Carolers visit Presidential Palace on Christmas Eve

NAY PYI TAW, 24 Dec — On Christmas Eve, carolers from the Christian Youth for Peace comprised of national races said a blessing for President U Thein Sein at the Presidential Palace in Nay Pyi Taw on Wednesday.

Rev U Saw Doe Doe Wah, the executive secretary of the Myanmar Christian Council, and the carolers led by U Pe Zin Aung and U Lin Htet sang Christmas songs and made best wishes for the country and President U Thein Sein.

The reverend said a blessing for the president, his wife Daw Khin Khin Win and family before a child presented a Christmas gift to the president.

The president and family greeted the carolers warmly and presented gifts to its members and then posed for a photo with them.

MNA

Yangon Mayor gives rare press conference to local media

By Ye Myint

YANGON, 24 Dec — Yangon Mayor U Hla Myint gave a rare press conference to local media at Yangon City Hall, which hosts offices of the Yangon City Development Committee, on Wednesday, answering questions relating to the works of the committee in the country’s biggest city.

Accompanied by YCDC members and departmental heads of the committee, the Mayor took many questions from Yangon-based local media on subjects ranging from the upcoming YCDC elections to construction of high-rise buildings and installation of concrete blocks to carve out bus lanes on downtown roads.

During the nearly two-hour-long question-and-answer session, the Mayor and his cabinet, who have had little or no direct contacts with media before, responded to all the reporters’ questions, including a tough one regarding YCDC’s response to Michaungkan demonstrators who staged a protest blocking a gate to Yangon City Hall, in which YCDC staff played loud music from speakers to drown out their chants.

Explaining why only one voter per household will be allowed to vote in the YCDC elections due for 27 December, the Mayor or cited lack of voter registration resources as the reason.

Yangon voters will choose from among 293 candidates for 115 seats in committee’s central, district and township levels through the elections, the first of their kind in about six decades.

“The above 200 reporters are expected to cover the elections as more than 180 have been registered at my office”, said the secretary of the Yangon municipal election commission.

Responding to a question on the concrete blocks placed on Yangon’s downtown roads for bus lanes, the mayor called it an undesirable but unavoidable situation stemming from drivers’ lack of adherence to traffic disciplines.

(See page 2)
President’s excellent awards added two more genres

NAVPYTAW, 24 Dec—Two more awards, namely excellent awards for township development supportive committee and for township development affairs committee in addition to seven awards will be presented to the winners. Chairman of the President’s Excellent Award scrutiny committee Union Minister U Tin Naing Thein told the coordination meeting of the committee in Nay Pyi Taw on Wednesday.

Yangon Region government honours victorious athletes, well-wishers

YANGON, 24 Dec—The Yangon Region Government Office and two business bodies on Wednesday presented over K9 million to the winners of inter-region/state chief ministers’ cup this year at the prize award ceremony at the Yangon Region Government Office here.

Yangon Region Chief Minister U Myint Swe recognized the participation of sports teams, referees, coaches and support groups during the tournaments, urging the athletes to try to be a selected one at both national and international level sport events.

The chief minister said that athletes from four corners of the country took part in 27 sport games which was held from June to November in regions and states with the aim of emerging the outstanding locals.

After the tournaments, Yangon Region stood first with 74 gold, 73 silver and 70 bronze medals, sources said. At the ceremony, the chief minister also presented certificate of honour to over 23 well-wishers who donated cash and kind to successfully organize the Yangon Region Chief Minister’s Cup held from August to October.—MNA

MFF releases lineup for Myanmar women’s team

YANGON, 24 Dec—According to the Myanmar Football Federation, the line-up of Myanmar women’s football team has been released recently to play against Vietnam’s Champion Ha Nam FC in the turn-up match at Youth Training Centre in Thuwunna, Thingangyun Township, here, on 27 December.

Under the leadership of head coach Thet Thet Win, assistant coach Daw San San Thein and goal coach U Ko Ko Aung, the Myanmar women’s team has been lined up with goalkeepers Mya Phu Ngon and Khin Thida Aye, defenders Khin Than Wai, Zin Mar Win, Wai Wai Aung, Phu Pwint Kyaw, Zargyi Oo, Nang Kyay Ngon, Aye Aye Moe and Chit Chit, midfielders San San Maw, Than Thaw, Phaw, Khin Moe Wai and Yupa Khaing, forwards Yi Oo, Khin Marlar Tun, Win Theingi Tun, May Thu Kyaw and Khin Nway Nway Shwe.

Ha Nam FC secured champion in the Vietnam’s National Games. It stood second in the Vietnam Women National League 2014.—GLNM

Myanmar, Thailand to expand project areas of alternative development in Tachilek and Monghsat

NAVPYTAW, 24 Dec—The government could reduce poppy cultivation area from 57,800 hectares in 2014 to 57,600 hectares in 2014 while declining opium production from 870 tons to 670 tons, Chairman of Central Committee for Drug Abuse Control Union Minister for Home Affairs Lt-Gen Ko Ko told the meeting 2/2014 of the committee at the ministry on Wednesday.

In accord with the guidance of Vice President U Aung San, the CCDAC has drawn work plans yearly, adding that arrangements are being made to implement alternative development plans in Loilem, Hopong and Loilem townships in Shan State in cooperation with UNODC under the 2014-2017 country programme.

He noted that Myanmar and Thailand agreed to expand the project areas of alternative development in Tachilek and Monghsat regions. Moreover, he added that the government coordinates with China to implement the projects in Tamtwe and Kaungkha regions.

Vice-Chairman of the CCDAC Union Minister for Foreign Affairs U Wunna Maung Lwin, Secretary Chief of Myanmar Police Force Police Maj-Gen Zaw Win and officials discussed progress of international cooperation, future tasks, accomplishment of the meetings.

Chief Minister attends Kayin New Year Day in Bago

BAGO, 24 Dec—Chief Minister of Bago Region U Nyan Win on 21 December attended the ceremony to mark Kayin New Year Day at the city hall in Bago, the capital of the region.

Bago Region Minister for Kayin National Races Affairs U Saw Jubilee San Hla put on the chief minister with Kayin national costume.

The chief minister and KNUR general secretary Pado Saw Kwe Htoo Win made speeches.

Region Kayin national literature and culture committee’s troupe, Kayin students of Bago University and vocalist Kabyar Bwe Hmu presented Kayin Don dances and songs to the audiences. The region minister presented prizes to distinction winning students in the 2013-14 academic year matriculation examination.—MNA

Yangon Mayor gives rare press...

YANGON—Mayor Kyaw Zan Myint reported on arrangements for awarding and progress of works.

Chairperson of social awarding work committe Deputy Minister Daw Su Su Hlaing and Chairman of economic awarding work committee Deputy Minister Dr Pwint Hsan and deputy ministers participated in the discussions.

Union Minister U Soe Than said that the president’s awarding programme is to turn out more and more outstanding persons in the entire nation. So, he stressed the need to select the winners without bias.

Deputy Minister for Information U Pike Hway reported on plans of cooperation among ministries to show the best scene of excellent award winners at the prize presentation day.

Officials discussed making medals and arrangements for inspecting the worksites.—MNA

Nav Pyi Taw, 25 December, 2014

President’s excellent awards added two more genres

Union Minister U Tin Naing Thein highlights selection of winners for President’s excellent awards.

Yangon Region government honours victorious athletes, well-wishers

MFF releases lineup for Myanmar women’s team

Myanmar, Thailand to expand project areas of alternative development in Tachilek and Monghsat

Chief Minister attends Kayin New Year Day in Bago

Yangon Mayor gives rare press...

Players of Myanmar women’s football team at training session.—MFF
Vice President inspects rehearsal of Grand Military Review Parade

NAV PYI TAW, 24 Dec — Vice President U Nyan Tun, who chairs the committee for Organizing the 67th Anniversary Independence Day’s Grand Military Review Parade, inspected the preparations and rehearsal for the event in Nay Pyi Taw on Wednesday morning. The vice president was accompanied by Union Ministers Lt-Gen Ko Ko, Lt-Gen Wai Lwin, U Wunna Maung Lwin, U Aye Myint Kyu, U Kyaw Lwin, U Ye Htut, Chief of General Staff (Army, Navy and Air) General Hla Htay Win and Commander Maj-Gen Maung Maung Aye.

Officials briefed the vice president on arrangements for reception, transportation, security and information at the event. The vice president, then, viewed the parade and display of flag bearers, military bands, parade troops, the presidential salute and troop inspection, salute for the national flag, fallen martyr leaders and defence services personnel, two-minute silence in memory of them, the independence day speech of the president, military pledges and the presidential salute on parade, and he fulfilled the requirements.

