First phase of Kaladan Multipurpose Project to be completed by 2014 June

The first phase of Kaladan Multipurpose Transportation Project which is jointly being implemented by Myanmar and India, will be completed by June 2014, according to the project’s contractor Essar Company. The installation port-cum-inland waterway, the first phase of the project, has been completed by 70 percent. Essar Company is implementing the project in three phases. Phase one is the construction of Sittway Deep Seaport and Paletwa jetty, dredging the Kaladan waterway and construction of six vessels.

In the second phase, finalization of design for a 109.2 km-long-road linking Paletwa with the border region is being carried out. According to Mizoram’s State Government, construction of a highway between Mizoram State and Chin State has completed about 60 km as third phase. President U Thein Sein said at the 11th ASEAN-India Summit held in New Delhi that the completion of waterways and highways crossing Rakhine and Chin States would help support better transport and trade between the regional countries.

Upon cent-per-cent completion of the project, India will hand over to Myanmar, and Myanmar will carry out maintenance works. Myanmar government and Indian government signed the contract for Kaladan Multipurpose Transportation Project in 2008.

The Project is expected to be fully operational by 2015. The financing for the entire Project is estimated at US $214 million.

Byline: CL Han Ngar, Photo: Asianfame Media Group
Talks on rural development given

TOUNGOO, 25 Dec—Talks on conservation of fish resources, boosting of fish production and rural development were held at the hall of Affiliated Basic Education Middle School in Nyaunggon Village of Kyaukkyi Township in Toungoo District in Bago Region recently.

Head of Bago Region Fisheries Department U Kyaw Min, Head of District Fisheries Department U Win Tin, Kyaukkyi Township Administrator U Myint Khaing and Head of Township Fisheries Department Daw Khin Myo Naing gave lectures on rural development.

It was attended by about 300 students and local people.

Kyaukkyi Township Fisheries Entrepreneurs presented two exercise books each to students.

Migratory bird lands in football ground in Hpa-an Township

HPA-AN, 25 Dec—A migratory bird arrived at the football ground of Hlaka Village in Hpa-an Township of Kayin State on 20 December afternoon, according to the villagers.

A large bird landed in the football ground near the house of U Myat Thway in Hlaka Village. He did not know the species of bird. But he though it may be a rare species.

“Due to the falling, the chest and left wing were broken. I gave it first aid treatment with the use of traditional medicine. Next, I referred it to a veterinarian to vaccinate it. I informed the police station to know the contacts for keeping the bird on 21 December. Thanks to surveinanc policeman Aung Myint Oo, I have got contact with District and Township Forest Departments. Officials of the township Forest Department examined the bird but it died at 3:30 pm,” said U Myat Thway.

The bird weighed five viss and 15 ticals. Each wing were 2.5 feet long. Two stretching wings were five feet wide.

It is estimated that the vulture species bird dopped there while flying to the southern part to take shelter in the cold season due to lower temperature in the northern part.

The bird was incinerated at 4pm on that day. —MMAI-Than Naing Oo (Hpa-an)

Ground breaking ceremony for new court in Ngaphe

NGAPHE, 25 Dec—The ground breaking ceremony for construction of new court was held in Ngaphe of Minbu District in Magway Region on 13 December morning.

It was attended by Pyithu Hluttaw MP U Hluttaung and members of universities, colleges and teachers of basic education schools, students, members of social organizations and local people totalling 67,463.

Mass walk activity of December continues for third week

PATHEIN, 25 Dec—The third week of mass walk activity in December was held in township of Pathein District in Ayeyawady Region on 21 December early morning.

The participants of the mass walk started walking in front of Pathein Township government office.

Ayeyawady Region Chief Minister U Thein Aung, the Chief Justice of the Region High Court, the Deputy Speaker of the Region Hluttaw and wife, the Region Ministers and their wives, the region advocates-general, the region auditor-general, the secretary of the region government and wife, region, district and township level officials, service personnel, faculty members of universities, colleges and teachers of basic education schools, students, members of social organizations and local people totalling 67,463 joined the mass walk activity.

They walked along Mahabandoola Road, and arrived at Shwe Statue as the finish line. Together with the Commander of South-West Command and wife and party, the mass walk participants took physical exercises. The region government served the participants in the mass walk with refreshments and foods.

Buddhist culture course opened in Bago

BAGO, 25 Dec—Bago Region Women’s Affairs Organization and Maternal and Child Welfare Supervisory Committee jointly organized the Buddhist culture course at the town hall in Hanthawady Ward of Bago on 21 December.

Chairperson of Region WAO and MCWSC Daw May Thu made a speech on the occasion.

The course run two days. —The course was conducted by Sayamgunyi Maha Saddhamma Jotika Daw Khin Hla Tin of Dhamma Byuha Sasana Mamaka Group and party.

The course was also attended by Patron of Bago Region WAO and MCWSC Daw Myint Myint Soe and Daw Tin Maw, chairpersons of district and township WAOs and MCWAs, teachers and members of Bago Region Police Force, totalling about 600. —MMAI-Than Zin

Vehicle donated to Phyusin Myitta Social Association

PATHEIN, 25 Dec—A ceremony to donate a vehicle by Shweyinay Maha Sasana Yeikha Sayadaw Bhaddanta Pannajota to Phyusin Myitta Social Association was held at Dhamma Sitagu Patana Dhammayon of Ayeyawady Region on 19 December.

Sayadaw Bhaddanta Paññajota administered the Five Precepts. The Sayadaw explained the purpose of donation and handed over documents related to the vehicle to Chairman of the association U Than Tun Naing.

On behalf of the association, Patron of the association Captain Nyunt Lwin (Retd) spoke words of thanks. —MMAI-Pathein Hla Kyi

Hsipaw’s firefighters put out fire of 12-wheeled truck

HSIPAW, 25 Dec—A fire broke out at a truck driven by Ko Mya Win loaded with wires and bulbs heading for Mandalay from Muse on Mandalay-Lashio Highway near Khonlon Village of Nawngan Village-tract in Hsipaw’s firefighters put out fire of 12-wheeled truck.

The vehicle lost over K 10.5 million in outbreak of fire. —MMAI-Sai (Hsipaw)
Storms wreak havoc in Britain, France on Christmas Eve

London/ Paris, 25 Dec— Hurricane-force winds and torrential rain disrupted transport networks and cut power supplies in Britain and France on Tuesday, one of the busiest travel days of the year just before Christmas, pushing the death toll to at least six people.

Winds of up to 90 mph hit both sides of the Channel with heavy downpours causing flooding, traffic jams, and cancellations of rail, flight and ferry services. In Britain the number of people killed in two days of storms rose to at least five after a man died trying to rescue his dog from fast-flowing waters in Devon, southwest England. A teenager died in France on Monday after a wall collapsed on him.

Airports in southern England were disrupted, with some flights from Britain’s busiest airport, Heathrow, canceled or delayed. Britain’s second busiest airport, Gatwick, said one terminal had been hit by a major power outage on Tuesday and storm damage had temporarily cut all trains to the airport. Passengers on a train heading to Plymouth in Devon spent the night stranded in the town of Taunton, tweeting photos of their ‘bed’, a seat, but no- praisely staff. British train operators canceled hundreds of services on Tuesday morning.

The United Kingdom was expected to hurt British retailers, eager to cash in on the traditional pre-Christmas rush. “Given retailers’ hopes that the last couple of days before Christmas would see a final strong surge in sales, the awful weather could not have come at a worse time,” said IHS analyst Howard Archer.

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Pakistan, India senior commanders hold rare border meeting

Islamabad, 25 Dec — Pakistan and India held the first face-to-face meeting of senior military commanders in 13 years, since the Kargil crisis in 1999 which brought the two countries to the brink of a full-scale war. Pakistan Army Major Gen Aamer Riaz and his Indian counterpart Lt Gen Vinod Bhatia, who are responsible for deployment of troops in the two countries in times of peace and war, led the delegations from two sides to the meeting held on the Pakistani side of the Wagah-Attari border crossing near Lahore.

The two men usually talk to each other on a hotline. “Both sides reiterated resolve and commitment to continue efforts for ensuring ceasefire, peace and tranquility on the Line of Control,” said a joint statement issued after the talks, referring to the de facto border in divided Kashmir.

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Pakistan to host talks on eliminating Syria chemical arsenal

Moscow, 25 Dec — Russia will host international talks on Friday on the elimination of Syria’s chemical weapons, Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said.

The meeting in Moscow will draw together experts from Russia, the United States, Syria, the United Nations and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), Ryabkov told Voice of Russia radio on Tuesday.

Syria agreed to abandon its chemical weapons under a deal proposed by Russia to avert potential US military action after a deadly 21 August sarin gas attack the United States blamed on President Bashar al-Assad’s government.

A plan adopted by the OPCW in The Hague last month called for the most critical chemicals to be transported out of Syria by 31 December and destroyed by mid-March. All other declared chemical materials would be eliminated by 30 June.

“We are certain that we will be able to complete the process in this agreed timeframe, meaning in the first half of the coming year,” said Ryabkov.

