No problems unsolvable with mutual trust, understanding and empathy: President

NAY PYI TAW, 5 Jan—President U Thein Sein met Chairman of Karen National Union (KNU) General Mutu Sae Phoe and party at the meeting hall of 500-acre farm in Pobbathiri Township in Nay Pyi Taw Council Area this evening.

The meeting was also attended by Vice-Chairman of Peace-making Working Committee Union Minister U Aung Min, members of the working committee Union Ministers U Soe Thein and U Khin Yi, officials of Myanmar Peace Center, peace negotiators, KNU General Secretary Phado Saw Kwe Htoo Win, KNU Secretary-2 Phado Saw Mahn Mahn, KNU CEC members Phado Saw Roger Khin, Phado Mahn Nyein Maung and Phado Saw Hla Tun. The President cordially greeted the KNU chairman and those present at the meeting. The KNU chairman presented Kayin national costume to the President as a New Year gift.

The President expressed his wish to keep constant contact with KNU as he opened the second meeting and congratulated the chairman and members for their re-election at 15th congress of the organization. He also said he is committed to bringing about lasting peace during his term, expressing his confidence that the KNU would share the same stance.

Hailed for cooperation on common ground for granting equal constitutional rights to all national races despite political differences. He also stressed the need to grasp the chance to build up the society where the eternal peace prevails.

The KNU chairman said he had received the invitation of the President from Union Minister U Aung Min. He also expressed KNU’s strong desire to build peace on ceasefire and negotiations, guaranteeing that KNU has no plan to reverse. The chairman also said KNU is considering how it could help bring peace to conflict-prone Kachin State.

The KNU secretary-general and four members discussed continuation of peace talks, ceasefire, liaison offices and regional development tasks.

The President said the discussions of the KNU chairman and members were commensurate with the realities and envisaged the future plans. Challenges are unavoidable in realizing own wishes and they must be overcome with patience and tolerance, said the President. Nationalist fervor, spirit to safeguard sovereignty and desire for peace and stability are common behaviors of both sides, he said. With such common ground, it would not be difficult to undertake the remaining works. However, it needs time.

There would also be diversities, but coordination is to be made on matters of peace negotiation, correlation and prepare for the final stage of political negotiations, he said.

KNU considering a role to help calm Kachin conflict: General Mutu Sae Phoe

The parliament constituted with representatives of all national races is the best place for discussion in the final stage of political negotiations, he said.

National races residing in the Union together are indeed members of a large family, he said. A peaceful and democratic nation, aspiration of all citizens, can be achieved only when all join hands to find a solution, he said.

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There would also be diversities, but coordination is to be made on matters of peace negotiation, correlation and prepare for the final stage of political negotiations, he said.

Every national race has nationalist fervor and aspires for peace and stability, he said. All including the KNU chairman and top leaders are to join hands for further coordination based on those common desires. He had instructed the Tatmadaw not to launch attacks other than self-defence, the President said. The government would like to hand down the peace to younger generations, he said.

Therefore, it would discuss in pursuit of peace for many times to ensure lasting peace, the President said. Approximately, 80 per cent of the border regions

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**Talks on anti-narcotic drugs given**

**YANGON, 5 Jan—Jointly-organized by Myanmar Anti-Narcotics Association and Myanmar Motion Picture Association and Myanmar Music Association, an educative talk on prevention against narcotic drugs and side effects was held at Yankin Education College, here, on 3 January.**

**Chairman of MANA (Central) Retired Police Col U Khin Maung Tun, executives, MMPA Chairman U Zin Waing, MANA Ambassador Dr Pyi Pyi Kyaw Thein and Dr Chit Thu Wai gave talks on dangers of narcotic drugs.**

- **Next, wellwishers presented cash donations to the MANA.**
- **Then Project Manager of Prevention against Danger of Narcotic Drugs of Health Department Dr Hla Htay of Ywahtagy Mental Hospital and MANA Vice-Chairman Professor Dr Khin Maung Gyi also gave educative talks on anti-narcotic drugs.**

**Indoor, outdoor games held in Yezagyo**

**YEZAGYO, 5 Jan—Hailing and honouring the 65th Anniversary Independence Day, Pyinnya Beikman Monastic Primary Education School organized indoor and outdoor games at the compound of Ma-O monastery in Yezagyo Township of Pakokku District on 3 January.**

- **For school children to be fit, both physically and mentally, monastic school head Sayadaw Bhaddanta Kavida and teachers conducted Myanmar traditional outdoor games for physical fitness and Maths and English contests as indoor games for brain development.**
- **Next, prizes were given to outstanding students.**

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**New tarred road opened to mark Independence Day in Pyinmana**

**NAY PYI TAW, 5 Jan—Hailing the 65th Anniversary Independence Day that falls on 4 January 2013, the opening of Shwec (1) new tarred road was held in Pyinmana Township of Nay Pyi Taw Council Area on 26 December.**

- **The member of Nay Pyi Taw Council the Pyinmana Township Incharge, the member of Nay Pyi Taw Development Affairs Committee and the Pyinmana Township Administrator formally opened the new road.**

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**Kyawin Township sees new concrete road**

**KYAING, 5 Jan—Hailing the 65th Anniversary Independence Day, the opening of a new concrete road was held in Kyawin Township on 3 January.**

- **The new concrete road is 1815 feet long, 20 feet wide and 8 inches thick.**
- **It was built by Kyawin Township Development Administration.**

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**House fire in Myawady**

**MYAWADY, 5 Jan—A fire occurred at a house in Ward-1 of Myawady Township at about 12 am on 3 January.**

- **The house caught fire by a lit candle. The fire swept through the whole house and spread out other adjoining three houses.**
- **Firefighters and local people with the help of four fire engines, one administrative vehicle and 20 water bowser managed to bring the fire under control at about 1 am.**
- **In the incident, an eight-year-old girl was pronounced dead. The fire left four households homeless. Myawady Police Station filed a lawsuit against the suspect for fire negligence.**

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**New tarred road opened in Muse**

**MUSE, 5 Jan—Hailing the 65th Anniversary Independence Day, a new tarred road that links between Muse and Saw Mon Hla NannU Pagoda in Salant village-tract was held on 2 January. The 5280-foot tarred road was built with the contribution of K51,317,000 by the State.**

- **Thanks to emergence of the new tarred road, pilgrims to Yan Taing Aung pagoda will be able to go there by car, saving time and energy.**

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**Cartoon, paintings and photo show held in Mandalay**

**MANDALAY, 5 Jan—To mark the 65th Anniversary Independence Day Cartoon, paintings and photo show was organized at Mandalay District Information and Public Relations Department in Pyijggidagon Township, here, on 2 January. Works—25 cartoons, 273 paintings and 125 photos —of cartoonist, artists and photographers in Mandalay were on display at the show which was being kept open till yesterday (Independence Day).**

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**Apartment fire in Kyimyindine Township**

**YANGON, 5 Jan—A fire broke out at an apartment on the third floor of a six-storey building on Kakhit street in Thida ward of Kyimyindine Township at about 6 pm on 3 January. A total of five fire engines and two administrative vehicles together with 75 fire crews put out the fire in cooperation with local people at about 6:15 pm.**

- **The investigation into the cause of the fire is ongoing.**

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**Stimulant tablets seized in Lashio**

**LASHIO, 5 Jan—A combined force of Lashio District Police Force and special anti-narcotic squad led by Police Inspector Maung Maung Oo seized 386 stimulant tablets from Shwechi (6) and Shwechi (9) streets, the new Shwechi (1) street is also important one linking Bogyoke Street, Bo Taung Htain Street and streets to Pyinmana Myoma market, Ahayathukha market, school and hospital in the township. As it was upgraded into a tarred road, people will be able to use the road as an all-weather one.**

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Italy’s Monti unveils alliance, rules out minister role

ROME, 5 Jan — Italian Prime Minister Mario Monti on Friday unveiled the alliance he will lead into February’s parliamentary election and said he would not agree to serve as a minister in another premier’s cabinet after the vote.

The 69-year-old former European commissioner, who replaced Silvio Berlusconi as prime minister in November 2011 when Italy was scrambling to avert a financial crisis, announced last week that he would run for a second term. Monti said on Friday the grouping would be called “With Monti for Italy”, whose logo is a circular symbol with the colours of the Italian flag and his surname in the centre.

“I hope that (the new alliance) helps improve politics, and that it renews the interest of those Italians who had turned their back on politics, involving them actively again in public affairs,” Monti said.

Opinion surveys have shown that up to 50 percent of the electorate plan to abstain or are undecided at the 24-25 February election that is a three-way battle between rightist Berlusconi, Monti and centre-left front runner Pier Luigi Bersani.

Focusing the campaign strongly around Monti could be a risky tactic, with his popularity dented by the tough tax hikes and spending cuts he has introduced over the past 13 months. Roughly 60 percent of Italians are against the idea of him standing for a second term, polls show.