A total of 7,128 members from the Defence Services (Army, Navy and Air), Myanmar Police Force, Myanmar Fire Brigade, Department of Immigration and National Registration, Customs Department, Myanmar Scout Youths, Myanmar Red Cross Society, Myanmar Women’s Affairs Federation, Myanmar Maternal and Child Welfare Association and troops representing the Nay Pyi Taw Council, regions and states will participate in the parade. The parade was organized annually on the Independence Day to remind the public of their responsibility to preserve the independence that was regained through the relentless efforts of all the national races and to exert efforts for national development.

The grand military review parades were held at the Independence Monument in front of the city hall from 1949 to 1953 and the then presidents Sao Shwe Thike and Dr Ba Oo attended the ceremony. From 1954 to 1962, the grand military review parades were held at the grand military review stage on Paya road and the then presidents Dr Ba Oo and Maung Win Maung took salute.

The Grand Military Review Parade is the greatest public event to salute the president and all the national races who fought for and defended the priceless independence and defence services personnel who sacrificed their lives and limbs.

The fine tradition of Myanmar which has been lost for 50 years is to be maintained starting from the 67th Anniversary Independence Day.

MNA

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing delivers speech at launching of new frigate

NAV PYI TAW, 24 Dec — Navy engineers are required to nurture a new generation of engineers while building high capacity warships for the country, Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing said at the ceremony to launch a new frigate, Kyaw Kyi Hla, in commemoration of the 67th Anniversary of the Myanmar Navy on Wednesday.

He said the newly-built high-capacity frigate installed with powerful weapons was built in Myanmar design based on Myanmar concept from beginning to end and he was proud of the shipbuilders and those who will perform their duty aboard the frigate.

Also present at the ceremony were the wife of the Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Daw Kyu Kyu Hla, Commander-in-Chief (Navy) Admiral Thura Thet Swe and wife, Commander-in-Chief (Air) General Khin Aung Myint and wife and senior military officers from the Office of the Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services.

The navy chief presented a miniature of the frigate to the senior general to mark the launching ceremony. The frigate was then launched and the commander-in-chief and party went aboard the warship before taking salute from the guards of honour and cash awards was given to the guards of honour and cryptocurrency, NyaungU and Kyaukse, Meiktila, Myint Oo, and Naval War Vessel Group Commander Cdr Zaw Latt.

Later, the senior general presented certificates of honour and cash awards to the commander of the naval dockyard command headquarters Commodore Myint Oo, and Naval War Vessel Group Commander Cdr Zaw Latt.

The senior general inspected the warships and an exhibition commemorating the anniversary event.

At the meeting, Thura U Shwe Mann met farmers in Mandalay region Wednesday. The farmers from districts of PyinOoLwin, Kyaukse, Meiktila, Myint Oo, NyaungU and Yamethin in the region attended the meeting.

The meeting was held at Sanpya village of Sengang township, and attended by chairman of regional Hlutaw, chairmen of Hlutaw committee and locals. At the meeting, Thura U Shwe Mann said that the needs of farmers presented by local representatives will be discussed in the next Hlutaw sessions before submitting them to the Union government.

He also noted that problem of land ownership disputes are not the new ones, but which have existed for 50 years, saying it should be tackled during the remaining term of more than one year of the government.

The speaker, chief minister of the region and parliamentarians then visited Maha Muni Buddha Image in Mandalay on 23 December evening.

MNA
Zeyathiri Township gets self-reliant village library

**NAY PYI TAW, 24 Dec** — As a gesture of hailing the 67th Anniversary Independence Day, “Thuta Alna” library was opened in Inthar Village, Zeyathiri Township, on Wednesday.

At the opening ceremony, Township Administrator U Myat Thin Tun explained the purpose of the self-reliant library, while Deputy Director Daw Thin Zin of Nay Pyi Taw Information and Public Relations Department spoke about the advantages of reading.

Well-wishers donated books and cash to the library through the deputy director and officials.

**Field staff to cultivate Palethwe hybrid rice on 3,000 acres of firm**

**NAY PYI TAW, 24 Dec** — Deputy Director-General U Naing Kyi Win of Agriculture Department assigned duty of growing Palethwe hybrid rice to staff for 2014-15 cultivation season was held at 3,000-acre model farm in Dekkhinathiri Township, Nay Pyi Taw Council Area, on 23 December.

Officials presented certificates of assignment and uniforms to 16 field staff. The deputy director-general, Head of Nay Pyi Taw Agriculture Department U Tin Oo Kyaw and officials discussed cultivation of Palethwe hybrid paddy on 1,600 acres of field through good agricultural patterns (GAP).
Mohnyin police officers meet media

Major Han Win Maung explained criminal cases from 2012 to 2014 and people’s participation in prevalence of law and order. Mohnyin is a township where the district administrative office is open. Members of Special Anti-Drug Squad have been assigned in Mohnyin. However, the township has no traffic police, with the commander of Township Police Force assigns such duty to his members. The township has inadequate number of police, officials told media.

Students get experiences from pre-tests for examination

Pre-tests for grade-5 and grade-9 students were held at three exam centres in post-primary schools and Basic Education High School in Nyaungdon, Taninthayi Region from 16 to 23 December. The activity was aimed at enabling the students to have experiences in entering the pre-test for 2014-15 academic year.

As part of efforts to promote educational reform during the term of the present government, the Ministry of Education conducted the pre-tests for the students.

Agricultural development bank disburse loans to farmers

Myawady, 24 Dec — Myanmar Agricultural Development Bank in Myawady Township, Ayeyawady Region, disbursed agricultural loans to local farmers as of 22 December for cultivation of summer paddy, cold season crops, beans and pulses.

Township Bank manager Daw Khin Myint Yi said the bank will deliver K2,820.28 million to the farmers from 57 village-tracts in the township. All loans will be disbursed to them in January 2015, at the rate of K100,000 per acre of summer paddy and K20,000 per acre of cold season crops.

Plans are underway to grow summer paddy on 9,800 acres of farmland. Kunchaung, Ma Mya and Kanyin Dams started to irrigate farmlands as of 15 December for cultivation.

Social organization members vaccinate people against elephantiasis


Health staff Daw San San Myint explained advantages of vaccination.

People join December’s sports activities

Papun, 24 Dec — A December mass walk activity was held in Papun, Kayin State, on Saturday.

Local people together with Pyithu and Amyotha Hluttaws participated in the traditional activity, walking along the road from Myoma Shwekyaung to the airport.

Locals joined the traditional sports event, race, volleyball, table tennis, boxing, Sepak Takraw and chess events at the township sports ground. Officials presented prizes to the winners.

Chairman of Township MCWA and officials vaccinated about 150 people at their residences in Ward 1. — Tun Tun Oo (Myawady Town)
Tokyo, 24 Dec — Japan is set to convene a special three-day Diet session on Wednesday to re-elect Liberal Democratic Party leader Shinzo Abe as prime minister, after a landslide victory in the 14 December lower house election gave him a fresh mandate.

Abe is expected to form a new Cabinet, with many of the ministers likely to be reappointed, and hold a news conference later in the day to explain his resolve to put priority on pulling the country out of deflation with his “Abenomics” economic policies.

The prime minister plans to tap former defence chief Gen Nakatani as the new defence minister, replacing Akinori Eto, who, according to LDP sources, plans to seek an offer to retain his post in the wake of a political funds scandal.

Nakatani, a veteran LDP lawmaker, previously served as head of the Defence Agency, the predecessor of the Defence Ministry. Just days after joining Abe’s revamped Cabinet in September, Eto came under pressure to resign in a sum of 3.5 million yen appeared in his political funds report as a “donation” to himself from his campaign funds management board, a move which opposition lawmakers say is banned under the law. He subsequently corrected the report, saying it was a clerical mistake.

Eto, also an LDP lawmaker, has decided not to remain as defence chief out of fear the opposition camp may exploit the scandal to influence Diet deliberations on security legislation scheduled for spring or later, the sources said.

Abe is seeking to re-model Japan’s post-war security policy through the legislation and to restart nuclear power plants that remain offline following the Fukushima disaster in 2011 amid heightened safety concerns.

On the first day of the special Diet session, the House of Representatives is scheduled to elect former Foreign Minister Nobutaka Machimura as its speaker, replacing Bunmei Bulukai in 2011 amid heightened safety concerns.

Visitors pose for photos during the Christmas season at the parish on Pham The Hien Street in Ho Chi Minh city, Vietnam, on 21 Dec, 2014. As Christmas is approaching, local parishes attract many visitors to come and enjoy groteses brightly decorated amid merry atmosphere. Xinhua

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe waves as he enters his office in Tokyo on 24 Dec, 2014. Abe, leader of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, will be re-elected as prime minister in a special Diet session the same day after a landslide victory in the 14 December lower house election gave him a fresh mandate. Kyodo News

On Wednesday morning, all the Cabinet ministers resigned in advance of the special Diet session to be held in the early afternoon to choose a new prime minister.

