President U Thein Sein felicitates Cuban President

Vice-President U Nyan Tun delivers address at coordination meeting to host 7th ASEAN Para Games at Wunna Theikdi Stadium.—MNA

Myanmar, ready to host 7th ASEAN Para Games

NAY PYI TAW, 31 Dec—The host country for the SEA Games has to organize the ASEAN Para Games in line with the rules of the ASEAN Para Sports Federation-APSF, said Vice-President U Nyan Tun at the coordination meeting to host the 7th ASEAN Para Games at Wunna Theikdi Stadium, here, this morning.

After successfully hosting the XXVII SEA Games, Myanmar will hold the 7th ASEAN Para Games, he added. The work guideline for the XXVII SEA Games was adopted to make preparations of the stadiums and gymnasiums with full facilities not only for the SEA Games but for the ASEAN Para Games, realizing the equality, participation and sharing for the para sports athletes. Now the country is ready to host the games. In its chronicle, Myanmar will have the great opportunity to uplift the prestige of the State by hosting the ASEAN Para Games.

In its fine tradition, Myanmar para sports athletes had secured a large number of medals in the Far East and South Pacific Region Para Games and ASEAN Para Games.

The leading committee and work committee are making strenuous efforts for successfully hosting the games and for enabling the Myanmar athletes to achieve victory. The Ministry of Sports and respective sports federations are contributing to the Myanmar athletes. Likewise, the government fulfills the requirement of food, accommodation and training of the athletes.

Chairman of the Leading Committee Union Minister for Sports U Tin Hsan, Joint Secretary-1 President for Myanmar Para Sports Federation Maj-Gen Nay Lin reported on organizing the games.

Officials of the respective subcommittees and Myanmar sports federations submitted the reports on respective sectors.

After hearing the reports, the Vice-President attended to the needs and urged officials to strive for successfully hosting the games and achieving the best results.

MNA

Thai PM seeks reconciliation despite threat of more protests

BANGKOK, 31 Dec—Embellished Thai Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra called for reconciliation on Tuesday as the streets of the capital, Bangkok, emptied ahead of New Year celebrations, a rare period of calm after weeks of unrest.

Anti-government protesters have vowed to disrupt a February 2 election called by Yingluck in a bid to settle a crisis that has pitted her government against Bangkok’s conservative elite and middle class.

The demonstrators have threatened to shut down Bangkok after the New Year, with plans to block roads in up to 20 places, although the scope of their protests has not always matched the promises made by their leader, Suthep Thaugsuban.

Yingluck has not been in Bangkok for more than a week, spending time among supporters in the north, but she used social media to send a message seeking peace and reconciliation.

“The occasion of New Year 2014, may I ask all Thais to be united in mind, to seek a blessing for the Thai people to love and harmonize and for those who differ in views, be it their political ideology or belief, to reconcile for a peaceful resolution for our nation,” she said in a Facebook post.

The demonstrators are determined to topple Yingluck, who they see as a puppet of her self-exiled brother and former premier, Thaksin Shinawatra.

Bangkok’s normally gridlocked streets were mostly clear on Tuesday as people headed to the provinces for the holidays.

Thailand’s Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra leaves the Government Complex after a meeting with the Election Commission in Bangkok on 20 December, 2013. —REUTERS

President U Thein Sein’s radio message on air

NAY PYI TAW, 31 Dec—A radio message to be delivered by U Thein Sein, President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, will be broadcast through radio programmes from 2 to 4 January, 2014. Myanmar Radio, Mandalay FM, Pymawsawyad FM, Shwe FM, Cherry FM, Padamy FM, FM Bagan and Thazin Radio will broadcast the message at 7 am, 11 am, 6 pm and 8 pm.—MNA

INSIDE

Integrated operation of GSDF intelligence, special units being considered

Orange to take legal action after report of spying via its cable

ONGC, Shell buy rest of Brazil offshore block from Petrobras

LinkedIn, Pinterest more popular than Twitter

Iranian official reports progress in nuclear talks with powers

PAGE-3

PAGE-4

PAGE-4

PAGE-5

PAGE-5

PAGE-3

PAGE-5

PAGE-3
Chess Tournament hails Independence Day in PyinOoLwin

PyinOoLwin, 31 Dec—As a gesture of hailing the 66th Anniversary Independence Day, the chess tournament is held at YMBA Hall in Ward 4 of PyinOoLwin in Mandalay Region.

The tournament is categorized as novice singles event and open team event.

The tournament kicked off on 28 December and the final and prize presentation ceremony will be held on 4 January 2014.

It was attended by officials of the township and chess enthusiasts.—Thet Naing (PyinOoLwin)

Hailing 7th ASEAN Para Games

Parasport racing athletes under training

Nay Pyi Taw, 31 Dec—Myanmar will host the 7th ASEAN Para Games on 14 January 2014. The Myanmar athletes who will take part in the race were under training at the training group No 1 of Wunna Theikdi Stadium on 29 December morning. They are under training of coaches U Min Aung and U Ye Win, close supervisor of Wunna Theikdi Stadium at the training group No 1.

U Hsan Lwin of Myanmar Para Sports Federation. “We hope to secure at least 15 gold, 15 silver and 15 bronze medals in the track and field event. We are pleased for donations for the para sport athletes of Myanmar team,” said coach U Min Aung.—Kyemon-Kyaw Thura (Nay Pyi Taw)

MPF launches emergency, complaint-handling phone lines

Nay Pyi Taw, 31 Dec—Myanmar Police Force under the Ministry of Home Affairs has put hot lines into place at Myanmar Police Force HQ and region/state police stations to enable the public to submit tip-offs and complaints over illegal acts, misappropriation and corruption.

The public may reach the numbers for their information and complaints but are requested to avoid making complaints to these phone lines. Myanmar Police Force HQ, Nay Pyi Taw Police Force, Kachin, Kayah, Kayin, Chin, Mon, Rakhine and Shan State Police Forces, Sagaing, Taninthayi, Bago, Magway, Mandalay, Yangon and Ayeyawady Region Police Forces, Offices of Commanders of East, West, South and North District Police Forces in Yangon Region, No (1) Police Station in Taunggyi, Office of Deputy Commander of State Police Force in Lashio, and Kengtung Police Station in Kengtung have emergency numbers of 199.

Phone numbers receiving complaints from the public are Myanmar Police Force HQ (067-412222 and 067-412444), Nay Pyi Taw Police Force (067-5530333), Kachin State Police Force (074-21444), Kayin State Police Force (035-23355), Sagaing Region Police Force (071-24996), Taninthayi Region Police Force (059-23998), Bago Region Police Force (052-23999), Magway Region Police Force (063-28099), Mandalay Region Police Force (02-61444), Mon State Police Force (057-29487), Rakhine State Police Force (043-22833), Yangon Region Police Force (01-2302199), Shan State Police Force (081-2125455) and Ayeyawady Region Police Force (042-23844).—MNA

Roads, bridges construction under supervision

Pyapon, 31 Dec—A ceremony to donate K 2.5 million to the fund for construction of the annex of Saya Zawgyi Library was held at the library in Pyapon of Ayeyawady Region on 28 December.

It marked the opening ceremony of 132nd branch of Kanbawzaw Bank Ltd in Pyapon.

Secretary of the Library Committee U Myint Aung (Writer Po Aung Lay) spoke words of thanks.

Pyapon Bank Branch Manager Daw Aye Aung, on behalf of the bank, presented K 2.5 million to Pyapon District Deputy Commissioner U Kyaw Soe Win, Township Administrator U Nye Lin, Library Committee Chairman U Wai Myint and member U Thein Tun (a) U Paik who returned a certificate of honour.

The library stores over 20000 books in addition 30 magazines, 30 journals and newspapers for public reading. Over 2000 members join the library and about 200 readers visit the library daily.—MMAL-Thuzar Nwe (Pyapon)

Free health care provided

Mandalay, 31 Dec—Specialists from Mackay Memorial Hospital gave health care services to the older persons at the Home for the Aged at the foot of Mandalay Hill in Aungmyetha Townships of Mandalay on 26 December.

It was jointly organized by Mackay Memorial Hospital of China (Taipei) and China-Myanmar Economic and Cooperation Exchange Association.

On 27 December, they also gave free treatment to the patients and donated medicines at Myintmyat Phusin Hospital at the corner of 37th and 74th Streets in Mahaanmye Township, Kyemon-Maung Pyi Thu (Mandalay)
Iranian official reports progress in nuclear talks with powers

DUBAI, 31 Dec. — Six world powers and Iran have made good progress in expert talks in Geneva on how to roll out last month's landmark nuclear deal which obliges Teheran to suspend its most sensitive atomic work, a senior Iranian official said on Tuesday.

It was unclear how close the seven countries came to resolving all the numerous practical issues involved in putting the 24 November accord into practice or whether they had agreed on a date to implement it after all-night talks. Abbas Araghchi, Iran’s deputy negotiator, told Iran’s state news agency only that some issues remained to be agreed at a more senior level. Western countries led by the United States fear that Iran’s nuclear work has military goals and have imposed years of crippling sanctions on Iran in an effort to force Teheran to curb its nuclear programme.

Araghchi denounced scepticism that the US and its allies to provide billions more dollars in aid.

The Geneva gathering was the third time since 24 November that nuclear experts and sanctions specialists from the United States, Russia, China, France, Britain and Germany had met their Iranian counterparts to work out the implementation of the breakthrough nuclear accord.

