister of Yangon Region U Myint Swe attended opening ceremony of Yangon International Trade Exhibition 2011 (Including Automobile Show 2011), at Tatmadaw Convention Hall, Dagon Township, here this morning.

Director U Kyaw Kyaw of IEMS Company Ltd and Managing Director U Myo Ko Ko of Shine Group of Companies opened the ceremony.

The Chief Minister and guests visited booths on show. A total of 125 booths showcase computers and related materials, electronic and electrical equipment, cosmetics and personal uses, clothing and fashion wares, cleaning and kitchen utensils, foodstuffs, modern furniture and home decoration materials. As a special programme, auto mobile agent companies, import companies and housing show room will also participate in the exhibition which lasts four days starting today. —MNA

Union FM felicitates Japanese counterpart

NAY PYI TAW, 23 Dec—On the occasion of the birthday of His Majesty Akihito, Emperor of Japan, which falls on 23 December 2011, U Wonna Maung Lwin, Union Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, has sent a message of felicitation to His Excellency Mr. Koichiro Gemba, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan.—MNA

Myanmar, Egypt to encourage closer cooperation

NAY PYI TAW, 22 Dec—Union Minister for Foreign Affairs U Wonna Maung Lwin received Mr Hany Riad Moawad, Ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt to the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, at his office this morning. They discussed matters relating to further promotion of bilateral relations and cooperation between Myanmar and Egypt.

MNA
**Iran nuclear issue can only be solved via dialogue, negotiations: Chinese diplomat**

UNITED NATIONS, 22 Dec — Wang Min, China’s deputy permanent representative to the United Nations, said here Wednesday that the Iran nuclear issue can only be resolved through dialogue and negotiations.

"At present, the situation is undergoing profound changes in the Middle East region. Against such background, it is of greater and more realistic significance for all parties to seek for a proper settlement of the Iran nuclear issue through dialogue and negotiations, maintain peace and stability of the Middle East and avoid further turbulence in the region," Wang told a Security Council meeting about the council's sanctions committee on resolution 1737, which was adopted in 2006.

The 1737 committee is tasked with monitoring a set of sanctions against Iran established by resolution 1737 and subsequent council resolutions. China believes that all parties concerned have obligations to earnestly and accurately implement resolutions of the Security Council. However, sanctions are not the ultimate objectives of the resolutions, he noted.

Wang said that the governing board of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has recently adopted a new resolution on Iran nuclear issue, aimed at promoting cooperation between the agency and Iran, as well as supporting the efforts made by the six countries including the United States, China and Russia to solve the Iran nuclear issue through dialogue. "We hope that all parties should seize this opportunity, act in the spirit of being responsible for peace and stability of the Middle East and international nuclear non-proliferation regime, to further enhance diplomatic efforts and push for substantial progress from cooperation between Iran and the IAEA," he said.

"This is common aspiration of the international community, and comply with the fundamental interests of all sides," Wang said.

Iran, as a state party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), is entitled to the right of peaceful use of nuclear energy and should fulfill its international obligations. China hopes that Iran could properly solve the outstanding issues through dialogue and cooperation with the IAEA, thus enhance the confidence of the international community and comply with the fundamental interests of all sides.

"China believes that as long as all parties have strategic vision, actively adopt measures in a flexible and programmatic manner, mobilize positive factors can progress be made in dialogue and negotiations," Wang said.

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**Eight US soldiers charged over death of fellow trooper**

WASHINGTON, 22 Dec — Eight US soldiers deployed in Afghanistan have been charged in connection with the death of a fellow Chinese-American soldier in October, officials said.

Danny Chen, a 19-year-old infantryman assigned to Company C, 3rd Battalion of the 25th Infantry Division, died Oct. 3. His body was found in a guard tower in southern Afghanistan with "an apparent self-inflicted gunshot wound" in his head, Xinhua quoted the report by the American Forces Press Service as saying.


The charges include dereliction of duty, maltreatment, involuntary manslaughter, assault consummated by battery, and reckless endangerment.

All of the accused were assigned to Company C, and posted to Combat Outpost Palace in southern Afghanistan, US military officials said.

No further information was disclosed in the report. The death of Chen, from Chinatown of New York, urged the US military to launch a thorough investigation.

A US military official revealed to Chen’s family that he had been subjected to physical abuse and ethnic slurs by his superiors, who allegedly dragged him out of bed one night and across the floor when he failed to turn off a water heater after showering, says a report published in the New York Times in October.

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**Bombings kill at least 63 in Baghdad**

BAGHDAD, 22 Dec — A series of bombings in Baghdad on Thursday morning left at least 63 people dead and 185 others injured. Local police say that a car bomb exploded in front of a building that houses government offices. 23 people were killed and 40 wounded. The police say there were at least 14 other explosions in Baghdad over the course of about one hour. They described them as coordinated attacks. Iraq military and police have been on heightened alert against terrorist attacks since US troops pulled out of the country on December 18th after 9 years of deployment.

Concerns are growing that sectarian confrontations could intensify after the judicial authorities leveled terrorist charges at the country’s Sunni vice president, a political rival of Shia Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki. —NHK

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**Mexican man says he dissolved 300 bodies**

TIJUANA (Mexico), 22 Dec — A man known as the “stew maker” dissolved the bodies of about 300 people in acid for Mexican drug cartels, his recently leaked confession reveals.

Santiago Meza, 45, was arrested in January 2009 and is awaiting sentencing in Nayarit for taking part in organized crime, covering up crime and illegal possession of firearms. In a confession recorded shortly after his arrest, he told the Mexican Attorney General’s Office he served the Arellano Felix cartel and later the Sinaloa cartel, SanDiegoTimes.com reported Wednesday.

A copy of Meza’s confession was anonymously leaked to a man who believes his son was one of the victims, the news Web site said.

Meza told investigators he disposed of bodies at five sites in the greater Tijuana region. Authorities found bone fragments, teeth and personal effects at two of the sites, the Web site said, though the veracity of Meza’s confession remains uncertain.

Meza, called “el pozolero,” for the Spanish word for “stew,” said he never saw the faces of any of the bodies he handled. “I don’t know who they were or what they did,” he said in his confession. “I remember that of all the bodies that I got to ‘pozolero,’ there were only three women. And I never got anyone in uniform.” —Internet

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**Italian tanker seized by Somali pirates freed**

ROME, 22 Dec — An Italian oil tanker with five crew members seized by Somali pirates in February has been freed, Xinhua reported Wednesday. The crew of the vessel Savina Carlyna was also released, the Ansa news agency said.

The tanker, owned by the Finetti D’Amato company, was seized by pirates some 1,400 km from the Somali coast on Feb. 8. Italian Prime Minister Mario Monti Wednesday expressed satisfaction with the release of the crew and the ship. —Xinhua

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**Alleged drug dealers are presented to media in Tijuana, Mexico, on 23 Dec, 2011. Seven suspects were arrested during a raid where 39 kilos of marijuana, 2 guns and 34,000 US dollars were seized in a house of Tijuana. —Xinhua**
France to unveil breast implant removal decision Friday

More than 1,000 of the 30,000 such implants in France have burst, according to the French health safety agency AFSSAPS. Eight cases of cancer, mainly breast cancer, had so far been reported in patients with PIP implants, and a ninth patient in Grenoble died of cancer last year, according to France’s Director General for Health, Jean-Yves Grall.

