Myanmar People’s Forum held in Yangon

YANGON, 28 Dec — In order to host ASEAN People’s Forum successfully while Myanmar’s Chair of ASEAN in 2014, Myanmar People Forum Group in cooperation with civil societies in the country organized Myanmar People’s Forum at Myanmar Convention Centre, here, today.

The objectives of the forum with the participation of more than 150 civil societies are to ensure mutual understanding and cooperation among Myanmar civil societies, to share information and experiences, to overcome challenges for the development of the country, to exchange views based on constructive cooperation of local organizations, to raise a strong voice for all walks of life including the people with disabilities, women, young and adult alike, and to promote participation and decision of the people in social, economic and political development undertakings and poverty reduction scheme.

It was held for the first time in Myanmar with the aim of holding more forums linking to ASEAN People’s Forum, sending representatives of Myanmar civil society selected in the forums, raising the awareness of people related issues at Myanmar People’s Forum and seeking ways and means to implement suggestions and procedures laid down at the last year’s ASEAN People’s Forum.

In his speech, Union Minister for Livestock, Fisheries and Rural Development U Ohn Myint said that in an effort for building up a country through people’s power, it needs to take the strengths of NGOs and civil societies in addition to the government. ASEAN People’s Forum is one of the meetings related to 2014 ASEAN Chair of Myanmar.

Especially, the annual ASEAN People’s Forum is held mainly for promoting the role of civil societies in the establishment of ASEAN Community and for listening to their voices for the emergence of People-centered ASEAN which is the top aim of ASEAN. Myanmar People’s Forum will help support the successful holding of the ASEAN People’s Forum.

He expressed his belief that the Forum could bring about better ideas for development of the country.

The three-day Myanmar People Forum will be held until 30 December. Over 150 civil societies will discuss the topics such as equality and human rights, development, peace and democratic reforms etc.

The resolutions that come out from ASEAN People’s Forum are usually submitted to the ASEAN summits. Myanmar People’s Forum’s results will be discussed at ASEAN People’s Forum.

Travel insurance available in Myanmar

While the nation is picking up the pace of development in various sectors, private sector has been granted to operate insurance services and more permits will be allowed to private companies in the upcoming year, said an official of the Ministry of Finance.

“Since 2012, private companies have been given permission to run insurance services. More approval will be made for applicants to start their services in the next year”, said Deputy Minister for Finance Dr Maung Maung Thein.

In 2012, 12 insurance companies were granted permission to operate insurance business and insurance licenses have also been given to 12 more insurance firms this year. Now, the licensed companies are operating their services.

With a dramatic increase in visitor numbers, it has been planned for foreign visitors to have access to insurance services during their stay in Myanmar.

“The number of applications for travel insurance is still low. But, it is expected to see foreign visitors applying for the insurance later when they know more about travel insurance,” said a manager of a private insurance firm.

Tourists to Myanmar can buy travel insurance by paying the premium for one unit of cover which is K 500,000 for one-week duration is K 500.

Tourist insurance buyer will be awarded compensation in the events of death or injury caused by accident while travelling with any conveyance based on the extent of units he or she bought.
**Local News**

**National Sports**

Victorious athletes of SEA Games receive warm welcome

**Seikpyu, 28 Dec—** A fire broke out at an onion warehouse in west ward of Seikpyu in Magway Region at 9.45 am on 26 December. A total of 30 members of Fire Services Department and Auxiliary Fire Brigade and 10 policemen together with local people put out the fire with the use of one fire truck.

They could totally put out the fire within 10 minutes.

**Bago, 28 Dec—** The 70-day free education course, organized by Phyo Education Group, was opened at its hall on Shwemawdaw Pagoda Road in Bago of Bago Region on 24 December afternoon. It was attended by Speaker of Bago Region U Hla Aung Tun, Patron of the education group, Chief Minister of Bago Region U Nyan Win, Bago Region Minister for Social Affairs Dr Kyaw Oo, Region Minister for Development Affairs U Ye Myint Tun, Patron of Bago Region Women’s Affairs Organization Daw Tint Maw, students and parents totalling about 200.

**Voluntary Activity**

Basic first-aid course for youths in Hsipaw

**Hsipaw, 28 Dec—** Organized by Hsipaw Township Red Cross Brigade of Shan State (North), the basic first-aid course No 1/2013 was opened at the hall of No 1 Basic Education Post-Primary School in Hsipaw on 26 December, attended by students, departmental officials and town’s elders.

Chairman of Township Red Cross Supervisory Committee Head of Township Health Department Dr Nyunt Oo Maung made a speech. Instructor of the course, MMAL-Nay Myo Htut (Ye) explained facts about the red cross brigade and Q/A of the brigade U Thein Soe Naing plan of the training course and disciplines. The trainers gave training on first aid courses to 50 trainees during one-week period.

**Narcotic drugs seized in Ye**

Ye, 28 Dec—Acting on a tip-off, Commander of Ye Township Police Force Police Major Kyaw Soe Lwin and party raided the public rest house in Mawkanin Village Kyaythahmyar, Chinpyit-Labutta of Ayeyawady Pale Township explained, “Villagers of Pale. We had lagged behind in development. We had been living there with the use of oil lamps and candles. Thanks to the region government, now we can enjoy lighting through solar panel. So, we all thank the region government for their efforts in electrification to our village.”—MMAL-Min Khant Soe (Zayar Myay)

Power supply through solar panels in villages

**Pale, 28 Dec—** Spending the fund of rural development and poverty alleviation, electrification was performed in five villages namely Sityin, Kyaythahmyar, Chinpyit-Labutta, Taungywathit and Khawthandi villages in Pale Township of Yinmabin District on 20 December.

Pal Township Electrical Engineer U Myint Thein said, “Sagaing Region Government contributed a half cost for electrification equipment such as solar panels and related items. The remaining part of the cost was funded by the local people. The solar equipment were shared 77 items to Sityin Village, 120 to Kyaythahmyar Village, 75 to Chinpyit-Labutta Village, 42 to Khawthandi Village and 36 to Taungywathit Village, totalling 350.” U Hla Aung of Sityin Village of Pal Township explained, “I am over 50 years old. Our Village is 40 miles away from Pale. We had lagged behind in development. We had been living there with the use of oil lamps and candles. Thanks to the region government, now we can enjoy lighting through solar panel. So, we all thank the region government for their efforts in electrification to our village.”—MMAL-Min Khant Soe (Zayar Myay)

Silky flowery course conducted

**Nay Pyi Taw, 28 Dec—** With the aim of increasing incomes for the families, silky flowery course was conducted at the hall of Myanmar Maternal and Child Welfare Association on 26 December, with an address by President Dr Daw Mon Mon Aung.

Wellwishers donated well to the fund of the education group. The Region Chief Minister gave words of encouragement to students. MMAL-Thant Zin

Students grasp opportunity to attend free education course in Bago

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According to further investigation, the squad searched the house of Daw Min Shwe in Mawkanin Village and seized 265 stimulant tablets and K 1.5 million from her bedroom.

In more investigation, they confessed that the stimulant tablets were entrusted at the restaurant in Mawkanin Village by Tun Win (a) U Paru, 37. Therefore, the combined team searched the restaurant at 10.10 pm.

Tun Win escaped from the scene. Lamaing Sub-Township Police Station filed a lawsuit against drug traffickers and those who are on the run under the law. MMAL-Nay Myo Htut (Ye)

**LocaL News**

**Fire breaks out in Seikpyu Township**

The fire started from the warehouse where garbage caught fire, and sparks fell on the roof of the warehouse.

In the incident, one warehouse of U Win Myint was destroyed in the fire.

**Seikpyu, 28 Dec—** A fire broke out at a onion warehouse in east ward of Seikpyu in Magway Region at 9.45 am on 26 December.

At Yway Nadi Hall, the ceremony to honour the victorious athletes took place. Chairman of the Township Sports and Physical Education Committee Township Administrator U Toe Toe Tun and Hluttaw representative U Hlaing Oo gave speeches.

Gold medalist Chinlone athlete Ma Thuza Aung spoke words of thanks.

MMAL-District IPBD

**Labutta, 28 Dec—** Town’s elders, district and township level departmental personnel, members of social organizations and local people extended a warm welcome to gold medalists in the Chinlone events of the XXVII SEA Games of Fire Services Department at 9.45 am on 26 December.

