President U Thein Sein sends messages of felicitations to Japanese Emperor, PM

NAY PYI TAW, 23 Dec — On the occasion of the birthday of His Majesty Akihito, Emperor of Japan, which falls on 23 December 2014, U Thein Sein, President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, has sent messages of felicitations to His Majesty Akihito, Emperor of Japan and His Excellency Mr. Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan.

MNA

Vice President urges traditional medicine practitioners to carry out research constantly

NAY PYI TAW, 22 Dec — Vice President Dr Sai Mauk Kham urged traditional medicine practitioners to conduct researches constantly to keep up with ever-changing diagnosis methods, applications and treatments amid changing modern lifestyle at the opening ceremony of the 15th Conference of Myanmar Traditional Medicine Practitioners held at the Myanmar International Convention Centre-2 in Nay Pyi Taw on Monday.

The vice president added that successive governments of Myanmar have taken necessary measures to enhance the role of traditional medicine in the public health sector as the people value it as a traditional heritage, for the safety and high effectiveness of its ingredients and for its relationship with Buddhism.

Then, the vice president said that rural residents, who make up 70 per cent of the population, rely more on traditional medicine and traditional medicine manufacturers should set up a fund to contribute to philanthropic work in rural areas as the traditional medicine business is a lucrative one. Being an ASEAN member, Myanmar has been working with other member countries in many sectors including traditional medicine where standardization, research and development with respect to registration, and trade of traditional medicine are needed, he said.

It is the responsibility of traditional medicine practitioners and professionals to preserve and buttress the basic principle (See page 3)

Peace negotiators meet prior to 7th round of nationwide ceasefire accord meetings

By Ye Myint

YANGON, 22 Dec — Ending a delay of nearly three months in peace talks on drafting a single text document for a nationwide ceasefire, peace negotiators of the Union Peace-making Work Committee (UPWC) and the Nationwide Ceasefire Coordination Team (NCCT) kicked off a coordination meeting at the Myanmar Peace Centre on Monday, with a focus on continuation of the agreements for reaching a truce deal.

The UPWC-NCCT meeting, which is due to last two days, is aimed at gearing up for the seventh round of peace meetings in which the text is expected to be finalized.

Through this NCA coordination meeting, we are hopeful of seeking compromise on the remaining few points for reaching the nationwide ceasefire accord,” said Union Minister U Aung Min, who led the UPWC side at the meeting.

Highlighting the two main aims of the accord, which are to bring the temporary truces to a durable stage and to begin political dialogues, the Union minister stressed the need to complete the document as soon as possible.

“The most important thing is to hold a political dialogue seeking a federal system for all national races in the country to live in peace and harmony as the truce deals alone cannot bring an end to the country’s armed conflicts”, voiced the Union minister, who is also the UPWC vice-chairman.

Today’s meeting only focused on the NCA, with both sides holding discussions on all remaining points and reaching agreements on some of them, said U Hla Maung Shwe, MPC senior adviser.

“But a few points need further approval and will be brought to leaders from both sides”, he added.

Regarding the absence of some members from both sides, Pado Saw Kwe Htoo Win, deputy leader of NCCT, asserted that no matter who participates in the meeting, views and decisions of both sides are to represent their own teams.

Dr Salai Lian Hmong Sakhorn of the NCCT also said, “The absence of senior military officers from the UPWC did not impact either side as this meeting is designed for making technical coordination between the two sides.”

“We don’t want to highlight ‘federal army’ at the moment. It’s an ideal of what the country’s army should be when the country is governed in a federal system,” he told the media after the first-day meeting.

According to officials, both sides will have constructive discussions on other issues, including Lawson issue, and on inviting local and international eminent persons to the next round of meetings scheduled tomorrow. The sixth round of UPWC-NCCT meetings, held 22-26 September, concluded with approval of the fourth draft of the ceasefire agreement. Both sides said the seventh round of meetings is expected to start in the second week of January.

GNLM
Buddhist monks hoist umbrella atop Mya Sein Yaung Pagoda

KyaiKto, 22 Dec — A golden umbrella, a pennant-shaped vane and a diamond orb were hoisted atop Mya Sein Yaung Pagoda in KyaiKto, Mon State, on Monday.

Midwifery Training School turns out new generations in Mandalay

Mandalay, 22 Dec — The Midwifery Training School (Mandalay) under the Department of Medical Science held the first convocation at the hall of University of Nursing (Mandalay) in Chamayathazi Township, Mandalay, on 20 December.

Principal Daw Molly of the school conferred diplomas on 67 trainees and made a speech.

It was also attended by Rector of University of Nursing (Mandalay) Dr Shwe Toe, Medical Superintendent Dr Maung Win of Mandalay General Hospital and officials.

From 1958 to 2012, the training school has turned out 3,088 midwives. Diploma holders have the opportunity to attend the Bachelor of Nursing Course and a master’s course. —Thih Ko Ko (Mandalay)

89 Malaysian tourists arrive in Myawady

Myawady, 22 Dec — Under the supervision of the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, Mother Ayeyawaddy Travels & Tours Co Ltd arranged arrival of 89 Malaysians led by Mr Wong Cheng Choy in Myawady on 22 December.

They arrived there in 28 cars. They tourists were welcomed by Liaison Officer U Kyaw Hsan Lin of Directorate of Hotels and Tourism Development, tour guide of the company U Win Lwin and a cultural troupe of Township Kayin literature and culture committee at the friendship bridge in Myawady.

The Malaysian tourists are scheduled to visit Myawady, KyaiKtiyo, Nay Pyi Taw, Inlay, Bagan, Mandalay, Yangon and KyaiKto townships. On 31 December, they will leave Myawady for Mae Sot in Thailand. —Thazar (Myawady Town)

Regional High Court judge visits jail, police station in Myingyan, Taungtha Tsp.

Myingyan, 22 Dec — Judge of Mandalay Region High Court Daw Khin Thin Wai inspected Myingyan Jail and police station in Myingyan, Mandalay Region, on 19 December.

The judge visited the jail and asked prisoners and inmates for their convenience in requirements of basic needs, healthcare services, and rights of inmates under the laws.

On 20 December, she visited Taungtha Township court and instructed township judges and staff to hear the cases as soon as possible and discharge their duties free from bribery and corruption.

She stressed the need to win the people’s trust and to realize a good judicial system.—Zaw Min Naring (Myingyan)

Judge of Mandalay Region High Court Daw Khin Thin Wai meets inmates at Myingyan Jail.
Vice President urges . . .

(from page 1)

of Myanmar’s traditional medicine as there are differences in traditional medicine and people among ASEAN member countries, he added.

The vice president pointed out that Myanmar practitioners have to ensure that the safety, quality, and efficacy of Myanmar traditional medicine meet all the necessary standards to win recognition from other ASEAN countries.

In conclusion, he urged all responsible personnel to collaborate for systematic development of Myanmar traditional medicine.

After the vice president’s speech, a message of President U Thein Sein was read out by Union Minister for Health Dr Than Aung.

In the evening, the vice president hosted a dinner to traditional medicine practitioners at the MICC-2.—MNA

I&P Ministry staff get smart cards

NAY PYI TAW, 22 Dec — With the technical assistance of Kyodo Printing Company of Japan, Asia Business Solution Co Ltd donated smart cards to staff of the Ministry of Immigration and Population, here, on 19 December.

Union Minister U Khin Maung Than Aung thanked the well-wisher company for its donations.

Director Maekawa Toshio of Kyodo Printing Co Ltd donated 40 smart cards for staff to Director-General U Maung Maung Than of Immigration and National Registration Department.—MNA

Hluttaw Speaker meets farmers in Bago

BAGO, 22 Dec — Speaker of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw and Pyithu Hluttaw Thura U Shwe Mann delivered speech to more than 5,000 farmers in Bago township Monday.

Thura U Aye Myint, on behalf of the speaker, read an opening speech to the farmers, saying that Hluttaw and government are striving for the welfare of people amid many challenges of democracy process of the country.

The speaker pointed out to the public that different views and ideas cannot be avoided during this process, commenting that the cooperation is needed for the welfare of the country and people as diversities cannot be allowed if these different opinions deterred development of the country.

Thura U Shwe Mann then said he thanked local representatives for presenting problems of land disputes, welfare of rural people and prosperity of the country.

He also said that Un ion Hluttaw has passed a law, and already urged Union government to protect the rights of farmers.

Government has formed land management committee chaired by vice-president, as well as local committees at respective areas.

Thura U Shwe Mann promised to tackle land ownership problems when these are submitted to the Hluttaw.

In the evening, the speaker of Hluttaw and U Nyan Win, chief minister of Bago region, visited Shwe mawdaw pagoda, donating flower, water, lights and scents to the pagoda.—MNA

Senior General receives chairman of Nippon Foundation

NAY PYI TAW, 22 Dec — Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing received chairman of Nippon Foundation Yohei Sasakawa in Yangon on Monday.

During their meeting, the Senior General said Myanmar and Japan have a history of good relations, which have been strengthened by the recent visits of senior military officers including himself.

The Senior General said he appreciates the contributions made by Nippon Foundation to the improve relations between the two countries.

He also noted that Tatmadaw is always ready to work together with any party or organization that may not threaten ‘Our Three Main Causes’, a set of fundamental policies adopted for unity of the country.