As an unexpected slump in gross domestic product data for the July-September period prompted Abe to postpone a second consumption tax hike until 2017, he sought voter approval for sticking to Abenomics — a combination of bold monetary easing, fiscal stimulus and growth-oriented reforms.

Before the end of the year, the new Cabinet is expected to approve an emergency economic package to mitigate the impact of the yen’s rapid slide, and a law to liberalize immigration in January for the next fiscal year starting in April 2015.

Abe has said his government will submit legislation to a regular Diet session next year to legalize the use of the right to collective self-defence, keeping in time with a revision of Japan-US defence cooperation guidelines pushed back to the first half of 2015. Kyodo News

Curfew in Indian state after tribal militants kill 48

Guwahati, (India), 24 Dec — India imposed a curfew in parts of the north-eastern state of Assam on Wednesday after suspected tribal guerrillas killed 48 people in a series of attacks in retaliation for an offensive against them.

Assam has a history of sectarian bloodshed and groups fighting for greater autonomy or secession from India. Tuesday’s attacks in four tribal-dominated districts, including those in the National Democratic Front of Bodoland within the space of an hour were the deadliest in months.

“The militants first came and asked for water. Suddenly they opened fire with their AK-47 rifles,” a witness, who fled into jungle, later told reporters.

The guerrillas say they are fighting for a separate homeland for indigenous Bodo people. They complain that the tea-growing state has been flooded with outsiders.

Indian security forces launched a campaign last month against the rebels in their remote hideouts, prompting a threat from them to target settlers.

“They didn’t even spare the women and children,” said a police officer, adding there were at least 10 women among the dead in Tuesday’s violence. At least 13 children were killed.

Laith Gogo, deputy commissioner of the worst-affected Sonitpur district, said the army had been put on standby and a dusk to dawn curfew imposed.

The single hospital in Sonitpur was crowded with scores of people with gunshot wounds.

Assam is one of seven states in India’s northeast, a region bounded by China, Myanmar, Bhutan and Bangladesh. Residents and authorities have accused the federal government of plundering its natural resources and ignoring development.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has vowed to accelerate the development of roads and railways in the area.—Reuters

Cambodia, Thailand vow to enhance security, peace along border

Phnom Penh, 24 Dec — Cambodian Defence Minister Tea Banh and his visiting Thai counterpart Prawit Wongswan on Wednesday pledged to enhance security and maintain peace along the border of the two countries.

“We agreed to increase cooperation in security and peace along the border,” Tea Banh told a joint press conference after the 10th meeting of Cambodia-Thailand General Border Committee.

He said the two neighbours will intensify cooperation in prevention and in human and drug trafficking, labour exploitation, illegal logging and all kinds of trans-border crimes.

We also agreed to enhance cooperation in fighting against terrorism and cracking down on weapon smuggling,” he added.

The two ministers also pledged to improve the livelihoods of the peoples along the border through facilitating daily trade activities and pushing for the establishment of special economic zones in border provinces.

Prawit arrived in Cambodia on Wednesday morning for a two-day trip. He is scheduled to pay a courtesy visit to Prime Minister Hun Sen on Thursday.—Xinhua

Dozens of tourists stranded by floods in Malaysian national park

Kuala Lumpur, 24 Dec — Nearly 60 foreign tourists are among almost 100 people stranded at a resort in a Malaysian national park that was closed due to floods. The area is regularly hit by flooding during the annual Northeast Monsoon.

This year nearly 60,000 people have been evacuated due to the floods, mostly from the east coast, according to the latest figures by Bernama.

Residents were warned to avoid coastal areas and river mouths as tides were expected to reach their peak over the next two nights. Malaysian newspaper New Straits Times said.

Eastern peninsular Malaysia is regularly hit by flooding during the annual Northeast Monsoon. This year nearly 60,000 people have been evacuated due to the floods, mostly from the east coast, according to the latest figures by Bernama.

Reuters

Cambodian Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Tea Banh (R) meets with his Thai counterpart Prawit Wongswan (L) in Phnom Penh on 24 Dec, 2014. Prawit arrived here on Wednesday for a two-day visit.—Xinhua

KyoDo news

Visitors pose for photos during the Christmas season at the parish on Pham The Hien Street in Ho Chi Minh city, Vietnam, on 21 Dec, 2014. As Christmas is approaching, local parishes attract many visitors to come and enjoy groteses brightly decorated amid merry atmosphere. Xinhua

Global New Light of Myanmar
Prosecutors seek detention of Korean Air executive in nut case

SEUL, 24 Dec — South Korean prosecutors requested on Wednesday a detention warrant for a former Korean Air Lines executive who delayed a flight because she was unhappy about how she was served nuts in first class.

The prosecutors have been investigating the former executive, Heather Cho, who is the daughter of the airline’s chairman, on charges of violating aviation law and another airline official for abetting perjury.

“`The prosecution this morning requested a detention warrant,” an official at the prosecutors’ office said, adding the request would be reviewed by the court.

Detention warrants are issued when the court believes there is a risk of flight or evidence tampering by suspects while investigations are ongoing.

A probe by the Transport Ministry concluded that Cho abused flight attendants in the 5 December incident at John F Kennedy airport in New York, and airlines officials may have tried to cover up the incident.

Public outrage grew when Korean Air initially issued what many in the country saw as a half-hearted apology that instead appeared to rationalize Cho’s conduct in the face of what it said was inappropriately aggressive performance by the cabin crew.

Cho resigned from all her posts at the airline and subsidiaries and apologized after she came under intense public outrage and ridicule. The airline’s chairman Cho Yang-ho subsequently apologized and said her daughter’s conduct was “foolish”.

The plane pushed away from the airport departure gate as the incident was taking place on board. The pilot then brought the plane back to the gate to expel the cabin crew chief, after Cho complained about being served macadamia nuts by a flight attendant in a bag and not on a dish.

The crew chief said in a local television interview that Cho swore at him and jabbed his hand with a document folder, pointing her finger at him while he knelted to apologize to her.

The prosecutors are also investigating whether Cho physically assaulted any of the crew members.—Reuters

Two men arrested in Sydney by counterterrorism team

SYDNEY, 24 Dec — Two men have been arrested in Sydney as part of ongoing counterterrorism investigations, Australian authorities said on Wednesday, a day after Prime Minister Tony Abbott warned of heightened terrorist chatter following the Martin Place cafe siege in which two victims and a gunman were killed a week ago.

A man, 20, was arrested at his residence on Tuesday and charged with possession of documents connected with facilitating a terrorist attack, an offense that carries a maximum penalty of 15 years imprisonment.

A second man, 21, also arrested on Tuesday, was charged with breaching a Control Order, the maximum penalty for which is two years imprisonment.

A Control Order is to prevent someone with terrorist links from being in certain areas or leaving Australia, associating with certain people, owning and using certain items, carrying out certain activities and accessing certain forms of technology, including the Internet. “This operation is an example of all agencies working together and recognizing how critical it is to act at an early stage to prevent innocent members of the community being subject to harm,” Australian Federal Police Deputy Commissioner National Security Michael Phelan said in a statement.

Tuesday’s arrests are a part of ongoing investigations known as Operation Appleby conducted by the Joint Counter Terrorism Team. Since September, 11 people have been charged.

Abbott also warned on Tuesday that authorities had advised there had been “a heightened level of terrorist chatter in the aftermath of the Martin Place siege” by terrorist sympathizers and reminded the public the terrorist threat level remains high.

Abbott urged the public to remain alert and aware, while giving assurances the law enforcement agencies are working to protect the community.

His comments come after the 16-hour cafe siege that ended early on 16 December. The gunman in the siege was a self-styled Islamic preacher.

Kyodo News

Four more Fukushima children suspected of having thyroid cancer

FUKUSHIMA, Japan, 24 Dec — Four more children are suspected of having thyroid cancer in the latest survey on the possible health impact of the 2011 Fukushima nuclear accident, sources close to the matter said on Tuesday. The four, who were 6 to 17 years old at the time of the disaster at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power station, had been diagnosed as not having the cancer in the first survey that was conducted within three years of the incident, they said.

The first survey covered all the 370,000 Fukushima children who were aged 18 or younger at the time of the disaster, and the second survey that began in April this year covers some 385,000, adding children born a year after the incident. Researchers at Fukushima Medical University, which has been taking the leading role in the study, will work to confirm if the four have developed the cancer and carefully study the cases if the influence of radiation, according to the sources.

The university takes the results of the first survey as the basic data in assessing whether cases of the cancer may increase in the future. The Fukushima prefectural government said in August that 57 children in the first survey have been confirmed with having thyroid cancer and 24 others were suspected of having it.

The four lived in the municipalities of Okuma, Fukushima, Date and Tamura at the time.

The external radioactive exposure levels of three of the four are estimated to be up to 2 millisieverts within four months of 11 March, 2011, the day of the Great East Japan Earthquake that triggered the disaster, the sources said.