Russia sent trucks and armored vehicles to Syria last week to transport toxics to the port city of Latakia for shipment out of the war zone by sea. Russia has been Assad’s most powerful supporter during the Syrian conflict, blocking attempts to push him from power or punish him with sanctions.

Along with the United States and the United Nations, Russia is helping to organize a peace conference scheduled to start on 22 January in Switzerland.

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US calls for immediate political talks in S Sudan

Washington, 25 Dec — The United States urged South Sudanese President Salva Kiir and former Vice President Riek Machar to end hostilities and begin mediating political talks, according to a statement issued by State Department on Tuesday.

US Special Envoy to Sudan and South Sudan, Donald Booth, is in the South Sudanese capital Juba to secure final commitment from Kiir and Machar to begin talks that could begin “in the coming days”, State Department spokesperson Jen Psaki said in the statement.

Booth is working with leaders from the Inter-Governmental Authority for Government nations to arrange for the negotiations, Psaki added.

Kiir said he was ready to begin talks with Machar “without preconditions” to end the current crisis in South Sudan. Booth told reporters on Monday.

Deadly clashes have escalated in South Sudan since 15 Dec, following what Kiir’s government claimed was an attempted coup by soldiers loyal to Machar, who was dismissed in July.

“The US urges all parties in the crisis in South Sudan to implement an immediate cessation of hostilities,” Psaki said.

An end to hostilities will offer critical humanitarian access to people in dire need and open a space for a mediated political dialogue between the opposing sides, she added.

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Iran parliament pushes for changing capital

Teheran, 25 Dec— Iran’s Majlis (parliament) voted on Tuesday for the generalities of a plan which calls for changing the political and administrative capital of the country, official IRNA news agency reported.

The plan, if receives final approval, will turn into a law which will enforce the formation of a council to study the new location of the political and administrative capital of Iran.

Iran urges the decentralization move following the problems like overpopulation, severe pollution, high rate of crimes and heavy traffic jam in Teheran over the past years.

Changing the capital has been at the core of discussions among officials and scholars in the past decades, but critics have been drawing on the financial burden of the plan and thwarted it.

Teheran, with around nine million population, is Iran’s largest city. Centralization policies of the Iranian government, after the Islamic revolution in 1979, have pushed hundreds of thousands of people to move to Teheran each year in search for job, good education, healthcare services, and a better life.

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A UN chemical weapons expert, wearing a gas mask, holds a plastic bag containing samples from one of the sites of an alleged chemical weapons attack in the Ain Tarma neighbourhood of Damascus on 29 Aug, 2013.

Reuters

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A Chelsea pensioner waits amongst crowds who were delayed or had trains cancelled due to storms, at Waterloo Station in London on 24 Dec, 2013.

Reuters

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Reuters

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A Chelsea pensioner waits amongst crowds who were delayed or had trains cancelled due to storms, at Waterloo Station in London on 24 Dec, 2013.

Reuters
SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Spacewalkers install new station cooling pump

CAPE CANAVERAL, 25 Dec — Two NASA astronauts spent more than seven hours working outside the International Space Station on Tuesday and successfully repaired a critical cooling system.

It was the second spacewalk in three days for flight engineers Rick Mastracchio and Mike Hopkins, who wrapped up the cumbersome work with only one problem.

As they were installing a spare cooling pump, a sprinkling of ammonia crystals leaked out from one of four fluid lines. The toxic liquid turns to flakes in the cold and weightlessness environment of space.

The astronauts spent an extra 15 minutes in the station’s Quest airlock to bake out any potential residue on their spacesuits. The 7.5-hour spacewalk was broadcast live on NASA Television.

“It took a couple of licks to get her done, but we got it,” Hopkins radiated to flight controllers at NASA’s Mission Control Centre in Houston.

The new pump will not be fully tested until later on Tuesday, but an initial check in the final hour of the spacewalk showed it was “alive and well,” reported NASA mission commentator Rob Navias.

During a spacewalk on Saturday, the astronauts removed a failed cooling system pump and attached it to a temporary storage site at the base of the station’s mobile rail cart.

NASA is considering a potential future spacewalk to repair the refrigerator-size pump and use it as a spare, officials said.

In addition to the new pump installed on Tuesday, there are two other spare pumps aboard the station, a $100 billion research complex that flies about 260 miles above Earth.

The US side of the station, which includes Japanese and European laboratories, has been without half its cooling system since 11 December when a valve failed inside a pump. The six-member crew was never in any danger, NASA said, but both cooling systems are needed to radiate heat from the station’s modules and laboratories.

With just one cooling loop, astronauts had to turn off unnecessary equipment and some science experiments. The Russian part of the station has a separate cooling system.

The spacewalks were NASA’s first since July when the water-cooled spacesuit worn by Italian astronaut Luca Parmitano developed a leak. His helmet began filling with water, a situation that could have caused him to drown if the spacewalk was not quickly aborted.

Engineers at the time traced the problem to contaminated water in a device that circulates water and air in a spacesuit and takes moisture out of the air. How the water became contaminated remains under investigation.

As a precaution, the helmets worn by Mastracchio and Hopkins were outfitted with moisture-absorbent pads and snorkels that could draw air from the belly of the spacesuits in case the problem recurred.

No leaks were reported, Navias said.

Softbank mulls acquiring T-Mobile

TOKYO, 25 Dec — Softbank Corp is considering acquiring T-Mobile US Inc. as early as next spring, sources close to the matter said on Wednesday.

Softbank, one of Japan’s largest mobile phone carriers, is studying the possibility of buying a majority stake in the US No 4 carrier through Sprint Nextel Corp that was bought by the Japanese company in July, according to the sources.

The deal is expected to top 2 trillion yen in value, they said.

In the US mobile phone market, the top two of Verizon Wireless and AT&T boast more than 100 million subscribers each, against about 55 million for Sprint. With the acquisition of T-Mobile, if realized, Softbank would come close to the top two with a subscriber base of nearly 100 million.

Softbank is in talks with T-Mobile’s German parent, Deutsche Telekom, according to the sources.

But Softbank will have to overcome a regulatory hurdle. Deutsche Telekom agreed in 2011 to sell T-Mobile to AT&T, but the deal was opposed by the US Justice Department because of antitrust concerns.

Handheld food scanner, mobile app developed to ‘check food as easily as mail’

MUMBAI, 25 Dec — Researchers have developed a handheld food scanner that connects to your smartphone to inform you about allergens, chemicals, nutrients and calories present in any food item.

The device ‘TellSpec’, developed in Toronto, can simply be pointed at a food item, to identify what’s in it.

For the calorie conscious, TellSpec can break down the amount of sugars, fats and more per gram of a scanned food item.

The device aims to help people make clean food choices by letting them “check their food as easily as they check their mail,” its makers said.

The scanner utilises a small Raman spectrometer, a unique cloud-based algorithm and a simple smartphone app. Scanning a food item on the plate or in a shopping aisle is as simple as aiming TellSpec at it and pushing a button.

It beams a low-powered laser at the item and analyses the reflected light waves to identify the chemical makeup of the food, “Gizmag” reported.

This data is uploaded to the analysis engine which processes the information, compares it to reference spectra, interprets the results with the help of a database, and downloads the results to the user’s smartphone.

It efficiently identifies foods and their ingredients approximately 97.7 percent of the time after scanning the food’s surface.—PTI
Tokyo, 25 Dec — The Nikkei stock index finished above the 16,000 threshold for the first time in six years on Wednesday, extending its winning streak to a sixth trading day, as market sentiment was buoyed by continued gains on Wall Street following upbeat economic data.

The 225-issue Nikkei Stock Average ended up 120.66 points, or 0.76 percent, from Tuesday at 16,009.99, its highest close since 11 December, 2007. The broader Topix index of all First Section issues on the Tokyo Stock Exchange finished 0.63 point, or 0.05 percent, higher at 1,258.18.

Major gainers included the paper and pulp, marine transport, and construction sectors, while the oil and coal, utility and mining sectors lost ground.

Kyodo News

Photo shows a display at an office of a money broker in Tokyo.

New York, 25 Dec — Less than half of people with diabetes-related eye disease have been told about it, which means they’re also missing out on treatment that could save their sight, US researchers say.

In nationwide surveys of adults with diabetic macular edema — a condition that can ultimately lead to blindness — just 45 percent of respondents said they had been informed by their doctor that diabetes had affected their eyes. Nearly 30 percent already had vision loss in the affected eye.

It’s important to catch the signs of diabetic macular edema (DME) early because it can be treated, Dr Neil M. Bressler said. He led the study at the Wilmer Eye Institute of Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine and Hospital in Baltimore.

DME commonly causes DME, which is a thickening of the eye’s retina. That change can be detected in an eye exam that includes dilation of the pupils. Left untreated, DME is likely to cause progressive vision loss.

Degeneration of the retina in people with diabetes, known as diabetic retinopathy — which is often caused by DME — is the leading cause of blindness in the US, Bressler and his colleagues write in the journal JAMA Ophthalmology.

Many US medical authorities recommend annual eye checks for diabetics to monitor early signs of vision problems, but many people with diabetes do not get the proper type or frequency of eye care (see Reuters Health story of December 10, 2013 here).