“The French government has formed a special committee to look at the issue. More than 300,000 implants are believed to have been sold globally by PIP over the last 12 years. British health authorities said they see no reason so far to have the French-made implants systematically removed. There is not enough evidence of a link between silicone implants and cancer, they said, more generally that “women with any type of breast implant... who have questions about their breasts or think that their implants may have ruptured, should seek clinical advice from their implanting surgeon.”

Brain size may predict risk for early Alzheimer’s disease

WASHINGTON, 22 Dec— New research suggests that, in people who don’t currently have memory problems, those with smaller regions of the brain’s cortex may be more likely to develop symptoms consistent with very early Alzheimer’s disease.

The study was published Wednesday in the online issue of Neurology, the medical journal of the American Academy of Neurology. For the study, researchers used brain scans to measure the thickness of regions of the brain’s cortex in 159 people free of dementia, with an average age of 76. The brain regions were chosen based on prior studies showing that they shrink in patients with Alzheimer’s dementia. Of the 159 people, 19 were classified as at high risk for having early Alzheimer’s disease due to smaller size of particular regions known to be vulnerable to Alzheimer’s in the brain’s cortex, 116 were classified as average risk and 24 as low risk. At the beginning of the study, participants were also given tests that measured memory, problem solving and ability to plan and pay attention. The tests will go on over the next three years. The study found that 21 percent of those at high risk experienced cognitive decline during three years of follow-up after the MRI scan, compared to seven percent of those at average risk and none of those at low risk. “Further research is needed on how using MRI scans to measure the size of different brain regions in combination with other tests may help identify people at the greatest risk of developing early Alzheimer’s as soon as possible,” said study author Bradford Dickerson, of Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston and a member of the American Academy of Neurology.

Asian shares, euro ease as fund doubts persist

Tokyo, 22 Dec—Asian shares fell and the euro struggled on Thursday as doubts remained over how much of the funds that banks raised from an inaugural long-term European Central Bank tender will actually flow into struggling euro zone economies and help restore confidence. MSCI’s broadest index of Asia Pacific shares outside Japan <.MIAPJ0000PUS> fell 0.7 percent, after climbing to a one-week high on Wednesday, while Tokyo’s Nikkei stock average <.N225> ended down 0.8 percent.

Despite the drop, Japanese equities have been least affected by the volatility stemming from the euro zone debt woes, with daily swings in the benchmark exceeding 2.5 percent for only 16 trading sessions this year, compared with 88 such days for the Euro STOXX 50 <.STOXX50E> and 41 for the S&P 500 <.SPX>. The euro was virtually unchanged around $1.343, with traders seeing major support around $1.3000, the December 14 low, above 2011’s trough of $1.2860. The euro reached a one-week high near $1.32 on Wednesday.—Reuters

Toyota set to shake off woes with record sales in 2012

Tokyo, 22 Dec—Toyota Motor Corp forecast a 20 percent jump in global sales to a record 8.48 million vehicles next year as it clawed back from this year’s output woes caused by natural disasters in Japan and Thailand.

Toyota overtook General Motors Co as the world’s top-selling automaker in 2008, but is set to lose that crown this year as supply-chain disruptions from the earthquake and tsunami in Japan and deadly floods in Thailand cut production around the world.

With estimated sales in 2011 of 7.90 million vehicles for the group, which includes units Daihatsu Motor Co and Hino Motors Ltd, Toyota will likely rank third behind General Motors and Volkswagen AG.

The top spot could return to Toyota next year as it builds inventory to meet pent-up demand and adds output capacity in China and Brazil. GM and VW have not disclosed their sales plans for 2012 and Toyota did not provide forecasts for the group. “The reason they lost sales this year was because they couldn’t build the cars. Now that they can, it’s possible they’ll take back the top spot,” said Satoru Takada, analyst at Tokyo-based TW.

“But it depends on which markets the growth will come from,” he said, noting that Toyota was dominant in Southeast Asia and the Middle East, but it faces tougher competition in markets like China and South America.

Toyota’s parent-only plan for 2012 exceeds the peak of 8.43 million vehicles marked in 2007.—Reuters

REUTERS Toyota set to shake off woes with record sales in 2012

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Toyota’s parent-only plan for 2012 exceeds the peak of 8.43 million vehicles marked in 2007.—Reuters
Steve Jobs honoured with Grammy award

LOS ANGELES, 22 Dec— The late Apple co-founder Steve Jobs will be honoured posthumously with a Grammy award for his contributions to music technology, the Recording Academy announced on Wednesday.

Jobs, who passed away 5 Oct of pancreatic cancer, will receive a Trustee Award for helping create products “that transformed the way we consume music, TV, movies and books,” the academy said in a prepared statement.

The Apple Computer Inc first received a Technical Grammy Award in 2002, for contributions of outstanding technical significance to the recording field, the academy said.

Along with Jobs, band leader and composer Dave Bartholomew, recording engineer Rudy Van Gelder will also receive the award.

The academy also picked the Allman Brothers, Glen Campbell, Diana Ross and Brazilian pianist/singer/guitarist Antonio Carlos Jobim as recipients of Lifetime Achievement Awards. Jobim was known for composing “The Girl from Ipanema,” a worldwide hit in the mid-1960s which won a Grammy for Record of the Year in 1965.

Other artists, including trumpeter Wayne Jackson, saxophonist Andrew Love of the Memphis Horns, country legend George Jones, and the late Gil Scott-Heron were also named as recipients. German sound-technology firm Celemony and the late engineer Roger Nichols, who worked with artists including Ross, Placidio Domingo, James Taylor and Stevie Wonder, were recognized with Grammy Technical Awards.

“This year’s honourees offer a variety of brilliance, creativity and amazing impressions on our culture,” said President/CEO of The Recording Academy Neil Portnow.

“It is an honour to recognize such a diverse group of individuals whose talents and achievements have had an indelible impact on our industry.”

The honourees will be formally acknowledged during the 54th Annual Grammy Awards to be held at Staples Centre in downtown Los Angeles on 12 Feb. 2012.
US opposes EU airline emission tax plan

WASHINGTON, 22 Dec—The US State Department says it is “disappointed” in a court ruling that the European Union can charge airline emissions tax on flights in EU countries. The US had tried to block European Union plans to levy the emissions tax, saying they were invalid and that plans for an emissions tax on airlines must be dealt with by the International Civil Aviation Organization.

However, the European Court of Justice ruled on Wednesday that the taxes were legal, the BBC reported. The United States, Canada and China had all opposed the plan. “We are disappointed by the decision of the court,” US State Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland said. “Our message to the European Union has been very clear: there is a mechanism in international aviation in ICAO for addressing the question of greenhouse gas emissions.”

US airlines argue the emission taxes go against the Open Skies Agreement, which allows airlines to fly between any EU country and any point in the United States.

The European Court of Justice rejected that argument. “Application of the emissions trading scheme to aviation infringes neither the principles of customary international law at issue nor the Open Skies Agreement” across the Atlantic, the ECI said.