A poll by the Tecne research institute released on Sky TG24 on Friday showed that Monti’s grouping would likely attract slightly more than 12 percent of the vote.

Monti, who wants to form a broad coalition of pro-Europe, pro-reform parties after the election, said on Friday that his goal will be to continue as prime minister, and he was unlikely to accept a job in someone else’s cabinet.

When asked if he would consider being, for example, the economy minister under another prime minister, he told La7 television channel: “I believe not.”

“I do not think I would have the motivation to commit myself to serve a government that did not agree with me on at least 98 percent of policy,” he said.

He told La 7 he would be open to a three-way television debate with Bersusco ni and Bersani. —Reuters

Ghanaian President urges national unity ahead of new term

Accra, 5 Jan—Ghana’s President John Dramani Mahama in a state of the nation address to parliament here Friday called on all Ghanaians to forge ahead in unity.

While appraising the country’s collective achievements over the past four years, Mahama, who won the 7 December presidential election on the ticket of the ruling National Democratic Congress (NDC), reminded Ghanaians of the hard work that lay ahead of them.

He therefore admonished the citizenry, especially politicians, to work towards greater cooperation and collaboration, irrespective of their political differences.

“Keeping the nation safe, anchoring our constitutional and democratic legacy on stronger moral and cultural values, growing stronger institutions; delivering on infrastructural development and social services, infrastructure and amenities to all parts of this nation, as well as affording our status as a Pan African giant, remain far from finished,” he said. President Mahama reminded the country’s Members of Parliament (MPs) that maintaining that success would only come in their shared responsibility to work towards the achievement of these goals.

Mahama also recalled the latest economic achievements of the nation, particularly in prudent fiscal and macro-economic management. “Through hard work and implementation of prudent fiscal and monetary policies, we were able, over the last four years, to stabilize the macro-economic environment. This resulted in remarkable acceleration of our growth,” said Mahama, against the backdrop of the distressed economy the NDC government inherited in January 2009.

A year after commercial oil production, Ghana’s economic growth in 2011 hit 14.4 percent and got touted by the World Bank as one of the fastest growing economies in the world, while the production figures for cocoa, Ghana’s largest foreign exchange earner, reached over one million metric tons.

EU says Iran not responded to nuclear talks proposal

BRUSSELS, 5 Jan — The European Union has proposed a time and place for further talks on Iran’s nuclear programme, but Iran has yet to respond, an EU spokesman said on Friday.

Iran said earlier on Friday it had agreed to resume talks in January with six major powers — represented by the EU — but the EU spokesman said Iran had not yet replied to proposals made on 31 December. “We offered dates and a venue, but we are still waiting to hear back from Iran,” said Manuel Mann, spokesman for EU foreign affairs chief Catherine Ashton, who leads negotiations on behalf of the United States, Russia, France, Britain, Germany and China.

Mann declined to say which dates and venue the EU had proposed. He said the talks would likely involve in the talks — particularly in the West — want the renewal of Iran’s uranium enrichment programme and most enriched is for peaceful purposes only but which produces material which, if processed further, can be used to make nuclear bombs.

There was no breakthrough in three rounds of talks since April 2012. But neither side has been willing to break off totally, partly because of concerns this could lead to war if Israel attacks Iran — something it has threatened to do in cases the US and the European Union look close to getting nuclear weapons. —Reuters

Obama to name Hagel as Defence Secretary

WASHINGTON, 5 Jan — US President Barack Obama is expected to name former senator Chuck Hagel to serve as his next Defence Secretary, and the announcement could come early next week.

Obama decided in an interview last week, saying there was nothing that disqualified Hagel from being selected.

Hagel, 66, is a moderate Republican. He served for two terms from 1997 to 2009 as senator for Nebraska, and is now chairperson for President’s Intelligence Advisory Board. Other contenders for the Pentagon post were said to be Michele Flournoy, former defence undersecretary for policy, and Ashton Carter, deputy defence secretary, reports have indicated.

Chavez swearing-in can be delayed

CARACAS, 5 Jan — President Hugo Chavez’s formal swearing-in for a new six-year term scheduled for 10 January can be postponed if he is unable to attend due to his battle to recover from cancer surgery, Venezuela’s vice president said on Friday.

Nicolas Maduro’s comments were the clearest indication yet that the Venezuelan government is preparing to delay the swearing-in while avoiding naming a replacement for Chavez or calling a new election in the South American OPEC nation.

In power since 1999, the 58-year-old socialist leader has not been seen in public for more than three weeks. Allies say he is in delicate condition after a fourth operation in two years for an undisclosed form of cancer in his pelvic area.

The political opposition argues that Chavez’s presence on 10 January in Cuba — where there are rumors he may be dying — is tantamount to the president’s stepping down.

But Maduro, waving a copy of the constitution during an interview with state TV, said there was no problem if Chavez was sworn in at a later date by the nation’s top court. —Reuters
Armstrong's moon speech not improvised, brother tells
BBC
CAPE CANAVERAL, 5 Jan—Astronaut Neil Armstrong
might not have been speaking entirely off the cuff when he delivered the
most iconic quote in the his-
tory of manned space flight. Armstrong wrote out the sen-
tence, “That’s one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind,” before blasting off from Cape Canaveral, Florida, with Apollo Astro-
navers Buzz Aldrin and Mi-
chael Collins in July 1969.

Because of a radio com-
munications glitch, millions of people watching on televi-
sion as Armstrong became
the first human being to step
onto the surface of the moon
never heard him utter the
word “a” before man. Arm-
strong, who died in August
at the age of 82, had always
maintained he composed the
words after touching down on
the moon on 20 July,
1969, while he waited to
leave the Eagle lunar lander.
But Armstrong’s younger
brother Dean, speaking in an interview for the
documentary, “Neil Armstrong — First Man on
the Moon” aired on Sunday,
said that was not entirely
accurate, “Dean told me that Neil
shared the words with him shortly before he left for
the Cape, so maybe a couple weeks before the mission,”
publisher Chris Riley told Reuters. An Armstrong family
despised did not reply to a request from Reuters for
comment. “I find the timing of Dean Armstrong’s reve-
lution to be curious,” said Rob-
ert Pearlman, owner and cu-
op. "Neil Armstrong — First Man on the
Moon" served as a template for an
HBO miniseries produced by
Tom Hanks, said Armstrong was asked many times over
the years when he came up
with the quote and always
replied that it was spoken spontaneously. —Reuters

Novell’s board must face investor suit over Attachmate sale
WILMINGTON, (Del-
aware), 5 Jan—Novell Inc
Directors who approved
the information technol-
ogy company’s 2010 sale
for $2.2 billion must defend
a lawsuit that alleges they
for $2.2 billion must defend
the higher bid, to partner
with others as Attachmate
Novell to get what
percent stake in the company.

Novell’s board agreed
in November 2010 to sell
the company to Seattle-
based software firm Attach-
mate for $6.10 per share. As
part of the deal, Novell also
agreed to sell a collection
of patents to a group led by
Microsoft Corp for $450
million. Novell shareholders,
led by pension funds for
Oklahoma firefighters and
Louisiana police, sued and
alleged that the board did
not allow another potential
buyer, which initially had
the higher bid, to partner with others as Attachmate
did. Attachmate was also
told of the simultaneous
patent sale, while the other
bidder was not.

Bret Fitzgerald, a
spokesman for Novell, which
is based in Waltham, Mas-
sachusetts, said he could not be imme-
diately respond to a request for comment.
Judge Noble refused the directors’ request for an early dismissal, and the
Novell suit will now proceed
where the defendants
can present evidence and tes-
timony to counter the plain-
tiffs’ claims. Many investor
lawsuits settle after surviving
a motion to dismiss.

However, Noble did
dismiss claims against At-
chmate and Elliott Asso-
ciates. The hedge fund had
been accused of gaming the
sale of Novell to get what
would have been the key factors that help
Lenovo smartphones stand
out,” said Yang Yuanqing,
chairman and chief execu-
tive officer, in an interview
in Beijing on Friday.

