President U Thein Sein sends felicitations to Japanese Emperor, PM

President U Thein Sein hosts dinner to support groups for successfully holding 27th SEA Games
UNFPA launches State of World Population 2013 in Myanmar

YANGON, 23 Dec—Every day, 20,000 girls under the age of 18 give birth in developing countries. Nine in 10 of these births occur within marriage or a union, and the birth attendant has little or no say in decisions about when or whether to become pregnant. Girls under the age of 15 account for 2 million girls giving birth each year. The local people reported on requirements for difficulties on recultivation of summer paddy in 2013-14. The Agriculture Department pledged to provide one basket of paddy straw for one acre to farmers and it will take such paddy in harvest time from farmers. —MMAL-Township IPRD

PyinOoLwin, 23 Dec—The year of 2013 brings significant cold to the nation. Various towns in the country have seen significant cold. PyinOoLwin is one of the towns with lower temperature.

As of early evening, the grass, trees and plants were wet with dew. As night falls, trees in the town were gradually covered with dew. Waking early in the morning, seeing a picturesque scene from the window is feeling of the past. Local people missed such a chance for many years.

At present, poinsettias are blooming in the town welcoming the X’mas. So, everybody can see red flowers matching with its environs.

People take exercises along the bunds of Kandawgyi and Kandawlay lakes and along the circular road of PyinOoLwin in the morning.

PyinOoLwin regains its dream of the past with foggy beauties. MMAL-Thet Naing (PyinOoLwin)

UNFPA congratulated the Ministry of Health for launching the National Services Standards and Guidelines on Adolescent Health Care in July with support from WHO and UNFPA. UNFPA remains committed to work with the Government and all stakeholders to help meet the needs and potentials of the young people of Myanmar. UNFPA is also a member of the recently established National Task Force for youth policy.

Moe Thu

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Moe Thu
President U Thein Sein’s video message to teams that made contributions to SEA Games success

NAY PYI TAW, 23 Dec—The following is the translation of the video message of President U Thein Sein shown at a dinner in honour of the teams that made contributions to the success of the 27th Southeast Asian Games at the square of Nay Pyi Taw City Hall this evening.

Esteemed youth,
The 27th Southeast Asian Games has successfully concluded. Myanmar has had an opportunity to host the Games again after 44 years. As Myanmar had the opportunity to successfully holding the Games it hadn’t been able to hold such a game due to various reasons in the past, the Games brought four opportunities to it. The first opportunity is to make known the internal and external critics who had voiced concern about whether Myanmar would be able to host such an international sporting event that Myanmar and its people were capable of hosting the Games.
The second opportunity is to present morale, ability, sense of fair play and courage of Myanmar athletes the world. The third one is to show kindness, hospitality and moralitity of Myanmar people to athletes and visitors from foreign countries. The final one is to promote the image of the nation and its people while foreign visitors enjoyed sports events and visited places of interest in Myanmar. Throng of athletes from respective countries, guests and local and foreign journalists participated in the SEA Games.

Like winning medals in the competitions, it is also important to describe Myanmar whose people are kind, hospitable and helpful and possess high morality and courage of Myanmar athletes. The United States and its allies to give up its sanctions on its oil exports and Turkish government’s urbanization plans and a corruption investigation in which scores of people, including the sons of Yanukovich’s power base, angered others backed by many in Russian-speaking eastern Ukraine which is Yanukovich’s future in Europe.

Like you, leading committees, supportive committees, athletes, officers and other ranks of Defence Services and Police Force, musicians and other technicians also made all-out efforts for the successful holding of the 27th SEA Games.

So, successful holding the Games is the national victory brought about by the entire people including all of you with Union spirit and genuine nationalistic fervor.

Now we are in the democratic transition building the new nation and moving towards national reconsolidation which is an urgent need for the development of the nation.

Successful realization of the national duty brought about by civil societies and all walks of life with a sense of cooperation at this time produced a brand new boost to move forward. If we are able to establish the national unity like this, it is sure to shape an era of peace and prosperity.

That’s why, I would like to call on all of you to apply a wealth of experience and spirit gained whilst working in the Games to nation-building endeavours.

May you all have peace of mind and good health.

US will seek triggers to reimpose sanctions on Iran

KIV, 23 Dec—Ukrainian opposition leaders urged supporters at a rally on Sunday to stay on Kiev’s main square through New Year and Christmas, as street protests appeared to be losing momentum.

About 100,000 people gathered at Kiev’s Independence Square to demonstrate for the fifth weekend in a row against President Viktor Yanukovych’s decision to shelve a trade deal the European Union and pursue closer ties with Russia. Although it was a relatively strong showing — enough to fill the square and adjacent streets — the number was the lowest this month, and around half the previous weekend’s turnout which was estimated at up to 200,000 people.

“We will not leave,” Vitaly Klitschko, a heavyweight boxing champion who leads the liberal UDAR (Punch) party, told the rally. “We will celebrate the New Year here and we will celebrate Christmas here.”

In the Ukrainian Orthodox Church’s calendar, Christmas falls on 7 January.

Seeking to consolidate the protest movement, he and leaders of other major opposition parties said they were establishing a nationwide political movement called Maidan, a reference to the Ukrainian name of the protest site, Maidan Nezalezhnosti.

“We will make life hell for this government,” said far-right nationalist leader Oleh Tyahnybok.

Street protests erupted after Yanukovych’s decision on 21 November to walk away from an agreement on free trade and political association with the EU, after years of careful preparation, and turn to Ukraine’s former Soviet overlord Russia.

The U-turn, while backed by many in Russian-speaking eastern Ukraine which is Yanukovich’s power base, angered others in western and central areas, where people see the country’s future in Europe.

Police fire teargas, water cannon at Istanbul protesters

ANKARA, 23 Dec — Police fired water cannon and teargas at protesters marching in Istanbul on Sunday against the Turkish government’s urbanization plans and a corruption investigation in which scores of people, including the sons of ministers, have been arrested.

Hundreds of protesters gathered in a square in Istanbul’s Kadikoy District, holding banners calling Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan’s government to resign, Turkey’s Dogan News agency reported.

Erdogan has denounced the corruption inquiry as the work of “dark alliances” and has vowed to expose those involved. In a crackdown on the police command, he has already removed dozens of police chiefs from their duties.

Turkish riot police use water cannons against protesters during a demonstration against Turkey’s ruling AK Party (AKP) and Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan, in Istanbul on 22 Dec, 2013.—Reuters
Astronauts nail first spacewalk to fix station’s cooling system

CAPE CANAVERAL, 23 Dec — Two NASA astronauts, their spacesuits rigged with snorkels in case of a water leak, floated outside the International Space Station for 5-1/2 hours on Saturday, successfully completing the first steps to fix the outpost’s cooling system.

The spacewalk, which was broadcast live on NASA Television, was the first for NASA since July when the spacesuit helmet worn by Italian astronaut Luca Parmitano began filling with water, a situation that could have caused him to drown.

No such leaks were detected in Saturday’s spacewalk, the first of two or possibly three that will be needed to complete the cooling system repair.

The operation was prompted by the December 11 shutdown of one of the station’s two US ammonia cooling systems, which forced the crew to turn off non-essential equipment and shut down dozens of science experiments.

While the six-member crew is not in danger, the remaining cooling system cannot support the three laboratories and other modules on the US side of the $100 billion station, a project of 15 nations. The Russian side of the station has a separate cooling system.

Engineers at the Johnson Space Centre in Houston tried devising ways to bypass a suspected faulty pump valve, but with time running short, managers decided to have astronauts replace the pump, located outside the station, with a spare.

The work, which began shortly after 7 a.m. EST, went smoothly, with station flight engineers Rick Mastracchio and Mike Hopkins finishing up an hour earlier than expected.

They were able to not only disconnect the old pump, but also remove it from its pallet on the station’s exterior truss, a task slated for a second spacewalk originally planned for Monday and later delayed until Tuesday, NASA said late on Saturday.

A third spacewalk, if needed, presumably also would slip one day, from Wednesday to Thursday.

NASA said an extra day was needed to prepare a backup spacesuit for Mastracchio to use.

