Nay Pyi Taw, 8 Jan — The handling by a designated ministry of the government’s programme on rural area development and poverty alleviation, and an annual budget allocated for the projects have raised hopes that success will be achieved.

The drive for rural area development and poverty reduction which began two months after the new government took office have not yet met with success due to the lack of a ministry handling the finances of the projects, said Vice-President Dr Sai Mauk Kham at a meeting of the Rural Area Development and Poverty Alleviation Work Committee here today.

The programme has been taken up by the Ministry of Livestock Breeding, Fisheries and Rural Area Development and a yearly budget will be allocated for the programme.

The vice-president also stressed the need for cooperation among the ministries concerned to achieve the targets of livestock breeding and fish farming, socio-economic improvement for rural people, production of goods and energy sufficiency in rural areas.

One third of over 60,000 villages have seen development in terms of power supply, he added.

He also stressed the importance of the private sector to help people living on a low income to earn higher wages to break the cycle of poverty.

During the meeting, Union ministers discussed plans for the development of livestock breeding and fish farming, small-scale production in rural areas, energy supply, education and health sectors.

Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Vice-Senior General Soe Win also reported on the participation of the defence forces in rural area development and the poverty alleviation drive.

In his concluding remarks, Vice-President Dr Sai Mauk Kham called on regional governments to build basic infrastructures such as transportation, power and water supply, education, health and loans that can directly benefit rural people. — MNA (Edited by Kerstin Winter)

MPT improves network quality

Nay Pyi Taw, 8 Jan — Myanmar Posts and Telecommunications under the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology has said it has improved its network facilities and decided to put into service a vendor and a GSM/WCDMA Mobile network.

Customers in the Nay Pyi Taw area and in Yangon Region have complained about bad network connections and quality.

The new devices have been installed in Nay Pyi Taw from November to December and in Yangon in December in order to improve voice quality and network connection.

Optimization works will be carried out until 31 January. The public has been asked to call 1876 to report further problems.

Myanmar Posts and Telecommunications (Edited by Kerstin Winter)
Foreign Heads of State/Government send felicitations to President U Thein Sein

Nay Pyi Taw, 8 Jan—The following are messages of felicitations from foreign Heads of State/Government sent to President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar U Thein Sein, on the occasion of the 66th Anniversary Independence Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

From Tamin Bin Hamad Al Thani
Amir of the State of Qatar
Your Excellency,

On the Anniversary of your country’s Independence Day, the People of the State of Qatar join me extending to Your Excellency and through you to the people of Myanmar our sincere greetings and felicitations coupled with our best wishes for Your Excellency’s personal well-being and further development and progress of the people of Myanmar.

From Norodom Sihamoni
King of Cambodia
Excellency,

It gives me great honour to extend my warmest congratulations to Your Excellency, the Government and the people of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, on behalf of the Government and the people of the Kingdom of Cambodia, on the auspicious occasion of the 66th Independence Day of Myanmar.

I wish Your Excellency happiness and good health, and the people of Myanmar continued peace and prosperity.

The Kingdom of Cambodia and the Republic of the Union of Myanmar enjoy excellent bilateral relations. I am confident that we will continue to cooperate closely to enhance these ties of friendship, solidarity and cooperation for the mutual benefit of our two countries and peoples.

Please accept, Mr President, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Mr. Choummaly Sayasone
President of the Lao People’s Democratic Republic
Your Excellency,

On behalf of the People of the Lao People’s Democratic Republic as well as on my own behalf, I wish to convey my warmest congratulations and best wishes to Your Excellency and through Your Excellency to the entire people of the Republic of Myanmar on the auspicious occasion of the 66th Anniversary of the Independence Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

I have a great pleasure to observe that the close cooperation between our two countries over the past decades has been further strengthened and I, and my spouse, hope that my state visit to the Republic of Union of Myanmar and attending the Opening Ceremony of the 27th SEA Games in December 2013 would be an important contribution to the history of relations between the two countries and I strongly believe that such friendly relations and close cooperation between our two countries will continue to further enhance in the years to come for dynamism of the ASEAN family, as well as the peace in the region and the world at large.

On the occasion of the New Year 2014, I would like to take this significant and auspicious opportunity to wish Your Excellency good health, happiness in leading the People of the Republic of Myanmar and good wishes on the future progress and prosperity.

I wish to extend to Your Excellency, the assurance of my highest consideration.

From Mr Joachim Gauck
President of the Federal Republic of Germany
Excellency,

On the occasion of the 66th anniversary of Myanmar’s independence permit me to offer you and the people of Myanmar warmest congratulations on behalf of myself as well as my compatriots.

In Germany, the reforms underway in your country continue to be widely recognised and appreciated. I look forward to my forthcoming visit to Myanmar, marking the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between our two countries. Our meeting will provide a good opportunity to discuss not only German support for the process of reform in your country but also ways to broaden and intensify relations between Germany and Myanmar.

I am confident that the amicable relations between our two countries will continue to thrive in future—through mutual commitment and for the benefit of these our countries.

From Abdullah Bin Nassor Bin Khalifah Al-Thani
Prime Minister and Minister of Interior of the State of Qatar
Excellency,

It gives me pleasure on the anniversary of your country’s Independence Day to express to you my cordial greetings and congratulations coupled with my best wishes of good health and well-being to Your Excellency and continued progress and prosperity of the people of Myanmar.

From Mr. Thongsing ThAMMAMVONG
Prime Minister of the Lao People’s Democratic Republic
Your Excellency,

I have a great pleasure to extend my warmest congratulations and best wishes to Your Excellency and the people of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar on the occasion of the 66th Anniversary of the Independence Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

I am very pleased to note that the friendly relations and close cooperation between our two countries and people have continued to be further enhanced and strengthened for mutual benefit of our two countries thus contributing for development in the region and the world at large.

In the delightful and significant occasion, I would like to wish Your Excellency good health, happiness, in leading the People of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar advance towards the new progress and prosperity.

Please accept, Your Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

From Ms Yingluck Shinawatra
Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand
Excellency,

On behalf of the Royal Thai Government and the Thai people, I have the honour to extend to Your Excellency and the people of Myanmar our warmest congratulations and best wishes on the occasion of the Independence Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

As a close friend and neighbour of Myanmar, the government and people of Thailand congratulate Myanmar on the continued success of the historic reform under Your Excellency’s leadership as well as on the recent successful hosting of the SEA Games. I also wish to reassure Your Excellency of Thailand’s fullest commitment and strong determination to continue to work closely with Myanmar to further strengthen and enhance our ties of friendship and cooperation for the progress and prosperity of our two countries and peoples.

Accept, Excellency, the renewed assurances of my highest consideration.

Students in Shwebo receive K 60,000 for good conduct

Shwebo, 8 Jan—Students at the T.W.S Private School in Shwebo who have shown good conduct by returning a lost item to its owner were given a cash prize of K 60,000 on Monday. Three Grade 7 students, named as Mg Thant Han Htet, Mg Pyae Kyaw Win and Mg Htet Wai Aung, found a gold ring at a lake near the compound of the School on 15 August. They handed the ring over to the school headmaster who found the rightful owner. According to school officials, the owner was so delighted with the act of honesty and moral of the students that he decided to thank them with money.

Kyemon-U Kyaw Zaw
572 (Edited by Kerstin Winter)

Four men, two women injured in North Okkalapa traffic accident

Yangon, 8 Jan—Four men and two women were injured in a traffic accident that occurred in Tatlin-chate Ward, North Okkalapa Township here at about 6 pm yesterday. A car heading for North Okkalapa from Mingaladon driven by an 18-year-old man collided with two bicycles and a trishaw. Six people were rushed to the North Okkalapa General Hospital for medical treatment with the driver under interrogation at the Police Station for his reckless driving.

MMAL-035 (Edited by Kerstin Winter)

Mandalay Region Chief Justice inspect courts in Myingyan District

Myingyan, 8 Jan—Chief Justice of Mandalay Region High Court U Soe Thein together with Mandalay Region Law Officer U Myo Tint made inspection tours of township and district courts in Myingyan District, Central area of the Union of Myanmar, on 5 January. During their tour of Natogyi, Taungtha and Kyaukpaduang townships, the region chief justice left instructions for high-ranking officers and officials of township and district courts to follow rules and regulations and to be dutiful staff for the public. They also inspected land plots to build staff quarters in Myingyan District Court and Kyaukpaduang Township court.

Kyemon-434 (Edited by Darrell Gibson)

431 sets of uniform presented to auxiliary firemen in Dala Tsp

Dala, 8 Jan—A ceremony to present uniforms to Ayllua Fire Brigade was held at the town hall of Dala Township this morning. At the ceremony, Dala Township Administrator U Tun Tun Win presented 431 sets of uniforms to the deputy commanding officer of the fire brigade on behalf of the firemen from 23 wards and 23 village-attach of the township.

The township administrator urged the firemen to improve their capacity joining hands with the ward/village administrators.

Kyemon-U Than Htay
(Edited by Kerstin Winter)
Japan, Spain vow to assist firms’ expansion into Latin America

Madrid, 8 Jan — Japanese Foreign Minis-
ter Fumio Kishida and his Spanish coun-
terpart Jose Manuel Garcia-Margallo
vowed on Tuesday to work together in
helping firms from their respective coun-
tries expand into the Spanish-speaking
market in Latin America, Japanese
officials said.

At a meeting in Ma-
drid, the two ministers also agreed to
seek an early conclusion of current negoti-
tiations for a free trade pact between Japan and the Eu-
ropean Union.

