Nippon Foundation provides humanitarian assistance to war-torn villages in Mon State

NAYPyITAW, 23 Dec—Japan Nippon Foundation presented 1000 bags of rice as part of its humanitarian assistance programme for war victims at State Hall in Mawlamyine in Mon State yesterday, attended by Vice-Chairman of Union peace-making Work Committee Union Minister at the President Office U Aung Min, committee members Union Ministers U Win Tun and U Zeyar Aung, Mon State Chief Minister U Ohn Myint, Charge d’Affaires a.i. of Japanese Embassy Mr. Ichiro Maruyama, Ambassador of Japan for Social Security of Myanmar Yohei Sasakawa.

Speaking on the occasion, the Mon State Chief Minister said the Union government and New Mon State Party are holding peace talks for lasting peace, expressing thanks for donation of 1000 bags of rice to the party by Nippon Foundation. Union Minister U Aung Min said the government could reach ceasefire agreement with 10 out of 11 ethnic armed groups, except Kachin national race armed group. The President held talks with donor countries including Norway, Australia, Britain, EU, World Bank and UN at the capital last June and donor countries affirmed their commitment to provide necessary assistance to Myanmar through two channels—directly from donor countries themselves and through NGOs and INGOs. The Union Minister affirmed the government’s commitment to fulfill the requirements of national races organizations in cooperation with NGOs, INGOs and donor organizations.

The humanitarian assistance programme of Nippon Foundation will provide foodstuffs worth USD 3 million to national races people phase by phase. The donation was the first delivery worth 300,000 dollars.

The Nippon Foundation Chairman and the Japanese Charge d’Affaires explained Japan’s assistance to Myanmar in anti-leprosy campaign, education, health, reaffirming Japan’s support for Myanmar’s democratization process and its commitment to peace process of Myanmar. The Nippon Foundation Chairman presented rice bags to Chairman of New Mon State Party U Nai Mon Hlaw and the rice bags were handed over to personnel concerned.

The Nippon Foundation is the biggest NGO in Asia and would reportedly provide foodstuffs and emergency aids worth USD 3 million as humanitarian aid for war victims of over 1 million in October, 2012 in the regions of national races armed groups under the agreement of Myanmar government. As the first delivery of humanitarian assistance, 1000 bags of rice were donated to war-torn villages in Mon State and the contributions would be distributed to war-torn villages in Kachin State.

Bayintnaung Flyover: Yangon’s answer to traffic woes

Bayintnaung Flyover is under construction with the use of heavy machinery. Traffic congestions have worsened considerably recent days in Yangon, the commercial hub of Myanmar. Queues of cars are longer than ever at traffic lights. Bayintnaung junction is remarkable for traffic queues. Traffic delays seem fairly common in Yangon. With the aim of realizing the reduction of heavy traffic volumes, Yangon City Development Committee is building overhead bridges at intersections in cooperation with private companies.

Excerpts of the interview with Deputy Head of Road/Bridge Department of YCDC and Project Manager Daw Soe Soe Tin made by Myanmar Alinn News Team follow.

Q: What is the determining factor for construction of Bayintnaung Flyover?
A: Bayintnaung junction serves as an entrance to Yangon, the economic city, from Ayeyawady Region including other parts of southern Myanmar. Moreover, it is a major intersection not only for the buses used by locals in Hlithetaya and university students but also for containers and trucks carrying raw materials for and manufactured goods of Hlithetaya and Shwepyitha Industrial Zones. So decision was made to build a flyover at the busy intersection clogged with heavy traffic.

Q: Could you tell me its type?
A: It will be a two-decked bridge. The flyover is an intersection of two bridges at which Bayintnaung street is carried over the West Thamaing railway station by a bridge. The type of the bridge is reinforced concrete one. The flyover construction project includes two bridges.

Q: May I know the length of the first bridge?
A: The first bridge will be built in Bayintnaung (See page 8)
Mon State Government meets Thai delegation

Than Aye (New Star Light Kyaw Win and Daw Than and wellwishers U Kyaw Yi Nanda ward of the new building in Mya

Long-staple cotton purchasing centres being kept open in Tatkon, Yamethin, Pyawbwe Townships

Nay Pi Taw, 23 Dec — Late monsoon long-staple cotton purchasing centres of the Ministry of Industry are being kept open at Tatkon Township for enabling cotton growers to have easy access to the market.

Director-General U Win Myint of Directorate of Industries, Managing Director Dr Aung Kyaw Soe of Myanmar Textile Industry and directors visited Myaukmyike long-staple cotton purchasing centre in Tatkon Township on 21 December.

Long-staple cotton purchasing centres which are being kept open are Myaukmyike and Nyaungshwewah centres in Tatkon Township, Yamethin Cotton Mill purchasing centre in Yamethin District and Nyaungshwewah purchasing centre in Pyawbwe Township.

New Mya Yi Nanda labour room for Chanmyathazi Township

Mandalay, 23 Dec — The opening of new Mya Yi Nanda labour room of Chanmyathazi Township Maternal and Child Welfare Association was held in conjunction with cash donation ceremony at the new building in Mya Yi Nanda ward of the township, here, on 21 December morning.

Chairperson of Mandalay District MCWSC Patron Daw Myat Ngwe spoke on the occasion, and the ceremony to hand over documents related to the new building and cash donation ceremony followed.

The Mandalay Region MCWSC Patron, the township MCWSC chairperson and responsible persons accepted cash donations of wellwishers and presented certificates of honour to them.

After the ceremony, those present viewed round the labour room which is a RC type one-storey building built with the contribution of K 34 million by New Star Light Company.

Next, Mandalay Region MCWSC Patron State Chief Minister U Ohn Myint and State ministers at Aung San Hall of Mon State Government Office, here, on 19 December. They held talks on boosting trade and investment cooperation matters. In the evening, the meeting between Mon State Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Thai delegation took place at Strand Hotel in Mawlamyne. They held comprehensive discussions on trade route and business matters. The Thai delegation arrived in Yangon on 18 December and held talks with entrepreneurs in Yangon.

On 20 December, they met Kayin State Government, Chamber of Commerce and Industry, entrepreneurs and representatives from private sector.

National Objectives of 65th Anniversary Independence Day for 2013

1. All the national people to live together in the Union through thick and thin
2. All the national people to constantly safeguard non-disintegration of the Union, non-disintegration of national solidarity and perpetuation of sovereignty
3. All the national people to participate in the tasks for bringing about genuine, eternal peace putting an end to the armed conflicts
4. To make relentless efforts, in building a modern, developed and democratic nation, in order to better serve public interest, to ensure poverty reduction and bring about righteous legislative, administrative and judicial pillars

Unidentified man found dead with serious injuries in Pathein

Pathein, 23 Dec — A man was found dead in front of Pathein Technical Training School on a road to Yangon-Pathein motorway in Ward-3 of Pathein at about 5 am on 11 December. He was believed to have been knocked down by a car. According to a tip-off, Police Sub-inspector Aung Ko Myo and party of No (2) Police Station went to the scene where an unidentified man who is believed to be 25 years old was found dead with serious injuries. No (2) Police Station opened a file against the case, and investigation into the case is being carried out.

Charity gala for quake victims on 5 January

Mandalay, 23 Dec — Writers and journalists in Mandalay planned to organize a Variety Show at Mandalay National Theater on 5 January to be able to raise the funds for quake victims. The show will include a varied programme of entertainment accompanied by Mandalay Myoma Band. The money from the show will be donated to the victims of earthquake in Mandalay Region.

Say Taman Yangon-Mandalay coach bus-line put into service

Yangon, 23 Dec — Ceremonies to mark the launch of Say Taman Yangon-Mandalay Coach Bus Line took place in Yangon and Mandalay on 21 December simultaneously.

Young Man coaches are equipped with facilities required for the fully convenience of passengers and a toilet. It is planned to reach Yangon from Mandalay within 10-hour drive. Starting from 21 December, the departure times from Yangon to Mandalay are 9.30 am, 8 pm and 9 pm. The departure times from Mandalay to Yangon are 9 am, 8 pm and 9.30 pm.

Arrangements are being made to start Yangon-PyinOoLwin and Yangon-Monywa coach routes soon.