Indonesia to deploy 87,000 cops to secure Christmas, New Year’s Eve

JAKARTA, 22 Dec—Indonesian police will deploy 87,000 personnel throughout Indonesia to secure Christmas and New Year’s Eve celebration, the country’s largest news portal detik.com reported on Thursday.

National Police Chief Gen Timur Pradopo said that the police will be deployed in a mission named Operation Candle 2011, hoping that the celebration could run smoothly. He also called on people to participate in guarding security.

More drugs discovered in Sydney’s shipping containers

SYDNEY, 22 Dec — More drugs have been found in shipping containers in Sydney’s south-west, Australia’s New South Wales (NSW) Police Force said on Thursday.

Drug Squad detectives, investigating a drug syndicate that has been importing drugs to Australia by concealing them in shipping containers, discovered more pseudoephedrine on Thursday morning, police said. Pseudoephedrine can be used to make the drug methamphetamine or “ice”.

Tensions between Pakistan and the United States have escalated following a 26 November NATO airstrike that killed 28 soldiers.

Pakistan had sealed its NATO supply route on the border with Afghanistan, and boycotted Taleban peace talks in Bonn as a response to the attack.

Pakistan’s Defence Committee chief Javed Ashraf Qazi said he believed the lull in attacks was because the US “does not want to aggravate the situation any further.”

Qazi said if the United States had a “high-level” target in its sights then, “I think they would go ahead” and launch a strike, The Daily Times reports. Pakistan’s government and army have long objected to the US drone programme. The Long War Journal quoted an anonymous American official, as saying the pause was because another attack “push US-Pakistan relations past the point of no return.”

There have been at least two other pauses in the drone programme, including when the United States had detained CIA contractor Raymond Davis after killing two people in the Lahore. US officials had previously denied that the two pauses earlier this year were due to tensions with Pakistan, and said operational issues with the unmanned aircraft were responsible for the pause.

Alleged secret service materials leaked to Slovak media

BRATISLAVA, 22 Dec — Slovak media have received yet another multi-page surveillance report allegedly drafted by the Slovak Intelligence Service (SIS), after earlier leaks of a wiretapped telephone conversation between former interior minister Robert Kalinak (Smer-SD) and Pravda daily reporter Vanda Pavrova.

According to the report, Kalinak was a police officer working for the national counterespionage agency at the time, called Akutabne.sk, wiretapping approvals from 2005 to 2009 were sent to a number of local media on Tuesday.

The leaks included information of operations named Gorilla and Gorilla 1, which were aimed at gathering intelligence on alleged activities of financial group Penta. The report also mentioned the names of many influential entrepreneurs.

South Korea to invest nearly USD 12 bn in oil in 2012

SEOUL, 22 Dec — South Korea plans to invest nearly USD 12 billion in oil and natural gas developments next year in a bid to secure stable energy supply, the economy ministry said Wednesday.

The nation’s public corporations would invest USD 7.8 billion in developing oil and natural gas resources in 2012, while private-sector enterprises were set to spend USD 4 billion in energy projects, according to the ministry of knowledge economy next year. Its investment was up 34 percent from USD 8.8 billions estimated for this year, and would be the largest annual amount for energy projects, according to South Korea’s oil and gas resources.

The ministry aimed to raise the country’s energy self-sufficiency ratio for both oil and gas to 30 percent by the end of 2012, while the state-run Korea National Oil Corp. (KNOC) planned to secure oil reserves of around 2 billion barrels and produce as much as 300,000 barrels per day by the end of next year.

US oil field expansion to be completed by 2014, the waterway’s 100th anniversary

Machines work at a construction site in Panama Canal, Panama, on 21 Dec, 2011. The canal expansion is expected to be completed by 2014, the waterway’s 100th anniversary. — Xinhua

India’s only aircraft carrier, the INS Viraat, is a warship that was purchased from the United Kingdom. It was formerly known as the HMS Hermes before being refitted by India. — Xinhua

Intelligence Report

There was a wiretapped telephone conversation between a former interior minister Robert Kalinak (Smer-SD) and a reporter from Pravda daily. The conversation was published by Akutabne.sk on Tuesday. — Xinhua

US President Barack Obama (C) speaks with a clerk as he shops for a Christmas bone for the Obama family dog, Bo, while at Pet Smart in Alexandria, Virginia. — Internet

A customer selects products at a Christmas market in Berlin, capital of Germany, on 21 Dec, 2011. German business confidence improved for the second month in a row in December, defying concerns in the eurozone on the unfolding debt crisis, according to a key survey released Tuesday. — Xinhua

Xinhua/UPI

US President Barack Obama (C) and First Lady Michelle Obama shop for Christmas gifts at the PetSmart pet supply store in Alexandria, Virginia. — EPA

US Coast Guard and the US Marines Corps were present in the skies near Cape Canaveral, Florida. — Xinhua

Xinhua
BofA’s Countrywide to pay $335 million over bias case

WASHINGTON, 22 Dec.—Bank of America Corp’s Countrywide Financial unit agreed on Wednesday to pay a record $335 million to settle civil charges that it discriminated against minority homebuyers, an historic settlement for the US housing crisis.

As the financial and housing crisis deepened in 2008, Bank of America bought Countrywide, which specialized in so-called subprime mortgages, focusing on loans to those with lower credit ratings and charging them higher interest rates and payments that suddenly increased after two or three years. The settlement covers conduct between 2004 and 2008, before the acquisition by Bank of America, and involved a range of alleged wrongdoing, including charging African-Americans and Hispanics higher interest rates and fees than non-minorities. Minorities also were steered to more expensive subprime loans, even though they were qualified for traditional mortgage rates. Justice Department officials said it was the largest residential discrimination settlement in US history. “The victims had no idea they were being victimized. They were thrilled to have gotten a settlement and realize the American dream,” Thomas Perez, head of the Justice Department’s civil rights division, told reporters.

The proposed settlement was filed in a federal court in California where a judge must approve it. —Internet

Almost 70 reporters killed worldwide in 2011

PARIS, 22 Dec.—Sixty-six journalists were killed worldwide in 2011, many of them covering Arab revolutions, gang crime in Mexico or political turmoil in Pakistan, Reporters Without Borders (RSF) said on Thursday.

Ten journalists were killed in Pakistan, most of them murdered, making it the most dangerous country for news coverage for the second year running. With pro-democracy demonstrations prompting violent reprisals from Arab governments, the number of reporters killed in the Middle East doubled to 20 this year. A similar number were killed in Latin America, where criminal violence was rife.

The Paris-based RSF said in a statement. Some 1,044 journalists were arrested this year, nearly double the 2010 figure—largely due to the Arab Spring, as well as street protests in countries including Greece, Belarus, Uganda, Chile and the United States.

From Cairo’s Tahrir Square to Khuzdar in southwestern Pakistan, from Mogadishu to the cities of the Philippines, the risks of working as a journalist attunes of political instability were highlighted more than ever in 2011, RSF said. China, Iran and Eritrea remained the biggest prisons for the media, it said, without specifying how many journalists were in jail there.