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World powers, Iran to resume expert nuclear talks on 30 December

BRUSSELS/ANKARA, 28 Dec — Experts from Iran and six world powers will resume talks on Monday on how to roll out last month’s landmark nuclear deal in Geneva, hoping to resolve numerous technical issues before the accord can take effect.

A spokesman for European Union foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton, who oversees diplomacy with Iran on behalf of the United States, Russia, China, France, Britain and Germany, said talks were scheduled to last one day for now.

Two rounds of negotiations have been held so far since Iran agreed on 24 November to curb its most sensitive nuclear work in return for relief from some economic sanctions that are damaging its oil-dependent economy.

In comments that highlight the challenges facing negotiators, Iran’s nuclear chief said on Friday Teheran was pressing on with tests of more efficient uranium enrichment technology. His comments were aimed at soothing the anger of Iranian hardliners over possible new US sanctions on Iran.

The nuclear experts have to work out when the deal will be implemented, triggering the loosening of economic restrictions by the EU and the United States.

A key sticking point appears to be what information Western governments will receive in advance to verify that Iran is meeting its end of the deal before they lift some sanctions.

Other outstanding issues address how exactly sanctions will be eased and practical details of Iranian concessions.

Some diplomats from the six nations have said they hoped the deal could be put fully in place by the second half of January.

The talks resume at a sensitive time. Iranian hardliners, irked by the foreign policy shift since moderate President Hassan Rouhani was elected in June, oppose the Geneva deal and call it “a surrender to America’s pressure” by the government.

Iran’s ambassador to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Reza Najafi and Tere Varjoranta, IAEA Deputy Director General and Head of the Department of Safeguards (R), leave a news conference at the headquarters of the IAEA in Vienna on 11 Dec, 2013.—Reuters

A group of 100 hardline Iranian lawmakers are seeking to oblige the government to increase uranium enrichment to 60 percent, a level that can produce bomb-grade material if enriched further, if new US sanctions are imposed on Teheran.

It is not clear if the bill will be debated in Iran’s 290-seat parliament as the country’s most powerful authority, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, has repeatedly blocked the Geneva talks. If approved, the bill would have to be ratified by a constitutional watchdog body to become law.—Reuters

Bangkok, 28 Dec — A Thai protester was killed and four wounded, an emergency official said on Saturday, after an unidentified gunman opened fire on demonstrators whose efforts to topple Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra flared into violence over the past two days.

The shooting came 48 hours after clashes between police and about 500 protesters, who are determined to disrupt a snap 2 February election called by Yingluck, outside a voting registration centre in which two people were killed and scores wounded.

Petphong Kamonkit-kam, director of the Erawan Emergency Centre in the Thai capital Bangkok, told Reuters one man in his 30s had been killed and four others suffered gunshot wounds.

The protesters have been rallying for weeks in their attempt to topple Yingluck, who they see as a puppet of her brother and former premier, billionaire tycoon Thaksin Shinawatra, and have vowed to disrupt the election.

Yingluck, who draws her support from the populous voter base among the rural poor in the north and northeast, is determined to go ahead with the poll.

On Friday, her government asked the military for help to provide security for both candidates and voters.

However, the chief of the heavily politicised military refused to rule out military intervention, responding that “the door was neither open nor closed” when asked if a coup was possible.

Several hundred protesters are camped in tents around the walls of Government House in Bangkok. Witnesses said when gunfire suddenly rang out at about 3.30 am on Saturday (0300 GMT Friday), “I was sleeping and then I heard several gunshots. I was surprised,” said one 18-year-old protester, who would not identify himself other than by his nickname “Bo.”—Reuters

Yemeni tribesmen blow up pipeline in south

MANI, 28 Dec — Yemeni tribesmen blew up a pipeline in the eastern Hadramout province on Saturday, disrupting oil flow two days after they seized an Oil Ministry building in the province, a local government official said.

The authorities face regular challenges from tribesmen who attack oil pipelines and power lines for reasons including demands for more employment and the release of jailed relatives.

Tribal sources said on Thursday that the Oil Ministry attack was in response to the killing of a tribal leader this month at an army checkpoint after his bodyguards refused to hand over their weapons to soldiers.

The pipeline attacked transports crude oil from Massila oil field in Hadramout to the port of Mukalla. This was the first time the pipeline has been hit.

Yemen, one of the Arab world’s poorest countries, is struggling to restore state authority after long-serving President Ali Abdallah Saleh was forced to step down in 2011.

A Thai security personnel is seen through a shattered windscreen of a destroyed police trucks at the Thai-Japan youth stadium, the site of fierce clashes between anti-government protesters and riot police, in central Bangkok on 27 Dec, 2013.—Reuters

Cambodian opposition leader appeals for talks with Hun Sen

PHNOM PENH, 28 Dec — Cambodia opposition leader Sam Rainsy appealed Saturday to Prime Minister Hun Sen, who heads the ruling party, to agree to talks in order to find a way out of the country’s current political crisis.

At a press conference, Sam Rainsy, leader of the Cambodian National Rescue Party, said his party wants to have an “open talk” with the Cambodian People’s Party next week.

He said that, starting from Wednesday, the first day of the New Year, the CNRP requests an open meeting among political parties and major civil organizations with the participation of the public in order for them to listen to the talks.

In an immediate response to Sam Rainsy’s appeal, Sar Kheng, deputy prime minister and minister of interior, said the CPP’s door is always open for negotiations with the CNRP but he did not give any specific date for such a meeting as Hun Sen just returned home Saturday from a three-day official visit to Vietnam. Also Saturday, Sam Rainsy made a surprise and rare statement by extending his warm wishes to Hun Sen and his family for happiness and success in work for the betterment of Cambodians and people in the New Year.

However, both Sam Rainsy and his deputy Kem Sokha said that opposition protests will go on unless a proper solution to the current political crisis is found.

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**Science & Technology**

**China says satellite network to be big asset, others can use it too**

BEIJING, 28 Dec — China’s homegrown satellite navigation system will bring untold economic, social and military benefits and other countries in Asia are welcome to use it, the director of China’s satellite navigation agency said on Friday.

The year-old Beidou satellite navigation system is a rival to the US Global Positioning System (GPS) and Russian GLONASS. Beidou’s 16 satellites serve the Asia-Pacific but the number of satellites is expected to grow to 30 by 2020 as coverage expands globally.

The system would bring benefits across the board, in both civilian and military applications, said Ran Chengqi, the director of the Satellite Navigation Office.

“The construction of the Beidou network should resolve the country’s security issues, including economic security and the security of society-at-large,” he said. “It’s obviously a combined military and civilian infrastructure.”

“What purpose it will have for national defence or armament, that’s for the armament department or Defence Ministry to consider, but I think that its uses are many,” Ran told a news conference.

The successful deployment of Beidou means the increasingly potent Chinese armed forces will have an accurate, independent navigation system — vital technology for guiding the missiles, warships and attack aircraft that allow Beijing to claim great power status.

Senior Chinese military officers have said Beidou is more important for the country than manned space flight or the Chinese lunar probes now under way, according to reports in the state-run media.

But the benefits are by no means limited to defence.

The government sees it as a commercial coup for fast-growing market satellite navigation services for cars, mobile phones and other applications.

China is encouraging other countries in Asia to adopt it by offering the service free, as the United States does with the civilian GPS network.—Reuters

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**Italy delays ‘Google tax’ until July, OKs funds for business, welfare**

Rome, 28 Dec — Italy delayed the start of its planned Internet tax until July 2014, approved billions of euros in business and welfare measures and extended a ban on media cross-ownership in a final package of year-end legislation approved on Friday.

The launch of an Internet tax, sometimes dubbed the “Google tax”, passed this week by parliament, will be postponed until 1 July, 2014, Prime Minister Enrico Letta’s office said in a statement. The delay should ensure it can be more closely coordinated with other European countries.

The tax, designed to ensure that companies that advertise and sell online in Italy do so only through companies with a tax presence in the country, has been criticized by the European Commission, which expressed doubts on its legality before it was approved in parliament.