Mon State Government meets Thai delegation

Photo shows students flocking to see wall posters and books on display at Insein Township Information and Public Relations Department Office on 19 December. — Kyemon

Photo shows harvesting of Palethwe paddy farmland of farmer U Tun Aye at Dahatdan village of Kwatnge village-tract in Meiktila Township on 20 December. — Kyemon

Donate Blood

Mawlamyne, 23 Dec — A 19-member Thai delegation led by Administrator Mr. Remgsak Majavinitchaimontri of Chacheoengsao Province of Thailand called on Mon
Death toll from China’s building fire rises to three

YAN’AN, 23 Dec—The death toll from a commercial building fire in northwest China has risen to three after a security guard’s body was found, a local fire-fighting officer said on Sunday.

The security guard went missing when he helped evacuate people in the the 14-story World Trade Building in downtown Yan’an in Shaanxi Province on Saturday. The identities of two others were yet to be identified, said Jia Xiaoxue, an officer of Yan’an fire department.

The fire broke out at about 5:30 am on Saturday, injuring 20 people aged from 7 to 51. Jia said that authorities will collect more evidence on Sunday to determine the cause of the accident.—Xinhua

Syrian civil war at stalemate, Assad won’t go — Russia

BEIJING, 23 Dec—Syria’s civil war has reached stalemate and international efforts to persuade President Bashar al-Assad to quit will fail, Russia’s Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on Saturday.

Mainly Sunni Muslim rebels seeking to overthrow Assad are fighting on the edge of the capital Damascus and expanding southwards from their northern strongholds in Aleppo and Idlib into the central province of Hama.

But Assad, from the Alawite minority linked to Shi’ite Islam, has responded with artillery, air strikes and —according to the NATO military alliance which is stationing anti-missile defences in neighbouring Turkey—with Scud-type missiles.

The Kremlin’s Middle East envoy was quoted as saying earlier this month that the rebels could defeat Assad’s forces and that Moscow was preparing a possible evacuation of Russians, the strongest signs yet that it is preparing for a post-Assad Syria.

That followed concerted calls from Western powers and some Arab countries for Assad to step down before Syria’s 21-month-old conflict, which has killed more than 44,000 people according to activists, wreaks more destruction.

Local Taleban leader killed in eastern Afghan operation

KABUL, 23 Dec—A local Taleban leader was killed in an operation launched by Afghan forces and the NATO-led coalition troops in eastern Afghan province of Ghazni on Friday, the coalition forces confirmed on Saturday.

“Afghan and coalition officials confirmed to us that the Taleban leader, Faruq, and one other insurgent were killed during a security operation in Andar district, Ghazni province, yesterday,” the coalition or International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) said in a Press release.

Faruq, also known as Nadim, was involved in anti-government activities including planning and executing Improvised Explosive Device (IED) attacks against Afghan and coalition forces, the statement added.

The security force detained one suspected insurgent during the operation in the province with Ghazni city as its capital 100 km south of capital Kabul, it said.

The Taleban, who ruled the country before they were ousted by a US-led invasion in late 2001, renewed armed insurgency, staging ambush and suicide attacks, killing and wounding civilians as well as combatants.

Tougher EU sanctions against Iran come into force

In a statement, Britain’s foreign office said there was a clear need “for an urgent solution”, “Iran’s leaders knew that sanctions are having a significant impact,” Britain’s Minister for the Middle East and North Africa Ali Ahmad Vahidi told Isna on Saturday.

“They should be in no doubt that the international community will keep up the pressure until they are ready to negotiate in good faith and take the concrete steps needed to convince the international community that they are not building a nuclear weapon.”

The new sanctions mark a significant change of policy for the 27-member bloc, which previously sought mainly to target specific people and companies with economic restrictions.

It has lagged the United States in imposing blanket industry bans because it is anxious to avoid penalising ordinary Iranian citizens, while punishing the Tehran government.

Sanctions have increasingly severe impact on the Iranian economy, although the country has years of experience of circumventing them by using front companies and tortuous shipping routes.

The new European measures make clear natural gas shipments are prohibited in any form and swapping, as opposed to simply buying, cargoes is also outlawed.

While imposing a general ban on financial transactions, they make exceptions for those involving humanitarian aid, food, medicines and provisions for legitimate trade. In a statement, the European Commission said the new law brought the number of entities subject to sanctions to 490 and the total number of persons to 105.

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People enjoy themselves on the frozen Shichahai lake in Beijing, capital of China, on 22 Dec, 2012.—Xinhua

BEIJING, 23 Dec—Temperatures in the Chinese capital Beijing could plunge to the lowest in almost three decades over the weekend, weather forecasters said on Saturday. Temperatures are expected to drop to minus 15 degrees Celsius in urban areas over the weekend.

Beijingers started to feel the freezing weather after a cold spell came in from Siberia on Friday night, Wang Hua, chief forecaster of Beijing Meteorological Observatory said.

Chen Dagang, a senior meteorological forecaster at the observatory, said the city’s lowest temperature in recent decades was minus 15.2 degrees, recorded in 1985.

Wang said in Beijing’s mountainous northern suburb, Sunday’s temperatures could drop to minus 20 degrees Celsius. However, he said they would rise again on Monday.

On Saturday, fewer people were on Beijing’s streets. Not many people were seen at Tiananmen Square, a tourist hot spot.

“It’s too cold,” said a woman who was wearing gloves. “Your hands go numb in the cold,” said a man who was wearing a coat.

A woman said, “You know that sanctions are a way for the United States, Germany and the Netherlands to turn Turkey to be operational by the end of January 2013. The 21-month

Iranian lawmaker says NATO Patriot missiles to create insecurity in Turkey

TEHERAN, 23 Dec—A senior Iranian lawmaker said on Saturday the deployment of NATO’s Patriot missiles along Turkey’s border with Syria will create insecurity in Turkey, Press TV reported.

He head of Iran Majlis (parliament) National Security and Foreign Policy Commission Alaeddin Boroujerdi said “These missiles will not help provide security to Turkey because all the neighbors of Turkey are discontent with the deployment of these missiles,” according to the report.

Deployment of Patriot missiles will not serve the interests of Turkey either, he was quoted as saying. Nato recently approved to send six Patriot missile batteries from the United States, Germany and the Netherlands to Turkey to be operational by the end of January 2013. The 21-month

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International crew of three reaches orbiting space station

CAPE CANAVERAL, 23 Dec—A Russian Soyuz spacecraft crewed by a French astronaut and two American astronauts has achieved a highly anticipated milestone in the fields of science, technology, and space exploration. The Soyuz mission, launched on 21 December from Kazakhstan’s Baikonur Cosmodrome, arrived at the International Space Station (ISS) on 24 December, marking the successful arrival of a new crew to the continuously occupied orbiting laboratory.

The Soyuz TMA-07M spacecraft carrying the International Space Station (ISS) crew of US astronaut Thomas Marshburn, Russian cosmonaut Roman Romanenko and Canadian astronaut Chris Hadfield blasts off from its launch pad at the Baikonur cosmodrome on 19 Dec, 2012.—Reuters

Los Angeles, 23 Dec—Instagram, the popular photo-sharing service, has retreated on some service terms after a backlash from users earlier this week. In a blog post on Thursday, Instagram founder and CEO Kevin Systrom apologized for a failure to “communicate our intentions clearly.” The terms of service changes pertaining to advertising have been reversed, Systrom said, and restored to what they had been before the changes were announced on Monday.

Instagram, which allows people to add filters and effects to photos and share them easily on the Internet, was acquired by Facebook earlier this year for $1 billion. Some top users of Instagram, including National Geographic magazine, said they would stop using the service after the new rules were announced on Monday. Language that had appeared to allow Instagram advertisers to display user photos without compensation have been removed from updated terms of service posted on Thursday. The updated terms also do not appear to contain a controversial provision that had stated that if a child under the age of 18 used the service, it implied live in an environment like that, the heart actually shrinks. "Your blood vessel response changes. It actually sets us up to cardiovascular problems,” Hadfield said. “We have a sequence of experiments that’s taking blood samples and monitoring our body while we’re exercising and doing different things to try and understand what’s going on with our cardiovascular system,” he said.

New York, 23 Dec—Google Inc is working with recently acquired Motorola on a handset codenamed “X-phone,” aimed at grabbing market share from Apple Inc and Samsung Electronics Co Ltd, the Wall Street Journal said, citing people familiar with the matter.

Google acquired Motorola in May for $12.5 billion to bolster its patent portfolio as its Android mobile operating system competes with rivals such as Apple and Samsung.

The Journal quoted the people saying that Motorola is working on two fronts: devices that will be sold by carrier partner Verizon Wireless, and on the X phone. Motorola plans to enhance the X Phone with its recent acquisition of Viewdle, an imaging and gesture-recognition software developer. The new handset is due out some time next year, the business daily said, citing a person familiar with the plans.