Founded in Beijing’s
Zongguancun technology
hub in 1984, Lenovo has
become a personal com-
puter giant, competing with
rivals including Hewlett-
Packard Co and Dell Inc,
and extending its reach to
the smartphone market.
Leno-
vo now serves as the
second-largest smartphone vendor
by shipment in the third
quarter last year, behind
only Samsung, while Ap-
ple Inc fell two places to
sixth in the same period, ac-
cording to reports from the
International Data Corpora-
tion. Specific market share
figures from local research
firm Analysys International
showed Lenovo’s share rose
to 14.2 percent in the third
quarter, from 4.8 per-
cent a year ago.
Lenovo does not want to be the second player... we
want to be the best.” Yang
told China Daily, adding
that he hopes the company
will gain the top position in
the Chinese smartphone
market this year. “Lenovo has
the confidence to outperform
Samsung and Apple, at least
in the Chinese market,” he
said. Yang said Lenovo has
long been dedicated to the
mobile phone business. As
early as 2002, it started re-
sourcing and development
on mobiles. It was the first
company to offer smart-
tables and tablet com-
puters in the Chinese mainland
market. It has been operating
since early 2002 with the aim
to become Lenovo’s top
smartphone vendor in
China. In 2012, it also
invested 5 bil-
lion yuan ($793.5 million) in
Wuhan, the capital of Hubei
Province, to build a manu-
facturing base with a produc-
tion capacity of 30 million
to 40 million smartphones a
year. Yang said such efforts will
help the company maintain
low stocks but with
steady supplies.

Wang Ying, an analyst
at Analysys International,
said: “Lenovo possesses an obvious advantage over ri-
vals in terms of sales chan-
nels.”

EU says its Google case not
affected by US ruling
BRUSSELS, 5 Jan -- A
decision by US regulators to
end a probe into whether Google
Inc hurt rivals by ma-
nipulating internet searches
will not affect the European
Union’s examination of the
company.

“We have taken note of
the FTC (Federal Trade
Commission) decision, but
we don’t see it has any
direct implications for our
investigation, for our dis-
cussions with Google, which are
ongoing,” said Michael Jen-
nings, a spokesman for
the European Commission,
the EU executive.

US regulators on Thurs-
day ended their investiga-
tion into the giant Internet
company, which runs the world’s
most popular search engine.

Internet com-
panies, such as Microsoft Corp,
had complained about
Google tweaking its search
results to give prominence
to its own products. But the
FTC said there was not
enough evidence to pursue a
big search-bias case.

The European
Commission has for the past
years been investigating
complaints against Google,
including claims that it un-
fairly favoured its own ser-
vices in its search results.

Google presented in-
formal settlement proposals
to the Commission in July.
On 18 December the Com-
mission gave the company
a month to come up with
detailed proposals to resolve
the investigation.

If it fails to address
the complaints and is found
guilty, Google could eventu-
ally be hit with a fine of up
10 percent of its revenue — a
fine of up to $4 billion. —Reuters

Samsung expected to widen smartphone
lead over Apple this year
SEOUL, 5 Jan—Samsung
Electronics Co Ltd is ex-
pected to widen its lead over
Apple Inc in global smart-
phone sales this year with
35 percent growth, helped by a
broad product line, market
researcher Strategy Analyt-
ics said Reuters on Friday.
Apple, returning the offen-
sive, could roll out a smaller,
cheaper “iPhone Mini” next
year to grab market share by
targeting demand from users
of lower-end smartphones,
Strategy Analytics said.
“We expect Sam-
son to slightly extend its
lead over Apple this year
because of its larger mul-
titier product portfolio,”
Neil Mawston, Executive
Director at Strategy Analyt-
ics, said in an e-mail inter-
view with Reuters. Global
smartphone shipments will
jump 27 percent to 875 mil-
lion this year, sliding from
last year’s torrid 41 percent
growth as easing is in
many key markets such as
North America, China, the
developed economies of
Asia, and Western Europe,
Mawston said.

South Korea’s Sam-
 sung Electronics is forecast
to sell 290 million smart-
phones this year, up from
a projected 215 million in
2012, the research firm
said. Apple’s smartphone
sales are projected to reach
180 million this year, up
33 percent from last year,
slightly trailing Samsung’s
35 percent increase.

Leaves a

People walk past a logo next to the main entrance of the
Google building in Zurich on 9 March, 2011. —REUTERS

Lenovo seeks top smartphone spot
BEIJING, 5 Jan—Lenovo
Group aims to challenge
Samsung Electronics Co Ltd
to become the No 1 smart-
phone vendor in the Chinese
market this year, according
to the company’s chief exec-
tutive officer. “Innovation,
strong distribution channels
and effective operations have
been the key factors that help
Lenovo smartphones stand
out,” said Yang Yuanqing,
chairman and chief execu-
tive officer, in an interview
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Xinhua
China’s Huawei expects profit jump after reporting drop in 2011

HONG KONG, 5 Jan — China’s Huawei Technologies Co Ltd, the world’s No 2 telecom equipment maker, expects a 2012 profit gain after reporting a sharp drop a year ago, thanks to new projects and increased sales in high-end mobile phone markets such as Japan. Net profit is expected to be around $2.4 billion, rotating and acting expected to be around $2.4 billion, rotating and acting

China’s Infosys denies report of firing 5,000 staff

MUMBAI, 5 Jan — India’s Infosys Ltd said on Friday a newspaper report it was planning to fire up to 5,000 poorly performing workers was “wrong”, although it encourages “chronic underperformers” to leave as part of its routine staff management. The Economic Times newspaper had earlier said Bangalore-based Infosys, India’s second-largest software services exporter and an icon in the country’s $100 billion outsourcing sector, was sacking up to 5,000 workers to trim costs.

Infosys, which has more than 150,000 staff, said there was no mass lay-off planned at the company and the number of underperformers that could potentially leave was “significantly lower” than the 5,000 mentioned in the paper. “We have a robust performance management system that includes structured appraisals and performance feedback,” it said in a statement. “This is done regularly and is not a one-time event.”

For years an investor favourite for exceeding its earnings targets, has struggled recently as its big customers cut costs, missing its own revenue guidance in three of the past four quarters. The software exporter may cut its revenue forecast for the year to March when it reports its December quarter earnings on 11 January, as US business clients get off spending and balk at signing big deals.

With about 60 percent of its business in the United States, Infosys is particularly vulnerable to swings in US corporate sentiment and has been hit hard by spending deferrals by the companies in the world’s largest economy. However, Infosys executive co-chairman S. Gopalakrishnan was quoted by other media reports on Friday as saying 2013 would be better than last year for India’s export-driven information technology industry.

Racial gaps in access to robotic prostate surgery

NEW YORK, 5 Jan — Minority and Medicaid cancer patients are less likely to have their prostate cancer removed at hospitals that use robot-assisted surgery, according to a new study that stops short of suggesting the robotic technique represents better care. “People who are poor — frequently Hispanic, African American or black, and Medicaid patients — tend to get less high-quality care than the rest of the population,” said Dr Otis Brawley, chief medical and scientific officer of the American Cancer Society.

Brawley, who wasn’t involved in the new study, also said there is no evidence that removing a prostate with a robot is better than the old-fashioned way, with “open” surgery that requires an incision across a man’s stomach. Those are two of several treatment options available for prostate cancer, including radiation as well as active surveillance also known as watchful waiting. The American Cancer Society estimates 250,000 men aged 50 and older are diagnosed with prostate cancer in 2012, and about 28,000 died from it.

Despite a lack of evidence showing its superiority, robot-assisted prostate removal has become the predominant method since being approved by the US Food and Drug Administration in 2000. It is used most commonly led by Dr Simon Kim at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota.

Robotic surgical tools allow the doctor to control the procedure through small incisions with the aid of a tiny video camera, an approach that is easier and quicker than open surgery, but also tends to be more expensive. Kim and his colleagues write in The Journal of Urology that evidence does exist to show that black patients are already less likely to get radical prostate removal surgery, and the 9,500 who had their surgery at hospitals without robots between 2006 and 2008.

India tablet computer sales to double in 2013

NEW DELHI, 5 Jan — Sales of tablet computers in India are expected to at least double this year to 6 million, the market’s third year of growth, as new devices attract business users and low cost draw consumers, research firm CyberMedia forecast. Sales are likely to have reached 3 million in 2012, up from about 0.5 million in 2011, the firm estimated on Friday, citing data for the quarter to end-September, when companies led by Samsung Electronics Co Ltd sold 1.1 million tablets.

With the launch of low-cost devices running on Google Inc’s Android platform by local firms, sales of tablets and smartphones have grown rapidly in the last two years. A slew of global makers of tablets have also entered the market. In 2013, new tablets based on Microsoft Corp’s Windows 8 platform and companies’ adoption of tablets for businesses will change the market significantly again, Faisal Kawoosa, lead analyst at CyberMedia’s telecommunications practice, said in a statement. India is the world’s second biggest telecommunications market with about 900 million mobile phone accounts. But computer penetration is low, and only about a tenth of its 1.2 billion people have access to Internet. Samsung had a 23.9 percent share of tablet computers sold in India in the July-September quarter last year, CyberMedia Research said.

An Apple logo is reflected in the screen of a new iPad at an electronics store in Mumbai on 27 April, 2012.

CyberMedia’s lead analyst Faisal Kawoosa said, “We expect total tablet sales to exceed 6 million in 2013.”