“During represurization of the station’s airlock following the spacewalk, a spacesuit configuration issue put the suit Mastracchio was wearing in question for the next excursion,” NASA said in a statement.—Reuters

Finnish city Oulu sees light at end of Nokia tunnel

OULU, 23 Dec — From early December, the Finnish city of Oulu is trapped in darkness for all but a few murky midday hours, a darkness some feared might be matched by its economic prospects after big local employer Nokia (NOKIV.HE) hit the skids.

Oulu, with a population of about a quarter million, was once a key Nokia R&D site, before the mobile maker was left for dead in the global smartphone race by Apple’s (AAPL.O) iPhone and handsets running Google’s (GOOG.O) Android software.

Nokia and its networks venture at one point employed about 5,000 people in Oulu, more than three times the biggest private sector employer, but now it has work for less than half that.

The city’s unemployment rate topped 16 percent in the summer, a level not seen since the Finnish financial crisis of the early 1990s.

But despite the gloom, and an average annual temperature of 2 degrees Celsius (36F), the buds of a recovery are visible in Finland’s biggest northern city, 600 kilometres from Helsinki.

It is becoming a model for the rest of the country as it fights to fill the gap left by Nokia’s tumbling sales and the tens of thousands of job cuts that preceded the former world beater’s September decision to give up the mobile business and sell to Microsoft (MSFT.O).

Oulu is now a leading candidate to host a new data centre for Microsoft, which wants to invest $250 million on such facilities in Finland after it takes over the Nokia business next year.

Former “Nokians” are starting to land on their feet too. Pasi Leipala, a former senior manager at Nokia, is now chief executive at Haltian, which designs electronics and software products and is one of the city’s most successful start-ups.

Last year you could count its employees on the fingers of one hand. Now it has a staff of 70.—Reuters

French government will police quality of 4G services

PARIS, 23 Dec — The French government will act to ensure telecom operators provide decent service as they roll out competitive offers. The contest has led executives to trade barbs in the media, with Orange CEO Stephane Richard accusing rival SFR of promising quality on its 4G service.

Iliad is still building its mobile network and had 700 mobile antennas capable of handling 4G speeds as of 1 December.

But after an expected initial surge, Apple is likely to find itself back in a costly marketing battle with Samsung Electronics.

The deal has been years in the making, with numerous visits by Apple to the state-owned carrier’s Beijing headquarters. Negotiations have been tricky, in part because of disagreements over details like revenue-sharing, analysts have said.
**BUSINESS & HEALTH**

**Boeing machinists to vote 3 January on revised contract**

**NEW YORK, 23 Dec —** Unionized workers at Boeing Co (BA.N) will vote on 3 January on the company’s latest proposed contract, according to a statement issued by the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers on Sunday evening.

In November, machinists at the Everett, Washington plant where Boeing’s 777 jet is built voted 2 to 1 against the company’s initial offer.

Under that eight year contract, production of Boeing’s next jet — the 777X — would have remained in Washington state. But in exchange, management wanted to replace the workers’ pension plan with a 401(k)-style retirement savings account and raise healthcare costs.

In the aftermath of the vote, Boeing said it would look for other locations to build the 777X, the only jet the company is likely to develop in the next 15 years. Boeing later made a revised offer that included a larger signing bonus and other concessions, and asked union leaders to endorse it. But the leaders of IAM District Lodge 751, which represents the 31,000 workers, refused to endorse it or put it up for a vote, saying the changes were not significant enough.

Details of the new offer will be sent to IAM District 751, District W-24 and District 70 members by mail prior to the vote, the IAM said in its statement, noting that the new proposal “contains significant improvements” from the earlier offer made by management in November.— Reuters

**Traffic at Target stores falls after data breach — WSJ**

**CHICAGO, 23 Dec —** In the wake of a massive data breach, Target Corp (TGT.N) suffered reduced customer traffic over one of the busiest shopping weekends of the year, the Wall Street Journal reported.

The number of transactions at Target fell 3 to 4 percent compared with last year’s final weekend before Christmas, while, transactions at other retailers were strong, the Journal said, citing estimates by retail consultancy Customer Growth Partners LLC.

Target said on Thursday that hackers had stolen data from as many as 40 million credit and debit cards of shoppers who visited its stores during the first three weeks of the holiday season. At least 2 million shoppers who used bank debit cards at Target stores during its recent data breach are facing lower limits on how much cash they can take out of teller machines and spend at stores.

“This is the worst possible time something like this could happen,” Craig Johnson, president of Customer Growth Partners told the Journal.

The consultancy firm estimates that US retail sales on Saturday topped $17 billion, exceeding those on Black Friday by $2 billion, according to the paper. A Target spokeswoman declined to comment to the Journal specifically on this weekend’s results, saying the retailer reports sales on a quarterly basis.

Target could not immediately be reached for comment by Reuters outside of regular US business hours.— Reuters

**French implant firm Carmat could seek investors**

**PARIS, 23 Dec —** France’s Carmat, developer of an artificial heart implanted into its first patient last week, may seek an injection of funds from fresh investors to help tap a potential multi-billion-euro global market, a senior executive said.

“We could, at some point, call on new investors,” Carmat co-founder Philippe Pouletty was quoted saying by Le Monde newspaper on Saturday. “Our aim, if possible, is to remain independent.”

The company said after Friday’s stock market close it had carried out its first implant of an artificial heart that can beat for up to five years, marking a potential breakthrough for patients with heart conditions.

Company officials warned it was too early to draw firm conclusions from the operation carried out in a Paris hospital on Wednesday, but noted the male patient in his 70s was conscious and talking in intensive care.

Pouletty told Le Monde that, once put on sale, the 130,000 euro ($177,700) device had a potential market of 100,000 patients in the United States and Europe. “The medical need is significant, with a market potential of several billion euros,” Pouletty said. “The issue is whether it will be reimbursed by healthcare systems. We are confident about that.”

Shares in the company closed at 102.86 euros on Friday, to give it a stock market value of about 436 million euros. The stock was listed on the Paris bourse in 2010 at 18 euros.— Reuters

**Russia’s red-hot car market stalls**

**MOSCOW, 23 Dec —** A year of disappointing auto sales in Russia has dealers and carmakers worried that a once-red hot market that was set to become Europe’s largest may have slipped out of gear.

Stuttering economic growth, unhelpful demographic trends and a coming increase in car capacity could dampen one of the few bright spots in a global market that is under pressure. In a Moscow showroom of dealership Premium Motors, packed with budget models such as Russian-made Ladas and Chevrolets, a dealer bewailed the lack of customers. “In October and November — sales were bad there were few people,” he said.

A few doors down, a dealership selling more expensive imported Volkswagens said it was finding it equally hard. “Maybe people need to save money instead of buying a car,” said a manager. Asked about the outlook for next year, he said: “Nobody knows. We hope.”

In a traffic-clogged city peppered with Porsches (PSHG.3DE) and Maseras-tis (FIA.MI) — trademarks of the super-rich who profiled personally from Russia’s resource wealth - it is the middle class who provide the bread-and-butter sales. Yet after three years of double-digit growth as Russia recovered from the 2008-2009 economic crisis, sales so far this year are down around 6 percent according to the Association of European Businesses, a Moscow-based lobby group that counts major auto makers among its members.

Auto executives, resolutely bullish that Russia’s rising middle class will support sales long-term, do not predict another crisis, but are worried about an extended contraction.— Reuters

**Toyota to recall over 11,000 cars in S Korea for defective air-conditioning**

**SEOUL, 23 Dec —** Japanese carmaker Toyota Motor was ordered to recall more than 11,000 cars in South Korea due to defective air-conditioning system, Seoul’s transportation ministry said on Monday.

A total of 11,307 cars sold by Toyota in the country were equipped with a faulty air-conditioning system, in which water produced by the radiator flows into the airbag control system and causes malfunction in the airbags and steering wheel, according to the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport (MOLIT).

Subject to the recall that covered 10,961 passenger cars of three models, including Camry, manufactured between 20 October, 2011 and 16 May, 2013. The recall also affected 546 units of the Venza compact utility vehicles made between 14 August, 2012 and 28 March, 2013.