The delay was contained in the so-called “Milleproegrone” (“thousand extensions”), a catch-all decree used by Italian governments to pack in miscellaneous pieces of legislation that must be approved before the start of the new year.—Reuters

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**Nasdq to compensate firms on 31 December for botched Facebook IPO**

New York, 28 Dec — Nasdaq OMX Group Inc will compensate firms on 31 December for qualifying claims related to Facebook Inc’s botched May 2012 initial public offering, the exchange operator said in a note to traders on Friday.

Nasdaq said previously it would pay up to $41.6 million in claims to market participants that lost money when a glitch in Nasdaq’s system during the IPO prevented timely order confirmations for many traders, leaving them unsure about their exposure for hours and, in some cases, for days afterwards. Nasdaq said a total of $41.6 million in claims qualified for compensation, even though market makers estimated they lost $500 million collectively.

Firms that qualified for compensation had until 23 December to agree not to sue Nasdaq over the IPO in order to be eligible for a one-time voluntary payout.

While Nasdaq was fined $10 million by the US Securities and Exchange Commission, the largest fine ever for an exchange, the snafu was just one of a raft of high-profile technology glitches that have plagued exchanges in recent years.—Reuters

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**Technical problem delays space station streaming-video venture**

CAPE CANAVERAL, 28 Dec — Spacewalking cosmonauts on Friday installed two cameras outside the International Space Station for a Canadian streaming-video business but then retrieved the gear after electrical connections failed, officials said.

Station commander Oleg Kotov and flight engineer Sergey Ryazanskiy left the station’s Pirs airlock at 8 am EST (1300 GMT) as the complex sailed 260 miles over Australia, mission commentator Rob Nass said during a NASA Television broadcast of the spacewalk.

It was third spacewalk this week by members of the station’s six-man crew. NASA astronauts Rich Mastracchio and Mike Hopkins made spacewalks on Saturday and Tuesday to replace a failed cooling pump.

During the first part of Friday’s planned seven-hour outing, the Russian cosmonauts set up a high-definition video camera on a swiveling platform and a medium-resolution still imager for Vancouver-based UrtheCast Corp.

The Russian space agency, Roscosmos, agreed to host the cameras on the $1 billion station, a project of 15 countries, in exchange for rights to use images and video taken over Russia. UrtheCast has commercial rights to images and video of the rest of the world. Company Chief Executive Scott Larson told Reuters.

UrtheCast plans to sell data to companies and government agencies that buy Earth-observing satellite imagery. It also plans to stream images over the Internet for free to subscribers, with the aim of attracting advertisers and sponsors.

But those plans are on hold after an unknown glitch kept the cameras, located outside the station’s Zvezda command module, from communicating with ground stations.—Reuters
High rates of high blood pressure persist in US Southeast

NEW YORK, Dec—One third of US adults have high blood pressure, but in the southeast part of the country the rate is well over half, according to a new study that finds too little is being done to reverse the problem. The Southeast has been called the Stroke Belt because of well-known high rates of cardiovascular disease, including high blood pressure. But that knowledge has not led to changes, nor to a full understanding of the reasons for the population’s high risk, the study team reports.

“The rates have not changed,” though the US has had treatment guidelines for high blood pressure since 1977, said one of the authors, Dr Uchechukwu K A Sampson, an assistant professor of medicine at Vanderbilt University Medical Centre in Nashville, Tennessee.

“The number of people who do not know that they have high blood pressure is the same,” he added. High blood pressure is an established cause of death from cardiovascular disease and accounts for up to 7.5 million deaths worldwide each year, the researchers point out.

To investigate the persistently high rates of high blood pressure in the South, Sampson’s group used a large database with recent information on men and women in southern states covering the years 2002 to 2009.

They focused on 69,000 white and black adults with similarly low income and education levels — to eliminate poverty as a factor — and analyzed what other causes might be contributing to blood pressure problems. Overall, they found that 57 percent of the study participants had high blood pressure. Blacks were nearly twice as likely as whites to be suffering from the disease, which has no symptoms of its own, but can lead to stroke or kidney damage if untreated.

But the racial difference was seen mainly among women. Fifty one percent of black and white men had high blood pressure, but the rates were 64 percent among black women and 52 percent among white women.

Obesity seemed to be a main driver of the problem, especially among whites, with the most severely obese having more than four times the risk of high blood pressure compared to normal weight men and woman. Other factors linked to the likelihood of severe high blood pressure included high cholesterol, diabetes, a history of depression and a family history of heart disease.

The numbers Sampson’s group found have not changed from previous studies and that consistency is alarming, he said.

“Yes, they still the same factors people have found before?” Sampson said. “If they are, that is bad news, then that means we have not done what we should have done in the past few years.” Of the study participants who knew they had high blood pressure, 94 percent were taking at least one blood pressure medication, which is a good thing, Sampson said. But only 30 percent were taking a diuretic medication that promotes water loss from the body. Diuretics should be one of the first-line medication options, the authors wrote.

Black people were twice as likely as whites to have high blood pressure without knowing it, Sampson said. That racial difference did not change even when researchers accounted for differences in income and education, the authors write in the journal Circulation: Cardiovascular Quality and Outcomes.

GM recalls 1.5 million cars in China over fuel pump bracket

SHANGHAI, Dec — General Motors Co’s (GMN) China joint venture is recalling 1.46 million cars due to a defect with the fuel pump brackets, in one of the largest safety recalls in the world’s biggest auto market.

The cars are made locally by Shanghai General Motors Co Ltd, GM’s venture with SAIC Motor Corp (600104.SS). GM said on Friday the bracket may crack (600104.SS). GM said on Friday the bracket may crack after long-term use and in extreme cases could lead to fuel leaks.

The recall, which was announced on Friday by China’s General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine, affects two of GM’s most popular models in China, the Buick Excelle compact car and the Chevrolet Sail subcompact.

More than 1.2 million Excelle made between 2006 and 2011 and more than 240,000 Sail subcompacts built between 2009 and 2011 are in the recall.

Separately, Ford Motor Co’s (F.N) joint venture with Chongqing Changan Automobile Co Ltd (000625.SZ) will recall close to $1,000 of its Kuga crossovers over a steering part, China’s quality control agency said. The leading US automaker by sales, GM is facing stiffer competition in China from competitors such as Volkswagen AG (VOWGp.DE).

Yale Zhang, head of Shanghai-based consulting firm Automotive Foresight, said GM was unlikely to sustain a big reputational hit in China because of the recall.

“GM has warned that the affected component might crack after long use and lead to fuel leakage, but in real life it doesn’t appear to have happened,” Zhang said.

“There are so many recalls these days, and some automakers call back products proactively more as a precaution,” Zhang said. “In this case, the recall shouldn’t affect GM’s reputation in China that much.”

Strict parenting may reduce teen smoking

NEW YORK, Dec—Parents who set limits are less likely to have kids who smoke, regardless of their ethnic and racial backgrounds, according to a new US study.

Researchers surveyed middle schoolers from diverse backgrounds and found that those whose parents had an “authoritative” and “structured” parenting style were also more likely to be discouraged from smoking by their parents and less likely to become smokers.

“One past studies have examined broad parenting styles, however this study looked at how specific parenting strategies may help protect youth from cigarette smoking initiation,” said Cassandra Stanton, an assistant professor in the oncology department at Georgetown University, who led the study. “We also note that unlike many studies in the area that are conducted in largely white middle class samples, this study was conducted in an urban multi-ethnic low-income school district,” Stanton told Reuters Health.

It’s important to identify ways of helping parents prevent kids from starting to smoke. Stanton’s team writes in the Journal of Pediatric Psychology, because the majority of lifetime smokers begin before the age of 18.

Lines of cars are pictured during a rush hour traffic jam in central Shanghai on 11 July, 2013.—Reuters

Big year ends with Wall Street hopeful for 2014

NEW YORK, 28 Dec—As Wall Street’s best year in more than 15 draws to a close, few are expecting a repeat performance in 2014, though traders have plenty of reasons to feel optimistic.

While the market will likely enter January quietly, with many traders still out for the holidays and few major catalysts, the upward trend is seen continuing next week, especially in some of 2013’s high-flying names.

Economic growth is expected to accelerate next year, boosting employment and consumer purchasing power. But with markets repeatedly notching all-time highs, that may not translate to market gains as dramatically as in 2013.

“There’s a pervasive feeling that the economy is getting better, and the Fed is still on the market’s side after saying it would keep rates low,” said Donald Selkin, chief market strategist at National Securities in New York.