The European Commission has been investigating Samsung Electronics Co Ltd for over a year over allegations it was abusing a patent deemed essential to mobile phone use. The Commission sent a “statement of objections” to the South Korean group, with its preliminary view that Samsung was not acting fairly.

"Intellectual property rights are an important cornerstone of the single market. However, such rights should not be misused when they are essential to implement industry standards, which bring huge benefits to businesses and consumers alike,” Competition Commissioner Joaquin Almunia said in statement. Apple and Samsung, the world’s top two smartphone makers, are locked in patent disputes in at least 10 countries as they vie to dominate the lucrative mobile market and win over customers with their latest gadgets. The filing of competition objections is the latest step in the Commission’s investigation. After notifying Samsung in writing, the company will have a chance to reply and request a hearing before regulators.

If no deal were struck, France would Press ahead with a law that would force Google to pay for the right to provide links to online news articles.—Reuters

FRANCE extends deadline for publishers’ talks with Google

PARIS, 23 Dec—The French government said it would extend to the end of January the deadline for talks between Google Inc and the French press to settle a dispute over the search engine’s links to online news articles.

Press associations in France, and other European countries, want Google to pay when it displays links to newspapers in Internet searches. In reply, Google has threatened to stop indexing articles from the French press.

Talks between the search engine and French publishers, which the government said are advancing, were expected to wrap up by the end of the year.

A Google carpet is seen at the entrance of the new headquarters of Google France before its official inauguration in Paris on 6 Dec, 2011.—Reuters

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**BUSINESS & HEALTH**

**Mother loses UK legal fight to stop son’s cancer radiotherapy**

**LONDON, 23 Dec—**A mother in Britain, who was so desperate to stop her cancer-stricken son having to undergo conventional medical treatment that she went into hiding with him, lost a court battle on Friday to prevent him receiving radiotherapy.

The case of Sally Roberts, 37, an Australian living in Brighton, southern England, and the plight of her seven-year-old son has made headlines in Britain.

Roberts wants to try alternative treatments first, including immunotherapy and photodynamic therapy for her son Neon. She has been told the boy needs treatment fast but fears the side-effects of conventional medical doctors. Treating the boy had warned that without radiotherapy he could die within three months.

Judge David Bodey told the High Court in London the life-saving radiotherapy treatment could start against the mother’s wishes, the Press Association reported.

“The mother has been through a terrible time. This sort of thing is every parent’s nightmare,” the judge said.

“But I am worried that her judgment has gone awry on the question of the seriousness of the threat which Neon faces.” The story of the sick blue-eyed blonde boy came to public attention earlier this month when Roberts prompted a nationwide police hunt by going into hiding with Neon for four days to stop him from undergoing the treatment.

The mother’s relentless battle in court also cast a light on the headlines that parents can face when dealing with the illness of a loved one, considering the short-term and long-term risks of a treatment and handling conflicting medical information available at the click of a mouse. Roberts said in court she had researched on the Internet her son’s condition a fast-growing, high-grade brain tumor called medulloblastoma and sought advice from specialists around the world because she did not trust British experts.—Reuters

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**Japan’s Abe heaps pressure on BOJ to set 2 percent inflation target**

**TOKYO, 23 Dec—**Japan’s next premier, Shinzo Abe, renewed pressure on the central bank to adopt a 2 percent inflation target, saying that he will try to revise a law guaranteeing its independence if his demand is not met.

He also said he will pick someone who agrees with his views on the need for bolder monetary easing to succeed BOJ Governor Masaaki Shirakawa when his term expires in April next year.

“At this month’s policy meeting, the BOJ said it would examine (setting an inflation target) at its next meeting” in January, Abe said on television on Sunday.

“If it doesn’t, we’ll revise the BOJ Law and set up a policy accord with the central bank to agree on an inflation target. We may also seek to have the BOJ held accountable for job growth.”

The comments are the strongest warning to date on the possibility of revising the law guaranteeing the BOJ’s independence from political influence. It is rare for a prime minister or a would-be premier to make explicit demands on what the BOJ should do at its policy-setting meetings. Abe, who is set to become prime minister on Wednesday after his opposition Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) won this month’s lower house election, has put the BOJ at the centre of political debate, urging bolder monetary policy to beat deflation.

He wants the BOJ to share with the government a binding 2 percent inflation target, double the central bank’s current goal, and ease policy “unlimitedly” to achieve it. There is no specific time frame. Under pressure, the central bank loosened policy on Thursday for the third time in four months by boosting asset purchases. It also said it would consider setting a higher inflation target at its next policy-setting meeting on 21-22 January. Some central bank policymakers, notably the conservative Shirakawa, have been reluctant to set a 2 percent inflation target in a country which has been mired in grinding deflation for more than a decade.

But they may have little choice but to meet Abe’s demand given explicit threats to the BOJ’s independence.

Abe’s LDP and coalition partner hold a two-thirds majority in the powerful lower house that allows them to overrule bills turned down in the upper house including one to revise the BOJ Law. “Countries around the world are printing more money to boost their export competitiveness. Japan must do so too” to keep the yen from rising, Abe said.

“It makes a big difference whether the yen is at 80 to the dollar, or at 90 to the dollar.”

Abe’s new government will have the power to nominate a new BOJ governor when Shirakawa’s term ends in April next year. The nomination, unlike other legislation, needs approval by both houses of parliament. That means Abe needs support from other parties to pass through the nomination in the upper house, where his coalition doesn’t hold a majority. “I’d like to have someone who agrees with our view (on monetary policy),” Abe said on Shirakawa’s successor.

“There are parties that share my view” which should be willing to cooperate with the LDLP in passing the nomination through the upper house, he said.—Reuters

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**FDA closer to approving biotech salmon, critics furious**

**WASHINGTON, 23 Dec—**A controversial genetically engineered salmon has moved a step closer to the consumer’s dinner table after the US Food and Drug Administration said on Friday the fish didn’t appear likely to pose a threat to the environment or to humans who eat it.

AquaAdvantage salmon eggs would produce fish with the potential to grow to market size in half the time of conventional salmon. If it gets a final go-ahead, it would be the first food from a transgenic animal — one whose genome has been altered to be approved by the FDA.

The AquaAdvantage Atlantic salmon egg was developed by AquaBounty Technology to speed up production to meet global seafood demand. In a draft science-based regulatory plan, the FDA affirmed earlier findings that the biotech salmon was not likely to harm people. It said it would take comments from the public on its report for 60 days before making a final decision on approval. “With respect to food safety, the FDA has concluded that food from AquaAdvantage salmon is as safe as food from conventional Atlantic salmon, and that there is a reasonable certainty of no harm from consumption,” the FDA assessment states. AquaBounty, who officials said they were caught by surprise by the news that its product was a step closer to approval as years of controversy had followed the company’s application for a go-ahead from the regulator.

They said they did not know the timing or details of the process the FDA will follow following the 60-day comment period.

“We are encouraged that the environmental assessment is being released and hopeful that the government continues the science-based regulatory process,” said AquaBounty Chief Executive Ronald Stotish. Critics say the new salmon is a “dangerous experiment” and have pressured the FDA to reject it. They say the FDA has relied on outdated science and standard methods for assessing the new fish.
Italy’s president dissolves parliament, paves way for early vote

Rome, 23 Dec—Italy’s President Giorgio Napolitano on Saturday dissolved parliament after a series of consultations with party leaders, which came following the resignation of Prime Minister Mario Monti.

“I have signed the decree of parliament dissolution, which was the obvious conclusion and already marked by facts,” Napolitano told a Press conference after the round of meetings.

He recalled Monti’s announcement of early resignation on 8 Dec after former premier Silvio Berlusconi’s centre-right People of Freedom party (PdL) withdrew support from the emergency cabinet.

In the lapse of time between Monti’s step back and the vote, which was just set to be held on 24-25 Feb, the caretaker government is due to remain in place for acts of ordinary administration.

Napolitano wished that the upcoming electoral campaign will be held with “competitive but also constructive spirit” shared by all political forces.

“The phase of the Monti technocratic government is closed, we are going to the polls…we are aware that Italy now deserves a second phase” made of “progressive policies and reforms,” the leader in the parliament lower chamber of the left Democratic Party (PD), Dario Franceschini, said after meeting Napolitano.

Franceschini thanked Monti, who handed in his formal resignation on Friday following the approval of the 2013 budget law, “for putting his international credibility to the service of the country.”