The survey data Bressler’s team used included patient questionnaires and physical examinations, so people with vision loss could be identified even if they themselves were unaware of the changes in their sight.

The researchers considered a subset of 800 people from the survey who reported having diabetes, which affects 25.8 million people in the US, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Of the 800 self-reporting diabetics, the physical exam confirmed that 238 had diabetic retinopathy without DME and 48 had DME.

Some 60 percent of those with DME said they had undergone an eye exam with pupil dilation within the past year. But only 45 percent said their doctor told them about the changes

Kyodo News

Japan’s top 3 automakers post record overseas output in November

Tokyo, 25 Dec — Japan’s top three automakers posted record overseas production in November, due largely to solid demand in China, according to data released on Wednesday.

Toyota Motor Corp.’s overseas output increased 16.4 percent from a year earlier to 266,817 units. Overseas output increased from 506,742 units on the back of improving market conditions in Asia, particularly China where the firm saw a sales slump last year.

Nissan Motor Co produced 381,950 units abroad, up 26.8 percent, while Honda’s overseas output rose 21.0 percent to 301,403 units. Toyota’s domestic production gained 3.5 percent from a year before to 266,817 units.

Honda Motor Co Fit cars head down the assembly line at the firm’s Saitama Prefecture plant in November.

Sony, Panasonic to dissolve tie-up in OEL TV display business

Tokyo, 25 Dec — Sony Corp. and Panasonic Corp. will dissolve their partnership developing organic electroluminescent television displays as they have not been able to establish a cost-effective means of mass production, sources close to the two companies said on Wednesday.

The Japanese electronics makers, which have jointly developed the displays for one and a half years, will end the tie-up as the contract expires at the end of this year.

But the two companies will continue development of OEL TV technology independently.

Improving the profitability of their respective TV divisions has been an urgent challenge for both Sony and Panasonic. For the time being, the companies will focus their financial and personnel resources for the development of “4K” liquid crystal display TVs, which show images at four times the resolution of high definition, the sources said.

Under the partnership, Sony and Panasonic were planning to catch up with South Korean rivals LG Electronics Inc and Samsung Electronics Co, but they could not maintain the quality of the panel nor lower production costs. Uncertain market outlooks for the next-generation TV displays also prompted them to end the deal, the sources said.

The South Korean pioneers have also been struggling with its OEL display business due to high costs.

Mt Fuji’s admission fee set at 1,000 yen

KOFU, (Japan), 25 Dec — Local prefectures on Wednesday agreed to collect a 1,000 yen admission fee from climbers on Mt Fuji from next summer on a voluntary basis.

Yamanashi and Shizuoka prefectures, which the volcanic mountain straddles, will allocate the revenue from the scheme to environmental projects and safety measures around the trails to counter the increasing number of climbers, prefectural officials said.

Upon Mt Fuji’s registration on the UNESCO world heritage site this year, the local authorities are speeding up the measures to accommodate an increased number of climbers, including restoration of toilets and first aid stations along the trails.

The authorities aim to collect the fee in principle from every adult who enters the fifth station of Mt Fuji while seeking contributions from children and disabled visitors to the extent they can. The prefectures may make admission fees compulsory in the future if necessary, the officials said. The fees are to be collected at the entrances to the trails in the summer peak season. The prefectures will also consider a scheme allowing climbers to pay the fee in advance online or at convenience stores, the officials said.

The authorities will solicit opinions from the public from late December to early January regarding the new scheme, before officially adopting it at a meeting on 22 January. During the 10-day trial period this summer, about 34,000 climbers paid a total of some 34 million yen. The total number of climbers in the summer peak season of July and August reached 370,000 this year.

File photo shows Mt Fuji, seen from near the border between the cities of Fujinomiya and Shizuoka Prefecture.

Many with diabetes unaware of vision loss

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Kyodo News

Photo shows the display at an office of a money broker in Tokyo.

Photo shows Sony OEL TV.

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At first Christmas as pope, Francis urges openness to God

VATICAN, 25 Dec — Pope Francis, celebrating his first Christmas as leader of the world’s 1.2 billion Roman Catholics, on Tuesday urged people to shun pride and selfishness and open up their hearts to God and their fellow man. 

Francis, who last March became the first non-European pope in 1,300 years, celebrated a solemn Christmas Eve Mass for some 10,000 people in a packed St Peter’s Basilica as hundreds of others watched on megascreens in the square outside. The great bells of the basilica, the same that rang to announce his election on 13 March, sounded when the Sistine Chapel Choir intoned the Gloria, a prayer which starts with the words the Bible says angels sang on the night Jesus was born in Bethlehem.

Francis delivered a short homily that was as simple as his white vestments: Man can choose between darkness and light. “... On the part of the people there are times of both light and darkness, fidelity and infidelity, obedience, and rebellion; times of being a pilgrim people and times of being a people adrift,” he said, speaking in Italian.

“In our personal history, there are both bright and dark moments, lights and shadows. If we love God and our brothers and sisters, we walk in the light; but if our heart is closed, if we are dominated by pride, deceit, self-seeking, then darkness falls within us and around us,” he said.

Francis, who consecrated the Mass with more than 300 cardinals, bishops and priests, urged people not to be afraid to reach out to God. “Do not be afraid! Our Father is patient; he loves us; he gives us Jesus to guide us on the way which leads to the promised land. Jesus is the light who brightens the darkness. He is our peace,” he said.—Reuters

Venezuela’s Maduro visits Cuba for anniversary of Chavez-Castro meeting

HAVANA, 25 Dec — Visiting Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro on Monday reaffirmed strong ties with Cuba during talks with Cuban leader Raul Castro, the state-run Granma daily said.

Maduro travelled to Havana to celebrate the 19th anniversary of former Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez’s first visit to Cuba and his historic meeting with retired Cuban leader Fidel Castro in 1994, it said.

Maduro met Fidel on Saturday. Chavez died of cancer on 5 March. During a two-year battle with cancer, he had undergone four operations in Cuba and spent months receiving treatment on the island.—Xinhua

Ex-pilot says he performed duty in shooting down S Korea plane in 1983

SEOUL, 25 Dec — A former Soviet fighter pilot who shot down a South Korean jumbo jet in 1983, killing 269 people on board, has said he carried out his duty as a military officer but that he has had frequent nightmares about the incident. Gennady Osipovich, 69, a former lieutenant colonel, made the comments in a recent interview with Kyodo News in Mykopy, the capital of southern Russia’s Republic of Adygea, where he now lives.

Osipovich was 38 when he flew one of the 10 Soviet fighters which were scrambled from various air bases in Russian Far East after a Korean Air Lines’ Boeing 747 intruded into Soviet airspace over Sakhalin on 1 Sept, 1983. The jumbo jet of Korean Air Lines, which was renamed Korean Air after the tragedy, had strayed off course when it flew over Sakhalin. Osipovich, who began flying Sukhoi Su-15 fighters in Sakhalin in 1976, said he performed his duty in response to orders over the radio from his superior officer.

Following an order to shoot down the airliner, Osipovich said, he fired two missiles at the jetliner from a distance of about 5 kilometres, hitting the tail of the jumbo which then burst into flames.—Kyodo News

5,000 homes in west Ireland without power

DUBLIN, 25 Dec — Some 5,000 homes in west Ireland are without power due to a lightning storm on Tuesday, state media reported. State broadcaster RTE quoted ESB, Ireland’s premier electricity utility, as saying that the areas worst affected was north County Mayo.

Repair crews have now restored power to most of west County Galway. Repair crews are also working to restore power to homes on the Aran island in County Galway after power outages were reported there over the past 24 hours. Earlier on Tuesday, as many as 17,500 homes were without power, according to ESB.

Meanwhile, Irish telecommunications company Eircom said almost 8,000 of its customers were without power in the west, southwest and east of the country due to lightning strikes. It said it expected to clear 800 faults on Tuesday.

Met Eireann, the Irish national meteorological service, said an Orange wind warning was still in place and the weather would remain blustery. However, it expected there conditions will improve by the end of the day. Irish ferries service has cancelled fast ferry sailings on Tuesday due to the stormy weather and passengers will now be accommodated on conventional crafts.—Xinhua

Italian migrant centre cleared after protests

ROME, 25 Dec — Italian authorities began clearing a migrant reception centre on the island of Lampedusa on Tuesday after a row over harsh living conditions that prompted detainees to sew their lips together in protest.

The facility, originally intended to house up to 850 migrants for up to 48 hours before transfer to other centres, has been steadily transformed into a long-term refugee camp where detainees are housed in overcrowded, unsanitary conditions, prompting domestic and international criticism.

Deputy Interior Minister Filippo Bubbico told the daily Avvenire newspaper that 200 migrants would be transferred to other centres. Only 17 individuals, still caught up in registration processes that require their identities be established before they are moved, would remain, he said.

Shahid Chaouki, a deputy of the centre-left Democratic Party who went to see the group’s training camps which hospital officials said were used to house up to 850 migrants, said it was “a criminal and cowardly act”.—Reuters

Israeli civilian, Palestinian girl killed in Gaza flare-up

GAZA, 25 Dec — A Gaza sniper shot dead an Israeli civilian over the border on Tuesday and Israel hit back with air strikes on two Hamas training camps which hospital officials said killed a Palestinian girl near one of the targets. The Israeli man, who the military said was working on Israeli’s security fence, was the first Israeli killed on the Gaza frontier in more than a year.

