Two corridors of Mekong Subregion will surely contribute to regional development

Bangkok, 20 Dec—President U Thein Sein delivered a speech at the 5th Greater Mekong Subregion Summit in Bangkok on Saturday, saying Myanmar’s reform process has gained momentum since the last such summit was held and it is working closely with other GMS member countries and the global community to achieve further progress.

The president’s speech followed his arrival in the Thai capital on Friday evening and his participation in a gala dinner hosted by Thai Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha for the leaders of the five-nation GMS as well as Asian Development Bank President Takehiko Nakao.

The summit, held at the Shangri-La Hotel under the theme “Committed to the Shangri-La Hotel under development Bank President GMS as well as Asian De-

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Global Compact Network Myanmar sets ambitious plan of further expansion to 1000 plus members

By Ye Myint

Yangon, 20 Dec—Global Compact Network Myanmar hosted a summit with hope to expand its membership to more than 1,000, in Yangon on Saturday.

The United Nations Global Compact Summit celebrating the mobilization of GCN Myanmar took place at the office of Republic of the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RUMFCCI).

About 300 companies including ones listed as participants in the United Nations Global Compact, the world’s largest corporate citizenship and sustainability initiative, were brought to the summit and encouraged to participate in the initiative.

“It is our goal to mobilize over 10,000 companies in Myanmar to be UNGC participants”, said Professor Dr. Aung Tun Thet, presidential economic adviser and also chair of GCN Myanmar.

In his speech, the Professor described the role of the country’s private sector not only as the main engine for development, but also as drivers for the UN’s sustainable development goals to be set from 2015 onwards.

The economic adviser, who is also the member of Myanmar Investment Commission, said all companies investing in Myanmar have to adopt corporate social responsibility initiatives and he called for at least 10 new recruits from each GCN Myanmar member.

“Let’s do well in business, at the same time, let’s do good for ourselves, the country and its people”, he said. Founded with a membership of 14 companies on 1 May 2012, the UN Global Compact Network Myanmar had grown to 152 participants in the UNGC initiative in 2014. Business participants are required to issue an annual Communication on Progress (COP) on progress made in implementing the Global Compact’s 10 principles in the areas of human rights, labour, the environment and anticorruption.

Beta release of Myanmar TTS engine projected in six months

By Khaing Thanda Lwin

Yangon, 20 Dec—A local non-profit organization on Saturday introduced its new project to build a Myanmar Text To Speech Engine (MyTTS), aiming to help people with poor or blurry vision with their learning.

With the financial assistance of the Kanbawza Group (KBZ), the Myanmar Christian Fellowship of the Blind (MCFB) is developing the speech engine that suits the window operating system.

Ma Thin Zar Myo, who leads a team of software developers, said that plans are underway to release a free beta version to the public in six months, expecting it to emerge as the first open source engine in Myanmar by the end of 2015.

Myanmar Text To Speech (TTS) engine (MyTTS), aiming to help people with poor or blurry vision with their learning.

He added that the text reader will benefit all users including people with reading disabilities and pre-literate children to learn the Myanmar language, noting that the creation will empower other software vendors who want to integrate it with their applications.

The KBZ group has pumped over K96 million into the project, with the official saying that the group has pledged more voluntary contributions to other development projects in the future.

(See page 3)
Float hotel to attract tourists in Mandalay

Nay Pyi Taw, 20 Dec—Mandalay Karaweik floating hotel will be commissioned into service in the near future. A restaurant was opened at the floating hotel on 19 December. The Happy New Year party will be held on board the hotel in Ayeyawady River on 31 December night. Vocalists He Lay, Nyan Lin Aung, Kaung Kaung and Yadana Mai will present hit songs on the occasion, according to managing director U Tun Tun. The floating hotel is a three-Decker. The top deck can be used as a wedding hall that can give 250 seats to the guests. The first and second decks comprise four suites, three family rooms and 32 double rooms.

The rooms are rented at US$ 120 per foreigner and K70,000 per citizens.

Basic education students join extempore talks contest

Sittway, 20 Dec—No 1 Department of Basic Education under the Ministry of Education and Sky Net (Education Channel) jointly organized the extempore talks contest and general knowledge quiz in commemoration of the 40th anniversary of Rakhine State Day in Sittway on 19 December.

Six students from basic education high schools participated in the extempore talks contest. Moreover, students participated in the general knowledge quiz. Rakhine State minister for social affairs Dr Aung Kyaw Min presented one set of Sky Net receiver to participant students.

Plan to vaccinate measles, German measles to people in 2015

Nay Pyi Taw, 20 Dec—A meeting to vaccinate measles and German measles to the people in January and February 2015 across the nation was held at the hall of Pyinmana Township People’s Hospital (200-bed) in Nay Pyi Taw Council Area on 19 December.

Member of Nay Pyi Taw Council Professor Dr Paing Soe explained vaccination for measles and German measles and dissemination of health knowledge to the people. National Consultant Dr La Win Maung of WHO discussed outbreaks of these two diseases in the world and the country.

Head of Nay Pyi Taw Health Department Dr Daw Hla Hla Kyi reported on plans to give vaccinations to the people in the council area.—Shwe Kokko

Boxing challenge marks Kayin New Year Day 2014

Myeik, 20 Dec—In commemoration of the Kayin New Year Day 2014, the Myanmar traditional boxing challenge was kicked off at a gymnasium in Myeik, the capital of Taninthayi Region, on 18 December afternoon.

Boxers from Myeik, Dawei and Kawthoung districts participated in the challenge. The challenge included special matches of famous boxers and ordinary matches of traditional boxers from 18 to 20 December.

Khaing Htoo (Myeik District IPRD)
Two corridors of Mekong . . .

(from page 1)

US$51.5 billion covering 10 development areas, ranging from energy and agriculture to environment, human resources development, urban development, tourism, and transport and trade facilitation, among others. At the sidelines of the summit attended by President U Thein Sein, prime ministers of Thailand, Cambodia, China, Laos, Vietnam, the leader of Thailand suggested some plans to be carried in the region, including establishment of special border economic zones along the economic corridors, the development of infrastructures for trading routes, facilitation of cross-border trade, investment and environmental conservation efforts.

U Win Aung, president of the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry, explained a statement of GMS Economic Forum and handed over the chairmanship of that group to Cambodia.—MNA

ECF Ministry, Finland university discuss human resource development

NAY PSI TAW, 20 Dec—Union Minister for Environmental Conservation and Forestry U Win Tun held talks with Professor Dr. Ari Pappinen and party of University of Eastern Finland of Finland at the ministry, here, on Friday.

They discussed forestry management in Myanmar, human resource development of University of Forestry, reforestation of the University of Eastern Finland and its cooperation with international community in generating energy from recycle of waste. They also focused on exchange of post-graduate students and faculty members among the ministry and University of Eastern Finland in the future, and prospects of cooperation in using gasifier to generate energy from recycling wastes.—MNA

Designation of minimum wage rates discussed

NAY PSI TAW, 20 Dec—The Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security held a meeting to discuss the designation of minimum wages on 18 December, sources said.

The union minister told the meeting that the government passed the Minimum Wage Law in July last year alongside related rules and regulations, adding that a national committee has been formed to designate minimum wage in five steps.

In the first step, the national committee formed subcommittees to quicken its operations, with the union minister saying that the second step involved holding seminars between employers and employees under the auspices of the government in cooperation with the Myanmar Development Research Institute and the International Labour Organization. According to the union minister, the third step deals with submitting reasonable wages to respective committees, while the fourth step requires the national committee to publish the outcomes for public observation for 60 days.

As for the fifth step, the national committee will put forward the proposed minimum wage rates to the government for approval. The union minister called for full participation and frank discussions in designating minimum wages.—MNA
**Myanmar Parliamentary Union meets**

**Nay Pyi Taw, 20 Dec** — Myanmar Parliamentary Union held a meeting to boost cooperation between Pyidaungsu Hluttaw and Region/State Hluttaw and enhance parliamentary capacity building on Saturday.

The meeting took place at Zabuthiri Hall of Hluttaw Complex in Nay Pyi Taw, with Speaker of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Thura U Shwe Mann who also the chair of the MPU delivering an address.

**Myanmar film industry development discussed**

**Yangon, 20 Dec** — Myanmar Motion Picture Development Department held talks with Myanmar Motion Picture Organization on development of the country’s film industry at the department in Yangon on Saturday.