The PD, which has a strong lead in the opinion polls, has promised to maintain the “overall result of the charter targets that the former European Commissioner has agreed with the EU while implementing more growth-oriented policies to stimulate Italy’s stagnant economy.”

On Oct 4, Monti had announced the resignation of 22 ministers of his cabinet, she said.

The resignation followed the folding of Monti’s centre-left Democratic Party in 2011, while the former Premier was up for the 2013 early elections.

The situation is unusual, calling for transparency and involvement of the people, so what else could be expected,” the senior official from the main opposition coalition, the National Salvation Front, told Reuters.

The resignation will provide stability needed for the transition to democracy, say the constitution is vital for ruling the country, running elections if Hugo Chavez's poor health, Brazilian Foreign Minister Antonio Patriota said on Friday. Chavez, who was reelected for a third presidential term in October, is undergoing cancer treatment in Cuba and his failing health may hold him back from taking office as scheduled on 10th Jan.

The situation is unusual, calling for transparency and involvement of the Venezuelan people in the decision-making process, Patriota told reporters.

No new vote in Venezuela if Chavez sworn in late

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez points at a map as he speaks during a Council of Ministers at Miraflores Palace in Caracas on 15 Nov, 2012. —Reuters

Venezuela’s succession: FM

Rio de Janeiro, 23 Dec—The Brazilian government does not foresee any problems with Venezuela’s upcoming succession which is complicated by President Hugo Chavez’s poor health, Brazilian Foreign Minister Antonio Patriota said on Friday. Chavez, who was reelected for a third presidential term in October, is undergoing cancer treatment in Cuba and his failing health may hold him back from taking office as scheduled on 10th Jan.

The situation is unusual, calling for transparency and involvement of the Venezuelan people in the decision-making process, Patriota told reporters.

The constitutional mandate that the swearing-in take place on that date. Chavez’s recovery in Cuba from a six-hour cancer operation that followed his October re-election. The socialist leader has been heard from for nearly two weeks, raising doubts as to whether he will be fit to continue governing.

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The resignation will provide stability needed for the transition to democracy, say the constitution is vital for ruling the country, running elections if Hugo Chavez's poor health, Brazilian Foreign Minister Antonio Patriota said on Friday. Chavez, who was reelected for a third presidential term in October, is undergoing cancer treatment in Cuba and his failing health may hold him back from taking office as scheduled on 10th Jan.

The situation is unusual, calling for transparency and involvement of the Venezuelan people in the decision-making process, Patriota told reporters.

No new vote in Venezuela if Chavez sworn in late

Venezuela’s succession: FM

Rio de Janeiro, 23 Dec—The Brazilian government does not foresee any problems with Venezuela’s upcoming succession which is complicated by President Hugo Chavez’s poor health, Brazilian Foreign Minister Antonio Patriota said on Friday. Chavez, who was reelected for a third presidential term in October, is undergoing cancer treatment in Cuba and his failing health may hold him back from taking office as scheduled on 10th Jan.

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The constitutional mandate that the swearing-in take place on that date. Chavez’s recovery in Cuba from a six-hour cancer operation that followed his October re-election. The socialist leader has been heard from for nearly two weeks, raising doubts as to whether he will be fit to continue governing.

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**Italy**

**NEW YORK**

Italian marines held in India return home for Christmas

ROME, 23 Dec—Two Italian marines on anti-piracy duty charged in India with killing two fishermen in February arrived home on Saturday for a family Christmas after India gave them special leave.

“Finally we’re breathing the air of home. We have to thank all the institutions which made all this possible,” said Massimiliano Latorre on arrival at Rome’s Ciampino Airport with his colleague, Salvatore Girone.

“Ten long months have passed and we really didn’t expect to be coming back for Christmas.”

The two sailors, part of a military security team protecting the tanker Enrica Lexi, are accused of shooting the two fishermen they say mistook for pirates off the southern Indian state of Kerala.

The two non-commissioned officers had been out on detention on bail but had not been permitted to leave India until the Kerala high court accepted an appeal to allow them to return home for Christmas.

The Italian government has undertaken to ensure they return to India by 10 January.

The men were welcomed at the airport by Foreign Minister Giuliano Terzi and Defence Minister Giampaolo Di Paola. Prime Minister Mario Monti also called them shortly after their arrival to reiterate the government’s determination to reach a final settlement of the case.

Reuters

**Yemen**

**NEW YORK**

Gunmen kidnap three foreigners in Yemen’s capital

SANAA, 23 Dec—Suspected Al-Qaeda gunmen kidnapped three Westerners in the Yemeni capital of Sanaa on Friday, an interior ministry official told Xinhua.

“Masked gunmen snatched a Finnish couple and their Austrian friend from the Tahrir Square in central Sanaa earlier Friday evening,” the official told Xinhua on condition of anonymity.

“The gunmen intercepted the trio in front of the trading shops in Tahrir and crammed them into a car at gunpoint,” the official said, citing an initial investigative report based on testimonies of several witnesses at the scene.

He said the intelligence report on the incident indicated that al-Qaeda wing is more likely to be behind the kidnapping. "The trio had been followed for several days by strange men who the intelligence agency thought have links with Al-Qaeda," he said.

The Westerners were studying Arabic language in a Yemeni school in the old city of Sanaa. The school’s manager told police that he lost contact with them since Friday morning.

The incident highlighted the fragile security situation in Yemen, despite reforms launched by Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh to unify the army and security forces to end the militia in the country. The kidnapping occurred two days after Hadi announced major reforms in the military and security bodies in accordance to a UN-backed power transfer deal that eased former president Ali Abdullah Saleh out of power. In the military reforms, Hadi removed several of Saleh’s relatives and sometimes Al-Qaeda terrorists who seek ransoms or the release of their jailed fellows.

Xinhua

**Germany**

**NEW YORK**

Germany contributes to help Syrian refugees in Lebanon

BEIRUT, 23 Dec—Visiting German Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development Dirk Niebel said on Saturday that his country will provide 5.14 million US dollars to United Nations aid programmes to help Syrian refugee children.

At a meeting with Lebanese Minister of Social Affairs Wael Abbas, Niebel said “The aid will be provided to the United Nations aid programme to help the Syrian refugees who are fleeing their war-torn country.”

The fund would be given to the UN Relief and Work Agency (UNRWA), the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the UN Population Fund (UNFPA).

German Ambassador to Lebanon, Birgitta Maria Stieker-Eberle, stressed the importance of “helping the Syrian refugees fleeing violence in their country,” hoping that they could return to their homeland “to rebuild a new Syria after the war.”

Xinhua

**Yemen**

**NEW YORK**

Four peacekeepers killed, one injured in Sudan’s Darfur

KHARTOUM, 23 Dec—United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) announced on Saturday that four of its peacekeepers were killed and one injured in Sudan’s Darfur region.

“Four of the mission soldiers were killed on 20 Dec, and a fifth injured,” Aicha Elbasi, UNAMID spokesperson, said in a Press release.

The available details indicated that a UNAMID soldier shot three of his colleagues dead and then killed himself, she said, noting that the incident took place at the mission base at Mokjear area in West Darfur State.

UNAMID took over the peacekeeping mission in Darfur from the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMISUD) on 31 Dec, 2007. The mission was planned to deploy 26,000 members of military and police to protect the civilians in the region, who have been suffering from a civil war since 2003.

Xinhua

**Syria**

**NEW YORK**

Syria receives three more bodies of militants killed in Syria

BEIRUT, 23 Dec—On Saturday, the bodies were transferred from Syria through the Arida border with northern Lebanon, the report said.

Last Sunday, the bodies of four fighters, including a Palestinian, were transferred to Lebanon.

Two weeks ago, the corpses of three Salafists were delivered to their relatives.

According to the spokesman of the victims’ families, the Syrian authorities only hand over the bodies of people who have been identified after DNA tests.

Xinhua

**Sudan**

**NEW YORK**

Rescuers work at the site of a blast in Peshawar, Pakistan, on 22 Dec, 2012. At least six people were killed and a dozen of others including a political leader were injured when a suicide bombing ripped through a political gathering in Pakistan’s northwest city of Peshawar on Saturday evening, local media reported.

Xinhua
The PSM goal

The Ministry of Information-MOI is on its way towards transforming the State-owned media into Public Service Media-PSM as per the democracy. Normally, PSM reflects the diversity of human society and presents quality programmes, and has editorial independence, financial independence, qualified employees, and accountability.