Kyodo News

Singapore rejects calls to join anti-Russian sanctions — Russian diplomat

SINGAPORE, 24 Dec — Despite strong pressure from the United States, Singapore has unequivocally said it will not join Western sanctions over Ukraine, Russian Ambassador to Singapore Leonid Moiseyev told Tass on Wednesday.

Singapore’s stance “is quite consistent and principled — the imposition of sanctions is prerogative of the United Nations, the Security Council, and without this sanctions are unlawful,” the ambassador said.

As a very attractive investment centre, Singapore “proceeds from the premise that sanctions violate the freedom of trade, normal international cooperation,” Leonid Moiseyev added.

Although Singapore denounced Moscow for Crimea’s accession, “economic relations with Russia were not damaged despite close ties of this country with the US, first of all in the military-political sector,” he added.

“On the contrary, the year has turned out to be successful on the bilateral track,” he added. Trade was expected to grow 50% this year to reach a record high of $8 billion, the diplomat said.

Trade between Russia and Singapore will grow 50% this year to reach a record high of $8 billion, Russian Ambassador to Singapore Leonid Moiseyev told TASS on Wednesday.

“The outgoing year was successful for bilateral ties, with trade growth being the most impressive result. We expect to reach an absolute record,” the diplomat said, adding that a positive tendency had continued for the past few years.

“Given the global economic situation which has seen a certain slowdown of Chinese economic growth, as well as against the background of obvious difficulties facing some other countries of the Asia Pacific region, the Russian market, ties with Russia are becoming increasingly attractive for Singapore,” the diplomat said.—I Iaur-Tass

Tokyo’s Imperial Palace is lit up on 23 Dec, 2014, the 81st birthday of Emperor Akihito. The third annual winter-time illumination, which began the same day, will be in place until 4 January between 5 pm and 9 pm. Kyodo News

81st birthday of Emperor Akihito. The third annual winter-time illumination, which began the same day, will be in place until 4 January between 5 pm and 9 pm. KyodoNews

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Thursday, 25 December, 2014

**Birth and death should be for the world**

By Aung Khin

Man is born into the world. Ever since his birth, we have been in the womb of our mother. We have depended on the support of the world for our survival. That means we cannot keep ourselves alive without protecting our environment. As soon as we started off as a fetus, nutrition and air became essential for our survival, and they still are. If we had not been safe in the womb of our mother, we would never have appeared as a creature of this world. Safe environment, sufficient nutrition and good nurturing are fundamentals for our lives, and they have been so since our birth.

Even after we have grown up, our life depends on our surroundings. Many people in the world are now faced with life-threatening conflicts, terrorism, disasters and diseases. All of these problems have their root causes. These should not be regarded as our enemies, but instead as issues to be solved tactically and appropriately, as all people are living on the same planet, we are breathing the same air. The air we breathe out will be inhaled by another of a certain place or a certain time.

Therefore, our birth is very meaningful to protect and safeguard the world and its people. Even when we squash a mosquito, we will suffer a certain reaction from that. Killing or troubling others is against human society.

We are extremely grateful to Mother Earth; she has supported and supplied us with everything we need. When we reach the end of our life, the world gives us a place to lie down. Between birth and death, we have stood on the earth; we get food and shelter from the world; we get the sun and the air.

We should be for the world; not the world be for us. Therefore, we should respond to the world with great love and sympathy at our best.

**Write for us**

We appreciate your feedback and contributions. If you have any comments or would like to submit editorials, analyses or reports please email: tun@gmail.com with your name and title.

Due to limitation of space we are only able to publish “Letter to the Editor” that do not exceed 500 words. Should you submit a text longer than 500 words please be aware that your letter will be edited.

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**THREATS TO GLOBAL VILLAGE AND GLOBAL PEACE**

By TOMMY PAUK

Global people are hearing miserable, disgusting, abhorrent, shocking and incredible news every day. Act of terrorism, extremism, injustice, racial injustice, inequity, power-politics, warmonger, hegemonics, racial conflicts, cybercrimes, cyber-attack and exploitations are the threats to our global village and global peace. There are many kinds of threats such as hacker’s threat, terrorist’s threat, extermist’s threat, pirate’s threat, sex-trafficker’s threat, human-trafficker’s threat, drug-trafficker’s threat and neo-colonialist’s threat.

Despite the Information Technology and its tremendous contribution to mankind, unfortunately, the destructive elements have appeared i.e., the cybercrime. The cybercrime is criminal activity done using computers and the internet (or) the illegal activities which are committed through the use of a computer and the internet.

The following crimes are considered to be cybercrimes;

- Downloading illegal music files, stealing millions of dollars from online bank accounts, creating and distributing viruses on other computers, posting confidential business information on the internet, identity theft, credit card account theft, in which criminals use the internet to steal personal information from the users, phishing, harming, blackmailing.

The hackers are the ones who can penetrate the high security levels to get the information or change the information. They even take down the websites which include important documents or information. On the other hand, they try to steal people’s information through viruses and bogus emails.

A very handful of despot rulers in the world commit cyber-attack to the networks of the countries or corporate organizations because they do not get on well with these countries or corporate organizations. Their acts are involved in the criminal activities on internet, threatening the global telecommunications worldwide. Significantly, the majority of the global communities do not support or recognize the notorious despotic rulers and their isolated policies. Such ridiculous and despotic rulers threaten with the nuclear weapons to the countries which oppose them. This is an absolutely great threat to the global peace. However, the peace-loving peoples and pacifists strongly deounce and oppose those foolish rulers. Even their own citizens do not support their unscrupulous acts.

Peoples in these countries are oppressed by ruthless and despotic rulers. They aggressively provoke some countries and neighbouring countries. Therefore, the global people are deeply concerned about that region and its people.

NB. The unstable and unsafe situations in the region threaten the global peace.

NEC has clarified the illegal activities of cyber-attacks as follows;

- Cyber attacks are socially or politically motivated as a means of achieving strategic goals primarily through the internet. Attacks target the general public or national and corporate organizations and are carried out through the spread of malicious programs (viruses), unauthenticated web access, fake websites, and other means of stealing personal or institutional information from targets of attacks, causing far-reaching damage.

- It is also a great threat to global internet and the users.

These acts or behaviors are despicable and horrible for all civil people on earth. In this 21st century, due to advanced technologies, we humans obtain a lot of achievements in trade, telecommunications, travel, education, economies, computer sciences etc. Consequently, global people are able to communicate with each other for any aims and objects easily and swiftly. Relations among global communities and societies seem like a family in which we can discuss, cooperate, decide any issues closely and solve the problems together. This situation is rather encouraging and it is a sign of prosperity for entire mankind. Nevertheless, there still prevails havoc and barbarous or atrocious acts in the world. Some countries are practicing isolated policies led by obnoxious, stubborn, narrow-minded, ridiculous and aggressive govern- ments and they do not care the aspiration of their people and wishes even though the globalization takes place in the world. As a result, in certain circumstances, they become wealthy, unhappy, miserable and blunted. These people or groups are enveloped with their dull, unwise and selfish government all the time.

Seemingly, people around the world are happy and secure to travel or struggle in their daily life. In reality, their inner feelings are insecure for their safety and security because the insidious plight of threats is prevailing around the world. Travelling by air, or travelling by ship, or travelling by car, or travelling by train cannot fully give the travelers guarantee for their security and fate in some regions in the world. e.g., recently, the passenger-plane of Malaysian Airline was shot down by unknown armed group while it was on her normal air-route, flying over Ukraine Territory. That area is a conflict zone between Russia and Ukraine. The hostility between two countries threaten global travels those who are innocent and they are entitled to travel safely and without fear. It alarms the global people to be cautious if they have to travel in that region and their safety and security are not guaranteed.

Nowadays, the sporadic warfare or armed-clashes occur here and there in some regions in the world. Some tourists and shoppers were murdered in some countries, but the culprits are not caught. The criminals challenge the police force and justice. This is another kind of threat to people around the world and peace. It can be inferred that their minds are not filled with compassion and humanity. The hostile acts of their environment affect them and they become savages in the world. They even targeted and killed children brutally. Recently, the Taliban militants ambushed the Army public School in a town called Peshawar, in Pakistan and killed 132 school children. The so-called Taliban militants committed the bloody massacre and terrorism; they are totally savages. The act of terrorism is vividly seen in some regions irrespective of religious sites, mosques, churches, train station, crowded markets, shopping malls, public areas, cinemas etc. Mostly, they commit homicide, beheading and massacre in broad daylight.

Among the beheaded victims are the foreign and local journalists, who take risks to get information and news which the Taliban is trying to keep from the world. For human life reveals that they are totally savages. The act of terrorism is vividly seen in some regions irrespective of religious sites, mosques, churches, train station, crowded markets, shopping malls, public areas, cinemas etc. Mostly, they commit homicide, beheading and massacre in broad daylight.