India’s tablet computer sales are expected to exceed 6 million in 2013, according to a report by CyberMedia Research. The report predicts that sales of tablets will increase sharply in the next few years, driven by a growing demand for mobile computing devices. The report notes that the market for tablets in India is still in its early stages, with only about 1.2 million tablets sold in 2011. However, the report expects that sales will increase significantly in the coming years, with a projected growth rate of 60% per year.

The report also highlights the increasing popularity of tablets among consumers, particularly in urban areas. It notes that tablets are being used for a variety of purposes, including education, entertainment, and business. The report predicts that the market for tablets in India will be driven by a growing demand for mobile computing devices, particularly in the education and entertainment sectors.

The report further notes that the market for tablets in India is likely to be dominated by Apple, with its iPad leading the way. However, the report notes that there are a number of other companies that are expected to enter the market in the coming years, including Samsung, Google, and other Chinese companies. The report predicts that these companies will compete aggressively for market share, leading to increased competition and innovation in the market.

Overall, the report predicts that the market for tablets in India is likely to experience significant growth in the coming years, with a projected growth rate of 60% per year. The report notes that the market is still in its early stages, but expects that it will continue to grow rapidly as more consumers adopt tablets for a variety of purposes.
**22 civil society actors to take part in Central African Republic’s peace talks**

YANGON, 5 Jan — The Central African Republic’s civil society groups will take part in the peace negotiations over the ongoing conflict between the government and the Seleka coalition of rebels, scheduled to take place in Libreville from 8 January under the guidance of the Economic Community of Central African States (CEEAC), Xinhua heard on Thursday.

“There will be 22 civil society actors who will represent youths, women, trade unions, the private sector, development NGOs as well as human rights NGOs during the Libreville talks,” said Modeste Gonda, the chairman of the Central Africa’s Network of NGOs.

This is one of the recommendations that were made on the same day in Bangui by colonel Ben Agourou who is the deputy head of the CEEAC’s Peace Consolidation Mission in the Central African Republic, who had been sent from Libreville to prepare for the process to find a solution to the crisis that began on 10 December when the rebels took up arms with an objective of removing President Francois Bozize from power.

While citing the statement by Agourou, Gonda said that although 8 January has been chosen as the date for the beginning of talks in Libreville, the government and the rebels have not yet confirmed if they are comfortable with the date.

The two parties have declared their support for the talks, even though the armed rebels have demanded a transition without Bozize who on his part has promised to form government of national unity with his adversaries. Other sources within the diplomatic circles in Bangui said that the peace talks in Libreville may start on 10 January. — Xinhua

**Gunmen kidnap oil marketer in Nigeria**

PORT HARCOURT, (Nigeria), 5 Jan—Nigeria’s police in southeast Rivers State on Friday confirmed the abduction of a senior staff of the Pipelines, Products Marketing Company in the state.

State police spokes-

“‘Our anti-kidnap unit has commenced investigation into the incident. We will give you more details as soon as we get them,’” he said, adding that no group had claimed responsibility for the abduction and no ransom had been demanded.

Nigeria is one of the worst countries in the world for kidnapping, where it is a lucrative criminal enterprise worth millions of dollars a year. Kidnapping has become everyone’s nightmare in Nigeria. People are being abducted as they go about their daily business.

**Pakistani girl shot by Taleban leaves British hospital**

Pakistani schoolgirl Malala Yousufzai waves as she is discharged from The Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham in this handout photograph released on 4 Jan, 2013. — Reuters

**Ecuador’s highly supported president vows to win re-election**

QUITO, 5 Jan—Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa on Friday vowed to win the 17 February presidential elections as he currently enjoys a support rate of more than 60 percent.

“It is time to begin a path towards a new victory of our revolution, our campaign will be with happiness, unity and harmony. Let’s leave bitterness to the ones who can’t defeat us in the elections,” Correa, also head of the ruling PAIS Alliance Movement, told supporters in Quito on Friday when the official election campaign began.

The opposition has accused the ruling party of making use of government resources to promote Correa’s reelection. To avoid affecting his duties, the president has applied for a 30-day leave to run his campaign.

Another candidate, the center-right former banker Guillermo Lasso, who came second in the polls with 11 percent support, has been a tough critic of the president, blaming Correa, a former economy minister, for the country’s 1999 bank crisis. Ex-president Lucio Gutierrez is also among the eight presidential candidates. Meanwhile, there are 1,381 candidates vying for seats in the National Assembly and 45 for seats in the Andean Parliament.

**Brazil registers record-high aircraft accidents in 2012**

RIO DE JANEIRO, 5 Jan — Brazil registered in 2012 a record number of aircraft accidents, the Centre for Investigation and Prevention of Aircraft Accidents (Cenipa) announced on Friday.

The country witnessed a total of 168 aircraft accidents in 2012, up from 159 in 2011. 146 of them involved planes and 22 involved helicopters. But the number of deaths in aircraft accidents fell to 71 in 2012, down from 90 in 2011, according to Cenipa.

“Last year, we started several actions focusing on prevention and improving aircraft maintenance, in order to reduce the number of accidents in the country. 2012 was a transitional year, and we believe there will be a reduction in 2013,” head of Cenipa Luiz Roberto do Carmo Lourenco said.

He also said that Cenipa is working alongside the National Civil Aviation Agency and the presidency’s Civil Aviation’s Secretariat to boost supervision in the sector. — Xinhua
Syria blames “terrorists” for deadly petrol station blast

BEIRUT, 5 Jan—Syria said on Friday a car bomb at a crowded petrol station in Damascus was set off by “terrorists”, a term it uses for rebels seeking to topple President Bashar al-Assad. The blast on Thursday night killed 11 people and wounded 40 at a station packed with Syrians queuing for fuel, which has become scarce in the 21-month insurgency against Assad, in the second petrol station attack in the capital this week, opposition activists said. “Terrorists ... blew up an explosive device at Qasimiyii Petrol Station near Hamish Hospital in Barzeh, Damascus, martyring several civilians,” state news agency SANA said.

The blast on Thursday night killed 11 people and wounded 40 at a station packed with Syrians queuing for fuel, which has become scarce in the 21-month insurgency against Assad, in the second petrol station attack in the capital this week, opposition activists said.

“The war pits rebels, mainly from the Sunni Muslim majority, against a government supported by members of Assad’s Shia-derived Alawite sect and some members of other minorities who fear revenge if he falls. Assad’s family has ruled for 42 years since his father seized power in a coup.”

Batteries to protect Turkey from the spillover of the Syrian conflict began arriving in the NATO ally on Friday, the US military said, but the missiles themselves are due later.

Turkey formally asked NATO for the missiles in November to bolster security along its 900-km (560-mile) border with Syria. Turkey repeatedly has scrambled fighter jets along the frontier and responded in kind when Syrian shells came down inside its borders, fanning fears that the civil war could spread to destabilize the region.

In a struggle with one of them, Pichardo was struck by a bullet in the right thigh.

Two New York police officers shot in leg in separate encounters

NEW YORK, 5 Jan—Two New York City police officers were shot in the leg late Thursday in separate incidents, including a shooting aboard a subway train, police said. Two plainclothes officers aboard a train heading toward Manhattan from Brooklyn at about 7:30 pm EST (0030 GMT) asked a man walking between train cars for identification, said Police Commissioner Ray Kelly in a statement.

The man appeared to be reaching for his wallet but instead pulled out a 9-mm Taurus handgun and opened fire.

A passenger in the subway car suffered a graze wound in the leg, he said.

Two New York police officers shot in leg in separate encounters

BEIJING, 5 Jan—More Chinese provinces and municipalities have announced education reforms that would allow children of migrant workers to enter high schools and college entrance exams locally.

Educational authorities in Ningxia, Shanxi, Hubei, Sichuan, Gansu, Henan, Shannxi and Jiangsu announced in recent days their respective plans to ensure that children following their migrant parents to cities can enjoy the same rights in education as their urban peers.

The announcements came after 13 other provinces and municipalities, including Beijing, Shanghai and Guangdong, published similar plans amid nationwide efforts to ease educational opportunities for children of migrant workers.

China currently has more than 250 million migrant workers living in cities. An estimated 20 million of their children have migrated to the cities, while some 10 million are left behind in their rural hometowns.

China’s household registration system used to confine kids to attending schools in their home provinces. A 2003 regulation amended this by allowing migrant workers’ children to receive the country’s nine-year compulsory education in cities where their parents work.

However, children of migrant workers continued to face the problem of having to return to their hometowns for further schooling when they were about to enter senior high school or at times of college entrance exams.

In early 2012, the Ministry of Education asked Chinese cities to formulate plans regarding further education and college entrance exams for migrant workers’ children. —Xinhua

Polish naval ship to take command of NATO mine-countermeasures mission

WARSAW, 5 Jan—The Polish naval ship Kontradmiral Xaverzy Czernicki will take command of NATO’s Standing Mine Countermeasures Group in a mission beginning later this month, the Polish Navy’s Press service said on Friday.