Owners of the defective vehicles can contact service centers operated by Toyota Motor Korea for free repairs from Thursday. Jaguar and Land Rover was also told to recall 888 defective cars in South Korea, which featured a 2.2 diesel vehicles for defective fuel lines that may cause fire, the ministry said. — Xinhua
Emperor turns 80, hopes to continue to fulfill his role

**WORLD**

TOkyo, 23 Dec — Em peror Akihito, on the occa sion of his 80th birthday on Monday, reiterated his in ten tion to do his best, while he is expected to hand over some of his official duties to the younger generation in the year after next.

"While accepting the limits arising from age, I hope to continue to fulfill my role as best I can," the emperor said at a custom ary Press conference held on Wednesday ahead of his birthday.

Emperor Akihito, enthroned on 7 Jan, 1989, is on Wednesday ahead of his my role as best I can," the emperor said, adding, "My health has had no bearing on this decision." Regarding the passing on of of ficial duties to reduce his burden, he said, "I would like to maintain the status quo for the time being."

Asked about the rela tionship between politics and the personal imperial family following Princess Hisako’s involve ment in Tokyo’s successful bid to host the 2020 Olymp ic Games, the emperor said, "It is my intention to continue to attend to my du ties in a manner compliant with the Constitution."

The Constitution of Japan stipulates, "The Em peror shall perform only such acts in matters of state as are provided for in this Constitution and he shall not have powers related to government," the emperor said. About the events that have left a special impres sion on him during the course of his life, the em peror pointed to "the Second World War."

Philippines launched an $8 billion strategic plan for re construction in the affected areas.

The world body and its partners have also launched a one-year strategic res ponse plan worth $791 million. Ban said only 30 percent of that amount has been funded so far.

**UN chief urges donors to give more aid to Haiyan victims**

MANILA, 23 Dec — UN Secretary General Ban Ki moon on Sunday urged the international community to provide more support on going efforts to rebuild the central Philippine commu nities devastated by pow erful typhoon Haiyan last month.

"I urge all donors to add to their generous re sponse so that we can help communities to work back better and safer," Ban told a joint news conference with Philippine Foreign Secre tary Albert del Rosario.

Ban ran in the Phil ippines late on Friday for a weekend visit to areas hit by Haiyan on 8 Nov, leav ing 7,888 people killed or missing.

On Wednesday, the UN chief urged donors to give more aid to Haiyan victims.

**Bomb explodes on Israeli bus, no one hurt**

Jerusalem, 23 Dec — A bomb that Israeli authori ties suspect was planted by Palestinian militants, ex ploded in a bus near Tel Aviv on Sunday after pas sengers were evacuated, and police said no one was hurt.

No group claimed re sponsibility for the bomb ing. But Fawzi Barhoum, a spokesman for the Islam ist militant group Hamas, said in a statement the blast was a "heroic action" in response to what he termed the "continued crimes" of Israel’s occupation of land Palestinians seek for a state.

Photographs from the scene, in the Tel Aviv sub urb of Bat Yam, showed the blast blew out the vehicle’s windows.

"There were about 12 passengers on the bus. The driver stopped immedi ately when he was alerted to a suspicious object. It was a bag on the back bench, and he immediately ordered everyone off," Ei tan Fixman, a spokesman for the Dan bus company, was quoted as saying on the YNet news site.

"We confirm the explo sion on the bus today was a terror attack, based on as sessments and evidence gathered at the scene," Israeli police spokesman Micky Rosenfeld, refer ring to suspected Palestin ian militants. Police had set up roadblocks at entrances to the occupied West Bank and were searching cars for the perpetrators.

It was the first such incident since Israeli-Palest ian peace talks — which have shown few signs of progress — resumed in July. "We strongly con demn the bombing of a bus near Tel Aviv today. Our thoughts are with those af fected and with the Israeli people at this time," US State Department spokes person, Jen Psaki, said in a statement on Sunday.

**Massive ice storm in Toronto leaves many in darkness, flights grounded**

Toronto, 23 Dec — A massive weather system has left the largest Canadian city blanketed in a thick coat of ice, and nearly 300,000 people without power since early on Sunday morning.

The bouts of heavy over night freezing rain caused numerous complications on the road, disrupting traffic and Toronto’s transit ser vice on one of the busiest travel weekends of the year.

Over 300 departing flights have been cancelled at Toronto Pearson International Airport since the morning. With ice-coated tree branches toppling across the road, blacking down power lines, and more than 90 "large-scale outages" throughout the city, Toronto Hydro warned that many could be left without power until Christmas Day.

"The city is experienc ing widespread outages. We cannot provide restora tion time, please plan for a worst case — up to 72 hrs," Toronto Hydro, the largest municipal electricity distri bution company in Cana da, tweeted.

The freezing rain warning has been lifted in Toronto, but it seems the worst is yet to come.

Toronto Hydro is ex pecting high winds later Sunday, which could result in even more power out ages. Winds are expected to gust as high as 50 km/hr.

Calling the storm one of the worst in Toronto’s history, Mayor Rob Ford said at a news conference on Sunday afternoon that the city is not yet in a state of emergency, but that could change if the weather con ditions continue to worsen over the next 24 hours.

**Syrian helicopter bomb raids kill 42 in Aleppo**

"The Syrian air force is either criminally incompe tent, doesn’t care whether it kills scores of civilians, or deliberately targets "barrel bombs" areas," HRW senior emer gency researcher Ole Solvang said in the report.

Barrel bombs are explosive-filled barrels or oil drums that are often rolled out of the back of helicopters with little at tempt at striking a particular target. They are capable of causing widespread casual ties and significant damage.

President Bashar al-Assad’s forces, battling re bels in a 2 1/2-year conflict against Syrian army, were killed on a road in Hanano, "They hit a convoy of many cars were destroyed. Barrel bombs are explosive-filled barrels or oil drums that are often rolled out of the back of helicopters with little attempt at striking a particular target. They are capable of causing widespread casual ties and significant damage. President Bashar al-Assad’s forces, battling rebels in a 2 1/2-year conflict against Syrian army, were killed on a road in Hanano, while we will be around the same age as the elderly citizens," said the emperor, adding, "My health has had no bearing on this decision." Regarding the passing on of official duties to reduce his burden, he said, "I would like to maintain the status quo for the time being."

 Asked about the relationship between politics and the personal imperial family following Princess Hisako’s involvement in Tokyo’s successful bid to host the 2020 Olympic Games, the emperor said, "It is my intention to continue to attend to my duties in a manner compliant with the Constitution."

The Constitution of Japan stipulates, "The Emperor shall perform only such acts in matters of state as are provided for in this Constitution and he shall not have powers related to government," the emperor said. About the events that have left a special impression on him during the course of his life, the emperor pointed to "the Second World War."
**Pilot to blame for Mozambican plane crash**

**Maputo, 23 Dec —** The preliminary investigation into the Mozambican plane crash on 29 Nov, which killed all 19 people on board, concluded on Saturday that the pilot caused the disaster by flying too fast.

According to the report, investigations into the plane’s black box at the National Transport Safety Board in the United States found that the plane operated normally with no mechanical malfunctions at 38,000 feet and had good communication with the Gaburone control centre in Botswana, but suddenly it started to descend, then vanished from radar screen and lost all communication with the control centre just before it crashed.

Abreu said the copilot went to the bathroom a few minutes before the crash, leaving the pilot, Herminio dos Santos Fernandes, alone in the cockpit. It was then the altitude selector was manually altered three times, bringing the plane’s altitude down from 38,000 feet to 500 feet. The throttle control was set to idling, but the velocity selector was operated manually several times, bringing the speed up to the plane’s VMO (Maximum Operating Velocity).

“These actions set off low and high intensity alarm signals, and there were repeatedly hits on the cockpit door, which can be heard on the recording, presumably indicating the copilot was trying to enter the cockpit but found the door locked against him,” said Abreu. — Xinhua

**Thousands of Swedes rally against racism**

**Stockholm, 22 Dec —** Thousands of Swedes took to the streets of Stockholm on Sunday in a protest against racism following a neo-Nazi attack on a similar but much smaller rally last weekend, police said.

The protest followed events last week when around 30 neo-Nazis attacked another anti-racism rally in the same suburb, Karrtorp, throwing bottles and firecrackers at protesters. Two people were stabbed and 26 neo-Nazis were detained by police.