In the meeting, which lasted nearly 23 hours and ended at 7 am (0600 GMT), the sides again sought to agree how exactly Iran would meet its obligation to suspend some uranium enrichment and how western governments would ease sanctions in return. “The last meeting … resulted in good progress,” Araghchi was quoted by IRNA as saying. “The experts will present their reports to deputies and political directors because some of the remaining issues need to be resolved at the political level.” — Reuters

Afghanistan rejects grim US intelligence forecast as baseless

KABUL, 31 Dec. — Afghanistan on Monday rejected as baseless a US intelligence forecast that the gains the United States and allies have made in the past three years will be significantly rolled back by 2017.

The US National Intelligence Estimate also predicted that Afghanistan would fall into chaos if Washington and Kabul failed to sign a pact to keep an international military contingent there beyond 2014.

President Hamid Karzai’s spokesman dismissed the US forecast as “absurd”.

“The US government has made the same prediction last year and the year before,” spokesman Aimal Faizi told Reuters. “The US news agencies are only repeating what their government has been saying.”

Faizi suggested the leaking of the gloomy US intelligence report was part of a bid to press Karzai into granting the Taliban control of some areas as part of a peace moves. — Reuters

Thailand’s army moves to allay coup fears

BANGKOK, 31 Dec. — Thailand’s powerful but politicized army sought to ease fears on Monday it might step in to resolve a festering political crisis, while anti-government protesters entrenched positions around Bangkok as they seek to disrupt a February election.

The latest round of an all-too-familiar political conflict in Thailand has dragged on for weeks. It flared last week into deadly clashes between police and protesters outside a stadium where registration for the 2 February poll was under way and at other rally sites around the Thai capital.

The head of the military added to the growing sense of unease on Thursday when he refused to rule out a coup after those clashes. A policeman and a protester were killed when an unidentified gunman opened fire, and scores were wounded in the clashes.

The coup was considered integral to the breakdown of the political stalemate in Thailand which has been going from bad to worse for several years.

In a meeting on Monday, which obliges Teheran to curb its nuclear programme, senior officials dismissed scepticism that the US and its allies to provide billions more dollars in aid.

The Geneva gathering was the third time since 24 November that nuclear experts and sanctions specialists from the United States, Russia, China, France, Britain and Germany had met their Iranian counterparts to work out the implementation of the breakthrough nuclear accord.

In the meeting, which lasted nearly 23 hours and ended at 7 am (0600 GMT), the sides again sought to agree how exactly Iran would meet its obligation to suspend some uranium enrichment and how western governments would ease sanctions in return. “The last meeting … resulted in good progress,” Araghchi was quoted by IRNA as saying. “The experts will present their reports to deputies and political directors because some of the remaining issues need to be resolved at the political level.” — Reuters

Afghanistan’s President Hamid Karzai addresses media representatives during a press interaction in New Delhi on 14 Dec, 2013. Karzai is on a four-day visit to India.

’s spokesman dismissed the US forecast as “absurd”.

“The US government has made the same prediction last year and the year before,” spokesman Aimal Faizi told Reuters. “The US news agencies are only repeating what their government has been saying.”

Faizi suggested the leaking of the gloomy US intelligence report was part of a bid to press Karzai into granting the Taliban control of some areas as part of a peace moves. — Reuters

A general view of the Bushehr nuclear power plant, some 1,200 km (746 miles) south of Teheran on 26 Oct, 2010. — Reuters

A general view of the Bushehr nuclear power plant, some 1,200 km (746 miles) south of Teheran in 26 Oct, 2010. — Reuters

Cambodian PM, opposition leader to meet over political row

PHNOM PENH, 31 Dec. — Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen and the country’s opposition leader Sam Rainsy will meet on Thursday to discuss and find solutions to the current political dispute following the July’s election, the government spokesman, Khieu Kanharith said on Monday.

“Today, Prime Minister Hun Sen agreed to hold a meeting with Sam Rainsy, president of the Cambodia National Rescue Party, on 2 January at the National Assembly,” he told reporters. “The meeting will focus on the reform of the National Election Committee and elections.”

Political debate between Prime Minister Hun Sen’s ruling party and Sam Rainsy’s opposition party has persisted since the July election results showed that the ruling party won a majority of vote with 68 parliamentary seats against 55 seats for the opposition.

The opposition refused to accept the outcome, claiming serious irregularities and has boycotted parliament since then.

Despite the opposition’s boycott, the ruling party-formed parliament voted on 24 September for the establishment of a new government under the leadership of Hun Sen.

Xinhua

That police officers gather at the Royal Plaza near the Government House in Bangkok on 30 Dec, 2013. — Reuters

Thai army chief General Prayuth Chan-Ocha said after Thursday’s clashes that “the door was neither open nor closed” on a coup, and social media across Thailand has buzzed with rumours of a coup ever since. Army spokesman Winthai Suwarsate said to play down those fears, telling reporters on Monday that the rumours were causing “confusion and speculation”. — Reuters
US cracks open skies to testing, use of aerial drones

A small drone helicopter operated by a paparazzo records singer Beyonce Knowles-Carter (not seen) as she rides the Cyclone rollercoaster while filming a music video on Coney Island in New York on 29 Aug, 2013. REUTERS

New York, 31 Dec — The US aviation regulator took a significant step toward opening the skies to aerial drones on Monday, authorizing six sites where unmanned aircraft can be tested for a variety of uses.

The Federal Aviation Administration already has approved limited use of drones in the US for law enforcement, surveillance, atmospheric research and other applications. But Monday’s move will give companies, universities and other entities locations at which to test much broader use, such as crop spraying, catching exotic-animal poachers or delivering packages.

“It provides the platform for this research to be carried out on a very large scale across the country,” Federal Aviation Administration Administrator Michael Huerta told reporters.

The first test site is expected to be open in six months and the sites will operate at least until Feb 2017. The FAA said the test sites will be developed by the University of Alaska, the state of Nevada, Griffiss International Airport in New York state, the North Dakota Department of Commerce, Texas A&M University at Corpus Christi, and Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, which includes locations in New Jersey.

The FAA is required to write initial rules governing commercial operation of drones by 2015. The test sites will operate longer, allowing rules to evolve with further testing, Huerta said. Drones are smaller and less costly alternatives to manned aircraft, and are a growing business for aerospace companies such as Boeing Co, Northrop Grumman Corp, Lockheed Martin Corp and AeroVironment Inc.

Beyond military capabilities, they also offer uses to businesses and researchers. Amazon.com Inc recently unveiled plans for drones to deliver small packages to homes.

Global spending on unmanned aircraft will almost double to $11.6 billion a year by 2023, according to the latest estimate by aviation and aerospace industry research firm Teal Group. The Association for Unmanned Vehicle Systems International (AUVSI), an industry group, estimates the industry could contribute more than $80 billion to the US economy over a decade and create more than 100,000 jobs. —Reuters

Antarctic blizzard halts icebreaker’s bid to rescue stranded ship

Sydney, 31 Dec — An Antarctic blizzard has halted an Australian icebreaker’s attempt to reach a Russian ship trapped for a week with 74 people onboard, rescuers said on Monday.

The Akademik Shokalskiy left New Zealand on 28 November on a private expedition to commemorate the 100th anniversary of an Antarctic journey led by Australian explorer Douglas Mawson.

It became trapped in the ice on 24 December, 100 nautical miles east of the French Antarctic station Dumont D’Urville. The 74 people aboard include scientists and tourists, many of them Australian, and 22 Russian crew.

A first rescue attempt by a Chinese icebreaker, the Snow Dragon, had to be halted because the ice was so thick. Now another attempt, by the Aurora Australis, has been hampered by the weather.

It has had to open waters about 18 nautical miles from the Akademik Shokalskiy because of poor visibility, the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA), which is co-ordinating the rescue, said. —Reuters

Orange to take legal action after report of spying via its cable

Paris, 31 Dec — Orange (ORAN.PA) is preparing its legal response to a report alleging the US National Security Agency (NSA) accessed customers’ data transmitted by a submarine cable partly used by the French telecoms operator. German website Spiegel Online said it had seen documents showing the NSA had tapped telecom data from the cable running from Marseille to North Africa and Asia. Orange uses the submarine cable along with 13 other telecoms companies, which collectively operate the cable.

A steady drip of allegations of breakdowns in the internet connection in the next few days because we want to know more about the eventual- ity that Orange data may have been intercepted,” an Orange spokesperson said on Monday, adding that Orange had had no role whatsoever in the spying.

Orange uses the sub- marine cable along with 13 other telecoms companies, which collectively operate the cable.

A steady drip of allegations of breakdowns in the internet connection in the next few days because we want to know more about the eventual- ity that Orange data may have been intercepted,” an Orange spokesperson said on Monday, adding that Orange had had no role whatsoever in the spying.

Linkedin, Pinterest more popular than Twitter

San Francisco, 31 Dec — More US adults use Linkedin (LNKD.N) and Pinterest than Twitter (TWTR.N), but that website attracts a greater proportion of blacks and young adults than does its social media peers, a Pew Research Centre study released on Monday showed.

Photo pin-up site Pinterest spiked in popularity over the past year, according to the survey, a poll of 1,445 Internet users aged 18 and older. About 21 percent of respondents said they employ the service, up sharply from 15 percent in a similar survey conducted a year ago.

The figure was 22 percent for LinkedIn and 18 percent for Twitter, holding roughly steady from a year ago. About 29 percent of the blacks surveyed by Pew made use of Twitter, vs. 44 percent for whites and Hispanics, the study showed. (Reuters.com/jc75v)

Twitter ranks higher than Pinterest in terms of engagement, however: 46 percent of users surveyed go onto the online messaging service daily, versus 23 percent for Pinterest and just 13 percent for LinkedIn.