The 10 locations that RSF considered the most dangerous for journalists included Abidjan, the business capital of Ivory Coast, where at least two reporters were killed in electoral violence, and Cairo’s Tahrir Square, where journalists were systematically attacked by supporters of Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak before he stepped down in February.—MFA/Reuters

Mariano Rajoy sworn in as Spanish PM

MADRID, 22 Dec.—Mariano Rajoy was sworn in as the new prime minister of Spain by King Juan Carlos II at the royal residence of the Palacio de la Zarzuela on Wednesday.

Rajoy was elected after his right wing Popular Party won an overall majority in the general election held last month, gaining 186 seats in the 350-seat Congress.

He was confirmed as Spain’s new prime minister by Congress on Tuesday following a two-day investiture debate in which he set out the programme of his new government, which will include wide-scale spending cuts in order to reduce the country’s deficit by 1.45 billion euros (21.7 billion US dollars).

The final act of protocol before Rajoy took office saw him swear an oath of loyalty to King and country on a crucifix, a bible and copy of Spain’s 1980 Constitution. In doing so, he became the sixth prime minister of Spanish democracy following the death of General Franco in 1975 and the second member of his party, following Jose Maria Aznar, to lead his country.

Spain’s previous prime ministers since 1975 are Adolfo Suarez, Leopoldo Calvo-Sotelo-Bustillos, Felipe Gonzalez, Aznar and Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero. Following the investiture, Rajoy took up residence at the Palacio de la Moncloa as did his predecessors.—MNA/Xinhua

US champion boxer Mayweather gets 90 jail days

BEIJING, 22 Dec.—Boxing champion Floyd Mayweather was sentenced to 90 days in jail by a Las Vegas judge for his role in a 2010 domestic violence case, media reported Thursday.

“Punishment is appropriate,” Justice of the Peace Melissa Saragosa said after a prosecutor complained that Mayweather had been in trouble before and hasn’t faced consequences.

The case involved a scrap between Mayweather and Manny Pacquiao, a champion fighter from the Philippines against whom Mayweather’s weightlessness is usually measured.

With Mayweather scheduled to report to jail Jan. 6, his 90-day term would expire in early April. A long-awaited fight between the two men regarded as among the best of their generation has been delayed by stalling techniques and verbal sparring.

Mayweather has reserved May 5 at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas for his next bout, but he typically requires eight weeks of training.

Workers survey a destroyed bridge in Iloilo City, southern island of Mindanao, as the death toll from flash floods in the southern Philippines climbs above 1,000. —Internet

Gas well explosion causes one injured, one missing in west China

BEIJING, 22 Dec.—Explosion and fire took place at a gas well in western China’s Sichuan Province early Thursday morning, causing one missing and one slightly injured, said China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC).

The fire was brought under control, and the company has sent a team of experts to investigate the cause of the accident, said the company’s biggest oil and gas producer and the owner of the well. Company sources added that gas released in the accident did not contain hydrogen sulfide, which is a toxic and inflammable gas.

Local residents that had been evacuated were returning home, said CNPC. —Xinhua

Workers place dead chickens into plastic bags after they were killed in Hong Kong. —Internet
Climate changes threaten to emergence of zoonotic diseases

Prof: Dr Tin Tin Myaing (University of Veterinary Science)

Globalization and climate change have had an unprecedented worldwide impact on emerging and re-emerging zoonotic diseases. Climate variability resulting from naturally occurring climate phenomena such as El Niño, La Niña, and global warming, associated with extreme weather conditions that lead to changes in the patterns of tropical rainfall. Disruption of natural ecosystems by alterations in environmental conditions for survival of pathogenic bacteria, viruses, and fungi that favored them to move into new areas thus zoonotic diseases are emerging. Climate changes such as increased temperature, increased or decreased precipitation, and sea level rise may impact on the emergence of re-emergence of infectious diseases.

Warmer temperatures are already enabling insects, and microorganisms to invade and reproduce in areas where once they could not survive in severely low temperatures and seasonal chills. Thus the pathogens are become to adapt, finding new niches and jumping across species into new hosts. Insect-borne diseases are now representing in temperate areas where the vector insects were non-existent in the past. Humans are also at an increased risk from insect born diseases such as malaria, dengue, and yellow fever. Vector borne diseases are especially susceptible to changing environmental conditions due to the impact of temperature, humidity and demographics of vectors. Transmission of Chikungunya virus and West Nile virus was directly linked to climate conditions. Temperature and humidity levels directly affect population densities of these insects and thus as their reproductive success, survival rates and ability to transmit disease. Lower temperatures kill many exposed ticks and insects and they can carry the pathogens so that cycles of disease transmission are interrupted and need to be restarted in spring.

Chikungunya virus (CHKV)

Climate changes favored the exposure of Chikungunya virus (CHKV) due to increased population of the mosquito vectors and consequently facilitated CHKV emergence in some geographical areas. Chikungunya virus (CHKV) is an Alphavirus of the Togaviridae family that shares the same vector responsible for spreading dengue virus, namely Aedes aegypti and to a lower extent, Aedes albopictus, which are the common peridomestic mosquito species in the Southeast Asia region. Since 2004, several million indigenous cases of Chikungunya virus disease occurred in Africa, the Indian Ocean, Asia, and recently, Europe. The virus, usually transmitted by Aedes aegypti mosquitoes, has now been repeatedly associated with a new vector Aedes albopictus.

Hemorrhagic dengue fever virus

Hemorrhagic dengue fever virus is found usually in children as a severe form and most commonly occurring in Asia. It is complicated by hemorrhage, shock and sometimes death. Dengue virus are transmitted and replicates by mosquitoes. Hemorrhagic dengue fever cases in Thailand in 2008 numbered more than 300,000. Humidity can greatly influence transmission of vector-borne diseases, particularly for insect vectors. Mosquitoes and ticks can desiccate easily and transmission of vector-borne diseases, particularly for insect vectors. Mosquitoes and ticks can desiccate easily and transmitted vector-borne pathogens or parasites such as those of anthrax, haemorrhagic fever and sepsis, may be subject to reemergence for reasons of higher temperatures promoting pathogen or vector development, and increased survival of many pathogens or parasites leading to more pathogen or vector mortality.

Leprosy

Climate change factors that may expand the range and increase the reproductive potential of rodent populations include increased rainfall, warmer temperatures, and climate extremes. Outbreaks of human diseases are often associated with increased rodent populations after heavy rainfall or during floods, a good example is Leptospirosis. Leptospirosis is a major health problem obviously related both to the monsoons and poor sanitary conditions, with multiple epidemics reported in recent years. Thailand has been the source of a leptospirosis outbreak in the 21st century, subsequent to flooding, and localized mainly in the northeast region of the country. Fear of the emergence of leptospirosis outbreaks following the 2004 tsunami disaster was due to the effect of salt water mixing with fresh waters.