Sweden, long seen as a bastion of tolerance, has seen a rise in support for the far right as immigration grows. Anti-immigration party Sweden Democrats has reached around 10 percent in the polls ahead of a parliamentary election next year. Stockholm was hit by the worst riots in years in May in mainly poor immigrant suburbs, with youths throwing rocks at police and setting cars on fire for more than a week. The violence in one of Europe’s richest capitals shocked a country that prides itself on a reputation for social justice, and fuelled a debate about how Sweden was coping with youth unemployment and the influx of immigrants.

The organizers of Sunday’s demonstration estimated more than 16,000 people took part. The crowd chanted “End racism now” and “No racists on our streets”, and prominent Swedish artists played on a stage set up on a soccer field. — Reuters

**Protesters rally against racism during a demonstration in the Stockholm suburb of Karrtorp on 22 Dec, 2013.**

**Chinese merchant killed during robbery in Russia**

**Moscow, 23 Dec —** A Chinese merchant was killed and another one injured on Saturday during a robbery in Russia’s Yekaterinburg, the Chinese Consulate General in that city said on Sunday.

Three unidentified attackers broke into a rented apartment and tied and beat up three Chinese merchants, the Chinese Consulate General said.

According to news agencies, the Chinese Consulate General has urged local authorities to hold those responsible for account. A criminal case has been opened. — Xinhua

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**South Sudanese women carry water in a UN camp in Bor, an area of South Sudan, on 22 Dec, 2013.**

**Palestinians insist own stance in push for peace talks**

**Ramallah, 23 Dec —** The US administration is likely to present its plan for a peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in February, a Palestinian official said on Sunday.

Riad al-Maliki, the Palestinian minister of foreign affairs, added that Washington raised several points for discussions and has not yet presented any official scheme as it pushes for a deal by spring.

US Secretary of State John Kerry, who sponsors peace talks between the two sides since their resumption in July, has forged a security plan for the West Bank, trying to take the security question off the negotiating table.

Having reservations on the plan, al-Maliki said the Palestinian leadership “reacted quickly in proactive approach,” with President Mahmoud Abbas sending a message to President Obama last week “defining what is acceptable and what is not for the Palestinians.”

On Saturday, Abbas received Arab support as Arab foreign ministers, who met in Cairo, announced their adoption of the Palestinian position concerning upcoming US proposals. Al-Maliki said that the Arab ministers’ meeting was also “a proactive measure.”

In their final statement, the Arab ministers emphasized that they don’t accept less than an independent Palestinian state on all lands that Israel has occupied in 1967 with a capital in East Jerusalem. They also urged the Obama administration to force Israel to stop settlement building in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

Kerry’s security plan envisioned, among others, Israeli presence or indirect control on the borders of their future state, especially in the vital Jordan Valley, for 10 to 15 years. The Palestinians have always stated they don’t accept any kind of Israeli military control on their borders with Jordan. — Xinhua

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**African immigrants use films and books to fight Italian racism**

**Rome, 23 Dec —** Seven years ago, Dagmawi Yimer was “between life and death” when Italian navy officers rescued him and 30 others from a skiff in heavy seas between Libya and the island of Lampedusa.

Today, Yimer directs documentary films about immigrants like himself from the home in the northern city of Verona he shares with his Italian partner and their two-year-old daughter. He is part of the fast-growing immigrant population that is changing the face of Italy, just as it has transformed the populations of more northern European countries such as Britain, France or Germany.

He is also one of many foreigners who are trying — through cultural initiatives such as films and books — to change the racist views of many Italians of the immigrants in their midst.

Contrary to popular perceptions, immigrants are making their mark across the Italian economy, politics and society. African-born author Kossi Komla-Ebi, a 59-year-old medical doctor, has published six books in Italian.

“Many immigrants think our emancipation is only economic and political, but we are convinced it’s cultural and that we can have a profound influence through culture,” he said. — Reuters

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**Israel’s Mossad headquarters to attend college job fair**

**Jerusalem, 23 Dec —** In highly unusual move, Israel’s Mossad intelligence agency will dispatch recruiters to interview prospective candidates in a job fair at a US university.

While its US counterpart, the CIA, is busy recruiting on college campuses across America for decades, the fabled Mossad, which for the most part of its existence had opted to remain deep in the shadows, had only begun approaching graduating seniors in person in recent years.

The adoption of the CIA’s favourite recruiting method could hint at the increasing competition posed by the private sector, which offers higher salaries and no risk. Although the Mossad is relatively unfamiliar with job fairs, the agency, like the Shin Bet security service, has made recruiting new personnel a top priority, placing periodic advertisements in newspapers and receiving applications via its official website since 2005. — Xinhua

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**Director Dagmawi Yimer from Ethiopia walks past a mural in downtown Rome on 13 Nov, 2013.**

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**New Light of Myanmar**

Tuesday, 24 December, 2013 7
**President U Thein Sein hosts ...**

(from page 1)

Chairman of the Constitutional Tribunal of the Union U Mya Thein, Chairman of the Union Election Commission U Tin Aye, Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Commander-in-Chief (Army) Vice-Senior General Soe Win, the Union ministers, the senior military officers, Hlutaw representatives, distinguished persons and those who made contributions to the 27th SEA Games.

Firstly, President U Thein Sein cordially greet ed those who gave a helping hand to the 27th SEA Games and presented certificates of honour to the liaison officer group, the volunteer group, work force group, GMS group and others.

The State symphony orchestra of the MRTV under the Ministry of Information entertained the attendees with songs.

A total of 15562 artists, intellectuals and intelligentsia, liaison officers and volunteers attended the dinner.

Likewise, on behalf of the President, Yangon Region Chief Minister U Myo Int Swe hosted a dinner to support groups for successfully holding the 27th SEA Games at the Yangon Region Government’s Office this evening.

Over 1000 volunteers enjoyed the dinner.

**Cambodian king ...**

(from page 16)

They exchanged views on cementing amity and friendship between the two countries, progress of political reforms in Myanmar, strengthening cooperation between the parliaments, governments and peoples of the two countries.

The Pyidaungsu Hlutaw Speaker and party viewed round the Royal Palace of Cambodia on 20 December evening.

They also attended a luncheon hosted by Chairman of International Cooperation, Information, Media and Foreign Affairs Commission Mr. Chheang Vun at Sokha Club on 21 December afternoon.—MNA

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**Union FM felicitates Japanese counterpart**

**NAY PYI TAW, 24 Dec**—On the occasion of the birthday of His Majesty Akhito, Emperor of Japan, which falls on 23 December 2013, U Wunna Maung Lwin, Union Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, has sent a message of felicitations to His Excellency Mr. Fumio Kishida, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan.—MNA

**Myanmar-Japan discuss conducting financial services**

**NAY PYI TAW, 23 Dec**—Deputy Minister for Finance Dr. Maung Maung Thein met with Mr Furukawa, Japanese Vice-Minister of Finance in Tokyo, Japan on 18 December.

They discussed preparations for holding ASEAN Finance Ministers’ meeting, ASEAN Deputy Finance Ministers and ASEAN+3 Meetings in Myanmar’s 2014 ASEAN chairmanship.

The deputy minister and Commissioner of Financial Services Authority (FSA) of Japan Mr. Hatanaka exchanged views on signing an MoU between the Ministry of Finance and FSA for conducting financial organizations and financial services in Myanmar.

The deputy minister together with executive officers from private insurance companies of Myanmar met with officials from the General Insurance Association and insurance companies of Japan from 16 to 19 December.—MNA

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**Speaker of Pyidaungsu Hlutaw Thura U Shwe Mann being given an audience by King of Cambodia His Majesty Preah Karona Preah Bat Samdech Baromneath Norodom Sihamoni.—MNA**

**Operation Dove Debriefing held in Yangon**

**YANGON, 23 Dec**—Operation Dove Debriefing jointly conducted by Myanmar Police Force and Interpol IMEST for taking security measures of the 27th SEA Games from 2nd to 20th December was held at Kandawgyi Palace Hotel, here, on 20 December.

On behalf of the chief of Myanmar Police Force, Myanmar delegation led by Police Col Aung Hlay Myint from Transnational Crime Corps, and Leader and high ranking officer of Interpol IMEST, Expert Mr. Rastislav Sasaki and four delegates and representatives from Brunei, Malaysia, Laos, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam participated in the discussions.