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THREATS TO GLOBAL VILLAGE AND GLOBAL PEACE

The main conclusion is that we must unite and protect our communities and eliminate any forms of the horrendous threats on earth. It is a serious global concern. Since we live in global village, we can work closely for good things and do for the welfare of all mankind. We are responsible for safeguarding human society and restoring peace, stability and harmony in the world. Beware of threats which prevail everywhere in the world!!!!!

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Tommy Paik is the pseudonym of U Thein Swe, who is an B.A (English) and R.I.L. degrees holder. 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 Translators, Interpreter for foreign firms.
France steps up patrols after spate of lone-wolf attacks

PARIS, 24 Dec — French security forces stepped up security in public places for the Christmas season on Tuesday after three acts of violence in three days left one dead and 30 wounded, reigniting fears of attacks by Islamist radicals.

Late on Monday, a man rammed a van into a crowded Christmas market in the western city of Nantes, wounding 10 shoppers. One of the victims, a 25-year-old man, later died of his wounds. The assailant survived and is being questioned by police.

That came a day after a man shouting “Allahu Akbar” (“God is greatest”) injured 13 in a similar attack in the eastern city of Dijon. On Saturday, an attacker, also yelling “Allahu Akbar”, was shot after stabbing three police officers in central France.

“What we are seeing with events in Dijon and Nantes is that they are creating copy-cat reactions,” Prime Minister Manuel Valls said after ordering the deployment of 200 to 300 extra soldiers for patrols in zones such as Paris’s Champs-Elysees avenue and main shopping districts. Some 780 soldiers have already been deployed to security patrols.

France is already on high alert after calls earlier this year from militants to attack its citizens and interests in reprisal for French military strikes on Islamist strongholds in the Middle East and Africa. Prosecutors have opened a terrorism investigation for the first attack, after searches unearthed what they called a written “religious testament” in which the suspect invoked the Arabic word for God, “Allah”, to give him strength.

 Authorities are not treating the other two other incidents as terrorism and have said those attackers both had mental health problems.

Valls nonetheless said on Monday France had “never before faced such a high threat linked to terrorism”. Interior Minister Bernard Cazeneuve said this week France had made 118 arrests in its efforts to crack down on French nationals who leave to fight alongside jihadists in Iraq and Syria and return home as potential threats to security. The far-right National Front has accused the Socialist government of trying to play down the Islamist threat and has stepped up its own calls for deportations of radical preachers and a tightening of border controls.

Separately, police in the Riviera city of Cannes said a man armed with two pump-action shotguns and a knife had been arrested at dawn near a local market. They said his motivations remained unclear pending further interrogation.

Colombia army launches search for soldier kidnapped by rebels

BOGOTA, 24 Dec — Colombia’s army has launched a search operation for a soldier kidnapped during an ambush by leftist FARC rebels last week in which five of his colleagues were killed, a spokesperson said on Tuesday.

The FARC, or Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, killed five soldiers in the southwestern province of Cauca as they patrolled a road the rebels had damaged with a bomb shortly before.

The attack came just hours before the group began an unlimited ceasefire at midnight on Friday. “In accordance with the directives of the National Army Command, all actions necessary to locate the soldier have been deployed and will continue until his freedom is reached,” an army statement said, naming the soldier as Carlos Becerra Ojeda. The FARC’s ceasefire comes as the group advances in peace negotiations launched by President Juan Manuel Santos in late 2012 and some analysts see it as a sign of progress toward the signing of a definitive peace deal.

The sides have reached a partial agreement on land reform, the FARC’s future participation in politics and how to end the drugs trade.

The tricky points of victim compensation and how to bring the armed conflict to an end, have yet to be agreed on.

The FARC was formed in 1964, mushrooming out of a peasant movement demanding land reform and has fought successive governments in a mainly rural conflict that has killed more than 220,000 and uprooted millions from their homes.— Reuters

Former US President Bush, 90, hospitalised for shortness of breath

AUSTIN, (Texas) 24 Dec — Former US President George HW Bush, 90, was hospitalised in Houston, Texas, late on Tuesday after experiencing shortness of breath, a spokesman for the 41st commander-in-chief said in a statement.

Bush’s latest health scare came two years after he was struck by illness during the 2012 holiday season and ended up spending seven weeks in a Houston hospital for bronchitis and related ailments before his discharge in mid-January of 2013.

On Tuesday evening, the former president “was taken by ambulance to the Houston Methodist Hospital as a precaution after experiencing a shortness of breath,” according to his spokesman, Jim McGrath.

Bush “will be held for observation, again as a precaution,” McGrath said in a statement.

The former president grew so ill during his previous hospitalization that he was believed at one point to be near death, and members of his family gathered around him. But he recovered and went on to mark his 90th birthday this year by taking a parachute jump in Kennebunkport, Maine. His eldest son, former President George W. Bush, just published a best-selling book about his dad, titled “41 — A Portrait of My Father.”— Reuters

Global arms trade pact to take force; US Senate has not ratified

UNITED NATIONS, 24 Dec — A global arms trade treaty that aims to regulate the $85 billion industry and keep weapons out of the hands of human rights abusers and criminals will enter into force on Wednesday, though the US Senate has not yet ratified it.

Supporters of the treaty welcomed the development, saying it was long overdue. They say the treaty, which the United States signed in 2013, would require arms exporters around the world to meet tough export criteria comparable to those in place in the United States and other Western democracies.

“Campaigners have been pushing for this moment for a decade,” said Anna MacDonald, director of the lobby group Control Arms, adding that it would be the “dawn of a new era.”

“If robustly implemented, this treaty has the potential to save many lives and offer much-needed protection to vulnerable civilians around the world,” she said. “It is now, finally, against international law to put weapons into the hands of human rights abusers and dictators.” Of the 130 signatories of the treaty, 60 have ratified it. A total of 50 ratifications were necessary for the pact’s entry into force.

The United States, the world’s top arms exporter, signed the Arms Trade Treaty in September 2013 but the Senate has not ratified it.

The National Rifle Association, a powerful US gun lobby, opposes ratification, even though the treaty covers only weapons exports, not domestic gun sales. Major weapons producers like Russia, China, India and Pakistan have not signed the treaty.

Top arms exporters that have signed and ratified it include Britain, France and Germany.— Reuters
As US troops return to Iraq, more private contractors follow

WASHINGTON, 24 Dec — The US government is preparing to boost the number of private contractors in Iraq as part of President Barack Obama’s growing effort to beat back Islamic State militants threatening the Baghdad government, a senior US official said.

How many contractors will deploy to Iraq—beyond the roughly 1,800 now working there for the US State Department—will depend in part, the official said, on how widely dispersed US troops advising Iraqi security forces are, and how far they are from US diplomatic facilities.

Still, the preparations to increase the number of contractors—who can be responsible for everything from security to vehicle repair and food service—underscores Obama’s growing commitment in Iraq. When US troops and diplomats venture into war zones, contractors tend to follow, doing jobs once handled by the military itself.

“It is certain that there will have to be some number of contractors brought in for additional support,” said the senior US official, speaking on condition of anonymity.

After Islamic State seized large swaths of Iraqi territory and the major city of Mosul in June, Obama ordered US troops back to Iraq. Last month, he authorized roughly doubling the number of troops, who will be in non-combat roles, to 3,100, but is keen not to let the troop commitment grow too much.

There are now about 1,750 US troops in Iraq, and US Defence Secretary Chuck Hagel last week ordered deployment of an additional 1,300.

The US military’s reliance on civilians was on display during Hagel’s trip to Baghdad this month, when he and his delegation were flown over the Iraqi capital in helicopters operated by State Department contractors.

The problem, the senior US official said, is that US troops continue flowing into Iraq, the State Department’s contractor ranks will no longer be able to support the needs of both diplomats and troops.

After declining since late 2011, State Department contractor numbers in Iraq have risen slightly, by less than 5 percent, since June, a State Department spokesman said.

For example, in July, the State Department boost ed from 39 to 57 the number of personnel protecting the US consulate in Erbil that came under threat from Islamic State forces during its June offensive.

That team is provided by Triple Canopy, part of the Constellis Group conglomerate, which is the State Department’s largest security contractor. Constellis did not respond to a phone call seeking comment.

The presence of contractors in Iraq, particularly private security firms, has been controversial since a series of violent incidents during the US occupation, culminating in the September 2007 killing of 14 unarmed Iraqis by guards from Blackwater security firm.

Three former guards were convicted in October of voluntary manslaughter charges and a fourth of murder in the case, which prompted reforms in US government oversight of contractors.

US troops in Iraq are not using private contractors to provide them additional security, a second US official said.

Virtually all the US government’s contractors now in Iraq work for the State Department. The withdrawal of US combat troops from Iraq in 2011 left little choice but to hire a small army of contractors to help protect diplomatic facilities, and provide other services like food and logistics.