Clarifying procedures set by the department on 1 December 2014 for responsible persons to adhere in making a movie, Director-General U Thein Aung of the department assured that there is no plan to re-activate the four points that had been lifted since 10 December 2011.

Expressing thanks for easing restrictions on movie production, responsible persons of the organization called for continuation of relaxing restrictions for the development of the film industry.

In his speech, the Speaker highlighted the importance of a team spirit among respective parliaments and capacity building to be enhanced.

Next, Depute Speaker U Nanda Kyaw Swa, MPU secretary, made clarification of work progress. Then those present held discussions on draft constitution of the MPU and other matters.

The meeting came to an end with concluding remarks by the Speaker.

**Germany helps Myanmar’s small business to grow**

**Yangon, 20 Dec** — The Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Myanmar and the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ) are jointly conducting “Saturday SME Talks”, aiming to give incentives to small and medium enterprises in the country, officials said.

“The Saturday SME Talks” took place for the first time on 23 August this year, with a talk given by Prof Dr Aung Tun Thet under the topic “promoting entrepreneurship and innovative SMEs”. Germany has been helping Myanmar since 2012 with the development of its private, financial, technical, vocational sectors.

The third seminar is expected to come in March 2015.—MNA

**Roads in capital to be closed to rehearse for Grand Military Review on Independence Day**

**Nay Pyi Taw, 20 Dec**—The fivesection Yazatharni and Zayatharni roads in Zabuthiri Township here will be closed between 4 and 10 am on five days to have rehearsals of ceremonies on the 67th Independence Day parade and the Grand Military Review, which will be held on 4 January.

The announcement of the security committee for these ceremonies stated that the temporary closures of these road sections will happen on 24, 26, 27, 29 and 30 December, as well as on 1 January.

The blockade for the rehearsals will include the corner of headquarters of Ministry of Finance on Yazatharni Road, the intersection of this road near officer number 18, Zayatharni Road in front of the head office of Ministry of Transport, the section of Zayatharni Road near officer number 38 and the road between Kumudrakyarpan and Kyarpan roundabouts on Yazatharni Road.

The Security Committee has noticed drivers to use Yazathungha, Pamitta and Zawana roads during these days, instead of the aforementioned road sections.

**Beta release of Myanmar TTS engine**

The team has invited local and foreign software developers to join hands or offer their technical know-how in developing a similar speech engine that can run on any devices.

The team can be reached at 09 796339780 and 0932237791 or visited at my ttsengine@gmail.com or mcfb.yecb@gmail.com.

**Anti-narcotic task forces seize over K1 billion worth drugs, weapons in northern Shan State**

**Nay Pyi Taw, 20 Dec** — Anti-narcotics task forces in northern Shan State confiscated more than one billion kyat worth drugs and equipment used to make illegal drugs outside the Lawkai township Friday.

While stopping the two vehicles, the task forces found the illegal drugs, equipment, guns, ammunition, and the three suspects, identified as Shon Jin Wu aged 45, Shon Ta Ji 19 and Shon Ta Sae 19, were arrested.

The confiscation of ammunition included four guns, 132 bullets, six magazines and a China-made bomb, together with the anti-narcotic drugs and the substances to make the drugs, including acetic hydroxide, hydro chloric acid, sodium hydroxide, sodium carbonate, sulphuric acid, potassium chloride and other equipment.

The three suspects have been charged with anti-narcotic and psychotropic substances laws.

Photo: Khaing Thanda Lwin

**Kanbauza Group donates over K96 million to Myanmar Christian Fellowship of the Blind (MCFB), a local non-profit organization, to develop its text-to-speech engine in the Myanmar language.**—Photo: Khaing Thanda Lwin
India looks to sway Americans with nuclear power insurance plan

NEW DELHI, 20 Dec — India is offering to set up an insurance pool to indemnify global nuclear suppliers against liability in the case of a nuclear accident, such as the one at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant in Japan. The move is aimed at allaying US fears about liability law and nuclear equipment suppliers’ liability for damages from accidents, which companies say is a sharp deviation from international norms that put the onus on the operator to maintain safety. From the 1950s, when the United States was the only exporter of nuclear reactors, liability has been channelled to plant operators across the world. India’s national law grew out of the 1984 Bhopal gas disaster, the world’s deadliest industrial accident, at a factory owned by US multinational Union Carbide Corp which Indian families are still pursuing for compensation.

The law effectively shut out Western companies from a huge market, as energy-starved India seeks to ramp up nuclear power generation by 13 times, and also strained US-Indian relations since they reached a deal on nuclear cooperation in 2008. GE-Hitachi, an alliance between the US and Japanese firms, Toshiba’s (6502.T) Westinghouse Electric Company and France’s Areva (AREVA.PA) received a green light to build two reactors each. They have yet to begin construction several years later, after India’s Department of Atomic Energy. Even Indian suppliers refused to sell equipment until the law is amended or they can indemnify against any liabilities.

“We are working fast to address the concerns of suppliers. We are working on a solution with the insurance companies,” RK Sinha, Chairman of India’s Atomic Energy Commission, told Reuters.

“State-run reinsurer GIC Re is preparing a proposal to build a ‘nuclear insurance pool’ that would indemnify the third-party suppliers against liabilities they would face in the case of an accident.”

Under the plan, insurance would be bought by the companies contracted to build the nuclear reactors who would then recoup the cost by charging more for their services. Alternatively, a state-run operator Nuclear Power Corporation of India (NPCIL) would take out insurance on behalf of these companies.

Sinha said New Delhi believed the insurance plan was not the best option given how tricky changing the law would prove, and that the proposal should be ready within the next two months. “The plan has yet to be thrashed out, and Sinha said the government was considering how it would better capitalise NPCIL. India wants to generate 62,000 megawatts from nuclear sources within two decades from the current level of 4,780 megawatts, even as other countries shift away from nuclear energy following Japan’s Fukushima disaster.”

GE declined to comment on the Indian proposal to offer insurance cover. Westinghouse said it needed more information before it could comment.  

Indian PM wishes Jewish community on occasion of Hanukkah

NEW DELHI, 20 Dec — Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday wished the Jewish community of the country on the occasion of Hanukkah, an important Jewish festival.

“Wishing my Jewish friends a Happy Hanukkah! May this Festival of Lights and the festive season ring in peace, hope and well-being for all,” Modi said in a tweet.

Hanukkah is an eight-day Jewish holiday commemorating the rededication of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem at the time of a revolt against the Seleucid Empire in the 2nd century BC, according to Jewish history.

And Israel and India have been seeking closer relations in the fields of counter-terrorism, defense and security since the Bharatiya Janata Party government came to power in May. —Xinhua

ADB chief says lower oil prices will benefit Asian economies

BANGKOK, 20 Dec — Visiting Chinese Premier Li Keqiang said here on Friday that China and Thailand have agreed to kick-start mutually beneficial cooperation on agro-product trade and railway.

China eyes deeper cooperation with Thailand and hopes for a more balanced bilateral trade and economic relationship, Li told reporters after meeting with Thai Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha.

The two governments signed a memorandum of understanding on farm produce trade cooperation.

The agreement allows China to invest in two dual-track rail lines in Thailand that will span 734 km and 133 km respectively and connect northeast Thailand’s Nong Khai Province, Bangkok and eastern Rayong Province. The project is estimated to cost some 10.6 billion US dollars.

“This is the expansion, extension and further confirmation of the previous agreement that the Chinese and Thai governments reached last year,” said Li.

Chinese Premier said he hopes that the two sides will speed up preparation for the railway project and lay a solid basis for the beginning of construction at an early date.

The new railway will also benefit neighbouring countries if being extended to other places of the region, Li said.

Chinese Premier Li Keqiang (centre L) and Thai Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha (centre R) attend the signing ceremony of two memoranda of understanding on railway cooperation and farm produce trade cooperation respectively after they met in Bangkok, Thailand, on 19 Dec, 2014.—Xinhua

China, Thailand eye closer agriculture, railway cooperation

BANGKOK, 20 Dec — The chief of the Manila-based bank said declining oil prices represent a “golden opportunity” for “beneficial reforms” in Asia. Last Wednesday in the ADB’s updated Asian Development Outlook, the bank said the growth outlook for developing Asia remains steady even though geopolitical tensions have yet to ease. With oil and commodity prices falling, the update said most developing Asian economies have revised their inflation forecasts downward.