“However, while new money will still be flowing into stocks next year, probably we’ll see less money come in. There’s little chance of another 30 percent gain or so next year.”

The S&P 500 .SPX has risen 29 percent so far in 2013, its best annual performance since 1997. The Dow Jones industrial average. DJI is up 26 percent while the Nasdaq is up nearly 38 percent.

The gains have been widespread, with all 10 S&P 500 sectors higher on the year. The weakest group, telecoms .SPLRCL, rose 6.5 percent while consumer discretionary .SPLRCID led the year with a gain of 40 percent. 
Hollande wants bigger UN role in Central African Republic

WORLD

US welcomes Okinawa governor’s decision on Marine base relocation

FRANCE’s President Francois Hollande addresses a news conference during a European Union leaders summit in Brussels on 20 Dec, 2013.—Reuters

PARIS, 28 Dec — French President Francois Hollande has asked the United Nations to play a bigger role in the Central African Republic, Hollande’s office said in a statement on Friday.

“France deployed a 1,600 strong peacekeeping mission in its former colony this month to stop massacres between militias, but the UN-backed intervention is struggling to restore security in the country,” a statement on Friday.

scored demonstra-

tors took to the streets of the capital Bangui on Sunday to complain that French forces were disarming only Muslim Seleka fighters, exposing Muslim citizens to revenge attacks by Christian groups. France has formally denied this.

Hollande said he had told Ban the French troops were there to protect the civilian population without discrimination.

Ban said in a statement on Thursday that he was appalled by the continued violence, including the reports of dozens more bodies found on the streets of the capital Bangui.

Reuters

US says Israel plans to release Palestinian prisoners on 30 December

WASHINGTON, 28 Dec — Israel has informed the United States of plans to release the next group of Palestinian prisoners on 30 December under a US-brokered peace plan, the State Department said on Friday.

“Although we had expected the release to occur on 29 December, we have been informed that technical issues made it necessary to do the release a day later,” State Department spokesman Jen Psaki said in a statement.

The release of about two dozen prisoners, the third group to be free since the talks resumed in July, are seen by the United States as an important next-step toward reaching an interim peace agreement between the Israelis and Palestinians by April.

A final agreement will then take about a year to negotiate.

Reuters

Bomb targets Montenegrin newspaper critical of government

BELGRADE, 28 Dec — A bomb blast shook the offices of Montenegro’s leading daily Vestijski list in the latest at-tack on a newspaper known for its criticism of the authorities under long-term leader Milo Djukanovic.

No one was hurt in the blast, which appeared to target a room used by editor-in-chief Mihailo Jovovic, shattering windows and damaging the facade of the building in the capital, Podgorica, shortly before midnight.

Jovovic said he was in his office and another 15 people were in the building at the time. “Glass shattered all over the office, one window was blown in and smoke filled the room,” Jovi-ovic told reporters.

Vestijski list director Zeljko Ivanovic said the attack was a murder attempt on the newspaper’s editor.

“This was the expected outcome of years of campaigning by the prime minister (Djukanovic), his government, his party and the mafia against independent media and primarily Vestijski list,” he said in a statement.

It was not clear what kind of explosive device was used. Vestijski list security cameras had captured a man in a black jacket planting a package in front of the building and leaving the site about a minute before the blast.

The Interior Ministry said it was looking for a man and a black Opel Corsa car in connection with the incident.

The attack follows a bomb blast in August outside the home of Vestijski list journalist Tufik Softic. The newspaper’s offices were pelted with stones in October during tensions over Montenegro’s first gay pride march. Cars belonging to the paper were torched in 2011.

Vestijski list is a fierce critic of Djukanovic — Montene-

gro’s dominant figure since the collapse of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s — and the cozy political and business elite in the tiny Adriat-

ic republic of some 660,000 people.

Reuters

Editor-in-chief of Montenegro’s leading daily Vjestijski Mihailo Jovic looks through a window damaged in a bomb blast overnight at the newspaper’s offices in Podgorica on 27 Dec, 2013.—Reuters

UN General Assembly approves $5.5 billion budget for 2014/15

NEW YORK, 28 Dec — The United Nations General Assembly on Friday approved a $5.53 billion UN budget for 2014-2015, down 1 percent from the total spending during the previous two years.

The new biennial budget that was adopted does not include peacekeeping, currently running at over $7 billion a year and approved in separate negotiations, or the costs of several major UN agencies funded by voluntary contributions from member states.

As in past years, the biennial budget negotia-

tions were marked by a tussle between poor coun-

tries seeking to raise UN development spending and major developed countries, which are the big-

gest budget contributors, trying to rein in the figures as they struggle to reduce expenditures in their own national budgets.

Fiji’s UN Ambassador Peter Thomson, speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 developing nations, said the 2014–2015 budget “represents the best that we as member states can muster at this time of continuing austerity in the world economy.”

He said the G77 bloc supported the budget “with deep concern that budgetary austerity may negatively affect the development pillar of the work of the United Nations.”

Critics of the United Nations, especially in the United States, have long charged that it is a bloated and sometimes corrupt bureau-


A United States Coast Guard boat patrols the waters of New York’s East River in front of the United Nation’s Marine base relocation

WASHINGTON, 28 Dec — US Defence Secretary Chuck Hagel on Friday welcomed the approval by the governor of Japan’s Okinawa Prefecture of landfill work for the relocation of a US Marine Corps air base within the island prefecture.

“It is the most significant milestone achieved in these realignment efforts so far,” Hagel said in a statement, referring to a plan to move the Futenma Air Station to a facility off the Henoko coastal area of Nago from a densely populated area in Ginowan. “Reaching this milestone is a clear demonstration to the region that the alliance is capable of handling complex, difficult problems in order to deal effectively with 21st century security challeng-

es,” Hagel said.

The Japanese and US governments agreed in April that the land used for the Futenma base can be returned to Japan in the Japa-

nese fiscal year of 2022, which begins in April 2022, or later. But a senior official of the Defence Department implied the US side could be flexible about the schedule, saying, “If the government of Japan is able to accelerate the construction and move the date up, we’ll be quite happy to move to the facility.”

The Japanese and US governments mapped out the original plan for the Futenma relocation in 1996 in a bid to reduce the burden on Okinawa, which hosts the bulk of US military forces in Japan. But they have yet to implement it following revisions, due mainly to opposition in local communities.

“Resolving these years-long issues will enable us to take our relationship to the next level as we revise the guidelines for US-Japan de-

fence cooperation,” Hagel said, referring to work by both governments to review the guidelines, which detail the roles and cooperation of the Japanese and US forces in a potential contingency, by the end of 2014.

Kyodo News

Critics of the United Nations, especially in the United States, have long charged that it is a bloated and sometimes corrupt bureau-

ecacy that wastes taxpayers’ money.

US Deputy Ambassa-

dor Joe Torresla, who fo-
cuses on UN management and reform at the US mis-

sion, said the 2014–2015 budget marked a “new commitment to real fiscal discipline at the United Nations at a tough time for hardworking families around the world.”

Reuters

A United States Coast Guard boat patrols the waters of New York’s East River in front of the United Nation’s building during the United Nations General Assembly in New York on 24 Sept, 2013.—Reuters

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A United States Coast Guard boat patrols the waters of New York’s East River in front of the United Nation’s building during the United Nations General Assembly in New York on 24 Sept, 2013.—Reuters
Moscow, 28 Dec — A car bomb killed three people in the southern Russian city of Pyatigorsk on Friday, officials said, in a worrying development for the Kremlin as Russia prepares to host the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi in six weeks’ time. Pyatigorsk lies 270 km (170 miles) east of Sochi, where the Games, a major prestige project for President Vladimir Putin, will open on 7 February.

The blast blew out the windows of buildings in an industrial neighbourhood of the spa resort town, officials said. Three people were killed, Pyatigorsk mayor Lev Travnev said on state-run Rossiya-24 television.

The explosion badly damaged a traffic police building, Interfax news agency reported, but state-run Inter-Tass cited police as saying all three people killed were bystanders, not police.

Pyatigorsk is just north of a strip of mostly Muslim provinces plagued by near-daily violence in a long-running Islamist insurgency. Its leader, Chechen warlord Dokku Umarov, urged militants in a video posted online in July to use “maximum force” to prevent Putin staging the Olympics.