According to the Navy, this mission will include vessels from Belgium, the Netherlands, Norway, Germany and Poland and will cover the Baltic Sea, the North Sea and the Norwegian Sea.

In 2002-2003, the Polish ship took part in the enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom missions in the Persian Gulf.

The Standing NATO Mine Countermeasures Group is part of NATO’s Response Force, a joint force geared to react to diverse threats. —Xinhua
The year 2013: A time of peace and prosperity

We left behind the year 2012 that witnessed a series of exciting and impressive reform processes producing both the challenges and positive developments. There were unpleasant events in the previous year arising from misunderstanding between the parties concerned who fail to do something on mature consideration. Whatever twists and turns and ups and downs we faced in the last year we hope this New Year will bring greater peace and prosperity to Myanmar in all of its pursuit of genuine democracy.

Although our country has been widely acknowledged as a miracle in the transition from the military rule to the parliamentary democracy among some nations struggling to reach democratic goal, internecine strife that inflicts casualties on both sides is likely to remain as a serious obstacle to reaching everlasting peace. It became apparent to all stakeholders that it is required to make negotiated political culture healthy. This culture, in fact, once flourished when Panglong agreement was reached during the time of independence struggle.

Now is the time to revitalize this culture for the success of our drive to forge national reconciliation. Only the negotiation based on mutual trust could help us attain our common goal of ensuring peace and prosperity. In building trust through it, all stakeholders are to desist from employing tactics in a manner of tit-for-tat to restore balance or to initially gain advantages before the process.

In shaping the promising future through ongoing reform process, those concerned are to set aside differences and respect the aspiration for peace of the population of 60 million. Flexibility of approach, the only way acceptable to all parties, is an essential prerequisite to the country’s quest for peace and prosperity.

The entire people far and wide the nation, on their part, are to clearly know what they need and what they want. The onus is on all of us wherever we live in the Union to show one hundred percent commitment to supporting the peace process for the sake of our country.

Myanmar, Japan focus on financial, monetary sectors

**NAY PYI TAW, 5 Jan —** Union Minister for Finance and Revenue U Win Shein met Japanese Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Mr Taro Aso and party at his office, here, on 3 January.

Yatanarpon Teleport elects new chairman

**NAY PYI TAW, 5 Jan—** Managing Director of Myanmar Posts and Telecommunications U Aung Maw was elected as Chairman of Yatanarpon Teleport Co., Ltd and Chairman of A-1 Construction Co., Ltd U Yan Win, as Vice-Chairman, at the BOD meeting of the Company held on 2 January.

BOD Chairman Union Minister for Communications and Information Technology, Vice-Chairman of the Hluttaw Office, met local people from eight townships in Bago District at Bago Region City Hall this morning.

The meeting was also attended by Bago Region Chief Minister U Nyan Win, region ministers, region Hluttaw Speaker U Win Tin and Hluttaw representatives, departmental officials, members of social organizations, town elders and local people.

He said the meeting was aimed at collecting opinions of the people in the district, inviting frank discussions. He called on the region Hluttaw representatives to keep in touch with the people in their constituencies to serve the interests of the people by reflecting their views in the Hluttaw. He urged the regional authorities to attend to their needs and to report the Hluttaw provided that the case needs specific legislation.

The regional authorities and town elders reported on issues of the district. The deputy ministers and departmental officials made clarifications.

In his concluding remarks, he stressed the need to respect the laws and regulations.

Bago district is formed with Kyaukdkada, Shwegyin, Ngaungbin, DaikU, Waw, Bago, Kawa and Thanpin townships.—MNA

A departmental official submits reports on respective sectors. MNA

Kachin power plants still non-operational due to security concerns

**MOHNYIN, 5 Jan —** Despite completed repair of power grid, power plants in Kachin State including Tarpein and Chipwenge hydropower plants can not resume operation due to security concerns, Mohnyin Township Pyithu Hluttaw Representative U Kyaw Soe Deputy Minister and BOD member Director-General of the Directorate of Telecommunications have decided not to include in the BOD at BOD meeting on 24 November, 2012 as the company is going to transform into a public company soon.—MNA

Lay said in his meeting with Namna villagers.

The villagers reported to their MP on various issues that range from mobile communications to road construction. He presented 20 barrels of tar contributed by Myitkyina Township Pyithu Hluttaw Representative U Thein Zaw and K 1 million by himself — for construction of tarred road in the village.

Galaingchaung small-scale hydropower plant built since 1990s is supplying electricity to Mohnyin, Hopin and Namna one hour in each two-day routine.

**NLM-001**
ATHLETES GEARING UP FOR XXVII SEA GAMES

After hearing the reports presented by departmental officials, the deputy minister fulfilled the requirements of the athletes.

At the meeting room of the training centre, the deputy minister met those in-charge and coaches of the sports events and gave necessary instructions.

Chanayethazan writers meet

Mandlay, 5 Jan—Chanayethazan Township Writers Association of Mandlay held the annual general meeting and the Sarsodaw Day annual general meeting of Mandalay held the Writers Association Chanayethazan Township and the Sarsodaw Day annual general meeting of Mandalay held the Writers Association.

Cash donated to education foundation in MraukU

MraukU, 5 Jan—With a view to promoting education standard of local students in MraukU Township of Rakhine State, a ceremony to donate cash to the U Aung Htay Oo Education Foundation was held at the hall of MraukU Basic Education High School No. 1 on 31 December.

In commemoration of the 51st birthday of U Aung Htay Oo, his family donated K 3.5 million to Headmistress Daw Ma Khin Win so as to set up U Aung Htay Oo Education Foundation.

Samples of foodstuff checked at Aharathukha Market

Pynmana, 5 Jan—Under the guidance of Nay Pyi Taw Council, Nay Pyi Taw Development Committee performed talks on health knowledge and checked footstuffs at Aharathukha Market in Pynmana on 28 December.

Water tanks in regular functions after cleaning in Myinnmu

Myinnmu, 5 Jan—The water tanks of Myinnmu Township Development Affairs Committee in Minye Kyawswa Ward were damaged in the past and in consequence, water flowed into Ayeyawady River via the sewerage water tank.

A person who inspected the tank said that mud and sand in addition to sediments of the water are seven feet deep in the 125,500-gallon-capacity water tank.

Due to concerted efforts of the workers under the supervision of Township Development Affairs Committee, the two water tanks have been cleaned. The mud and sand were removed from the tanks from 23 to 26 December. As of 27 December, the tanks supply water to the local people regularly, said plumber U Zaw Myint.

MraukU yields more ancient Buddha images

Nay Pyi Taw, 5 Jan—While carrying out sanitations at Myadazaung encircled zedi and Ngwehtthaung Pagoda in MraukU of Rakhine State, the devotees saw 80 Buddha images each of which is one inch high near Myadazaung zedi on 28 December.

The encircled pagoda is located half a mile north of MraukU Nandawgon. The pagoda is one of the pagodas built by King Min Saw Mon in 1430 AD. The Buddha images were cast in lead with Bhunpassa Mudra.

At present, the Buddha images are being kept at MraukU Archaeological Museum.

TAUNGGYI UNIVERSITY WELCOMES FRESHER STUDENTS

Nay Pyi Taw, 5 Jan—Taungyi University held the fresher welcome party for students from all majors for 2012-2013 academic year on 31 December.

The rector and the pro-rector extended greetings to the students.

POULTRY FARMS FUMIGATED IN KANBALU

Kanbalu, 5 Jan—Head of Kanbalu Township Livestock Breeding and Veterinary Department Dr Kyaw Win, Deputy Heads of Department Dr Aung Shwe Tun and Dr Myat Lin and departmental officials supervised Zigon (a) livestock breeding zone in Kanbalu Township on 22 and 23 December.

They inspected death of poultry in the farms. They fumigated the poultry farms so as to prevent outbreak of avian influenza disease and disseminated knowledge of raising bio-security to poultry raisers.
Four French hostages in Niger alive but in poor conditions

PARIS, 5 Jan—Four French hostages kidnapped two years ago in northern Niger, French President Francois Hollande said here on Thursday that 30 gunmen kidnapped a 35-year-old pilot and 220 flight attendants from the New York-based company, are still alive but in poor conditions.

The operations of AUA Airlines employees plan sue for 50 mln euros in payments

VIENNA, 5 Jan—More than 200 former Austrian Airlines (AUA) pilots and flight attendants are planning to take action against their former employer over severance packages they believe were calculated incorrectly, “Der Standard” reported in its Friday edition.