“The forecast for the region is lowered to 3.2 percent in 2014 and 3.5 percent in 2015, from 3.4 percent and 3.7 percent,” the report said. It added lower prices will give importers such as Indonesia and India a chance to reform costly fuel subsidy programmes while oil exporters will be able to develop their manufacturing sectors as lower commodity prices tend to make their real exchange rates more competitive.—Kyodo News

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Obama’s year-end message to Americans: I’m not a lame duck

He was quickly labelled a lame duck after his Democrats’ dramatic mid-term election losses to resurgent Republicans in early November. Already a multitude of potential candidates are jockeying for position in the looming fight to succeed him in 2016.

Obama’s actions in the weeks since the elections, however, have foiled the conventional wisdom that his presidency is largely over. He bypassed a divided Congress to reform immigration on his own, ignored congressional critics this week by moving to normalize relations with Cold War-era foe Cuba, and made a deal with Republicans on a $1.1 trillion spending bill to the chagrin of some Democrats.

Perhaps the biggest factor in Obama’s improved mood has been stronger economic growth and job creation after the long tepid period that marked much of a presidency that began in early 2009 when the economy was mired in deep recession. It is an old truth of American politics that presidents have a greater ability to strike compromises and go against their party’s orthodoxy in their last two years in office, when they don’t have to face the voters again.

Obama’s message to Republicans, who will control both houses of Congress in January, was that he will be willing to compromise with them but will insist that he gets something he wants in return.

Obama cited tax reform as an area of potential compromise, and as part of any deal he raised again that US companies would have to pay to approve funds for infrastructure projects, a demand Republicans have repeatedly rejected.

“In order for their initiatives to become law I’m going to have to sign off,” he said. “And that means they have to take into account the issues that I care about, just as I’m going to take into account the issues that they care about.”

The president felt no compunction about publicly calling out Sony Pictures for withdrawing a comedy movie. “The interview” because of a massive hacking attack that the United States on Friday blamed on North Korea.

“I wish they had spoken to me first,” Obama said of Sony executives. “I would’ve told them, ‘do not get into a pattern in which you’re intimidated by these kinds of criminal attacks.’”

Behind the scenes, Obama privately acknowledged that he has six or nine months to make progress on his agenda before the campaign to replace him kicks into high gear and Americans begin to look past him.

But at his Press conference, he beseched Americans not to do just that yet. “My presidency is entering the fourth quarter. Interesting stuff happens in the fourth quarter. And I’m looking forward to it,” he said. —Reuters

US President Barack Obama gestures as he answers a question during his end of the year Press conference in the briefing room of the White House in Washington, on 19 Dec, 2014.—Reuters

Cuba not returning to capitalism despite US deal: Castro’s daughter

HAVANA, 20 Dec — Cuba will defend its socialist principles and will not return to capitalism just because it has agreed a detente with the United States, the daughter of President Raul Castro said, dispelling any notion that US companies would be free to roll into Cuba.

“The people of Cuba don’t want to return to capitalism,” Mariela Castro, a member of parliament, told Reuters on Friday.

Cuba and the United States on Wednesday agreed to end more than five decades of animosity and re-establish full diplomatic relations. US President Barack Obama also said he intends to remove some sanctions against Cuba and work with the US Congress to end the economic embargo.

But even if all US barriers to Cuba were lifted, any US companies would still need permission from Cuba’s communist government to do business on the Caribbean island.

Rebels say new Ukraine peace talks will not take place on Sunday — IFX

KIEV, 20 Dec — A Ukrainian separatist leader said a new round of peace talks aimed at easing the conflict between the Kiev government and rebels will not take place on Sunday as had been hoped, news agency Interfax reported on Friday.

Talks in the Belarusian capital of Minsk between Russia, Ukraine and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe in September brokered a ceasefire agreement between Kiev and pro-Russian rebels.

“The truce was flouted by both sides but violence has lessened significantly. We may be able to meet in December, raising hopes of further talks. Ukrainian Petro Poroshenko said this week representatives were likely to meet on Sunday to discuss implementing the next steps of the agreement.

Denis Pushilin, vice speaker of the separatists’ “People’s Council”, a leadership body, said a date had yet to be agreed.

“We must make every effort to bring this about, as at the next meeting we want to see deals being struck on the exchange of prisoners, deals on the demarcation line, the buffer zone,” he told journalists in Kiev after talks with Poroshenko. —Reuters

Ukrainian army soldiers from battalion “Aydar” practise shooting during a military drill in the village of Schastya, near the eastern Ukrainian town of Luhansk on 20 Sept, 2014.—Reuters

EU open to possible easing of sanctions against Russia

BRUSSELS, 20 Dec — The European Union (EU) is open to possible easing of its sanctions against Russia, if peace progress is made in Ukraine, French President Francois Hollande said here on Friday. Speaking at a Press conference of the EU winter summit, Hollande called for implementation in an announcement of the Minsk agreement reached in September between Kiev and independence-seeking insurgents. The French president hoped the process of the Minsk agreement “moves fast by the end of the year,” adding that the contact group that includes delegates from the two confronting sides and envos from Russia and the Organization for Security and Cooperation will meet next week in Minsk on further implementation of the previous agreement.

The current Russian economic situation is very delicate and fragile, which is not good for Russia, Europe and the global economy, Hollande said, attributing Russia’s situation to falling oil prices and sanctions imposed by the EU. — Xinhua
Israel bombs Hamas facility in Gaza following rocket fire

JERUSALEM, 20 Dec — Israeli aircraft struck a Hamas military site in the Gaza Strip early on Saturday in retaliation for a rocket fired at southern Israel the day before. This is the first Israeli air strike on the coastal enclave since a 50-day war ended in August. Palestinian media reported that missiles were fired at a training facility in the area of Khan Yunis in southern Gaza. No injuries have been reported.

The Israeli military issued a statement saying that aircraft attacked Hamas “terror infrastructure” in southern Gaza in response to rocket fire earlier in the day, with pilots reporting a direct hit. Lt Col Peter Lerner, a military spokesperson, said, “The IDF (Israel Defence Forces) will not permit any attempt to undermine the security and jeopardize the well-being of Israeli civilians. The Hamas terrorist organization is responsible and accountable for today’s attack against Israel.”

The Israeli strikes came after a rocket, the third launched from Gaza since a cease-fire came into effect on 26 August, exploded in an open area near the border fence shortly before noon on Friday, causing no injuries or damage. Air raid sirens sounded in Israeli communities in the vicinity shortly before the projectile fell, alerting residents to seek cover.

Two rockets, launched at Israel on 1 November and 16 September respectively, exploded in fields near the border and caused no injuries. Following the first attack, Hamas arrested the members of a militant group. Israel did not respond to those attacks. No group in Gaza has claimed responsibility for Friday’s attack, which came after a European Union court on Wednesday ruled to remove Hamas from the bloc’s list of terror organizations. Danny Danon, a Likud lawmaker and former Israeli deputy minister, said the incident served as a proof to Europe that Hamas, which wrested control of Gaza in 2007, “is a terrorist organization.”

“If anyone doubted this, then they received the answer now,” he said.

Haim Yelin, the head of a local council of southern Israeli border communities that were battered by numerous rockets in July and August, said that diplomacy was the only way to end the rocket attacks that have been targeting Israel for more than a decade.

Civilian deaths in Afghanistan war reach new high in 2014 — UN

KABUL, 20 Dec — At least 3,188 Afghan civilians have been killed in the intensifying war with the Taliban in 2014, making it the deadliest year on record for non-combatants in the United Nations said on Friday.

The numbers are a sharp reminder that the Afghan war is far from over, even as a US-led international force formally ends its combat mission at the end of the month, shifting to a supporting role for Afghan forces after 13 years.

“The situation for civilians in Afghanistan is becoming increasingly dire,” said Georgette Gagnon, human rights director for the UN mission in Kabul. As of 30 November, the United Nations had recorded a total of 3,188 civilian deaths and 6,429 injuries. That puts 2014 on track to be the first year on record that combined civilian casualties will surpass 10,000. Civilian deaths over the year to the end of November were up 19 per cent over the same period last year and had already surpassed the previous high set in 2011, when 3,133 civilians were killed.

For the first time, ground battles between the Taliban and Afghan forces became the main cause of civilian deaths. In previous years, planted bombs killed the most civilians.

“That is very worrying,” said Gagnon, calling on all sides to do more to keep civilians from being caught in crossfire of mortars and other heavy weapons. About three-quarters of civilian casualties were caused by Taliban insurgents, who are intensifying their fight to re-establish their hardline Islamist regime that was toppled in a US-backed military intervention for sheltering the al-Qaeda architects of the 11 September, 2001, attacks on US cities. The Taliban are also holding up peace talks with the Afghan government.