Sasakawa said he understands Tatmadaw’s efforts for people and stability of country and acknowledged its cooperation in humanitarian support of his foundation.

He also supported Myanmar’s stance of not accepting foreign intervention in the country’s internal affairs and promised to persuade ethnic armed groups to embrace this idea.

The Senior General attended a gathering party of veteran musicians co-organized by the Yangon Gallery and the Emperor Music Band at People’s Park in Yangon.

At the meeting, he said arts and culture underscore the dignity of a country and urged nurturing of new generation that can conserve traditional culture.

Mynawdy

Union FM sends message of felicitations to Japanese counterpart

NAY PYI TAW, 23 Dec — On the occasion of the birthday of His Majesty Akihito, Emperor of Japan, which falls on 23 December 2014, U Wunna Maung Lwin, Union Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, has sent a message of felicitations to His Excellency Mr. Fumio Kishida, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan.—MNA

Thaton Township observes Kayin New Year Day

THATON, 22 Dec — The Kayin New Year Day festival was observed in David’s Villages in Thaton Township, Mon State, on 21 December.

At 5 am, local authorities hosted Kayin national flag. Township Administrator U Tun Tun Naing read the message sent by Union Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, has sent a message of felicitations to His Excellency Mr. Fumio Kishida, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan. —MNA

Kayin nationals attend Kayin New Year Day festival in Thaton, Mon State.

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing poses for documentary photo with Chairman of Nippon Foundation Yohei Sasakawa.

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing received chairman of Nippon Foundation Yohei Sasakawa.

Union FM sends message of felicitations to Japanese counterpart

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing receives chairman of Nippon Foundation Yohei Sasakawa.

Thaton Township observes Kayin New Year Day

Kayin New Year Day in Poe and Sakaw Kayin and Myanmar languages. Brig-Gen Thura Sein Thaung (Rtd) read the message sent by Union Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, has sent a message of felicitations to His Excellency Mr. Fumio Kishida, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan. —MNA

Senior General receives chairman of Nippon Foundation

Vice President urges . . .

Union FM sends message of felicitations to Japanese counterpart

Thaton Township observes Kayin New Year Day
University students participate in blood donation ceremony

Mandalay, 22 Dec — Myat Parami blood donors association organized students of Mandalay University of Computer Studies (Dahattaw) to donate blood at Mandalay General Hospital on 21 December.

In commemoration of the Blood Donors Day, 70 students and donors participated in the blood donation.

The association held blood donations eight times from January to December and presented over 720 blood bags to Mandalay National Blood Bank and Central Women’s Hospital.

Thiha Ko Ko (Mandalay)

Film festival marks 60th anniversary of Japan-Myanmar diplomatic relations

Mandalay, 22 Dec — In commemoration of the 60th anniversary of Japan-Myanmar diplomatic relations, the “Japanese Film Festival 2014” was held at Win Laik cinema in Chanayetazan Township, Mandalay, from 19 to 21 December.

It was attended by officials of the Japanese Embassy and Myanmar Motion Picture Promotion Department (Upper Myanmar branch), students from Japanese major from University of Foreign Languages (Mandalay) and movie-lovers.

The audiences enjoyed the Japanese movies directed by Shinobu Yaguchi, Hiroyasu Doi and Makoto Shinkai with Myanmar language subtitle.

—Thiha Ko Ko (Mandalay)

Villagers get knowledge about fish breeding on manageable scale

Myingyan, 22 Dec — The first basic Buddhist culture course concluded at the Dhammayon in the compound of staff Quarters of Nay Pyi Taw Development Committee on 21 December.

Trainer Daw Thit Thit Shein urged the trainees to try their best to become good and able citizens of the nation. Patron of Nay Pyi Taw Women’s Affairs Organization and Maternal and Child Welfare Supervisory Committee Daw Khin Khaing and officials presented prizes to outstanding trainees.

A total of 107 students at middle school level attended the training course from 5 October to 21 December.

Plans are underway to conduct more training courses in summer.

—Shwe Kokko

Buddhist culture course wraps up in Nay Pyi Taw

Mandalay, 22 Dec — A ceremony to open Padauk Yanant Literary House and book shop was held in Yannaylon Ward, Chanayethazan Township, Mandalay, on 21 December, attended by writers, poets, and editors from Yadanaobon and Mandalay dailies.

The literary house publishes books in political, economic, social and education arenas written by famous authors with their biographies and life achievements.

To mark the opening ceremony, the books are sold at special prices.

—Thiha Ko Ko (Mandalay)

—Zaw Min Naing (Myangyan)

Padauk Yanant literary house publishes books of famous authors

Myingyan, 22 Dec — Myingyan District Fisheries Department of Mandalay Region conducted a fishery course in Htanaunggon Village, Myingyan Township, on 19 December.

Staff of Fisheries Department gave lectures to 21 trainees from 19 to 22 December.

Township level departmental officials and staff gave lectures to 21 trainees.

They disseminated knowledge about animal breeding and the emerald green project.

—Zaw Min Naing (Myangyan)

Thiha Ko Ko (Mandalay)
Joint table top exercise between armies of China, Malaysia kicks off in Malaysia

KUALA LUMPUR, 22 Dec — The opening of the joint table top exercise (TTX), named “Peace and Friendship 2014”, between the Malaysian Armed Forces (MAF) and Chinese People’s Liberation Army (PLA) was held here on Monday at the Malaysian Armed Forces Joint Warfare Center.

This is the first time for the two sides to host the joint TTX.

During the exercise, the two sides will focus on subjects such as combined joint escort, combined joint rescue of hijacked vessel and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR), etc.

The two sides will also communicate on the mechanisms and experiences on the involvement of military in the actions of HADR.

The exercise is expected to come to an end on 26 December. During the opening, the two sides agreed that this joint TTX is an important move to materialize the consensus reached by the high-ranks of the two armies and celebrate the 40th anniversary of diplomatic ties between the two countries. It is also an important milestone for the friendly communication and pragmatic cooperation between the two sides, which is attached great importance by the high-ranks of the two armies.

The joint TTX is believed to further promote the understanding and mutual trust between the two sides, enrich the China-Malaysia all-round strategic partnership, improve the capacity of the two sides in jointly handling challenges and enhance the overall security and stability.—Xinhua

Two kidnapped soldiers freed in S Philippines

DAVAO CITY, (Philippines), 22 Dec — Leftist rebels freed on Sunday two soldiers captured in a raid at a Japanese-owned banana plantation in southern Philippines early this month, the military said on Monday.

The New People’s Army (NPA) captors turned over the two soldiers, Benjamin Samano and Alvin Ricarte, to local officials and religious leaders led by Davao City mayor Rodrigo Duterte at a remote village in Mindanao’s Compostela Valley.

Philippine Department of National Defence communications chief Rear Admiral (formal rank) Danilo Lim confirmed the two soldiers were snatched during a raid by some 20 NPA guerrillas in a farm owned by Sumitomo Fruits Corporation.

Lim said they were captured after a fierce clash overnight over a dispute between locals and Japanese farmers on the farm.

Lim said they were freed within hours of the attack when the guerrillas were chased by soldiers.

The military said the two soldiers were due to be transferred to a veterans hospital in Davao City.

Photo taken on 21 Dec, 2014 shows a bulldozer clearing snow after a heavy snowfall blocked the traffic in the busy Manali highway in Himachal Pradesh, India.—Xinhua

Two kidnapped soldiers freed in S Philippines

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Two kidnapped soldiers freed in S Philippines

36 flights, 50 trains delayed as dense fog engulfs Indian capital

NEW DELHI, 22 Dec — At least 36 flights and 50 trains were delayed as a thick blanket of fog enveloped New Delhi on Monday.

Dense fog engulfed the city and the visibility at the airport runway is below 50 metres, and the city recorded a maximum temperature of 15 degrees Celsius on Sunday, lowest so far this winter.

At least four people have died due to cold wave in New Delhi.

The meteorological department has forecast moderate to dense fog on Monday with the maximum temperature likely to hover around 16 degrees Celsius.

Photo taken on 21 Dec, 2014 shows a bulldozer clearing snow after a heavy snowfall blocked the traffic in the busy Manali highway in Himachal Pradesh, India.—Xinhua

Two kidnapped soldiers freed in S Philippines

Cooking class aims to attract young Japanese women to Philippines

Tokyo, 22 Dec — Thai noodles and Indian curries are well known among young, gourmet-loving women who patronize Japan’s international food scene, but dishes from the Philippines have yet to find their way into the hearts and stomachs of that key demographic.

In an effort to remedy the situation, ABC Cooking Studio, a Japanese cooking school operator ABC Cooking Studio Co Inc-a-month cooking lessons on traditional Filipino cuisine from September to December.

The popularity of the lessons exceeded the organizers’ expectations. Most participants had never tasted Filipino food, and many left the lessons excited to also learn more about other aspects of the country’s culture.

Kyoko Miyamoto, 37, was one of 25 mostly female students who joined the final Filipino cooking class in early December at the ABC Cooking Studio in the Tokyo Midtown shopping complex in the capital’s Roppongi district.

“I have never visited the Philippines. Being involved with Filipino food in this way does make me want to go there,” Miyamoto said.