Beyond experts have said Twitter is less intuitive than Facebook and thus can turn off users, curtailting its growth as a mainstream social media platform. —Reuters

Nokia Solutions chairman to step down after Microsoft deal

Helsinki, 31 Dec — Nokia said the chairman of its networking equipment unit, Nokia Solutions and Networks (NSN), will step down following the sale of the Finnish company’s mobile phone business to Microsoft.

Jesper Ovesen, who joined NSN in 2011 when it was still a joint venture between Nokia and Siemens, will continue for a while as an advisor after the mobile phone business is transferred to Microsoft, Nokia said on Monday.

Markets expect more details on the new management structure at Nokia and its equipment business to be announced after the deal is closed, as expected to happen in the first quarter of 2014. —Reuters

A Nokia mobile phone lies on a tablet computer showing logos of Microsoft, in this illustration picture taken in Frankfurt, on 18 Nov, 2013. —Reuters

A sign displays the Twitter logo on the front of the New York Stock Exchange ahead of the company’s IPO in New York, on 7 Nov, 2013. —Reuters
BUSINESS & HEALTH

ONGC, Shell buy rest of Brazil offshore block from Petrobras

RIO DE JANEIRO, 31 Dec — Royal Dutch Shell Plc (RDS.A.L) and India’s Oil and Natural Gas Corp (ONGC.NS) (ONGC) purchased the remaining 35 percent of a Brazilian offshore oil block from their partner, Brazil’s state-run Petroleo Brasileiro SA (PETR4.SA). Shell said in a statement on Monday.

In the deal, which the companies began negotiating in September, Shell will get an additional 23 percent of BC-10, raising its stake to 73 percent. ONGC will get an additional 12 percent, boosting its stake to 27 percent, Shell said.

Petrobras had originally agreed to sell its 35 percent stake to China’s Sinochem for $1.66 billion. Shell and ONGC, though, exercised their right of first refusal. ONGC agreed to $259 million for the 12 percent stake in October, valuing the entire sale about the same as the amount Sinochem agreed to pay.

The additional share of oil coming to Shell from BC-10 could see the company jump past China’s Sinochem to become Brazil’s No 4 producer, behind Petrobras, Norway’s Statoil ASA (STL.OL) and Britain’s BG Group Plc (BG.L), based on October figures from Brazil’s petroleum regulator, the ANP.

Petrobras, as the Brazilian company is known, has been selling off assets in Brazil and abroad in an attempt to raise cash to finance a $237 billion five-year investment plan, the world’s largest corporate spending programme.

Petrobras’ need for cash has risen as production from older oil fields has stagnated and output from new areas comes on line behind schedule, forcing the company to boost debt to finance investment.

The government has also forced the company to sell gasoline and diesel fuel at home at prices below those on the world market, causing its refining and supply arm to lose money as fuel imports rise.

The BC-10 block is home to Shell and ONGC’s Parque das Conchas, or “Shell Park” area. The block, at the north end of Brazil’s Campos Basin, northeast of Rio de Janeiro, is home to the Ostra, Abalone, and Argonaut oilfields. Shell is the operator of the area.

Parque das Conchas, which began operating in 2010, produces about 30,000 barrels a day of oil.

The company approved a third phase of the project in July which could add as much as 28,000 barrels a day of oil output to the project, Shell said.

---

China halts imports of Pfizer drug on paperwork glitch

SHANGHAI, 31 Dec — China suspended imports of US drugmaker Pfizer Inc’s AIDS-related drug Diflucan on Tuesday, citing a problem with late paperwork, the country’s food and drug watchdog said in a statement on its website.

Pfizer, the largest drugmaker in the United States, contravened Chinese law when one of its France-based factories failed to submit a supplementary application on time, the China Food and Drug Administration (FDA) said in the statement.

With the country’s healthcare spending forecast to nearly triple to $1 trillion by 2020 from $337 billion in 2011, according to consulting firm McKinsey, China is a magnet for makers of medicines and medical equipment.

Pfizer has taken steps to resolve the issue and is working with China’s FDA to ensure its products comply with Chinese law, it said in a statement on its Chinese-language website. The issue is not linked to quality or safety, it added.

Some analysts said the incident looked like a “paper problem” and should be short-lived.

“It should not impact too much Pfizer’s business in China and I am sure the imports will be resumed once the procedure is complete,” said Simon Li, Shanghai-based general manager at Kantar Health China.

China has been cracking down this year on the healthcare sector, with investigations ranging from allegations of corporate bribery to how drugs are priced, as well as steps to increase quality and safety levels across the sector.

---

Some current, former smokers should get annual lung scans

CHICAGO, 31 Dec — Heavy smokers and former heavy smokers should get annual lung cancer screening tests, according to new guidelines issued on Monday by an influential US panel.

The final recommendations, issued by the US Preventive Services Task Force and published in the Annals of Internal Medicine, apply to people aged 55 to 80 whose smoking has put them at high risk of cancer. That includes former heavy smokers who have quit within the past 15 years. Heavy smokers are considered to be those who smoked a pack a day for 30 years, or two packs a day for 15 years. According to a comprehensive review of medical evidence since 2004, the panel found the benefits of screening high-risk individuals with low-dose computed tomography, or CT scans, outweigh the potential harms of over-diagnosis and increased exposure to radiation, which also contribute to cancer risk.

The panel, which is comprised of independent experts and advises US policymakers, gave the screening a “B” recommendation, meaning it is at least moderately certain that the benefits of the scans outweigh the harms. The Affordable Care Act, insurers are required to cover preventive services with a grade of “B” or higher.

The guidelines are intended to help prevent some of the 160,000 annual lung cancer deaths in the United States, which exceed the total number of deaths from breast, prostate and colon cancer combined.

An engineered Oil and Natural Gas Corp (ONGC) works inside the Kalol oil field in Gujarat on 12 Sept, 2009.—Reuters

Berkshire Hathaway to buy Phillips 66 unit for around $1.4 billion

NEW YORK, 31 Dec — Warren Buffett’s Berkshire Hathaway Inc (BRK.A.N) struck a deal to buy a Phillips 66 (PSX.N) business that makes chemicals to improve the flow potential of pipelines for around $1.4 billion of stock.

Phillips 66 said on Monday that Berkshire will pay for the unit, Phillips Specialty Products Inc, using about 19 million shares of Phillips 66 stock that it currently owns.

“I have long been impressed by the strength of the Phillips 66 business portfolio,” Buffett said in a statement. “The flow improver business is a high-quality business with consistently strong financial performance.”

The exact number of shares Berkshire will pay for the unit will be determined by their price on the closing date, the companies said.

James Hambrecht, CEO of Berkshire’s specialty chemicals unit Lubrizol Corp, will oversee the business, Buffett said. Berkshire bought Lubrizol for about $9 billion in 2011.

Phillips 66 CEO Greg Garland said the company decided to sell the business because Berkshire Hathaway made a strong offer. He said the company will now focus its growth on its oil and natural gas transportation and processing business, as well as its other chemical businesses.

Phillips 66 said it expects the Phillips Specialty Products unit to have about $450 million of cash and cash equivalents on its balance sheet at closing. It expects the deal to close in the first half of 2014.

Berkshire favors larger companies with consistent earnings power and easy-to-understand businesses.

In June, it paid $12.3 billion for half of ketchup maker HJ Heinz Co, and in May it paid $2.05 billion for the 20 percent it did not already own of Israeli toymaker Iscar.—Reuters
**WORLD**

**Poverty in Italy hits record levels**

Rome, 31 Dec — Poverty in Italy has reached its highest level in at least 16 years as the economic crisis has bitten, driving up unemployment and squeezing wages, according to a report on social cohesion issued on Monday.

Relative poverty, defined as a family of two living on a monthly income of 991 euros ($47,61) or less, affected 12.7 percent of families, the highest level recorded since the current series of data began in 1997, the report by statistics agency ISTAT said.

The report, a compendium of data on issues ranging from employment to demographics, said poverty had deepened in all areas of Italy between 2011 and 2012. Relative poverty rose from 4.9 percent to 6.2 percent in the richer north and from 23.3 percent to 26.2 percent in the poorer south, the report said.

The report painted a grim picture of the impact of the country’s worst post-war recession, with joblessness at record levels, incomes squeezed and permanent, full-time employment declining.

“As one of the countries most affected by the crisis, Italy registered a progressive decline in the main macroeconomic and social indicators in 2012.” Labour Minister and former ISTAT chief Enrico Giovannini said in the introduction to the report. —Reuters

**Fiery oil train collision forces evacuation of North Dakota town**

FARGO, (North Dakota) 31 Dec — Residents of a small town in North Dakota were urged to evacuate after a runaway crude oil train collided with another train on Monday, setting off a series of explosions and fires, the latest in a string of incidents that have raised alarms over growing oil-by-rail traffic.

Local residents heard five powerful explosions just a mile outside of the small town of Casselton after a westbound 112-car train carrying soybeans derailed. An eastbound 106-car train hauling crude oil ran into it just after 2 pm CST (2000 GMT), local officials said. There were no injuries in the collision that left 21 rail cars on fire, according to BNSF. Residents within 5 miles (8 km) of Casselton were urged to evacuate to avoid contact with the smoke. Residents within 10 miles were asked to remain indoors.

Casselton City Auditor Sheila Klevergaid said crews are pushing snow to contain the oil before it reaches a nearby creek. —Reuters

**Fighting erupts as Iraq police break up Sunni protest camp**

RAMADI, 31 Dec — Fighting erupted when Iraqi police broke up a Sunni Muslim protest camp in the western Anbar Province on Monday, leaving at least 13 people dead, police and medical sources said.

The camp has been an irritant to Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki’s Shi’ite Muslim-led government since Sunni protesters set it up a year ago to demonstrate against what they see as marginalization of their sect.