With regard to Ja-
pinese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s visit to the war-
linked Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo late last month that angered Japan’s
Asian neighbours, Kishida stressed that through the visit, Abe expressed his “condolences” for all the
war dead and vowed “never to wage a war,” according
to the officials. The press
representative of Catherine
Ashton, the European Union’s
international representative for foreign affairs and security
policy, said in a statement after the visit that Abe’s action is “not conducive
to lowering tensions in the
region or to improving re-
lations with Japan’s neigh-
bours,” especially China
and South Korea.

In the talks, Kishi-
da also explained to
Garcia-Margallo the Abe government’s security pol-
icy, including the recently adopted national security
strategy, noting that ties with Europe and Spain are
important in pursuing the
policy, according to the of-
ficials.

The Spanish minister
responded that he under-
stood Japan’s undertakings,
they added. Kishida is visiting
Spain for two days from
Tuesday ahead of his visit
to France, where he and his
defense colleague Tsunoro
Oodera are to meet with their French counterparts for the first so-called “two-
plus-two” security talks be-
tween Tokyo and Paris on
Thursday.—Kyodo News

US military helicopter crashes in
Britain, munitions across site

London, 8 Jan — Brit-
ish police said on Wednes-
day they would be working
with the US Air Force and others to
find out why a US military helicopter crashed on the coast of eastern
England, killing all four crew
on board. Wreckage
included munitions was spread over a wide area of the
Crash site in difficult ter-
rain.

The helicopter, a Pave
Hawk assigned to the 48h
Fighter Wing based at RAF
Lakenheath air base, was performing a training mission along the
Norfolk coast when it went
down in marshland on
Tuesday evening.

The cause of the crash,
which occurred in a nature
reserve near the village of
Cley next the Sea, was not
known. The area is about
130 miles northeast of London. “We will be work-
ing with our partners at
the Ministry of Defence,
Air Accident Investigation
Branch and US Air Force
to gather all evidence from
the scene and then recover the
body,” said Chief
Superintendent Bob Scully
of Norfolk Constabulary,
the local police
force.

“This is difficult ter-
rain with marshland and tides
connected with wreck-
age containing munitions
covering a large area,” he
said in a statement.

A 400-metre (quarter
mile) area around the crash
site remained cordoned off
to preserve public safety. No one on the ground was
thought to have been hurt,
authorities said.—Reuters

A private security guard stands outside the US Embassy
in New Delhi on 15 Dec, 2013.—Reuters

United States sending more troops
and tanks to South Korea

Washington, 8 Jan — The United States said on Tuesday it will send
300 more soldiers and about 40 Abrams main battle tanks and
other armoured vehicles to South Korea next month as part of a military rebal-
ance to East Asia after more
than a decade of war in Af-
ghanistan and Iraq. The bat-
talion of troops and M1A2
tanks and about 40 Bradley
fighting vehicles from the 1st US
Cavalry Division based at Fort Hood, Texas, will begin a nine-month de-

deployment in South Korea on
1 February. A Pentagon
spokesman said the person-
nel would remain for nine
months but on departing
would leave their equipment
behind to be used by follow-

US Army soldiers and its M2A2 Bradley fighting
vehicles take part in the US-South Korea joint military
exercise against possible attacks by North Korea, at a
shooting range near the demilitarized zone separating
the two Koreas in Paju, about 45 km (28 miles) north
of Seoul, on 8 June, 2011.—Reuters

National reconciliation to benefit
Palestinians in ongoing peace talks

Gaza, 8 Jan — As Palestinian
President Mahmoud Abbas’ Fatah
Party and Hamas in Gaza
recently made positive statements on achieving na-
tional reconciliation, ana-
lysts say ending the internal
split serves the Palestin-
ian interests in the ongoing
peace talks with Israel.

In a surprising move,
Ismael Haneya, the Prime
Minister of the Hamas au-
thority, announced on Mon-
day a series of measures to
pave the way for the recon-
ciliation.

Analysts see Haneya’s
measures as a direct result
deep political and financial crisis facing Ha-
mas in the aftermath of the
dissolution of Egypt’s Islamic
president Mohamed Morsi in

Since Hamas’ violent
takeover of the Gaza Strip in
June 2007, the Palestin-
ians in the coastal enclave
have been subjected to a
tight Israeli blockade and a
closure of the crossing
points, which caused a high
rate of poverty, unemploy-
ment and a severe shortage of
fuel and electricity.

Ending division and
achieving national recon-
ciliation would bring Gaza
and the West Bank back to
unity, then all the hard liv-
ing conditions and the re-
strictions imposed on the
movement of goods and
individuals will be more
likely lifted,” said Hani al-
Basoos, a Gaza-based po-
titical analyst.

Leaders of Fatah and Hamas had signed several reconciliation agreements in
2011 and 2012. How-
ever, disagreements on
issues like forming a tran-
tionary unity government
and setting up a date for
elections put off the im-
plementation.

Xinhua

India targets American expatriate club as
diplomatic row escalates

New Delhi, 8 Jan — India has told the United States it cannot permit non-
diplomats to visit a club at its Delhi Embassy, escalat-
ing a row over the arrest of an Indian diplomat in
New York.

Hundreds of expatriate Americans use the Ameri-
can Foreign Service Association club, which has a
bar, swimming pool, res-
taurant and a beauty parlor
within the embassy pre-
mises. The club has been in
existence for decades.

The embassy must
cease all commercial ac-
tivities benefiting non-
diplomatic staff on its
premises by 16 January, a
government source with
direct knowledge of the dis-
pute told Reuters. India is
furious at the 12 December
arrest, handcuffing and strip
search of its deputy con-
sul in New York, Devyani
Khobragade, who prosecu-
tors accuse of underpaying
her nanny and lying on a
visa application.

Still fester for nearly
a month on, the row has
started to affect the wider
relationship between the
world’s two largest democ-
racies, with one high-level
visit already postponed and
a visit scheduled for next
week by US Energy Sec-
retary Ernest Moniz now
looking doubtful. India has
already taken a number of
retaliatory measures and is
pressuring Washington ahead of a court appearance by
the diplomat due on 13 Janu-
ary.

The latest move is
aimed at closing the em-
bassy’s social club to non-
diplomats. India says the fa-
cilities are tax free because they are located in the emb-
assy grounds.

“Basically the thing
is that the provision of such facilities to non-diplomats
and not paying taxes is

clearly not in accordance with the Vienna conven-
tion,” the government
source with knowledge of the dispute told Reuters.

“You can’t have these facilities inside and not pay taxes and allow non-diplo-
mats,” the source said.

Reuters

A road sign is seen for the village of Cley in Norfolk, eastern England on 8 Jan, 2014.—Reuters

Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida (L) and
Spanish Foreign Minister Jose Manuel Garcia-Mar-
gallo hold hands before their talks in Madrid on 7 Jan, 2014.—Kyodo News

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s visit to the war-linked Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo late last month that angered Japan’s Asian neighbours, Kishida stressed that through the visit. Abe expressed his “condolences” for all the war dead and vowed “never to wage a war,” according to the officials. The press representative of Catherine Ashton, the European Union’s top representative for foreign affairs and security policy, said in a statement after the visit that Abe’s action is “not conducive to lowering tensions in the region or to improving relations with Japan’s neighbours,” especially China and South Korea.

In the talks, Kishida also explained to Garcia-Margallo the Abe government’s security policy, including the recently adopted national security strategy, noting that ties with Europe and Spain are important in pursuing the policy, according to the officials.

The Spanish minister responded that he understood Japan’s undertakings, they added. Kishida is visiting Spain for two days from Tuesday ahead of his visit to France, where he and his defense colleague Tsunoro Oodera are to meet with their French counterparts for the first so-called “two-plus-two” security talks between Tokyo and Paris on Thursday.—Kyodo News

National reconciliation to benefit Palestinians in ongoing peace talks

Gaza, 8 Jan — As Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas’ Fatah Party and Hamas in Gaza recently made positive statements on achieving national reconciliation, analysts say ending the internal split serves the Palestinian interests in the ongoing peace talks with Israel.

In a surprising move, Ismael Haneya, the Prime Minister of the Hamas authority, announced on Monday a series of measures to pave the way for the reconciliation.

Analysts see Haneya’s measures as a direct result of the deep political and financial crisis facing Hamas in the aftermath of the ouster of Egypt’s Islamist president Mohamed Morsi in July, 2013.

Since Hamas’ violent takeover of the Gaza Strip in June 2007, the Palestinians in the coastal enclave have been subjected to a tight Israeli blockade and a closure of the crossing points, which caused a high rate of poverty, unemployment and a severe shortage of fuel and electricity.

Ending division and achieving national reconciliation would bring Gaza and the West Bank back to unity, then all the hard living conditions and the restrictions imposed on the movement of goods and individuals will be more likely lifted,” said Hani al-Basoos, a Gaza-based political analyst.

Leaders of Fatah and Hamas had signed several reconciliation agreements in 2011 and 2012. However, disagreements on issues like forming a transitional unity government and setting up a date for elections put off the implementation.

Xinhua
US Secretary of State John Kerry holds a joint Press conference after their talks in Washington on 7 Jan, 2014. — KYODO NEWS

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry holds a joint Press conference after their talks in Washington on 7 Jan, 2014. — KYODO NEWS

Over 8,000 DRC refugees enter Uganda

KAMPALA, 8 Jan — More than 8,000 Congolese have so far crossed into Uganda following rebel attacks in the eastern region of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), an update report by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) office said here on Tuesday.

The fleeing of the Congolese is attributed to a 25 December attack by a Ugandan rebel group Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) in areas of Kamango and Kikingi in the eastern DRC. There was subsequent fighting involving the Congolese army and UN intervention brigade.