Militants say they want to carve out a Muslim state in the North Caucasus. Their insurgency is rooted in a two-decade separatist wars in Chechnya, one of the region’s provinces. 

St Petersburg, 28 Dec — With only four days to go in the year, the New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg said on Friday that the big city is on track to set a new record low in homicide and shooting rates in 2013.

There have been 332 homicides so far this year, down 20 percent from last year’s record low, and down nearly 50 percent from 2001, the mayor said.

This year is set to be the lowest since the city started keeping track in 1963.

Meanwhile, the number of shootings has fallen by 20 percent from last year’s record low — with 1,093 shootings reported through Thursday — down 32 percent from 2001, he said.

The innovative programmes the city under...
December mass walk continues for fourth week

A total of 14 clubs took part in the event that will be held till 4 January at Tabuang football grounds in the ward. Each team comprises five players including goalkeeper and three substitutes totaling eight players. The final match will be held on 4 January (Independence Day). K 100,000 is set for first prize, K 75,000 second prize and K 50,000 third prize.

Ko Myo-Shwe Paukkan

Players vying for the ball during a soccer match of Yan Aung (2) Ward administrator’s cup football tournament kicks off

PYINMANA, 28 Dec—Hailing the 66th Anniversary Independence Day, Yan Aung (2) Ward administrator’s cup football tournament is organized under the leadership of Yan Aung (2) Ward Administrator U Kyi Khaung Min.

The tourney includes four groups which consist of footballers under 20 years old in the ward.

Tun Tun Oo (Myawady)
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

Illegal timber seized

Pathaingyi, 28 Dec—Acting on a tip-off, a police squad led by IP Than Zaw Oo and Senior Forester U Kyaw Min Lwin of Township Forest Department inspected the stationary vehicle with the load of illegal timber near Hmway Pyant Tea Shop in Ohnchaw Village in Pathanignyi Township, Shan State (North) on 25 December.

They seized pieces of tamalin illegal timber on board together with Kyaw Kyaw Lin, 21, son of U Tha Htwar of Kangyi Village of Nawngkhoi Township and Arkar Moe, 19, son of U Maung Oo and Zaw Win, 22, son of U Win Naing of the same village.

Forest Department opened files of lawsuit against the illegal timber traffickers under the law.

Monghsat, 28 Dec—Under the aegis of Presiding Nayaka of Thabyinnyu Monastery Sayadaw Bhdanta Indaka of Kyade Village in Monghsat Township in Shan State (East), the third Dhammaçakka Desana recitation contest took place at the Dhammayon of the monastery in Monghsat on 26 December.

Chairman of Township Management Committee Township Administrator U Aye Naing and Chairman of Township Development Supportive Committee USai Chit Thaung formally opened the contest.

The religious associations from Basic Education Post-Primary School (Myothit), BEPPS (Kyade) and Dhamma School, BEHS senior and junior religious associations participated in the contest.

Kyetmon-Tha Zaw Oo (IPRD)

Zaygyo and other markets to sell 552 salerooms through competitive bidding

Mandalay, 28 Dec—Markets and Slauhters Department of Mandalay City Development Committee will sell 552 salerooms of Zaygyo and other markets through competitive bidding.

The list of salerooms include that of MIngala Market, Mann Thri Market, Mann Yadana Market, Myo Haung Market, Seinpan Market, Thiri Mandal Market, Hitaing Markets and Thiri Marlar car parts shopping mall.

Most of the buyers purchase the shops on the ground floor. The shops from first to above floors are rare to be bought. Therefore, the shops on these floors are to be used as the warehouses, said a owner of the cosmetics shops from Rose Complex of the Zaygyo Market. The MCDC has installed the second and third floors of the Zaygyo Market with lifts escalators.

Kyetmon-Thaung

Pakokku, 28 Dec—A team comprising Pakokku District Head of Fire Services Department U Khin Maung Than and Commander of Township Police Force Police Major Than Soe gave talks on fire preventive measures, reduction of traffic congestion, crime reduction and prevention of abuse against children at the hall of Ward 9 administrator in Pakokku on 26 December evening.

It was attended by about 70 local people.

The Head of District FSD explained the points of preventing the outbreak of fire and putting out of fire, the township police force commander reduction of traffic accidents, crime reduction and prevention against rape case.

The officials then held discussions with the participation of the local people.

Official give educative talks to local people in Pakokku.
India seeks possible US tax violations as stand hardens in row

NEW DELHI, 28 Dec— India has sought details about staff in American schools in the country for possible tax violations and revoked ID cards of US consular officials and their families, retaliatory steps for the arrest of an Indian diplomat in New York. The measures suggest that the two countries are no closer to a resolution of a diplomatic dispute over the treatment of Deputy Consul General Devyani Khobragade this month on charges of visa fraud and underpay- ment of her housekeeper. Khobragade, who

US judge says NSA phone surveillance is lawful

NEW YORK, 28 Dec— A federal judge ruled that a National Security Agency programme that collects records of millions of Americans’ phone calls is lawful, calling it a “counter-punch” to terrorism that does not violate Americans’ privacy rights.

Friday’s decision by US District Judge Wil- liam Pauley of Manhattan diverged from a ruling by another judge this month that questioned the pro- gramme’s constitutionality, raising the prospect that the Supreme Court will need to resolve the issue.

In a 54-page decision, Pauley dismissed an Amer- ican Civil Liberties Union lawsuit contending that the NSA collection of “bulk telephony metadata” violated the bar against warrantless searches under the Fourth Amendment of the US Con- stitution.

The judge also referred often to the 11 Septem- ber, 2001 attacks, in which close to 3,000 people died, and said broad counter-ter- rorist programmes such as the NSA’s could help avoid a “horrible” repeat of those events.

“This blunt tool only works because it collects everything,” Pauley wrote. The leaks have sparked a debate over how much leeway to give the government in protecting Americans from terrorism.

Four killed, scores wounded in clashes across Egypt

CAIRO, 28 Dec — Mus- lim Brotherhood supporters and police clashed across Egypt on Friday, leaving at least four dead in protests after the army-backed government declared the group a terrorist organization.

The violence broke out after Friday prayers and the health ministry said 87 people were wounded in the clashes, which flared in Cairo and at least four other cities.

An 18-year-old Broth- erhood supporter was shot dead in the Nile Delta city of Damietta. A second man was killed in Minya, a bas- sin of Islamist supporters south of Cairo, and a third person was killed in the capital, the interior ministry said, without providing fur- ther details.

A young man was killed late on Friday, the state news agency reported, after clashes broke out in the southern city of Aswan be- tween security forces firing tear gas and Brotherhood supporters who burned two police cars.

Security forces de- tained at least 265 Brother- hood supporters nationwide, including at least 28 women, the ministry also said.

The widening crack- down has increased tensi- ons in a country suffering the worst internal strife of its modern history since the army deposed Islamist President Mohamed Mursi in July.

The Brotherhood was declared a terrorist organi- zation after 16 people were killed in a suicide attack on a police station on Tues- day, although the group condemned the attack and it was claimed by a radical faction based in the Sinai Peninsula.

The Muslim Brother- hood and its Islamist allies had called for protests in response to the government decision. Police fired bird- shot and tear gas at student protesters at Al-Azhar uni- versity’s Cairo campus. Gunfire was heard in the Suez Canal city of Ismailia, where demonstrators threw fireworks and rocks at po- lice who used teargas, a Reuters witness said.

Scores of rebels killed in Syrian government ambush

BEIRUT, 28 Dec — Syr- ia’s army ambushed Islam- ist fighters in the Qalamoun mountains north of the capi- tal Damascus on Friday, leaving as many as 60 peo- ple dead, the Syrian Obser- vatory for Human Rights said.

The attack happened between the Christian town of Maeloula and the town of Yabroud, where gov- ernment forces and rebels are fighting, said the Ob- servatory, a British-based, pro-opposition monitoring group with sources across Syria.

Syria’s civil war be- tween forces loyal to Presi- dent Bashar al-Assad and mostly Sunni Muslim rebels fighting to topple him has killed more than 100,000 people since March 2011.

Syrian state television showed footage of dozens of bodies lying in a moun- tainous area, with machine guns and rocket-propelled grenades next to them.