To become PSM, the State-owned newspapers are changing their news presentation style, have formed their Governing Body, will run efficiency courses on news gathering, writing and editing, and will establish independent financial system.

Concerning the quality, they will present policy speeches of the leaders of the State and news on policy comprehensively together with expert analyses and public views, while news on normal activities will be edited for publication according to their value.

What’s more they will change themselves from personal orientation to public interest orientation, issuing constructive criticism on the three pillars of the State power to win public trust as the genuine fourth estate, informing the public about the State policies in an attractive way, for example, though articles or interviews, and internationalizing their size and quality.

The PSM reform will be reinforced with the program of conducting staff efficiency courses in cooperation with international media organizations, assigning editors from international news agencies as on-job instructors in State-owned newspapers, seeking ways for in-house editors to attend on-job trainings in dailies abroad, introducing international level curriculum at the Education Ministry-run B.A Journalism Course in cooperation with UNESCO, conducting diploma courses and competency certificate courses for editors and reporters of the State-run dailies and private periodicals jointly by international media organizations and Myanmar Press Council.

In fact, the PSM goal is to regain public trust that can provide excellent competitive edge in the future media world and effective assistance for the State in serving the interest of the people.

Reducing infant and mother mortality rate key objective of Health Ministry

YANGON, 23 Dec—Decline in infant and mother mortality rate is one of the most important objectives of the Ministry of Health, Union Minister Dr Pe Thet Khin said in meeting with trainees of Central Midwifery Training Centre in Yangon this morning.

He said the ministry is striving to achieve Millennium Development Goals and called on the trainees to study both theories and practices of midwifery works.

The Union Minister urged them to cordially treat the patients.

Principal of the school Daw Aye Aye Wady, Director-General Dr Than Zaw Myint of the Department of Medical Science and the Director-General Dr Min Than Nyunt of Health Department reported the minister on conditions of the school.

The Union Minister inspected Language lab, Midwifery Learning Resource Centre and library of the school.—MNA

WFP clarifies Kachin work plan for next three years

NAI PYI TAW, 23 Dec—World Food Programme briefed Kachin State Government and Kachin State Progress of Border Areas and National Races Department on work plans to be implemented in 2013-2015 by World Food Programme (PRRO-2000299) at State Government Office in Myitkyina on 18 December morning. Deputy Director U Zaw Win Aung of the department explained matters related to implementation of the task in cooperation with the department and World Food Programme, Mr Kai Alexander Roehm (Head of Programme, Unit, WFP Country Office) ongoing PRRO-2000299 Programmes to be carried out in 2013-2015 by WFP.

State Chief Minister U La John Ngan Hsai raised questions for his knowledge and Mr Kai Alexander Roehm made clarification.

Q: May I know ongoing work?

A: The construction project has been completed.

Q: Is there any contribution of foreign experts and organizations?

A: Yes. The flyover is designed by Asian Engineering Consultant Co., Ltd of Thailand. First Myanmar Construction Co., Ltd of Myanmar is implementing the project in cooperation with YCDC and TPC Prestressed Concrete of Thailand.

Q: When did the construction work start?

A: The construction works started in 5 June 2012 after stake-driving ceremony. It is set to be enjoyed as it is the first-ever construction project of such facility in Myanmar.

NAI PYI TAW, 23 Dec—Deputy Construction Minister U Soe Tint visited construction project of Hlone river crossing Bayinnaung Bridge-2 that will be built by Special Project Group (5) in Mayangon Township, Yangon, yesterday.

Border Affairs Minister Col Than Aung, State Finance and Revenue Minister U Nyunt Aung, Jade Land Company Chairman U Yon Hlaing and Mr Hlaing Aung made clarification.

Q: When will it be finished?

A: The construction works started on 5 June 2012 after stake-driving ceremony. It is set to be finished.

The opening of the bridge has been completed.

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Pyapon to get one more bridge soon

Pyapon, 23 Dec—Pyapon Bridge crossing Pyapon River lies on Pyapon-Dedyay Road. Thanks to the bridge, the local people have easy access to Yangon Region and other regions. Chaungdwin Bridge passing Pyapon-Chaungdwin Village is located on Pyapon-Kyaiklat Road facilitating the local people to be able to travel to Pathein and other areas of Ayeyawady Region. Hmawby Bridge is located on Pyapon-Ahmar Road. The bridge contributes to smooth flow of commodities and smooth transport of the local people.

Kyounku Bailey Bridge on Pyapon-Kyounku Village is now damaged. Therefore, Bridge Construction Special Group 5 of the Ministry of Construction is building a concrete bridge as of 30 November. The new bridge is 195 feet long. It will have 28 feet wide motor way flanked by three feet wide pedestrian way each. The construction period is designated 15 months roughly. Thus, the facility may be opened in March 2013.

Myanma Alinn

Chin State Chief Minister awards winners in football, tennis

Haka, 23 Dec—The prize presentation of the Chin State Chief Minister’s Cup Inter-Township Open Football and Tennis Tournaments was held at Vanmathumong Sports Ground in Haka on 13 December afternoon.

In the final match of the Harvesting of monsoon paddy inspected on model plot

Songaing, 23 Dec—Director-General U Myint Swe of Settlement and Land Records Department, Head of Mandalay Region Settlement and Land Records Department U Aye Ko and staff conducted survey of monsoon paddy production at the farmland of U Thaung Sein in Theinnigon field in Theinnigon Village-tract of Songaing Township, Kyaukke District, on 16 December. After the survey, 85.75 baskets of paddy per acre of Ayeyo Min strain was put on record on the model plot.

They also inspected harvesting of monsoon paddy, correctness of statistics on farmlands, registration of farmlands in line with the farmland law and rules.—Myanma Alinn

Gold entrepreneurs leave for India

Yangoon, 23 Dec—At the invitation of Indian Gems, Diamond and Jewellery Trading Entrepreneurs Association, a 13-member delegation of Mandalay Region Gold Entrepreneurs Association left here by air on 16 December afternoon.

Executive of the association leader of the delegation U Aung Hsan Win (Aung Thamadi Gold Ship) said, “We will visit Mumbai, Kolkata and Surat from 16 to 22 December. We will observe stock exchange and gold trading in Mumbai, gold refinery, gold wear designs and diamond trading in Mumbai and Kolkata.

Moreover, we have a plan to visit Diamond and Gold Training School of the State in Surat.”

During the visits, the delegation members will have the opportunity to observe international gold market, international gold refinery technology and gold wear designs.—Myanma Alinn

Hsipaw celebrates Shan New Year

Hsipaw, 23 Dec—The Shan New Year and new harvesting ceremony was held at Aungmingala Bodaw Monastery in Hsipaw on 14 December morning.

Local authorities and Chairman of Shan Literature and Culture Committee U Sai Ngoh Kwam formally opened the ceremony.

Shan national U Sai San Tint made a speech. The local authorities explained matters related to national races provisions on Constitution, emergence of Shan New Year festival and new harvesting ceremony.

After that, they offered new harvested paddy to members of the Sangha and older persons and served meals to them.

Next, those present participated in the traditional sports of Shan nationals, extempore talks, martial arts and traditional dances.

Myanma Alinn

Scene in Bagan

Organized by Myanmar Medical Association (Women’s Chapter), a ceremony to pay respects to 189 older surgeons of above 75 was held at the hall of MMA on Theinbyu Street in Mingala Taungnyunt Township on 15 December.—Myanma Alinn

CASH DONATED: Sayagyi U Po Kyon-Sayamagyi Daw Khin Po of Shwe Pyi Tan Boarding of Ward 7 in Shwebo donated one Air SAp, one Air Mattress and K 100,000 to Shwebo District Hospital.

Myanma Alinn

Sanitation carried out: Members of Auxiliary Fire Brigade led by Head of Pyay District Fire Services Department U Nyunt and Deputy Commanding Officer U Ohn Lwin of Township Auxiliary Fire Battalion carrying out sanitation and tasks for proper flow of drain in Hsandaw Ward in Pyay on 16 December.

Myanma Alinn

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Myanma Alinn

65th Anniversary Independence Day 2013

MYANMA ALINN

NATIONAL
China cancels one-year control on thermal coal prices

BEIJING, 23 Dec—China’s price regulator will end its one-year control on thermal coal prices beginning 1 Jan, 2013. The decision was made because prices are stable based on balanced demand and supply. Prices of thermal coal will be decided by suppliers and consumers, according to a statement issued by the National Development and Reform Commission. “The move to cancel limits on thermal coal prices will not lead to sharp price hikes as demand is sluggish amid the global economic slowdown,” said Zang Yongjun, an analyst with China Center for International Economic Exchanges (CCIEE).

