Vice President Dr Sai Mauk Kham looks into hospital renovations in Yangon

Yangon, 29 Dec — Vice President Dr. Sai Mauk Kham inspected renovation works at 500-bed specialist hospital and 1,500-bed general hospital in Yangon Monday.

At the arrival to the specialist hospital, medical superintendent Dr Than Htut explained infrastructure, management, water and electricity supply, treatments and plans for 2015-2016 fiscal year at the hospital.

Deans of medical departments also presented the functioning of respective theatre, followed by suggestions of deputy health minister Dr Win Myint.

Dr. Sai Mauk Kham said: “Government has allocated more budgets for health sector. A long-term plan will be needed to ensure international treatment norms. Medical workers are suggested to collaborate with respective department, with the help of regional departments in some circumstances.”

The vice president then looked around upgrading and renovation works at the 1,500-bed Yangon General Hospital.

APPLICATION FOR CAR IMPORT PERMITS DOUBLES

Yangon, 29 Dec — The number of applications for getting car import permits has doubled as the Ministry of Commerce has asked importers to apply for import licenses prior to shipping from 1st January, 2015, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

The ministry’s effort is aimed at reducing the storage of vehicles at Thilawa Port, a ministry official said.

Currently, the ministry allows importers to ship in cars to Thilawa Port and to apply for an import license upon arrival of the vehicles.

The One-Stop Services-OSS, the agency that oversees imports under the Ministry of Commerce, has issued around 700 permits to importers after scrutinizing their applications in accordance with the rules of the ministry.

To be able to cope with the increasing in number of applications, the ministry has reinforced the workforce at the agency, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

The government launched a car-swap programme with cars more than 40 years old in 2011.

MRTV TO DEBUT NEW CHANNELS IN JANUARY

Nay Pyi Taw, Dec 29 — Myanmar Radio and Television will introduce two new products commencing 1 January 2015, according to the statement of Ministry of Information on Monday.

MRTV News Channel and MRTV Entertainment Channel will come through as the next steps of the state-owned broadcaster with the contribution of a private media.

Private media Shwe Than Lwin will feed up two matches of England Premier League per week, together with Champion League and Spanish La Liga.

On 15 October 2013, MRTV added digital system or DVB T2 to the existing analogue system that covers the whole country. In addition to the main programme, Myanmar International, Ethnic Channel, Hlutaw Channel, Farmer Channel and Reader Channel can be received by DVB T2 Set Top Box.

The first phase of digital broadcasting system has covered Yangon, Nay Pyi Taw, Sagaing and Tatkam on 15 October 2013 for Independence Day’s Grand Military Review ceremony
Deputy Speaker meets Leader of Osaka Girl Guides Team and party

NAY PYI TAW, 29 Dec—Deputy Speaker of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw and Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) U Nanda Kyaw Swa received Leader of Osaka Girl Guides Team Ms Yoko Shinke and party of Japan at Pyithu Hluttaw C Hall in Nay Pyi Taw on Monday.

Also present at the call were Chief of Girl Guides Team Daw Tin Hla Kyi and Vice Chairperson of Myanmar Girl Guides Association (Temporary) Daw Khin Saw Ohnmar.

The deputy speaker extended greetings to Myanmar and Japanese Girl Guides teams at Zabuthiri Hall of the Pyithu Hluttaw where two Girl Guides teams exchanged views.

Union minister views round construction, maintenance of road sections, bridges in Rakhine State

NAY PYI TAW, 29 Dec—Engineers and staff are to carry out their tasks dutifully for development of roads and bridges in Rakhine State, Union Minister for Construction U Kyaw Lwin told engineers and office staff at Thandwe District Public Works on 27 December.

The union minister and party viewed upgrading of local roads in Thandwe and placing asphalt concrete on Thandwe-Taungup road.