“There were about 400 of us including Saudis, Chechens and other nationali- ties,” a badly wounded fighter who was lying on the ground told a state tel- evision reporter who was asking him about numbers and nationalities.

The fighter said he be- longed to Liwa al-Islam, a Salafist jihadi group that is one of the biggest and best organized rebel units fight- ing to topple Assad.

Several Egyptians help an injured man out of the site of a clash between security forces and supporters of ousted Islamist president Mohamed Morsi at Al-Maskan Square in Cairo’s Heliopolis District, Egypt, on 27 Dec, 2013. XINHUA

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**Regional**

**Flu season begins, peak expected in late January in Japan**

Tokyo, 28 Dec — The influenza season has set in nationwide in Japan with the average number of patients per clinic topping the lead-off threshold of one in the latest weekly report and the peak anticipated in late January and early February, a national institute said on Friday.

The season started at the usual time of the year, from late January and March in Japan. Typical symptoms include a fever exceeding 38 C, headache, joint pain, and muscle pain — *Kyodo News*

**Nepal to have first hospital for wild animals**

KATHMANDU, 28 Dec — The Denver Zoo in the United States is helping Nepal build its first hospital for wild animals at Sauraha in Chitwan, south-central part of the country.

The hospital will be built at the Chitwan National Park, a World Heritage reserve that protects over 932 square km of forests, marshland and rippling grassland and wildlife, said officials of the National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC). The Denver Zoo has verbally assured financial assistance of 10.5 million dollars (150 million US dollars) to build the hospital that will be of great help in treating injured and endangered wild animals at the national park, added the officials.

"The initial deal for the hospital has already been made," said Govinda Ga-jurel, general secretary of the NTNC. "A written deal about the sort of help that we will get from Denver will be made soon. A team headed by Denver Zoo Vice President for Animal Care Brian Aucone has already met with Nepali officials in this regard.

The NTNC had been in talks with former US Ambassador to Nepal Michael E. Malinowski, president of the US Humane Society and other US government officials on the construction of the hospital for a long time." *Xinhua*

**Laos pledges to encourage production initiatives, check infrastructure spending**

VIENTIANE, 28 Dec — The Lao government has pledged to invest more heavily in commercial production initiatives while reign in infrastructure spending, state-run daily Vientiane Times reported on Friday, Prime Minister Thongloun Sisoulith made the commitment during the ongoing ordinary session of the National Assembly that concluded here on Friday.

The decision to readjust government investment priorities came after parliamentary suggestions that benefits from government infrastructure spending in recent years were taking too long to materialize. The National Assembly made the suggestions amidst current budgetary strain in the country.

The Lao government already has suspended a number of projects in order to ease budgetary concerns including infrastructure development schemes deemed "not critically important." *Xinhua*

**PH govt launches massive rehabilitation programme for Haiyan-devastated areas**

MANILA, 28 Dec — In the upcoming year of 2014, the top priority of the administration of Philippine President Benigno Aquino III is to rehabilitate vast areas in the Central Philippines devastated last November by super-typhoon Haiyan (locally named Yolanda), the strongest typhoon to hit land in recent history.

Early this month, Aquino announced that the government will earmark a total of 40.9 billion pesos (950 million US dollars) for housing, infrastructure, livelihood and employment opportunities, local facilities and social services in Tacloban City, the worst-hit city, and other coastal communities in the island of Leyte and Eastern Samar. The entire 40.9 billion pesos could be fully funded in the budget for 2014. Earlier, the Philippine Congress passed a supplemental budget of 14.5 billion pesos (330 million US dollars) for the immediate rehabilitation and rescue efforts in the typhoon-hit areas.

Aquino has also appointed former Senator Panfilio Lacson as his rehabilitation czar. Lacson, also a former chief of the Philippine National Police (PNP), will oversee the reconstruction of the entire region ravaged by the super typhoon.

The government funds aside, the United Nations (UN) and several foreign countries have pledged to continue extending financial support for the rehabilitation of the typhoon-hit areas in the Philippines.

Earlier this month, the UN launched a global 791-million-dollar call for aid to take care of the needs of the survivors in the Philippines over the next 12 months.

In a visit to Tacloban City last week, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon reiterated UN’s full support for the rehabilitation of the city and other areas. Ban urged typhoon survivors to “never despair” as he pledged to rally global backing to help them recover from one of their country’s deadliest disasters during his visit on 21 December. *Xinhua*

**PH govt launches massive rehabilitation programme for Haiyan-devastated areas**

PH govt launches massive rehabilitation programme for Haiyan-devastated areas

**Bangladesh tense ahead of opposition march**

DHAKA, 28 Dec — As the main opposition alliance in Bangladesh gears up for a “long march” to Dhaka seeking cancellation of the parliament polls slated for 5 January, many fear the situation in the country could become much more volatile.

Former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia on Tuesday night through a Press conference urged people from all walks of life to join march toward capital Dha- ka on 29 December to put pressure on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina’s government to scrap the parliament elections.

Khaleda Zia made the plea at the end of the fifth spell of countrywide blockade enforced by her 18-par- ty alliance.

Hasina’s ruling Bang- ladesh Awami League (AL) party has vowed to resist the programme and asked its leaders and activists to remain alert to prevent any attempt to create anarchy in the name of the programme. *Xinhua*
**Claims Day Notice**

**MV Panja Bhum Voy No (003)**

Consignees of cargo carried on MV Panja Bhum Voy No (003) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 29.12.2013 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of A.W.P.T. where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

Damaged cargo will be surveyed daily from 8 am to 11:20 am and 12 noon to 4 pm to Claims Day now declared as the third day after final discharge of cargo from the Vessel.

No claims against this vessel will be admitted after the Claims Day.

**Shipping Agency Department**

MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY

**Agent for:** MS Wan Hai Lines Pte Ltd

Phone No: 256908/378316/376797

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**Russia to ban 11 Estonian dairy, fish exporters**

TALLINN, 28 Dec—Russia has announced a ban on 11 Estonian dairy and fish exporters, which will take effect from 9 January, 2014, the Estonian Public Broadcasting (ERR) reported on Friday.

The move was part of Russia’s attempt to force the rules of its customs union with Belarus and Kazakhstan onto the European Union, of which Estonia is a member, the ERR quoted Marko Mikheilson, head of Estonian Parliament’s Foreign Affairs Committee, as saying.

Russia recently also banned food products from the Netherlands and Lithuania as these companies failed to comply with Russia’s rules of its customs union, including the ban on pork and other products into Russia to Latvia, on 6 Nov, 2013.

A local resident picks up an item from a heap of illegally dumped waste left from the construction of facilities for the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, a Black Sea resort city in Russia, on 6 Nov, 2013.

**Kyodo News**

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**Latvia ready to join euro zone**

RIGA, 28 Dec—Latvia is ready to become the 18th member of the euro zone on 1 January, 2014.

Posters on Latvia’s entry to the eurozone bloc are hung along main streets of Riga, capital of Latvia, to mark the event.

Since July 2013, the Latvian authorities have carried out a large-scale publicity campaign to inform people of the advantages of its entry to the eurozone to ease people’s concerns over possible rises in commodity prices and unemployment rate after joining the bloc.

According to government regulations, shops in Latvia are now showing product prices in two currencies: lat and euro. The euro will officially be brought into Latvia’s formal circulation in 2014, but some private shops are already accepting euro payments now.

Latvians are now busy converting lat into the euro. Riga’s shopping centres have also witnessed an increasing number of customers who want to spend their lats in hands before the New Year.

Latvia’s central bank said there is no need to be panic, as people can still convert their lats into the euro at the central bank without paying any fees after the official circulation of the euro.

Latvia’s central bank, as saying.

**Trentuina police seize $2.3 million of gold at roadblock**

TUNIS, 28 Dec—Tunisian police found 60kg of gold, worth around $2.3 million, as they checked vehicles for arms and militants on one of the main road links with the remote south of the country on Friday, state media reported.

Authorities have set up roadblocks on major routes, fearing Islamists may be planning attacks during New Year celebrations.

The North African country is still in flux after the revolt that toppled President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in early 2011 and inspired revolts across the Arab world.