His death, which drew a swift threat of retaliation from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, came amid heightened tensions after two suspected Palestinian attacks — a bus bombing near Tel Aviv on Sunday that caused no casualties and the wounding of an Israeli policeman in a stabbing on Monday.

Officials from Hamas, the Islamic group which rules Gaza, and witnesses said Israeli aircraft bombed the group’s training camps in Khan Younis and al-Bu-Reij. Witnesses said Israeli military medical workers treat an Israeli worker wounded near the Israel-Gaza border, on 24 Dec, 2013.—Reuters

Israeli tanks fired shells east of Gaza city. Gaza hospital officials said a three-year-old girl was killed by shrapnel during the Israeli strike on the Bureij facility. They had initially estimated her age at two years.

She was standing with other family members outside their home near the camp and two of her brothers were wounded, the officials said. In a statement, Hamas condemned the girl’s death as “a criminal and cowardly act.”—Reuters

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**40 trucks of int’l relief aid to be delivered to Syria**

**ISTANBUL, 25 Dec—** An international convoy with 40 trucks loaded with relief supplies, including food, medicine, clothing and heating material will leave from the Turkish borders for Syria on Wednesday, a Turkish NGO said on Tuesday.

The announcement was made in a Press conference in Istanbul with the participation of members of Syrian National Coalition (SNC), the biggest opposition umbrella in exile and the representatives of International Union of Muslim Scholars.

All trucks have gathered in Turkish border areas of Hatay, Gaziantep and Sanliurfa on Tuesday and they will enter Syria on Wednesday, as the weather conditions deteriorate in the war-worn country.

As many as 36 local and international civil society organizations took part in the relief efforts initiated by the Turkish Foundation for Human Rights and Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief (IHH) under the slogan of “Pulse of Life,” and have gathered 1 million US dollars worth of aid.

The convoy, which is expected to distribute the relief inside Syria within a month, is also joined by activists from Qatar, Kuwait, Sudan, Pakistan, Bahrain, Lebanon, Turkey and France. Currently, the total number of Syrian refugees hosted in Turkey is key hosts 600,000 of them. According to UN’s latest report, this figure is expected to double by the end of 2014.—**Xinhua**

**Russia says preparing to lift Lithuanian dairy ban**

**MOSCOW, 25 Dec—** Russia is preparing to lift a suspension it imposed on the import of Lithuanian dairy products in October, Russian news agency RIA reported on Tuesday.

The head of Russian’s consumer protection agency indicated that Russia and Lithuania had resolved differences in talks.

“As of today, based on the results of the meeting, documents allowing for the delivery of (dairy) products are being drafted, state-run RIA quoted Rosputrenadzor’s acting director, Anna Popova, as saying.

Russia halted dairy imports from Lithuania on 7 October, putting pressure on the cheese-producing European Union member before a summit there on 28-29 November at which Ukraine had been expected to sign a trade deal with the EU.

Ukraine baulked at the last minute, shelving preparations for the EU deal and instead pledging to forgo closer ties with Russia. Russia last week agreed a $15 billion bailout for Kiev and promised to cut the price it pays for gas.

Lithuania had threatened to refer Moscow to the World Trade Organization over what its president called “trade obstacles.”

Russia has been criticized for using trade restrictions as a political lever. Similar import bans in the past decade have included Georgian wine and mineral water, Moldavian wine and vegetables from the European Union.—**Reuters**

**Snowden says mission already accomplished**

**WASHINGTON, 25 Dec—** Edward Snowden, a former National Security Agency (NSA) contractor who disclosed the agency’s secrets and forced the US government to revaluate its surveillance policies, has said his mission is accomplished.

“For me, in terms of personal satisfaction, the mission’s already accomplished,” Snowden told the Washington Post in his first in-person interview published online on Tuesday since his June arrival in Russia, which granted him a one-year temporary asylum.

“I already won. As soon as the journalists were able to work, everything that I had been trying to do was validated,” said Snowden, whose revelations showed secret legal authorities empowered the NSA to sweep in the telephone, Internet and location records of whole populations.

“But, remember, I didn’t want to change society. I wanted to give society a chance to determine if it should change itself,” Snowden said.

“All I want was for the public to be able to have a say in how they are governed,” he said. “That is a milestone we left a long time ago. Right now, all we are looking at are stretch goals.”

At his year-end news conference held on Friday, US President Barack Obama defended the NSA’s domestic spying programmes while promising some reforms in the upcoming new year. Obama said he would review the reform recommendations by a presidential advisory panel during his holiday break starting on Friday, and would make a “pretty definitive statement” in January about some reforms.

Obama’s comments came in a week in which a federal judge declared the NSA’s collection programme probably was unconstitutional.—**Xinhua**

**Britain extradites ex-billionaire to Algeria**

**ALGIERS, 25 Dec —** Britain extradited Algerian former billionaire Abdelmoumene Rafik Khalifa to his homeland, APS news agency reported. King is a statement of the Justice Ministry.

Khalifa is wanted by the Algerian justice on charges of embezzlement, fraud and conspiracy, as he was tried in absentia in 2007 and was sentenced to life imprisonment.

In 2009, the wanted billionaire took refuge in Britain after his business collapsed.

He was refused to leave to appeal to the British Supreme Court on 3 Dec, and was due to be extradited within 28 days of that date, media reported, quoting a statement of the British Home Office.

The extradition of Khalifa was proceeded on 24 December, as it is “in line with legal procedures and provisions of the relevant judicial agreement between Algeria and the United Kingdom,” APS said quoting the statement. Earlier this month, a source close to the file revealed to Xinhua that the British Home Office notified Algerian authorities that Khalifa suffers mental problems and takes anti-depression drugs.—**Xinhua**

**Mali to pardon rebel group of Ansar Dine**

**ALGIERS, 25 Dec —** Senior Algerian officials are currently brokering peace talks between the Malian authorities and Ansar Dine, one of the rebel groups in northern Mali, a local security source told Xinhua on Tuesday, adding that the mediation would lead to an amnesty.

The Malian authorities would declare an amnesty for the Islamist fighters, who participated in the 2012 uprising in Mali to achieve a permanent end of hostility between the two parties, the source said.

The peace talks were first launched in last April in Algeria’s southernmost province of Tamanrasset, on the border with Mali, between representatives of the rebel movement and Algerian officials, the source said, adding the Malian authorities then joined the negotiations. —**Xinhua**
NEW Light of Myanmar

Welcome to selling season

The shopping season has just entered with flock of ads of discounts and promotion by supermarkets alongside the Christmas and holiday season. There is no distinct shopping season for us as the western culture does not have much influence. For us, the whole year round is yet the shopping season.

We, the Myanmar people, tend more to be excessive buyers than smart sellers. We mostly trade the raw materials rather than selling the fine products. We are great producers but poor sellers. Since the new government took office, the President has laid down the policies to steer the country into selling the fine products rather than trading raw materials. The most distinct example is that the country will no more trade timber logs as from 2014.

In revitalizing the country’s economy, we should pay due attention to raise spending power of each individual in the economy through stronger manufacturing industry while raising the consumption. We should no more be consumers with limited spending power, but producers with strong consumption. To encourage production, the government and monetary service providers should provide loans to innovative producers. The great importance should also be attached to the relaxation of procedures to register the small-scaled and medium-scaled enterprises and protect them in a legal framework.

Historic Town “Sale”

U Ponnya, a native of Sale became a famous writer-playwright in late Kombuang Period of Mon monarchy. The story of Khan Gyi “was an honorific prefix to the name of a learned monk teacher.” Saka-rim means Myanmar Era and the year 1185 corresponds to AD 1823. Shin Maha Labba is the name of the Image meaning “Lord Great Fortu-

tune Buddha.” “Man Phaya means the Image of Lacquered wicker work.” Yon Phaya Gyi means Great Lacquered Image of the Buddha. ME 1185 is not the year of the making of the image. It is the year in which the image was enshrined in the building.

Local history of the image is a make-believe story one early morning of high water season while the River Ayeyawaddy was flooding, some fishermen saw the image among bil-lows of water. When they broke the news, towns people excitedly came down to the river side to retrieve the image from the mighty waves. But their attempts were obstructed by heavy rain and rapid current casting away all boats and driv- ers. They decided to give up their salvage work. At that moment an old woman named Daw Bwe of Pwe village quarter came down to the river side and paid homage to the image on the waves making her vow “Oh, Sacred Image, Pray take residence in Sale. I’ll take care of the Image and support for you!” Soon after that vow was made the image miraculously moved upstream, defying waves and came with the salvage party.