The number of Pentagon contractors, which in late 2008 reached over 163,000, though the number of US troops on the ground at the time—has fallen sharply with reduced US military presence.

Pentagon spokesman Mark Wright said there is only a handful left now and they report to the State Department. In late 2013, the Pentagon still had 6,000 contractors in Iraq, mostly supporting US weapon sales to the Baghdad government, Wright said.

China police stop ‘extremists’ leaving country, one shot dead

BEIJING, 24 Dec — Police in southwest China shot dead one person and detained 21 others who were part of a group of “religious extremists” trying to cross into Vietnam, state media said on Wednesday.

The reports, carried by state television and the official Xinhua news agency, did not say where the group was from, but small numbers of Uighurs from China’s far western region of Xinjiang have begun trickling out of China to Southeast Asia in recent years.

State television said that one of the group tried to stab a policeman but two other officers shot the person dead. It noted that the others had all been detained. The incident happened on Sunday night in Guangxi region, it said.

Xinhua said police had been tipped off that the group was trying to cross the border into Vietnam, and so assembled a team to track them down.

Hundreds of people have been killed in unrest in Xinjiang in the past two years, prompting a crackdown by Chinese authorities, who blame the problem on Islamist militants who want an independent state called East Turkestan.

China is hoisting a red flag to combat the Islamic State militant group after last week’s attack by a third of its fighters in Iraq, President Xi Jinping said at a summit with US President Barack Obama.

Xi Jinping was responding to a rare attack by Islamic State fighters in neighboring Iraq, and he said China would cooperate with the US to defeat the militants.

Thirteen of the Islamic State fighters were killed in the operation, which was carried out the previous night by US and coalition fighter jets.

Obama and Xi Jinping said the two countries would work together to combat Islamic State fighters in Iraq and Syria, and they agreed to hold high-level talks in the near future.

The United States and China have been locked in a escalating conflict over Islamic State, with the US government denouncing China’s treatment of Uighurs as a human rights issue.

China has been trying to boost its position in the region, and has recently welcomed US President Barack Obama to visit China.

Some of the Uighurs who have ended up in Southeast Asia are believed to be planning to move to southern Thailand and on to Malaysia. They are thought to be providing support to the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria.

Non-profit organizations in the region say they have received reports of Uighurs who have fled to Thailand to escape China’s treatment of the ethnic group.

Some of the reports say the Uighurs are being held in detention camps in Xinjiang.

Analysts say China’s treatment of Uighurs has been contentious and has led to international criticism.

A Shi’ite fighter walks during an intensive security deployment against Islamic State militants in Balad, north of Baghdad on 15 Dec, 2014.—REUTERS

Ten more strikes hit Islamic State in Syria, Iraq

WASHINGSTON, 24 Dec — The US-led coalition fighting Islamic State in Syria and Iraq launched 10 more strikes against the militants on Tuesday, destroying various fighting positions, the US military said in a statement.

The seven strikes in Syria and three in Iraq also struck a unit of Islam ic State fighters as well as some of the militants’ oil collection equipment, according to the Combined Joint Task Force for the operation.—Reuters

Islamic State captures Jordanian pilot after warplane downed in Syria

AMMAN / BEIRUT, 24 Dec — Islamic State fighters took a Jordanian pilot captive after their warplane was downed in northeastern Syria on Wednesday, the first such capture taken from the US-led coalition battling the jihadist group.

Jordan’s armed forces said one of its pilots had been captured after his plane fell during an air raid over the northeastern Syrian province of Raqqa on Wednesday.

“Jordan holds the group (IS) and its supporters responsible for the safety of the pilot and his life,” an army statement read on state television. It did not say whether the plane was shot down.

Islamic State social media accounts published pictures purportedly of the warplane’s pilot being held by the group’s fighters as well as images of what they said was his Jordanian military ID card. The images were verified by two close relatives contacted by Reuters who said they had been notified by the lead of the Jordanian air force the pilot was held captive.

One of the images showed the pilot in a white shirt being led out of the warplane by several armed fighters. Another showed him on the ground surrounded by at least a dozen fighters in military fatigues and equipped with assault rifles.

Jordan is one of the countries participating in the US-led coalition set up to battle Islamic State and which has been bombing Islamic State targets in Syria since September.

Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates have also participated in or supported the strikes against Islamic State targets in Syria, according to US Central Command.

Raqqa province, which borders Turkey, is almost entirely under the control of Islamic State fighters.

Boosted by arms seized in Iraq, the group evicted most rival rebels from the province earlier this year and took control of a string of government military bases over the summer, including an air base.—Reuters

Suicide bomber kills 17 people south of Baghdad

BAGHDAD, 24 Dec — A suicide bomber killed 17 people and wounded 33 others in Madaen, 45 km (15 miles) south of Baghdad on Wednesday, Iraq police and medical officials said.

The dead were 14 Sunni pro-government fighters and three soldiers. The bomber blew himself up near a line of pro-government fighters waiting for their salaries, the officials said, adding they expected the toll to rise.

A general view shows the town of Sinjar as smoke rises from what activists said were US-led air strikes on 22 Dec, 2014.—REUTERS

Reuters
South Korea seeks China’s cooperation in probe into cyberattack on nuclear operator

SEOUL, 24 Dec — South Korea is seeking the cooperation of Chinese authorities in a probe into a cyberattack on its nuclear power plant operator after tracing multiple Internet addresses involved to a northeastern Chinese city near North Korea, a prosecution official said on Wednesday.

The location of the Internet addresses, which were used to connect to networks in South Korea for the attacks, did not prove the source of the hack was either China or North Korea, the official said, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

“Whenever we have the cooperation of the Chinese, where of course we don’t have jurisdiction, we will be asking for checks or maybe a search of the location of the IP addresses,” the official said.

“As we’re doing this, there is a possibility that the IP addresses in China are not the final source but used in a routing. It’s possible the network in China was used (remotely) from some other location.”

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said: “I regret that I’m not aware of the specific situation but I can tell you, China’s relevant position has been consistent. We resolutely oppose hacking activities in any form.”

Korea Hydro and Nuclear Power Co Ltd (KHNP), which runs South Korea’s 23 nuclear power reactors, said last week its computer systems had been hacked but only non-critical data had been stolen. Operations were not at risk, it said.

The official close to the investigation reiterated his team had not ruled out the involvement of North Korea in the attack but there was also no indication yet to believe it was involved. North Korea remains technically at war with the South.

Connections to South Korean virtual private networks (VPNs) used in the cyberattacks were traced to multiple IP addresses in China’s Shenyang city, located in a province which borders North Korea, the official said.

The country’s nuclear operator, watchdog and the ministry have set up emergency teams to remain on stand-by for two days starting from Wednesday as a self-claimed hacker demanded the shutdown of three reactors by Thursday in Twitter messages, threatening to create “destruction”.

President Park Geun-hye has called the leaks “cyberterror” and cyber security has been boosted at the country’s nuclear plants.

The incident at the nuclear operator came after the United States accused North Korea of a serious cyberattack on Sony Pictures and vowed to respond proportionately. — Reuters

Modi orders insurance, coal reforms after stymied by parliament

NEW DELHI, 24 Dec — The cabinet approved an executive order on Wednesday to implement coal and insurance reforms, a government official said, underlining the administration’s resolve to push through economic measures despite political opposition in parliament.

Under the order, foreign firms can increase their participation in insurance joint ventures from 26 percent to 49 percent, a potential lifeline for a sector starved of capital and squeezed by regulations.

The move came after the government’s plan to introduce a bill to increase the foreign investment cap was blocked in the upper house of parliament by opposition deputies who demanded that it rein in Hindu hard-liners pushing a partisan agenda.

Modi won a national election this year but he lacks a majority in the upper house which is indirectly elected by state legislators. Fintancial firms led by Max India (MAXIL.NS) and Reliance Capital (RLCP.NS) rallied on news of the government decree which has to be approved by lawmakers within six weeks of the opening of the next session of parliament—scheduled for the start of February.

The cabinet also renewed another order opening up the coal industry to the private sector after a bill on the issue similarly failed to make headway in parliament. “Both insurance and coal ordnance were cleared by the cabinet this morning,” a government official said, speaking on condition of anonymity. The president has to sign off the decrees.

US to pay $3.2 million to contractor freed from Cuba prison

MIAMI, 24 Dec — Alan Gross, the contractor freed last week after five years in a Cuban jail will receive $3.2 million (2 million pounds) from the US government as part of a settlement with his employer, the US Agency for International Development (USAID) announced on Tuesday.

Gross was employed by Bethesda, Maryland-based DAI as part of a USAID-financed project in Cuba. DAI had sought $7 million for Gross, said a USAID spokesman.