Since the UN began tracking civilian casualties in 2009, a total of 17,282 civilian deaths and 29,536 injuries have been recorded. While US military officials have portrayed the war as in the process of being won by Afghan security forces, the national army and police have also suffered record losses this year, with more than 4,600 killed. Since 2001, nearly 3,500 foreign soldiers from 29 countries have been killed in Afghanistan, including about 2,200 Americans.

Iran honours nuclear deal with powers, IAEA report shows

VIENNA, 20 Dec — Iran has continued to meet commitments under an interim nuclear agreement with six world powers, a confidential UN agency report showed, though Teheran temporarily halted conversion work that makes higher-grade uranium less suitable for bombs.

The monthly update by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), seen by Reuters, said Iran was not enriching uranium above a fissile concentration of 5 percent, far below the 90 percent level needed for atomic arms. It also said Iran had not made “any further advances” to its activities at two enrichment facilities and an unfinished heavy water reactor.

Under last year’s accord between Iran and the United States, France, Germany, Russia, China and Britain, the Islamic Republic halted its most sensitive nuclear activity and took other steps in exchange for some easing of economic sanctions.

It was negotiated to buy time for talks on a final settlement of a 12-year dispute over Iran’s nuclear programme, which it says is peaceful but the West fears may be aimed at developing a capability to produce nuclear weapons.

After Iran and the powers last month failed for a second time to meet a deadline for ending the stand-off, they extended the preliminary accord until 30 June.

France and Britain said on Thursday that Iran had not demonstrated sufficient flexibility in the nuclear talks. The remarks, at the United Nations, came just after the completion of another inconclusive round of negotiations in Geneva this week.

Western officials say Iran has not compromised on major sticking points, including the size and scope of its future uranium enrichment programme and the speed of ending sanctions.

Under the interim deal’s extension, Iran would continue to convert higher-grade uranium oxide into reactor fuel thereby making it harder and more time-consuming to turn it into the fissile core of a bomb. Teheran denies any such aim.

Iranian border policemen inspect the remains of a rocket launched into Israel from Gaza Strip in southern Israel, on 19 Dec, 2014. A rocket fired from the Gaza Strip hit southern Israel on Friday, causing no injuries or damages, the Israeli military said. Air raid sirens were heard in several Israeli communities bordering the Gaza Strip shortly before the rocket exploded in an open territory.

Britain intends to allow women to serve in frontline infantry roles

LONDON, 20 Dec — Britain is likely to be allowed for the first time to fight in ground close combat roles by 2016, the British Ministry of Defence (MoD) announced on Friday.

“I hope that, following further work on our training regimes and equipment, we can open up combat roles to women in 2016,” British Defense Secretary Michael Fallon said.

He added that roles in the armed forces “should be determined by ability not gender.”

The MoD on Friday published a government-commissioned report, which “ended the long-held view that mixed close ground combat units would have an adverse effect on cohesion between troops,” the ministry said in a statement.

The report calls for further research into the physiological demands on women before they are allowed to fight on the front line. “Ground close combat roles place high physical demands on service personnel, and it is important that the impacts on women’s health are fully explored,” the MoD said.

It added that it would be “irresponsible and potentially place women at risk of personal injury” if they undertake these roles without further research.

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Till the last breath
By Aung Khin

All men are afraid of dying, and the world moving forward without us. To understand well the arts of living in life is a complete mystery to us. There have been a list of things they don’t teach us at school — how to love somebody, how to be famous, how to be rich or how to be poor, and all how to die.

However we need to learn ourselves from experiences for the best of our lives till the end of our last breathe. Mental maturity and benevolence are of importance for the life.

While had mentalities of grudge, hatred and jealousy do not need lessons or training, the positive mental attitude such as sympathy and tolerance require years of self-seeking followers on every experience before responding external factors. All good is hard, while all evil is easy.

We can easily counter with negative attitudes of anger and disgust against other’s mistreatment. However patience or forgiveness rarely comes out to calm down the heat out of dissatisfaction. Life is too long and boring for those who do not care about prosperity of oneself or society.

The world has developing issues to be tackled of all time. Whenever a certain problem has happened, we need to solve it with peace and tranquility. When a situation or argument cannot be resolved properly, negative impacts such as misunderstanding and displeasure might result from it. Gorge Washington said that it is at all times easier to make enemies than friends.

Mahatma Gandhi said ‘An eye for an eye will only make the whole world blind’. For those who have high expectation making the world and nearby society peaceful is not easypeasy. They always concentrate on the welfare of human till their last breathe, with the consideration of dying and comedy are crucial for all.

Letters to the Editor

Dear Sir,

It was the 70th Sarsodaw Day of Myanmar which came on the 1st waxing day of Nattaw 1306 by Myanmar calendar, 23rd November 2014. The first Sarsodaw Day of modern Myanmar was celebrated on the 1st waxing day of Nattaw 1306 Myanmar Era (15th November 1944) in Yangon sponsored by Pyimya Takan Association, Myanmar Writers’ Association and Myanmar scholars. Since that time Sarsodaw Day was held annually as an auspicious event to honour and commemorate Myanmar literature and Myanmar writers.

The first ceremony to pay puja (obeisance) to the senior doyen writers was inaugurated by the Myanmar Nainggan Sarpay Lotha Association in 1342 Myanmar Era (AD 1980). The initial number of doyen writers came to only 10. Since then the number of old writers increased steadily, with national coverage. The minimum age was also fixed at 80 next birthday. The latest anniversary ceremony was held on the 1st waxing day of 1376 Myanmar Era (23rd November 2014) at Yangon, in the YCDC Town Hall, the auspicious venue of such ceremonies, being held annually. One hundred and eighty doyen writers graced the ceremony. Only very few were physically strong and mentally alert, as many felt the ravages of old age and infirmity. But there was joy among all as they meet and greet each other, reliving their old memories, and resolving anew to contribute in the remaining day of their twilight years.

The State Dignitaries most respectfully paid obeisance, contributed cash donated by generous donors and a gift of SKYNET to the 28 newly arrived freshers. The President of current Myanmar Writers Association, Sithu U Tin Huang (Lettwin that Saw Chit) delivered a stirring key note speech to grace the ceremony and one seasoned writer delivered word of thanks. Finally the 70th Sarsodaw Day ceremony came to a close.

This is the 5th year for me to attend the ceremony and bless all who had contributed much towards growth and sustenance of Myanmar literature and enduring heritage of a thousand years. Inwardly I conodeled the 20 writers who passed away peacefully in 2014. While thanking the Editor of Global New Light of Myanmar for giving the opportunity to write for publication, I would like to say that I had composed the letter myself and have sent it to you. I hope this letter will be published.

Yours etc

U Ba Than (Maha Vijja)
It is time to remove...

We need to strengthen the spirit of patriotism so that we can prosper our nation and the entire people. There is a correlation between good government and clean government and the existence of good government must be in equilibrium. It is necessary to maintain the enough equilibrium to operate or drive the mechanism of administrative body constantly.

People from all walks of life are working for their livelihoods in the country. The citizenship, a block of foreign investors are planning to invest in Myanmar for long term businesses or manufacturing products or establishing business associations or membership. It is a sign of mutual-benefit for Myanmar and foreign investors. When we look at the benefits from the economic aspect, our country can earn huge amount of foreign currency and can import the essential foreign products for the people, e.g. heavy machinery for construction, modern medical equipment for public hospitals, modern sea-vessels for sea-transport etc. Simultaneously, we can create job opportunities for the locals. Moreover, there will be no political conflicts and international trade will be more flourishing in Myanmar. Therefore, both local and foreign investors can do their respective businesses independently and confidently. Hopefully, Myanmar can be transformed from the developing country into the developed country with our endeavors. Let’s march together with the clean government towards a prosperous goal!!

The author is Retired Deputy General Manager, Admin: Dept; Myanmar Posts and Telecommunications

Tommy Pauk is the pseudonym of U Thein Swe, who received a Bachelor of Arts degree from University of Maine in 2002 and a Master of Arts degree from the University of Massachusetts in 2004. He is a Business and Marketing Consultant. He has English Teaching experience at Yangon University English Department and Workers’ college in Yangon, and now is working as freelance writer and English Teacher cum Translator/ Interpreter for foreign firms.
Ferguson wants peace instead of protests, but anger still simmers

Ferguson, 20 Dec — It is hard to find much healing in Ferguson, Missouri. More than four months after a white police officer killed an unarmed black teenager and sparked nationwide demonstrations over the way police in the United States interact with the black community, anger still simmers in the city of 21,000 mostly black residents.