The Image was taken to a lake, to the south of the town, where it was put on a sledge and carried to the present site, which was origi-nally a small natural mound. Its top was fashioned into a pedestal for the Image to rest on. A monk named U Prive brought local lacquer master to make the Image. Daw Bwe fulfilled her vow by building a wooden shrine to house the Image and gilding the Image. She initiated an annual festival in honour of the Image in the month of May and the other for U Kyin U. Elderly readers and old generations much prefer U Kyin U’s writings as being ma-tured and dignified. Whereas younger generations cher-ished U Ponnya’s products and they relished his jokes and social and political satires. While U Kyin U’s hu-mour was dry and subtle, U Ponnya’s writings were crammed with blatant wards, sarcasm and highbrow jokes sometimes amounting to the point of obscurity. So quick naturally young generations, especially male youths often quoted lines and jokes from his plays, mostly based upon Buddha’s jataka storie’s pio-neered later modern pyazats (slap-sticks). Even preacher monks and puppeteers quoted on his plays and wuthuth [novels] because they were poetic, eloquent and humourous. In spite of his brilliant liter- ary career U Ponnya unfor-tunately met an untimely end. One prominent play of his, Wizaya Pyazat involved him, rightly or wrongly in the Palace rebellion led by two sons of King Min-don, princes Myint Kyin and Myin Khone Taing. U Pon- nya was accused of inciting the two princes to turn against their royal father by writing Wizaya Pyazat. Without fair investigation and trial he was given death punishment on charge of high treason, not by royal order but by his enemies at the court.

Today “Sale” is prefixed to his name “U Ponnya”. So he was better called Sale U Ponnya. His manuscripts and original plays are kept in the Brit- ish Museum in London. To-day towns people of Sale are proud of U Ponnya. They should set up some kind of memorial in his honour. Sale seedless plums are now gaining international fame. But no one, right now, seems to cultivate it on commercial scale. Like the literature of Manx Island of the United Kingdom, Sale people like to say that Sale seedless plums cannot grow elsewhere, just as Manx tail- ed cats cannot be found elsewhere than where other than The Isle of Man. Modern genetic sci- ence may one day give an- swer to these two monopo- listic assumptions—tail-less cats and seedless plums of Sale.

Seeing is believing. So come to Sale to get eye wit- ness account of all in this article.
66th Anniversary Independence Day, 2014

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.

National Sports

Happy Learning with sports for children

YEKYI, 25 Dec—As part of efforts for enabling the students to happily learn education in the mass sports activity of December, Basic Education High School No 2 (Myoma) of Yekyi Township in Pathein District of Ayeyawady Region held the December sports activities at its sports ground on 23 December morning. Students participated in five sports events. The sports competition was supervised by the headmaster and teachers, Kyemon-Min Zaw Oo (Yekyi).

Health Care Activities

Hepatitis B vaccination given in Sagaing

SAGAING, 25 Dec—The medical checkup and vaccination of hepatitis B was held at the office of Town’s Elders Office and Myoma Market in Sagaing on 21 December.

Liver specialist Dr U Than Sitt and specialists plan to perform medical checkups and hepatitis B vaccination to the local people with Hepatitis B virus from Sagaing three times a year at fair prices.

At the health care services, over 410 patients received medical checkups with Hepatitis B and C viruses received medical checkups provided by specialists with the assistance of townsenders committee chairman U Zaw Win and Dr Hnin Hnin Sein. Kyemon-Nanda Min Lwin

Construction

Khontha Bridge under construction in Kalay

KALAY, 25 Dec—A wooden bridge linking East Khontha and West Khontha villages in Kalay Township was damaged in floods of Nerinzara River in last rainy season. The bridge floated in the river, so the local people faced difficulties in transport.

Under the instruction of Kalay District Management Committee U Maung Htoo, local people of West Khontha Village recently started reconstruction of over 200 feet long wooden bridge crossing Nerinzara River on a self-reliant basis.

Kalay Township Irrigation Department provides them a backpack to be used in construction tasks.—Kyemon-In Nine

Business Course (Trial Course) concludes

MANDALAY, 25 Dec—Jointly organized by Myanmar-Japan Human Resources Development Centre and Mandalay Region Chambers of Commerce and Industry, the Business Course (Trial Course) concluded at its office in Mandalay on 21 December morning.

Mandalay Region Minister for Planning and Economic U Aung Zan, Director-General U Hla Maw Oo of Directorate of Trade and Vice-Chairman of Mandalay Region CCI U Soe Myint presented certificates to 124 trainees. Kyemon-002

69th Street in Mandalay under construction from Mandalay Hill to Kywehsegan

MANDALAY, 25 Dec—The Engineering Department (Road and Bridge) of Mandalay City Development Committee is building the 69th Street which is the longest one from north to south of Mandalay.

The street will stretch from Mandalay Hill in Aungmyethazan Township Kywehsegan of Pyigyidagan Township.

The Leprosy Office of Health Department between 35th and 36th streets have been removed and the remaining road section is under construction as of early December. In the early 2014, the road can be commissioned into use.

For the first phase, the four-lane road was constructed round the Education College between 33rd and 35th streets. On completion of the road section between 66th and 35th streets and Theikpan street, the traffic congestions on 69th street may be reduced to some extent.

Thanks to the road construction, the prices of land plots and housing are rising day by day in Mahamyang Ward of Maahaguymye Township.

The price of land plot in Mahamyang Ward rose to K 100 million from K 50 million.—Kyemon-Thihia Ko Ko (Mandalay)

Three dead bodies found under overturned car

DAIKU, 25 Dec—A Canter with the load of fish driven by Ko Thar Gyi (a) Thet Paing Oo of Ward 5 in DaikU heading for Yangon from DaikU overturned at mile posts 80/2 and 80/3 on Yangon-Mandalay Highway near Tapin Village of Phaungdawthi police station area in DaikU Township of Bago Region on 21 December night.

In the incident, five passengers were pressed under the vehicle. Policemen from Phaungdawthi Police Station and members of DaikU Township Fire Services Department led by Township Head U Myo Swe and members of Phayagyi Auxiliary Fire Brigade rushed to the scene and carried out rescue works in time.

They could remove Nyein Chan, 30 of Ward 3 in DaikU and Ko Thu, 27 of Ward 3 in DaikU with serious injuries from the vehicle.

In the incident, U Thein Nyunt, 41 of Phaungwge Village, U Tin Hsan, 44 of Phaungwge Village and Ma Tu Mar, 25 of Ward 7 in DaikU died on the spot under the vehicle.

The injured were sent to DaikU Hospital in time. Phaungdawthi Police Station opened a file of lawsuit over the case. Kyemon-Thihia Yazar

Accident

Photo shows construction of a new wooden bridge across Nerinzara River in Kalay.

New Light of Myanmar
LOCAL NEWS

Thursday, 26 December, 2013 9
**Ukraine receives first tranche of Russian bailout**

Russia’s Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev (R) speaks with his Ukrainian counterpart Mykola Azarov during a meeting in Moscow on 24 Dec, 2013. — Reuters

**Suicide car bomb kills 15 at Egyptian police compound**

A man walks near debris after an explosion near a security building in Egypt’s Nile Delta city of Mansoura in Dakahlia Province, about 120 km (75 miles) northeast of Cairo on 24 Dec, 2013. — Reuters

**Turkey vows no cover-up despite purge of graft investigators**

Turkey’s president pledged on Tuesday there would be no cover-up in a high-level corruption case, despite a government-ordered purge of police investigating it that drew protests at home and a censure from the European Union.

**India downgrades immunity of US consulate officers**

India on Tuesday downgraded the diplomatic immunity of certain category of United States diplomats and withdrew the immunity enjoyed by their family members in reaction to an Indian woman diplomat by US police earlier this month, said local media. US consular officials in four consulates in India are being issued new ID cards specifying the limited immunity which will not protect them from serious offenses, said Press Trust of India.

**No genocide talks unless Aleppo bombardment ends**

The moves incensed many Turks who see an authoritarian streak in Erdogan and his Islamist-rooted AK party, and who are still simmering from huge anti-government protests in mid-2013. President Abdullah Gul, a more unifying figure, sought to calm the furor.

“Turkey is not the same place compared to 10 or 15 years ago. Many reforms have been carried out, in politics as well as in the law,” Gul said in his first public remarks on the case.

“In a country where such reforms have taken place, if there were corruption and mistakes they would not be covered up,” he told reporters, adding that “the independent, objective and democratic legal system (will) adjudicate the allegations in a manner that will not leave any question marks.”

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President Vladimir Putin offered Ukraine the lifeline last week, along with a big cut in the price Kiev pays for vital Russian gas supplies, as he tries to persuade Russia’s Slavic neighbor to join a customs union of ex-Soviet republics.

“Yesterday ... the first tranche of Ukrainian sovereign debt was acquired for $3 billion,” Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev told his Ukrainian counterpart Mykola Azarov at a meeting in Moscow, in televised comments.

“The money went to the central bank of Ukraine yesterday,” he said. Azarov confirmed Ukraine had received it. President Viktor Yanukovich’s pivot back to Moscow and away from an offer of closer trade ties with the EU has sparked huge protests in Ukraine, sometimes swelling to hundreds of thousands, and the creation of a tent camp in central Kiev.

The protesters accuse Yanukovich of selling out Ukraine’s Soviet-era overlords with the deal on debt and gas prices, which looks to have headed off what could have been a funding crisis for the Ukrainian state next year.