The ADF has bases in the eastern DRC and in the recent past it has launched attacks on civilian populations. “Most of the refugees are staying in the community while some 2,600 are registered at Bubukwanga transit center in Bundibugyo District,” said the report.

The transit site was opened in mid-July to accommodate the initial influx from similar fighting in and around Kamango that began on 11 July, 2013.

People walk on a street in Washington, the United States, on 7 Jan, 2014. Blast of air pole gripped the Midwest and pushed toward the East and South on Monday. — XINHUA

Lebanon officially invited to Geneva II conference

BEIRUT, 8 Jan — Lebanon received on Tuesday an invitation to attend the Geneva II peace talks on the Syrian crisis slated for 22 Jan, Lebanon’s official National News Agency reported.

Lebanese caretaker Foreign Minister Adnan Mansour received on Tuesday an invitation from the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon to attend the Geneva II peace talks later this month.

After recurrent delays, the peace talks were finally scheduled to take place on 22 January in Switzerland’s Montreux and will be pressed by Ban.

On Monday, Ban began dispatching invitations for the Geneva II peace conference, calling it “a unique opportunity for ending the violence” in Syria.

Lebanon hosts around one million Syrian refugees and has on separate occasions announced its support for a political solution to the Syrian crisis.

The Syrian opposition has not decided whether or not to attend the conference, while the United States and Russia are engaged in negotiations over the attendance of Iran.

No further details were given on where that might take place or how many troops it might involve. Reluctance to further empower Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki or put American boots on the ground constrains US support for Iraq as it battles militants from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, an al-Qaeda affiliate, in Anbar Province, and seeks to reverse a striking surge in violence across the country in the last year.

The United States is sending missiles, surveillance aircraft and other gear that may help Iraq forces rebuff al-Qaeda in the western province, a Sunni Muslim stronghold. But Washington also wants Maliki, a Shi’ite, to do more to reach out to minority Kurds and Sunnis who accuse him of fanning sectarian tensions.

The conflict in Anbar is the latest in a string of events pitting Maliki against Iraqi Sunnis, many of whom resent the Shi’ite domination that has followed the US-led ouster of Sunni leader Saddam Hussein in 2003.

Colin Kahl, a former senior Pentagon official specializing in the Middle East, said the US military’s ability to conduct overt activities in Iraq was extremely limited, but that the Obama administration was likely providing the Iraqi government with intelligence to help them target al-Qaeda.

“We do so, we have to be mindful that we are not empowering Maliki’s bad behavior, and we need to be careful not to do anything that makes it look like we are taking sides in a sectarian fight,” Kahl said.

Beyond such modest support, and despite growing US fears that the war in Syria is fuelling a regional al-Qaeda comeback, US officials say their hands are largely tied in Iraq.

Secretary of State John Kerry made clear last weekend the Obama administration has no appetite for sending US troops back.

“This is a fight that belongs to the Iraqis,” he said. “We’re not contemplating putting boots on the ground. This is their fight, but we’re going to help them in their fight.”

Egypt’s Mursi in court for second time

CAIRO, 8 Jan — Former Egyptian President Mohamed Mursi arrived in court on Wednesday for the second session of his trial on charges of inciting the killing of protesters during his time in head of state, state media reported.

The charges relate to violence outside the presidential palace in December, 2012. During protests ignited by a presidential decree that expanded Mursi’s powers, the army deposed the Muslim Brotherhood politician on 3 July following mass protests against his rule.

Mursi was last month ordered to stand trial in two further cases. The new charges include conspiring with the Palestinian group Hamas, Lebanon’s Hezbollah and the Shi’ite Islamist government of Iran against Egypt, and involvement in a terrorist plot related to his escape from prison in 2011.

Fourteen other Islamist leaders are standing trial with Mursi in the case being heard on Wednesday.

No of welfare recipients in Japan hits record high

TOKYO, 8 Jan — The number of recipients of welfare in Japan reached a record 2,164,338 as of last October, up 4,530 from the previous month, with increasing numbers of elderly depending on assistance, the welfare ministry said on Wednesday.

The number of household welfare recipients was also the highest on record at 1,594,729, according to the Health, Labour and Welfare Ministry.

An increased number of elderly are relying on welfare because they receive little or no pension, a ministry official said.

The rate of increase in recipients has slowed, however, since the rapid jump following the 2008 financial crisis, the official added.

Households composed of at least one person aged 65 or older made up 45 percent of the total households on welfare at 719,398, up 2,399 from September.

The government is set to revise down the baseline payment for essentials such as food and utilities by 0.4 percent in April, having judged that the consumption tax hike planned for that month will be offset by lower overall living costs.

No of welfare recipients in Japan hits record high

No of welfare recipients in Japan hits record high
**New Light of Myanmar**

**WORLD**

**Former British foreign secretary “optimistic” about Iran nuclear deal**

TEHERAN, 8 Jan — Former British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw said on Tuesday that he is “optimistic” about the implementation of an interim nuclear deal signed between Iran and six major world powers last November, Press TV reported.

In a meeting with the head of Iran-Britain Parliamentary Friendship Group, Abbas-Ali Mansouri-Arani, in the Iranian capital of Teheran on Tuesday, Straw said despite the ups and downs in Iran-Britain ties, both sides seek the improvement of relations in line with mutual interests, according to the report. The Iran-Britain Parliamentary Friendship Group has always called for the expansion of bilateral relations and opposed extremist views regarding Iran’s ties with the West, Straw was quoted as saying. Mansouri-Arani, for his part, said “The Islamic Republic of Iran has always carried out its nuclear activities based on the NPT (Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty) regulations and, like other signatories to the treaty, Teheran calls for its absolute and legal rights,” the Iranian lawmaker added.

Last week, Iran and the P+5+1 group held the third round of expert-level meeting in Geneva to prepare the grounds for implementation of the nuclear deal, however, the Iranian side announced that although most part of the agreement is prepared for the implementation, a few issues still remain for further discussions. Straw, who arrived in Teheran on Tuesday at the head of a four-member parliamentary delegation, is scheduled to meet Iran’s foreign minister and some influential Iranian lawmakers.—Xinhua

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**International drug cartels targeting elderly carriers**

WELLINGTON, 8 Jan — International drug smuggling gangs are targeting elderly travellers, New Zealand Customs officers warned on Wednesday after a 72-year-old US citizen was charged with importing millions of dollars of methamphetamine.

The US man appeared in an Auckland court on Wednesday charged with importing 6.2 kg of methamphetamine with a street value of 3 million to 6 million NZ dollars (2.49 million to 4.98 million USD dollars) and was remanded in custody until March.

The man arrived in Auckland from Bangkok on 28 December and was arrested after customs officers searched his bag and found the drugs concealed in the lining of his suitcase.

The case drew similarities with two separate arrests of US nationals, aged 70 and 55, for importing methamphetamine into Australia last week, said customs manager investigations Maurice O’Brien.

Criminal syndicates appeared to be targeting older people to carry significant amounts of drugs across borders, O’Brien said in a statement.

“It’s important the public is aware that such criminal operations exist and people who, either knowingly or unknowingly, carry these drugs end up bearing the full brunt of the law,” he said.

A 68-year-old Auckland man was arrested in November last year after he arrived into New Zealand from Papua New Guinea carrying 1.5 kg of methamphetamine concealed inside two brunt of the law,” he said.

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**BUSINESS & HEALTH**

**New Light of Myanmar**

8 Jan — Asian Americans have been saved from smoking-related deaths for 50 years.

More than half of American men and over a third of women were smokers on 11 January, 1964, warns the US Surgeon General.

The Federal Trade Commission also urged media outlets to scrutinize advertisements more carefully to avoid publishing potentially misleading ads, noting that some of the advertisements for the products — from food supplements to skin creams — appeared in mainstream publications. The commission provided guidance for publishers and broadcasters on how to screen weight-loss claims in advertisements. The FTC’s action, codenamed “Operation Failed Resolution,” was timed to coincide with the anniversary of the original, he said. “The next stage really needs to be a move ahead to this smoke-free generation concept,” Lushniak said.

Lushniak believes the next step should be a resolution to introduce an endgame within the next 50 years. That concept will be part of an upcoming Surgeon General’s report due 16 January.

"We are celebrating the anniversary in a different place when it came to tobacco and cancer. Fifty years later, smoking rates have been cut by almost half, and a new study estimates that 8 million Americans have been saved from premature smoking-related deaths.

"You look back in history to 1964, and in reality, the world was a very different place when it came to tobacco use and smoking," said Rear Admiral Boris Lushniak, the acting US Surgeon General.

A collection of reports released online on Tuesday highlights how public-health efforts, from cigarette taxes to advertising limits, have helped cut smoking rates. The reports also identify new trouble spots, including communities where members have not been able to quit in significant numbers.

One paper estimates that about 17.7 million deaths from 1964 to 2012 were related to smoking. Without any of the tobacco control measures introduced in that period, an additional 8 million people would have died, according to Theodore Hobof the Yale School of Public Health in New Haven, Connecticut, and colleagues.

**Lose weight with skin cream? Fat chance, says US govt**

WASHINGTON, 8 Jan — Americans putting their faith in miracle cures to shed unwanted pounds are likely to be disappointed, US regulators said on Tuesday in announcing settle- ments with four firms accused of falsely advertising weight-loss products such as skin creams.

The Federal Trade Commission won agreement from L’Occitane, Inc.; Sensa Products LLC; HCG Diet Direct LLC; and LaSpa LLC.