The operation triggered an immediate political backlash as dozens of Sunni lawmakers offered their resignations.

Maliki, who is seeking a third term in April’s elections, has repeatedly vowed to remove the camp and accused protesters of stirring strife and shielding al-Qaeda-linked militias.

Violence has spiked this year as al-Qaeda-linked militias target the government and anyone seen to be supporting it, raising fears of a return to the sectarian conflict of 2006-7 that killed tens of thousands. Another 11 people died in separate attacks across Iraq on Monday.

Police sources said Monday’s clashes broke out when gunmen opened fire on police special forces trying to enter Ramadi, the western city where the protest camp is located.

The gunmen destroyed four police vehicles and killed at least three policemen in the north of Ramadi, one source said. —Reuters

**South Korea may need five more nuclear plants for 2025-2035**

SEOUL, 31 Dec — South Korea may have to build up to five nuclear power plants between 2025 and 2035 to meet a target of 43,000 MW of nuclear power under a plan to reduce the proportion of nuclear in the total energy supply, government officials said on Monday.

Asia’s fourth-largest economy has been under pressure to reduce its use of nuclear power after a scandal forced the closure of some reactors that had received replacement parts using fake safety certificates.

The Energy Ministry said this month that the government was considering lowering reliance on nuclear power to 29 percent of total power by 2035, from 41 percent by 2030.

But it did not specify how many nuclear reactors would be needed for that plan.

The ministry set out its policy to parliament on Monday saying that to meet the target of 29 percent, power from nuclear in 2035, the country would need capacity for 43,000 MW of nuclear power by then, up from 36,000 MW by 2024. —Reuters

**Chinese, Russian Presidents exchange New Year greetings**

BEIJING, 31 Dec — Chinese President Xi Jinping and his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, exchanged New Year greetings on Tuesday, expressing their shared wish to further enhance bilateral ties in 2014.

In his message, Xi extended sincere greetings to Putin and the Russian people on behalf of the Chinese government, the Chinese people and himself.

During the past year, China and Russia focused on the overarching objective of facilitating healthy and stable progress of the international situation and promoting the development and revitalization of both countries, Xi said.

With a strategic vision and a global perspective, he added, the two countries pushed forward their comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership and scored significant achievements in bilateral cooperation in various areas.

Expressing satisfaction with the development of bilateral relations in 2013, Xi said he always believes that a high-level and strong China-Russia relationship is a blessing not only for the people of both countries but for the entire world.

In the new year, Xi said, he is ready to maintain close communication and contact with Putin and work together with him to further deepen bilateral cooperation in various areas and steer the development of bilateral ties into a new phase.

—Xinhua

---

**Two homeless women sit on a bench in downtown Rome on 25 Nov, 2011.** —Reuters

---

**A police officer checks the luggage of a passenger at a station in Sochi, Russia, on 30 Dec, 2013. An explosion occurred on a trolleybus the same day in the southern city of Volgograd, where a suicide bombing took place the previous day.** —Kyodo News
1200 sets of uniforms provided to fire brigade members

Transport

Kyaukpadaung-Pwaykyit road extended to 12 miles long one

Twidil native donates one set of computer to Twidil Post-Primary School

Basic veterinary and breeding workers course opened in Kalewa

Twidil native donates one set of computer to Twidil Post-Primary School

As a gesture of hailing the 66th Anniversary Independence Day, Pyithu Hluttaw representative U Aung Myint Thein, Region Hluttaw representative U Aung Naing Oo and Executive Officer U Aung Phyo of Paungde Township Development Affairs Committee formally open 2-inch tube-well in Kyaukpyu Village of Paungde Township on 27 December.—KYEMON-MYINT NAING (PYAY)
Make films worthy of praise

Academy Awards are a set of awards given annually for excellence in cinematic achievements. As one of the most prominent award ceremonies in the world, the Academy Award ceremony is televised live in more than 100 countries annually. Most recently, the Myanmar Motion Picture Academy Award ceremony for the year 2012 had successfully concluded. The academy awards were chosen from the films out of 17 that were shown in a year. This year saw only nine academy awards against 11 that are normally given.

Altogether nine statuettes were awarded, honoring artists, directors and other personalities of the filmmaking industry for their excellent works during the year 2012. It is encouraging to see this year that a child actor won the Academy Award as a special award. But we are deeply touched by the fact that there were no movies in 2012 that won the Academy Award. And it can be concluded that there were no movies that met the standard set by the award scrutiny and choosing committee.

In his address at the ceremony, Union Minister for Information U Aung Kyi said that motion picture is recognized worldwide as a high value creative industry in knowledge economy. Creative industry is different from conventional one. Whereas the latter manufactures conventional products with substantial capital, machinery and labor, the former has its essence in individual creativity, skill and talent founded upon innovation and cultural knowledge, and urged those in the firm world to equip them selves with unlimited resources of intellectual creativity and skill, insight and inspiration.

1. The Joint-committee for Reviewing the Constitution of the Union of Myanmar issued Press Release (2/2013) and invited legislative, executive and judicial pillars to send reviews and suggestions on the Constitution not later than 31 December, 2013.
2. According to the press release, the joint-committee received 28247 letters of suggestion till 4.30 pm on 31 December, 2013.
3. The following are letters of suggestion on respective chapters received from departments, associations, political parties and persons up to 31 December, 2013.

Six political prisoners released from Central Prison (Insein)

YANGON, 31 Dec — Six political prisoners were released from Central Prison (Insein) in accord with the Pardon issued by the President’s Office at 12.30 pm today.

They were Maung Maung Than, son of U Ali, Tin Htay, son of U Soe Myint, Win Myint, son of U Nyen Maung, Maung Maung (a) Sat Thar, son of U Shaku, Win Shwe, son of U Tha Hla and Tin Htut (a) Tin Htut Paing, son of U Htay Win.

New delivery room donated to Myanmar Nurse and Midwife Association

YANGON, 31 Dec — In memory of late Yoshi Mayor Mr. Nishiyama Katsumi, Mr. Nishiyama Katashi donated a new delivery room to Myanmar Nurse and Midwife Association yesterday.

On the occasion, Chairperson of Myanmar Nurse and Midwife Association Prof Dr. Nang Htaw Hla, Myanmar-Japan Cooperation Group Chairman Prof Shigeru Okada and Mr. Takemoto Ichiro formally opened the new building.

They handed over documents related to a new delivery room and its related items to Vice-Chairperson II Prof Daw Yin Mya of Myanmar Nurse and Midwife Association at the building in Nurses Ayeneiknyein Compound on Industrial Zone (1) Road in Dagon Myothit (South) Township.

The RC type building is 40 feet long and 24 feet wide. Its related items cost USD 40,000.
Cash assistance provided to war veterans

Magway, 31 Dec—Cash assistance presentation ceremony took place at the hall of Magway Township War Veterans Organization of Magway Region on 28 December.

Major Myo Aung (Rtd) explained the purpose of providing cash assistance to WVO members of over 75 years old. Next, K 20000 each was given to six war veterans.

The ceremony was attended by members of Township VWO, organizers, guests and media persons.

Pensioners Association holds meeting in Sagaing

Sagaing, 31 Dec—The annual general meeting of Pensioners Association of Sagaing Township was held at the city hall in Sagaing on 29 December.

Chairman of the association U Hla Myint made a speech. Chairman of the Township Management Committee U Tun Win Aung and townelder U Zaw Win gave speeches.

Responsible persons of the association submitted executive committee report, final report and future tasks. Wellwishers donated cash assistance to ailing members. The association has organized about 3000 members. The meeting elected U Win Maw (Judicial) as Chairman, U Kan Nyunt (Settlement and Land Records) as Secretary and 30 executives.—Kyemon-Nanda Min Lwin

Office work course concludes

Myawady, 31 Dec—The office work refresher course No 2/2013 concluded at the hall of Myawady District Court in Myawady District in Kayin State on 29 December.

District Judge U Phyo Phyo made a concluding remarks and presented certificates to trainees.

It was attended by Deputy District Judge U Saw Kaw Nay Mu, District Law Officer U Than Soe, Township Judge U Myo Tint, Deputy Township Judge U Zaw Lin Maung and trainees.

The course was run during four weeks period.

Monghsat District organizes talks on census taking process

Monghsat, 31 Dec—An educative talk on 2014 census taking process and population was held at Thiri Yadana Hall of Monghsat District General Administration Department recently.

Chairman of Monghsat District Census Committee U Khin Maung Cho made a speech. Head of District Immigration and National Registration Department U Win Myint explained the collection on data for census and population and Staff Officer of District Information and Public Relations Department U Than Zaw Oo population, housings and census law.

The talk was also attended by State Hluttaw representative U Yaw Ba, Township Administrator U Aye Naing, District and Township departmental officials, the chairman of Township Development Affairs Supportive Committee, ward and village administrators, members of Township Maternal and Child Welfare Association and Women’s Affairs Organization and teachers.

Globetrotters emphasize visits to Thanlyin

Yangon, 31 Dec—After the XXVII SEA Games, globetrotters pay visits to Thanlyin and Kyauktan townships of Yangon South District.

The globetrotters visited Thanlyin Myoma Market at 10 am on 29 December and they went shopping there.

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

A fire broke out at No 158 on 1st Minyekyawswa Street in Dala on 29 December. Fire fighters and local people put out the fire with two fire engines. A building was destroyed in the fire and it was valued at K 750,000.

Kyemon-Banya Maung Maung
Israel frees Palestinian prisoners, pushes settlement plan

Jerusalem, 31 Dec — Israel set free 26 Palestinian prisoners on Tuesday as part of US-brokered peace efforts, after pledging to press ahead with plans to build more homes in Jewish settlements.