Officials in Ferguson, Missouri, and the larger St Louis area want to move from protests to peace, promising programmes to build alliances between blacks and whites, and between police and those they are sworn to protect.

“Ferguson is really trying to move forward,” Ferguson Mayor James Knowles said in an interview. “We’re very open. We’re listening and making proactive changes.”

Still, hundreds of people who participated in the protests face criminal charges or fines. Protest leaders and a team of lawyers want charges dismissed for many of the roughly 500 people arrested in the St Louis area since Michael Brown’s 9 August shooting by police officer Darren Wilson. A grand jury declined to indict Wilson in November in the teenager’s death.

“They should wipe the slate clean. All of these charges are a tactic to intimidate... to complicate our lives,” said Derek Laney, an activist with Hands Up United, which has organized demonstrations.

A group calling Jail Support has raised more than $120,000 to post bonds and pay defence attorneys to represent the protesters in court. And a non-profit group called Plea for Justice was incorporated this month in St Louis to pursue litigation for protesters and others in the area.

Further adding to tensions, the Missouri arm of the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People sued the Ferguson-Florissant School District on Thursday, alleging the school board election process put black voters at a disadvanta-

e.

The identities of the killed and injured are not immediately available.

Saturday’s US drone strike is the 20th of its kind in Pakistan in 2014. Since the beginning of this year, at least 140 people, most of them believed to be militants, have reportedly been killed in such strikes.

The overall cleanup work of the Fukushima plant — which is expected to take decades — has been delayed by radiation fears and the ongoing work to remove fuel. The operators are now also dealing with the effects of the 2011 earthquake and tsunami disaster, which has caused significant damage to the facility.

All fuel removed from Fukushima Daiichi No 4 unit pool

Tokyo, 20 Dec — The operator of the crippled Fuk-

ushima Daiichi nuclear power plant said on Saturday it has finished removing all fuel rods from the spent fuel pool of the badly damaged No 4 reactor building, a major step in decommissioning efforts.

A total of 1,535 fuel rod assemblies, including 1,331 riskier spent fuel rods and 204 unused ones, have been now taken to other buildings after Tokyo Electric Power Co’s yearlong operation, reducing risks of exposure of the fuel in the event of a new earthquake or other possible accidents.

“Completion of the removal work is a milestone and I feel deeply about it,” plant chief Akira Ono told reporters, adding TEPCO will not let its guard down as the decommissioning process will be lengthy.

The overall cleanup work of the Fukushima plant — which is expected to take decades — has been delayed by the huge amount of contaminated water building up at the site.

The No 4 reactor, which was offline for regular check-ups at the time of the March 2011 earthquake-tsunami disaster, has finished removing all fuel rods from its spent fuel pool. TEPCO hopes to begin taking out the fuel from the No 3 spent fuel pool in the next fiscal year beginning in April, and the No 1 pool in fiscal 2017, a key step before extracting the melted fuel. But it is uncertain whether the work will go smoothly given higher levels of radiation in the Nos. 1 to 3 units.

Pakistan hangs two militants after Taleban school massacre

Lahore, 20 Dec — Pakistan executed two prominent militants on Friday, sources said, in a clear response to this week’s massacre of more than 130 children at a school.

The hanged militants had no links to the Taleban as its main assault in the city of Peshawar on Tuesday, but their executions came at a time when a shocked Pakistani society is piling pressure on the government to do more to stem escalating violence.

Pakistan lifted a moratorium on the death penalty after the attack and Mohammed Aqeel and Arshad Mehmoood were the first prisoners reported hanged under the new arrangements.

The announcement of their deaths came just hours after The UN human rights office appealed to Pakistan to refrain from resuming executions, saying this was likely to fuel terrorism and might even feed a “cycle of revenge”.

“Aqeel alias Usman and Arshad were hanged in Faislabad Jail at 9:00 pm,” a source in a local government in Punjab Province told Reuters.

Aqeel, also known as Dr Usman, had been in jail for leading an attack on the Pakistani army headquarters in 2009 in which 20 people were killed. He was a member of the radical sectarian Lashkar-e-Jhangvi group.

Mehmoood, was arrested for trying to assassinate former President Pervez Musharraf.

Four other militants, currently in jail in the eastern city of Lahore, are also expected to be executed in coming days.
FTSE set for biggest weekly rise in two years

LONDON, 20 Dec — The FTSE 100 headed to its biggest weekly gain in two years on Friday, led by recent laggards such as insurer Aviva and Tullow Oil as analysts recommended snapping up battered shares after a recent selloff.

Fund managers and traders cited a gradual wind-down in trading activity as investors cut risk before the holiday season.

British supermarket chain Tesco, which has been trading at depths not seen since 2003, was up 5.5 per cent.

“Trading has been volatile. Now investors are trimming positions ahead of the few days off, just wanting to reduce the risk,” said Mark Ward, head of execution trading at Sanlam Securities. Barclays, which had fallen 11.6 per cent in just over a week, rose 1.3 per cent after the judge overseeing New York state’s lawsuit accusing it of fraud in its alternative trading system raised questions about the case.

At the close, the broader FTSE 100 index was up 1.2 per cent at 6,345.27 points, adding to a 2 per cent rise on the previous day and up 3.9 per cent for the week, the biggest weekly rise since December 2011. Tullow Oil gained 6.9 percent, rising as Brent crude rallied back above $60. The stock is down 50 percent this year, suffering from a steep decline in the price of oil.

Britain’s public finances improved sharply in November, official data showed on Friday, helped by a fine on banks hit by a foreign exchange trading scandal.

Global equities have been rallying since Federal Reserve Chair Janet Yellen said on Wednesday that US interest rates were unlikely to rise for “at least a couple of meetings,” meaning April at the earliest.

Before this bounce, the FTSE had fallen nearly 9 percent in 1-1/2 weeks, as a slide in commodity prices hit energy and mining stocks and concerns about Russia’s financial stability damped emerging market economies.

“When these turns happen quickly, there’s fear of missing out,” Ian Williams, a strategist at Peel Hunt, said. “It may be that we need the dust to settle and people to reconsider things in January before we get a real idea of whether this rally is sustainable.”

Bernstein said insurer Aviva was “a last minute Christmas bargain” and upgraded the stock to outperform from neutral after a 15 percent fall in the stock since the announcement of the buy to Friends Life in November.

Aviva’s shares rose 3 per cent on Friday.

“We believe the recent sell-off provides an attractive entry point into the stock, even for those – like us – who are only prepared to value the synergies and cash return,” the analysts wrote in a note. —Reuters

Three air-bag accidents at Boeing plant lead to extra safety measures

SEATTLE, 20 Dec — Workers at planemaker Boeing’s (BA.N) Everett plant near Seattle are following extra safety measures after three air bag-related accidents, including the death of a technician last month, the company said on Friday.

No one was seriously hurt when an air bag deployed on 13 December as a seat supplier technician was working on a Zodiac Aerospace seat on a plane being readied for delivery, Boeing spokesman Wilson Chow said.

“We understand that employees are concerned.” Chow said, adding the company was holding meetings with workers and was implementing additional safeguards and inspections.

“We are confident the system is safe to work on and to be around, and the seat-belt air bag poses no risk to the flying public,” Chow said.

The accidental discharge of a seat-belt airbag happened because a bent connector pin caused a short circuit, he said.

Chow confirmed a third incident but could not provide specifics, such as injuries or cause.

A technician for aircraft interior supplier Jamco America died after being struck in the face when a passenger seat air-bag inflator discharged while he and another technician from a different supplier were working on a 777 on 13 November, the Seattle Times newspaper reported.

A source who declined to be named said that workers were now following extra safety measures, including using caution tape to cordon off the seats.

The 13 December incident involved an actual air bag deployment. Chow said, while the 13 November incident happened as the system was partially assembled.

“There is widespread concern,” Connie Kelliher, spokeswoman for International Association of Machinists, District Lodge 751, told the newspaper.

“We are actively involved and working to ensure our members concerns are addressed.”

A man walks past the London Stock Exchange in the City of London on 11 Oct, 2013.—Reuters

‘Black Friday’ spree lifts UK retail sales growth to 27-year high — CBI

LONDON, 20 Dec — A “Black Friday” shopping frenzy pushed British retail sales growth to a 27-year high in December, according to an industry survey on Friday.