The settlements required them to drop unsubstantiated claims from their ads and, in some cases, return money to consumers. The FTC also urged media outlets to scrutinize advertisements more carefully to avoid publishing potentially misleading ads, noting that some of the advertisements for the products — from food supplements to skin creams — appeared in mainstream publications. The commission provided guidance for publishers and broadcasters on how to screen weight-loss claims in advertisements. The FTC’s action, codenamed “Operation Failed Resolution,” was timed to coincide with the anniversary of the original, he said. “The next stage really needs to be a move ahead to this smoke-free generation concept,” Lushniak said.

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**Goldman, JPMorgan and peers must rethink pay to meet EU cap**

WASHINGTON, 8 Jan — Investment bankers working in London for many top US and European groups face a major overhaul of their pay structure, as their recent bonuses have far exceeded new EU rules which will curb payouts to be made this time next year.

Goldman (JPM.N), JPMorgan Sachs (GS.N), Bank of America (BAC.N), Barclays (BARC.L) and Credit Suisse (CSGN.VX) paid bonuses to leading staff which ranged from 3.3 to 5.4 times their fixed pay for 2012, according to data disclosed by the banks and Reuters calculations.

Big changes will therefore have to be made to meet the European Union rules which cap bonuses at the same level as fixed pay, or double if the bank’s shareholders approve.

Bankers’ bonuses remain a hot topic among politicians and the public. Many blame their high levels for encouraging reckless risk-taking that led to the 2008/09 financial crisis and a series of mis-selling and misconduct scandals. Banks usually pay staff bonuses in January or February based on their performance the previous year. So while the EU caps came into force three months ago, they will be applied first to bonuses for 2014 to be handed out early next year.

Major banks continued to reward their top risk-taking staff heavily on performance in bonuses for 2012, their regulatory disclosures have shown in the last few weeks.

Goldman Sachs paid its top 115 UK staff an average of $4.67 million (2.84 million pounds) each for 2012, an increase of three-quarters from the average for 2011 and the highest of the major banks.

"The banks and NTT Data Corp, which manages ATM data for Japanese banks, are also planning to expand the scheme to other Asian economies, the sources said. The move is aimed at extending improved financial services to visitors from Asia, as well as Japanese visitors to the region, especially in the run-up to the Tokyo Olympic Games in 2020. Integration of the ATM systems would allow foreign visitors to withdraw Japanese yen using cash cards issued by foreign banks, a transaction that will be cheaper than cash withdrawals using credit cards. Similar plans are being tried out in other Asian economies.

Integration of the ATM systems with lenders in Asia

TOKYO, 8 Jan — Major Japanese banks are considering connecting their automated teller machine systems with about 30 financial institutions in South Korea and Thailand from fiscal 2015, industry sources said on Wednesday.

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SpaceX Falcon rocket lifts off with Thaiicom digital TV satellite

CAPE CANAVERAL, (Florida), 8 Jan — A Space Exploration Technologies' Falcon 9 rocket blasted off from Cape Canaveral Air Force Station in Florida on Monday to put a commercial communications spacecraft into orbit for Thai satellite operator Thaicom. The 224-foot-tall rocket lifted off its sea-side launch pad at 2:06 pm (2206 GMT), soaring through overcast skies as it headed toward the satellite's drop-off point more than 55,000 miles above Earth, or about one-quarter of the way to the moon.

More than 1 billion Android devices to ship in 2014

LONDON, 8 Jan — The number of smartphones and tablet computers shipped with Google's Android operating system will break the 1 billion barrier this year, research group Gartner said on Tuesday. Android, which is installed on products made by Samsung, HTC, Sony and many other manufacturers, is forecast to reach 1.1 billion users in 2014, up 26 percent on last year, with the strongest demand in emerging markets.

Nintendo shares surge as China eases gaming console ban

TOKYO, 8 Jan — Shares in Nintendo Co Ltd jumped as much as 7.5 percent to a two and a half-year high on Wednesday after China temporarily lifted a 14-year-old ban on selling video game consoles.

The move could pave the way for Nintendo, Sony Corp and Microsoft Corp to enter the world's third-largest video game market in terms of revenue.

"Nintendo hasn't had a catalyst for a long time, so if it can revive (via) the Chinese consumer market then it would be positive," a Tokyo-based trader said.

Sony to distribute games for PlayStation 4 via cloud computing

SONY CORP President Kazuo Hirai delivers a keynote address during the International CES, a global consumer electronics and consumer technology tradeshow, in Las Vegas on 7 Jan, 2014.

In his own blog post, Netflix's case, Cockcroft said he would counsel large enterprise companies who want to work more in the cloud — using remote computers that work over the Internet rather than proprietary centralized computers. In Netflix's case, Cockcroft moved its streaming entertainment to Amazon's cloud platform.

Battery Ventures lands Netflix executive

SAN FRANCISCO, 8 Jan — Battery Ventures has hired away Adrian Cockcroft, the engineer who helped Netflix's streaming, to become the venture-capital firm's first technology fellow. Cockcroft will help Battery advise and evaluate companies and formulate investment theses, said Mike Duber, a principal at Battery, in a blog post on Tuesday. While Cockcroft will play a role in sourcing deals, he won't be a partner.

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Registration for firms made easier with new Myanmar Companies Act

**NAY PYI TAW, 8 Jan**—A new bill to help companies register more easily will come into effect in May. The Myanmar Companies Act was amended in October 2012 with the assistance of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the new bill will be passed in parliament in May.

The new law will not only meet international standards to help companies register more easily, but the new law will also consist of provisions that will contribute to the development of SMEs, according to the Private Sector Development Sub-committee.

Parliaments of Myanmar, Japan discuss bilateral cooperation

**NAY PYI TAW, 8 Jan**—Government officials from Japan, including MPs from the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), Democratic Party and Japan Restoration Party led by Mr. Ichiro Aisawa, Chairman of the Standing Committee on Rules and Administration of Japan were welcomed by Amyotha Hluttaw Deputy Speaker U Mya Nyine yesterday.

They discussed promotion of bilateral relations and cooperation between the two parliaments and sectors of education, social issues, economic and culture. The meeting was attended by chairman from Amyotha Hluttaw and Pyithu Hluttaw of the Myanmar-Japan Parliamentary Friendship and the economic cooperation committee.

**MNA (Edited by Kerstin Winter)**

Parleys of Myanmar, Japan discuss bilateral cooperation discussed

**NAY PYI TAW, 8 Jan**—Australian and Myanmar officials discussed cooperation in the fight against human trafficking today, with Attorney-General of the Union Dr Tun Shin receiving a delegation of the Australia-Asia Program to Combat Trafficking in Persons (AAPTIP).

At the meeting, the Australian delegation leader Mr. Mark Taylor said that he would like to cooperate in human trafficking activities between Myanmar and AAPTIP, and that AAPTIP wants to work together with law officers from the Union Attorney-General’s Office in solving the related problems of human trafficking.

The Attorney-General of the Union also said that

Preparations for holding ninth regular session ...

**(from page 16)**

who is also Chairman of the central committee, Deputy Speaker of Amyotha Hluttaw, members of the central committee and chairmen of work committees, Union ministers and officials of the Union government office and respective organizations.

**MNA (Edited by Kerstin Winter)**

Humanity shared is humanity multiplied

**(Edited by Kerstin Winter)**

In some corners of the world, a child who has no food might be crying in the chilling dark. A pregnant woman who has no access to healthcare might be seeking help from a local traditional midwife. A group of people fleeing some kind of conflict might be nearly frozen to death in poorly sheltered camps. A slum dweller might be dying on the road, completely alone. A helpless elderly beggar might be lost in a city searching to take refuge for a night somewhere. An intelligent child who dreams of studying might be washing dishes in a mansion. Who cares?

Yes, we care. At least, we often do. Most of the humanitarian aid goes to refugee camps where basic needs have to be urgently met and many people are in a life-threatening situation, yet other stories are dramatic enough as well. Dramatic stories trigger our sympathy.

They portray one of the very few lovely and beautiful things on this planet and in the hearts of human beings.

It would be the most tangible contribution of the media to humanity to report such stories. Those stories directly touch the hearts of everyone who reads them. They quickly go viral on social networks or in some other ways. Our sympathy lasts as long as the stories are on air. Its depth is questionable.

The fact is that we have sympathy mostly when we hear the stories, rather with the human beings behind these tragedies. Every fellow human being on this planet has stories that have been shared or not. The terrific waiter at the teashop you used to visit will have a story. The irritated bus conductor will have a story. The office staff member who goes crazy will have a story. Many stories of human beings are untold. We are not supposed to get rid of rage, prejudice or some other bad feeling just because we are human beings. We should rather focus on amplifying sympathy for all of our fellow human beings while keeping the special focus on the needy.

The world will become a lovelier place to live in if each of us shares the love for each other.

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw…

**(from page 16)**

The Speaker also pledged, on behalf of MPs, that they will work their best in the interests of the people in terms of writing laws that protect the people and can be abide by the people.—MNA

**Speaker of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Thura U Shwe Mann meets with people. —MNA**

Chairman of Leading Committee Speaker of Amyotha Hluttaw U Khin Aung Myint explains ongoing processes for upcoming Hluttaw meetings.—MNA

**Pyu Ancient Cities Coordinating Committee meets ahead of UNESCO World Heritage site announcement**

**NAY PYI TAW, 8 Jan**—The Pyu Ancient Cities Coordinating Committee held a meeting here yesterday morning, as expert of ICONOS are going to visit the three Pyu ancient cities which will be included on the list of UNESCO World Heritage sites in late January. At the meeting, reports were given on research work, museum works and management of Myanmar passed the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Law in 2005, and that law officers at different levels participate in the fight against human trafficking operations.