The operations of AUA were taken over by subsidiary Tyrolean Airways on 1 July, 2012, with 117 pilots and 220 flight attendants, including those now lodged the complaints, deciding to resign rather than continue under the new management. AUA spent a total of 60 million euros (79.2 million US dollars) on severance packages, for some individuals up to 700,000 euros. Lawyer for the employees Roland Gerlach said those involved are entitled to more, and plans to launch a class-action lawsuit against the AUA in February to claim at least 50 million euros. Gerlach said still-active employees also had a case to make for further entitlements, which could bring the total sum to “well over 100 million euros.” The AUA denies any fault in the matter, with spokesman Peter Thier telling “Der Standard” the company was “confident we have acted legally correctly,” and that the company was “forced” to adopt new measures in its pension payments system to ensure survival of the company.

Iran says talks with big powers to be held in January

NEW DELHI, 5 Jan—Iran has agreed to hold talks with six major powers about its atomic program in January but the date and venue has yet to be decided, the country’s top nuclear negotiator said on Friday.

The six powers—the United States, Russia, France, Britain, Germany and China—have failed to achieve a breakthrough in three rounds of talks since April. But neither side has been willing to back down totally, partly because of concern this could lead to war if Israel attacked its arch-foe.

The powers last met in talks in Moscow. That session was allowed to proceed by low-level technical talks in Istanbul. Jalili is the second member of Iran’s nuclear team to visit India in less than a month. He said he welcomed the two countries’ strong ties but said India had no particular role in getting Iran’s nuclear talks restarted.—Reuters

Arrested Italian marines return to India after Christmas

NEW DELHI, 5 Jan—The two Italian marines who were facing murder charges in India for allegedly killing two Indian fishermens, have returned to India after delivering Christmas with their families at home, reported local media on Friday.

Massimiliano Latorre and Salvatore Girone were allowed to go home for two weeks by the High Court in Kerala, south India. They returned to Kochi on Friday morning on a flight from Rome, said Press Trust of India. They will soon leave for a court to surrender their passports and go back to police custody.

The marines were arrested on 19 February last year for shooting dead two Indian fishermen from the merchant vessel Enrica Lexie off India’s southern coast, mistaking the fisher men as pirates.—Xinhua

China stresses support for urban public transport development

BEIJING, 5 Jan—The Chinese government has vowed to introduce more measures to prioritize the development of public transport systems in the country’s increasingly congested urban areas.

In downtown areas, there should be a bus stop every 500 meters. The use of public-transport should account for about 60 percent of motor vehicle use, according to a statement by the State Council. China’s cabinet, released Saturday on the official website of the Chinese government, www.gov.cn. Airport shuttle buses, school and shuttle buses for specific institutions can use public transport lanes, and more efforts will be made to improve the taxi booking system, according to the statement.

Authorities will expand the public transport vehicle fleet and ask bus operators to increase service.

According to the statement, between 2011 and 2015, public transport vehicles will be exempt from the consumption tax and they will enjoy favorable rates in vehicle and vessel tax and electricity charges. They will also receive subsidies for fuel and diesel use. Roads have become overcrowded in many Chinese cities, especially in mega-cities like Beijing and Shanghai, due to the explosion in private car consumption and poor driving habits.

According to a survey on daily commutes conduct ed by IBM in 2011, Beijing has the second worst traffic jams in the world, after Mexico City. Shenzhen, a booming economic hub in southern China, ranked third on the list.—Xinhua
**S Korea’s president-elect meets with Japanese envoys**

SEOUL, 5 Jan—South Korea’s President-elect Park Geun-hye on Friday met with a delegation dispatched by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

The envoys, led by former Japanese finance minister Fuku-shiro Nakaga, gave Park a letter in which Abe voiced hope for progress in bilateral relations, Park’s spokesperson Cho Yoon-sun told reporters.

The Japanese leader, who returned to power in general elections last year, said in the letter the two countries share values of democracy and market economy, Cho added.

While domestic issues dominated the presidential campaign, the president-elect has said the disputed islets are not subject to negotiation and urged Japan to “squarely face” the issue.

The 63-year-old man, who was taken to a local hospital, was arrested last year for ramming a truck into the Japanese embassy in Seoul.—Xinhua

**Philippine gov’t condemns N Philippine shooting rampage**

MANILA, 5 Jan—The Philippine government on Friday condemned the shooting spree which killed at least nine people and injured 11 others in the northern Philippine Province of Cavite.

Deputy presidential spokesman Abigail Valte said in a news briefing that the tragic incident should spur the Philippine National Police (PNP) to boost its campaign against loose firearms in the country.

“We condemn the shooting incident, especially since the victims included children,” Valte said.

She said state investigators are already investigating the possibility that the suspect, who was identified as Ronald Bae, started his killing spree due to the rise in the use of drugs when he committed the crime.

Bae used a .45-caliber pistol to shoot his neighbors in Talbon 1 village in Kawit town, Cavite.

The suspect was also killed after he engaged responding policemen in a shootout.—Xinhua

**Cambodia to spend 21 mln USD for July general election**

PHNOM PENH, 5 Jan—Cambodia will spend about 21 million US dollars to cover for the proceedings of the general elections on 28 July, a senior official at the National Election Committee (NEC) said on Friday.

“The budget for the forthcoming elections is about 21 million US dollars, up from about 17 million US dollars in the last elections in 2008,” Tep Nytha, NEC’s secretary-general, said in a press briefing, saying that the government covers all expenses.

The increase in budget was due to the rise in turnouts, he said, explaining that in the 2008 elections, there were only about 8 million eligible voters, but in the forthcoming elections, there are up to 9.67 million voters.

Cambodia holds a general election once in every five years. The last one was conducted in July 2008.

At that time, the Cambodian People’s Party of Prime Minister Hun Sen won 90 seats in the National Assembly, followed by the Sam Rainsy Party with 26 seats, the Human Rights Party 3 seats, the Norodom Ranariddh Party 2 seats and the Funcinpec Party 2 seats.—Xinhua

**China kicks off election of engineering academicians**

BEIJING, 5 Jan—The Chinese Academy of Engineering (CAE), one of the country’s top think tanks, started its biennial election of academicians on Friday.

According to regulations, the academy will be joined by no more than 60 academicians during the elections, and in most cases nominated candidates should be under the age of 70. There are special circumstances where nominees can be above 70. Punishment will be handed out to those involved in election fraud, including falsifying applications and using influence to gain votes, the CAE said.

The election result will be publicized at the end of 2013. The Academician of the CAE is the highest academic title in the field of engineering. Currently there are 765 CAE academicians who have the life-long honorary title.—Xinhua

**South Korea’s President-elect Park Geun-hye (R) meets with former Japanese finance minister Fukushiro Nakaga, who leads a delegation dispatched by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, in Seoul, South Korea, on 4 Jan, 2013. Xinhua**

**Mongolia names 2013 as environmental education year**

ULAN BATOR, 5 Jan—Mongolia designated 2013 as the environmental education year to promote public awareness of environmental protection.

Instead of treating pollution afterwards, it was crucial to enhance people’s awareness of environmental protection, Environment Minister Sanjaasuren Oyun told reporters on Friday.

Government departments and social groups should act together to promote the concept of green growth and drafted regulations for environmental protection. In addition, the authorities should prioritize sustainable development, Oyun said.

Official data show Mongolia is facing a serious shortage of water resources, with about 70 percent of land suffering different degrees of desertification.—Xinhua

**Singapore sees faster increase of foreign lawyers than locals**

SINGAPORE, 5 Jan—The number of foreign lawyers has been growing faster than that of local lawyers over the past several years, said Lok Voj Ming, president of the Law Society of Singapore, on Friday.

Lok said that Singapore’s legal profession is growing steadily and that the number of lawyers holding practising certificates exceeded 4,000 in 2012. The number of local lawyers grew by 27 percent between 2007 and 2012, while that of foreign lawyers by 42 percent during the same period of time.—Xinhua

**Chinese Ambassador to France Kong Quan shows the commemorative stamps for China’s upcoming lunar new year, Year of the Snake, at a post office in Paris, capital of France, on 4 Jan, 2013. The French postal department began to sell on Friday the commemorative stamp for China’s Year of the Snake which is due to begin on 10 Feb, 2013. Xinhua**
Teheran to close govt offices, educational centres due to air pollution

TEHERAN, 5 Jan—Iran’s Air Pollution Committee of Tehran’s Government announced on Saturday that educational and governmental institutions in the Iranian capital will be closed on Saturday due to the alarming high air pollution in the city, the official IRNA news agency reported.

Iranian Vice President Mohammad-Javad Mohammadi-Zadeh told IRNA that the air pollution committee decided to announce the shut-down of educational centers and governmental offices due to alarming air pollution.

During the past days, some measures, including imposing restrictions on the traffic flow in the city, were adopted but the resistance of the pollution led to the decision, Mohammadi-Zadeh was quoted as saying.

He denied the death reports in Teheran because of the air pollution, said the report.

In recent years, Iran’s government and parliament have made several efforts to solve air pollution problem in Teheran, including passing laws to urge for safer fuel and to replace old, inefficient cars with new ones.