Deputy Superintending Engineer U Khin Soe of Road Construction Project Special Group-9 reported on construction of Pyay-Taungup road, Taungup-Thandwe road and Taungup-Maei road and an official of Nay La Thitsa Company, Taungup-Thandwe-Ngapali-Lontha-Mazin road. On 28 December, the union minister met engineers and staff at the hall of Road Construction Project Special Group-8 in An. He also inspected upgrading of Minbu-An road section, construction of the retaining wall at Para Creek Bridge, Padan-Ngaphe-Sedoktara-Saw road and Panhtein and Inn Bridges.

MPT to sell new stamps to mark 67th Anniversary Independence Day

NAY PYI TAW, 29 Dec—In commemoration of the 67th Anniversary Independence Day, Myanmar Posts and Telecommunications under the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology will sell one new stamp worth K200 and two new stamps worth K100 each at region and state post offices at 9.30 am on 4 January 2015.

As a special programme, Nay Pyi Taw, Yangon and Mandalay General Post Offices will sell the stamps with seal of date to the buyers on 4 January 2015.

Myanmar-China friendship basketball tournament kicks off

YANGON, 29 Dec—Chairman of Myanmar National Sports Committee Union Minister for Sports U Tint Hsan delivered an address at the opening ceremony of Myanmar-China friendship basketball tournament to mark the 106th anniversary of Chinese Merchants Association in Myanmar at Aung San Gymnasium, here, on 28 December.

Chinese Ambassador Mr Yang Houlan and Chairman of Chinese Merchants Association of Myanmar U Myint Shwe extended greetings.

The union minister, the Chinese ambassador and officials opened the tournament.

Enthusiasts may watch the matches at Aung San Gymnasium as of 1 pm daily. —MNA

Myanmar youths join American Junior WJGS 2014 in US

YANGON, 29 Dec—A Myanmar youth golf delegation led by manager U Chan Han took part in the American Junior WJGS 2014 in World Golf Village Resort in Florida, the United States of America from 19 to 22 December 2014. Phu Pwint Yati Khaing stood seventh in the girls’ event while Phone Pyae Chan Han secured the 11th position and Hein Sithu, 25th position in the boys’ event.

Altogether 57 athletes from 22 countries participated in the American Junior WJGS 2014.

MPT will sell new stamps in commemoration of 67th Anniversary Independence Day.—MNA
Vice President U Nyan Tun views rehearsal of military columns, departments, social organizations for Independence Day’s Grand Military Review ceremony

NAY PYI TAW, 29 Dec — Vice President U Nyan Tun on Monday morning viewed rehearsal and preparations for successfully holding the 67th Anniversary Independence Day’s Grand Military Review ceremony 2015 at the pandal of the grand military review in Nay Pyi Taw.

Together with Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services and Commander-in-Chief (Army) Vice-Senior General Soe Win, union ministers and senior military officers, the vice president heard reports on preparations for the ceremony, reception, transport, security and information.

He viewed the marching of flag bearers, military bands, parade columns and armoured troops to the ground, saluting the president, inspection of the parade columns, saluting the State flag, paying tribute to the martyrs and fallen Tatmadawmen, two-minute silence, a speech of the president for 67th anniversary Independence Day, taking oaths, saluting of military columns and aircrafts of Defence Services (Air).

Flag bearers, military bands and parade columns of Defence Services (Army), Myanmar Police Force, Immigration and National Registration Department, Customs Department, Myanmar Scout Youth, Myanmar Red Cross Society, Myanmar Women’s Affairs Federation, Myanmar National races participate in rehearsal for 67th Anniversary Independence Day’s Grand Military Review ceremony.—MNA

Four books chosen for Sayawun Tin Shwe literary awards

YANGON, 29 Dec — A scrutiny committee chose four books for Sayawun Tin Shwe Literary Award in 2014.