In the cooking programme, students were taught to prepare two main dishes — “pork adobo,” which is meat marinated and simmered in vinegar, soy sauce and garlic, “sambal na hipon,” a soup known for its sour taste and cooked with shrimp and vegetables — and “turon,” a popular Filipino snack made up of a banana in a deep-fried spring roll wrapper and covered with caramel sauce.

Organizers, who started discussing the cooking class project in 2013, said that up to 24 students could join each cooking lesson and that they were surprised to have no trouble filling up the slots.

Maiko Kosugi, a 28-year-old food blogger who cooked her first Filipino food at the ABC Cooking Studio with her friends, said, “I was not familiar with Filipino food and had no idea how it tasted, so I was surprised at how there was so much detail in preparing the food. Still, I could easily cook this at home.”

Other students ranging from their 20s to 30s shared such sentiments and seemed eager to eating Filipino cuisine again, or visit the Philippines for firsthand experience of the local cuisine.

This is good news for the Philippine tourist officials, who have been doubling efforts to boost tourism for the fast-growing Southeast Asian country which is just a four-hour flight from Tokyo. Aside from the cooking classes, they have also been promoting the country’s cuisine at food fairs.

The Philippine government data showed the number of Japanese tourists to the Philippines in 2013 totaled 437,305, up 5.15 percent from the previous year. More than 460,000 Japanese people are expected to have visited in 2014. “The Department of Tourism in Tokyo has embarked on tourism promotion to ensure the continued growth of Japanese tourists visiting the country,” said Valentino Cabansang, tourism attache and representative to East Japan of the Philippine Department of Tourism in Tokyo.

At the end of every two-hour cooking class, the department gave participants souvenir bags containing tourism pamphlets and dried mangoes.

The ABC Cooking Studio also offered cooking classes on “washoku” traditional Japanese cuisine — which was added to UNESCO’s Intangible Cultural Heritage list in 2013 — in the Philippines in 2014.

ABC Cooking Studio’s projects in Japan and the Philippines reflect hopes that interest in cooking will boost tourism for both countries.

Miyamoto, who liked her first taste of Filipino food, said, “I think it would be hard for me to travel to a country if I do not enjoy the local cuisine.”

Kyodo News

Two kidnapped soldiers freed in S Philippines

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Two kidnapped soldiers freed in S Philippines
China condemns cyberattacks

BEIJING / WASHINGTON, 22 Dec — China has said it opposes all forms of cyberattacks, but it stopped short of directly condemning the hacking of Sony Pictures, or of responding to US calls for action against North Korea, blamed by Washington for the assault.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi “reaffirmed China’s relevant position, emphasizing China opposes all forms of cyberattacks and cyber terrorism” in a conversation with US Secretary of State John Kerry on Sunday, the foreign ministry in Beijing said in a statement.

“(China) opposes any country or individual using other countries’ domestic facilities to conduct cyberattacks on third-party nations,” it said. The statement made no direct mention of North Korea.

It was the first time the United States had directly accused another country of a cyberattack of such magnitude on American soil and set up the possibility of a new confrontation between Washington and Pyongyang.

North Korea has denied it was to blame and has vowed to hit back against any US retaliation.

“We do not know who or where they (the hackers) are but we can surely say that they are supporters and sympathizers with the DPRK, or the official name for the North,” Chung Yang-ho, deputy energy minister, told Reuters by phone. He made no mention of North Korea and could not verify messages sent by a user claiming responsibility for the attacks and demanding the shutdown of three aging nuclear reactors.

“It’s our judgment that the control system itself is designed in such a way and there is no risk whatsoever,” Chung Yang-ho, deputy energy minister, told Reuters by phone. He made no mention of North Korea and could not verify messages sent by a user claiming responsibility for the attacks and demanding the shutdown of three aging nuclear reactors.

US Secretary of State John Kerry (R) delivers remarks as China’s Foreign Minister Wang Yi (L) looks on, before their meeting at the State Department in Washington on 1 Oct, 2014.—Reuters

It’s our judgment that the control system itself is designed in such a way and there is no risk whatsoever,” Chung Yang-ho, deputy energy minister, told Reuters by phone.

Three unidentified relatives (3rd R) of Sydney cafe siege victim, lawyer Katrina Dawson, gather after laying a floral tribute to her in Martin Place on 18 Dec, 2014.—Reuters

Three unidentified relatives (3rd R) of Sydney cafe siege victim, lawyer Katrina Dawson, gather after laying a floral tribute to her in Martin Place on 18 Dec, 2014.—Reuters

Education panel calls for introduction of new university entrance tests

SYDNEY, 22 Dec — An Australian court on Monday ordered bail revoked for the partner of a self-styled Sheikh who last week stormed a Sydney cafe at gunpoint, sparking a 16-hour hostage crisis that left three people dead, including the gunman.

Amrah Droudis, on bail after being charged with the murder of hostage-taker Man Haron Monis’ wife, was ordered by a Sydney court returned to jail to await trial.

Monis, who had been charged as an accessory to the murder, had also been free on bail.

The perceived failure of the justice system to prevent Monis, a convict- ed felon well known to authorities, from seizing a cafe in the city’s financial district in broad daylight, has sparked calls for a tightening of the bail system.

Three unidentified relatives (3rd R) of Sydney cafe siege victim, lawyer Katrina Dawson, gather after laying a floral tribute to her in Martin Place on 18 Dec, 2014.—Reuters

Three unidentified relatives (3rd R) of Sydney cafe siege victim, lawyer Katrina Dawson, gather after laying a floral tribute to her in Martin Place on 18 Dec, 2014.—Reuters

Court orders partner of Sydney hostage-taker jailed

Tokyo, 22 Dec — A Japanese government advisory body on education on Monday proposed the introduction of new “academic skill evaluation tests” for university entrance exams, calling on universities to pay more importance to essays and interviews with applicants in addition to the paper tests.

The Central Council for Education proposes the new mechanism start on 1 April, 2020, after the current “national centre test” for university exams is abolished.

If the proposal is accepted, the revision would be the first major change in Japan’s university entrance test mechanism since 1979.

The council filed the proposal with Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology Minister Hakubun Shimomura.

The “evaluation” tests would be conducted multiple times a year so that the applicants can use the best results for their university entrance exams.

The advisory body also called for the separate introduction of new tests to assess high school students’ basic academic skills in the 2019 academic year starting on 1 April, 2019.—Kyodo News

S Korea nuclear plant operator says hacked, but no risk to reactors

SOUTH KOREA, 22 Dec — Computer systems at South Korea’s nuclear plant operator have been hacked, but only non-critical data has been lost and there is no risk to the safety of the reactors.

The attacks come amid concerns that North Korea may mount cyberattacks against industrial and social targets after accusations by the United States that Pyongyang was responsible for a devastating hacking assault on Sony Pictures.

South Korea is still technically at war with the North.

South Korea’s energy ministry said it was confident that its nuclear plants could block any infiltration by cyber attackers that could compromise the safety of the reactors.

“It’s our judgement that the control system itself is designed in such a way and there is no risk whatsoever,” Chung Yang-ho, deputy energy minister, told Reuters by phone.

An official at Korea Hydro and Nuclear Power Co Ltd (KHNP), the nuclear plant operator that is part of state-run Korea Electric Power Corp, told Reuters that the hacking appeared to be the handiwork of “elements who want to cause social unrest”.

“IT is 100 percent impossible that a hacker can stop nuclear power plants by attacking them because the control monitoring system is totally independent and closed,” the official said.

Neither Chung nor the KHNP official made any mention of North Korea.

They also said they could not verify messages posted by a Twitter user claiming responsibility for the attacks and demanding the shutdown of three ageing nuclear reactors.

It was the first time the United States had directly accused another country of a cyberattack of such magnitude on American soil and set up the possibility of a new confrontation between Washington and Pyongyang.

North Korea has denied it was to blame and has vowed to hit back against any US retaliation.

“We do not know who or where they (the hackers) are but we can surely say that they are supporters and sympathizers with the DPRK, or the official name for the North,” Chung Yang-ho, deputy energy minister, told Reuters by phone.

Three unidentified relatives (3rd R) of Sydney cafe siege victim, lawyer Katrina Dawson, gather after laying a floral tribute to her in Martin Place on 18 Dec, 2014.— Reuters

The user who was described in the posting as but also of an anti-nuclear group based in Hawaii said more documents from the nuclear operator will be posted if the reactors are not closed.

Seoul prosecutors are conducting a criminal probe into the leak of data from KHNP, including blueprints of some nuclear reactors, electricity flow charges and radiation exposure estimates.

They have traced the IP used for a blog carrying the stolen documents to an online user in a southern city who has denied knowledge about the postings and claimed his user ID has been stolen.

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Obama to name Sally Yates as pick for deputy attorney general

HONOLULU, 22 Dec — US President Barack Obama is expected to announce on Monday that US Attorney Sally Yates will be his nominee for deputy attorney general, the No 2 position at the Justice Department, a US official said.

Yates, 54, currently serves as US Attorney for the Northern District of Georgia where she is known as a close ally of outgoing US Attorney Eric Holder’s Justice Department.

She is a vocal proponent of Holder’s policies on lowering incarceration rates by cutting jail time for low-level drug offenders.

During her time as a federal prosecutor in Georgia, Yates led several high-profile cases, including the successful prosecution of Eric Rudolph, who bombed a building in Atlanta during the 1996 Olympics.