They discussed making a check with Interpol crime database to the foreigners who enter Myanmar by flight during the SEA Games and inspection and exchanging information at the airports of the countries.

Over 1700 persons underwent a check going through crime database of Interpol at Nay Pyi Taw International Airport and 123353, at Yangon International Airport till 20 December.—MNA
Second Mandalay Hill Invitational Cycling Contest on 25 Dec

**Mandalay, 23 Dec—**The Second Mandalay Hill Invitational Amateur Cycling Contest will be held on 25 December.

The participants will be launched from the starting point in front of Sedona Hotel at the corner of 26th and 66th Streets.

They must pass the finish line at the platform of Kyemon-Lin Let Kyei Sinn (IPRD).

Hluuttaw, Irrigation Department, farmers to dig Ingyinon feeder canal

**Mohnyin, 23 Dec—**As Ingyinon Village-tract in Mohnyin Township of Kachin State is engaged in cultivation of monsoon paddy and cold season crops, the local farmers can earn increased income from cultivation tasks. So, they have enjoy better socio-economic life.

**Farmers from Ingyinon Village are relying on Hsahlaw Creek and Mayangon Drain for cultivation of crops. They irrigate water from the drains to over 1000 farmlands.**

Sometimes, the drains may cause overflow at the harvest time. In consequence, the local people suffer loss in reduction of per acre yield of paddy and loss and damages of paddy.

**Pyi thu Hlutaw** representative U Kyaw Soe Lay and Aminthu Hlutaw representative U Sai Tin Aung of Mohnyin Township together with Head of Township Irrigation Department U Khin Maung Lwin, Deputy Head of Township Agriculture Department U Min Thein and Deputy Head of Township Settlement and Land Records Department U Min Zaw, made a field trip to inspect the Ingyinon field.

Spending the fund allotted by Irrigation Department in 2014-15 fiscal year, the water control building will be built at Hsahlaw Creek. The Department will carry out dredging of Ingyinon Drain with the use of heavy machinery spending the fund allotted by the Pyidaungsu Hlutaw of Mohnyin Township.

Moreover, the local people will join hands with the department in implementing the project.

**Kyemon-K Hsai Naw (Phukant)**

Four objectives of 66th Anniversary Independence Day

- All the national people to live together in the Union forever in weal or woe;
- All the national people to strive together for non-disintegration of the Union, non-disintegration of national solidarity and perpetuation of sovereignty;
- All the national people to participate in efforts for ceasing armed conflicts and gaining genuine peace;
- All the national people to work hard in building a developed and discipline-flourishing democratic nation.

Traditional medicines donated to Kyaiktioy Pagoda

**Kyaiktioy, 23 Dec—**A total of 56 monasteries are carrying out missionery works along mountain ranges where Kyaiktioy Pagoda is located in Kyaiktioy Township of Mon State.

So as to contribute to health conditions of members of the Sangha from the monasteries, well-wishers have been donating traditional medicines to the monasteries as of 2003. This year’s donation is 11th time of its kind.

This year, U Maung Maung Oo (Mingalar Shwe Oak) and family, U Tun Shwe (Tun Shwe Wah Traditional Medicine Clinic) family, U Aung Ko Ko (Aye Gabar Clinic) U Ngwe Soe-daughter Daw Swe Swe Lin (Nawin Clinic) family, U Win Aung (Aung Taman Clinic) family, Daw Mi Mi Thet (Pan Wuthmnon) family, U Kyaw (Hmancho) family, U Myint Lwin (Galon Yazar) family and U Aung Than (Wazzakarana) family donated traditional medicines to the Sayadaw of Pagoda Platform Monastery.

Traditional medicines are transported to the hill at the end of December 2013 and first week of January 2014.

Together with traditional medicine practitioners, those wishing to donate cash and medicines may contact 09-31248184 of U Khin Maung Myint. **Kyemon-537**

Finished Ingyin fossil gets East Europe market

**Natogyi, 23 Dec—**Ingyin petrified wood fossils from Natogyi Township of Mandalay Region get not only domestic market but also the market from China, Taiwan and Singapore, said U Phone of Toe Aung Myint Co. One lot of Ingyin fossil can fetch K 40000, he said. Now, the company accepts many offers from the Taiwanese customers.

Green Ingyin fossils are marketable in Chinese market while orange and red browncolour products in East European and Taiwanese markets.

Tow Aung Myint Co is producing finished Ingyin fossil products for the market all the year round. **Kyemon-Htay Myint**

Seizures of drugs increased more than previous years in Kalay

**Kalay, 23 Dec—**Seizures of narcotic drugs could be seized in Kalay of Sagaing Region more than that of previous years.

The authorities arrested 88 men and 22 women in 65 cases of heroin, 95 men and 13 women in 65 cases of opium, 12 men and five women in nine cases of stimulant tablet, 20 men and four women in eight cases of pseudo-ephedrine, 15 men and four women in 11 cases of Khatpon, three men and one woman in two cases of capsule, said the commander of Kalay District Police Force in meeting with media on 20 December.

Members of Kalay District Police Force investigate trafficking of narcotic drugs. In 2012, they seized 104 cases of narcotic drugs and 158 in 2013. **Kyemon-Lin Let Kyei Sinn**

Irrigation

Irrigation

Anti-Narcotic Drives

**Route of Mandalay Mayor Mini-marathon announced**

Mandalay, 23 Dec—The Mandalay Mayor Mini-marathon 2014 will be launched at 6.30 am on 11 January 2014.

The mini-marathon will include men’s and women’s open and novice contests.

The participants will be launched in front of Mandalay City Development Committee Office. They have to run the 13 miles route along 80th Street, 12th street, 66th street, 10th street, 62nd street, Theikpak Street, 78th street passing Yangon-Mandalay Highway junction, and 30th street and will pass the finish line at Bahtoo Stadium.

The open event will be categorized from men’s and women’s 1st to 10th grade, novice men’s and women’s classes. Handsome prizes will be given to the winners. **Kyemon-Maung Pyi Thu (Mandalay)**

National Sports

National Sports

**66th Anniversary Independence Day, 2014**

**Photo: Ko Ko Khaing (IPRD)**

- Kyemon-Lin Let Kyei Sinn

- Min Thein and Deputy Head of Township Land Records Department U Min Zaw, made a field
Suicide bomber kills seven outside Libya’s Benghazi

BARIS, (Libya), 23 Dec — A suicide bomber detonated a truck packed with explosives at an army checkpoint outside the city of Benghazì on Sunday, killing 13 soldiers in the first such attack in Libya’s deepening turmoil.

Car bombs and assassinations of army and police officers are common in Benghazì, where troops have clashed regularly with militants from the hardline Islamist group Ansar al-Sharia.

But a suicide bombing would mark a shift in tactics to fit a pattern common in other Islamist struggles in the Middle East, but not in Libya either during or since the uprising that brought down Muammar Gaddafi.

The attacker blew himself up at a road checkpoint near a small military base in Baris, some 50 km (30 miles) outside Benghazì, killing 13 people and wounding three, state news agency Lana said.

“A Toyota truck approached the checkpoint and parked there. There was a young man driving, but when the army troops went to check it out, the vehicle exploded,” said Aymen al-Abdaly, a Benghazì army officer.

A Reuters reporter at the scene saw four destroyed cars and blood splashed on the tarmac.

The government postponed celebrations for Libya’s independence day on 24 December and declared three days of mourning for the victims of what it called a “cowardly terrorist act,” Lana said.

Fears grow of civil war in South Sudan as rebels seize town

JUBA, 23 Dec — South Sudan’s government said on Sunday rebel soldiers had seized the capital of a key oil-producing region and fears grew of all-out ethnic civil war in the world’s newest country.

The UN announced it was trying to rush more peacekeeping forces to landlocked, impoverished South Sudan as foreign heads of a commander who has declared support for Machar, it said.

Information Minister Michael Makuei said on Sunday an army divisional commander in Unity State, John Koang, had defected and joined rebel leader and former Vice President Riek Machar, who had named him the governor of the state.