Winners for the books are Aye Phyu for her book entitled “Articles on businesses and organizations”, Yu Ya (MU-1) for selected short stories, Dr Nilar Thein for “Victories of eye specialists” and Tun Aung Chan for “Flowering Waters; Dipping into Myanmar History”. Sayawun Tin Shwe Life-long Achievement Literary Award will go to veteran writer Maung Su San.

Prizes will be awarded to the winners in January 2015. For further information, may dial 01-0536444 and 095117683.—GNLM

Cleft lip and palate patients may receive free surgical treatment in Dawei

DAWEI, 29 Dec — A 15-member surgical operation team led by Belgian cleft lip and palate surgical specialist Professor Dr Tomard Patrick will perform free surgical operations on cleft lip and palate patients at Sitagu Aroya-dana Hospital in Dawei, Tanintharyi Region, from 11 to 15 January 2014.

Patients with cleft lip and palate across the country may receive free medical services at the hospital.

Po Shwe Tham (Dawei)
Youth participation in sports grows in Mohnyin

MOHNYIN, 29 Dec — A Sepak Takraw tournament took place in the sports ground of Mohnyin railway yard on 25 December.

A total of 12 youth teams participated in the tournament. “Various sports events should be organized on holidays for local youths, aimed at enabling the youths to emphasize sports competitions and to be free from danger of narcotic drugs,” a volunteer from a social organization told media.

After the competitions, Mohnyin Degree College stood first and Myanmar Railways, second.

Similar sports meets will be held on 2015 Independence Day and Union Day.

Former students pay respects to retired teachers at Dawei BEHS No 3

Dawei, 29 Dec — No 3 Basic Education High School in Dawei called ABM School in the past held the third ceremony to pay respects to teachers at its hall on 28 December.

Former students Chief Minister of Tanintharyi Region U Myat Ko, member of Union Civil Services Board Dr Kyaw Kyaw Htay and Chairman of the organizing committee U Nyan Win formally opened the ceremony. Former students paid respects to the retired teachers. On behalf of teachers, retired ABM teachers U Ban Nyein, U Ba Aye and retired assistant region education officer U Nyan Tun gave words of advice.

At the ceremony, students paid respects to 94 retired teachers. Similar ceremonies took place at Dawei BEHS Branch and Maungmeshaung Village’s BEHS Branch in Dawei Township.

DRD upgrades gravel road to asphalt one in Myeik Tsp

MYEIK, 29 Dec — Department of Rural Development constructs the Taungpale-Shantaung-Minthan inter-village road and a concrete bridge on it in 2014-15 fiscal year.

Head of Myeik District DRD U Aung Naing Tun and Head of Township Department U Aye Naing DRD upgraded gravel road to asphalt one in Myeik Township.

Eligible people get citizenship scrutiny cards in Natogyi Township

MYANMAR, 29 Dec — In implementing Moe Pwint 7 plan, issuance of citizenship scrutiny cards exceeded the target, Head of Natogyi Township Immigration and National Registration Department U Soe Moe told media on 27 December.

Staff of the department delivered cards to 75 people from Phalangon village, 27 people from Moeegan village and 116 people from Ywathaaye village. As staff of the department made trips to the grassroots level for issuance of the cards, local people could save time and money because they did not need to go to urban area to take out the cards.

During the trip, the staff issued the cards to 528 eligible people, exceeding 324 people of 324 targeted amount.—Khin Zar Mon (Myeik)
Japan, S Korea, US ink memorandum to share info on N Korea

A memorandum of understanding between Japan, South Korea and the United States on sharing and safeguarding sensitive information on defence such as North Korea’s nuclear and missile programmes went into effect on Monday, South Korea’s Defence Ministry said. According to the memorandum of understanding, the Japanese Defence Ministry and the South Korean Defence Ministry will, through the US Department of Defence, share only information each has authorized with each other. Japan is hoping to be able to swiftly obtain information on North Korean missile launches that South Korea has gathered. According to diplomatic sources, the three countries signed the memorandum by Friday.