Also, the Iranian government announced a number of decentralizing policies in the country in a move to slow down the accumulation of people and industries in the capital to a considerable degree.

However, the plans were left unimplemented for unannounced reasons.

Xinhua

Suicide car bomber kills 27 Shi’ite pilgrims in Iraq

Hilla, 5 Jan—A suicide bomber driving a car at least 27 Shi’ite Muslims at a bus station in the Iraqi town of Musayib on Thursday, police and medics said, as they were gathering to return home from a religious rite.

The attack, which also wounded at least 60, underlines sectarian tensions that threaten to further destabilize the country a year after US forces withdrew.

Police said the bomber drove into a busy bus station where pilgrims were catching buses back to Baghdad and the northern provinces after the Arbaein rite in the holy city of Kerbala, where thousands make an annual pilgrimage.

Mussayab is 60 km (40 miles) south of the capital Baghdad. “I was getting a sandwich from a very strong explosion rocked the place and the blast threw me away. When I regained my senses and stood up, I saw dozens of bodies,” said Ali Sabbar, a pilgrim who witnessed the explosion.

“Many cars were set on fire. I just left the place and didn’t even participate in the evacuation of the victims.”

Arba’een has been a frequent target for militants since the US-led invasion that toppled Sunni dictator Saddam Hussein, who banned Shi’ite festivals.

A roadside bomb targeting a minibus transporting Shi’ite pilgrims back from Kerbala also wounded 8 people in New Baghdad.

The latest violence followed nearly two weeks of protests against Shi’ite Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki by thousands of people from the minority Sunni community in the western province of Anbar, which shares a border with Syria.

The protesters accuse Maliki of being under the sway of non-Arab Shi’ite neighbor Iran and of marginalizing Sunnis, who dominates Iraq until the 2003 US-led invasion.

They want Maliki to abolish anti-terrorism laws they say are used to persecute them.

The conflict in neighboring Syria, where a Sunni majority is fighting to topple government backed by Shi’ite Iran, is also whipping up sectarian sentiment in Iraq and the wider region.

Although violence is far lower than in recent sectarian slaughter of 2006-2007, a total of 4,471 civilians died last year in what one rights group described as a “low-level war” with insurgents.

Reuters

Poland’s PM explained resignation of ABW chief transform it into a terror-combating and data-processing unit. However, Bondaryk, who resigned on Wednesday, disagreed with the plans and wanted ABW to remain in its present form.

Tusk told the Press conference that Bondaryk’s notice will come in force on 15 January, adding that project with the planned changes in ABW should be ready at the turn of March and April.

Bondaryk, 54, took over the ABW chair in January 2008.

Xinhua

Poland’s PM explained resignation of ABW chief Xinhua

Warsaw, 5 Jan—Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk on Thursday explained Internal Security Agency (ABW) chief Krzysztof Bondaryk’s resignation, saying that he had a different vision of its work.

Last year, Tusk revealed plans to deprive ABW of most of its investigative powers and

US targets armed groups operating in DR Congo

WASHINGTON, 5 Jan—The US government on Thursday slapped sanctions on two militant groups accused of “fomenting violence and instability” in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

The Department of Treasury blacklisted Movement de la 23 Mars (M23) and the Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda (FDLR), alleging that as armed groups operating in eastern DRC, they have committed “serious crimes” involving the targeting of civilians and children in the conflict in the African country.

“These crimes, which include recruitment as well as killing, maiming and sexual violence, violate international law and are the basis for the groups’ designation today,” the Treasury said in a statement.

M23 was targeted also for receiving arms and material related to military activities that have contributed directly to the ongoing conflict, the agency said.

The M23 rebellion started in April last year, when a militia that had been integrated into the DRC armed forces mutinied. The militant group has since taken control of large parts of eastern DRC, which is rich in mineral resources, and captured Goma, the capital of the North Kivu Province, in November but withdrew soon to start negotiations with the government.

The FDLR is led by Rwandan genocide, the Treasury said, noting that top commanders of both groups, M23’s Bosco Ntaganda and FDLR’s Sylvester Mutebure, are wanted by the International Criminal Court.

“Both groups have been actively recruiting and using children in armed conflict,” the agency said. “They have been responsible for campaigns of horrific violence against the civilian population in the DRC, and they have used their resources to undermine peace efforts in the region.”

“The United States is committed to working with the international community to end the violence perpetrated against children in the DRC and to exposing those responsible for these atrocities,” David Cohen, under secretary of Treasury for terrorism and financial intelligence, was quoted as saying.

“We also urge Rwandan to halt its assistance to M23, including any and all forms of support to Congolese armed groups,” he added.

Xinhua

Snowcat accident kills six Russians, injures two in northern Italy

ROME, 5 Jan—Six people were killed and two others seriously injured as a snowcat hit on Friday night in Italy’s northern Trentino region, local media reports said.

According to Sky television, all victims were from Russia traveling from a dawn of Cermis, a mountain in eastern Trentino, aboard a rented snowcat.

But suddenly the snowcat lost control and went off the track. All passengers were thrown in a cliff, police officer Stefano Sandri was quoted as saying by Sky television.

He said that five teams were working on the spot, but the bumpy road and the snow made the rescue operations difficult. The two injured, who were in serious condition, were rushed to a nearby hospital for treatment.

Xinhua

Free Blood

A Japanese nurse (L) attends to a patient in the newly opened Basic Health Care Unit on 3 Jan, 2013, in Baggaman town on Minndano island, which was hit by a strong typhoon a month ago. Set up by the International Committee of the Red Cross, the seven-member health care unit led by health workers from the Japanese Red Cross Society aims to fill the gap in the medical facilities that the government claims it may not be able to provide. —Kyodo News

Donate Blood

An Eurasian Eagle Owl stands during the annual stocktake at London Zoo in London, Britain, on 3 Jan, 2013. More than 17,500 animals are counted in the annual stocktake at the zoo. Xinhua

Snowcat accident kills six Russians, injures two in northern Italy

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Xinhua
Los Angeles, 5 Jan—Writers of films including “Zero Dark Thirty,” “Lincoln” and “Argo” were named as nominees in contention for top honours to be bestowed by the Writers Guild of America (WGA), the WGA, West and WGA, East announced on Friday. “Zero Dark Thirty” will vie against “Flight,” “Looper,” “The Master” and “Moorise Kingdom” for the best original screenplay, one of the three awards the group will hand out at the 65th annual event to be simultaneously broadcast in Los Angeles and New York on 17 Feb.


A number of the Academy Awards frontrunners including “Les Miserables,” “Beasts of the Southern Wild,” “Django Unchained” and “Amour” have failed to make the cut as they are deemed ineligible under the stringent WGA rules. Only screenplay written by WGA members or those which fall under the jurisdiction of the guild can qualify. The WGA awards have been regarded as one of the major honors which closely correlate with the Oscar winners. Among the past 20 WGA winners, 15 went on to nab the Oscars.

The film, “Phil Specter,” written and directed by Mamet’s life that imagines HBO a movie inspired by his relationship with the attorney who defended him against charges of killing his former wife, Mary Baden, who defended him—scarred murderer Phil Spector, dismissing him as a “freak”—until he watched a documentary that shed light on a complicated personality. Now, the “Glengarry Glen Ross” writer is bringing to HBO a movie inspired by Spector’s life that imagines him as his attorney, Helen Mirren as his attorney, but the majority of my closest friends I’ve known since I was a kid. And a lot of them are still dependent [on welfare]. I also think living in New York keeps you pretty grounded. I’m not particularly fancy.”

Scarlett Johansson looks for creative streak in partner

London, 5 Jan—Scarlett Johannson always looks for “creative” partners.

The Hitchcock actress was married to fellow actor Ryan Reynolds from 2008 to 2011 and has since been linked to Sean Penn, advertising executive Nate Naylor and journalist Roman Dauriac, and says the most important thing for her is that her partner has a creative streak.

She said: “It’s nice that [fellow actors] can relate and it’s nice you have a shorthand when you’re talking about work, but that can also be monotonous. For me, most importantly, I look for a partner who is creative. I like people who have a colorful way of looking at things, that are inspiring and like art, music and film.”

Scarlett, 28, also says the best friends she has are the ones she has known from when she wasn’t famous, when she was growing up a working class girl.

She added in an interview with the February edition of Britain’s ELLE magazine: “I have friends I’ve made as I’ve got older, but the majority of my closest friends I’ve known since I was a kid.

LA sisters Haim lead hopes of pop revival in 2013

They include MTV’s “Brand New for 2013” survey, the band topped BBC’s “Sound of 2013” poll on Friday decided by over 200 experts and also appeared on the cover of music magazine NME’s new music edition out this week. Matt Wilkinson, New Bands Editor at NME was upbeat about indie music in 2013 because “up-and-coming acts like Haim had the attitude to succeed unlike more ‘redundant’ stars of the past.”