Domestic gold rush hits bureaucratic slowdown

COJOTI, (Dominican Republic), 23 Dec — Little more than a decade ago, one of the world’s largest known gold deposits sat abandoned in the foothills of the Dominican Republic’s Central Cordillera mountain range. Car-sized boulders leached heavy metals into what locals called the “blood river,” its waters ran so red from contaminants.

Today the mine, which reopened as Pueblo Viejo this year, hums with activity. Trucks with tires twice the size of an SUV roll through its massive open pits on roads that cut through the 11-square-kilometre site (4.24 square miles), transporting tons of rock to a processing facility.

Some 2,000 people already work here, churning out shimmering gold bars that are exported to Canada and the United States, but the mine has the potential to create 12,700 more direct and indirect jobs and contribute $1.3 billion a year in exports.

This dynamic, foreign-operated enterprise is part of the country’s effort to develop an industry that could help boost and diversify its tourism-dependent economy.

Yet despite robust commercial production by two of the world’s largest gold mining companies, Canada’s Barrick Gold Corp and Goldcorp Inc, development of the mining sector is vexed by bureaucratic delays and agitation by activists still concerned about pollution and government deals with foreign companies to exploit the nation’s riches.

At stake are billions of dollars and thousands of jobs in a country of 10 million with high levels of unemployment and poverty.
Bangladesh police charges factory owner, 12 others over deadly fire

DHAKA, 23 Dec — Charges have finally been pressed against 13 people including the owner of a garment factory over a late 2012 devastating fire that left 112 dead as officials were arrested over a year after the horrendous tragedy wrapped up an investigation.

In one of the worst tragedies in Bangladesh’s history in November 2012, at least 112 workers of the factory at Ashulia on the outskirts of capital Dhaka were killed. Dozens of workers also sustained injuries as the 24 Nov devastating fire, claimed to be “an act of sabotage,” raged through the eight-storey Taazreen Fashion Limited, where global brands including US retail giant Wal-Mart were manufactured.

AKM Mohsinuzzaman Khan, a Criminal Investigation Department (CID) inspector, on Sunday morning submitted the charge sheet against the accused in a case before Chief Judicial Magistrate Court of Dhaka. A CID official who preferred to be unnamed said the Taazreen Fashion Ltd owner and its officials have been accused of breaching construction rules including building staircases that were too narrow and unsafe. Of the accused, he said, many including owner Delwar are on the run. The only arrestee is security-in-charge Anisur Rahman.

After submitting the charges, the CID inspector made a plea to the court to issue arrest warrant against the absconding accused. He also requested the court to confiscate the properties of the absconding accused. Bangladesh has one of the largest garment industries in the world, providing cheap clothing for major Western retailers that benefit from its widespread low-cost labour. But the industry has been widely criticized for low pay and limited rights given to workers and for the often dangerous working conditions in garment factories.

In Bangladesh, factory owners are rarely charged over such tragedies. Analysts say tragic incidents continue to occur in Bangladesh as most of the time culprits go unpunished. The Taazreen fire incident was dwarfed by another worst ever industrial tragedy at an apparel hub on outskirts of the capital where five factories housed in a eight-storey building collapsed on 24 April this year, leaving at least 1,130 people dead.—Xinhua

Over 20 injured in bomb attack in southern Thailand

BANGKOK, 23 Dec — At least 30 people were wounded in a bomb attack on Sunday in southern Thailand, local police said.

According to the police, the blast happened in front of a hotel in Sa-dao district of Songkhla Province, with children and a Malaysian tourist among the injured.

The explosive device was hidden in a car in the hotel’s parking lot and detonated by mobile phone, the police said.

Two bombings occurred earlier in the day near local police stations in the same district, but there were no casualties.

More than 5,500 people have been killed in the provinces of Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat since a separatist insurgency broke out in 2004.—Kyodo News

Japan to extend Fukushima radiation cleanup work by up to 3 yrs

Tokyo, 23 Dec — The government will have to extend its decontamination work following the 2011 crisis at the Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear power plant by a maximum of three years, government officials said on Sunday.

The Environment Ministry will shortly release a new schedule for radiation cleanup work, which was scheduled to be completed by the 31 March end of fiscal 2013 under the initial plan, according to the officials.

The government will try to complete the work before reorganizing in fiscal 2017 areas around the crippled plant, currently divided into three zones based on radiation levels.

The cleanup work has been completed as scheduled only in the city of Tamura, out of 11 municipalities in Fukushima Prefecture subject to the work, with work in three other areas heading for completion by the end of the current fiscal year.

The ministry believes that a three-year extension would be enough to complete the work for most of the municipalities, but as for Futaba, it remains uncertain when the work will be concluded as most parts of the town are classified as areas difficult to return to for a long time, the officials said. On 14 Dec, the government announced plans to acquire around 19 square kilometres of land chiefly around the Fukushima Dai-ichi plant to build facilities for the long-term storage of radioactive and other waste piling up in the decontamination process. The government aims to start using the planned facilities in January 2015.—Kyodo News

Cambodian PM to visit Vietnam to boost bilateral ties

PHNOM PENH, 23 Dec — Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen will pay a three-day official visit to Vietnam from 26 Dec in order to further enhance ties and cooperation between the two neighbours, according to a news statement from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Monday.

The visit plan came at the invitation of Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung. During the stay, the two prime ministers will hold a bilateral talk and witness the signing ceremony of eight agreements, the statement said.

One of the deals is the treaty on extradition between the two neighbours, according to a news statement from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Monday.

The visit plan came at the invitation of Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung. During the stay, the two

Chinese seniors enjoy their meals at the 3rd Christmas seniors lunch event in Chinatown, Vancouver, Canada, on 21 Dec, 2013. About 500 Chinese seniors are invited to attend this event.—Xinhua

Uncertainties linger over six-party talks despite multilateral efforts

SEOUL, 23 Dec — The Korean Peninsula, where the two Koreas are still in a state of war as an armistice agreement, not a peace treaty, ended the 1950-53 Korean War, started off the year 2013 with escalated tensions. The United Nations Security Council imposed sanctions on the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) in January after Pyongyang test-fired its long-range rocket, called Unha-3. The DPRK conducted its third nuclear test in February, the first under Kim Jong Un’s leadership, going so far as to amend its constitution for the nuclear statehood.

“Resuming talks is the very first thing to do for nuclear-free North Korea (DPRK),” Yang Moo-jin, a professor at the University of North Korean Studies in Seoul, said in a recent telephone interview. “Strategic patience is not a right answer.”—Xinhua
Israeli ministers demand US to end spying

JERUSALEM, 23 Dec — Israeli ministers are demanding on Sunday the US to end espionage in light of the revelation that the National Security Agency has spied on Israel’s top leaders.

“Now the secret is out,” said Transportation Minister Yisrael Katz in a statement, “The US is systematically spying on the defence and diplomatic leadership here in Israel. Is this how friends treat each other?”

Katz said he would urge the cabinet’s Sunday meeting “to demand an American commitment to end the surveillance.” The Minister of International and Strategic Affairs Yuval Steinitz told Israel Radio that the eavesdropping is “illegitimate. “Israel doesn’t conduct surveillance on the US President, the White House or the Secretary of Defence,” Steinitz said.

He added that the US and Israel “unprecedented” strategic alliance, “in a level sufficient to prevent eavesdropping or mutual espionage.”

Rescuers work on the boats on the Dordogne River at the site of a helicopter crash in Lagon- et-l’Eau-Carnay, France, on 20 Dec, 2013. Rescue teams scooped the Dordogne river in southwestern France after a helicopter carrying three Chinese went down on Friday.—XINHUA
Don't Smoke

‘Fast and Furious 7’ to be released in April 2015 — Vin Diesel

NEW YORK, 23 Dec — “Fast and Furious 7,” the action film that was shut down after the sudden death in a car crash last month of actor Paul Walker will be released in April 2015, the star of the series, Vin Diesel, said on Sunday.

Diesel posted a message on his Facebook page saying “Fast and Furious 7 will be released...April 10th 2015,” adding “P.s. He’d want you to know first ..., in an apparent reference to Walker, who was killed on November 30 in a fiery car wreck in Santa Clarita in Southern California. The film, the seventh in a series of hit films about car racing, was originally slated for release on 11 July next year, according to Universal Pictures, which is owned by Comcast Corp. Walker became a symbol of street-racing and car culture in his role as law enforcement officer Brian O’Conner in the “Fast & Furious” series. Days after the accident, which killed the car’s driver as well as Walker, 40, Universal suspended production of the new movie.