He said that the plane’s last coordinates at the time when it lost contact with air traffic control, however, indicate that it might have crashed into the sea. “And if it plunged into the sea, it might be at the bottom of the sea,” he said. However, according to the air force officer, if it really crashed into the sea and is resting at the bottom, Indonesia does not have the means to retrieve it.

“That’s why, through our foreign minister, we have contacted other countries — the United Kingdom, France and the United States, which have so far offered help to borrow locators,” he said. As rainy season is under way in Indonesia, another challenge the rescuers are facing now is the weather, which is bad in some areas, particularly at sea. There were 135 passengers on board, consisting of 138 adults, 16 children and one infant. By nationality, 149 of the passengers are Indonesians, with six others being a Singaporean, a Malaysian, a Briton and three South Koreans, the statement said. The plane had an Indonesian captain, a French co-pilot and five cabin crew.

According to the airline, the plane underwent a scheduled maintenance on 16 November and the pilot had a total of 6,100 flying hours and the first officer a total of 2,275 flying hours. Having also affiliations in the Philippines and Thailand, AirAsia Group is the largest low-cost carrier in Asia in terms of fleet size and the number of passengers carried.

The airline has been named the World’s Best Low Cost Airline in the annual World Airline Survey by Skytrax for five consecutive years from 2009-2013 and the World’s Leading Low Cost Airline at the 2013 World Travel Awards. AirAsia CEO Tony Fernandes told reporters in Jakarta on Monday that the group has carried 220 million passengers in 13 years and had no fatalities prior to Flight QZ8501.
Amid hacking tensions, South Korea proposes resuming talks with North

SEUL, 29 Dec — South Korea proposed on Monday to resume stalled talks with North Korea, an offer that comes amid heightened diplomatic tensions after Seoul’s key ally the United States blamed the North for a cyberattack on Sony Pictures Entertainment.

North Korea has denied responsibility for the hacking and said it was an attempt by the United States to smear its name.

Kim Jong-un

Pyongyang subsequently blamed Washington for its own internet outages, and has denied any involvement in recent system breaches into South Korea’s state nuclear power operator.

Seoul’s unification minister said the South had sent a letter to Pyongyang seeking negotiations, which it hopes to hold in January and would cover issues including reunions for families separated by the 1950-1953 Korean war and possible co-operation on humanitarian issues.

The North had accepted the letter but had yet to respond, South Korean Unification Minister Ryoo Kihl-jae told a news briefing.

“I don’t think we will have any particular agenda, but our position is to discuss everything that South and North have mutual interests in,” said Ryoo, noting that 2015 marks the 70th anniversary of Korea’s independence from Japan.

A delegation of high-level North Korean officials made a surprise visit in October to the closing ceremony of the Asian Games hosted by the South, and promised to reopen dialogue between the two. However, the two sides failed to hold follow-up talks as tension persisted, with the North lashing out at the South over Pyongyang’s propaganda leaflets sent to the North via balloon by activist groups.

Military officials from North and South Korea met in October to discuss border altercations, including an exchange of fire, but they did not resolve their differences.

South Korea imposed an broad set of sanctions on Pyongyang in 2010 following the sinking of a South Korean corvette that killed 46 sailors.

South Korea blamed the North, while Pyongyang denied it was responsible.

The two Koreas have remained technically at war for more than six decades as the Korean War ended in an armistice, not a peace treaty. Reunification of the Korean peninsula has been a priority for South Korean President Park Geun-hye.

Jet Airways plane catches fire while landing in Kathmandu, all safe

KATHMANDU, 29 Dec — A Boeing 737-800 flying from Mumbai to Kathmandu was hit by a bird and caught fire while landing at Kathmandu airport on Monday afternoon.

The aircraft, operated by India’s Jet Airways was struck by a bird just minutes before it landed at the airport, said Birendra Shrestha, general manager of Tribhuvan International Airport in Kathmandu.