Gulf Arab countries forecast high returns for renewable energy

DUBAI, 23 Dec—The Abu Dhabi-based International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) said on Saturday the six GCC countries’ returns through renewable-energy integration could hit 200 billion US dollars by 2030. IRENA said in a statement that the six countries of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC), which are Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, United Arab Emirates and Oman, continued to establish ambitious clean energy projects which are supported by innovative research and development as well as investment.

IRENA added that there are presently 30 such projects which are in planning stage, under construction or have been completed in the region. The GCC states, home of some 60 percent of the world’s known oil reserves, are reducing their reliance on oil and gas and are diversifying their sources of energy for their own needs in order not to keep their oil and gas wealth for the lucrative energy export business. IRENA cited Qatar as an example, which was currently working on a solar energy project which will account for 16 percent of the country’s total electrical output by 2018, said IRENA.

Ggio said, “We decor our Orchard Road with all the street lighting, and it’s world’s famous, as well as all the shopping malls and hotels. They also add together the festivity and to drum up the shopping mood. And this is very different from the rest of the year.” Retailers alongside the OrchardRoad are very similar to that of the Fifth Avenue in New York and the Oxford Street in London. But as Goh saying that every year people come to visit the Orchard Road, they have different experiences, especially the different designs at shopping malls and along the roadside.

Audiences enjoy the traditional Chinese folk music during an open day at the National Center for the Performing Arts (NCPA) in Beijing, capital of China, on 22 Dec, 2012. The NCPA held an open day to mark its 5th anniversary on Saturday.

Xinhua

New Light of Myanmar

Christmas season sales in Singapore

SINGAPORE, 23 Dec—On the Orchard Road —the bustling shopping destination in Singapore and also home to the top Christmas lights display of the world, people who have been attracted by the beautiful decoration and big sales are most willingly to spend much on their desirable goods during the more than one month Christmas Season Sales that kicked off on 17 Nov.

The economic growth is expected to be reduced in 2012 with the Singapore government several retail statistics remain in the doldrums, but in stark contrast, the consumer market is very hot during the season. Especially, foreign tourists are becoming the main force of the “Christmas” consumption in Singapore.

In an exclusive interview with Xinhua, Steven Goh, executive director of Orchard Road Business Association, said, “Christmas season is the most significant season of the whole year. And based on our survey, 30 percent of the sales are done within the last two months of the year. And so you can see that we’ve a lot of our marketing efforts towards the last two months of the Christmas season in Singapore, especially Orchard Road.”

Working-class neighbourhood in Madrid wins “El Gordo” lottery

MADRID, 23 Dec—Unemployed Spaniards in a highly indebted commuter town in the outskirts of Madrid celebrated with joy after sharing the top prize in “El Gordo”, the world’s biggest lottery.

The 200-year-old Christmas draw doled out more than 2.5 billion euros ($3.3 billion) in prizes, with a top individual prize of 4 million euros. The smallest ticket, known as a ‘decimo’ wins a tenth of the prize and costs 20 euros.

Millions of Spaniards living through tough economic times had hoped to pocket part of “The Fat One” although spending in the Christmas lottery dipped heavily this year.

Winning in 2012 was particularly sweet, not just because Spain is suffering its second recession in three years and one in four of the workforce is jobless, but also because 2012 is the last year winners will pay no tax on their takings.

Spain’s centre-right government, which has introduced austerity measures has this year to shrink its public deficit, ruled that from next year those who win over 2,500 euros will pay 20 percent to the state.

Javier Hernando, a middle-aged owner of a bar in Alcalá de Henares, 35 km (20 miles) northeast of Madrid, said the prize would allow him to look at life differently, as European authorities press countries on the periphery of the euro zone to raise the age of retirement.

Luis, a 28-year-old unemployed electrician, said he would spend the money on buying a flat.

The lottery tickets are sold in thousands of official kiosks across Spain and local bars and shops often sell decimals. This year over 27 million individual prizes will be awarded.

The lottery, which dates back to 1812, is an important Christmas tradition in Spain, with many families, offices and bar regulars clubbing together to buy a full ticket for 200 euros.

Sales dipped 8 percent this year to 2.47 billion euros compared to a 0.5 percent drop in 2011.

“It is no wonder that sales have gone down taking into account the economic situation we are going through. We are in crisis, people are out of work and have no income,” said a spokesman for the National Lottery.

Those who did not win big in El Gordo can look forward to the El Nino lottery on 6 January, or together the festivity and to drum up the shopping mood.


Xinhua
Senior minister among nine killed in blast in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD, 23 Dec—At least nine people including senior provincial minister Bashir Ahmad Bilour were killed and over 18 others were injured in a suicide blast that hit a political gathering in Pakistan’s northwest city of Peshawar on Saturday evening, senior government official said.

The 70-year-old minister was a leader of Awami National Party (ANP), the official said.

An injured man is wheeled to a hospital in northwest Pakistan’s Peshawar on 22 Dec, 2012.—Xinhua

Rebel attacks foiled with arrest of 3 leftists in N Philippines

MANILA, 23 Dec—Philippine government troops arrested three suspected members of leftist New People’s Army (NPA) who were allegedly on a “final reconnaissance” to stage attacks in three municipalities in northern Philippines Province of Quezon, military said on Saturday.

Armed Forces Southern Luzon Command Spokesman Colonel Generoso Bolina identified the suspects as Dennis Quidor, alias Anghel/Joshua, and Eliseo Lopez. The rebels, who were riding two-hired motorcycles, were apprehended at around 11:00 pm on Friday after they evaded a joint police and military checkpoint in San Francisco town.

“The three (rebels) were tasked to conduct final reconnaissance before staging attacks in the municipalities of Mulanay, San Francisco and San Narciso,” Bolina said.

Confiscated from the suspects were three bags containing improvised explosive device, a caliber 22 pistol, a hand grenade, two M16 long magazines, a caliber 45 magazine, pieces of ammunition, seven pieces of blasting caps, four cellular phones, and subservive documents, he said.

Aside from the three insurgents, the drivers of the motorcycle were also held for questioning, the official added.

Abe vows to improve Sino-Japanese ties

OSAKA, 23 Dec—Shinzo Abe, leader of Japan’s Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), said in the western Japanese prefecture of Yamaguchi on Saturday that he would make efforts to improve Japan-China ties that have been under severe strain, local Press reported.

“Abe told Japanese reporters, Abe was in Yamaguchi to visit the cemetery of his father—late Japanese foreign minister Shintaro Abe.

“We want to make efforts to return to the starting point of developing a mutually reciprocal relationship” with China, he added.

Abe is considering sending LDP Vice President Masahiko Komura, head of the Japanese association of lawmakers for friendship with China, to China as a special envoy, the report said.

President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Raja Pervez Ashraf condemned the blast and expressed their grief over the death of the provincial minister.

Traffic accident kills seven in Indonesia’s West Java

JAKARTA, 23 Dec—Seven passengers of a tour bus were killed in a crash with a truck in Cipularang toll road, West Java, Indonesia on early Saturday.

The Tri Star bus carrying people from Central Java’s City of Puswokerto to spend holidays in the capital city of Jakarta. It hit the back of the truck with high speed, taking the front left part of the bus was totally torn apart,” he added.

Residents carry the newly picked navel oranges in Shuai-tuana Township of Zigui County, central China’s Hubei Province, on 22 Dec, 2012. Navel oranges in Zigui entered into the harvest time recently. The total output of navel oranges in Zigui County is estimated to reach 245,000 metric tons this year.—Xinhua

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Sri Lankan police arrest 100 Chinese nationals

COLOMBO, 23 Dec—Police in Sri Lanka arrested 100 Chinese nationals who were involved in telephone fraud in the country. The police arrested 17 Chinese nationals in Rajagiriya, a suburb of Colombo, over similar charges and they were then deported back to China. These arrested were connected to a network of people from different countries who had been involved in telephone fraud.

India to sign defence pacts with Russia

NEW DELHI, 23 Dec—India is likely to sign defence pacts with Russia worth 25,000 crores Indian rupees (5 billion US dollars) during Russian President Vladimir Putin’s visit in this country next week, local media reported on Saturday. The defence pacts will include two major deals for the supply of 42 more Sukhois-30MKI fighter jets and 59 additional Mi-17 V5 armed choppers, The Times of India newspaper reported.