Future work

Owning to anthropogenic activities, there is widespread scientific agreement that the world’s climate is warming at a faster rate than ever before, with concomitant changes in precipitation, flooding, winds and the frequency of extreme events such as El Niño. In order to evaluate the risks of the occurrence of emerging zoonotic diseases, vector borne diseases that are heavily influenced by the current weather conditions and the effect of future forecasting and analysis will need to be included in the early warning systems. Disease surveillance must be combined with a network of expert laboratories with the appropriate diagnostic capabilities to carry out testing for still exotic, or rare diseases. A comprehensive study of mosquito-borne diseases requires a combination of entomologists, epidemiologists and climatologists to work together to examine the associations of changing vector habitats, disease patterns and climatic factors. Animal Disease Awareness and preparedness should be noticed for farmers, veterinarians, relevant sectors, including descriptions of the diseases, preventive measures and practical control measures. Incidence data are needed to provide a basis for epidemiological studies to increase actively global disease surveillance by computer data based system to share information among the veterinarians. Public education and awareness to reduce exposure to disease, extreme weather alerts and meteorological data collection may be implemented. Researchers should continue to expand their knowledge of how climate and weather influence health outcomes. Physical, biological, health, and social scientists must collaborate to better understand what makes certain people and animals’ community more vulnerable to the health impacts of climate variability and change, and how people adapt to emerging zoonotic disease threats. An integrated approach to epidemiological, entomological and environmental data collection, analysis and enhancing zoonotic disease awareness should be reinforced. International collaboration should be taken such as WHO, OIE and FAO and can work together within the framework. Further work needs to be done to determine the role of climate change in the future epidemics of zoonotic and other infectious diseases.

Model plot produces over 100 baskets per acre

Kyaukse, 22 Dec—The harvesting ceremony was attended by officials of Myanma Agriculture Service, Irrigation Department and local farmers. A 10-acre model plot organized by Aye Myawin paddy on 5 acres of farmlands in Sulenge Village in Kyaukse Township on 7 December. Under supervision of township level officials, the paddy plot was harvested by local farmers. After the harvesting, a total of 101.65 baskets of paddy were produced.

Paddy harvested on model plot

Yesagyo, 22 Dec.—A 10-acre model plot of Yadan Toe paddy, cultivated through good agriculture pattern, owned by nine farmers was harvested in Zeedaw Village of Yesagyo Township on 1 December.

The harvesting ceremony was attended by officials of Myanma Agriculture Service, Irrigation Department and local farmers. After the harvesting a total of 101.65 baskets of paddy were produced.
Union Minister meets beef/cattle/milch cow breeders, milk product…

*from page 1*

He then met of Myanmar Red Cow Head Co and Myanmar Shwe Yin Co and discussed construction of modern slaughters in Livestock Zone, beef/dairy cows farming, export of processed meat and fish, and export of new items through farming of cows, buffalo, goats, sheep, and myum. The two companies will run those works with investments from Australia and Malaysia.  

MNA

Sacred Tooth Relic of Buddha kept for 15th day in Mandalay

NAY PYI TAW, 22 Dec — The Sacred Tooth Relic of the Buddha conveyed from the People’s Republic of China has been kept at Maha Atulawaiyan (Atumashi) Monastery in Mandalay for 15th day for the public obeisance. Buddhist devotees from Mandalay and other areas paid obeisance to the Sacred Tooth Relic today. Today, the donation for the Sacred Tooth Relic has amounted to K 1,592,548,634, US$12029, Euro 325, Bhat 12740, SS1661.50, Chinese Yuan 14173.19, Malaysian amount to K1,592,548,634, US$12029, Euro 325, Bhat 12740, SS1661.50, Chinese Yuan 14173.19, Malaysian currency 670, Lao currency 184000, 7571 items of jewellery worth K 1332545590.  

MNA

Sagaing Region Chief Minister holds golf tourney, opens hospital ward and hammers stakes for more

NAY PYI TAW, 22 Dec — Sagaing Region Chief Minister U Tha Aye launched golf tournament held in his name in Monywa Golf Course on 17 December, which was participated by 23 teams and 136 golfers. On the next day, he awarded winners in the tournament. On 19 December, he attended opening ceremony of Sangha ward of Station Hospital in Kwerkwim model village in Myinmu Township. He inspected the hospital and hammered stakes for extended ward and water purifier. The chief minister addressed ceremony to hand over documents related to the Sangha ward and donated cash to medical fund of the hospital. He inspected progress in construction of basic education high schools in Ayawdaw Township and visited Station Hospital in Maletha village. He met district-township legal officers at Region Advocate-General’s Office in Monywa.  

MNA

Yangon-Mandalay expressway sees vehicle crash; two killed on the spot and three injured

NAY PYI TAW, 22 Dec — Two passengers were killed in a car crash at Milepost 1854 in Yangon-Nay Pyi Taw road section (near Yetkanzintaung Village) on Yangon-Mandalay expressway at 11:45 pm on 18 December. The incident occurred due to careless driving of the driver of Toyota Hilux Surf whose colour’s grey, which was travelling from Yangon to Nay Pyi Taw, and claimed two; the driver and one of five passengers aboard. The remaining-injured passengers were rushed into Nay Pyi Taw Hospital where they are now receiving medical treatment. Even though the express way has already got the traffic signboards put up by the Ministry of Construction for road safety, some drivers are still careless with driving.  

MNA

FM sends message of condolences to Philippine counterpart

NAY PYI TAW, 23 Dec — U Wunna Maung Lwin, Union Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, has sent a message of condolences to His Excellency Mr. Albert F. Del Rosario, Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Philippines, for the lost of lives and devastation caused by the recent flash-floods in Mindanao Island, the Philippines, on 18 December 2011.  

MNA

The Sacred Tooth Relic of the Buddha conveyed from the People’s Republic of China.  

MNA

Union Health Minister Dr Pe Thet Khin receives Japanese guests

NAY PYI TAW, 22 Dec — Director Mr Yukio Ito of Sojitz Corporation and Kitahara Neurosurgical Institute (KNI) from Japan called on Union Minister for Health Dr Pe Thet Khin, at Minister Office here on 21 December. They discussed medical and technical cooperation matters and training. Also present at the meeting were Director-General Dr Tun Naing Oo of Health Department, Director-General Dr Than Zaw Myint of Medical Science Department and officials.  

MNA

CBM Governor receives Vietnamese guests

NAY PYI TAW, 22 Dec — Governor of Central Bank of Myanmar under the Ministry of Finance and Revenue U Than Nyien met the delegation led by Chairman of Board of Directors of Vietnam Bank of Vietnam Mr Pham Huy Hung at his office this morning. They frankly discussed banking and monetary matters, opening branches of Vietnam’s banks in Myanmar and cooperation for smooth functioning of investment works between the two countries. Also present at the call were deputy governors and division heads of CBM.  

MNA

Educative talks on job site safety and fire drill was organized in Hlaingtat Saw Mill of Thazi Township on 10 December.  

MTE
Mexico says 42 million turtles born in 2010-11 nesting season

Mexico City, 22 Dec—Mexican authorities recorded a total of 42.2 million Olive Ridley, Leatherback and Kemp’s Ridley sea turtle births during the 2010-11 nesting season, authorities said.

Efforts to secure the protection of female turtles and their nests and safeguard hatchlings’ journey to the ocean are led by the National Commission on Natural Protected Areas, or Conanp, at 33 nesting beaches, the Environment and Natural Resources Secretariat said in a statement Wednesday.