“The bird got sucked into the plane’s left engine causing the fire while the plane was still airborne,” Shrestha told Kyodo News. “The plane successfully landed and everyone on board is safe.”

The fire is under control and the plane has been temporarily grounded. Engineers are looking into the damage caused to the aircraft.

Several planes flying to and from Kathmandu’s airport have experienced bird hits in the past. In September 2012, a Dornier turboprop belonging to a local airline crashed minutes after taking off from the airport due to a bird hit and all 19 on board, including 12 foreigners, died in the crash in the Bhaktapur district that neighbours Kathmandu.—Kyodo News

Iranian general killed by sniper bullet in embattled Iraqi city

DUBAI, 29 Dec — A sniper killed an Iranian Revolutionary Guards commander who was training Iraqi troops and Shi’ite militia fighters in the Iraqi city of Samarra, official Iranian media reported on Sunday.

Brigadier General Hamid Taqavi, a veteran of the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war, was killed by snipers hiding behind a power transformer in Samarra, an embattled city north of Baghdad and home to holy Shi’ite shrines, they said, quoting a Revolutionary Guards’ statement.

Several people with him were wounded in the rain of sniper fire, they said.

“Taqavi became a martyr while fulfilling his duty as a military adviser in the fight against Daesh (IS) revisionist terrorists, a glorious end to a long valuable service to advance the cause of (Iran’s 1979 Islamic revolution),” said the official Defence Ministry site.

It said the general had fought “enemies on various fronts.”

Unspecified numbers of Iranian advisors and combatants are defending holy Shi’ite sites in Iraq and Syria against raids by Sunni Jihadi fighters. Iran sent reinforcements to Iraq to help stave off an advance on Baghdad by IS militants this year at the request of Iraqi government and Shi’ite leaders.—Reuters
Tensions with New York City police go beyond racial issues

NEW YORK, 29 Dec — Tensions between New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio and the police are rooted in issues that go beyond racial relations, the police commissioner said on Sunday, a day after the funeral of one of the two officers slain a week ago in their patrol car.

The tensions “involve labour contracts. They involve a lot of history in the city that’s really different from some of what’s going on in the country as a whole,” Bill Bratton said on NBC’s “Meet the Press.”

“You need to understand this isn’t just about policing,” he said. “This is about the continuing poverty, the continued growing disparity between the wealthy and the poor.”

On Saturday, thousands of police officers assembled outside the former residence of Rafael Ramos to eulogize the 25-year veteran who was killed in a shooting last week.

The funeral, which took place in Queens, was attended by the body of Ramos, who was killed in a confrontation with a man who lived in New York City.

The funeral was followed by a wave of demonstrations against police violence in New York and other cities, and de Blasio voiced qualified support for white officers this year.

The killing of Ramos and Liu triggered a backlash. The head of the city’s largest union, Patrick Lynch, said the mayor had the officers’ blood on his hands.

De Blasio has not taken questions from journalists since last Monday. Wiley Norvell, a spokes-

man for the mayor, declined to address questions about the tensions directly.

“Our sole focus is unifying this city and honoring the lives of our two police officers,” he said in an email.

Bratton defended the mayor on CBS’s “Face the Nation,” saying the mayor completely supported the police. The commissioner said it was inappropriate for officers to turn their backs on the mayor.

Bratton told NBC the city’s leadership would make an effort to meet with union leaders to ease tensions.

“I think it’s probably a rift that is going on for a while longer,” he said.

On CBS, Bratton said police have investigated more than 50 threats against officers since the deaths of Ramos and Liu.

“Moral in the department at this time is low, there is no getting around that,” he said.

Bratton appeared on the CBS programme with Rudy Giuliani, who was generally unequivocal in his support for police during his two terms as mayor.

De Blasio was partly at fault for the backlash by police, Giuliani said, but he agreed that officers should not have turned their backs when the mayor spoke.