The 42 new Sukhois, to be produced under license by state-owned Hindustan Aeronautics, will add to the 230 Sukhois earlier contracted from Russia, the report said, adding that the price tag of the total consignment stands at 12 billion US dollars.

The medium-lift Mi-17 V5 choppers will add to the 80 such choppers already being inducted under a 1.34 billion US dollars deal inked in 2008 with Russia, the newspaper said. Russian President Vladimir Putin is to arrive in India on Monday. India is Russia’s number one arms importer and Russian defence equipment accounts for nearly 70 percent of Indian arms supplies.—Xinhua

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Invitation to open tender for purchase of related parts of Chiller Units for maintenance of air-conditioners at Myana Radio and Television (Nay Pyi Taw Tatkion) of Ministry of Information

1. Open tenders are invited to purchase following spare parts to be used in maintenance of air-conditioners at Myana Radio and Television (Nay Pyi Taw Tatkion) of Ministry of Information—
   - Spare parts and 14 related parts for Chiller Unit (Model No. 30 GTN 210-93 and 30 GTN-100)
2. Open tender forms may be drawn from Ministry of Information, Office No (7), Nay Pyi Taw, from 09:30 hr to 16:30 hr on 2-1-2013. The overdue tenders will not be accepted.
3. Each tender forms and detailed information are available at the following address—
   - Procurement Committee Ministry of Information Office No (7), Nay Pyi Taw
   - Tel: 067-412327, 067-79474

Netherlands to flood Hedwige Polder in 2019

The Hague, 23 Dec—The Dutch government is planning to flood a patch of reclaimed land in Zeeland, the Hedwige Polder, in 2019, to alert them of the incident.

The plan is part of a deal with the Flemish government in northern Belgium to compensate nature for planned work to deepen a river estuary route to the Belgian port of Antwerp.

Huge local resistance in Zeeland, however, has led the Dutch government to attempt to back out of deal, drawing anger from Belgium. The plan was part of the Tender Board at Ministry of Information, Office No. 7, from 09:30 hr to 16:30 hr on 2-1-2013. The overdue tenders will not be accepted.

Nigeria distributes 40m treated mosquito nets in 2012

Lagos, 23 Dec—Up to 48 million Long Lasting Insecticide Nets (LLIN) have been distributed in 34 states of Nigeria's border states.

The Nigeria Malaria Control Programme (NMCP) Festus Okoh released the figure on Friday in Lagos, Nigeria's commercial hub. The distribution is part of the targeted 64 million nets. “We will start the distribution of the nets in the remaining states by January, 2013,” Okoh said.

“In terms of usage, about 29 percent of children under five and 34 percent of pregnant women slept under LLIN in the night before the survey,” he added.—Xinhua

Suspicious envelope mailed to elementary school in Texas

Houston, 23 Dec—A suspicious envelope with a white powdery substance was mailed to an elementary school in the US city of Houston on Friday, a local TV station reported. The envelope was delivered to Franklin Elementary School in Houston, Texas, and arrived at the school at noon, according to local TV channel KPRC.

Houston Fire Department officials who went to the scene did not find anything alarming about the envelope after initial testing, the report said. However, the report said, the area where the envelope was received was quarantined until the all-clear was given. A letter was sent by the school’s principal to parents to alert them of the incident. “A letter containing a white powdery substance arrived on campus through the US mail. Testing on the envelope and the powdery substance revealed that the substance did not pose a threat to our students or staff,” the letter reads.—Xinhua

Russia has not scrapped plan to order two more Mistral warships from France

Moscow, 23 Dec—Russia on Friday reconfirmed its intention to order two more Mistral-class warships from France.

Russia signed a contract with France in June 2011 to buy two Mistral-class warships from the latter. The deal raised eyebrows in the West because of the advanced nature of the vessels.

Kenyan leader pardons 6,700 prisoners to ease congestion

Nairobi, 23 Dec—Kenyan President Mwai Kibaki on Friday pardoned a total of 6,700 inmates to ease congestion in penal institutions across the East African nation.

“In this regard, those pardoned are 2,850 prisoners of good conduct convicted of petty or minor offenses serving a sentence not exceeding six months and 2,586 first offenders who are of good conduct and convicted to serve sentences not exceeding nine months or less,” the statement said.

Others are 1,227 ordinary prisoners of good conduct with a balance sentence of nine months or less and 37 prisoners aged 65 years and above who are confirmed to be terminally ill.

The release order was signed by President Kibaki in exercise of the powers conferred on him by Section 27 of the old Constitution read together with Article 133 of the new Constitution and the provisions relating to suspension of provisions of the new Constitution under the Sixth Schedule, clause 2 (1) (c).

Photo taken on 22 Dec, 2012 shows some of the 500 Santa Claus sand sculptures created by students of sand artist Sudarshan Pattnaik's sand art school for Christmas celebrations on the beach of Puri in eastern Indian state Orissa’s Bhubaneswar.—Xinhua

People gather at the Western Wall of Jerusalem’s Old City after a rain in early morning of 21 Dec, 2012.—Xinhua

Bank Holiday
All Banks will be closed on 25th December (Tuesday) Christmas day 2012, being public holiday. Under the Negotiable Instruments Act.

Central Bank of Myanmar

Advertisement & General

Notice
This is inform the public that, we are looking for descendant (s) of Oh Khuan Sim Neoh who have been immigrated to Rangoon, Burma(now known as Yangon, Myanmar) in year 1936. She used to have a sister by the name of Oh Khuan Ee in Penang, Malaysia.

If anyone has information regarding the descendant of Oh Khuan Sim Neoh, please contact M/s Shafiq Abdullah And Co., Advocates & Solicitors, No.87 C-2-19, 2nd Floor, University Height Shoplot, Jalan Sungai Dua, 11700 Gelugor, Penang, West Malaysia. Tel: 04-656 3312, Fax: 04-656 3296, Email: shafiqabdullah@co@gmail.com
“Les Miserables” movie relies on close-ups for emotional punch

New York, 23 Dec—For British director Tom Hooper, the key to turning “Les Miserables” from the wildly popular stage musical to a cinematic experience both sweeping and intimate, was all in the close-up.

The stage musical has left audiences around the world wiping away tears with its themes of justice, redemption and romantic and familial love.

So bringing it to life on screen for fans and filmgoers was “hugely daunting,” Hooper says. Still, the Oscar-winning director of “The King’s Speech,” was ambitious, wanting to offer even more of the “intense emotional experience” that has kept fans returning to various stage productions since “Les Miserables” made its English language debut 27 years ago.

“I felt very aware of the fact that so many millions of people hold this close to their hearts and would probably sit in the cinemas in complete fear,” Hooper told reporters about his big screen take on the tale of French revolutionaries rising up against powerful forces.

Movie stars Hugh Jackman, Russell Crowe and Anne Hathaway were all put through an intense audition and rehearsal process, to make sure they could sing take after take, live, with cameras positioned right in their face. It also features a large ensemble including Amanda Seyfried and Eddie Redmayne, as well as Sacha Baron Cohen and Helena Bonham Carter, who lead the comic relief song, “Master of the House.”

“I thought the great weapon in my arsenal was the close up, because the one thing on stage that you can’t enjoy is the detail of what is going on in people’s faces as they are singing,” Hooper said. I felt (that) having to do a meditation on the human face was by far the best way to bring out the emotion of the songs.”

NBC television network will air director Frank Capra’s classic movie “It’s A Wonderful Life” starring Jimmy Stewart (C), shown with the film’s cast in an undated publicity photo, on 25 Dec, 2000.

“It’s a Wonderful Life”vaulted to the top spot from No 5 in 2009, when the list was last compiled, bumping “The Nightmare Before Christmas” from its best-reviewed status.

Films that use the holiday as a backdrop for the plot such as 1988’s “Die Hard,” which was No 6 on the list, and 1983’s “Trading Places” at No 9, were also eligible, the website said.

Rotten Tomatoes, which analyzes film reviews and assigns a score based on total critical reception, applied that same formula to Christmas films for the list, Matt Atchity, the website’s editor in chief, told Reuters.

“You look at the list and it’s all the classics — the cream floats to the top,” Atchity said, adding that the rankings were weighted to reflect the amount of reviews a film received, which could artificially boost or decline a score.

Films from the 1960s and 1970s were notably absent from the list. Atchity said studios were more focused at that time on work by big-name directors than on seasonal films.