Azarov later joined Putin and other leaders of the Caspian, Belarus, Armeenia and Kyrgyzstan — ex-Soviet republics that have joined or plan to join trade alliances Russia is building, part of Moscow’s drive to restore its influence in its former empire.

January referendum on a new constitution.

“We heard a loud noise and I found blood all over my body,” one wounded man told state television, speaking from a hospital bed with his head wrapped in bandages. “We all ran downstairs to find our colleagues on the ground in blood.”

The attack prompted a cabinet statement declaring Mursi’s Muslim Brotherhood a terrorist organization, though officials did not directly accuse the group of staging the attack. The Brotherhood, which is already outlawed, condemned the bombing as “an attack on the unity of the Egyptian people”.

Later on Tuesday, hundreds of angry people in Mansoura stormed and torched buildings and shops they suspected to be owned by Brotherhood members, witnesses and state media said. Others attacked and torched an empty bus after earlier seeing one of its passengers flashing the four finger hand sign symbolizing the killing of hundreds of Mursi supporters at a protest camp broken up by the police in August.

The blast underlined the risk of militancy moving from the densely populated Nile Valley from the Sinai Peninsula, where attacks have killed some 200 soldiers in police since July.

“We face an enemy that has no religion or nation,” Interior Minister Mohamed Ibrahim, the survivor of an assassination attempt in Cairo in September, said at the scene of the blast.

The interior minister said the car bomb attack was carried out by a suicide bomber, citing evidence gathered at the scene.

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India has decided to take firm reciprocal steps following the end of the deadline for surrender of identity cards provided to US consular staff in India,” Indo-Asian News Service quoted unnamed sources as saying.

New Delhi has also decided that no cards will be given to family members of US consular officials, as the same courtesy is not extend- ed to Indians in the United States, according to the news service. India earlier used to extend cards to the family members of US missions.

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The move is seen as a step forward by India in its standoff with United States over the arrest of Indian diplomat Devyani Khobragade in New York on 12 Decem ber. Tuesday also saw the end of the deadline for surrendering the identity cards provided to US diplomats as was ordered by India.

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Okinawa governor arranging to approve landfill for US base relocation

Tokyo, 25 Dec — Okinawa Gov Hirokazu Nakaima is making final arrangements to approve within the week landfill work needed for the relocation of the US military’s Futenma air base within his prefecture, a source close to the matter said on Wednesday.

Nakaima is slated to meet later on Wednesday with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe who seeks to obtain local approval for the work needed to build a replacement facility for the US Marine Corps Futenma Air Station.

The governor’s decision would mark a major breakthrough in Japan-US efforts to follow through on their 1996 agreement on the relocation after years of political maneuvering amid stiff local opposition in Okinawa.

The Abe administration has called on Okinawa to accept a plan made in 2006 to build a replacement airstrip in an offshore area in Okinawa’s Nago to move the base from densely populated city of Ginowan.

Counterfeit HK$1,000 banknotes found in HK

Hong Kong, 25 Dec — Several fake HK$1,000 ($129) banknotes have turned up in Hong Kong, prompting the territory’s monetary authorities to call on local banks on Tuesday to speed up withdrawal of the 2003 series from circulation.

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority said the five banknotes bearing “fair resemblance” to genuine ones issued by the Bank of China Hong Kong in 2003 were spotted by two local banks on Monday.

“Until the HKMA will ask banks to speed up the process of withdrawing the 2003 series HK$1,000 banknotes from circulation,” it said in a statement.

A 2010 series of HK$1,000 banknotes with upgraded anti-forgery features is also in circulation.

The Hong Kong Police Force’s Criminal Crime Bureau said the bogus banknotes have better counterfeiting features than those seized previously, but they can still be spotted by people with a careful eye.

Among the differentiating features of the counterfeited genuine notes, patterns on the fake notes are smudged, the intaglio printing is flat, the watermark is less clear, the optical variable ink and fluorescent fibers have different tones, and the holographic windowed thread lines up on rough edges.

According to police, seized fake Hong Kong dollar banknotes are insignificant in number and mostly of better quality, being mainly produced by inkjet and toner printers with no security features and a smooth surface with no embossed feel. They sometimes even have the same serial number.

Indonesia’s Mount Sinabung may erupt again

Bekasi, (Indonesia), 25 Dec — Mount Sinabung, one of the most active volcanoes in Indonesia, may erupt again or find new seismic balance and be stable as its seismic activities remain high, agency said here on Tuesday.

Head of National Volcanology Agency, who goes with single name Suroono, foresees that the emergency relief period, which was to end on 4 January, is going to be extended as the tremors are still intense, dashing hope for 18,412 evacuees, who have been in shelters since last month, of returning home soon.

“The seismic activity of Sinabung is still high. I have not found out whether it is part of Sinabung activities to find new seismic balance and stable or to erupt again,” he told Xinhua.

Mount Sinabung in Karo district has rumbled to life since September after being dormant for four years, but it went over into drive in November, pushing more evacuation, hence the authorities expanded evacuation zone to 5 km from 3 km earlier. “I think the emergency relief period by up to 4 January can not cope with the mount seismic activity. I foresee it will be expanded again,” said Suroono, referring to the one week extension.

On 3 November, the 2,457-metre Mount Sinabung volcano in Karo district of North Sumatra witnessed its strongest eruption since September, shooting a column of ash up to 7,000 meters to the sky. The authorities have then raised the threat alarm of the volcano to top level.

The Mount Sinabung volcano is among the 129 active volcanoes in the vast archipelago country, which is vulnerable to seismic upheaval as it lies on the Pacific “Ring of Fire.”

Road accidents kill 1,727 people in Cambodia in 11 months

Phnom Penh, 25 Dec — Road accidents killed at least 1,727 people in Cambodia in the first 11 months of 2013, down 0.5 percent from the 1,735 deaths for the same period last year, a report by the Ministry of Public Work and Transimway said on Wednesday.

During the January-November period this year, there were 3,934 road accidents, up 0.7 percent from the 3,905 cases over the same period last year, the report said.

Besides the deaths, the accidents injured 6,490 people, down 4 percent from a 6,800. people.

Preap Chan Vibol, director of the Ministry’s Transport Department, said about 50 percent of the accidents were caused by overspeed driving, and the rest were caused by alcohol-related driving, neglect driving and law violation.

“For their own safety and others’ safety, I’d like to call on all drivers to drive with high responsibilities in order to avoid road accidents,” he said.

Road accident is still the number 1 killer in Cambodia.

Last year, traffic accidents killed 1,894 people, according to the Ministry’s report. The country lost about 300 million US dollars a year due to the accidents.

Thai protesters vow to hound PM, cling to promise to thwart poll

Bangkok, 25 Dec — Thai anti-government protesters abandoned efforts to block candidates from signing up for a February election after Tuesday’s protests, as the government seeks to hound Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra and cling to its promise to thwart a poll she is expected to hound.

“Tests opened at a Bangkok elite school to stop them when registration started, despite attempts by protesters — Road accidents killed at least 1,727 people in Cambodia in 11 months.” — Reuters

Vessels of the 15th and the 16th Chinese Navy escort fleet break the sailing formation in Gulf of Aden, on 22 Dec, 2013. The 15th convoy fleet began to return home on Sunday and the 16th fleet officially started its escort missions on its own.— Xinhua
The Hague, 25 Dec—

In 2013, Gasunie processed a record number of 113 billion cubic metres of gas, the Dutch gas infrastructure company said on Tuesday.

The old record amount was taken out of service.

The Dutch company processes record amount of gas in 2013

In addition, a few million cubic metres of gas, which was taken out of service.

In the Netherlands, gas transmission network with a total length of over 12,000 km, as well as a network of 3,100 km in Germany. The company was founded through a public-private partnership between Royal Dutch Shell, ExxonMobil and the Dutch state.

In 2006, Tibet started the construction of low-rent apartments, one kind of housing difficulties. These low-rent apartments, with an overall floor area of 300,000 square meters, will benefit about 20,000 people in 74 cities and counties around Tibet, said the Department of Housing and Urban-Rural Development of Tibet.

Tibet is striving to ensure all low-income families with housing difficulties receive subsidies or low-rent housing by 2015, said the department.
**NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR**

**ENTERTAINMENT**

**Brad Pitt, Angelina Jolie do Christmas shopping at discount store**

**S**YDNEY, 25 DEC — F**amous Hollywood couple, Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie were spotted at Target in Robina over the weekend, hitting a discount store to do some last-minute shopping for Christmas.

The A-list couple stopped by the budget retailers in Robina, north east Australia, on 22 December with their six children — 12-year old Maddox, 10-year old Pax, 8-year old Zahara, 7-year old Shiloh and 5-year old twins Knox and Vivienne — in tow.

The pair had made a special request to the store to stay open after its official hours so that they could shop without being disturbed by fans.

“They made sure no one was around to blow their cover. The store manager waited until everyone had gone home and opened it up secretly for them at 7:30 pm on Sunday.” An employee of the store told a newspaper.

“They shopped for an hour and a half to buy presents for their children and friends. Who would have thought people like them would do their shopping at Target?” the source added.

**Denise Richards denies keeping Charlie Sheen away from children**

**L**OS ANGELES, 25 DEC — Act**ress Denise Richards has denied reports that she has banned her ex-husband Charlie Sheen from spending Christmas with their kids.