“He created an impression with the police that he was on the side of the protesters,” Giuliani said.—Reuters

Mexico calls for larger, more diverse UN Security Council

MEXICO CITY, 29 Dec — Mexico on Sunday called for an overhaul of the United Nations Security Council, envisaging more member countries across a wider geographical swathe, as the government steps up efforts to raise its profile on the global stage.

Tasked with maintaining global peace, the UN Security Council meets when war looms and cooperates in efforts to solve international disputes, with measures ranging from sanctions to military action.

The Council has five permanent members — China, France, Russia, Britain and the United States — and 10 temporary members elected by the UN General Assembly for two-year terms.

In a statement, Mexico’s foreign ministry said it wanted the 10 temporary members to grow to 26, with six members coming from Africa, five from Asia, four from Latin America and the Caribbean, live from both Western and Eastern Europe, and one from small developing nations.

However, Mexico said it was against changing the five permanent members of the Council.

“The final aim of this process would be to have a more representative Council, that is more efficient, more transparent and that would be accountable ... to the UN General Assembly,” the foreign ministry office statement said.

The proposal comes just a few months after Mexico said it was ready to take part in United Nations peace-keeping missions, after years of staying out of the world’s conflicts.

Mexico has traditionally pursued a low-key foreign policy. But since taking office in 2012, Mexican President Enrique Pena Nieto has sought to raise Mexico’s international standing.

In his very first speech as president, Pena Nieto said making Mexico “an actor with global responsibility” was one of his key priorities.—Reuters

Colombian rebel chief in Cuba for peace talks: gov’t

BOGOTA, 29 Dec — A fugitive commander of the rebel Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) is in Cuba for peace talks with the Colombian government, the authorities confirmed on Sunday.

Joaquin Gomez, commander of FARC’s South- ern Bloc and a member of its secretariat, had travelled to Havana to take part in the negotiations, said a press release issued by the president’s office.

As Gomez is a fugitive wanted by the government, his travel arrangements were made “following all the established protocols” and with the authorization of Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos, said the release.

The 67-year-old Gomez, whose real name is Milton de Jesus Toncel, is considered to be among the country’s biggest drug traffickers. He is also believed to be behind attacks on oil facilities in the country’s southwestern department of Putumayo.

Gomez faces a 34-year prison term after a trial in absentia.

Gomez is also wanted by the United States. The State Department is offering a reward of up to 2.5 million US dollars for information leading to his arrest, according to the agency’s website.

Italy says 265 rescued from ferry, more than 200 still stranded

ROME, 29 Dec — Rescue teams working through the night have pulled 265 people off a stricken car ferry which caught fire off the coast of Greece but more than 200 are stranded on board, the Italian navy said on Monday.

Helicopter crews have been slowly airlifting passengers from the upper deck of the Norman Atlantic, which caught fire in the early hours of Sunday and began drifting in rough seas between Greece and Italy.

A medical team and a flight operator are on the vessel to assist the 213 passengers and crew who remain aboard as the rescue continues, the navy said.

After initial rescue efforts were impeded by bad weather that prevented other ships reaching the multideck ferry, Italian and Greek helicopter crews began the difficult airborne operation on Sunday afternoon.

The operation is being coordinated from the Italian navy’s amphibious transport ship the San Giorgio, while the Norman Atlantic is towed to the southern Italian port of Brindisi.

One man was confirmed to have died on Sunday and there were four reported injuries. Seven passengers have been flown to Kalata in southern Italy.

The Italian-flagged Norman Atlantic, chartered by Greek ferry operator Anek Lines, was sailing between Patras in western Greece and Ancona in Italy carrying 478 passengers and crew and more than 200 vehicles when it caught fire.

A rescue helicopter flies over the burning car ferry Norman Atlantic as fire fighting tug boats douche the vessel in south Adriatic sea on 28 Dec, 2014.  Reuters
**MIND**

Kyi Mun

* Mind is the key to Life. You can elevate your life with your mind; and You can degrade your life with your mind.