Gwyneth Paltrow: Embarrassing to strip for film roles

LOS ANGELES, 23 Dec — Actress Gwyneth Paltrow does not enjoy stripping down for film roles and finds it embarrassing too.

The 41-year-old actress also praised her co-star, Mark Ruffalo, for the way he handled the challenge. “I’m not an exhibitionist like that. And it was a challenge. I’m this other woman and I’m really going to go for it. And it was fine,” she said.

The Oscar-winning actress also praised her co-star, Mark Ruffalo, for helping her to stay calm during filming. “Mark is so lovely. He made it very easy.”

Julia Roberts is reportedly private about her personal life.—PTI

Julia Roberts: I am a healthy eater

LONDON, 23 Dec — Pretty Woman star Julia Roberts may have a trim figure, but insists she loves eating.

The 46-year-old actress said that she always has had a healthy appetite, reported Contactmusic.

“I am a hearty eater, which I told my husband Danny Moder 13 years ago when he asked me out. I said, ‘Prepare yourself, I won’t just have a salad!’ But that’s worked out for us,” she said.

Roberts is notoriously private about her personal life, and says she loves reality TV stars such as the Kardashian family - who have reality show Keeping Up With The Kardashians because it directs attention away from her.

“As a film actor, I’m only inviting people to pay attention to my characters. But if you’re a reality star, by virtue you are asking me and inviting people to pay attention to you. It’s great because they take that attention from me,” she added.—PTI

‘The Hobbit’ tops ‘Anchorman’ sequel at weekend box office

LOS ANGELES, 23 Dec— The dwarves and hobbits of “The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug” proved too much for the much-publicized sequel “Anchorman 2: The Legend Continues,” as the hit fantasy film topped movie charts in the United States and Canada for a second straight week, earning $31.5 million over the weekend.

Kicking off Hollywood’s year-end push of high-profile movie releases, the “Anchorman” crew led by Will Ferrell was unable to dethrone last week’s winner and took in $26.8 million for the No. 2 spot, according to sales estimates from Rentrak.

“Fast & Furious 6” was predicted “Anchorman 2” would bring in $35 million to $40 million from Friday through Sunday. The movie cost $50 million to make.

“Forty million over five days is a sensational start,” said Don Harris, president of domestic theatrical distribution for Paramount Pictures, the Viacom Inc (VIAB.O) unit that released the film, adding that was in line with studio expectations.—Reuters
Pedro fires Barcelona fightback, Real strike late

Barcelona, 23 Dec — Barcelona came from behind to beat Getafe 5-2 thanks to a quickfire hat-trick from Pedro and Real Madrid needed a late goal from substitute Jese to overcome Valencia 3-2 on Sunday.

The signs looked ominous for Barcelona as they went 2-0 down within the first 15 minutes after Sergio Escudero and Lisandro Lopez found the net for Getafe.

With Lionel Messi and Neymar missing through injury and suspension, Pedro took it upon himself to rescue Barcelona with three goals in eight blistering minutes.

The Canary Islander chipped keeper Miguel Moya and added two clinical finishes before the break.

He also crossed for Cesc Fabregas to volley in the fourth midway through the second half, and was then fouled in the box before Fabregas converted the penalty.

The battling spirit of Gerardo Martino’s side, who were also missing senior players Xavi Hernandez, Victor Valdes and Carlos Payol, shone through as they refused to cave in despite trailing for much of the first half.

“We had 15 bad minutes before the team rediscovered their composure and played how we had planned,” Martino told a news conference.

“We got the result we wanted and it was a good game. It was a fantastic performance from Pedro and the whole team played well overall.”

Barcelona top the table on 46 points, level with Atletico Madrid, who beat Levante on Saturday, but with a healthier goal record. Real are third on 41 points.

“We dropped our level at times during the game but we need to concentrate on continuing to pick up points and starting the fight again in the New Year,” said Real defender Sergio Ramos.

“There are areas that we need to work on which we will do. Barcelona and Atletico are making it difficult at the top but we will keep going.”

Getafe took the lead early on Saturday with a 2-0 lead only for Fulham to pull level with 20 minutes remaining as City’s defence,

New Zealand prodigy Ko splits with coach

Wellington, 23 Dec — New Zealand’s Lydia Ko has split with long-time coach Guy Wilson, who started working with the golfing prodigy as a five-year-old novice and helped take her to number four in the world 11 years later.

Ko, who was born in South Korea and has already won five professional titles, four as an amateur, became the youngest winner on the LPGA Tour when she captured last year’s Canadian LPGA Tour when she capped a five professional titles, four as an amateur, became the youngest winner on the LPGA Tour when she captured last year’s Canadian Open at the age of 15.

She signed up with management company IMG earlier this month.

In statement to Fairfax media, Wilson said he was “incredibly disappointed” that their partnership had come to an end.

“We’ve spent a lot of time together over the past decade and during that time I’ve become very close to Lydia and her family. While I’m incredibly disappointed that our 11-year partnership is over, I respect Lydia and her team’s decision,” Wilson said in the statement.

“When I first met her..."}

Free-scoring Manchester City must be more boring, says Milner

London, 23 Dec — The entertaining, goal-scoring feats of title-chasing Manchester City has wowed fans and impressed rivals this season, but midfielder James Milner craves a less cavalier approach. Even without injured top scorer Sergio Aguero, City delivered a glut of goals in a 4-2 away win over relegation threatened Fulham on Saturday.

They have scored a league-best 51 goals from 17 league matches, 35 coming at home, and are on course to better the record of 103 scored by Chelsea en route to winning the title in the 2009/10 season.

They still sit only second, however, as their cavalier approach and struggles to field a settled defence and mistake-free goalkeeper have given teams an opportunity to pounce points when hosting the big-spending 2011/12 champions.

City weathered some early pressure on Saturday before taking a 2-0 lead only for Fulham to pull level with 20 minutes remaining as City’s defence, the joint fourth worst away from home in the league, were again culpable. But substitutes Jesus Navas and Milner put City back on top with late goals to leave them a point behind leaders Liverpool.

Mourinho plans 12-year Chelsea stay despite poor contract

London, 23 Dec — Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho has never had a contract to stick with the English Premier League club for 12 seasons despite accepting his ‘worst contract’ in six years.

The Portuguese rejoined the London outfit, with whom he won league titles in 2005 and 2006, in June after trophy-laden years spent in Italy and Spain with Inter Milan and Real Madrid.

He will take his title-chasing Chelsea side across London to face Arsenal, managed for the last 17 years by Arsene Wenger, on Monday (2000 GMT) where victory could send them level on points with leaders Liverpool.

“Realistically I hope at the end of these four years we sit, analyze the situation and that will be the point where we both — club and me — are happy to carry on or happy to separate,” Brit-}

Valencia’s Sofiane Feghouli and Real Madrid’s Marcelo Vieira jump for the ball during their Spanish first division match at the Mestalla stadium in Valencia on 22 Dec, 2013. — Reuters

Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho puts the ball to Branislav Ivanovic during their English Premier League soccer match against Crystal Palace at Stamford Bridge, London, on 14 Dec, 2013. — Reuters

Mourinho has never completed four seasons with a club in his highly successful career that has brought seven league championships across Europe and two Champions League titles. — Reuters

"But I would like, say, 12 years. I’m 51 next month. I’d say 12 years, and then two to go to a World Cup with a national team. I would prefer the Portuguese national team. England second (choice).”

Mourinho has never completed four seasons with a club in his highly successful career that has brought seven league championships across Europe and two Champions League titles. — Reuters

"But I would like, say, 12 years. I’m 51 next month. I’d say 12 years, and then two to go to a World Cup with a national team. I would prefer the Portuguese national team. England second (choice).”

Mourinho has never completed four seasons with a club in his highly successful career that has brought seven league championships across Europe and two Champions League titles. — Reuters

"But I would like, say, 12 years. I’m 51 next month. I’d say 12 years, and then two to go to a World Cup with a national team. I would prefer the Portuguese national team. England second (choice).”