Here are the 25 best-reviewed Christmas films of all time, according to website Rotten Tomatoes:

- “It’s a Wonderful Life” (1946)
- “Holiday Inn” (1942)
- “The Nightmare Before Christmas” (1993)
- “Stalag 17” (1953)
- “Miracle on 34th Street” (1947)
- “Die Hard” (1988)
- “Arthur Christmas” (2011)
- “A Christmas Story” (1983)
- “Trading Places” (1983)
- “Rare Exports: A Christmas Tale” (2010)
- “Lethal Weapon” (1987)
- “A Midnight Clear” (1992)
- “A Christmas Tale” (2008)
- “While You Were Sleeping” (1995)
- “Scrooged (A Christmas Carol)” (1988)
- “Elf” (2003)
- “Kiss Kiss, Bang Bang” (2005)
- “Gremlins” (1984)
- “The Santa Clause” (1994)
- “The Bishop’s Wife” (1947)
- “Bad Santa” (2003)
- “8 Women” (2002)
- “Batman Returns” (1992)
- “White Christmas” (1954)
- “The Ref” (1994)
Europe should recall a former Ryder Cup captain - Clarke

London, 23 Dec — Europe may need to recall a former captain to compete with the United States in the 2014 Ryder Cup after the Americans “put down a marker where we don’t ask anybody to do it again, but we might have to look at that.” Europe are expected to name their captain early in the New Year when there are few more iconic figures in golf, he said. Scotland and it sends out a statement that they are very serious about winning the trophy back.

Watson will captain his country for a second time having led the team to victory in 1993, the last time the US won on foreign soil.

Darren Clarke of Northern Ireland watches his tee shot on the first hole during the first round of the British Open golf championship at Royal Lytham & St Anne's, northern England on 19 July, 2012. —Reuters

Barca coach Vilanova out of hospital after surgery

Madrid, 23 Dec — Barca coach Tito Vilanova was released from hospital on Saturday, two days after undergoing surgery on his salivary glands, the La Liga club said.

“He is well enough to return, the club said.

The 44-year-old was sidelined for around three weeks after the surgery last week before returning to his job as assistant to Pep Guardiola and then taking over from his close friend at the end of last season.

Under his leadership, Barca have made a record-breaking start to their La Liga campaign and top the standings with a six-point lead over second-placed Atletico Madrid ahead of their game at Real Valladolid on Saturday.

City strike late as Arsenal go third

London, 23 Dec — Manchester City endured 93 minutes of frustration before Gareth Barry’s injury-time header gave the Premier League champions a 1-0 win over Reading on Saturday to increase the pressure on leaders Manchester United. Roberto Mancini’s side, who

snatched the title in the dying seconds of last season, again displayed the knack of scoring late as Barry’s controversial effort broke Reading’s resistance and moved City to within three points of United, who play at Swansea on Sunday.

Manchester City’s Gareth Barry (R) challenges Reading’s Mikele Leigertwood during their English Premier League soccer match at The Etihad stadium in Manchester, northern England on 22 Dec, 2012. —Reuters

NBA: Kings suspend top scorer Cousins indefinitely

Sacramento, 23 Dec — The Sacramento Kings have suspended leading scorer and rebounder DeMarcus Cousins indefinitely for “unprofessional behavior and conduct detrimental to the team,” the Kings said on Saturday.

The suspension, his third this season, came after Cousins exchanged words with Kings coach Keith Smart during halftime of Friday’s loss to the Los Angeles Clippers. The center did not play in the second half after being left in the locker by Smart.

Cousins, who is averaging 16.6 points and 9.5 rebounds, lashed out at Smart after the coach said something to him, the Sacramento Bee reported.

Cousins later apologized for his actions.

“I shouldn’t have responded back,” he told reporters. “Should have accepted what was said and stayed quiet.” Cousins twice has been suspended by the National Basketball Association this year.

He was suspended for two games in November for confronting a San Antonio Spurs announcer and was benched one game by the league earlier this month after striking the Dallas Mavericks’ O.J. Mayo in the groin. — Reuters

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Barca end the year on a high as Real lose

MADRID, 23 Dec—Unbeaten La Liga leaders Barcelona ended 2012 on a high with Lionel Messi striking his 91st goal of the year in a 3-1 win at Real Valladolid while their arch-rivals Real Madrid slumped to a 3-2 defeat at Malaga.

It was the perfect tonic for Barca following the news that coach Tito Vilanova had to have throat surgery last Thursday.

The 44-year-old was released from hospital earlier on Saturday and was absent from Valladolid’s Jose Zorrilla stadium as Barca racked up a record 16th win this season.

Real’s woes deepened after the stuttering champions suffered a second consecutive setback following last weekend’s 2-2 draw at home to Espanyol.

Coach Jose Mourinho sprung a surprise by leaving captain and goalkeeper Iker Casillas on the bench and the defeat left Real 16 points behind Barca at the top of the Ligue 1 standings.

Real Madrid coach Jose Mourinho appeared to be playing with fire on Saturday when he left influential captain and goalkeeper Iker Casillas out of his team who then slumped to a 3-2 La Liga defeat at Malaga.

A hero to Real fans and a fixture between the two for more than a decade, Casillas was a nervous spectator on the bench as number two keeper Antonio Adan conceded three times and the champions slipped 16 points behind Malaga in fourth was cut to two points.

Mourinho told a post-match news conference Real were “facing an insurmountable gap” but dismissed a question about whether he feared for his job.

Barcelona’s Daniel Alves (L) challenges Real Valladolid’s Alberto Bueno during their Spanish First Division soccer match at Zorrilla Stadium in Valladolid on 22 Dec, 2012.—REUTERS

U Win Lwin (55 years old)

We express our deepest and sincere condolence.

Sony South East Asia Management and Nakanishi

Real’s Mourinho raises eyebrows by dropping Casillas

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Barcelona, 3-1 winners at Real Valladolid.

Mourinho told a post-match news conference the decision was “purely technical” and appeared to suggest that Adan had been picked because of Casillas’s recent performances.

Asked whether he had relegated the Spain international to the bench because he believed Adan was the better keeper, Mourinho said: “In my opinion? Of course.

“As it’s the opinion that counts, as it’s the coach who chooses and as I consider the opinions of my assistants valid we decided,” added the Portuguese. “It seems to me...the work of the keeper who played had absolutely no bearing on the outcome of the game.

“The coach analyses the situation and analyses the players available, chooses the team to play.

“You can invent all the stories you like but it’s a purely technical decision and nothing more.”

He later said Casillas was not the only aspect of Real’s game that had needed fixing.

“No it was a general problem. We haven’t been playing well in different aspects of the game, one of which was our defensive work.”

Sergio Ramos, another of Real’s club captains, was asked in a television interview if he had been surprised by the decision to leave out his Spain team mate.

“Of course, he is usually the captain of this team and I think he will remain so as he is a great goalkeeper,” Ramos said. 

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A work coordination meeting on construction of Waiyawsana Jade Pagoda and Jade Dhammayon at Hsinywa Village in Amarapura Township of Mandalay Region was held at the Convocation Hall of State Pariyatti Sasana University in Aungmyethazan Township of Mandalay Region yesterday, with an address by Union Minister for Religious Affairs Thura U Myint Maung.

Mandalay Region Chief Minister U Ye Myint invited suggestions of those present, and the secretary of the leading committee explained facts about construction works.

Then responsible persons of subcommittees reported on their respective sectors. After the meeting, the Union Minister and the Chief Minister observed the replica of Waiyawsana Jade Pagoda.

Moderate earthquake shakes northwest of Monywa

Nav Pyi Taw, 23 Dec—A moderate earthquake of magnitude 5.5 Richter Scale with its epicenter inside Myanmar about 35 miles northwest of Monywa, about 95 miles west-northwest of Mandalay seismological observatory was recorded at 23 hrs 11 min 46 sec M.S.T yesterday, Department of Meteorology and Hydrology announced.—MNA

Summary of observations at 9.30 hr MST

Nay Pyi Taw, 23 Dec—Weather is generally fair in the North Bay and partly cloudy to cloudy in the Andaman Sea and elsewhere in the Bay of Bengal.

State of the Sea

Strong easternly winds with moderate to rough sea are likely at times Deltaic, Gulf of Mottama, off and along Mon-Tarintihai Coasts. Surface wind speed in strong wind may reach 30-35 mph. Seas will be moderate elsewhere in Myanmar waters.

Outlook for subsequent two days

Continuation of decrease of night temperatures in the Upper Myanmar Areas.