* Bhagavad Gita

* Mind precedes all mental states. Mind is their chief; They are all mind-wrought. If with an impure mind a person speaks or acts, suffering follows him like the wheel that follows the foot of the ox.

* Mind precedes all mental states. Mind is their chief; They are all mind-wrought. If with a pure mind a person speaks or acts, happiness follows him like his never-departing shadow.

* Just as a Fletcher straightens an arrow shaft, even so the discerning man straightens his mind – so fickle and unsteady, so difficult to guard and control.

* As a fish when pulled out of water and cast on land thrombs and quivers, even so is this mind agitated. Hence should one abandon The realm of Mara.

* Wonderful, indeed, it is to subdue the mind, so difficult to subdue, ever swifl, and seizing whatever it desires. A tamed mind brings happiness.

* Let the discerning man guard the mind, so difficult to detect and extremely subtle, seizing whatever it desires. A guarded mind brings happiness.

* Dwelling in the cave (of the heart), the mind, without form, wonders far and alone. Those who subdue this mind are liberated from the bonds of Mara.

* Wisdom never becomes perfect In one whose mind is not steadfast, who knows not the Good Teaching and whose faith wavers.

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**PERSPECTIVES**

Tuesday, 30 December, 2014

Career promotion of workers through education

By Myint Win Thein

Nowadays, people have to learn their entire lives to equip themselves with tools that will help succeed in their careers. As a result, life-long learning has become very popular in every country, especially in developed ones where rapid technological development forces people to modify their skills regularly.

In poor countries, children drop out of school as their parents cannot afford education for them, and enter the workforce by working in construction sites, factories, shops, restaurants and so on. They often have to change jobs as their employers go out of business. They have to find jobs in other factories, shops, restaurants again, without prospects of career promotion for them. This is also the case in industrial zones in Myanmar. Most workers there are young girls who missed out on education for various reasons and now work in factories in industrial estates away from their native towns or villages for a meagre income. When their factories close down or they are made redundant, they have to find other jobs that are not better than the previous ones. Sometimes, they cannot find another job and have to take indecent jobs.

They need to be equipped with educational qualifications that will lift their lives out of poverty through non-formal education that is as useful as formal education. It is advisable that every industrial zone in Myanmar should set up non-formal education centres with a collective fund of industrialists to help promote the lives of workers. In addition, semi-formal education centres that will help younger workers join in formal education should also be established in industrial zones.
Monastic education middle school gets new school building

SAGAING, 29 Dec — A ceremony to inaugurate new school building entitled ‘Weint Sein’ was held at Shwethamar monastic middle school in Ywahtaung ward, Sagaing Township, on 28 December. Well-wisher of the school building owner of Weint Sein jewellery shop Dr Daw Phyu Phyu Swe explained the purpose of donation. Mandalay Region Minister for Development Affairs Mandalay Mayor U Aung Maung, Region Minister for Finance Dr Myint Kyu and well-wisher U Win Sein formally opened the new building.

The well-wisher spent over K140 million on construction for the 102 feet long and 30 feet wide building. It is a RC two-storey building to admit students of the monastic education.

Tin Maung
(Mandalay)

MRCS serves as linkage institution among separated family members

MOHNYIN, 29 Dec — The Myanmar Red Cross Society cooperates Red Cross societies in regions and states to help reunite family members who were separated in various disasters and miseries.

Members of Mohnyin Township Red Cross Brigade in Kachin State handed over 22 letters through Re-storing Family Links (RFL) programme of MRCS to the families concerned in December 2014. Deputy Commanding Officer U Myint Oo of the Township Red Cross Brigade led their works as of 15 November.

Over 70 skilled workers led by Deputy Superintendent Engineer (Civil) U Khin Maung Than started their works as of 15 November.