US Secretary of State John Kerry, whose shuttle diplomacy led to a resumption of the negotiations in July after a three-year break, was due to return on Thursday to seek a framework agreement in talks that have shown few signs of progress.

Israel agreed to release 104 long-serving Palestinian prisoners — the latest group is the third of four to go free — as part of the US-led efforts that coaxed Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas back to the negotiating table after a three-year break.

In tandem with the prisoner releases in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Israel has announced new construction in settlements in occupied territory Palestinians seek for a state.

Most of the 26 inmates going free were convicted of killing Israelis and almost all were jailed before the first Israeli-Palestinian interim peace deals were signed 20 years ago.

Palestinians have jubilantly welcomed the return home of brethren they regard as national heroes. The families of Israelis they killed or injured have voiced anger and mounted unsuccessful court challenges against their release.

Last week, an Israeli official said Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s government — which includes pro-settlement parties — would announce plans after the latest release to build 1,400 more homes for settlers in the West Bank.

Dutch fireworks nuisance hotline receives over 42,000 complaints

The Hague, 31 Dec — The Dutch fireworks nuisance hotline received over 42,000 complaints and several people were hurt in accidents with fireworks, Dutch media reported on Monday.

Regional fractions of the Dutch political party GroenLinks set out the initiative for the hotline. The party wants to map the size of fireworks nuisance and also plead for a fireworks restriction, but a majority of the Dutch parliament is against a restriction.

In the Netherlands, it is legal to buy fireworks for four days prior to the New Year celebrations. Fireworks can be set off between 10 am (0900GMT) on 31 December and 2 am (0100GMT) on 1 January, 2014, with those who break the rules facing a fine of 100 euros (1.379 US dollars).

“We would only like to see fireworks during professional fireworks shows. This is what happens in many other countries. It would give all the benefits of the fireworks, but with minimal disadvantages,” the organizers stated on their website. — Xinhua

IOC says it has no doubt over security at Sochi Games

ZURICH, 31 Dec — The International Olympic Committee has no doubt Russian authorities will be able to provide security at the Winter Olympics, a spokeswoman said on Monday after two bomb blasts killed tens of people in the Russian city of Volgograd.

“At the Olympics, security is the responsibility of the local authorities, and we have no doubt that the Russian authorities will be up to the task,” the spokeswoman said. The attacks in Volgograd come less than six weeks before Russia is due to host the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi. — Reuters

More earthquakes recorded in Groningen due to gas extraction

The Hague, 31 Dec — Gas extraction in Groningen in 2013 caused a record number of earthquakes, Dutch national broadcaster NOS reported on Monday.

This year a total of 127 earthquakes were measured, compared to 80 quakes in 2012. This coincides with a significant increase in gas production. The Dutch Petroleum Company (NAM) collected 52 billion cubic metres of gas from the ground in 2013, 10 percent more than last year.

Experts expect a new earth quake record in 2014. In January this year the State Supervision of Mines (SSM) reported that increased gas production since 2000 of about 20 up to 50 billion cubic metres per year has not only led to a rise in the number of earthquakes but also to an increased risk of severe earthquakes.

The heaviest earthquake in recent years in Groningen was on 16 August, 2012, near Huizenze, with a magnitude of 3.6 on the scale of Richter.

Congo’s army repels attacks in Kinshasa, dozens killed

Kinshasa, 31 Dec — Congolese troops killed dozens of armed youths who attacked the airport, a military barracks and state television headquarters in the capital Kinshasa on Monday in incidents claimed by a disgruntled religious leader.

Before transmission was shut down at state television, the attackers shouted slogans in favour of pastor Paul Joseph Mukungubila and against President Joseph Kabila.

The pastor, who calls himself a prophet and once ran for president in 2006, later told the BBC that the attacks were in response to government harassment of his supporters. “It’s the fifth time the brothers were attacked; they decided to show what they are capable of,” he said late on Monday.

Several corpses lay on the rain-soaked ground outside the brightly painted gates of the state television center after the attack, a Reuters witness said. The broadcaster reported that security forces had killed 46 of the attackers, while government officials said about 20 more had been arrested.

Shortly after the clashes, soldiers in the eastern mining province of Katanga attacked a church run by Mukungubila, who has rallied against Kabila’s decision to make peace with Tutsi rebels in eastern Congo, saying the president was under the influence of Rwanda.

Witnesses said the fighting in the regional capital Lubumbashi quickly subsided. Security forces found arms and ammunition in the church, sources told Reuters.

“We have total control of the situation,” said government spokesman Lambert Mende, saying there were no civilian or troop casualties. — Reuters

Volgograd blasts prompt nationwide security measures, draw int’l condemnation

Beijing, 31 Dec — Russia stepped up security nationwide on Monday after two blasts in the southern city of Volgograd left at least 32 people dead and score of others injured.

The United Nations, China, the United States and many other members of the international community have condemned the terrorist attacks and pledged joint efforts to fight terrorism.

Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered the National Anti-Terrorism Committee to tighten security throughout the country. The committee said several presidential instructions were specially on Volgograd, some 900 km southeast of Moscow.

However, no extra security measures will be taken in Sochi ... Everything necessary has been done,” he said.

The 22nd Winter Olympic Games, the first to be held in Russia, are slated for 7-23 February with 98 sets of medals up for grabs. Volgograd is some 690 km northeast of Sochi. On Sunday, a suicide bomber ripped a railway station in Volgograd, killing 17 people and injuring 45 others. Another bomb went off Monday morning in a trolley bus in the same city, leaving at least 15 dead and 28 others wounded.

The two explosions have drawn immediate international condemnation. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon was appalled by the twin bombings, a UN spokesperson said on Monday. In a telephone conversation with Putin, Ban stressed the importance of strong international cooperation to the fight against terrorism and noted that perpetrators must be brought to justice.

Xinhua

A prisoner (C) released from an Israeli prison is welcomed by relatives in the West Bank city of Ramallah early on 31 Dec, 2013. —Reuters

Congolese security forces secure the street near the state television headquarters in the capital Kinshasa, on 30 Dec, 2013. —Reuters

Russian police check a driver’s documents in Sochi on 30 Dec, 2013. —Reuters

More earthquakes recorded in Groningen due to gas extraction
Japan to support road network expansion in Asia

MUMBAI, 31 Dec — The Japanese government is planning to help improve transport connectivity in South and Southeast Asia by renovating existing roads and building new ones, sources familiar with the matter said on Monday.

The infrastructure support, aimed at strengthening economic ties within the regions including India and Myanmar, comes in response to Chinese-led projects to link southern China and South Asia by road and rail. The Japan International Cooperation Agency will be responsible for drawing up plans for financing and construction. It will invite officials from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal and Thailand to New Delhi in mid-January to brief them on site surveys, the sources said.

Japan expects to confirm with India the plan to proceed with road-building projects in January when Prime Minister Shinzo Abe visits the country, they said. The Japanese projects are expected to improve road connectivity between Bangladesh, India, Myanmar and Thailand while giving Bhutan and Nepal better access to coastal areas. Aging road infrastructure and constraints on network capacity and efficiency have become barriers to trade between the countries.

The economies of Bangladesh, India and Myanmar, for instance, would benefit from new roads in areas where land transport infrastructure is underdeveloped or inefficient. Japanese companies operating in the regions are also likely to profit from better land transport connectivity, which would improve their supply chains.

But such infrastructure development may not immediately lead to improved trade between countries where diplomatic issues need to be resolved first.

Bangladesh, for instance, has limited cross-border trade with India and Myanmar due to diplomatic constraints.— Kyodo News

Western Australia prepares for cyclone overnight

CANBERRA, 31 Dec — A red alert has been issued for people in some areas of Western Australia’s Kimberley and Pilbara region as Tropical Cyclone Christine is expected to hit the coast around midnight on Monday. The Australian Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) said Cyclone Christine will continue to intensify and is expected to cross the coastal border between Karratha and Port Hedland, about 1,200 km north of the Western Australian capital city of Perth on Monday night or early on Tuesday morning.

“There is a threat to lives and homes. You are in danger and need to act immediately,” the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) of Western Australia warned on its website. The DFES also informed that a relocation point has been set up in south Hedland where about 85 people have taken shelter. An emergency welfare centre has also been opened in Karratha. The DFES State Emergency Service (SES) and Volunteer Emergency Service (VES) advised people to get ready to move to the strongest, safest part of their house, keep the emergency kit at hand, stay away from doors and windows, and keep them closed, stay indoors until the authorities give the All Clear notice.

Volcano erupts in Indonesia

JAKARTA, 31 Dec — Mount Sinabung, one of the most active volcanoes in Indonesia, erupted again midnight on Tuesday, the strongest since September, spewing hot ash up to 7,000 metres high along with lava and ash forcing more evacuation, an official said.

“Hot lava burst forth with flames from the crater and slid off the southeast slope of the volcano, leading the authorities to warn all residents nearby to evacuate,” Sutopo Purwo Nugroho, spokesman of disaster management and mitigation agency, told Xinhua by phone.

“The people are asked to evacuate, especially those living on the southeast side of the mountain as hot lava and ash keep bursting to the direction,” said Sutopo.

The rumbling volcano started minor eruption on Monday afternoon and erupted intermittently for seven times, according to the spokesman. He added that there were no casualties.

The 2,457-metre Mount Sinabung in Karo district of North Sumatra has rumbled to life since September after being quiet for 400 years, but it went into overdrive in November, forcing the authorities to extend evacuation zone to within a radius of 5 km from 3 km.