Ten of those beaches are natural protected areas, three are located inside biosphere reserves, 15 are international-ally designated wetlands sites and the remainder are located in areas without special protection mechanisms, the secretariat said.

Approximately 1.2 million Olive Ridley turtle nests were laid and 23.3 million offspring made their way to the ocean at the Playa de Escobilla sanctuary and Morro Ayuta beach, both located in the southern state of Oaxaca. A total of 20,574 Kemp’s Ridley turtle nests were laid in the northeastern state of Tamaulipas and 534 in the eastern state of Veracruz as an estimated 18.9 million hatchlings reached the sea in those two regions.

The nesting figure for the latest season is up compared to the previous season, and therefore the conclusion can be drawn that the population is on the road to recovery, according to the secretariat.

In those states, authorities supervised the entrance to the sea of 15,414 Leatherback offspring.

The secretariat estimates that around 1.647 Leatherback turtle nests were laid along the entire Pacific coast during the 2010-11 nesting season.

Invasion of their habitat (beaches) by man, accidental fishing, depredation of their nests by some communities that still consume their flesh and eggs and injuries suffered by boats’ outboard motors are the main dangers sea turtles face in Mexico.

Mexico banned the harvest of sea turtles for commercial or subsistence reasons in April 2006.
**Vitamin E prevents muscle wasting, repairs cells**

**WASHINGTON, 22 Dec—**

Vitamin E is rubbed on the skin of the injured area and is consumed by runners to improve endurance. But scientists now have found how the powerful antioxidant helps repair tears in the plasma membrane. Daily activities such as eating and exercise can tear the plasma membrane and a new research by Georgia Health Sciences University shows that vitamin E is essential to repair, the journal *Nature Communications* reported. Without repair of muscle cells, for example, muscles eventually waste away and die in a process similar to what occurs in muscular dystrophy, said a university statement.

Muscle weakness is a common complaint in diabetes, another condition associated with inadequate plasma membrane repair. "Without any special effort we consume vitamin E every day and we don’t even know why," said Paul McNeil, Georgia’s cell biologist and study co-author. Century-old animal studies linked vitamin E deficiency to muscle problems but how that happens remained a mystery until now, McNeil said. According to him, lack of membrane repair causing muscle wasting and death prompted him to look at vitamin E. Vitamin E appears to aid repair in several ways. It can help to eliminate destructive byproducts from the body’s use of oxygen that impede repair. Because it’s lipid-soluble, vitamin E can actually insert itself in membranes to prevent free radicals from attacking. It also can help keep phospholipids, a major part of the membrane component, from breaking down so they repair better after a tear. —*Internet*

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**Seven NOTW phone-hacking victims to receive compensation**

**LONDON, 22 Dec—** Media group News International has said that seven public figures will receive compensation after their phone hacking claims against the publisher of the now-defunct British tabloid News of the World were settled.

People to receive settlements from the News International subsidiary, News Group Newspapers (NGN), includes former bars, freed after two weeks behind bars, The Washington Post reported. A small crowd of reporters and supporters greeted him.

Police tried to keep the release under wraps by transferring Navalny by van from the detention center where he had been held to a police station in his neighbourhood.

Navalny has been an outspoken critic of Prime Minister Vladimir Putin. Putin, who spent eight years as foreign minister, Minister Vladimir Putin. Putin, who spent eight years as foreign minister, said he was a victim of phone hacking and was targeted in the process of denouncing the powers that be.

Newspapers and Glenn Mulcaire have been settled with News Corporation’s Management and Standards Committee, acting on behalf of NGN, the statement said. "The claims are Mark Oaten, Ulrika Jonsson, Timmmus, Michelle Milburn, Paul Dudge, James Hewitt and Calum Best. NGN has agreed to pay appropriate sums by way of compensation and costs and have expressed regret for the distress caused," it added. According to the report, former England footballer Paul Gascoigne’s case that he was a victim of phone hacking was also being resolved. A lawyer said that Gascoigne’s case "is settling" during a brief hearing at the High Court.

Counsel Jeremy Reed, who represents various claimants in the News of the World phone-hacking case, made the announcement.

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**An Iranian woman buys sweets and nuts for Yadda Night at a market in Teheran, Iran, 21 Dec, 2011. Yadda Night is Iranian winter solstice celebration. It is celebrated on the longest night of the year, locally believed, to be on 21 Dec on the eve of winter solstice.**

**NY worker ‘traumatized’ by black effigy**

**NEW YORK, 22 Dec—** A black New York City employee found a black baby doll hanging at a Parks Department loading dock, police said Geoffrey Croft, president of NYC Park Advocates, described the worker as “traumatized” by his find, The Wall Street Journal reported. The man, described as being in his 60s, works in The Bronx. **Croft, who publishes a blog, A Walk in the Park, said someone also scrawled “KKK” in the bathroom at the facility, WPX-IV, New York, reported. Police have said they cannot confirm the second incident. The city settled a lawsuit in 2008 that accused the Parks Department of discriminating against employees who belong to racial minorities. —*Internet*

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**Brazil has 11.4 mln citizens living in slums**

**RIO DE JANEIRO, 22 Dec—** Some 11.4 million Brazilians are living in slums, about 6 percent of the population, a report released Wednesday by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) said. The report shows that the percentage of Brazilians who live in shantytowns, often in precarious conditions, almost doubled in the past 20 years.

Nearly half of the shantytowns are in the cities of Rio and Sao Paulo, the largest two cities in Brazil, and in Belém, in the northern region. In Belém, 34.5 percent of the population lives in slums. In Rio and Sao Paulo, the figures are 22 and 11 percent respectively.

The percentage of black or mixed-race citizens in slums is much higher than other ethnic groups. Slum residents are also younger at an average age of 27.9 years old, outside, according to the IBGE report. Living conditions in slums are worse than in regular neighborhoods in Brazil’s largest cities, but sometimes social indicators are better in rural areas. The average per capita income, for example, is higher, reaching 570 reais (199 US dollars) in slums, against 112 reais (60 dollars) in rural areas.

The illiteracy rate in slums stands at 8.4 percent, twice as high as the rate registered outside slums. However, the rate is lower than the national average, which is 9.6 percent, and the average in rural areas, which is 23 percent. —*Xinhua*

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**Building owner blamed for deadly fire**

**CHICAGO, 22 Dec—** The owner of an empty Chicago building where two firefighters died deserves jail time, a prosecutor said in announcing criminal charges Wednesday. Chuck Dai was charged with criminal contempt for allegedly ignoring court orders to bring the building up to code, the Chicago Sun-Times reported. The fire in December 2010 is believed to have been started by homeless people trying to stay warm. As firefighters battled the blaze, the roof collapsed, killing Corey Ankum, 34, and Edward Stringer, 47, and injuring 15 of their comrades.

Dai should be held responsible, State’s Attorney Anita Alvarez said. “He had a responsibility to continue to make all the repairs that were ordered by the court to make,” she said. “If the boards didn’t work, then he needed to buck up that building. But, he didn’t go there. He didn’t do what he was supposed to do. He totally disregarded the order.” Alvarez’s lawyer said his client was not to blame for the roof collapse. Gene Murphy said prosecutors are “looking for a fall guy.” —*Internet*

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**Russian blogger freed after two weeks**

**MOSCOW, 22 Dec—** A Russian blogger and opposition leader said he could be a political candidate himself one day as he was released from jail early Wednesday.