Some Republicans, including Senators Ted Cruz, Mike Lee and David Vitter, have threatened to hold up confirmation of the new attorney general, who would oversee Yates, over disagreements with Obama’s new immigration policy.

If confirmed, Yates will replace outgoing Deputy Attorney General James Cole, who is leaving in January and has not announced future plans.

The choice of Yates signals that little may change at the Justice Department after Holder leaves the post.

Yates currently serves on Holder’s advisory committee of US attorneys under the leadership of Loretta Lynch, Obama’s pick to be the next attorney general.

“T heyir v e ry e ffecti ve p artnership l eading t he US attorney community will be taken to a whole new level,” said US Attorney for New Jersey Paul Fishman, who previously led the committee.

Lavrov to discuss situation around Mideast settlement with head of Palestinian delegation

MOSCOW, 22 Dec — Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov will on Monday hold a meeting with head of the Palestinian delegation at the Middle East talks Saeb Erekat.

The meeting between Lavrov and Erekat will be held against the backdrop of submission to the UN Security Council by Jordan of a draft resolution that gives 12 months to the comprehensive settlement of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, which should result in the establishment of a sovereign and vital state of Palestine.

The document also says that all Israeli forces should leave occupied territories not later than in 2017.

Answering on Friday a question on Russia’s position regarding the document, Lavrov said: “For us, there’s no question from the viewpoint of recognizing the Palestinian statehood proposed in the UN Security Council draft resolution.

“There’s a question on how the peace process will develop in the future. We are currently holding intensive contacts with both Palestinians and participants of the Quartet of international mediators to understand how all this situation may affect efforts to get the peace process out of the deadlock it was driven to this year,” he said.

The US said it would not back the draft resolution. Israel’s attitude towards the resolution was negative.

Meanwhile, Erekat said that if the document is not adopted, the State of Palestine will file documents to join the International Criminal Court.

Essebsi declares win in Tunisia election, rival contests

TUNIS, 22 Dec — Veteran politician Beji Caid Essebsi declared victory in Sunday’s presidential run-off vote, seen as the last step in Tunisia’s shift to full democracy four years after an uprising ousted autocrat Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali.

Official results are not due until Monday and his rival, the incumbent president, Moncef Marzouki, refused to concede defeat.

But soon after polls closed, Essebsi, an 88-year-old former parliament speaker under Ben Ali, announced that he had won by a clear margin and jubilant supporters took to the streets of the capital in celebration, chanting “Beji President!”

Victory for Essebsi would enable him to consolidate power, with his new secular party, Nidaa Tounes (Call for Tunisia) already controlling parliament after defeating the main Islamist party in legislative elections in October.

With a new progressive constitution and a string of votes successfully completed, Tunisia is hailed as an example of democratic change in a region that is struggling to cope with the aftermath of the 2011 Arab Spring revolts.

“I dedicate my victory to the martyrs of Tunisia. I thank Marzouki, and now we should work together without excluding anyone,” Essebsi told local television.

However his rival Marzouki, a 69-year-old former rights activist, rejected the victory claim and suggested that he would emerge the winner when the official results were released.

“Tunisia has won today, democracy has won, we need to stay united. Despite the claims of our adversary, all indications are positive for us, we look ahead,” he told cheering supporters from the balcony of his Tunis campaign headquarters.

Police fired tear gas to disperse a few hundred protesters in a southern city who took to the streets to denounce Essebsi’s victory speech, the state news agency TAP reported.

Although Tunisia has largely avoided the bitter post-revolt divisions that trouble Egypt and neighbouring Libya, tensions nevertheless flared between Islamists and secularists after the 2011 rebellion in one of the Arab world’s most secular nations.

Islamist militants who emerged in the wake of the uprising remain a risk. One gunman was killed overnight and three arrested after they opened fire on a polling station in the central Kairouan governorate.

Accepting former regime officials — known as the “Remnants” by their critics — back into politics was one of the steps that initially helped restore calm and keep Tunisia’s often unsteady transition to democracy on track.

Essebsi took 39 percent of votes in the first round ballot in November with Marzouki winning 33 percent.

As front runner, Essebsi dismissed critics who said victory for him would mark a return of the old regime stalwarts. He argued that he was the technocrat Tunisia needed following three messy years of an Islamist-led coalition government.
Every human being is born free and equal and no one has authority over others, according to Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Being born free and equal, men alienate their natural liberty to society only for their own advantage, hoping that society will in return provide them with what they need and will protect them by law. On the other hand, they abide by the laws of the society, which are the only conditions of civil association. When a society fails to do so, men regain their natural liberty for their survival, breaches between the society.

Recently, about 300 unidentified men armed with swords rampaged through a squatter in Hlinethaya Township in the former capital Yangon, injuring some of its residents and damaging a number of their shelters that could hardly be termed as any forms of human dwellings by any standards. The purpose of the attack was to regain the land by getting rid of the alleged squatters from the land said to be owned by a company. This undesirable rampage continued without any intervention for some time, forcing the residents to defend themselves by wielding whatever weapon they could lay their hands on. Later, the company that claims to own the land said it had to hire those men with swords as it was impossible to solve the problem at the court of law. It can be said that all of them have regained their natural liberty, which means just survival or preservation for oneself.

The society has still failed to provide the residents what they basically need as human beings and as a result, they settled on the vacant land plot said to be owned by the company. In Myanmar, it is also not clear whether those who are said to own land have also acquired it in accordance with the law. Therefore, the government and the Hluttaw have had to set up commissions to tackle land disputes across the country in accordance with the law and to provide land or low-rent apartments to the landless.

Everyone needs to respect laws that bind them together as a society or a country. If no one has respect for the law and regains their natural liberty, the ties that bind them together as a society will collapse.

If no one has respect for law
By Myint Win Thein

Every aspect is linked with, and benefits many other sectors. It contributes to regional development, poverty alleviation and raising the living standard of local communities. It generates more income for local governments through taxes. It creates job opportunities for people with a variety of levels of education. It draws foreign and local investments. It develops local and foreign trade. It improves the image of the country abroad. It attracts regional and international events like conferences, forums, exhibitions and competitions. It develops other sectors of the economy such as construction, transportation, entertainment, furniture, handicrafts and souvenirs, production, the hospitality industry, etc. It encourages the establishment of human resource development institutions and programmes related to hospitality industry, tourism and recreation. It also enhances better management and conservation of heritage sites, regeneration of run-down urban areas, promotion of cleanliness, neatness and sanitation, taking pride in one’s cultural assets and popularization of traditional and regional food, crafts and products within the country, as well as abroad.

There is no doubt that because of its long history, unique geographical features and warm-hearted people, Myanmar can be said to possess all the attributes of a perfect tourist destination. The country is well located, being neighbours of two of the world’s largest and most densely populated countries in the world, China and India, and serving as a land bridge between South and Southeast Asia. Area wise, Myanmar is the second largest country in Southeast Asia with the top two highest mountains, the second, third and fourth longest rivers and the tenth largest lake in the region. As a country of over 1930 km from north to south, it straddles the Tropic of Cancer, and is geographical- ly diverse with snow capped mountains, cool hills, deep valleys, fertile plains criss-crossed with mighty rivers, and regions, enchanting islands, beautiful lakes, fierce waterfalls, unspoilt hot springs, long coastlines, pristine beaches, and dense forests with an abundance of wildlife and rare species of plants. Above all, Myanmar is home to over 100 national races and has a rich history dating back to more than one thousand years. The country is dotted with many important heritage sites and unique architecture, as many kingdoms rose during its history to be succeeded by another, such as the Pyu kingdoms which are acknowledged as the first Buddhist kingdoms in Southeast Asia, the Mon kingdoms, the powerful Bagan kingdom and its successive kingdoms. They had made Myanmar one of the most powerful nations in the region since the 12th century. In addition, the languages, cultures, costumes, architecture, music, song, dance, art, craft, and food, all contribute charm and variety to a country that few can compete with in terms of diversity and uniqueness.

Myanmar is also well known for its good-natured, friendly, generous, hospitable, honest, small, sincere, unpretentious and well-mannered people as commended by foreigners who have visited Myanmar. 70 percent of the population live in rural areas, and they can be even more warm-hearted than those living in urban areas, and are ready to give a hearty welcome to whoever that visits them, offering them hospitality which is simple but necessary quality and skills to expand training programmes for persons with different levels of skills, in already established higher education institutions of regions popular with tourists.

The definition of a tourist according to Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary is “someone who visits a place for pleasure and interest usually while on a holiday”. Hence, it is important to show tourists not just places of religious and historical interest, but also to take them to places of entertainment. One does not need to conduct a large scale research on this matter, as a study of a few of our more experienced neighbours such as China, India, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Cambodia will suffice to tell us what kind of entertainments to develop. It is my opinion that the majority of tourists will be quite happy to watch traditional dances, marionette shows, performances of short scenes from traditional plays, and brief demonstration of traditional games and sports, listen to local music and songs, take part in traditional ceremonies and celebrate, and go on a cruise along the river, which are all good experiences. Care must be taken not to make the performances too long, as lengthy performances of something in a different language and from a different culture can be quite boring experience. Hence, it is essential for those in the entertainment field, to be familiar with the taste of foreigners, what to choose to present, how to involve their participation and how to adapt local music, songs, dances and plays to suit their preferences.