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

Bangladesh opposition’s top leader arrested for instigating violence

DHAKA, 31 Dec — The Detective Branch of Bangladesh Police on Monday night arrested a top leader of the country’s main opposition party. Vice-Chairman of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) Shamsur Rahman Moudud, also a former foreign secretary, was arrested shortly after he came out of the residence of ex-Minister of Independence, Zia who virtually remained confined to her house since the opposition alliance launched “March for Democracy” programme on 24 December.

Chowdhury and Khale- da’s two advisers — Reaz Rahman and Sabihuddin Ahmed — entered the opposition chief’s residence around 5:00 pm to help her with a meeting with British High Commissioner in Dhaka Robert Gibson.

Soon after Gibson’s departure, Chowdhury came out and was arrested by the detectives at about 7:30 pm local time. “Reaz Rahman managed to leave the house safely but Chowdhury was arrested,” Sabihuddin Ahmed told Xinhua over phone.

“T’m staying inside the opposition chief’s house to avoid arrest,” he said but refrained from giving any details about the agenda of the meeting.

Deputy Commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) Musadduk Rahman told Xinhua that Chowdhury was detained for “instigating political violence.”— Xinhua

Cambodia aims to adopt law on ‘access to information’ in 3 years

PHNOM PENH, 31 Dec — The Cambodian government said on Monday that a law on access to information will be adopted in three years.

Information Minister Khieu Kanharith said at an editors’ forum organized by the Club of Cambodian Journalists in Phnom Penh that the law on “access to information will be adopted by the end of 2016 or early 2017.”

The law is important as it will help provide information of all sources from the government to citizens, particularly through journalists, he said.

When asked why it will take up to three years to have the law adopted, Khieu Kanharith said it needs to be fully explained to all parties concerned so that they better know the significance of this law for good governance.

Cambodia has spent more than a decade working on this draft law. The formation of a new government in July committed to reforming all the government’s bodies in depth including the media sector for wider access to information has spurred momentum.

Cambodia adopted a press law in 1995 but journalists and citizens say it is not enough.

About 100 editors from both print and electronic media attended the one-day forum. The Club of Cambodian Journalists is the biggest and most influential journalists association in Cambodia.— Kyodo News

A ceremony is held to mark the opening of the newly-built Guanyan Bridge in Lianzhou, south China’s Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, on 30 Dec, 2013. The 30-metre-width bridge runs 1,410 metres and officially opened on Monday. It is the 19th bridge spanning over the Liujiang River in the city.— Xinhua

The amphibious docking vessel Jinggangshan (L) of the 15th Chinese naval escort fleet approaches the port of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, on 29 Dec, 2013. After completing its escort mission, the 15th Chinese naval escort fleet paid a four-day visit from Sunday to Tanzania on its way back to China.— Xinhua

Volcano erupts in Indonesia

JAKARTA, 31 Dec — Mount Sinabung, one of the most active volcanoes in Indonesia, erupted again midnight on Tuesday, the strongest since September, spewing hot ash up to 7,000 metres high along with lava and ash forcing more evacuation, an official said.

“Hot lava burst forth with flames from the crater and slid off the southeast slope of the volcano, leading the authorities to warn all residents nearby to evacuate,” Sutopo Purwo Nugroho, spokesman of disaster management and mitigation agency, told Xinhua by phone.

“The people are asked to evacuate, especially those living on the southeast side of the mountain as hot lava and ash keep bursting to the direction,” said Sutopo.

The rumbling volcano started minor eruption on Monday afternoon and erupted intermittently for seven times, according to the spokesman. He added that there were no casualties.

The 2,457-metre Mount Sinabung in Karo district of North Sumatra has rumbled to life since September after being quiet for 400 years, but it went into overdrive in November, forcing the authorities to extend evacuation zone to within a radius of 5 km from 3 km.

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

Bangladesh opposition’s top leader arrested for instigating violence

DHAKA, 31 Dec — The Detective Branch of Bangladesh Police on Monday night arrested a top leader of the country’s main opposition party. Vice-Chairman of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) Shamsur Rahman Moudud, also a former foreign secretary, was arrested shortly after he came out of the residence of ex-Minister of Independence, Zia who virtually remained confined to her house since the opposition alliance launched “March for Democracy” programme on 24 December.

Chowdhury and Khale- da’s two advisers — Reaz Rahman and Sabihuddin Ahmed — entered the opposition chief’s residence around 5:00 pm to help her with a meeting with British High Commissioner in Dhaka Robert Gibson.

Soon after Gibson’s departure, Chowdhury came out and was arrested by the detectives at about 7:30 pm local time. “Reaz Rahman managed to leave the house safely but Chowdhury was arrested,” Sabihuddin Ahmed told Xinhua over phone.

“T’m staying inside the opposition chief’s house to avoid arrest,” he said but refrained from giving any details about the agenda of the meeting.

Deputy Commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) Musadduk Rahman told Xinhua that Chowdhury was detained for “instigating political violence.”— Xinhua

Cambodia aims to adopt law on ‘access to information’ in 3 years

PHNOM PENH, 31 Dec — The Cambodian government said on Monday that a law on access to information will be adopted in three years.

Information Minister Khieu Kanharith said at an editors’ forum organized by the Club of Cambodian Journalists in Phnom Penh that the law on “access to information will be adopted by the end of 2016 or early 2017.”

The law is important as it will help provide information of all sources from the government to citizens, particularly through journalists, he said.

When asked why it will take up to three years to have the law adopted, Khieu Kanharith said it needs to be fully explained to all parties concerned so that they better know the significance of this law for good governance.

Cambodia has spent more than a decade working on this draft law. The formation of a new government in July committed to reforming all the government’s bodies in depth including the media sector for wider access to information has spurred momentum.

Cambodia adopted a press law in 1995 but journalists and citizens say it is not enough.

About 100 editors from both print and electronic media attended the one-day forum. The Club of Cambodian Journalists is the biggest and most influential journalists association in Cambodia.— Kyodo News

A ceremony is held to mark the opening of the newly-built Guanyan Bridge in Lianzhou, south China’s Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, on 30 Dec, 2013. The 30-metre-width bridge runs 1,410 metres and officially opened on Monday. It is the 19th bridge spanning over the Liujiang River in the city.— Xinhua

The amphibious docking vessel Jinggangshan (L) of the 15th Chinese naval escort fleet approaches the port of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, on 29 Dec, 2013. After completing its escort mission, the 15th Chinese naval escort fleet paid a four-day visit from Sunday to Tanzania on its way back to China.— Xinhua
Austrian unemployment expected to increase further in 2014

VIENNA, 31 Dec—Unemployment in Austria is expected to continue to rise in 2014 on the back of a 1 percent increase this year, the Public Employment Service Austria (AMS) said on Monday. The statement confirms previous forecasts by other Austrian research institutes throughout 2013. Member of the AMS Board Johannes Kopf said in the January edition of the AMS magazine “Gewinn” he expected an increase to over five percent unemployment, and over the course of 2014 an increase in the number of unemployed of between 10,000 and 15,000. The Austrian Institute of Economic Research (WIFO) reported that the number of unemployed rose by over 30,000 in 2013, and said private consumption and real earnings had stagnated. In addition GDP growth of only 0.3 percent put it at the lowest since the financial crisis of 2008 and 2009. However, WIFO expects private consumption to increase by about one percent in 2014 due to improved income developments and an easing of inflation, added that improvements in the economy are not expected to be enough to brighten the unemployment outlook.—Xinhua

China to strengthen cooperation with Vietnam

BEIJING, 31 Dec—Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said on Monday that China’s willingness to strengthen cooperation with Vietnam. The development of China-Vietnam relations maintains momentum and China attaches great importance to its ties with Vietnam, Wang told Vietnamese Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Pham Binh Minh in a telephone conversation. Wang said that leaders of the two countries have reached consensus on comprehensively carrying forward the strategic partnership between the two countries with pledges to promote maritime, land and financial cooperation. He said China is willing to work with Vietnam to implement the leaders’ consensus and enhance high-level exchanges.

China is also willing to work with Vietnam to prepare for the seventh meeting of the China-Vietnam steering committee on cooperation, to make the first round of talks of the working group for joint maritime development successful, and to push for the early start of joint investigation in sea waters out of the mouth of Beibu Bay in a bid to make substantial progress in joint maritime development. Minh said that he agreed with Wang. Vietnam is willing to work with China to further promote bilateral relations in the coming year, he said. The two officials also exchanged views on regional issues including Japan.—Xinhua

Eight Afghan militants killed in fresh military operations

KABUL, 31 Dec—Eight Taleban militants were killed in separate military operations in Afghanistan, the country’s Interior Ministry said on Monday. “In past 24 hours, Afghan National Police (ANP) conducted several anti-terrorism joint operations with army and the intelligence service in Kabul, Kandahar, Zabul, Paktya and Helmand provinces. As a result eight armed Taleban members were killed and one was wounded,” the ministry said in a statement. The ANP also discovered and seized light and heavy rounds ammunition and improvised explosive devices, the statement noted. The statement did not disclose if there were any casualties on the side of security forces. The Taleban insurgent group has not made comments so far.—Xinhua
MUMBAI, 31 Dec — Veteran actress Zeenat Aman has starred in a bilingual movie Strings of Passion.

Sussanne Roshan denies reports about Rs 100 crore divorce settlement

MUMBAI, 31 Dec — Sussanne Roshan denied media reports saying her divorce from Hindi movie star Hrithik Roshan is a Rs 100 crore settlement and said that its unethical to publish such false news.

Sholay 3D made on a budget of Rs 20 crores, says producer

MUMBAI, 31 Dec — The much-awaited 3D version of epic film Sholay, set to release on 3 January 2014, has been made on a budget of approximately Rs 20 crores, which includes restoration and conversion, says producer Sascha Sippy.

Beyoncé Secretly Recorded HOW Many Songs?