The 42-year-old took to microblogging website Twitter on Monday to reply to a fan’s query about the report.

“That’s actually not true. I don’t know why he feels the need to do this publicly. I don’t keep him away from our kids.” Denise tweeted. “You done ranting? Keep it classy dude. Our kids don’t need to be privy to this, you are welcome to spend X’mas with us. Hope you still come.” She posted in a tweet directed to Charlie Sheen. “You were and are welcome to see them, I never asked for your plane.

**Universal takes writedown on new Keanu Reeves film**

**L**OS ANGELES, 25 Dec — Comcan Corp’s Universal Pictures movie studio has taken unspecified write-downs for its $175 million (106 million pounds), Keanu Reeves film “47 Ronin” that opens on Christmas Day, the studio has acknowledged, as Hollywood neared the end of a year of big budget bombs.

The film, a fantasy action film about a group of samurai in 18th century Japan, cost $175 million to make, according to people with knowledge of its budget.

It is expected to gross between $17 million and $20 million for the five-day Christmas Day holiday period through Sunday 29 December, Hollywood experts have forecast, especially weak showing for a big budget film.

“Universal Pictures regularly evaluates its film slate for potential adjustment,” said a Universal official. “In the case of ‘47 Ronin,’ we adjusted film costs in previous quarters and as a result, our financial performance will not be negatively impacted this quarter by its theatrical performance.”

Universal did not disclose the size of the earlier write-downs.

Although Hollywood executives cautiously predict a record year at the box office, many had their own big budget misfires. Walt Disney wrote down the costs of the $215 million Johnny Depp western “The Lone Ranger,” which it said had lost more than $160 million.

Earlier in the year, Dreamworks Animation took an $87 million write down for its 2012 holiday film “Rise of the Guardians,” while Warner Brothers’ “Jack the Giant Slayer” generated $197.7 million in worldwide ticket sales and cost $195 million to make. (Studios generally get half the ticket sales.)

Sony cited the “theatrical underperformance” of the $150 million thriller “White House Down” as one reason its studio recorded a $181 million loss for the first quarter. Universal’s “47 Ronin” tells the story of a half-Japanese, former slave, played by Keanu Reeves, who joins a band of outcast samurai intent on avenging the death of their master and who battle mythic beasts and shape-shifting witches. It was initially scheduled for release in November 2012, but was moved to February 2013 for more work on the 3D visual effects, before it was postponed to Christmas Day.

**Britney Spears: Feel too old for fun in the bedroom**

**L**OS ANGELES, 25 Dec — The 32-year old singer, Britney Spears says she loves to have an active sex life, but at times she feels she is too old to have fun in the bedroom.

Britney Spears, who is currently dating David Lucado, has made the revelation in her documentary I Am Britney Jean, which aired in the US recently.

“I love sex. I think sex is great. But I feel a little different about it now that I’m older.

Sometimes I feel like I’m 20 and then sometimes I feel like I’m 50,” she said. She has sons 8-year old Sean Preston, and 7-year old Jayden James, with ex-husband Kevin Federline. She, recently, also said that she was keen to add to her brood, and that now she wants a baby girl.

**Britney has made revelations about her life in her documentary I Am Britney Jean.**

**Kate Winslet names baby boy Bear**

**L**OS ANGELES, 25 Dec — Act**ress Kate Winslet, who welcomed a baby boy earlier this month, has named him Bear Winslet.

A spokesperson confirmed that the baby’s name is Bear Winslet, who was born at an NHS Hospital in Sussex on 7 December, reports aceshowbiz.com.

Kate is also a mother to 13-year-old daughter Mia from her marriage with film producer Jim Threapleton and a 10-year-old Joe with director Sam Mendes.

Bear is her first child with husband Ned Rocknroll.

“Bear is Kate’s first child with husband Ned Rocknroll.

**Canadian actor Keanu Reeves talks with a fan as he leaves his apartment in Budapest on 11 March,2011. Reeves is in Budapest for two months for the shooting of his new film “47 Ronin”.

**Brad and Angelina are reportedly getting married soon.**
**SPORTS**

**America’s Cup regatta may return to San Francisco in 2017**

San Francisco, 25 Dec—Oracle Team USA wants to stage the next America’s Cup regatta in San Francisco in August 2017 in catamarans smaller than the one they sailed to victory last summer, team CEO Russell Coutts told Reuters on Monday.

Oracle Corp CEO Larry Ellison’s team notched eight successive wins over Team New Zealand in September, coming from behind to take the 34th America’s Cup in one of the sport’s most remarkable comebacks.

The event’s victor wins the right to choose the venue. Coutts wants to return the regatta to the Northern California city’s waterfront, and hopes to convince civic leaders to agree to host the event a second time.

San Francisco Mayor Ed Lee on Monday sent a letter to Coutts opening negotiations. The city and Oracle have a number of details to sort out and the board of supervisors must approve any deal.

Numerous hurdles remain before Ellison can reach an agreement with the city, including convincing critics of the economic benefits for the city, which turned out less than initially estimated.

Some supervisors criticized the last arrangement between the city and Ellison as being too generous to the event organizers.

But “the 34th America’s Cup generated hundreds of millions of dollars in economic activity for San Francisco, created thousands of jobs and showcased our spectacular waterfront, the beauty of San Francisco Bay, and the sport of sailing to millions of spectators around the world,” Lee wrote in his letter.

Yet controversy dogged this year’s event.

Critics questioned the safety of the faster, high-tech 72-foot catamarans sailed in the last America’s Cup, particularly after a sailor died in a tragic accident.

“Some people within the city are saying why should we support a race for a billionaire like Larry Ellison,” Coutts said. “Most people have recognized that it was more about highly skilled, young athletes than it was about billionaires.”

San Francisco and Ellison hope to finalize an agreement by 1 March, Lee said in his letter.

Coutts expects the next series of races for the world’s oldest sporting trophy to be sailed in twin-hulled catamarans between 60 and 65 feet long (18 and 20 metre), with hydrofoils to lift the hulls out of the water onto carbon-fiber blades.

“It will be a foiling catamaran for sure,” Coutts said in a telephone interview. Coutts said the Australian challenger of record, led by winemakers Bob and Sandy Oatley, and Oracle have hired an entity to design the rules for the next Cup. To reduce costs, he said they are considering shrinking the number of crew members from 11 to eight.

They also are considering re-imposing a nationality rule, Coutts said. Just one member of this year’s winning American team hailed from the United States.

The races leading up to the final series last summer lasted months. Next time, Coutts said, he plans to consolidate the races into just one month in August 2017.

That month was the best time to stage the event in San Francisco’s cruise ship terminal because cruise ships rarely dock in San Francisco in August, Coutts said.—Reuters

**Arsenal playmaker Wilshere reacted to children jibes**

London, 25 Dec—The abusive hand gesture Jack Wilshere directed at Manchester City fans this month was a reaction to jibes about his children, the Arsenal and England midfielder explained on Tuesday.

The 21-year-old said he regretted his reaction, which resulted in a two-game suspension, and he would have to learn his lesson.

“Suppose I will just have to take the abuse about my kids in future,” Wilshere said on his Twitter account. “Anyways, one more game to go! Can’t wait to be back.”

—Having missed second-placed Arsenal’s goalless draw with Chelsea on Monday, Wilshere will complete his ban by sitting out Thursday’s Premier League visit to West Ham United.

The player will be back for the match at Newcastle United on Sunday. Arsenal were beaten 6-3 by City at the Etihad Stadium on 14 December.

—Reuters

**Dempsey returns to Fulham on two-month loan deal**

London, 25 Dec—United States forward Clint Dempsey is rebounding Fulham on loan for two months from Major League Soccer’s Seattle Sounders, the struggling Premier League club announced on its website (www.fulhamfc.com) on Tuesday.

The 30-year-old, who can play as a deep-lying striker or in midfield, returns to Craven Cottage having previously joined the west London club in January 2007 from New England Revolution.

Dempsey, who moved to Seattle from Tottenham Hotspur in the close season, scored 60 goals in 225 games in over five seasons at the club, level on points with Andy Cole and Alan Shearer when he bit the arm of former England striker Michael Owen.

“I will certainly push to be the best striker out there,” said Liverpool manager Brendan Rodgers after Suarez bagged two goals in a 3-1 win over Cardiff City on Saturday. “He looks like he can score a hat-trick in every game.”

Liverpool visit Manchester City, who are one point behind the leaders in third place, on Thursday.

—Reuters

**Suarez is best player in world, says Gerrard**

London, 25 Dec—England captain Steven Gerrard has acclaimed Liverpool team-mate Luis Suarez as the best player in the world on current form.

In 12 appearances this season the red-hot Uruguay striker has scored 19 goals to fire Liverpool to the top of the Premier League. That is six more than his nearest rival, Argentinian and Manchester City forward Sergio Aguero.

Suarez’s prolific streak has earned him a new long-term contract at Anfield where he has overcome widespread misgivings after several controversial incidents including one last season when he bit the arm of Chelsea defender Branislav Ivanovic.