It is also necessary to make cities and towns visited by tourists more attractive and interesting. The first requirement is to keep the places as clean, tidy and beautiful as possible using landscaping and brightening them with local trees and flowering plants to bring out the best of the places. (See page 9)

Making Myanmar a memorable trip for tourists
By Myo Myint

The tourism industry has been dubbed as smokeless industry because S.N. Mishra (2009) explained in Basic of Tourism Management, it requires no plants, chimneys, or machines, or actual product. Others say it is so called because as a service industry, it has no obvious effects on the local area, but like other industries, it supports the economy and creates job opportunities. What is most significant about the tourism industry is that it is not a stand-alone industry. It is interlinked with, and benefits many other sectors. It contributes to regional development, poverty alleviation and raising the living standard of local communities. It generates more income for local governments through taxes. It creates job opportunities for people with a variety of levels of education. It draws foreign and local investments. It develops local and foreign trade. It improves the image of the country abroad. It attracts regional and international events like conferences, forums, exhibitions and competitions. It develops other sectors of the economy such as construction, transportation, entertainment, furniture, handicrafts and souvenirs production, the hospitality industry, etc. It encourages the establishment of human resource development institutions and programmes related to hospitality industry,
5 foreigners arrested for stealing cash from ATMs

NAV PI TAW, 22 Dec—Police have arrested five foreigners on suspicion of stealing money from automatic teller machines at Yangon banks since last month in two separate cases.

The first suspect, identified as British citizen Niranjan Rasalingam, was arrested on 22 November while he was trying to withdraw money from an ATM using a fake bankcard. He confessed to committing the thefts together with four other suspects. Among them, three suspects—Indian nationals Mathiyalagan Rajkumar, Pandian Balu and Muthaya Dinsh Kumar—have since been arrested, while an unidentified suspect of the same nationality is absconding.

Police further investigated the cases and found that the four suspects stole money from the six private banks 58 times. They were arrested with 35 fake bankcards, two memory cards, an iPad, a laptop and more than 2.53 million kyat.

The investigation has revealed that the stolen money was not from the accounts of local customers, shareholders or private banks, but from Visa company and accounts of foreigners.

Visa is the second such financial service to enter Myanmar, after MasterCard made the country’s first multinational card ATM transaction. The world’s largest payment network has signed licensing agreements in Myanmar with CB, KBZ and Myanmar Oriental Banks. Authorities said the thefts happened not because of faults of the local banks, but because of the weakness of ATMs set up by foreign financial institutions.

All these suspects have been charged with criminal theft and offenses under the electronic act and immigration act. In the second case, a foreigner identified as Bulgarian citizen Dimo Velinov Ivanov, was arrested as he was trying to steal money from an ATM at a bank in Yangon. Two electric circuits with memory cards, two small batteries, and two metal foils, as well as one MasterCard and one Visa card, both with his name of them, were seized from him.

He was also charged with a criminal theft and offenses under the electronic act and immigration act.

Further investigation has revealed that a second Bulgarian suspect in the same case, identified as Shmandurov Andon Ivinov, is now absconding. —MNA

Making Myanmar ...

(from page 5)

It is especially important to landscape scenic spots like waterfronts carefully as too many plants, or unsuitable ones can block beautiful views. It should be made compulsory for cities and towns that draw tourists to conserve its heritage buildings, because these are the distinguished features of a place and not the modern buildings which can be seen in every country. Similarly, it is necessary to establish museums, and exhibition centres to showcase local products and crafts. Many Myanmar museums have more artifacts than they can exhibit at the same time, and they are kept in storage. Special exhibitions on specific themes should be held to be able to rotate all their collections and draw more visitors. Visit to unique factories and cottage industries where demonstrations of how a product is made can enliven the visits of tourists, but again these places must be interesting, clean and tidy. Myanmar has the advantage of having a festival in every month of the year and participation in them can make the visit more memorable and enjoyable for tourists.

For many tourists, food is as important as accommodation, and it is important to have restaurants and eateries with a wide range of food. While it is necessary to have restaurants that specialize in international food, there should also be clean and inexpensive restaurants and food stalls serving local food including dishes of national races for those tourists who are adventurous and would like to have a taste of the huge diversity of dishes available in the country, and who can popularize it in their home countries, as it happened with lephet and mohinga for which foreigners have acquired a taste.

Tourists do not just like to take back photographs and videos of places they have visited. They also like to take back souvenirs. Again, Myanmar has a large variety of art and crafts made of silver, bronze, wood, cane, bamboo, straw, cloth, leather, seashells, rocks, etc., and a wide range of jewellery and textiles from which tourists can choose. But it must be reminded that for these souvenirs to be saleable, craftsmen and sellers must be aware, firstly, that the products have to be of the quality, shape, colour, design, packaging and price that foreigners like and secondly, that they need to be of the size, weight and shape convenient for them to carry back home. Hence to popularize Myanmar souvenirs, opinions and advice of foreign specialists need to be sought.

There are many guidebooks produced abroad on Myanmar tourist attractions. While some are up-to-date, others contain a lot of outdated and wrong information. With the growth in the tourist industry, it is important that tourists are provided with up-to-date and correct information. With the growth in the tourist industry, it is important that tourists are provided with up-to-date and correct information. With the growth in the tourist industry, it is important that tourists are provided with up-to-date and correct information. With the growth in the tourist industry, it is important that tourists are provided with up-to-date and correct information. With the growth in the tourist industry, it is important that tourists are provided with up-to-date and correct information.

There are many guidebooks produced abroad on Myanmar tour destinations. While some are up-to-date, others contain a lot of outdated and wrong information. With the growth in the tourist industry, it is important that tourists are provided with up-to-date and correct information.

Another area that has room for improvement is making it convenient for tourists to travel in Myanmar. Again, there should be a wide variety of choices, but they should all be safe, punctual, clean and up to international standard. So also airports, railway and bus stations and ports should provide necessary information and have adequate facilities for the convenience of passengers.

The 2013-14 target of Myanmar for foreign tourists is 2 million and up to the beginning of December, 1.9 million tourists have visited Myanmar. The coming year’s target of welcoming 3 million tourists cannot be said to be too ambitious, because Laos received 3.8 million tourists in 2013. Many travel agencies see Myanmar as one of the promising new destinations for tourists which could rival its neighbours. To maintain the momentum of increase in tourists, we need to make the effort to learn from the experience of other neighbouring countries, and develop new products and better facilities. We also need to ensure that all the service providers involved in tourism are fair to their customers and do not overcharge, or cheat them, to make a fast buck, so that we can maintain our competitiveness, attraction and good name. It is also crucial to educate those involved in tourism on how to improve their services, so that their earnings can be raised. Lastly, it needs to be repeated that the close collaboration of many ministries, local government authorities, the private sector and stakeholders is indispensable in making tourism one of the top contributing sectors to our country’s economy in the near future.

Indian citizen fugitive

Mr Sajjan Mohamed Arif in case of taking out money from ATM of private banks on 22-11-2014. —MNA

Fake ATM cards used in taking out money from ATMs.—MNA

Indian citizens Mr Mathiyalagan Rajkumar, Mr Pandian Balu and Mr Muthaya Dinsh Kumar who got involved in withdrawing money from ATMs on 22-11-2014.—MNA

Bulgarian Mr. Dimo Velinov Ivanov (L) who attempted to draw money from ATM on 14 December 2014 seen with tools, and Bulgarian Mr Shmandurov Andon Ivinov (R) who escaped from the scene.—MNA
Iraqi Kurds, Yazidis fight Islamic State for strategic town of Sinjar

Mount Sinjar, 22 Dec — Kurdish and Yazidi fighters battled to take the strategic northern Iraqi town of Sinjar back from Islamic State on Sunday after breaking a months-long siege of the mountain above it.

Seizing the town would restore the majority of territory Iraq’s Kurds lost in the jihadist group’s surprise August offensive. It would also give a huge strategic victory to both the Iraqi Kurds and the central government in Baghdad, as the Kurdish fighters could then cut the highway from Syria to Mosul, a vital supply line for Islamic State. Backed by US warplanes, Iraqi Kurdish and Yazidi fighters, also joined by Kurdish guerrillas from Syria and Turkey, pushed into Sinjar from the western border post of Rabia and from Sinjar mountain to the north, to which Islamic State fighters opened a corridor on 21 Dec, 2014. Earlier on Sunday, one soldier and a civilian were killed and five people wounded in two separate IED blasts in Jalalabad city, the provincial capital of Nangarhar Province, police said.—Xinhua

US-led forces launch 13 air strikes in Iraq, three in Syria

WASHINGTON, 22 Dec — US-led forces attacked Islamic State targets on Sunday with 13 air strikes in Iraq and three in Syria, using fighter, bomber and other aircraft, the US military said.

Four of the Iraq strikes were near Sinjar in the north of the country, which destroyed Islamic State buildings, tactical units and vehicles, while other Iraqi cities targeted included Tal Afar, Ramadi, Mosul and Baiji, according to the Combined Joint Task Force. The strikes in Syria over the weekend were focused around the contested city of Kobani near the Turkish border, it said in a statement.

There were five air strikes near Kobani on Saturday followed by the three on Sunday.

In Iraq, US and partner nations conducted eight air strikes on Saturday, including near Tal Afar, Ar Rutba, Mosul and Baiji, the task force said.