LONDON, 31 Dec — In the time that Beyoncé took to create 14 songs and 17 videos for her surprise visual album, anything could have happened. For at least a year, the singer went under the radar, shooting videos in New York City and Houston and working with producers like Timbaland and Detail without a peep.

Anne Hathaway shoed paparazzi away with dog’s poop

LOS ANGELES, 31 Dec — Actress Anne Hathaway dealt with a photographer following her by placing a plastic bag with her dog’s excrement in it on her car’s windshield.

Justin Timberlake hangs himself ‘upside down’ before concerts

LOS ANGELES, 31 Dec — Singer-rapper Justin Timberlake hangs ‘upside down’ to prepare himself for his concerts.

The couple, Hindi movie star Hrithik Roshan and Sussanne Roshan, announced their separation via an official statement on 13 Dec. PTI

Anne was captured on camera wearing a grey sweater, jeans and sneakers. PTI

Justin has his unique set routine backstage.

A source said, “Justin is really strict about routine before his gigs. He believes keeping talking to a minimum and meditating gets him ‘in the zone’.” “The hanging upside down bit gets his heart rate going as last-minute preparation,” the source added.—PTI

Sussanne's decision to end their marriage via an official statement on December 13. Both dated for four years before finally getting married on 20 December, 2002. PTI

It took three years to restore and convert Sholay into 3D.

Sholay, starring Amitabh Bachchan, Dharmendra and Zeenat Aman, who acknowledged ignorance about such a practice, told the director of the movie, Sanghamitra Chowdhury, “Frankly, I did not know that it exists in our industry.”

The yesteryear star plays the role of the mother of one of the three protagonists in the movie, which is a Hindi-English production.

I had scripted Strings of Passion based on my research and interviews of directors, producers, cast and wannabe actors in Hindi films, who had confided me on sexual exploitation of some male model-extras. These models are desperately in need to be in reckoning. Usually they are abused as gigolos,” Sanghamitra said.

Sanghamitra said the title of the movie does not reflect the subject she is exploring in the movie.

“I was deeply disappointed when I read today’s (December 28) article titled Sussanne and Hrithik Roshan divorce: Rs 100 crores settlement? There is no element of truth in the news and it is entirely speculative,” she said in a statement on 28 December.

“It is unethical to publish false news and speculate on the private relationships of individuals,” she added.

Hrithik announced Sussanne’s decision to end their marriage via an official statement on December 13. Both dated for four years before finally getting married on 20 December, 2002.

The couple has two sons — Hrehaan and Hridhaan. Sussanne says that they still have respect for each other and their focus remains the kids.

Hrithik and I have always had the deepest respect for one and another. Our primary focus has and will continue to be our two children. I would yet again like to appeal that we are granted our privacy at this critical juncture in our lives,” she said. PTI

Beyoncé and Jay-Z's "Drunk in Love" music video had over 1.2 billion views. PTI

Beyoncé

We were just trying to have fun, and I think you can hear that in the record.

We can see the shooting of ‘Drunk,’ ‘No Angel,’ ‘Blue,’ ‘Rockets,’ ‘Yonce’ and ‘XO’ with directors like Terry Richardson, Lil Internet and Ricky Saiz. Some of the videos feature a run ‘n gun’ type of filming — Bey and the directors admit that they didn’t plan that much. She admits, “I’m trying to rebel against perfection ... It’s fun because you never know what’s going to happen.”

As for when we’ll hear that bevy of unreleased tracks, we have a feeling they’ll come out of nowhere. But as Beyoncé taught us, we don’t really need to be prepared. We’ll just let it happen.—Reuters

PTI

Zeenat Aman stars in a bilingual movie Strings of Passion

MUMBAI, 31 Dec — Veteran actress Zeenat Aman has starred in a bilingual movie Strings of Passion, which includes two hours backstage before his gigs, to prepare himself to restore and convert it into an epic film Sholay, starring Amitabh Bachchan, Dharmendra. It was directed by Hrishikesh Mukherjee, who had produced Sholay starring his son Ramesh Sippy. The film was released in January with Zeenat scheduled to come to the city to attend the premiere.—PTI

Zeenat Aman, playing the role of the mother of one of the three protagonists in the movie, which is a Hindi-English production.

I had scripted Strings of Passion based on my research and interviews of directors, producers, cast and wannabe actors in Hindi films, who had confided me on sexual exploitation of some male model-extras. These models are desperately in need to be in reckoning. Usually they are abused as gigolos,” Sanghamitra said.

Sanghamitra said the title of the movie does not reflect the subject she is exploring in the movie.

“I was deeply disappointed when I read today’s (December 28) article titled Sussanne and Hrithik Roshan divorce: Rs 100 crores settlement? There is no element of truth in the news and it is entirely speculative,” she said in a statement on 28 December.

“It is unethical to publish false news and speculate on the private relationships of individuals,” she added.

Hrithik announced Sussanne’s decision to end their marriage via an official statement on December 13. Both dated for four years before finally getting married on 20 December, 2002.

The couple has two sons — Hrehaan and Hridhaan. Sussanne says that they still have respect for each other and their focus remains the kids.

Hrithik and I have always had the deepest respect for one and another. Our primary focus has and will continue to be our two children. I would yet again like to appeal that we are granted our privacy at this critical juncture in our lives,” she said. PTI

Beyoncé

We were just trying to have fun, and I think you can hear that in the record.

We can see the shooting of ‘Drunk,’ ‘No Angel,’ ‘Blue,’ ‘Rockets,’ ‘Yonce’ and ‘XO’ with directors like Terry Richardson, Lil Internet and Ricky Saiz. Some of the videos feature a run ‘n gun’ type of filming — Bey and the directors admit that they didn’t plan that much. She admits, “I’m trying to rebel against perfection ... It’s fun because you never know what’s going to happen.”

As for when we’ll hear that bevy of unreleased tracks, we have a feeling they’ll come out of nowhere. But as Beyoncé taught us, we don’t really need to be prepared. We’ll just let it happen.—Reuters

PTI

The yeteyear actress is 62-years-old.
Coaching greats good for the game, says Federer

London, 31 Dec — Roger Federer, who has taken on childhood hero Stefan Edberg as part of his team, thinks the recruitment of former great players as coaches will be good for tennis in the long term.

The 17-times major champion said bringing the likes of Edberg, Ivan Lendl, who coaches Andy Murray, and Boris Becker, who is now working with Novak Djokovic, back into the sport was a positive move.

The 32-year-old, who earlier this week said Edberg had taken some coaching to get involved, had been surprised at Becker’s involvement, though.

“I didn’t think he wanted to become a coach, I didn’t expect to see him back on tour, that was a bit of a surprise,” Federer told reporters at the Brisbane International on Monday.

“But then again, I’m happy to see former greats and legends excited to be doing such a job and wanting to help the next generation and it brings them back into the game.

“I think it’s a good thing, I think in tennis we have tendency to, I won’t say drive out, our legends and former greats (but) I think we should integrate them more.

“I don’t think it’s the best way to integrate them as a coach,” he chuckled. “But at least you see them again.

“And maybe they actually get a taste of it and other greats see that they are welcome and that we are so happy to see them.

“I think it sends out a good message.”

Despite the plethora of big name coaching recruits for the teams of the top players in men’s tennis, Federer sees little change in the pecking order for the Australian Open, which starts on 13 January.

Brisbane, 31 Dec — Victoria Azarenka thinks her rivalry with Serena Williams is making her a better player and is looking forward to renewing it over the next few weeks at the Brisbane International and the Australian Open.

World number two behind the 17-times major champion, Azarenka will only meet Williams if both players make the final at the Pat Rafter arena next weekend and Melbourne Park on 25 January.

You learn things about yourself and what you need to improve, because when somebody is taking you to the limit you really have a good look at what you have to do better to rise up.

“I definitely enjoy that and love tough competition. To take that challenge for me every time is very exciting. That’s what I wake up for and train hard for.”

Azarenka avoided Williams altogether in Australia last year, firstly in bizarre circumstances in Brisbane when she was forced to withdraw from their semi-final meeting after a possibly wrong cure went wrong. They were again scheduled to meet in the last four in Melbourne before an injury-hampered Williams lost her quarter-final to compatriot Sloane Stephens.

Azarenka’s subsequent victory over Stephens in the semi-finals, when she took a controversial 10-minute medical time out, means she has of lot of goodwill to win back in Australia over the next month.—Reuters

Injury-free 2014 top of Messi’s wish list

Barcelona, 31 Dec — Barcelona forward Lionel Messi is hoping for an injury-free 2014 as his recovery from a thigh injury nears completion, the World Player of the Year said on Monday.

Messi has been in his native Argentina recuperating from a thigh strain sustained on 10 November, the latest in a series of muscle injuries that plagued him throughout 2013.

Barca stumbled during his most recent absence, losing consecutive games to Ajax Amsterdam in the Champions League and Athletic Bilbao in La Liga, and are keen to have him back in the side as soon as possible after the end of the winter break.

“After celebrating the end of the year with my family and friends, I will fly to Barcelona on Wednesday and after my return we will see when I am ready to play again,” Messia said on Barca’s website (www.fc.barcelona.es).

“The objective now is to get myself back to full fitness and the idea is to have a few practice sessions with my team mates before returning to action,” he added. Coach Gerardo Martino’s squad have New Year’s Day free and return to training with a double session on Thursday.

Barca host Eibar in La Liga on Sunday before playing at home to Getafe in their King’s Cup last 16, first leg, the following Wednesday.

Messi may get some practice time in those two matches but Martino will be wary of rushing him back and, if possible, will want him at peak fitness for the La Liga clash at Athletic Madrid on 11 January.