“Our understanding is that the money will go to Alan Gross as part of an agreement between the two parties,” the USAID spokesman said. The money would be paid in the next few days, he added.

DAI spokesman Steven O’Connor said the company was “delighted to have Alan home and pleased to have this legal matter settled.”

Gross had been jailed in Cuba since December 2009 until his release last week as the governments of the United States and communist-run Cuba restored diplomatic relations and swapped prisoners.

“His detention was a major obstacle to improvement in US-Cuban relations after more than 50 years of hostility. The settlement calls for payment by USAID for unanticipated claims under a cost-reimbursement contract, including claims related to Gross, USAID said in its statement.

Gross and his wife Judy filed a $60 million lawsuit in November 2012 for gross negligence against DAI and the US government. Gross settled with DAI for undisclosed terms in May 2013, and a US district court rejected his claim against the government, which was upheld last month on appeal.

A lawyer for Gross declined to discuss the settlement but added that it was planning to seek a review by the Supreme Court of its case against the US government.

Gross was serving a 15-year sentence for providing Internet equipment to Jewish Cubans under a US programme that Cuba views as subversive. Information is tightly controlled on the Caribbean island. Internet use is limited, and visitors are not allowed to carry satellite technology.

The United States says Gross was merely helping Cubans get connected as part of a democracy-building project. — Reuters
**Claims Day Notice**

**MV MARINOS VOY NO (001)**

Consignees of cargo carried on MV MARINOS VOY NO (001) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 25.12.2014 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of H.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**

**Myanmar Port Authority**

**Agent for:** M/S China Shipping Lines

Phone No: 2301185

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**Claims Day Notice**

**MV DAEWAI STAR VOY NO (001)**

Consignees of cargo carried on MV DAEWAI STAR VOY NO (001) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 25.12.2014 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.P 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**

**Myanmar Port Authority**

**Agent for:** M/S Continental Shipping Line PTE LTD

Phone No: 2301185

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**Weather Report**

**Bay Inference:** Weather is 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 25th December, 2014:** Weather will be partly cloudy in Taungthu Region and generally fair in the remaining Regions and States.

**Outlook for Subsequent Two Days:** Generally fair in the whole country.

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**Australian foreign minister hopeful Egypt will release Al Jazeera journalist**

**Sydney, 24 Dec —** Australian Foreign Minister Julie Bishop said on Wednesday the case of jailed Australian journalist Peter Greste is “under consideration” by high levels of the Egyptian government and she is hopeful of his release by the end of the year.

“I urged the (Egyptian foreign minister) to consider releasing Peter Greste for Christmas, we wanted him out and home as soon as possible,” Bishop told the Seven Network.

“We’ve got our fingers crossed, we don’t know whether we have secured this yet.”

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sissi was considering pardoning Greste and two other journalists of Qatar-based Al Jazeera television who have been in jail for a year. The three journalist were sentenced in June to between seven and 10 years jail on charges including spreading lies to help a “terrorist organization”, an allusion to the banned Muslim Brotherhood.

Greste and possibly Canadian-Egyptian Mohammed Fahmy could be pardoned. However, the third journalist, Baher Mohammed, is Egyptian, so would not be expected to benefit.

Human rights groups and Western governments have condemned the trial of the journalists and the United Nations questioned Egypt’s judicial independence. The affair has contributed to tensions between Egypt and Qatar.

An appeal for Greste is due to be heard on 1 January.

“It would be very exciting if there were some steps taken before then,” Bishop said.— Reuters

Nagasaki Prefecture.

The three missing are Mitsuyoshi Hamamoto, 52, Yoichi Imanishi, 60, and Akishiro Matsugami, 54, the coast guard said, adding five others were injured and taken to a hospital in Hamada.

The Japan Coast Guard sent patrol boats to search for the missing fishermen.— Kyodo News

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**Beijing bans private clubs in public parks**

**Beijing, 24 Dec —** Illegal Indonesian migrant workers returning from Malaysia arrive at Halim Perdanakusuma military airport base in Jakarta, capital of Indonesia, on 23 Dec, 2014.— Xinhu

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**Two dead, three missing after fishing ship sinks in Sea of Japan**

**Matsum (Japan), 24 Dec —** Two fishermen died and three others are missing after a fishing vessel sank in the Sea of Japan early on Wednesday, the Japan Coast Guard said.

The 135-ton No.1 Gempaku Maru with a crew of 20 men — 17 Japanese nationals and three Indonesians — sank in waters some 48 kilometers off the city of Hamada, Shimane Prefecture, in western Japan at around 4:40 am on Wednesday, coast guard officers said.

Crew members from other boats rescued 17 of the fishing vessel’s crew, two of whom later died, but the three others remain missing.

The two dead were identified as Shoichi Yokoyama, 59, and Keiji Tsukamoto, 56, both residents of the city of Hirado, Nagasaki Prefecture.

The three missing are Mitsuyoshi Hamamoto, 52, Yoichi Imanishi, 60, and Akishiro Matsugami, 54, the coast guard said, adding five others were injured and taken to a hospital in Hamada.

The Japan Coast Guard sent patrol boats to search for the missing fishermen.—Kyodo News

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**Chinese government official Hua Chunying told a press briefing: “We hope that Japan will work toward the same direction with China...will follow the path of peaceful development.”—Kyodo News**

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**Senior US nuclear official Burns to head regulatory agency**

**Washington, 24 Dec —** US President Barack Obama has promoted a senior official of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to succeed Allison Macfarlane as chairman, the commission said on Tuesday.

Stephen Burns, an NRC commissioner who has held various posts at the organization for more than three decades, will take the top post 1 January, the commission said. His five-year term will expire in 2019.

The commission is a Maryland-based body independent of the federal government. It helped the Japanese government and Tokyo Electric Power Co contain the disaster at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant, set off by an earthquake and tsunami in March 2011.

Burns was head of legal affairs of the Nuclear Energy Agency of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development before returning to the NRC as commissioner in 2011.

Macfarlane, who is stepping down, will take a post at George Washington University, according to the commission. — Kyodo News

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**Australian Foreign Minister Julie Bishop**

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**China asks Japan to be on peaceful path after Abe renamed PM**

**Beijing, 24 Dec —** A Chinese government official on Wednesday renewed a call on Japan to appropriately face wartime history and pursue a peaceful development after Shinzo Abe was reelected as parliament’s Japanese prime minister.

“A long-term and sound development of Sino-Japanese relations serves the fundamental interest of the countries,” Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying told a press briefing. “We hope that Japan will work toward the same direction with China...will follow the path of peaceful development.”—Kyodo News

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**Australia bans Tyre-Park:**

**Australian foreign minister hopeful Egypt will release Al Jazeera journalist**

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**China asks Japan to be on peaceful path after Abe renamed PM**
Angelina Jolie’s ‘Unbroken’ mines human spirit, survival

New York, 24 Dec — Angelina Jolie never expected to direct a film with shark attacks, plane crashes and prisoner-of-war camps, but she found the story of a World War Two hero so compelling she tackled them in “Unbroken,” a biopic about survival, faith and forgiveness.

The Oscar-winning actress and second-time director was halfway through Laura Hillenbrand’s best-selling book about Olympic runner and POW survivor Louis “Louie” Zamperini when she knew she wanted to make it into a film. “I would never have thought of myself handling that kind of cinematic film making,” said Jolie, 39. “But I cared about the story so I had to suddenly learn to do all those things.”

The film opens in US theatres on Christmas. Shot in Australia with a script by Joel and Ethan Coen, “Unbroken” follows Zamperini as a bombardier in air fight with enemy planes and through two harrowing crashes. After his plane plummets into the Pacific in 1943, he survives 47 days adrift in a life raft battling starvation and sharks. He is fished out of the ocean, imprisoned in Japanese POW camps and tortured, pushed to the edge of human endurance.

“It’s a movie for everybody,” said Jolie. “I want my children to know about men like Louie, so when they feel bad about themselves and they think all is lost, they know they’ve got something inside them, because that is what this story speaks to, what is in all of us.”

English actor Jack O’Connell, 24, won the National Board of Review’s 2014 breakthrough performance award and plaudits for his portrayal of Zamperini. Reuters

Remake of ‘The Gambler’ turns to theme of redemption

New York, 24 Dec — From the opening shot of the new remake of the classic 1970s film “The Gambler,” a different Mark Wahlberg is on view from the scrappy, unhindered character he has traditionally played.

As English professor Jim Bennett, a tear runs down Wahlberg’s cheek as he sits at his dying grandfather’s bedside. “This particular part was an opportunity for me to do something different,” the actor told a news conference. “I am used to playing the underdog, as opposed to the guy who has everything.”

“The Gambler,” which opens on Christmas day, chronicles the week-long downward spiral of disaffected Bennett, who despites all the trappings of success and privilege is bent on self-destruction via high-stakes gambling.