Afghan security forces transfer a destroyed military vehicle following a blast in east Afghanistan on 21 Dec, 2014. Earlier on Sunday, one soldier and a civilian were killed and five people wounded in two separate IED blasts in Jalalabad city, the provincial capital of Nangarhar Province, police said.—Xinhua

Libya’s official government targets rival forces trying to seize ports

BENGHAZI, 22 Dec — Military planes loyal to Libya’s recognized government attacked on Sunday an opposing force that is seeking to seize the country’s two biggest oil ports, officials said.

The advancing force, which is allied to a rival government based in Tripoli, moved east a week ago to try take the Es Sider and Ras Lanuf ports. The adjacent terminals have since closed, halting exports of an estimated 300,000 barrels a day of oil.

The recognized government of Prime Minister Abdullah al-Thinni was forced to relocate to the east after losing control of Tripoli in August to a group called Libya Dawn, which installed a new administration in the capital city.

On Sunday, pro-Thinni forces sent aircraft to bomb the advancing fighters some 40 km (25 miles) west of Es Sider and also inside Sirt, a large city further along the coast, said a military spokesman in Es Sider.

He said the planes had bombed military targets, but Ismail al-Shukri, a spokesman for the rival force said civilian targets had been hit in Sirt.

There was no immediate word of any casualties.

The fighting is part of a wider struggle for control of the North African country which sits on Africa’s largest oil reserves. Former rebel groups which helped topple Muammar Gaddafi in 2011, NATO-backed uprising now fight each other.

Western powers fear the conflict could lead to the break-up of the OPEC producer. The United Nations had planned to launch a new round of talks to defuse the crisis last week, but the latest fighting delayed the negotiations.

The UN said on Wednesday the venue and date for the meeting were still unclear.

A Reuters reporter visiting Es Sider saw Thinni’s forces building up a defensive line with tanks and anti-aircraft gun mounted on trucks some 10 km (6 miles) west of the terminal. “We are in contact with the airforce and the coastal guards to coordinate,” said a commander. The reporter saw a helicopter and MiG jet standing ready at an airport at Ras Lanuf, which is normally used by oil firms.—Reuters
US firm finds malware targeting visitors to Afghan government websites

WASHINGTON, 22 Dec — Malicious software likely linked to China was used to infect visitors to a wide range of official Afghan government websites, US cybersecurity researchers say.

ThreatConnect, a Virginia-based cybersecurity firm, said its researchers last week found a corrupted JavaScript file that was used to host content on “gov.af” websites, and there are no known antivirus protections available for the malware.

Rich Barger, chief intelligence officer of ThreatConnect, told Reuters his company was confident the new campaign, “Operation Poisoned Helmand,” was linked to the “Poisoned Hurricane” campaign described this summer by another security firm, FireEye, that linked it to Chinese intelligence.

He said the latest attack was very recent and one timestamp associated with the Java file was from 16 December, the same day Chinese Prime Minister Li Keqiang met with Afghanistan’s chief executive officer, Abdullah Abdullah in Kazakhstan.

China is seeking to take a more active role in Afghanistan as the United States and NATO reduce their military presence.

“We found continued activity from Chinese specific actors that have used the Afghan government infrastructure as an attack platform,” Barger said, adding that Chinese intelligence could use the malware to gain access to computer users who had checked the Afghan government sites.

Barger said the attack was a variant of what he called a typical “watering-hole” attack in which the attackers infect a large number of victims, and then follow up with the most “promising” hits to extract data.

He said researchers this summer saw a malicious Java file on the website of the Greek Embassy in Beijing while a high-level delegation led by Keqiang was visiting Greek Prime Minister Antonis Samaras in Athens.

The two events were not directly related, Barger said, and additional research was needed into the status of ministerial and official government websites or around the dates of notable Chinese delegations and or bilateral meetings.

In this case, the malware was created on 13 December, just days before the high-level meeting, Barger said.

The malware was found on numerous Afghan government websites, including the ministries of justice, foreign affairs, education, commerce and industry, finance and women’s affairs, and the Afghan Embassy in Canberra, Australia, according to ThreatConnect, which was formerly known as Cyber Squared.

By late Sunday, Barger said it appeared that the attackers or “cleaned up” by the Afghan government.

Xiaomi raising over $1 bln from investors including GIC

SINGAPORE / SHANGHAI, 22 Dec — China’s Xiaomi is raising over $1 billion from investors including Singapore sovereign wealth fund GIC that would value the smartphone maker at over $45 billion, a person familiar with the deal said.

The fund raising was first reported by the Wall Street Journal earlier this month, and Xiaomi confirmed it to Reuters.

The people said this round was led by tech fund All-Stars Investment and included Russian tech fund DST Global and Yunfeng Capital, a private-equity firm affiliated with Alibaba Group Holding Ltd Executive Chairman Jack Ma.

All-Stars Investment is led by former Morgan Stanley analyst Rich Barger.

GIC’s investment in Xiaomi comes after Singapore state investor Temasek Holdings Pte Ltd bought a small stake in the smartphone maker during an earlier funding exercise, a second person said.

The people were not authorized to speak to media on the matter and so declined to be identified.

Xiaomi and GIC declined to comment. Ji could not be reached for comment.

Xiaomi brands itself as an Internet company that eschews traditional marketing and sells hardware at low prices as a distribution channel for its real money maker, software and services.

It has been investing heavily in other manufacturers with the aim of building an ecosystem of Internet-connected devices and appliances to extend its reach beyond smartphones.

Nomura analysts said in a report earlier this month that Xiaomi and founder Lei Jun had invested in 43 companies across China’s mobile Internet eco-system, including smart device makers, network infrastructure firms, smartphone platform developers, and providers of various mobile internet services.

Xiaomi’s investment partners include Shunwei VC, Temasek and Kingsoft, the Nomura analysts said.

India tests its heaviest space launch vehicle, eyes global market

NEW DELHI, 22 Dec — India’s space agency successfully tested on Thursday its most powerful satellite launch vehicle that can put heavier payloads into space, and, it hopes, win India a bigger slice of the $300 billion global space industry.

The Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) also checked the working of an unmanned crew module on the vehicle, which could give the agency the option of manned missions.

Once operational, the Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV) Mark III will be able to put satellites weighing about 4 tonnes into orbit, almost doubling India’s current capability.

“The powerful launch vehicle ... will change our destiny in placing various spacecraft into communication orbits,” said S Somnath, project director of the new GSLV vehicle.

Songbirds fly coop long before tornadoes arrive in Tennessee

WASHINGTON, 22 Dec — You might want to be careful about who you call a birdbrain. Some of our feathered friends exhibit powers of perception that put humans to shame.

Scientists said on Thursday that little songbirds known as golden-winged warblers fled their nesting grounds in Tennessee up to two days before the arrival of a fierce storm system that unleashed 84 tornadoes in southern US states in April.

The researchers said the birds were apparently alerted to the danger by sounds at frequencies below the range of human hearing.

The storm killed 35 people, wrecked many homes, toppled trees and tossed vehicles around like toys, but the warblers were already long gone, flying up to 930 miles (1,500 km) in a day. Some were reaching points as far away as Florida and Cuba, the researchers said.

Local weather conditions were normal when the birds took flight from their breeding ground in the Cumberland Mountains of eastern Tennessee, with no significant changes in factors like barometric pressure, temperature or wind speeds.

And the storm, already spawning tornadoes, was still hundreds of miles away.

“This suggests that these birds can detect severe weather at great distances,” said wildlife biologist David Andersen of the University of Minnesota.

He noted that the study published in the journal Current Biology.

“We hypothesize that the birds were detecting infrasound from tornadoes that were already occurring when the storm was still quite distant from our study site,” Andersen added.

Infrasound is below the normal limits of human hearing, but some animals can hear it.

The warblers came right back home after the storm passed, said fellow researcher Henry Sterby, an ecologist from the University of California, Berkeley.

The researchers, who were already studying the migratory patterns of the naivile Java file had either been inactivated by the attackers or “cleaned up” by the Afghan government.

Reuters
Sanctions against Russia should be canceled if Minsk agreements observed

The sanctions are not an end in itself, deputy chairman of the faction of the Social Democratic Party of Germany in parliament Rolf Muetzenich says.

German lawmaker

The West announced new, sectoral, restrictions against Russia in late July, in particular, for what the Russian government was Moscow’s alleged involvement in protests in Ukraine’s south-east.

In response, Russia imposed on 6 August a one-year ban on imports of beef, pork, poultry, fish, cheeses, fruit, vegetables and dairy products from Australia, Canada, the EU, the United States and Norway. Russia has constantly dismissed Western allegations that it could in any way be involved in hostilities in the southeast of Ukraine.

Muetzenich was quoted by of politics and security, reliable from the viewpoint the atmosphere become fire established in eastern

Many in parliament Rolf Muetzenich of the faction of the Social Democratic Party of Germany in parliament Rolf Muetzenich says.

“We need to be very clear and frank: sanctions must be lifted if the ceasefire regime ed if the ceasefire regime is respected,” Muetzenich said.

In early September, some Russian companies came under first batch of Western sanctions, including visa bans and asset freezes, after Russia incorporated Crimea in mid-March after a coup rocked Ukraine in February.