Hart fit to play for City after cut, says Pellegrini

London, 31 Dec — Manchester City goalkeeper Joe Hart, who needed five stitches to a cut under his eye after being injured against Crystal Palace on Saturday, is fit for the visit to Swansea City in New Manchester City goalkeeper Joe Hart is seen with a cut under his eye as he salutes fans after winning their English Premier League soccer match against Crystal Palace at the Etihad stadium in Manchester, northern England on 28 Dec, 2013.—Reuters

Hart’s year of 2013 was cut short by an eye injury against West Ham United on 23 December. City officials said a team doctor had found no structural damage or broken blood vessels in Hart’s eye.

The 28-year-old, who has played every minute of City’s season, said he was fit to face “the toughest test of the season” against “my old mates” on Saturday.

The game is one of four that Pellegrini and Manchester City have won in the last five matches. They have missed three in the league and one from the Carabao Cup.

The Chilean, who has won 22 of City’s 24 home games this season, said he was “very sorry” to find himself the subject of online abuse after the club announced he would miss. He has been advised by the FA on this issue.

Hart, who was a member of the 2010 World Cup-winning side and the 2012 European Championship-winning squad, has been out for 53 days in total and said he was “very happy to be back.”

Manchester City manager Manuel Pellegrini said Hart’s return would lift the team.

“We are very pleased to have Joe back, he is a very important player for our club and it is very good to have him in the team, he is a very important player for us,” Pellegrini said.

“Of course, Joe will be very important for us, not only in the Premier League but also in the Champions League.”
Wednesday, 1 January, 2014

Stupid not to think Atletico can win La Liga

MADRID, 31 Dec — It would be “stupid” not to think Atletico Madrid can end Real Madrid and Barcelona’s decade-long stranglehold on the La Liga title this season, coach Diego Simeone was quoted as saying on Monday.

Atletico are level at the top with champions Barca on 46 points with just under half the season played, with Real five further back in third.

With La Liga’s leading marksman Diego Costa in scintillating form, the capital’s second club are in a strong position to match Valencia’s feat from 2004 of denying Spain’s wealthy big two the domestic title.

Argentine Simeone, who has transformed the club since taking over at the end of 2011 and led them to a King’s Cup triumph against Real last season, told Italy’s II Giornale daily that one of his wishes for 2014 was the La Liga crown.

“Would be stupid not to think about it, above all looking at the standings,” he told the newspaper.

However, the health of his three sons was the most important thing, added the 43-year-old, who spent part of his playing career at Serie A sides Inter Milan and Lazio.

He also had two stints at Atletico and was part of the side that won a league and cup double in 1996.

As well as riding high in La Liga, Atletico are through to the last 16 of the Champions League, where they will play AC Milan. They will meet Valencia over two legs in the last 16 of the King’s Cup, with the first leg at the Mestalla on 7 January, and the return at the Calderon a week later.

Atletico have yet to play Barca in La Liga but beat Real 1-0 at the Bernabeu in September, their first league victory against their bitter city rivals in more than a decade.— Reuters

Cross-Strait judicial cooperation handles 40,000 cases

TAIPEI, 31 Dec — The Chinese mainland and Taiwan have cooperated on more than 40,000 criminal cases since a 2009 cross-Strait pact on crime, Taiwan’s judicial authorities announced on Monday.

Police from both sides have captured 230 suspects, and seized over 3,000 kg of heroin and ketamine, in that time.

According to media reports, Morales said he spoke by phone with CAP President Enrique Garcíaseveral days ago, and sought his agency’s cooperation, in view of CAF’s financial aid to Brazil for the same purpose.

The president added that he would prefer the sports venues to be state owned, “but if we cannot cover the expenses then we will have to call on the private sector.”

Officials want to “provide a good show for all Bolivia from Cochabamba, through the organization and mobilization to receive our visitors with a lot of hospitality,” said Morales.

The South American Games, organized by the South American Sports Organization (Odesur), will be held in Bolivia in 2018, 40 years after the nation hosted the first edition in 1978 in La Paz, Cochabamba and Santa Cruz.— Xinhua

LatAm development bank offers Bolivia 200 mn USD credit for sports venues

LA PAZ, 31 Dec — The Latin American Development Bank (known by its Spanish acronym CAF) has offered Bolivia 200 million US dollars in credit to build sports venues in the lead-up to the 2018 South American Games in Bolivia, Bolivian President Evo Morales said on Monday.

Following a meeting with the governor of central Cochabamba department, Eduardo Novillo, and other officials, Morales told reporters at a press conference that the “CAF has no problem in supporting us in building sports infrastructure in the department of Cochabamba, which will be needed for the South American Games.”

According to media reports, Morales said he spoke by phone with CAF President Enrique García several days ago, and sought his agency’s cooperation, in view of CAF’s financial aid to Brazil for the same purpose.

The president added that he would prefer the sports venues to be state owned, “but if we cannot cover the expenses then we will have to call on the private sector.”

Officials want to “provide a good show for all Bolivia from Cochabamba, through the organization and mobilization to receive our visitors with a lot of hospitality,” said Morales.

The South American Games, organized by the South American Sports Organization (Odesur), will be held in Bolivia in 2018, 40 years after the nation hosted the first edition in 1978 in La Paz, Cochabamba and Santa Cruz.— Xinhua

Croatian fans perform longest fan wave during the Kontinental Hockey League (KHL) ice hockey match between Medvescak Zagreb and Russian team Vityaz Podolsk at Arena Zagreb in Zagreb, capital of Croatia, on 29 Dec, 2013. More than 15,000 Medvescak Zagreb fans set a new Guinness world record in longest so-called “Mexican fan wave” with 15 minutes and 3 seconds breaking the old record of 6:54 seconds that stood from 1986 during the Mexico vs Brazil match in cowboy Stadium, Texas.

Xinhua

Cross-Strait judicial cooperation handles 40,000 cases

BRAZIL, 31 Dec — The World News

Welcome to the Southern most part of Myanmar
Speaker of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw attends handover ceremony of patient’s ward & nurses hostel at Kanyutkwin People’s Hospital

Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Committee for Scrutinizing the Remaining Political Prisoners
Press Release (1/2013)
14th Waning of Nadaw, 1375 ME
31 December, 2013

Press release on work progress report of Committee for Scrutinizing the Remaining Political Prisoners

1. Committee for Scrutinizing the Remaining Political Prisoners comprising 16 members from government organizations, civil society organizations and political parties was formed on 19 February, 2013.

2. Aiming at contributing towards stability of the State and the lasting peace, national reconciliation, all-inclusiveness in the political process, nation-building endeavours by encouraging the prisoners to take part in it as citizens realizing the magnanimity of the State, the committee was reconstituted with 19 members—six from government organizations, seven from civil society organizations and six from political parties—in accord with Order No (43/2013) of the President’s Office issued on 8 May, 2013.

3. The committee met for the first time at Myanmar Peace Centre on 23 February, 2013. Its second meeting took place at the same venue on 16 March, 2013, and a list of 87 inmates was submitted in accord with recommendation of the committee members on 23 April, 2013, and an amnesty was granted for them.

4. The third meeting of the committee was held on 11 May, 2013. A list of 23 inmates was submitted in accord with recommendations of the committee members on 17 May, 2013, and an amnesty was granted for them.

5. The fourth meeting was held on 16 June, 2013. A list of 73 inmates was submitted in accord with recommendations of the committee members on 23 July, 2013, and an amnesty was granted for them.

6. The fifth meeting was held on 27 July, 2013 and the sixth meeting on 30 August, 2013. A list of 56 inmates was submitted in accord with recommendations of the committee members on 7 October, 2013, and an amnesty was granted for them.

7. The seventh meeting was held on 12 October, 2013, the eighth meeting on 27 October, 2013 and the ninth meeting on 9 November, 2013. A list of 69 inmates was submitted in accord with recommendations of the committee members on 15 November, 2013, and an amnesty was granted for them.

8. The tenth meeting was held on 23 November, 2013 and the eleventh meeting on 7 December, 2013. A list of 41 inmates was submitted in accord with recommendations of the committee members on 11 December, 2013, and an amnesty was granted for them.

9. The twelfth meeting was held on 21 December, 2013. A list of five inmates was submitted in accord with recommendations of the committee members on 30 December, 2013 and an amnesty was granted for them.

10. While scrutinizing the remaining political prisoners after reconstituting the committee with 19 members, the committee held a total of 12 meetings during the period from 23 February to 21 December, 2013 at MPC and submitted the list of political prisoners to the President for granting amnesty for 354 inmates.

11. Moreover, President’s Office had already issued a pardon under Order No (51/2013) on 30 December, 2013 in order to delete the offenses that are thought to be tied with politics for those being convicted and prosecuted in connection with other offenses.

Union FM felicitates Cuban counterpart

Union FM felicitates Cuban counterpart

Environmental Conservation and Forestry Ministry, KOICA discuss arid zone greening

Union Minister U Win Tun receives KOICA Chief Resident Representative Mr. NAM Kwon Hyoung.—MNA

New stamps sold at post offices to mark 66th Anniversary Independence Day

Committee for Scrutinizing the Remaining Political Prisoners

NAY PYI TAW, 31 Dec—Speaker of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw and Pyithu Hlut-taw Thura U Shwe Mann attended the handover of extended patient's ward and six-room nurses hostel under the Ministry of Health held at People’s Hospital in Kanyutkwin of Pyu Township in Bago Region this morning.

The officials and donors cut the ribbon to open the ceremony. The Speaker of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw then pressed the bottom to open it.

Donor Executive Director U Tun Myint of Aroma Rose Co. Ltd handed over related documents to the Ministry of Health.

(See page 8)