Jessica Lange plays Bennett’s wealthy, out-of-patience mother, Brie Larson is a star pupil with whom he becomes romantically involved, and John Goodman is a philosophical loan shark.

Intent on defying expectations, the filmmakers said they aimed to take a different approach to the story of the gambler, a role memorably played by James Caan 40 years ago.

“The 1974 film was about gambling addiction, and I happen to come from a mindset where I think everything is voluntary,” said writer William Monahan, describing his take on the story. “I don’t believe in addiction,” said the Oscar-winning writer of “The Departed,” a film that scored Wahlberg a best supporting actor nomination and also won best picture. Reuters

Actresses need to act their age: Russell Crowe

London, 24 Dec — Russell Crowe feels older stars should not expect to be cast as young characters. Crowe, 50, said there are roles out there but the older actresses still expect to be cast as young characters, reported Contactmusic.

“I think you’ll find that the woman who is saying that (the roles have dried up) is the woman who at 40, 45, 48, still wants to play the ingenue, and can’t understand why she’s not being cast as the 21 year old,” he said.

Crowe added that film stars need to ensure they are comfortable with who they are in order to succeed in the industry.

“‘If you are willing to live in your own skin, you can work as an actor. If you are trying to pretend that you’re still the young buck when you’re my age, it just doesn’t work,” he said.—PTI

‘Star Trek 3’ film to open in US theatres in July 2016

New York, 24 Dec — “Star Trek 3,” the latest film in the intergalactic franchise featuring Captain Kirk and the crew of the USS Enterprise, will open in US theatres on 8 July, 2016, Paramount Pictures said on Tuesday.

The release will coincide with the 50th anniversary of the original “Star Trek” series starring William Shatner as Kirk and Leonard Nimoy as the pointy-eared First Officer Spock.

“Fast and Furious” director Justin Lin is set to direct the latest film in the Star Trek franchise. The first two movies were helmed by “Lost” TV show creator JJ Abrams, who rebooted the franchise, based on the popular TV show and earlier film adaptations.

Abrams is directing “Star Wars: The Force Awakens” but will be a producer on the film. Reuters

One Direction sing Christmas song

Los Angeles, 24 Dec — British boyband One Direction sang ‘Santa Claus Is Coming to Town’ while playing instruments like drum, triangle and banana-shaped maraca on a TV chat show.

One Direction made an appearance on ‘The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon’ and joined the show’s host for a song, reported Ace Showbiz.

Harry Styles, Niiall Horan, Zayn Malik, Louis Tomlinson and Liam Payne all looked cute in bright-coloured Christmas-y jumpers as they showcased their sweet vocals while playing instruments like snare drum, triangle and banana-shaped maraca alongside Fallon and the members of The Roots.—PTI

One Direction made an appearance on ‘The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon’ while playing instruments like drum, triangle and banana-shaped maraca on a TV chat show.—PTI

Director of the movie JJ Abrams poses at the party for the release of the Blu-Ray DVD of “Star Trek Into Darkness” at the California Science Centre in Los Angeles, California on 10 Sept, 2013. Reuters

The ‘Star Trek’ films have earned more than $1.2 billion at the US box office since 1979, according to boxofficemojo.com.—Reuters
Southampton sign Dutch winger Elia on loan from Bremen

LONDON, 24 Dec — Southampton have agreed to sign Werder Bremen’s Netherlands winger Eljero Elia on loan until the end of the season, the Premier League club said on Tuesday. “The winger will officially join Saints on Saturday 3rd January, initially on loan until the end of the season with a view to a permanent transfer next summer,” the club said on their website.

The 27-year-old Elia will provide cover for Eng-
No injury returns for Man United, says Van Gaal

LONDON, 24 Dec — None of Manchester United’s injured players are likely to be fit for the next Premier League match against Newcastle United, manager Louis van Gaal said on Tuesday.

Daley Blind, Marcos Rojo, Luke Shaw, Marouane Fellaini, Ander Herrera and Chris Smalling missed the 1-1 draw at Aston Villa and only Smalling has an outside chance of returning against Newcastle at Old Trafford on Friday.

“For a few players it is fine because they are recovering quickly,” Van Gaal told reporters.

“You also have players who are not recovering so quickly, so I have to rotate. I have a lot of injured players, that is the problem with these matches.”

United’s 1-1 draw at Villa ended a run of six successive wins which has lifted Van Gaal’s side to third.

“We want to build a fortress at Old Trafford and we have made it that already because we have won a lot, and with great results,” Van Gaal said.

“We have to continue, but there are no easy games in the Premier League.” United travel to Tottenham Hotspur on Sunday and Stoke City on Thursday before an FA Cup third-round trip to Yeovil.

“My record in away matches as a coach is not so bad,” Van Gaal said.

“Away, teams are more open and want to attack but here they want to defend. That is why we have to build up a certain playing style so we can dominate. I am saying every week that we are dominating for 45 or 60 minutes. We have to dominate for 90 minutes.”

Radamel Falcao headed the equaliser against Villa, only his second goal for United, and Van Gaal is looking for more from the on-loan Colombian striker. “He can be in great form, but the team has to be in great form. That allows Falcao to show his qualities,” the Dutchman said. “When the cross is not coming from Ashley Young, then he cannot show what he has done in the last match.”—Reuters

Chelsea aim to deny rivals City any festive cheer

LONDON, 24 Dec — The omens are good for a Chelsea side heading into Christmas top of the Premier League tree but manager Jose Mourinho does not want to give title rivals Manchester City any reason to cheer over the festive season.

Having beaten Stoke City 2-0 at the Britannia Stadium on Monday, the London club ensured they went into a busy fixture schedule leading the table with 42 points from 17 matches.

The last three times Chelsea have been top on Christmas Day they have gone on to win the title, but Mourinho is taking nothing for granted with testing matches to come.

Sam Allardyce’s fourth-placed West Ham United travel to Chelsea’s Stamford Bridge ground on Friday before Mourinho’s men head to Southampton on Sunday and then make the short trip across London to face Tottenham Hotspur on New Year’s Day.

“Now we have to focus on the three matches we still have until the end of this period,” Mourinho told reporters after the victory at Stoke.

“Playing against Big Sam is a hard job for us, we have to cope with it. Three-point lead we have is a little advantage, it is a little pillow we have to protect us. “We have been top of the league since day one and we are there because we are playing really well. Our Christmas fixtures are more difficult than any other one (club).”

Second-placed City travel to West Bromwich Albion in search of a seventh straight league win but they are still without injured strikers Stevan Jovetic, Edin Dzeko and Sergio Aguero.

Zlatan Ibrahimovic

Ibra unhappy at coming second on list of Swedish greats

STOCKHOLM, 24 Dec — Striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic has dismissed his second-place finish on a list of Sweden’s all-time sporting greats behind tennis master Bjorn Borg.

“Thank you but to finish second is like finishing last,” he informed the Dagens Nyheter newspaper through his brand manager Mika Lepisto.

The 33-year-old Paris St Germain striker was second in the list of 150 Swedish sportspeople, created by the newspaper as part of their 150th anniversary celebrations.

Asked where he would have put himself in the rankings, Ibra said: “On that list I would have been number one, two, three, four and five, with due respect to the others.”

Instead, the newspaper jury selected tennis great Borg, who won 11 grand slam tournaments in a stellar career that Ibrahimovic acknowledged.

“Bjorn Borg is a cool person and a living legend,” said Ibra, who has scored 51 goals in 101 games for Sweden and has won titles at many of Europe’s leading clubs including Ajax Amsterdam, Juventus, Inter Milan, Barcelona, AC Milan and PSG.—Reuters

Neymar: I have learned from World Cup pain

PRAIA GRANDE, 24 Dec — Neymar says he has learned important lessons from his 2014 World Cup heartbreak as he looks to 2015 for redemption.

The Brazil captain on Tuesday reiterated that a back injury suffered during his team’s 2-1 World Cup quarterfinal victory over Colombia in July was one of the “worst moments” of his life. Neymar was ruled out of the tournament with a fractured vertebra after clashing with Colombia’s Camilo Zuniga late in the match in Fortaleza.

The hosts were eliminated from the World Cup four days later when they lost 7-1 to eventual winners Germany in Belo Horizonte. “It was a year of lessons, happiness and sadness,” the Barcelona forward said during the opening of his Neymar Jr Institute for underprivileged children.

“It was an excellent World Cup from a certain point of view. But then I got injured and that was one of the worst moments of my life.”

Neymar has already scored 16 goals from 19 matches in all competitions for Barcelona this season.

He has also shone for Brazil since replacing Thiago Silva as captain in September.

He scored all four goals in the 4-0 victory over Japan in October and added a brace in a 4-0 rout of Turkey in November.

The Selecao No 10 looks set to again be his team’s central figure at the Copa America in Chile next June and July. —Xinhua