The Australian house where eight children killed to be demolished

The house where an Australian mother allegedly killed eight children, most of them her own, will likely be demolished in keeping with indigenous culture to make way for a memorial, a government official said on Monday. The fate of the house in the tropical northern city of Cairns was being discussed while a judge decided to transfer the murder case against 37-year-old Raina Mersane Ina Thaiday to Queensland state’s Mental Health Court. Thaiday is the mother of the four boys and three of the girls who were slain. The eighth child was her niece. The Queensland government agreed to the demolition of the home because of the horrific nature of the killings and in keeping with indigenous cultural beliefs, Queensland MP Gavin King said.

The government will liaise with the community on what form a memorial would take. Thaiday was charged on Sunday with eight counts of murder over the deaths of the children, aged between two and 14 years.

Magistrate Alan Comans declined a request from Thaiday’s lawyer, Steven MacFarlane, to have the case moved to the Mental Health Court. Comans said during a brief hearing at the Cairns Magistrates Court on Monday it was too soon for such a request.

No plea was entered at the hearing on behalf of Thaiday, who remains under police guard in hospital. She is being treated for stab wounds. MacFarlane said he was not sure how long his client would remain in hospital, where she is also awaiting psychiatric assessment. Police have asked that media abide by the cultural protocols of the indigenous Torres Strait Islander community, to which the family belongs, and withhold the names and photos of the dead children.

Rep Paul Ryan of the House Budget Committee, a moderate Republican, is the most visible critic of the bill’s approach, which has resulted in a delay of the final vote. Ryan has been pushing for a more conservative approach to tax reform that would include-rate cuts and tax reforms, or balance the budget and avoid painful cuts in military spending.


Reuters

Ryan told Reuters in a recent interview, “We know for a fact that it is not accurate or prudent to ignore the effects of economic growth on policies we make in Congress.”

Under current congressional analysis rules, if a bill cuts tax rates, government revenues will fall. Dynamic scoring assumes that CBO’s work under Elmendorf “pushes failed Keynesian economic analysis.”

It also criticized CBO for failing to reject analyses of President Barack Obama’s healthcare reform law produced by conservative White House consultant Jonathan Gruber, who has come under fire for videotaped remarks saying the law was written to hide new taxes and that voter “stupidity” aided its passage.

But several prominent conservative economists have backed Elmendorf, arguing that Republicans would gain more credibility by keeping the former Clinton administration economist. They note that CBO’s work under Elmendorf has been evenhanded, and on some occasions where it has supplied dynamic scoring analysis for informational purposes, Democrats have been hurt. For example, CBO estimated that Obama’s minimum-wage hike plan would eliminate around 500,000 jobs in the near term. “If you go with dynamic scoring, Elmendorf is a great guy to implement that,” said Michael Strain, deputy director of economic policy studies at the conservative American Enterprise Institute. “It would be harder to accuse Republicans of putting their thumb on the scale” if he stays.

Kyocera build 13.4-megawatt floating solar power plant near Tokyo

OSAKA, 22 Dec — Japanese photovoltaic cell maker Kyocera Corp said on Monday it will build a 13.4-megawatt floating solar power plant in a venture at a dam in Chubu Prefecture near Tokyo. The joint venture with Century Tokyo Leasing Corp plans to start operation of the plant in March 2016 with about 50,000 solar power generation modules installed on the water surface of the Yamakura Dam in Ishikawa Prefecture.

All the electricity generated at the plant will be sold to Tokyo Electric Power Co for an estimated 450 million yen a year.

The plant is expected to generate about 15,635 megawatts of electricity annually, which is equivalent to the amount consumed by 4,700 households each year, Kyocera said.

Kyocera said the facility will be one of the world’s largest floating solar power plants. It plans to start operation of 30 floating solar power plants nationwide during fiscal 2015, which ends March 2016.

Kyodo News

5 Iranian men were hanged in Esfahan for raping a 14-year-old girl

Iranian prison officials said on Thursday that five Iranian men were executed in the central city of Esfahan for raping a 14-year-old girl.

Police arrested the five men, whose names were not released, after receiving a complaint from the victim's family.

Iranian law permits the death penalty for committing sodomy and for raping girls aged 15 or under.

Republican lawmakers weigh big changes at US budget referee agency

WASHINGTON, 22 Dec — When Republicans take full control of Congress on 6 January, they will face decisions on major changes at the Congressional Budget Office, including possibly naming a new head and changing the rules used to assess the cost of legislation. Conservative groups have been calling for the replacement of CBO Director Doug Elmendorf, who was appointed by Democrats in 2009 and whose term expires next month. They argue that a Republican-leaning economist would more readily adopt a cost analysis known as “dynamic scoring” that incor-

...
CONGRATULATIONS

We would like to congratulate on the Patron of

the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (UMFCCI) and

the Chairman of the Kanbawza Bank Limited, U Aung Ko Win,

who has served the highest Income Tax at the first place among all higher national tax payers

nation-wide in Myanmar once again for the Assessment Year of 2013-2014,

as per official announcement of the Internal Revenue Department, the Ministry of Finance,

the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, Yangon dated 22.12.2014.

We wish that you continue to be the highest tax payer in Myanmar for the upcoming years

and contribute toward the betterment of society and development of the country.

Chairman and Central Working Committee/Working Committee
The Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (UMFCCI)

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE
MV THAI BINH BAY VOY NO (08/14)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV THAI BINH BAY VOY NO (08/14) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 22.12.2014 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of A.W.P.T(2) where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S RK SHIPPING & TRADING PTE LTD.

Phone No: 2301186

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE
MV KOTA RAJIN VOY NO (899)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV KOTA RAJIN VOY NO (899) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 22.12.2014 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of A.W.P.T where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S ADVANCE CONTAINER LINES

Phone No: 2301185

Bank Holiday

All Banks will be closed on 25th December (Thursday) Christmas Day 2014, being public holiday under the Negotiable Instrument Act.

Central Bank of Myanmar

WEATHER REPORT

BAY INFERENCE:
Weather is generally generally fair in the North Bay and partly cloudy to cloudy in the Andaman Sea and elsewhere in the Bay of Bengal.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL EVENING OF THE 23rd December, 2014: Weather will be partly cloudy in Bago, Yangon, Ayeyawady and Taninthayi Regions, Kayah, Kayin and Mon States and generally fair in the remaining Regions and States.

Major Russian pharmaceutical companies stop production of life-saving drugs

 Moscow, 22 Dec — Some 16 major Russian pharmaceutical companies have stopped the production of “the cheapest and the most essential drugs,” including antibiotics and fluids, the chairman of the State Duma health committee Sergey Kalashnikov said on Monday. “This comes due to a sharp increase in the dollar price for the substances which are bought abroad,” Kalashnikov said, adding that the prime cost of medicines is now some three or four times higher than the actual price amid weakened rouble. The members of the State Duma health committee as well as representatives of the Russian Health Ministry, the Ministry of Industry and Trade, the Federal Anti-Monopoly Service and the Federal Tariff Service are due to focus on the situation at an urgent meeting later on Monday. “The main goal is to develop a concept for work in emergency conditions to ensure uninterrupted access to medicines,” Kalashnikov said, explaining that the idea is to adjust prices for foreign-made life-saving drugs and resume the production of pharmaceutical substances in Russia. The lawmaker in particular proposes that Russia should follow the example of India and Brazil and introduce a mechanism of mandatory licensing when “it is allowed to manufacture medicines, generics if a patent has not expired.” This concerns the “most expensive medicines” which are used to treat such diseases as cancer and AIDS, he said.—Itar-Tass

According to the chairman of the State Duma health committee Sergey Kalashnikov, this comes due to a sharp increase in the dollar price for the substances which are bought abroad.—Itar-Tass
TV talent show winner Ben Haenow lands Britain’s Christmas No 1

LONDON, 22 Dec — The winner of Britain’s “X-Factor” TV talent show, 29-year-old Ben Haenow, claimed the coveted Christmas number one spot in the British singles chart on Sunday, the Official Charts Company said.

Haenow’s “Something I Need” became the second fastest-selling single of the year, shifting 214,000 copies to knock last week’s chart topper “Uptown Funk” by Mark Ronson and Bruno Mars into second place.

Haenow is the seventh X-Factor winner to claim a Christmas number one in the past 10 years.

Ed Sheeran took third place in the chart with “Thinking Out Loud”, while “Let Me Love You” by DJ Snake featuring Lil Jon rose to number four. Fifth spot was taken by The Weeknd with “Can’t Feel My Face”.

The shortlist will make it to the final 35 movies that will qualify for the final category. The last Indian film that made it to the final five nominees was Ashutosh Gowariker’s ‘Lagaan’ for the 74th Academy awards in 2003. ‘Mother India’ and ‘Satyajit Ray’ are the other two Indian films to have made it to the top five.

The 87th Academy awards will take place on 22 February. The films that have made it to the shortlist this year include ‘Wild Tales’, an Argentinean film by director Damian Szifron.

India’s ‘Liar’s Dice’ out of Oscars race

LONDON, 22 Dec — India’s official entry ‘Liar’s Dice’, a road drama about a tribal woman’s journey to find her missing husband was cut from the shortlist for the Academy awards.