The Confederation of British Industry’s distributive trades survey’s retail sales balance soared to +61 in December, the highest reading since January 1988, and a marked rise from November’s +27.

Strong economic growth and a recent drop in the price of essentials such as food and fuel appears to have caught the Christmas trading period, said Barry Williams, an executive at Wal-Mart’s Asda brand who chairs the CBI survey.

“But shoppers may have caught the Christmas bug early and brought some of their spending forward. This has been a tough year for many retailers and parts of the sector are still struggling.”

Grocers enjoyed the strongest rate of growth, while furniture stores also saw strong growth for a quarter of a century is a big boost for retailers as they head towards the climax of the crucial pre-Christmas trading period,” said Barry Williams, an executive at Wal-Mart’s Asda brand who chairs the CBI survey.

“No one was seriously hurt when an air bag deployed on 13 December as a seat supplier technician was working on a Zodiac Aerospace seat on a plane being readied for delivery, Boeing spokesman Wilson Chow said.

A Boeing 787 Dreamliner under construction is pictured at the Boeing facility in Everett, Washington on 17 Feb, 2012.—Reuters

American nurse exposed to Ebola released from hospital

SAN FRANCISCO, 20 Dec — An American nurse who was exposed to Ebola while volunteering in Sierra Leone was released from the National Institutes of Health’s Clinical Centre in Maryland on Friday without showing signs of the disease, NIH said.

“The patient has shown no clinical or laboratory evidence of Ebola infection and will complete 21 days of monitoring at a private residence in Virginia under the direction of the Virginia Department of Health,” NIH said in a statement.

NIH did not release any further information on the nurse, including when he or she might have been exposed to the virus, affiliation or name.

The NIH clinical centre is one of the facilities across the United States designated as an Ebola treatment centre by the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention.

A child who arrived in Chicago with a fever was under observation on Friday at a city hospital to rule out the Ebola virus, hospital officials said.

Ebola has killed nearly 7,000 people out of more than 18,600 infected, nearly all of them in the impoverished West African countries of Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea.—Reuters
Prosecutors question ex-Your Party head Watanabe over funds scandal

Tokyo, 20 Dec — Prosecutors have questioned the former head of the now-defunct opposition Your Party, Yoshihiko Watanabe, over an alleged violation of the political funds control law involving his political group, sources close to the matter said on Friday. Watanabe, a 62-year-old veteran politician who lost his Diet seat in Sunday’s general election, borrowed 90 million yen in 2010 from a bank account linked to his political group and repaid the money. He also borrowed 80 million yen in 2013 from the same account. But neither of those transactions were recorded in the group’s funds report, raising the question of whether they violated the political funds control law.

The Tokyo District Public Prosecutors Office’s special investigative arm has questioned Watanabe on a voluntary basis to decide whether they can pursue criminal charges against people involved in crafting the report.

Watanabe’s office issued a statement on Friday saying, “We will sincerely explain that there is no problem from the viewpoint of the political funds control law.”

Watanabe, who quit as Your Party leader on Sunday, was under fire for crafting the report.

Prosecutors have also said that they have not yet been formally informed of the group’s funds report, raising the question of whether they planned to fully equip the land-based Russian strategic nuclear forces with modern weapons by 2021, while the triad of nuclear forces would be equipped with more than 50 Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs) next year.

Putin ordered the government to draft a “balanced realistic option” of the state defence programme for 2016-2025, as well as to present an updated military doctrine by the year-end, taking current situation “like NATO’s expansion” into consideration. Moreover, Putin ordered on Friday’s meeting to fully equip the land-based Russian strategic nuclear forces with modern weapons by 2021, while the triad of nuclear forces would be equipped with more than 50 Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs) next year.

Putin also reaffirmed plans to modernize the fleet of Russian strategic bombers and nuclear-powered submarines. Moreover, a senior Russian Defence Ministry official told Putin during the meeting that substitute for imported military productions is under special control and the plan for 2014 is 100 percent completed.

Putin in November urged the defence industry to start to replace foreign-made components with domestically-produced ones to reach the target of modernizing at least 70 percent of the equipment of Russian armed forces by 2020. While urging the construction of military infrastructure on Arctic islands, Putin reiterated that Russia is taking necessary measures to ensure its defence capability in the Arctic rather than planning to militarize the region.

“Our actions in the region are measured and reasonably moderate, and they are absolutely necessary to ensure Russian defense capabilities,” RIA Novosti news agency quoted Putin as saying.

Later in the day, Deputy Defence Minister Nikolai Pankov announced that the number of professional soldiers serving in the Russian Armed Forces in 2014 set an all-time record of 295,000. Pankov added that the ministry in 2015 plans to contract at least 55,000 more professional soldiers.
### Invitation for Tender

**TENDER NO. 6(T) MPE/CONDENSATE (2) / 2014-2015**

1. **Open Tender** is invited for the Myanmar Petrochemical Enterprise, the Ministry of Energy for the conveyance of Yetagun Condensate 0.7 Mmbbl (±5%) from Yetagun Marine Terminal Offshore to No.(1) Refinery (Thanlyin).

2. **Tender Closing Date**: 15-1-2015 at (12:00) noon.

3. **Tender Opening Date**: 15-1-2015 at (13:00) hrs.

4. **Delivery Time**: 1st April 2015 to 31st March 2016

5. **Tender Documents and details information are available at the Department of Finance, Myanmar Petrochemical Enterprise, Nay Pyi Taw, during office hours commencing 22-12-2014 on payment of the Myanmar Kyats One Hundred Thousand (Kyats 100,000) per set.

6. Only tender documents which have purchased tender document officially from Myanmar Petrochemical Enterprise will be accepted for evaluation.

**Managing Director**

Myanmar Petrochemical Enterprise

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### Invitation for Open Tender

**THIRD REPUBLIC OF THE UNION OF MYANMAR**

**MINISTRY OF ENERGY**

**MYANMA OIL AND GAS ENTERPRISE**

(INVITATION FOR OPEN TENDER) (22/2014)

- Open tenders are invited for supply of the following respective items in United States Dollars.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr.No</th>
<th>Tender No.</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Remark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>IFB-118-(14-13)</td>
<td>Geotechnical Instruments for Applied Research Centre, Geology Workstation &amp; Mud Logging Unit (1) Lot</td>
<td>US$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>IFB-119-(14-15)</td>
<td>Retest Factory for CNG Type I (150 Cylinder / Day) (1) Unit</td>
<td>US$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>IFB-120-(14-15)</td>
<td>CNG Compressor Driven Motor with Complete Package &amp; Accessories (2) Units</td>
<td>US$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>IFB-121-(14-15)</td>
<td>CNG Compressor Driven Electric Motor with Complete Package &amp; Accessories (1) Unit</td>
<td>US$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Tender Closing Date & Time**: 14-1-2015, 16:30 Hrs

**Tender Document shall be available during office hours commencing from 17th December, 2014 at the Finance Department, Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise, No(44) Complex, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar.**

**Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise**

Ph:+95 67-411097/411206

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### Weather Report

**DATE: 19th December, 2014**

- Weather will be partly cloudy in Taninthayi Region and Kaebin State and generally fine in the remaining Regions and States.

**STATE OF THE SEA:**

Strong easterly winds with moderate to rough sea are likely at times Deltaic, Gulf of Motama, off and along Mon-Taninthayi Coasts. Surface wind speed in strong wind may reach (35)m.p.h. Seas will be moderate elsewhere in Myanmar waters.

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### Natural Text:

**First patient in Serbia gets artificial heart device**

**Belgrade, 20 Dec — The first surgical procedure to fit a patient in Serbia with an artificial heart has been successfully completed at the Clinical Centre of Serbia (KCS) on Friday.**

- The mechanical organ that should help patient through to the biological heart transplant was surgically inserted into Vladimir Petrovíc, aged 40, from Pancove.

- The surgical procedure was carried out by around 15 doctors comprising Serbian surgeons and their German colleagues, and the team was headed by the cardiovascular surgeon and KCS director Miljko Ristic.

- The operation went well and we do not expect any subsequent complications, Ristic told Radio Television of Serbia.

- According to him, the patient with an artificial heart can live up to five years longer than he would without the device, but a donor needs to be found after this period to remedy the patient’s condition in the long-run. — Tanjug

---

**10 years on tsunami victims, disaster workers still heal the wounds**

- Vadita Sittirachot, 22, Watana, “Game” to many of the residents, was 14 when he decided to live in the orphanage.