Alexei Navalny, 35, was freed after two weeks behind bars, The Washington Post reported. A small crowd of reporters and supporters greeted him.

Police tried to keep the release under wraps by transferring Navalny by van from the detention center where he had been held to a police station in his neighbourhood.

Navalny has been an outspoken critic of Prime Minister Vladimir Putin. Putin, who spent eight years as foreign minister, said he was a victim of phone hacking and was targeted in the process of denouncing the powers that be.

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Michael Jackson house auction raises $1m

London, 22 Dec—The contents of the house where Michael Jackson lived before he died have sold at a Los Angeles auction for almost $1 million (£646,000). Some 500 items were for sale from the mansion the singer rented, including furniture, ornaments and paintings. Among the lots was an armchair upon which Jackson wrote a message to himself that fetched $25,750 (£16,600). A pottery rooster holding a chalkboard bearing a note from Jackson's children also sold for $5,000 (£3,200). Prior to the auction, organisers had estimated total sales to be between $200,000 (£129,000) and $400,000 (£258,000). Also sold was a Victorian Revival-style bedroom suite, an 18th Century French clock and a shower bench on which Jackson had drawn stick men. Only a handful of auction items bore a personal connection to the singer and his family, as most were part of the rented surroundings.

The study of Leda's head is believed to have been completed about 1505. Leonardo da Vinci drawings tour UK for Queen's Jubilee

London, 22 Dec—A collection of 10 rarely seen drawings by Leonardo da Vinci is to go on display in Birmingham. The works include designs for a chariot, anatomical sketches and a study of the head of Leda, the mythological mother of Helen of Troy. They form part of the Royal Collection at Windsor Castle.

The touring exhibition will almost certainly have altered the ecology of the river, shifting the balance of plantlife in the Thames. "Generally, Thames water quality has been improving— the fish are returning," explained Bristol's Dr Nicholas Howden. "But the big challenge that remains is diffuse pollution.

Ex-Miss Venezuela Eva Ekvall dies of breast cancer

Houston, 22 Dec—Former Venezuelan beauty queen Eva Ekvall has died of breast cancer at the age of 28. She died in hospital in Houston in the US on Saturday, her family said. Eva Ekvall was crowned Miss Venezuela in 2000 and was also a Miss Universe finalist. She worked as a model, actress and television presenter. She wrote a book about her struggle with the disease that helped raise awareness of it in Venezuela. The book—titled "Fuera de Foco" (Out of Focus)—also featured e-mails to family and friends. Her treatment included chemotherapy, a double mastectomy and reconstructive surgery. Ms Ekvall knew the images of her bald, sick and without make-up would shock people in Venezuela, where beauty queens are major celebrities and cosmetic surgery is very popular.
Matt Damon would love to do another Bourne movie

LONDON, 22 Dec—Matt Damon has said he would love to do a fifth movie in the Bourne franchise.

The actor does not feature in the fourth film of the series, The Bourne Legacy, and he says that if the movie doesn’t work it won’t necessarily affect the prospects of future Bourne projects.

“It [Bourne Legacy] doesn’t work we can just ignore it and pretend it didn’t happen,” the Daily Express quoted him as saying.

But he expects that it will work and only help us if we did another one, which I’d love to do,” he said. The 41-year-old also clarified his comments about writer Tony Gilroy, whom he blamed for the film’s failure.

“This absolutely makes sense,” Barth said, noting the landing’s degree of difficulty was high because of holiday traffic and nearby lighting and trees.

Authorities said the cause of the engine failure was under investigation.

No injuries when plane lands on street

A pilot did an “absolutely amazing” job of landing his crippled plane safely on a street in Longmont, Colo, an airport manager says.

Tim Barth, airport manager at Vance Brand Municipal Airport in Longmont, said the pilot, John Pritchard of Lafayette, and his teenage daughter were returning to Boulder from Plattsburg, Neb, in a Piper Cherokee Arrow II when they began having engine trouble Sunday, the Longmont Times-Call reported Monday.

Longmont police Sgt. James Sawinska said Pritchard received permission to divert to Vance Brand, but he soon discovered the plane would not make it.

“He had a choice of the roadway or off to the side,” Sawinska said.

Barth said Pritchard landed the plane on a narrow stretch of Hover Street without causing any injuries or property damage.

“They poured the wine and the glasses with the key in the lock. They couldn’t see what it was. At the end, they took the empty wine bottle and the glasses with them. We couldn’t figure out if Madonna prefers specific wine, or is a total germaphobe,” the New York Post quoted the source as saying.

Sources also revealed that Zaibat picked up the bill, paying with his credit card — but not before Madonna brought her own red wine in a bag along with her beautiful crystal glasses.”

The New York Post reported Monday that the 53-year-old bought out her own red wine in a bag along with her beautiful crystal glasses.

“Open at Your Risk.”

In a door of the trailer said, “Open at Your Risk.” and discovered two toilets. “We did not and never will come in and read for the part, and I didn’t really think I had a chance,” he said. “I didn’t expect anything like this in a million years. I remember they asked me to come in and read for the part, and I didn’t really think I had a chance. I was like: ‘Don’t waste my time.”

Contactmusic quoted her as telling Metro newspaper. “So I read for the director Brad Bird and I thought it of fashion in the 1990s, but he has lately had many customers bringing in old typewriters to be restored, the New York Daily News reported Monday.

“They have their computers, they have their blackberries or ipads or whatever it is, but they still would like to have a typewriter. They like the idea of pressing the keys and having the words hit the paper,” Schweitzer said.

Donna Brady of Brady & Kowalski Writing Machines said she and her partner have had a lot of interest in the typewriters they sell at Brooklyn Flea.

“The more disconnected we get from other humans because of electronic devices, the more we kind of want to get away from those gadgets,” she said. “A lot of people still want to be productive, but would like to get away from the screen.”

No typewriters experience a comeback

New York typewriter sellers said the low-tech machines are experiencing a comeback among writers who like to avoid distractions.

Paul Schweitzer, 73, whose Gramercy Typewriter Co was founded by his father Abraham in 1932, said he started working on laser printers when typewriters fell out of favor in the 1990s, but he has lately had many customers bringing in old typewriters to be restored, the New York Daily News reported Monday.

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SUSPICIOUS FLA TRAILER CONTAINS TOILETS

Police in Florida said they opened a suspicious trailer marked with anti-government messages and a warning to “Open at Your Risk” and discovered two toilets.

Sgt Vincent Ogburn, an Orlando police spokesman, said officers evacuated nearby buildings, including the Orlando Sentinel, and Orange Avenue was shut down for 4 hours Sunday while police attempted to determine the trailer’s contents, the Sentinel reported Monday.