He added that the Legal Affairs and Prosecution Work Group led by the Deputy Attorney-General has been formed in accord with Section 7 of the law.

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**MNA (Edited by Kerstin Winter)**
Construction

Rural road maintained to help regional development

MOHNYIN, 8 Jan—Over 100 people led by U Tun Lwin, representative of the local people, helped with road maintenance of the Katkaw Road linking Ohusanhsaing and Nammon villages in Mohnyin Township of Kachin State on 4 and 5 January. The 15-mile long inter-village road is being used in extraction of timber. It was constructed by Myat Noe Thu Timber Company in 2007. Before the maintenance, the local people faced difficulty in transportation due to damaged parts. After building a bridge across the 200-foot long Kyaukpon Creek, the road will be completed for rural use and it will be shorter than the road in Hopin Sub-township, said a local of Ohusanhsaing Village. Township level officials will inspect progress of the road maintenance.

MMAL-Tun Yi (Edited by Kerstin Winter)

Local people equip sub-township with power generator

SHWETHAUNGYAN, 8 Jan—Several development tasks in rural areas were undertaken in Shwethaungyan Sub-township of Pathein Township of Pathein District of Ayeyawady Region on 4 January. In Thabawgan Village, a power generator built by local people contributed about K 6 million to the development tasks. Meanwhile, the Thukha Myitta Social Association was opened and the Thuta Sweson Library celebrated its anniversary ceremony which was attended by officials. The sub-township of Pathein District was one of the cyclone-hit areas in Pathein District was one of the townships in Sagaing Region in the northwest of the nation consists of 113 villages and four wards to spend the allotted fund on development tasks such as water supply, road and bridge construction, health, education and so on.

In the 2013-14 financial year, the Parliament allotted K 100 million to each MP to be able to carry out development tasks in their respective constituencies aside from the fund of the Development Affairs Department under the Ministry of Livestock, Fisheries and Rural Development.

MMAL-Myo Win (Edited by Kerstin Winter)

Pyinmana Institute of Agriculture welcomes freshomn students

PYINMANA INSTITUTE OF AGRICULTURE holds an anniversary ceremony on 1 January. In the 2013-14 academic year at its hall on 6 January.

Faculty members and other students expressed their well-wishes. The first year students were introduced to the faculty members on the occasion.

The student association of the institute presented cash assistance to outstanding students of the institute who have the opportunity to join the University of Agriculture for further studies. The Myanmar Awba Company and the KRC Company awarded outstanding students of the 2012-13 academic year. The Institute of Agriculture was moved the institute from Mandalay to Yezin in 1973 with the aim of training more students and providing more practical experience.

MMAL-Soe (Nay Pyi Taw) (Edited by Kerstin Winter)

Development

Kyunhla Tsp to spend K 100 million on development tasks

KYUNHLA, 8 Jan—Instructions were given by Hluttaw MPs for the allotment of a K 100-million fund to Kyunhla Township on 1 January. Pyithu Hluttaw MP U Kyaw Nyunt and Amyotha Hluttaw MP Dr Myint Naing, Region Hluttaw MPs U Soe Kyaw Naing and U Myo Myint Tun gave instructions on regional development. Secretary of Township Development Supporting Committee U Than Tun stressed the need to follow the directives in carrying out regional development tasks. Kyunhla Township, a township in Sagaing Region in the northeast of Phakant Township, one of the townships in Phakant Township, one of the townships in Myitkyina District, Kachin State in northern Myanmar, was opened and the Thuta Myitta Social Association and the Development Affairs Department under the Ministry of Livestock, Fisheries and Rural Development.

55 trainees conclude Red Cross first-aid course in Phakant Township

PHAKANT, 8 Jan—A first-aid course concluded on 2 January at the hall of the Basic Education High School in Seikmu Village of Phakant Township, one of the townships in Myitkyina District, Kachin State in northern Myanmar. The Joint Secretary of the Kachin State Red Cross Supervisory Committee and Staff Officer Grade I of Kachin State Red Cross Brigade U Gennes explained facts about Red Cross affairs, while officials presented completion certificates to 55 trainees. The one-week course was jointly organized by Seikmu Village and Township Red Cross Brigades.

MMAL-Soe Naing (Phakant) (Edited by Kerstin Winter)
US acts to keep minority, disabled students out of jail

WASHINGTON, 8 Jan — The Justice and Education departments unveiled guidelines on Wednesday to prevent schools from violating civil rights laws and keep students out of jail after data found minorities and the disabled were more likely than others to face discipline or arrest. Attorney General Eric Holder said the guidelines were aimed at giving direction to school law enforcement officers, protecting the civil rights of students, and keeping kids in the classroom.

“An iterative school disciplinary infraction should land a student in the principal’s office, not in a police precinct,” Holder said in a statement. The guidelines came after the Justice Department sued Mississippi state and local officials in 2012 over what it called a “school-to-prison pipeline” that violated the rights of children, especially black and disabled youths.

The lawsuit contended that police in Meridian, Mississippi, routinely ar- rested suspended students even when they lacked probable cause to believe they had committed a crime. The district agreed in March 2013 to change how it disciplined students.

The guidelines’ principles call for improving school environments by training staff, engaging families and teaching students how to resolve conflicts.

They also urged schools to understand their obligations under civil rights laws, and the package outlines a host of federal resources regarding school discipline.

In an accompanying letter, Education Secretary Arne Duncan wrote that department data show black students were three times more likely than whites to be suspended or expelled.

Although students with disabilities make up 12 percent of US students, they are 19 percent of students who are suspended and almost a quarter of those get- ting a school-related arrest.

"We are also inviting all the leaders from the MSG countries to visit Indonesia to build closer relations and allow better cooperation between these ministers," Sulistiyo said.

Fiji is taking a lead role in establishing the acad- emy, which will be based in Fiji to train police officers from the five Melanesian Spearhead Group countries, said the Ministry of Information.

While thanking the In- donesian government for the assistance, Bainimarama said it would go towards the establishment of an academy designed to boost the region’s police force.

Sulistiyo said the assistance is a firm commit- ment of the Indonesian peo- ple towards the Melanesian Spearhead Group in the es- tablishment of the regional police academy.

"We are also inviting all the leaders from the MSG countries to visit Indonesia to build closer relations and allow better cooperation between these ministers," Sulistiyo said.

US Attorney General Eric Holder speaks on stage during the annual meeting of the American Bar Association in San Francisco, California on 12 Aug, 2013.—Reuters

Indonesia donates 500,000 USD to Fiji-based Regional Police academy

SUVA, 8 Jan — Indo-nesia donated 500,000 USD dollars on Wednesday to the soon to be established Fiji-based Melanesian Spearhead Group’s (MSG) Regional Police Academy, the Fijian government an- nounced.

Fijian Prime Minis- ter Voreqe Bainimarama received the donation on behalf of the Melanesian Spearhead Group from the Indonesian government’s Secretary of Coordinating Ministry for Political, Legal and Security Affairs Lieu-tenant General Langeng Sulistiyo, who led a del- egation to meet with Bainimarama at his office, ac- cording to the Ministry of Information.

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As an intergovernmen- tal organization, the Mela- nesian Spearhead Group consists of Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Is- lands, Vanuatu, as well as the Kanak and Socialist National Liberation Front ( FLNKS) of New Caledo- nia.—Xinhua

Albania’s 2014 budget raises police salaries to improve security

TIRANA, 8 Jan — Alba- nia’s 2014 budget provides higher salaries for police officers in a bid to improve the country’s security and law and order situations.

The 2014 state budget includes a 20-25 percent pay raise for most of the state police officers starting from 1 January, the official news agency ATA reported on Tuesday.

The budget allo- cated for state police has increased 14 percent, according to budget figures from the interior ministry.

Official statistics show that salaries of Al- bania’s state police offic- ers were among the lowest among its neigh- bouring countries such as Macedonia.

Albanian Interior Minister Saimir Tahiri ex- pressed the wish that the salary increase could trans- late into greater safety of Albanian citizens. —Xinhua

Syria ships out first batch of chemical weapons materials

People inspect a site hit by what ac- tivists said was an airstrike by forces loyal to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad in the Duma neighbour- hood of Damascus on 7 Jan, 2014.—Reuters

Syria has started moving chemi- cal weapons materials out of the country in a crucial phase of an international- ally backed disarmament programme that has been delayed by war and techni- cal problems.

The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons said on Tuesday that “priority chemical ma- terials” were transported to the port of Latakia and onto a Danish vessel which was now sailing towards inter- national waters.

Syria agreed to aban- don its chemical weapons by June under a deal pro- posed by Russia and agreed with the United States after an 21 August sarin gas at- tack that Western nations blamed on President Bashar al-Assad’s forces. Damas- cus blames rebels for the attack.

"We have no reason to be doing this," State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki told a news briefing, add- ing: “We have no reason to believe that the regime has gone back on any aspect of their promise.” —Reuters
Indonesia continues modernization of its air force

JAKARTA, 8 Jan — Indonesia will continue to beef up its air force by purchasing more modern warplanes to replace its ageing F-5 Tiger E/F multirole fighter jets that have been serving for more than 30 years. Two planes remain in service from a total of 12 single and double-seat ones that Indonesia procured from the US producer Northrop in early 1980s.

Indonesian Defence Minister Parniwe Yusgiantoro disclosed on Tuesday that the fighter jet considered to replace F-5 Tiger should be able to carry out tactical tasks, and launch long-range missiles.