“The difference (from recent times) is that they want to be pop stars, want to be on the front of NME, want to create their own scene and want to be No 1,” he told Reuters. “It’s been quite a long time since bands really wanted to do that.”

Haim is made up of Este, Alana and Danielle, all in their early- to mid-20s—as energetic as they are photogenic and signed to the Polydor label in Britain. Dorian Lynsky of the Guardian praised their “fantastic, inventive songs”, and said they were part of a revival from “the current sickly condition of chart pop” dominated by familiar faces like Rihanna and producers David Guetta and Calvin Harris.—Reuters

Scarlett says the best friends she has are the ones she has known from when she wasn’t famous. But
Azarenka quits Brisbane for Grand Slam

MOSCOW, 5 Jan—Belarusian tennis player Victoria Azarenka withdrew Friday from the Brisbane International tennis tournament, in a bid to recover from a toe injury to defend her Australian Open title when the year’s first Grand Slam starts in 10 days.

“I have to make sure I will be fully recovered and ready for the Australian Open. It’s a compromise I have to make,” Azarenka told a Press conference in Brisbane. “It’s a right toe infection. It’s been there for about 10 days and getting worse a little bit … I have to take something out of my toe,” the RIA Novosti quoted her as reporting.

Azarenka’s withdrawal sent her semifinal opponent Serena Williams of the United States right into the final, where the latter would face off with Russia’s Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova on Saturday.

Williams expressed sympathy for Azarenka and was sorry for missing the chance to play with each other.

“I had that toe problem just a couple of weeks ago and it’s painful … I hope she gets better fast,” the world No 3 said on the WTA website. Depending on results in Brisbane and at the Australian Open, Williams can become the oldest-ever world No 1 if she overtakes Azarenka in the rankings. —Xinhua

Robinho would need to take a paycut at Santos

SÃO PAULO, 5 Jan — Santos coach Muricy Ramalho has warned Brazil striker Robinho he will need to take a substantial pay cut if he is to rejoin the Brazilian club. Ramalho is confident the player is willing to return to the side where he made his name, but revealed the two parties still have differing financial expectations.

“For the numbers mentioned it won’t work. That’s why players of Robinho’s stature don’t come to Santos,” many players return to Brazil looking to get back into the national side. But the club can’t sign a player when the wage demands are impossibly high,” Ramalho said.

Robinho is reportedly demanding over one million reais a month after tax, equal to the sum he receives at Italian club AC Milan. Santos are capable of paying approximately half the amount requested.

But in spite of negotiations reaching an impasse, Ramalho remains optimistic in bringing the player back to Santos.

“Robinho has always been our primary target. When the player has the will to join the club it makes the deal easier. But it remains difficult due to the salary demands,” he said. As well as reaching an agreement with the player Santos still need to close the deal with Milan. The Italians have already refused an offer of seven and a half million euros and are believed to be demanding 10 million euros for the 28-year-old. —Xinhua

Robinho in Zagreb slalom

ZAGREB, 5 Jan — Mikaela Shiffrin was crowned a snow queen at 17 when she won the classic folklore slalom in Zagreb on Friday to show she is not just a one-hit wonder. The American teenager, who celebrated her maiden World Cup victory last month in Are, dominated both runs to win in two minutes and 1.73. Sweden’s Frida Hansdotter was second, like in Are, a considerable 1.19 seconds adrift while Canada’s Erin Mielzynski, her country’s own slalom prodigy, finished third some 1.76 off the pace.

Totally dumbfounded when winning her first laurels in Sweden three weeks ago, Shiffrin again said she was unable to take in what was happening. “After Are, I thought I’d be able to handle it the next time, but I’m not,” she told reporters. “I chose the same tactics of shutting down my brain and letting the legs do it.” Her exceptional technique paired with a relaxed approach worked wonders again, allowing her to claim back the red bib as world slalom leader.

“The bottom line is that I didn’t know what it was when I took (the bib) for the first time in Are. Now I’m just going to make sure I keep it clean,” she said.

Overall World Cup leader Tina Maze, who had finished on the podium in the last nine technical events she entered, failed to complete the course for the first time this season when she straddled a gate halfway down the second run. —Reuters

New woe for Sydney organizers after Tsonga withdrawal

SYDNEY, 5 Jan — Fresh off losing their top two men’s seeds, Sydney International tournament organizers were left with a nightmare scenario on Saturday when their top two local hopes were drawn against each other in the first round. Just hours after top seed Jo-Wilfried Tsonga and his French compatriot Richard Gasquet withdrew from the Australian Open warmup tournament, Australian number one Marinko Matosevic was drawn against compatriot Bernard Tomic in the first round.

The 27-year-old Matosevic, who was the ATP Tour’s most improved player last year after jumping from 201 to 49th in the world, has moved ahead of Tomic, who faded in 2012 after a meteoric rise in 2011 and finished the year ranked 52nd. The 20-year-old Tomic, who was also dumped from the Australian Davis Cup team because of doubts about his commitment, has actually been in good form at the Hopman Cup in Perth, winning all three singles matches, including a 6-4 6-4 victory over world number one Novak Djokovic.

World number eight Tsonga was earlier forced to withdraw from the Sydney tournament with a hamstring injury that he sustained at the Hopman Cup and he will be facing a battle to be fit for the January 14-27 Australian Open in Melbourne. “Unfortunately Jo-Wilfried Tsonga sustained an injury in Perth and has been forced to pull out … with a left hamstring injury,” Sydney tournament director Craig Watson said in a statement. Gasquet, who would have been top seed after Tsonga’s withdrawal, pulled out for “personal reasons”, Watson said.

The 10th-ranked Gasquet reached the final of the Qatar Open against a resurgent Nikolay Davydenko and possibly felt he had enough match practice under his belt before the year’s first grand slam begins at Melbourne Park on 14 January. American John Isner, who was forced to withdraw from the Hopman Cup with a niggling knee injury, was installed as the top seed at Sydney and has a bye into the second round. —Reuters
Los Angeles, 5 Jan — The 2013 PGA Tour got off to a false start on Friday when first-round play at the season-opening Hyundai Tournament of Champions in Hawaii was abandoned because of strong winds. Following an earlier suspension in play due to adverse conditions at the Kapalua Resort, the players were summoned off the course as winds gusted up to 45 mph and balls oscillated on the exposed green at the par-three second.

With no realistic hope of a resumption on Friday, PGA Tour rules official Slugger White announced the interrupted first round would be washed out and that the players would try to complete it on Saturday with a two-tee start. “We started in almost unplayable conditions and it just got worse,” White told reporters. “We tried to play and Mother Nature just wouldn’t help us. We have decided to scrub this round, wash it out completely. No shots count.”

“We are going to start the first round tomorrow morning. I can honestly say the forecast isn’t real good but maybe we’ll get lucky. That’s the hope.” US Open champion Webb Simpson had been the early leader in Friday’s aborted round. Moving to three under par after just seven holes in the elite, winners-only event on the Hawaiian island of Maui, Swede Jonas Blixt was at one under after five holes, a stroke in front of compatriot Carl Pettersson (after one hole) and Americans Kyle Stanley (four), Ryan Moore (three), Johnson Wagner (two) and Scott Piercy (one).

“It stinks for me,” American Simpson said of the abandoned round. “I got off to a great start but that’s the way it goes. I’m sure they made the decision that’s best for all the guys. “But the good news is, I had a good start and I’m playing well. I was able to make a couple of puts and that’s what you have to do on a day like today.”

Strong winds wipe out first day at Kapalua

Los Angeles. — Brett Bielenberg (C) of the United States celebrates during the victory ceremony for the 2013 woman’s Alpine Skiing World Cup slalom race in Zagreb, Croatia, on 4 Jan, 2013. Shiffrin Mikaela claimed the title of the event. — Xinhua

Stevens looks to emerge a better rider than before


Sunday, 6 January, 2013

MYANMAR INTERNATIONAL

(6-1-13 09:30 am – 7-1-13 09:30 am) MST

* News
* The 13th Myanmar Traditional Medicine Practitioners’ Conference

Explore the Relaxation through Anirudh’s Globalized Journey

15th AGM of U Hla Tun Hospice (Cancer) Foundation

* Myanmar Movies Impact (Part 2)

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Peace talks between President and KNU leaders bear fruits: Union Minister U Aung Min

Vice-Chairman of Union-level Peace-making Group Union Minister U Aung Min and KNU General Mutu Sae Phoe meet the press.—MNA

Vice-President Dr Sai Mauk Kham delivers an address at the dinner hosted to KNU Chairman General Mutu Sae Phoe and party.—MNA

ASEAN women donate cash to Lewe philanthropic centre

UMFCCI hold talks with Chongzhou Mayor and party

Peace talks between President and KNU leaders bear fruits: Union Minister U Aung Min