- He was living with his aunt and uncle when the deadly tsunami struck, killing his aunt.

- His aunt remarried, but Watana did not get along well with his new uncle and sought refuge in the orphanage.

- “At first, I think I just want to study until Grade 3 in high school and go to a vocational school. But the foundation gave me the opportunity and inspiration to continue my studies,” he told Kyodo News.

- The foundation sent him to university in Phuket and “Game” is now a fourth year law student at Rachabhat Phuket University.

- Next August, he plans to go to Britain to study English with the support of the foundation.

- “I want to hone my English skills,” he said, adding he plans to get a master’s degree in psychology.

- After that, he said he plans to help around in the orphanage that continues to help tsunami survivors and other children in the area.

- Niwan Chantawong, 38, another victim who has been with the center since the tsunami, helps Watana run the orphanage. — Kyodo News

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**Roijana Prasertrong (C), 49, is surrounded by children at an orphanage in Pang-Nga, a Thai coastal province south of Bangkok, on 29 Nov, 2014. Roijana has been helping children orphaned by the massive 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami. Niwan Chantawong (L), top, 38, a survivor of the tsunami, helps Roijana run the orphanage. — Kyodo News**

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Emma Watson named feminist of the year

London, 20 Dec — Actress Emma Watson has been named feminist of the year in a new poll. The ‘Harry Potter’ star became a women’s rights heroine following a heartfelt sexual equality speech she made at the launch of the #HeForShe campaign at the United Nations in September, reported Contactmusic.

The 24-year-old actress rallied feminists all over the world with her stirring commentary on rights and equal pay, and her celebrity fans were quick to applaud her for her well-presented argument. Now she has been rewarded with the top spot on the fashion website’s top ladies list, compiled by ForWomen.org.

Watson has beaten out transgender actress Laverne Cox, US newswoman Rachel Maddow, Beyonce and Cher.—PTI

Wax statue of Jenniffer Lawrence’s ‘Hunger Games’ character unveiled

Los Angeles, 20 Dec — Actress Jennifer Lawrence’s ‘Hunger Games’ character Katniss Everdeen’s waxwork has been unveiled at Madame Tussauds in London.

The attraction now features the character in the outfit worn for the second instalment in the series ‘Catching Fire’, reported E! online. Katniss sports her famous braided hairstyle and she wears her brown leather hunting jacket, dark charcoal trousers, knee-length tie-up leather brown boots, brown leather quiver and bow.

Likenesses of Katniss have also been placed at Madame Tussauds New York and Hollywood attractions. “We are hugely excited to have worked with Lionsgate to launch a Katniss wax figure following ‘The Hunger Games: Mockingjay – Part 1’, ” said Nicole Fenner from Madame Tussauds London. “The figure is in its own film-specific backdrop, allowing our guests to get up close to Katniss and the beloved story of The Hunger Games, which we know they’ll love.”

Lupita Nyong’o named best celebrity body

New Delhi, 20 Dec — Oscar-winning actress Lupita Nyong’o has been named Best Celebrity Body of 2014 by readers of Fitness magazine.

Country star Taylor Swift also features high on the first-ever Fitness Magazine Fit List, claiming the Favourite Workout Song title for ‘Shake It Off’, reported Continental.

She has narrowly beaten out Iggy Azalea, who comes in second with Fancy.

Meanwhile, British actress Kiera Knightley has picked up the Favourite #BodyLove Moment for agreeing to pose topless for a magazine.—PTI

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Brad Pitt, George Clooney celebrate their wedding over dinner

Los Angeles, 20 Dec — Superstars Brad Pitt and George Clooney have recently celebrated their marriages over a dinner as they missed out each other wedding due to their busy schedules.

Pitt, 51 and Clooney, 53, tied the knot earlier this year to their respective partners Angelina Jolie and Amal Alamuddin, and the couples got together at the ‘Gravity’ star’s mansion, reported Femalefirst.

Clooney invited the head chef from one of his favourite restaurants to cook a lavish seafood dinner and went to Pitt’s Miraval estate in France to ship wine from their vineyard. “The head chef from George’s favourite restaurant, ‘The Musso & Frank Grill’, cooked up a huge meal for the two couples with oysters and lobsters.

‘As a nice touch George had shipped over some of Angelina’s wine from her and Brad’s French vineyard,” sources said.

Pitt tied the knot with Jolie, 39, on 23 August in France and Clooney married Alamuddin, 36, on 27 September in Italy.—PTI

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Rappers are destroying image of Bollywood music: Imran Khan

New Delhi, 20 Dec — ‘Amplifier’ singer Imran Khan, who lent his voice for a song in upcoming film ‘Tevar’, says the new-age rappers might have become a rage with the listeners but they have not given quality music to Bollywood. Imran has made his debut in the Hindi film industry with the ‘Lets Celebrate’ song and said he does not like the music of many hit hip-hop artists and rappers.

“Personally I don’t like their music. I feel it is just over-hyped. These Punjabi rappers and artists, who have entered Bollywood from outside, have destroyed its image. Bollywood music is not about hip-hop but it is more about colours. ‘Hip-hop should be left to others. And if one attempts that, it should be done in a proper way but the current fusion of hip-hop and Bollywood, in my opinion, is not good. I will bring a change in this scene now.” Imran told PTI in an interview. The popular Punjabi singer said before ‘Tevar’ he had turned down many offers by Bollywood filmmakers but Boney Kapoor (producer of ‘Tevar’) made him feel at home and he felt an instant connection with him.

‘Several producers and actors had approached me earlier but I rejected the offers as I felt that they just wanted to use me. I did not feel right about it. ‘I am not a greedy person so I knew if I would make Bollywood debut I will make with a good project. When Boney Kapoor came to me, I felt like I met my lost family in India. He, Arjun (Kapoor) and everyone made me feel comfortable. I liked the film’s story. I am glad to have made my Bollywood debut with this film,” he said.

‘Tevar’, starring Arjun Kapoor and Sonakshi Sinha in lead, is hitting theatres on 9 January, 2015.—PTI

George Harrison to get Grammy Lifetime Achievement award

Los Angeles, 20 Dec — The Beatles’ George Harrison and Bee Gees are already among the winners at the 57th annual Grammy Awards. The Recording Academy announced that they would honour the two musicians with the Lifetime Achievement Award at a private ceremony held a day before the Grammys, reported Ace Showbiz.

Other names set to receive the prestigious prize include Buddy Guy, country duo the Louvin Brothers, saxophonist Wayne Shorter, French composer Pierre Boulez and Texas Tejano musician Flaco Jimenez.

“This year we pay tribute to exceptional creators who have made prolific contributions to our culture and history,” Recording Academy President-CEO Neil Portnow said in a press statement. “It is an honour and a privilege to recognize such a diverse group of talented trailblazers, whose incomparable bodies of work and timeless legacies will continue to be celebrated for generations to come,” Portnow added. Grammys will be held on 7 February, 2015. PTI
Major sporting upsets of 2014

London, 20 Dec — Brazil suffer 7-1 World Cup humiliation against Germany

“Historic Disgrace” screamed the Folha de Sao Paulo’s headline, as a shocked nation digested a 7-1 World Cup semi-final defeat by Germany on home soil. While many pundits had speculated that this Brazil side lacked the sparkle of previous vintages, nobody predicted they would suffer perhaps the greatest shame in their illustrious footballing past.

Germany inflicted a sudden and direfate, taking a 5-0 lead after 29 minutes in front of a stunned audience at Belo Horizonte’s Mineirao stadium.

Perhaps out of sympathy, Joachim Loew’s eventual champions lifted their foot off the gas and coasted home, regaining just twice more in the second half, before Oscar made an apologetic mark on the scoreboard for Brazil in the 90th minute.

2. Nishikori beats Djokovic in the US Open semi-finals

When you have just played back-to-back five-set, four hour marathon matches, the last person you would want to face would be an iron-willed world number one with a reputation for out-lasting everyone else on the tour. A sweltering early September afternoon in New York, however, provided the unlikely stage for young Japanese Kei Nishikori to inflict a stunning four-set defeat on Novak Djokovic and deny the Serb a fifth successive trip to the US Open final.

With the mercury tipping 100 degrees Fahrenheit and in stifling humidity on Arthur Ashe court, Nishikori proved tireless in grinding past Djokovic, winning 6-4, 6-1, 6-4, 6-3 to become the first Asian man to reach a grand slam final.