“On current form he is the best player in the world,” Gerrard said of Suarez. “Lionel Messi’s out injured and Cristiano Ronaldo’s had a bit of an injury last summer,” the Liverpool skipper told Sky Sports television, referring to the number one players at Barcelona and Real Madrid respectively.

“He (Suarez) is certainly the best striker out there. He’s proving that with his minutes-to-goals ratio.”

The Ivanovic incident resulted in a 10-match domestic suspension that meant the Liverpool striker missed the start of this season. The 27-year-old Suarez has this season become the first Liverpool player to score at least twice in five consecutive home matches. He is on course to surpass the Premier League record of 34 goals shared by former England strikers Andy Cole and Alan Shearer. Cole achieved his haul with Newcastle United in 1993-94. Shearer’s was with Blackburn Rovers in 1994-95.

—Reuters

**Members of Oracle Team USA wave to spectators after winning Race 16 of the 34th America’s Cup yacht sailing race against Emirates Team New Zealand in San Francisco, California on 23 Sept, 2013.—Reuters**
Trinidad oil spill caused by sabotage

PORT OF SPAIN, 25 Dec—One of the five oil spills that happened along Trinidad and Tobago’s southwestern coast this month has been classified as sabotage, local media reported on Tuesday.

The valves that were opened could have only been opened using a specialized type of wrench,” Energy Minister Kevin Ramnarine told a news conference on Monday.

Belgium spends 2.24 pct GDP on research, development

BRUSSELS, 25 Dec—Belgium has beaten its record of investment in research and development in 2012, spending 2.24 percent of its gross domestic product (GDP), said the Secretary of State for science policy Philippe Courard on Tuesday.

This represented 8.4 billion euros and nearly 95,000 jobs. Private companies were responsible for 68 percent of investment in research and development.

Investment in research and development was growing in Belgium for ten years, while its neighbours, with the exception of Germany, were mainly in a less favorable situation, said Courard.—Xinhua

Top Argentine teams face rest of season under new coaches

BUENOS AIRES, 25 Dec — Ricardo Gareca, the longest serving coach at one team in the Argentine top flight, has decided to leave Velez Sarsfield after winning four trophies during five years in charge.

Gareca, 55, told sporting manager Christian Bassedas, the former Velez, Newcastle United and Argentina midfielder, of his decision in a three-hour meeting late on Monday.

“At the end of the meeting, the coach communicated his decision not to continue as coach of Velez Sarsfield,” Bassedas said.

The ex-Argentina striker, who took charge in January 2009, won three league crowns and the grand final between the 2012/13 season’s two champions - his ‘Final’ - winning Velez and Newell’s Old Boys, who won the ‘Final’ title.

Gareca, whose side finished joint second to San Lorenzo in the 2013/14 season’s championship that ended on December 15, had hinted last month he wanted to try new pastures.

His successor looks likely to come from reserve team coach Hector Almendoz or former Velez striker Omar Asad, who has coached San Lorenzo and Mexico’s Atlas.

San Lorenzo also face the rest of the season under a new coach after Juan Antonio Pizzi decided to accept an offer from Valencia. Sports daily Ole has reported the rest of the season under a new coach after Juan Antonio Pizzi decided to accept an offer from Valencia. Sports daily Ole has reported that he has signed a pre-contract agreement and is travelling to Spain on Thursday.—Reuters

Chinese citizens evacuated from South Sudan

BEIJING, 25 Dec — The Chinese Foreign Ministry said on Tuesday that some of the Chinese citizens in South Sudan had safely left the country. “The Chinese Embassy to South Sudan, as well as embassies and consulates in neighbouring countries and cities where relevant flights will stop for transit, have offered assistance in consulting services, customs procedures, coordination and resettlement,” Foreign Ministry spokesman Hua Chunying said at a daily Press briefing.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry and the Embassy in South Sudan have issued safety alerts to warn Chinese citizens against travel to South Sudan in the near future and have demanded non-essential personnel to evacuate as soon as possible, Hua said.

“So far, there have been no reports of death or injury of Chinese nationals,” she said. Hua added that China has asked relevant authorities in South Sudan to reinforce security protection for Chinese citizens and organizations. “The Chinese Foreign Ministry and the Embassy to South Sudan will closely follow the developments of the situation and take necessary steps to safeguard the security and lawful interests of Chinese citizens and organizations in South Sudan,” Hua said.—Xinhua
Workshop on Education Policies held at Meiktila University

Meiktila, 25 Dec—A workshop on Education Policies (University Level) was held at Learning Centre of Meiktila University yesterday afternoon, attended by Rector of Meiktila University Dr Maung Thin, professors, heads of departments and faculty members.

At the ceremony, the Rector explained formation of committee for implementation of the education, future tasks for 17 working groups and the points discussed at workshop which was held on 17 and 18 December in Nay Pyi Taw.

Those present discussed policies related to 12 points of implementation of the education promotion, formation of central council of the universities and hierarchy levels of working groups.

U Tin Hlaing (Meiktila)

Carol singers rocking around NPE compound

Nay Pyi Taw, 25 Dec—Carol singers sang special Christmas songs for the staff of News and Periodicals Enterprise (NPE) under the Ministry of Information at Khayebin junction in Zeyathiri Township, here, today.

General Manager U Ye Naing, Chief Editor Daw Than Huy of Myanmar News Agency (External), Chief Editor U Aung Naing, Chief Editor U Khin Maung Kyaw Din of the Mirror Daily, Chief Editor U Than Myint Tun of the New Light of Myanmar Daily and staff served the carol singers led by Pastor U Saw Toe Toe of Good News Baptist Church in Pyinmmana Township food and snacks.

Carol singers wished X’mas blessings for the families of NPE.

Khin Yadana

Cooling auto sales drives prices down

There has been a cooling till the end of December. He continued that not just he but also his colleagues at other automobile trading centres were encountering the slowest car sales.

Some car dealers voiced that there would be a change in taxes on imported cars due to Cost, Insurance and Freight (CIF) values which are thought to be the reasons that have driven car sales down in January, 2004.

So, all buyers and sellers are looking forwards to the New Year coming ahead. Car prices could be set after the new CIF values are released, dealers said.

As dealers at the centres cannot lower the car prices than their buying prices unlike car sales centre owners, it has become another reason to cool car sales. Moreover, price of overage vehicle slip has also dropped.

Nonetheless, dealers and buyers are looking forwards to a great sales year in 2014 in the hope that car prices would fall thanks to CIF values change.

Myanmar Alinn: 25-12-2013

Chin State Chief Minister meets Indian Ambassador

Haka, 25 Dec—Chief Minister of Chin State U Hong Ngai received Indian Ambassador to Myanmar Mr. Gautam Mukhopadhyaya at the meeting hall of the Chin State government office on 22 December.

Also present at the call were state ministers, departmental officials and responsible persons of the embassy of India in Myanmar.

The chief minister and the Indian ambassador held talks on undertakings for development, cultural exchange, transport and matters related to cooperation between Chin State and Mizoram, a state of India sharing border with Myanmar.

Chin State IPRD

Japan to continue peacekeeping missions in S. Sudan: spokesman

Tokyo, 25 Dec—The government said Wednesday that Japan’s Self-Defense Forces will not withdraw from South Sudan, where the United Nations continues operations to protect civilians from increasing violence.

“We will continue to contribute to the nation-building of South Sudan along with the international society,” Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga told a press conference.

The Ground Self-Defense Force has engaged in reconstruction and other work mainly in the capital of Juba in the African country. South Sudan became independent from Sudan in 2011 after decades of civil war.

The UN Security Council on Tuesday unanimously adopted a resolution to lift the number of peacekeeping troops and police in South Sudan to better protect civilians from violence.

Suga welcomed the decision, saying Japan hopes the missions will help ease the situation. Asked about the possibility of dispatching more GSDF personnel to South Sudan, the top government spokesman said Tokyo is “not considering” the option.

Also Wednesday, the government said three GSDF staff will depart for South Sudan on Jan. 4 to replace their colleagues at the U.N. headquarters in Juba. They will be charged with procuring commodities and managing information for six months to a year, the government said.

Kyodo News

(From L) Yasutoshi Nishimura, senior vice minister of the Cabinet Office, and three officers of the Ground Self-Defense Force, attend a ceremony in Tokyo on 25 December, 2013, ahead of the GSDF staff’s departure for South Sudan on 4 January to replace their colleagues at the UN headquarters in the capital Juba.—KYODO NEWS

Byline: TIN WIN LAY (KYIMYINDE)  PHOTO: KOGYI TIN

“Car sales are more cooler this winter”, said U Kyaw Naing, a freelance car dealer at Thiri Mingala Automobile Trading Centre.

Compared with the car sales in previous months when four or five Hijet light trucks with high demand are used to be sold a month, car market has been cooling till the end of December. He continued that not just he but also his colleagues at other automobile trading centres were encountering the slowest car sales.

Some car dealers voiced that there would be a change in taxes on imported cars due to Cost, Insurance and Freight (CIF) values which are thought to be the reasons that have driven car sales down in January, 2004.

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Myanmar Alinn: 25-12-2013

Trs: YM

Photo shows Hijet vehicles that used to be in high demand in car market.