The actress even dished out that she catches her favourite film during the oc­asion. “I like to watch old movies, read and bake. My favourite holiday movie is ‘Home Alone 2’, believe it or not,” she added.—PTI

Final ‘Hobbit’ film draws holiday season crowds at box office

LONDON, 22 Dec — The last movie of Peter Jackson’s “Hobbit” films rode to the top of US and Canadian weekend box office charts, selling an estimated $56.2 million worth of tickets and boosting the holiday movie season that is crucial to Hollywood.

“The Hobbit: The Battle of the Five Armies” grabbed another $34.4 million from Wednesday and Thursday screenings for a combined debut of $90.6 million over its first five days, distributor Warner Bros said on Sunday.

“Night at the Museum” was placed on online piracy sites a few days before the film’s release, reportedly People magazine.

“Getting to see my family all in one place. I travel so frequently for work, it’s one of the only times we all get together,” she said.

20th Century Fox, a unit of 21st Century Fox. Lions Gate Entertainment Corp distributed “Mockingjay”.—Reuters

I’ve no patience to cook Christmas Dinner: Angelina Jolie

LONDON, 22 Dec — Superstar Angelina Jolie forec­esses her husband Brad Pitt to cook the Christmas Dinner as she has no patience.

The 39-year-old mother of six said she gets too easily distracted to be in charge of such a huge and important meal. Speaking on Good Morning Brit­ain, Jolie said, “Nobody in my house wants me to do anything on Christmas Day. I have no patience! I start things and then I get distracted and I go and I’ll start reading over there, or start playing outside with the kids.”

“I think you have to be very patient to cook. I’d be designated to the chopping board! Brad would be re­ally good at the timing and organization.”

Admitting that they hadn’t really thought much about what to get each other for Christmas, the Pitt-Jolie family are to con­centrate on making sure their six children have an amazing time.

“We travel a lot so I think it’s more what to do, what’s going to be the experience, where we’re going to go, or what we’re going to do, who we’re go­ing to see, and I think they [the children] know.”

“Mummy loves a stocking and I love a gift, we try our best not to spoil them so we try to be very balanced and calculating to not go too far.”—PTI

Aguirre to explain himself at press conference

TOKYO, 22 Dec — Embattled Japan manager Javier Aguirre will hold a press conference to offer an explanation regarding match-fixing charges that have been leveled at him in Spain, the Japan Football Association revealed on Sunday when its board of trustees met.

Arrangements are being made so the press conference will be held before Aguirre's squad is to begin training for next month's Asian Cup on 29 December. The Mexican coach has not appeared in public since Spanish prosecutors named him among 41 individuals last week in a report into the alleged rigging of a Liga clash between Levante and his former club Zaragoza in May 2011.

Aguirre was manager of Zaragoza and the team won the match 2-1, avoiding relegation to the second tier as a result. He could be asked to appear in Spain if the complaint is accepted by a Valencia court and a full-scale investigation is launched towards the inner circle. If so, what can we do.

Spanish prosecutors alleged that the Levante players were paid a total of 965,000 euros to deliberately lose the game, according to reports.

Zaragoza first made bank transfers to Aguirre and its players, and then the money passed on to the Levante players, reports said citing the prosecutors. Former Zaragoza president Agapito Toiglas and players from both teams are cited as defendants in the complaint.

Aguirre, who has also coached the Mexican national team and has played as manager at Atletico Madrid and Espanyol in Spain, was appointed as Japan coach in late August.

He replaced Italian coach Alberto Zaccheroni, who stepped down after Saturday's 2-0 home victory over Livingston. Sunday's decision ended the uncertainty surrounding the future of the club's all-time record goalscorer. Rangers, who were founded in 1873, had never played outside the top division from the formation of the Scottish League in 1890 until 2012, a year after winning their 54th title. They are nine points behind leaders Hearts in the Championship (second tier) as they chase a third successive promotion and a return to the top flight.——Reuters

Vonn will have to wait until 2015 for record

VAL D’ISERE, (France), 22 Dec — Lindsey Vonn will have to wait until the New Year for a record-equalling women’s World Cup victory after she crashed in a Super-G won by Austria’s Elisabeth Goergl on Sunday.

The race in Val d’Isere was the American’s first chance of matching the record of 62 wins set by Sweden’s Ingela Thulin.

She had dominated Saturday’s downhill on the same course but on Sunday took a turn wide, crashed into a fence and was swept away to complete her last race of 2014. “Yesterday was a great day, but a very long day,” she said. “I missed a little bit of elevation (today) and I wasn’t able to make the gate.”

The positive thing is that my knees are good and I’m still going home for Christmas with a big smile,” added the American, who returned this month from a year out of action after two knee operations.

The four-times World Cup champion will return in Bad Kleinkirchheim, Austria, on 10 and 11 January while races scheduled for Semmering on 28 and 29 December were moved to Innsbruck for lack of snow.

Former world champion Goergl mastered the tricky Val d’Isere course to clinch her seventh World Cup win in one minute and 25.42 seconds. Super-G Olympic champion Anna Fenninger secured an Austrian one-two with 0.05 seconds. Slovenia’s Tina Maze was third, 0.13 off the pace. “It was a tricky course and I kind of like it when it’s tricky,” said Goergl.

Second, to Vonn on Saturday. “I spent a long time for the inspection and then my coaches told me there were weird turns and what to do and it worked out fine.”

Second-placed Fenninger has been below par this winter but said she could celebrate Christmas on a high note: “Things didn’t work out as well as I would have wanted so far, I had to fight and it was really important to have a good result before the break.”

The 2014 women’s World Cup winner currently trails Maze by 249 points.

Austria’s Marcel Hirscher won the men’s giant slalom in Alta Badia for the second successive season, beating world and Olympic champion Ted Ligety by a huge 1.45 seconds. France’s Thomas Fanara was third, 0.03 adrift.—Reuters

FIFA official says England had best bid for 2018 World Cup

The bid, however, remained in the New Year whether to stand down from the process. Mayne-Nicholls said last month he would decide in the New Year whether to stand against Blatter. FIFA rules prevent campaigning before 29 January with the election set for 29 May.
Liverpool’s Martin Skrtel (2nd L) scores a goal against Arsenal during their English Premier League football match at Anfield in Liverpool, northern England on 21 Dec, 2014. REUTERS

Liverpool’s heavily-hand-aged Martin Skrtel headed a goal deep into stoppage-time to spare them another deflating Premier League defeat as they snatched a 2-2 home draw with Arsenal on Sunday.

Inferior for most of the match, Arsenal still led with goals from French duo Mathieu Debuchy and Olivier Giroud after Philippe Coutinho had put the hosts deservedly ahead.

But Slovakian Skrtel, who required six minutes of treatment on a gashed head after being kicked by Giroud, thundered in a header from Steven Gerrard’s corner to deny Arsenal a late victory, having earlier been adjudged offside by the handball on Sunday.

Arsenal and Liverpool meet again in mid-table, lost 3-0 at Anfield in December.

“Last year was a bit in our mind and our flow was not there. We are playing with a bit the handbrake on,” said Johnson. — Reuters

Paris, 22 Dec — Olympique de Marseille will lead Ligue 1 into the two-week break thanks to Michy Batshuayi’s half-volleyed winner in a 2-1 home victory over Lille on Sunday.

Belgian striker Batshuayi, starting after coach Marcelo Bielsa dropped Dimitri Payet following the France international’s poor training performances, scored the 69th minute winner to put OM on 41 points from 19 games.

The goal came eight minutes after Lille’s Idrissa Gueye had cancelled out team mate Nolan Roux’s first-half goal.

“Performance wise it was a special way to do it,” said Johnson. — Reuters

Despite failing to earn all three points, Arsenal moved back into sixth spot on goal difference above London rivals Tottenham Hotspur with 27 points from 17 games, four behind fourth-placed Manchester United who hold the last Champions League spot.

Their third win of the season to offer an explanation remains uncertain. “There are different ways to win a game and to win a derby and I think a winning goal in the last minute is a special way to do it,” said Sunderland manager Gus Poyet.

Liverpool, languishing in mid-table, lost 3-0 at Manchester United the previous weekend when they created chances at will. A lack of killer instinct seemed to have stained them again on Sunday as they enjoyed 65 percent possession and had four times as many goal attempts as the visitors.

A riveting Tyne-Wear derby at St James Park featured more than 30 goal attempts but Liverpool-born Johnson was the only one to find the net a minute from time to give Sunderland advantage. In the end they needed a defender to salvage something from all their hard graft. Even Arsenal boss Arsene Wenger admitted three points for his side, had Skrtel not equalised, would have been fortunate.

“We regret to concede on 84 minute in the last minute, but overall we had a fair result,” Wenger told Sky Sports.

Last year was a bit in our mind and our flow was not there. We are playing with a bit the handbrake on.” Liverpool completely dominated the opening half but had to wait until the 45th minute before Coutinho punished Arsenal for conceding possession, switching the ball to his right foot and drilling past Wojciech Szczesny via the post.

The defensive gremlins that have also undermined Liverpool’s season returned immediately as Debuchy headed an unlikely equaliser in first-half stoppage time.

Giroud struck what looked like being the winner after a slick Arsenal counter-attack, converting from close range in the 64th minute from Sant Cazorla’s cut back.

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Lille notched up another 1-0 win in the day’s other game, with goals from French duo Dimitri Payet following the France international’s poor training performances, scoring the 69th minute winner to put OM on 41 points from 19 games.

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