“I have advised them to consider on airworthiness and technical capabity aspects to pick the most suitable plane to replace the F-5 Tiger,” the minister said on the sidelines of a meeting with senior military officers. Indonesian air force planned to procure one squadron of brand new warplanes with delivery expected to take place in the second military’s 5-year strategic plan (Renstra) period from 2015 to 2020.

During the first Renstra period from 2010 to 2014, Indonesia allocated a total of 12.4 billion US dollars to finance modernization of its military, including the procurement of new fighter jets for the air force. Indonesian air force now operates one squadron of Sukhoi 2730 fleet whose delivery from Russia was completed last year.

Deliveries of other planes included Super Tucano from Brazil, KT-1 Wong Bee and T-30 Golden Eagle from South Korea and Grob G120 from Germany.

Indonesia is also expecting the delivery of 24 refurbished F-16 fighter jets granted by the United States. Indonesian military commander General Moeldoko said on Monday that the military planned to strengthen the air force by purchasing more weaponry.

The commander has said that Sukhoi SU-35 and F-16 were among the options. Indonesian military sources are expected to meet by mid-April to discuss the national budget and other policies.

Indonesia eyes proposal for faster recovery of WWII remains of Japan soldiers

TOKYO, 8 Jan — The ruling Liberal Democratic Party is planning legislation to designate retrieval of the remains of Japanese who died in World War II as “a state responsibility” and accelerate the work toward the 75th anniversary in 2020 of Japan’s surrender.

Under the legislation, the party is set to propose, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s LDP aims to increase the number of specialized staff at Japanese diplomatic missions abroad to beef up information gathering and allocate more funds for the project.

It comes as the lack of coordination among relevant ministries and insufficient funding have been blamed for hampering efforts to retrieve remains, even as the aging of information about burial sites has made it more difficult to gather relevant information.

The legislation would call for appointing a state minister in charge of the recovery work, and encourage further involvement by the foreign and defence ministries in the project to collect remains in hard-fought battlefields such as in the Philippines and Iwo To Island in the Pacific.

About 2.4 million Japanese soldiers and civilians died in Japan and abroad during World War II. The remains of around 1.13 million were still unearthed at the end of March last year.

An estimated 600,000 can be recovered, according to data by the Health, Labour and Welfare Ministry.

The health ministry has been mainly taking charge of the recovery activities after Cabinet approval in 1952, but critics have argued that the lack of firm legal ground for the project has led the retrieval to be snarled.

The ministry data show the remains of up to 2,000 war dead were collected each year in fiscal 2011 and 2012.

The LDP initially planned to submit similar legislation in the extraordinary Diet session that ended in December, but postponed it to hammer out details.

N Korea to hold parliamentary election in March

BEIJING, 8 Jan — North Korea said on Wednesday it will hold a parliamentary election in March, the first since leader Kim Jong Un inherited power after the death of his father Kim Jong II in late 2011. The election is likely to help Kim, who is believed to have turned 31 already made by the ruling Workers’ Party. The commander said the election will be closely watched as it will likely provide some hints of any shift in the country’s elite structure.

It is possible that many members of the assembly will be replaced following the purge and the execution of Jang Song Thaek, who had been considered the country’s second-most powerful figure.

Jang, who had been seen as a guardian of Kim, was described by the leader as “filth” in his New Year’s address. Kim also said that the elimination of his uncle bolstered the country’s unity “by 100 times.”

New assembly members are expected to meet by mid-April to discuss the national budget and other policies.

Thai caretaker PM says coup out of picture

BANGKOK, 8 Jan — Thai caretaker Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra said on Tuesday that the military would not stage a coup to end the current political tumult. Commanders of all armed forces have learned lessons from the past and they will consider long-term repercussions of a coup, Yingluck was quoted by Bangkok Post as saying. The best solution lies in talks, she added.

Yingluck and the top military brass still talk regularly and they trust each other, according to PM’s Secretary-General Suranand Vejajiva. Suranand said he believed the military leaders would not consider staging a coup. Army chief Prayuth Chan-ocha on Tuesday pleaded for no violence during the planned operation to shut down Bangkok on 13 January, saying that the government would be held accountable if violence occurs.

Seven killed in fire on train in western India

NEW DELHI, 8 Jan — At least seven people, including one woman, were charred to death in a major fire which broke out on an express train in the western Indian state of Maharashtra in the early hours of Wednesday, a senior police official said.

“The fire broke out in three coaches of Bandra-Dehradun Express near Dahanu in the state’s Thane district. The fire started in one coach and soon spread to two other compartments. The passengers were all sleeping when the fire started,” he said, on condition of anonymity.

While several people died on the spot, several others escaped the fleeing compartment and rushed to local hospital, the official said. A probe has been ordered into the incident, he added.

Passengers are seen aboard a train heading for Xi’an at Hangzhou Railway Station in Hangzhou, capital of east China’s Zhejiang Province, on 7 Jan, 2014. Immigrants workers in Zhejiang started to leave for home ahead of the upcoming China’s Spring Festival travel rush, during when passenger volume in Zhejiang will reach 220 million according to estimation. XINHUA

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A Russian contestant makes an ice sculpture during the 28th China Harbin International Ice Sculpting Contest in Harbin, capital of northeast China’s Heilongjiang Province, on 7 Jan, 2014. —XINHUA

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The government will reach 220 million each year in fiscal 2011 and 2012.

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Drunk Drivers to face severe punishments in Poland

WARSAW, 8 Jan — The Polish government will tighten punishments on drunk driving by raising fines and bring repeat offenders to jail, local media reported on Tuesday.

The decision was made after two fatal accidents had occurred since Christmas holidays involving drunk drivers, including one repeat offender that had killed six people in drunk driving on the New Year’s Day in northwest Poland.

Five dead at Beijing construction site

BEIJING, 8 Jan — Five construction workers were killed after they fell from a scaffolding in Beijing on Tuesday, local authorities announced on Wednesday.

The accident happened at about 3 pm at a construction site in Tongzhou District in eastern Beijing as the five workers fell from the sixth floor when the scaffolding leaned, sources with the district government told Xinhua.

All the workers died after emergency treatment failed by 9 pm Tuesday night. The Beijing Administration of Work Safety has launched an investigation into the cause of the accident. Work at the construction site has been halted for rectification, said the local authorities who have launched safety checkpoints targeted all construction sides in the district.—Xinhua

Beijing Zoo Market to be relocated

BEIJING, 8 Jan — In order to improve the city’s downtown functions, as well as relieve its overcrowding and traffic jams, Beijing has decided to transfer several of the area’s wholesale and distribution venues. The well-known Zoo Market is also on the waiting list.

The Zoo Market, a massive wholesale market located near the Beijing Zoo, will move out of the city’s downtown area and its wholesale industry will be transformed into retail business, exhibition and e-commerce venues. Its new site and exact timetable for the relocation have not been confirmed yet.

The relocation of the Zoo Market is part of the industrial upgrading planning taking place in the downtown area, but does not mean that a transfer plan makes for a one-size-fits-all policy, one official with the local government said during a press conference on Tuesday.

Key words of the industrial upgrading in this area include “transformation, adjustment, removal and merger.”

According to statistics published in early 2013, there were about 13,000 booths located in the Zoo Market, and more than 30,000 employees, with a daily customer flow of more than 100,000.

The relocation is so complicated that a timetable is not yet available at this moment, said the official, but market research and policy studies are ongoing for the transfer plan.

The low-end warehousing industry of yet another wholesale market in the Dahongmen area will also be moved out of the city centre.—Xinhua

In newly solvent California, Dems propose free preschool

Sacramento, 8 Jan — A top California lawmaker unveiled a $1 billion proposal on Tuesday to fund free preschool for all children in the most populous US state, the latest challenge by Democratic leaders to fiscal restraints imposed by Governor Jerry Brown.

The plan by Senate Democratic leader Darrell Steinberg to offer pre-kindergarten to California 4-year-olds comes as he and other Democratic lawmakers try to push Brown to raise spending on social services, including education, in next year’s budget.

The era of cutting education in California is over,” Steinberg told a news conference at a Sacramento elementary school. “The issue is, how can we prudently invest?”

He said children who attend high quality preschools do markedly better throughout their educations, are more likely to attend college and less likely to commit crimes as adults.

The proposal marks the latest effort by democratic lawmakers to stake out progressive political ground at a time when Brown, also a Democrat, has charted a more centrist path. A similar plan is under consideration in the state assembly backed by Democratic Speaker John Perez, a spokesman said.

16 Colombian rebels surrender to government

BOGOTA, 8 Jan — Sixteen members of the rebel Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) turned themselves in to the military in the latest group surrender, the navy said on Tuesday.

The insurgents surrendered on the outskirts of the southwestern town of Tumaco, the navy said in a statement, adding that the group decided to lay down their weapons after their leader, known as “Marcos Lata,” was captured in December.

“At the time of their voluntary surrender, the (rebels) handed over an AK-47 rifle, a ‘chango’ (homemade weapon), two revolvers, 356 cartridges of different calibers, and a boat with two engines,” the statement said.

The navy added that among the 16 was a man going by the alias “El Bur- ro,” who claimed to be in charge of recruiting young people for FARC’s Daniel Aldana faction.

The group “was also responsible for gathering information on the activities of the security forces in Tumaco,” the navy said.

According to Colombian authorities, around 1,200 guerrillas surrendered last year. The president, Juan Manuel Santos urged insurgent groups to demobilize and rejoin civilian life.