3. Shaun White fops at the Sochi Winter Olympics

The major draw of the 2014 Winter Games turned out to be one of its biggest disappointments after pulling out of his first event and failing to win a medal in his second.

After talking up his chances of completing a stunning double, United States’ snowboarder Shaun White withdrew from the Slopestyle, before his eight-year reign as Olympic half-pipe champion ended in a shocking fourth-place finish.

It all proved a major letdown for the fans who made the arduous journey to the Russian resort hoping to see him produce his ast gravity-defying tricks.

4. Seattle Seahawks thrash Denver Broncos to win Super Bowl

A Seattle defence made up of a bunch of overlooked and unwieldy players completely nullified a Peyton Manning-led offence that had set an NFL record for points in a season in one of the most one-sided Super Bowls ever.

The 43-8 thrashing was a performance worthy of some of the greatest defensive teams in NFL history and drew comparisons with the Pittsburgh Steelers’ “Steel Curtain”, the 1985 Chicago Bears with William “Refrigerator” Perry, and the Ray Lewis-led Baltimore Ravens of 2000.

“A bunch of misfits, that’s what they called us,” said defensive end Red Bryant. “A bunch of nobodies.

5. Western Sydney Wanderers winning the AFC Champions League

Coach Tony Popovic took over at the Western Sydney Wanderers in 2012 when they had no strip, no playing staff and no facilities. That did not prevent them going on to win the Asian Champions League title 900 days later in their maiden campaign, defying huge odds to overcome much wealthier Asian powers.

A 0-0 draw against twice Asian champions Al-Hilal in front of 65,000 fans in the Saudi capital in November was enough to secure a 1-0 aggregate victory and earn plenty of plaudits for former Socceroo Popovic. — Reuters

Overseas tip led FBI to recover stolen art worth up to $24 million

Los Angeles, 20 Dec — An overseas tip investigators received six years after one of the biggest art heists in Los Angeles led to the return of nine stolen paintings, including works by Marc Chagall and Diego Rivera, collectively worth as much as $24 million, police and FBI said on Friday.

The paintings were recovered in an FBI sting operation in which a suspect, Raul Espinoza, 45, was arrested after he tried to sell the stolen artwork to undercover agents at a Los Angeles-area hotel in October for $700,000, authorities said.

Espinoza was charged with receiving stolen property and more suspects are being sought, investigators said at a news conference where they disclosed new details of the case and displayed the artwork. Espinoza has pleaded not guilty and is in custody.

The nine paintings were part of the private collection of an elderly Los Angeles couple who have since died. They were home when the paintings were snatched in August 2008 but were bedridden and unaware of the theft at the time, police said.

Los Angeles Police Detective Donald Hrycysz said the daytime burglary occurred during a short but unspecified “window of opportunity” when the couple, who were under round-the-clock care, were presumably left unattended. The Los Angeles Times has reported the theft occurred while a housekeeper was out shopping for groceries.

Hrycysz said three additional art works believed to have been stolen from the home were still missing.

A $200,000 reward was offered months after the heist, but the case grew cold until September 2014, when investigators received an overseas tip that led them to Espinoza and arrangement of the sting operation, the FBI and police said.

Reuters

Bill Lewis, assistant director in charge of the FBI’s Los Angeles Division, speaks during a news conference at FBI Headquarters in Los Angeles, California on 19 Dec, 2014. — Reuters
Billion dollar Sochi Games a sporting success

BERLIN, 20 Dec — The Sochi 2014 winter Olympics have gone down in history as the most expensive sports event ever organised with a staggering cost of more than $51 billion.

The legacy left by Russia’s first winter Games is one of gleaming purpose-built arenas with little or no post-Games use, a massive overhaul of infrastructure at the Black sea resort and a record price tag that triggered changes for future Olympics.

Despite months of bad press in the run up to the Games over Russia’s human rights record and anti-gay propaganda law, when the competitions started the Olympics were a sporting success. With Russian President Vladimir Putin in the stands for a project he helped bring to his country back in 2007, when sports took centre stage, the fate of stray dogs, double toilets and #sochiproblems top trending on Twitter all slipped into the background.

American snowboarder Shaun White failed to shine again on the Olympic stage, withdrawing over safety fears in the inaugural slopestyle competition leaving Sage Kotsenburg as the first ever Olympic slopestyle gold medalist.

The women’s ski jumping competition was also one of 12 new events, with teenage American Sarah Hendrickson becoming the first woman to soar through the air at an Olympics, going on to finish 21st.

Germany’s Carina Vogt flew 104.5 metres to win the milestone event, the culmination of a 13-year fight by female athletes to be allowed to take part.

Another first was the shared gold medal in the women’s downhill at Rosa Khutor’s 2,713 metre-long run, with Slovenia’s Tina Maze and Swiss Dominique Gisin both clocking 41.41 seconds.

Belarus’ Daryu Domracheva dazzled in Sochi, becoming the first woman to win three biathlon titles at the same winter Olympics.

For Norwegian Ole Einar Bjøndalen, there was nothing novel about another gold medal but it was a record 13th Winter Games gong after he helped his country to the biathlon team mixed relay title.

The 40-year-old edged ahead of former cross-country skier Bjorn Daehlie and moved alongside him as the leading all-time Winter Olympics gold medalist with eight.

The Dutch dominated speedskating like few nations have done in any sport winning 21 of 30 individual medals and four medal sweeps, turning the Adler arena orange.

There was also joy for the hosts, with Victor Ahn, an adoptee Russian after switching allegiance from South Korea, winning two gold medals in an hour at the Iceberg arena.

He confirmed himself among the Olympic greats with victory in the 500 metres individual and 45 minutes later returned to help Russia win the 5,000m relay. Russian teenager Adelina Sotnikova won the women’s figure skating individual title amid accusations from South Korea of biased judges after their V ancouver winner Kim Yuna was beaten into second.

But the home team was hit by tragedy when Russian ski cross athlete Maria Komissarova broke her back during a training run for the extreme sport.

Kenya’s marathon queen Jeptoo fails second doping test

Nairobi, 20 Dec — Kenyan Rita Jeptoo, winner of the Boston and Chicago marathons for the last two years, has tested positive for a banned substance in a B sample taken after she failed an out-of-competition check in September.

“The results of the analysis of the B sample which was conducted on 17th to 19th December 2014 at the WADA (World Anti-Doping Agency) accredited laboratory of Lausanne confirmed the finding of the A sample,” Athletics Kenya said in a statement on Friday.

Jeptoo, provisionally suspended from athletics after the A sample tested positive, had asked for a B check. She told reporters at the time that the accusation was false. Dozens of Kenyan athletes have failed doping tests in the past two years.

Government officials have blamed the growing amount of cases on foreign agents and Athlete’s Agency’s failure to educate its sportsmen and women properly.

The country’s triple world and Olympic champion Moses Kiptanui has called on athletes to stop breaking up with their tennis-playing fiancée Caroline Wozniacki.

A year to forget for an injury-plagued Tiger Woods was ended by winning the Northern Ireland’s Rory McIlroy after the ‘Celtic Tiger’ won two majors in 2014 to regain his status as the game’s leading player.

McIlroy claimed a stellar campaign with four victories and five runner-up spots in 23 starts worldwide, embalming his credentials as a genuine go-to great in what many regard as a handover of the ‘Tiger’ torch to a new ‘Rory’ era.

What the former world number one Woods failed to add to his career major tally of 14 and played just eight tournaments during a winless and truncated season, McIlroy proved to be the player to beat virtually every time he teed off in competition.

McIlroy dominated golf’s biggest events, taking half the major titles of 2014 after American left-hand-er Bubba Watson had clinched the Masters for a second time in three years and Germany’s Martin Kaymer had coasted to an eight-shot victory at the US Open. Sven Hedin Stenson, Australian Adam Scott and Spaniard Sergio Garcia each triumphed once as they also produced impressively consistent golf during the year but McIlroy set himself apart from his closest rivals, just as he did in 2012.

Having endured a turbulent 2013 on and off the course, McIlroy was once again a picture of focus and consistency, finishing no worse than 25th in 17 Starts on the 2013-14 PGA Tour and recoding three victories among 12 top-10 placings.

He also claimed the European Tour’s money list trophy for the second time in three years and played an influential role in Europe’s Ryder Cup victory over the United States in September.

McIlroy never looked back after recording his first win of the year at the European Tour’s flagship BMW PGA Championship in May, just a few days after breaking up with his tennis-playing fiancée Caroline Wozniacki.