**New Light of Myanmar**

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**Advertisement & General**

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Russian punk band says freed to improve Russia’s image before Olympics

MOSCOW, 28 Dec — One of two freed members of punk protest band Pussy Riot, Nadezhda Tolokonnikova, said on Friday their release was aimed solely at improving Russia’s image before it hosts the Winter Olympic Games and was not a humanitarian gesture.

Tolokonnikova, 24, and Maria Alyokhina, 25, walked free under a Kremlin amnesty on Monday after serving more than 21 months of a two-year prison term for performing a profanity-laced “punk prayer” protest against President Vladimir Putin in Moscow’s main Russian Orthodox cathedral.

Tolokonnikova said the Winter Olympics, due to be held in February in Russia’s Black Sea resort of Sochi, were Putin’s pet project and that anybody attending them would be supporting him.

“With the Olympics approaching, Vladimir Vladimirovich (Putin) does not want his favourite project ruined,” Tolokonnikova said. Last week, Putin also pardoned former oil tycoon Mikhail Khodorkovsky, viewed by Kremlin foes as a political prisoner, after he spent more than 10 years in jail. “The thaw has nothing to do with humanitarianism. The authorities only did this under pressure from both Russian and Western society.” Tolokonnikova told a news conference with Alyokhina at her side, adding she feared “there could be more repression after the Olympics”.

“Whether one likes it or not, going to the Olympics in Russia is an acceptance of the internal political situation in Russia, an acceptance of the course taken by a person who is interested in the Olympics above all else — Vladimir Putin,” Tolokonnikova said.

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Singer Miley Cyrus performs during the 2013 Z100 Jingle Ball in New York on 13 Dec, 2013. REUTERS

Miley Cyrus says after Disney, it was time to be herself

LOS ANGELES, 28 Dec — It is sex, drugs and pop music — and Miley Cyrus is fine with that way now that the provocative singer has shed her innocent Disney star image along with most of her clothes. Cyrus, 21, who has grabbed headlines in the past year for her admitted drug use, sexually suggestive dancing and wearing as little as boots in a music video, said she was surprised by the scrutiny her new persona has attracted.

“I went from people just thinking I was, like, a baby to people thinking I’m this, like, sex freak that really just makes a baby to people think I’m this, like, sex freak that really just

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Singer Miley Cyrus performs during the 2013 Z100 Jingle Ball in New York on 13 Dec, 2013. REUTERS
Federer adds “childhood hero” Edberg to coaching team

Roger Federer of Switzerland serves to Rafael Nadal of Spain during their men’s singles semi-final tennis match at the ATP World Tour Finals at the 02 Arena in London on 10 Nov, 2013.— Reuters

Stoke manager Hughes charged with improper conduct

Stoke City manager Mark Hughes has been charged with improper conduct for his coat-throwing outburst during the match at the Etihad stadium in Manchester City on Thursday. “I’m not asking for a big injury... Just a little injury to stop him playing for four days.”

Knowing that Suarez has scored 19 goals in 13 league games this season, Mourinho — who has been moaned his own strikers’ profligacy this term— unsurprisingly avoided making comparisons. His three main strikers — Fernando Torres, Samuel Eto’o and Demba Ba — have scored only five times between them. “Every game is hard,” he said. “The difference is some teams are bigger — bigger name, bigger impact... Man City-Liverpool, Chelsea-Liverpool, Chelsea-Arsenal...”

Mourinho is looking forward to spend time with a knee injury, winning 10 tournaments including a record eighth French Open crown and a second US Open title.

Nadal adds “childhood hero” Edberg to coaching team

Spanish tennis player Rafael Nadal

Madrid, 28 Dec — Staying fit is more important to Rafael Nadal in 2014 than adding to his 13 grand slam titles, the world number one was quoted as saying on Friday.

Nadal’s 10 titles last season came close to matching the best year of his career, when he won 11 in 2005, including his first Roland Garros crown.

Stoke City manager Mark Hughes

The Australian Open, the first of the season’s four grand slam tournaments, begins on 13 January with Federer looking for his fifth title there and first since 2010.

The world number six opens his season next week at the Brisbane International, where Briton Murray has been champion for the last two seasons.—Reuters

Roger Federer has made his coaching team,” Federer said in Melbourne, Stefan Edberg to coaching team

Roger Federer has made “childhood hero” Stefan Edberg to coaching team

Melbourne, 28 Dec— Former world number one Roger Federer has made his “childhood hero” Stefan Edberg part of his coaching team and will use him on an occasional basis next year, the Swiss said on Friday.

“Edberg was quoted as saying on the ATP website (www.atpworldtour.com). “It’s up to us to keep that belief going.”

Premier League soccer match at the Etihad stadium in Manchester, northern England on 26 Dec, 2013. — Reuters

Mourinho hoping for ‘little Suarez injury”

LONDON, 28 Dec — Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho enjoyed a typical moment of mischief on Friday when he suggested a “little injury” might deprive Liverpool of in-form striker Luis Suarez for Sunday’s Premier League clash at Stamford Bridge. Speaking to Chelsea TV, the Portuguese coach avoided any mention of Suarez’s controversial behaviour in the clubs’ last meeting, at Anfield in April, when he bit the arm of defender Branislav Ivanovic.

Instead, Mourinho said he hoped the free-scoring Uruguay striker — who was suspended for 10 matches for his dental attack — would not be available to play in the clash of the third and fourth-placed clubs.

“Maybe Suarez has got a little injury,” he said following Liverpool’s 2-1 defeat at Manchester City on Thursday. “I’m not asking for a big injury... Just a little injury to stop him playing for four days.”

Knowing that Suarez has scored 19 goals in 13 league games this season, Mourinho — who has been moaned his own strikers’ profligacy this term— unsurprisingly avoided making comparisons. His three main strikers — Fernando Torres, Samuel Eto’o and Demba Ba — have scored only five times between them. “Every game is hard,” he said. “The difference is some teams are bigger — bigger name, bigger impact... Man City-Liverpool, Chelsea-Liverpool, Chelsea-Arsenal...”

But every game is difficult. The last two matches we played (at home), Swansea and Crystal Palace: 1-0, 2-1. You have to give everything to win matches.”

The Portuguese praised Eto’o, despite the Cameroonian international having missed two clear chances to net his third league goal of the season. “He did well,” Mourinho said. “I want that feeling that my strikers are working to have chances. I want them to shoot, I want the goalkeeper to save, the ball to hit the post.”

Mourinho also said he hoped to see Chelsea awarded more penalties for fouls on their tricky Bel-

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Guz Poyet

Nadal says fitness more important than titles in 2014

LONDON, 28 Dec — Sunderland boss Gus Poyet will seek to rub salt into Cardiff City’s wounds when his improving team visit the newly-promoted Welsh club on Saturday. Poyet believes his team can maintain their own momentum and, with other results going their way, may be able to climb off the bottom of the Premier League.

Just 24 hours after Car- diff sacked their widely- respected manager Malky Mackay, Poyet hopes to take advantage by heaping more pressure on them. “People keep forget- ting we are unbeaten in four games — we’re playing well,” Poyet told the Sunderland website (www. safe.com) on Friday. “It’s up to us to keep that belief going.”

Sunderland have won twice and drawn twice in four outings in all compe- titions since they suffered consecutive home defeats by Chelsea and Tottenham earlier this month.

On Thursday, they maintained their more disciplined defensive approach with a 1-0 win at Everton, recording their third clean sheet in four games during which they have con- ceded only one goal. “The whole squad has to pull together — two games in three days is tough,” added Poyet, following their win at Goodison Park, courtesy of a first-half penalty by Ki Sung-Yeung.

“We have quality play- ers to call upon like Jory Aldidore and Adam Johnson who were on the bench, but we face a difficult match.”

“They are fighting for their lives, but we need to make sure we’re ready and perform to the best of our ability. We need to make it difficult for them on Saturday.”

Cardiff lost 3-0 at home to Southampton on Thursday and are only four points ahead of Sunderland in 16th place in the Premier League.—Reuters

Sunderland’s manager Gus Poyet

Spanish tennis player Rafael Nadal

Melbourne, 28 Dec— Stefan Edberg will join Severin Luethi on my coaching team,” Federer, a 17 times grand slam champion, announced on his Facebook page referring to next month’s Australian Open. Swede Edberg, also a former world number one, won six grand slams, including two Australian Open titles, in the mid-1980s.