The Colombian government and FARC began peace talks in November 2012 in the Cuban capital of Havana, seeking an agreement that will end the half-century-old armed conflict.—Xinhua

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Shakira to Debut New Duet With Rihanna

Rihanna posted a promotional photo on Instagram with the caption "One Week. Countdown." Shakira took to Twitter with the graphic and announced the song’s release date in two languages. "Can’t Remember to Forget You" will be available on 13 January as the first single off of Shakira’s inaugural album with Sony label RCA, which is also her first since 2010’s Sale el Sol. She has said in an interview that the still-unnamed project is dedicated to Spanish soccer player Gerard Piqué, her partner and the father of her son Milan, reports Billboard.

Shakira tweeted on 8 December that the music video for the then-mysterious single was directed by Joseph Kahn, who also helmed Mariah Carey and Miguel’s "Beautiful," as well as "Love the Way You Lie" by Eminem and Rihanna. The singer’s track release also comes just before she returns to The Voice, which is back for a sixth season on 24 February.— PTI

Director Campion to head Cannes film jury

PARIS, 8 Jan — Oscar-winning New Zealand director Jane Campion will head the jury for the 67th Cannes film festival in May, the festival announced on Tuesday. Campion, who won an Oscar for best screenplay for her 1993 film "The Piano" and is the only woman ever to win the top Cannes prize, the Palme d’or, for that same film, succeeds US director Steven Spielberg, who headed the jury last year.

"I am truly honoured to join with the Cannes Film Festival as president of the in-competition features for 2014," Campion said in a statement issued by the festival. "In fact I can’t wait."

"Since I first went to Cannes with my short films in 1986 I have had the opportunity to see the festival from many sides and my admiration for this queen of film festivals has only grown larger," she said.

Campion lauded Cannes’ ability to celebrate the glamour of the film industry with its stars and parties while "rigorously maintaining the festival’s seriousness about the art and excellence of new world cinema.

In addition to "The Piano" winning the Palme d’or in 1993, the festival that year named Holly Hunter, who played opposite Harvey Keitel in the movie, best actress. Campion, who was born in Wellington and originally studied to be an anthropologist, started making short films in the 1980s and won the top Cannes prize for a short feature in 1986. Her first feature film was "Sweetie" (1989) followed by "An Angel at My Table" (1990) and "The Piano"— Reuters

Lily Tomlin marries longtime partner, collaborator Jane Wagner

LOS ANGELES, 8 Jan — Actress Lily Tomlin has married her longtime partner and comedy collaborator Jane Wagner, Tomlin’s publicist said on Tuesday.

Tomlin, 74, married Wagner, 78, on New Year’s Eve at a private ceremony in Los Angeles after 42 years of being together, Jennifer Allen said.

Same-sex marriage became legal again in California last June, after a US Supreme Court ruling that nullified a state ban on same-sex marriage.

"Love is love," Tomlin said in an interview that the still-unreleased project is dedicated to Spanish soccer player Gerard Piqué, her partner and the father of her son Milan, reports Billboard.

Sholay 3D, Mr Joe B Carvalho get lukewarm response at box office

MUMBAI, 8 Jan — This year’s new releases — 3D version of 1975 epic movie Sholay and Arshad Warsi-starrer comedy Mr Joe B Carvalho — received a lukewarm response from the audience.

"The response to Sholay 3D was alright. The occupancy was between 60 percent and 70 percent. There were people who turned up with their families and got nostalgic. They were happy to see it in 3D format," Gautam Dutta, COO, PVR Cinemas, told IANS.

"The film, which also stars Soha Ali Khan and Jaaved Jaffrey, was made at a budget of Rs 10 crore and was released on 1,100 screens in the country. "It must have earned more than Rs 2 crore in the country. Maybe, the fact that it wasn’t released in South India its business was affected," said Thada-

"Dutta says the occupancy was between 65 percent and 70 percent for the Samir Tiwari directed fun film. "Big movies like Dhoom:3 had around 90 percent occupancy on most of the days. Mr Joe B Carvalho had between 65 per-

"cent and 70 percent, so it did fine," added Dutta.— PTI

Warner Bros in talks with Dutch production firm Eyeworks

AMSTERDAM, 8 Jan — Time Warner’s (TWX:N) Warner Bros division is in talks to buy Dutch television production company Eyeworks, Dutch media reported on Tuesday, giving no details of the value of the deal or sources.

Eyeworks produces and distributes entertainment programmes in 16 countries for more than 100 television channels, its website says, and has 1,500 staff. The bulk of its operations are in Europe but it is also active in Argentina, Chile, Brazil, the United States, New Zealand and Australia.

Its most successful international titles include Test The Nation, Who Wants to Marry my Son?, Beat The Blondes, Reality Queens of the Jungle and I Know What You Did Last Friday.— Reuters

Security guards stand at the entrance of the Warner Bros beach during the annual MIPCOM television programme market in Cannes, southeastern France, in this 4 Oct, 2010 file photo.— Reuters
Advantage Sunderland as Man United lose again

LONDON, 8 Jan — Sunderland gained the upper hand on Manchester United by deservedly winning their League Cup semi-final, first leg 2-1 on Tuesday to intensify the pressure on visiting manager David Moyes after a testing week.

Italian Fabio Borini scored a second-half penalty to give the Premier League’s bottom club a one-goal lead ahead of the return at Old Trafford after a 52nd minute Nemanja Vidic header cancelled out Ryan Giggs’s own goal in first-half stoppage time.

It was United’s third straight defeat after they were beaten at home in the FA Cup third round by Swansea City on Sunday.

Devastated Vonn out of Sochi Games with injury

NEW YORK, 8 Jan — Olympic downhill champion Lindsey Vonn, one of the biggest attractions in winter sport, will miss next month’s Sochi Games because she requires surgery on her injured knee.

The 29-year-old American broke the news on her Facebook page on Tuesday.

“I am devastated to announce I will not be able to compete in Sochi,” said Vonn, the girlfriend of world No. 1 golfer Tiger Woods.

“I did everything I possibly could to somehow get strong enough to overcome having no ACL (anterior cruciate ligament) but the reality has sunk in that my knee is just too unstable to compete at this level.”

Vonn, a four-times overall World Cup champion and the standout name in women’s Alpine skiing, badly injured her right knee in a world championship super-G in February.

She hurt her knee again while training for the season-opening World Cup downhill at Beaver Creek, Colorado but appeared to be back on track after racing at Lake Louise, Alberta.

Vonn then travelled with the US team to Europe and, with Woods watching her for the first time at a World Cup race, injured her knee once more in Val d’Isere, France.

“It was Tiger’s first time at a World Cup race and I was really hoping to win my 60th as a present for him,” said Vonn who with 59 victories in the competition is three short of the women’s record held by Austrian Annemarie Moser-Proell.

Vonn still believed she could recover in time for Sochi, aiming to compete at her fourth straight Olympics, but faced the grim reality on Tuesday.

“The accident in Val d’Isere [an MRI showed an MCL (medial collateral ligament) sprain which, coupled with the torn ACL, has made it impossible to stabilise her knee and be ready to safely ski again next month],” Vonn’s public relations team said in a statement.

“She will have surgery shortly and is expected to make a full recovery in time for the 2014-15 World Cup season and the 2015 world championship.”

Simpson’s father in Sydney despite ban

SYDNEY, 8 Jan — The presence of his banned father watching from court-side boosted Bernard Tomić’s game as he opened the defence of his Sydney International title with a 6-3, 6-0 demolition of eighth seed Marcel Granollers on Tuesday.

Having my dad there is a very good feeling,” Tomic told reporters after the victory over his Spanish opponent.

“Obviously winning my first title here gives a lot of memories to me. I think it’s the way I played today. Having my dad there for the first time in a while, it’s good.”

“I know his ban will finish soon, in a few months, and back to helping me. I’m happy. I played very good. I’m happy to be back playing like this.”

Former taxi driver John Tomic has not watched his son play since he was banned last May from all ATP events, which includes next week’s Australian Open, after he was charged with headbutting his son’s former training partner Frenchman Thomas Drouet and breaking his nose.

He was convicted and sentenced to eight months’ imprisonment by a Spanish court for assault last September although he was not required to serve jail time because his sentence was under two years in length.

While he is banned from receiving accreditation, which entitles him to international events, he was allowed to buy a ticket as a member of the public at the discretion of the tournament director.

Simpson says trainer to blame for positive test

KINGSTON, 8 Jan — Jamaican sprinter Sherrone Simpson, who tested positive for a banned substance last year, told a disciplinary panel on Tuesday that she saw no “red flags” before taking a supplement supplied by her trainer.

Simpson, who faces a two-year ban if found guilty of a doping violation, testified in front of a three-member panel for over three hours and said a supplement provided by her Canadian trainer was responsible for her positive test.

Simpson was one of five Jamaicans to test positive at last June’s national championships. Both she and former world 100m record holder Asafa Powell returned adverse findings for the banned substance oxilofrine.

The Olympic 4x100m relay silver medalist said she was not familiar with one of the five supplements given to her but that nothing on the bottle of Ephapony D1 appeared during her online search of the World Anti-Doping Agency’s banned list. “No alarm bell. No red flag,” told the panel.

But a lawyer for the Jamaican Anti-Doping Commission said that there is no evidence to suggest
UN chief welcomes progress in effort to eliminate chemical weapons in Syria

UNITED NATIONS, 8 Jan — UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on Tuesday welcomed the progress made in the process of removing Syria’s most critical chemical weapons material outside of the country. Ban’s spokesperson issued a statement after the UN chief was informed by the Joint Mission of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the United Nations that further progress has been made towards the removal and eliminations of Syrian chemical weapons programme.

Earlier on Tuesday, OPCW-UN Special Coordinator Sigrid Kaag announced that a first shipment of chemical materials has been moved from Syria, which initiated the process of transferring chemical weapons from the country to locations outside its territory for destruction.