Mourinho has never completed four seasons with a club in his highly successful career that has brought seven league championships across Europe and two Champions League titles. — Reuters
UAE applies phase-out schedule for old oil tankers

ABU DHABI, 23 Dec — Abu Dhabi Ports Company (ADPC), the master developer behind the Khalifa Port that is the United Arab Emirates capital Abu Dhabi, said here on Sunday it applied a phase-out schedule for old oil tankers.

In an e-mailed statement, ADPC said its phase-out schedule has been designed in addition to the phase-out schedule already implemented by the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, also called MARPOL 73/78.

Under the newly implemented scheme, ADPC is advising all port customers and potential port visitors that entry will be refused to oil tankers older than 30 years of age.

While oil tankers which exceed 28 years of age will be refused entry from January 1, 2014, and the same rule will apply to oil tankers older than 25 years of age, from January 1, 2015.

Vietnam’s non-performing loan rate rises sharply in 2013

HANOI, 23 Dec — The rate of non-performing loans (NPL) in Vietnam’s financial institutions is expected to rise sharply by 23.73 percent in 2013, Vietnamese government reported on Monday.

The financial institutions’ NPL is estimated to reach 146.5 trillion Vietnamese dong (6.94 billion US dollars) in 2013, up 23.73 percent year on year, said a report released on the website of Vietnamese government over a latest online meeting session of Vietnamese government and localities on Monday.

The report said the total NPL of the country’s financial institutions remains high, due to slow progress of weak banks’ restructuring processes and weak demand of the whole economy.

The operation of Vietnam Asset Management Company (VAMC), established under Resolution 53/2013/ND-CP by Vietnamese Government, has brought about first-step accomplishments.

VAMC is likely to buy at least 30-35 trillion Vietnamese dong (1.42-1.65 billion US dollars) NPL of banks in 2013, said the report.

Imperious Juventus end five points clear

ROME, 23 Dec — Juventus ended 2013 five points clear at the top of Serie A after a 4-1 victory at Atalanta stretched their winning league run to nine games on Sunday.

AS Roma remained their closest pursuers following a 4-0 crushing of bottom club Catania with their closest pursuers following a 4-0 crushing of bottom club Catania with two goals from defender Mehdi Benatia.

A delicate backheel from Rodrigo Palacio’s earned Inter the spoils four minutes from the end of the Milan derby and moved them up to fifth on 31 points.

Milan have only won one league game in two months and are languishing in 13th place on 19 points, only five away from the relegation zone, after a poor performance in which Sulley Muntari was sent off in stoppage time following a scuffle.

Carlos Tevez’s 11th league goal of the season after six minutes and strikes from Paul Pogba, Fernando Llorente and Arturo Vidal tightened Juve’s grip on top spot with 46 points from 17 games.

Roma, still unbeaten, have 41 points after they dispatched Sicilians Catania with goals also coming from Mattia Destro, his third in as many games, and Gervinho.

The first half wasn’t very good but the second half was stellar. The second half is how I always want to see Roma,” Roma coach Rudi Garcia told reporters.

“Forty-four points after 17 games is extraordinary, any other year we would be top. But this year there is a Juve that wins every game,”

Giuseppe Rossi’s 14th league goal of the season helped Fiorentina scrape a nervy 1-0 win at lowly Sassuolo and lifted them to 33 points in fourth place, three points behind Napoli.

Hellas Verona hammered struggling Lazio 4-1 through a Luca Toni brace and further goals from Romulo and Juan Iturbe and they lie sixth on 29 points.

Sampdoria continued their unbeaten run under new manager Snasa Mi-hajlovic with a 1-1 draw against Parma and Torino hammered Chievo 4-1.

Juve were ahead after six minutes as Tevez collected Arturo’s Vidal’s mis-placed pass and fired home.

Maxi Moralez struck a shock equaliser nine minutes later, drilling a low first time drive off the post and past Gianluigi Buffon, the first goal he had conceded in nine league games.

The champions remained on top, however, and Pogba put them back in front after the break, calmly slotting home after Llorente touched down Kwadwo Asamoah’s cross.

Llorente removed any doubt as to the outcome when he took Giorgio Chiellini’s pass with his back to goal and brilliantly rounded visiting goalkeeper before firing home.

A long-range strike from Alessandro Diamanti helped struggling Bologna beat Genoa 2-0 and move out of the relegation zone, relieving the pressure on manager Stefano Pioli.

According to local media reports, Bologna chairman Albano Guaraldi wants Italy great Roberto Baggio to replace Pioli, who received a lot of support from home fans. — Reuters
Cambodian King gives audience to Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann

Chinese coaches honoured

Nay Pyi Taw, 23 Dec—A ceremony to honour Chinese coaches who provided technical assistance to Myanmar at the 27th SEA Games under the G to G programme took place at Goal Camp, here, this morning.

Chairman of the Leading Committee for holding the 27th SEA Games Union Minister for Sports U Tint Hsan said that Myanmar Minister for Sports U Tint Thant speech to Chinese coaches. The leader of G to G team said he was delighted to make contributions to SEA Games and it would enhance bilateral cooperation between the two nations.

Then, Chairman of the Committee for SEA Games to Chinese coach. —MNA

Support groups, volunteers for events of 27th SEA Games in Yangon Region honoured

Yangon, 23 Dec—Yangon Region Government hosted a dinner in honour of those who provided technical and financial supports and voluntary services to the events of the 27th SEA Games in Yangon Region.

During the ceremony held at the Yangon Region Government Office today, Yangon Region Chief Minister U Myint Swe thanked them for their contributions to promotion the image of the region by holding the 27th SEA Games successfully.

Myanmar hosted the games with the aim of strengthening friendship, unity and cooperation among the regional countries, the chief minister said.

The motto of the 27th SEA Games in Myanmar is “Green, Clean and Friendship”.

The successful completion of the 27th SEA Games is a source of victory and pride of the country and has enhanced the country’s image, the chief minister added.

Before the dinner, the video message of President U Thein Sein was shown on projector screen. —MNA

Notice to Amyotha Hluttaw representatives

The Ninth Regular Session of First Amyotha Hluttaw will be held at the meeting hall of the Hluttaw Complex in Nay Pyi Taw at 10 am on Monday (13th January, 2014). Invitation letters have been sent to Amyotha Hluttaw representatives.

Amyotha Hluttaw representatives are requested to report at Amyotha Hluttaw Affairs Hall (I-19) of Nay Pyi Taw not later than 12 January and not earlier than 11 January whether or not they received the invitation letters and bring their representative registration cards and representative scrutiny cards.

Notice to Pyithu Hluttaw representatives

The Ninth Regular Session of First Pyithu Hluttaw will be held at the meeting hall of the Hluttaw Complex in Nay Pyi Taw at 10 am on Monday (13th January, 2014). Invitation letters have been sent to Pyithu Hluttaw representatives.

Pyithu Hluttaw representatives are requested to report at the Hluttaw Office of Nay Pyi Taw not later than 12 January and not earlier than 11 January whether or not they received the invitation letters and bring their representative registration cards and representative scrutiny cards.

Thai baht slumps as protesters seek to block election

Bangkok, 23 Dec—The Thai baht plummeted its lowest in almost four years on Monday as a political crisis grew more intractable, with anti-government protesters trying to block candidates registering for a February election that is looking increasingly uncertain.

Police estimated more than 200,000 protesters rallied across the capital on Sunday to demand Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra resign. She has called a snap election for February 2 to defuse tension but the opposition Democrat Party will boycott the poll and demonstrators are determined to scuttle the plan.

The stalemate is all too familiar after eight years of deadlock broadly between supporters and opponents of Yingluck’s brother, Thaksin Shinawatra, a tycoon whose populist political machine has won every election since 2001 with millions of votes from the rural poor in the north and northeast.

Opposed to Thaksin is a Bangkok-based establishment of top generals and old-money families threatened by his rapid rise and angered by his ability to influence politics from self-imposed exile in Dubai.

They have backed protests against Thaksin’s governments since 2005 and the party they favor, the Democrats, has not won an election in 21 years.

Yingluck refuses to quit and said the Democrats’ election boycott would complicate the political reforms all sides want.—Reuters