A bomb squad member in protective gear eventually opened the trailer and found two toilets. “We didn’t and do not know what this person’s intentions were,” Ogburn said, referring to whoever locked the trailer to a palm tree outside the newspaper offices. Aigon said a door of the trailer said, “Open at Your Risk.”
Man United routs Fulham 5-0 in Premier League

LONDON, 22 Dec — Manches
ter United earns its big-
est win in three months on Wednesday as rout
ing Fulham 5-0 to keep the heat on leader Manch
erester City in the Pre-
miership title race, but
saw two key players pick up
injuries.

Dimitar Berbatov
forced off injured in the 20th
minute after being caught by
Clint Dempsey's arm while
duggling for the ball.

And his replacement, Ashley
Young, came off injured
while tackling Dickson
Erahue at the start of the sec-
ond half with an unspecified
injury that Ferguson said
will rule him out for two to
three weeks.

The tackle on Ashley
Young was a very aggres-
sive tackle and I will have to
see that again,’ said Ferguson.
‘Fulham were very aggres-
sive in the second half and
Ashley Young had paid the
price for that.’

INTERNET

Manchester United's striker
Wayne Rooney scores the
fourth goal during the
English Premier League
football match between
Fulham and Manchester
United. — Internet

Sunderland wins at QPR to
move clear of drop zone

LONDON, 22 Dec — Mar-
tin O’Neill watched his new
Sunderland side squander a
two-goal lead before Wes
Brown’s late header clinched
a 3-2 victory at Queens Park
Rangers on Wednesday.

In the clash of two re-
eligation threatened sides,
goals from Nicklas Bendner
and Stephane Sessegnon put
Sunderland in control before
QPR struck twice in four
minutes.

Heidar Helguson started
the comeback in the 63rd
minute when he bundled
Alejandro Faurlin’s cross
into the net and the Icelandic

INTERNET

Contador decision mid-January: report

Graeme McDowell of Northern Ireland
Mark O’Meara in 1998. And
that’s why he can appreciate
how difficult it was this year
for Graeme McDowell to
follow up on a blockbuster
performance.

“Santos FC communicates
that reports, claiming Bar-
celona from Spain would have
a first-refusal option on
Neymar as ‘unfounded and
untrue’,” the official website
reads.

As announced on 9
November this year, the ath-
ete Neymar will stay with
three points. Then, the

Santos denies Barcelona has
first-refusal option on Neymar

BARCELONA, 22 Dec —
Santos has released an
official statement branding
the club’s reports on a first-
refusal option on Neymar as
‘unfounded and untrue’.

Reports suggest that the
Catalans have ironed out a
clause with the Brazilian
outfit, which would see the
Club World Cup champions
in the event of any future sale
of the rights of the athlete
Neymar.

That’s how it was for
INTERNET

McDowell comes down from
his high, ready to climb

ORLANDO, 22 Dec — Im-
agine winning two of golf’s
biggest trophies only a cou-
ple of months apart. Then,
right when it looks as though
a dream season can’t get any
better, competing against
the field of stars and beat-
ing Tiger Woods on the last
day when no one gave you
much of a chance.

That’s how it was for
INTERNET
Jaguar photo shows conservation success

LA PAZ, 22 Dec.—A photograph of a female jaguar with two cubs near a gas pipeline in Bolivia proves the success of jaguar conservation efforts, a wildlife group says. The Wildlife Conservation Society released the photo of the jaguar family taken near the Santa Cruz-Puerto Suarez Gas Pipeline in Kaa Iya National Park in Bolivia.

The adult jaguar, nicknamed Kaaiyana, has been seen with her cubs in the area for more than a month, a WCS release said Wednesday. “Kaaiyana’s tolerance of observers is a testimony to the absence of hunters in this area, and her success as a mother means there is plenty of food for her and her cubs to eat,” said John Polisar, coordinator of the WCS Jaguar Conservation Programme.

The WCS estimates at least 1,000 jaguars live in the Gran Chaco jaguar Conservation Unit, a 47,000-square-mile area spanning southern Bolivia and northern Paraguay. Kaaiyana was first detected by a WCS survey at the Bose site in 2005 with male jaguars, and again in 2006 with a cub. Kaa iya park guards work to prevent illegal hunting and poaching.

Inference

No.
**Experts meet for transboundary biodiversity management and climate change adaptation initiative in Hindu-Kush-Himalayas region**


In his address, the Union Minister urged the experts from the region to promote cooperation in science and research sector, to review strategic resolutions passed at the Tengchong consultation and to complete drawing future strategic programme for transboundary biodiversity conservation, ecosystem management, sustainable development and climate change adaptation.

Nepal-based the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) was formed in 1983 for the mountain communities in the Hindu-Kush-Himalayas (HKH) region which is the widest mountain chain in the world and located in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal and Pakistan.

The HKH region is known as the “Third Pole” of the earth, due to its inaccessibility and the amount of water stored in the form of ice and snow. It is also known as the “Water Tower” of Asia, the source of ten of its largest rivers. Myanmar became a member of ICIMOD in 1990. The Mt. Khakaborazi in the northernmost part of the country is located in HKH region.

**Agreement signed with Busan Korea Biotechnology to establish combined cycle power plant in Yangon**

Union Minister U Khin Maung Soe at MoU signing ceremony between Department of Electric Power and Busan Korea Biotechnology Co Ltd.—MNA

NAY PYI TAW, 22 Dec—Department of Electric Power and Busan Korea Biotechnology Co Ltd signed a MoU for the feasibility study of combined cycle power plant project to supply Yangon and Thilawa Industrial Zone with sufficient electricity at the Ministry of Electric Power No (2) in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

The ceremony was attended by Union Minister for Electric Power No (2) U Khin Maung Soe, Chairman of Myanmar Investment Commission U Soe Thein, Union Minister for Finance and Revenue U Hla Tun, Union Minister for Electric Power No (1) U Zaw Min, Union Minister for Energy U Thaw Hlay, Union Attorney-General Dr Tun Shin, deputy ministers, departmental heads and officials of Busan Korea Biotechnology.

Densely populated with booming economy, Yangon in the south of the country is the largest electricity consuming region — half of electricity consumption of the whole country 700 Megawatts flows into it — while hydropower plants lie in the northernmost part. Four dilapidated power plants in the region can generate only 240 MWs, requiring the region to join 400 miles long power grid to meet its increasing demand — 10 per cent each year. It contributes to power loss and insufficiency.

Yangon and its neighbourhoods are in need of an immediate natural gas-fired and recycled power plant.

**Essay, poem, poster and painting contest of traffic rules educative show held**

NAY PYI TAW, 22 Dec—The basic-level essay-writing, poem, poster and painting contests of the fourth Nay Pyi Taw Traffic Rules Educative Show to be held from 7 to 11 January 2012 under the aegis of Nay Pyi Taw Council took place at No. 1 Basic Education High School Pyinmana on 17 December.

Chairman of Nay Pyi Taw Traffic Rules Enforcement Committee Nay Pyi Taw Council Member U Saw Hla and party viewed the competitions. A total of 180 students from schools in Nay Pyi Taw Council Area participated in the competitions.

**Yangon International Trade Exhibition 2011 opens**

India defers test firing of nuclear-capable Prithvi-II missile

**Brain size may predict risk for early Alzheimer’s disease**

**Facts about the HKH region**

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