“Severin, who has been part of my team for the last seven years, will do most of the weeks and Stefan has agreed to help out for at least 10 weeks starting at the Australian Open in Melbourne,” the 32-year-old Federer added. “Stefan was my childhood hero and I am really looking forward to spending time with and learning from him.”

Federer is the third leading player to hire a former tennis great to help on the coaching side after Andy Murray’s link up with Ivan Lendl and world num- ber one Novak Djokovic’s decision to recruit Boris Becker to his team.

“I’m really excited to be part of Roger’s team and I hope together we can bring out his best tennis,” Edberg was quoted as saying on the ATP website (www.atpworldtour.com). “In that sense, and thinking about 2014, I am not going to talk at the moment about winning the ninth Roland Garros or winning Wimbledon again, which would be the third time.”

“No, look: what is im- portant to me is to maintain my fitness in a way that will allow me to play the whole year, and competing at a good level.”

“You see it’s not easy: I couldn’t do that, for the whole season, in 2012, 2013.”

Nadal’s 10 titles last season came close to matching the best year of his career, when he won 11 in 2005, including his first Roland Garros crown.

But certainly 2013 was the most emotional of my career. If you ask me about the key elements of what happened I think I started playing when I was fresher than ever after a seven-month rest. That may have been the key to the successes.”

Nadal will get his next crack at a grand slam when the Australian Open starts in Melbourne in mid Janu- ary. He is playing compatri- ot and world number three David Ferrer at an invita- tional event in Abu Dhabi later on Friday.—Reuters

Spanish tennis player Rafael Nadal

English

Reuter
Private vehicles becoming Nepalis’ necessity

KATHMANDU, 29 Dec — Personal vehicles including car, jeep and motorbike, which are once considered to be luxury, have now been a matter of compulsion and necessity.

The rising individuals’ income, growing number of youths conscious to raise their living standards and mismanaged public transport services in Nepal has prompted large number of customers to own personal vehicles for them.

According to government data, Nepalis purchased 35 four wheelers (cars and jeeps) and 512 two wheelers (motorbikes/scooters) a day on average in the first four months from mid-July to mid-November of the current fiscal year. Suppose a four wheeler costs 2.5 million Nepali rupee (26,315 US dollars) and a two wheeler is priced at 150,000 Nepali rupee (1,578 US dollars), the Nepalese collectively purchased automobile worth 160 million Nepali rupee (1.68 million US dollars) a day.

According to the fresh data released by Department of Transport Management (DoTM) this week, a total of 71,954 personal vehicles were registered across the country during the first four months of current fiscal year, around 5 percent more than what had been registered during the same period of last fiscal year.

Of the total number of registered vehicles, 61,492 were two wheelers, a clear manifestation of Nepalis’ preference for small and light vehicles.

DoTM officials attributed the elevated style and growing income of common Nepalis to the growth in purchase and registration of personal vehicles.

“The rise in the registration of personal vehicles is because they have been an integral part of Nepalis’ life,” DoTM spokesperson Mukti KC told Xinhua.

One of the local residents told Xinhua anonymously that several artillery shells landed at a secessionist camp in al-Dhalaee Province, leaving at least 12 people killed and many others injured. A local chief of emergency confirmed to Xinhua on a telephone conversation that 12 civilians were killed and about 30 others were seriously injured during the military artillery attack.

Chinese man saved after getting lost in southwestern Norway

OSLØ, 28 Dec — A young Chinese man, who got lost in the mountains on the way to Peikestolen in southwest Norway earlier on Friday, has been found and saved in a prompt search operation.

A search team heard cries at 21:30 local time (2030 GMT) and located the 21-year-old man 20 minutes later, said the Norwegian-language newspaper Aftenposten in a dispatch on its website.

The man, whose condition was described as “safe and sound”, was expected to be taken first to Peikes-tolltyna, and from there to Stavanger later.

A search operation was quickly launched after police were notified of the incident at 20:00 (1900 GMT).

The man, whose identity was not immediately known, called his friends at about 15:00 local time and said he was “fairly scantly dressed and he has no food and drink with him,” said Anatoly Bjoernsen, a police officer from the Norwegian county of Rogaland.

One of his friends, who declined to be named, told Xinhua through telephone that the man had been taken to a local hospital for medical checkup.

Artillery shelling kills 12 in Yemen’s secessionist camp

ADEN, (Yemen), 28 Dec — Artillery shells fired by the Yemeni armed forces struck a secessionist camp in the southern province of al-Dhalea on Friday, killing 12 people and injuring many others, local residents told Xinhua.

One of the local residents told Xinhua anonymously that several artillery shells landed at a secessionist camp in al-Dhalaee Province, leaving at least 12 people killed and many others injured. A local chief of emergency confirmed to Xinhua on a telephone conversation that 12 civilians were killed and about 30 others were seriously injured during the military artillery attack.

Keeper Hart is ‘best in England’ says Pellegrini

LONDON, 28 Dec — Two months after dropping him following a string of mistakes, Manchester City manager Manuel Pellegrini on Friday hailed goalkeeper Joe Hart as “the best in Eng-land”.

England first choice Hart, 26, played in his first Premier League game in nearly two months in the 4-2 win at Fulham on 21 December and produced several outstanding saves on Thursday when City beat Liverpool 2-1 at the Etihad Stadium.

“Hart has worked very hard in the last month and a half,” Pellegrini told the City website (mcfc.co.uk).

“He is the best goalkeeper in England.”

Hart was replaced by Romanian Costel Pantilimon early in November, one week after an error that allowed Fernando Torres to score Chelsea’s winner in a 2-1 Premier League triumph at Stamford Bridge.

At that time, he appeared to be suffering a loss of confidence although Pellegrini did still pick him for Champions League and League Cup matches.

His reflex saves to deny Philippe Coutinho and Jordan Henderson in Thursday’s thriller suggested any such crisis is now behind him.

City’s win enabled them to leap-frog Liverpool into second place in the Premier League behind Arsenal.

Pellegrini added: “I am very pleased with Joe. Not only (for) now, but I think in all the games he played in the last month. He did very well. “I thought it was good for Joe to have a rest. He was not in his best mo-ment.”

Hart’s restoration helped City recover from a one-goal deficit against Liverpool.

“It was a very impor-tant win because Liverpool was the best team in the Premier League and they were at the top of the table before the match.

“It’s important that we showed the personality to come from behind to win the game.”

Pellegrini also warned: “We play against Crystal Palace in less than 48 hours (after playing Liverpool) and we have to be ready for that.” City captain Vincent Kompany echoed those thoughts. “These fixtures bring different challenges and there is a lot to take ac-count of — as much as we would like to call ourselves favourites, there will be fatigue and, being the festive period, the games come thick and fast,” said the Belgian defender.

“There have already been one or two surprise re-sults and I expect this to continue. That Tony Pulis’ teams are really organised and diffi-cult to beat.”

A Visit To Kayah State (Part-I)

Manchester City goalkeeper Joe Hart throws the ball during their English Premier League match against Fulham at Craven Cottage in London, on 21 Dec, 2013. — Reuters

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One killed as Islamist students clash with police in Cairo

CAIRO, 28 Dec—One student was killed on Saturday when supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood fought with Egyptian police at the Cairo campus of Al-Azhar University, state media reported.

Shaimaa Mounir, a student activist, told Reuters that the dead student was Khaled El-Haddad, a supporter of the Brotherhood that was designated this week as a terrorist organization by the state.

The violence followed clashes across the country on Friday in which at least five people died.

State-run newspaper Al-Ahram said that security forces on Saturday fired tear gas to disperse pro-Brotherhood students who were preventing their classmates from entering university buildings to take exams.

Protesters threw rocks at police and set tyres on fire to counter the teargas. Al-Ahram quoted a health ministry official as saying that one student had been killed and four injured.

Two college buildings caught fire in the violence. State TV broadcast footage of black smoke billowing from the faculty of commerce building and said “terrorist students” had set the agriculture faculty building on fire as well.

Police arrested 60 students for possession of makeshift weapons including petrol bombs, according to an emailed statement from the interior ministry. Calm had been restored, and scheduled exams had begun after the morning clashes.

Al-Azhar, a respected center of Sunni Islamic learning, has for months been the scene of protests against what the Brotherhood calls a “military coup” that deposed Islamist Mohamed Mursi as president after a year in office.

Reuters