Ban commented in the statement the special coordinator and her team for their steadfast work in challenging circumstances.

Xinhua

Libya autonomy groups vow to sell oil from seized ports, challenges Tripoli

Tripoli/London, 8 Jan — A heavily armed autonomy group in eastern Libya said on Tuesday it would invite foreign companies to buy oil from seized ports and protect arriving tankers, challenging Tripoli which has promised to use force to stop them.

The announcement came just hours after Libya’s defense ministry said it would destroy any tankers loading oil from eastern ports in the Cyrenaica region which are under control of the armed protesters.

The escalation adds to chaos as the weak Tripoli government struggles to rein in armed groups that helped ousted Muammar Gaddafi in 2011 but kept their guns to demand power and a bigger slice of the country’s oil wealth. The conflict is hurting oil revenues, which fund the OPEC nation’s government and the import of wheat and other crucial food. The government has warned it will be unable to pay public salaries if the standoff continues, risking more turmoil.

On Monday, Libya’s navy said it had shot at a tanker trying to load oil at the eastern Es-Sider port which was seized with two other terminals by the autonomy group in August. The three harbors accounted previously for 600,000 barrels a day. But the group, led by tribal leader and 2011 civil war hero Ibrahim Jathran, shrugged off Tripoli’s warning by inviting foreign companies to buy eastern oil.

“ We welcome global companies to do business with the navy security guards will guarantee the safety of tankers,” said Abd-Rabbo al-Barassi, prime minister of Jathran’s self-declared eastern government. Workers at the seized ports had returned to work, he said, without giving details on when they had left. He added that a newly founded oil company called Libya Oil and Gas Corp would be dealing with potential buyers. A new army and coast guard, made up of Jathran’s battle-hardened fighters, would secure the ports.

Barassi said his group had nothing to do with the tanker shot at by a Libyan navy vessel on Sunday on its way to Es-Sider. Tripoli has said the tanker had been bound to load oil at the seized port, but Barassi called this statement a “lie.”

Reuters

Valencia strike late to hold Atletico in Cup

The Belgium international, on loan from Chelsea, then denied Pablo Piatti in the 82nd before producing possibly his best stop of the night a minute later from Feghouli’s close-range blast. It looked as if Diego Simeone’s Atlético side, who are level with Barcelo-

Maikro, 8 Jan — Valencia forward Hedler Postiga headed an equaliser in the final minute of added time to snatch a 1-1 draw at home to Thibaut Courtois when he was on hand to send a mis-hit Sofiane Feghouli cross into the net from close range after 93 minutes.

In new coach Juan Antonio Pizzi’s second game in charge, a fired-up Valencia dominated possession at the Mestalla but fell behind when a fluffed clearance by keeper Vicente Guaita fell to midfielder Garcia.

Garcia also had Atleti’s first real effort on goal when a brilliant save from Courtois denied him.

Courtois made three more brilliant saves as Valencia pressed for an equaliser, first leaping to tip a curling effort from substitute Sergio Canales around the post in the 76th minute.

After Raul Garcia had nestled the visitors ahead in the 72nd minute, Portugal forward Postiga finally beat inspired keeper Thibaut Courtois when he was on hand to send a mis-hit Sofiane Feghouli cross into the net from close range after 93 minutes.

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Garcia also had Atletico’s best chance of the first half but his rising effort was well saved by Guaita, while Valencia’s Jan Berntsen drew a fine save from Courtois with a low drive seven minutes after the break.

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VALENCIA, 7 Jan, 2014.—REUTERS

Valencia’s Helder Postiga celebrates after he scored against Atletico Madrid during their Spanish King’s Cup soccer match at the Mestalla stadium in Valencia, on 7 Jan, 2014.—REUTERS

R/489 Printed and published by the New Light of Myanmar press in Nay Pyi Taw, the News and Periodicals Enterprise, Ministry of Information.
Preparations for holding ninth regular session of Hluttaw discussed

NAY PYI TAW, 8 Jan—As the Myanmar parliament convenes for its ninth regular session this month, a coordination meeting was held on 8 January to discuss the successful organization of the session.

Chairman of the Leading Committee Speaker of Amyotha Hluttaw U Khin Aung Myint explained the ongoing processes for the upcoming Hluttaw meetings.

The secretory of the central committee presented a report on plans to set up the work committees, with Union Ministers Lt.-Gen Ko Ko, U Aung Kyi, U Nyan Tun Aung, U Than Htay, Dr Pe Thet Khin, U Htay Aung and U Kyaw Lwin and departmental heads reported on preparations for organizing the Hluttaw sessions.

The meeting was also attended by the Deputy Speaker of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw and Pyithu Hluttaw U Nanda Kyaw Swa, (See page 8)

Third day of gems sale in Nay Pyi Taw attracts more merchants

NAY PYI TAW, 8 Jan— The third day of Myanmar Gems Emporium which will last till 10 January at Mani Yadana Jade Hall continued here today as jade lots are being auctioned.

Of the 157 gem lots on offer, 104 could sell through an open bidding system. Bidding for the utility jade lots has started and the winners will be announced on 9 January.

Bids for a total of 2,839 utility jade lots were registered from 6-9 January and the winners will be announced on 10 January. Patron of the Myanmar Gems and Jewellery Entrepreneurs Association Union Minister for Mines Dr Myint Aung and Deputy Minister U Than Tun Aung inspected the utility jade and gem lots and offered their support for the auction.

Tickets for 7th ASEAN Para Games available soon

NAY PYI TAW, 8 Jan—Tickets for opening and closing ceremonies of the 7th ASEAN Para Games will be available at Accreditation Center of Wunna Theikdi Stadium here. The tickets for opening ceremony will be sold starting 1st January and closing ceremony, as of 15 January. The citizenship scrutiny card is required to purchase tickets and a person can buy two tickets.

Under five year old children are allowed to enjoy the ceremonies free of charge. Opening and closing ceremony tickets are also valid for games. Accreditation cards of the audience for respective sports events will be sold starting 8 January at Accreditation Center of Wunna Theikdi Stadium.

Byline: Linlet Kyei Sinn

“It can be said that the water level at Chindwin River declines speedier this year than last year. We take care of steering the watercrafts near Chindwin Bridge along the water course. Now, the ships cannot anchor at Mingin of Sagaing Region due to the emergence of sandbanks in the river. Only skilled coxswain can navigate the ship safely,” said a coxswain from Ngwesino Ship.

Kyaemon: 7-1-2014

Trx: TTA (Edited by Kerstin Winter)

Correction

Please read “Kabaw” instead of “Bamaw” on third line of last paragraph in 6th column on page 16 under the title of “Myanmar, India to solve demarcation issue amicably” in this daily issued on 8-1-2014. Error is regretted.—NLM

Statement No. 1/2014 of Myanmar National Human Rights Commission on Presidential Order of Pardon

1. The Myanmar National Human Rights Commission whole-heartedly welcomes the issuance of Presidential Pardon under order No. 5/1 2013 dated 30 December 2013 of the President Office.

2. The Committee for Scrutinizing the Remaining Political Prisoners comprising 19 Members from government organizations, civil society organizations and political parties issued its work progress report by Press Release (1/2013) dated 31 December 2013 and the Commission recognizes the efforts of the Committee.

3. The President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar mentioned, in his speech delivered to the people over the radio on 2 January, 2014, that he acted in keeping with his promise to release all political prisoners by the end of 2013. The implementation by the President of his promise conforms with the notion that there should be no such people as political prisoners in democratization process.

4. The Myanmar National Human Rights Commission had submitted open letters to the President two times to seriously consider the granting of amnesty to those who had been imprisoned in various prisons in Myanmar and to release them from those prisons. Those open letters were issued on 10 October and 12 November 2011 respectively. After the submission of appeals by the Commission, the President, through a Presidential announcement order, reduced the prison terms of some prisoners and released the prisoners from various prisons. The Myanmar National Human Rights Commission, in its Statement issued on 14 January 2012, welcomed the release of prisoners and strongly urged those who had been released from respective prisons to take part in building national unity and a democratic state peacefully and in whatever way they can in view of the President’s magnanimity.

5. Since the President granted the pardon in order to contribute to the stability of the state and the lasting peace, to build national reconciliation, to ensure all-inclusiveness in the political process and on humanitarian grounds, the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission wishes to strongly urge those who have been released from various prisons to contribute to the process in conformity with the objectives of the President.

6. As the Government is making efforts to build a democratic state, the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission would like to recommend that among the existing laws and provisions, the amending, revoking, strengthening and redrafting as necessary of the laws and provisions which may impede the democratization should be given serious consideration without endangering the stability of the State and the public peace and tranquility.

Myanmar National Human Rights Commission
Date: 3 January 2014

Passengers rely on waterway transport from Homalin to Monywa

Although everybody has easy access to Homalin, which is located in the upper area of Sagaing Region in the northwest of the nation through aviation and waterway transport, most of the people rely on their travels to the town by boat along the Chindwin River.

The local producers transport rice, betel leaves, tomatoes, construction materials, personal goods, cosmetics, textiles, and other goods to their customers from Monywa and Mandala via the waterway. Likewise, their trade partners send mats and baskets made of bamboo to these regions.

Several ships run daily along the waterway of the Chindwin River from Homalin to Monywa. Transport charges for ordinary classes range from K 6,000 to K 9,000 per passenger from Monywa to Kalewa, Mawlaik, Phaungpyin and Homalin and for the upper class, a ticket cost K 13,000 and K 15,000 to Phaungpyin and Homalin, respectively.

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“MNA (Edited by Kerstin Winter)