The region government will spend K2.25 billion on construction of AC road and general works in 2014-15 fiscal year. The deputy superintendent engineer said, “It is the first-ever asphalt road in the region. The construction task may be completed on 15 March 2015. Depending on the allotted budget, asphalt concrete will be placed on the Dawei-Yebyu road, Dawei-Maungmagan road and Dawei-Myitta road.”

“The road is being upgraded to an asphalt facility. As it is very smooth, drivers are to take care of their vehicles and the smooth road to be free from traffic accidents,” said a resident near the road.

Po Shwe Thun
(Dawei)

Dawei Township constructs asphalt concrete road

MANDALAY, 29 Dec — Mandalay Region Minister for Development Affairs Mandalay Mayor U Aung Maung presented championship trophy and cash award to Aye Aye Aung with 236 strokes in the 15th Mayor Cup golf tournament on 28 December.

The mayor also presented trophies and cash awards to Myint Swe with 213 in the senior professional event and Maung Maung Oo with 282 in the amateur event and trophy and K2 million to Ye Htet Maung Oo with 274 in the professional event.

A total of 26 professional golfers, 24 senior professional golfers, 177 men amateurs and 36 women amateurs participated in the golf tournament.

Tin Maung
(Mandalay)

Mandalay Mayor Cup golf tournament wraps up

Firefighters of Township Fire Services Department and Auxiliary Fire Brigade participating in fire drill with the use of fire trucks at Myoma Naychi Market in Myanaung, Ayeyawady Region, on 28 December.

Win Bo (TOWNSHIP IPRD)
Hopes dim Egypt to release Australian
Al Jazeera journalist soon

KABUL, 29 Dec — The US-led mission in Afghanistan formally ended its combat mission on Sunday, more than 13 years after an international alliance ousted the Taliban government for sheltering the planners of the 11 September, 2001 attacks on American cities. About 13,000 foreign troops, mostly Americans, will remain in the country under a new, two-year mission named “Resolute Support” that will continue the coalition’s training of Afghan security forces.

“The Afghan army and police are struggling to fight against Taliban militants who this year killed record numbers of Afghans. Today marks an end of an era and the beginning of a new one,” said US General John Campbell, commander of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), at the ceremony marking the end of the mission held at the ISAF headquarters in Kabul.

“We will continue to invest in Afghanistan’s future,” Campbell said at the ceremony, during which he rolled up the coalition’s flag. Since 2001, nearly 3,500 foreign soldiers have died in the Afghan war, including around 2,200 Americans.

Now, thanks to the extraordinary sacrifices of our men and women in uniform, our combat mission in Afghanistan is ending, and the longest war in American history is coming to a responsible conclusion,” President Barack Obama said in a statement. “The late al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden had strong relations with the Taliban, who let him and other members of his global militant network hide in Afghanistan. The Taliban have launched increasingly deadly attacks in the past year. Nearly 3,200 Afghan civilians were killed in the conflict between the militant group and the army in 2014, and more than 4,600 Afghan army and police died in Taliban attacks.”

For Afghanistan’s new president, Ashraf Ghani, keeping control of territory and preventing security from further deteriorating is a top priority. ISAF said it had withheld details of Sunday’s ceremony until the last moment for fear the insurgents might attempt an attack with rockets or mortars.

US-led mission in Afghanistan ends combat role; thousands of foreign troops remain

US soldiers from D Troop of the 3rd Cavalry Regiment load bags into a container in preparation for leaving Afghanistan at forward operating base Gamberi in the Laghman Province on 28 Dec, 2014. —Reuters

Sydney, 29 Dec — Hopes are fading for the release of Australian journalist Peter Greste, who has been in jail in Egypt for a year, after Cairo sent mixed signals about his case. Australian Foreign Minister Julie Bishop said on Monday. The Al Jazeera reporter is serving seven to 10 years for crimes that include spreading lies to help a “terrorist organization” — an allusion to the Muslim Brotherhood group which is banned in Egypt.

Bishop last week raised the possibility Greste could be freed before an appeal hearing set for 1 January, “We had indications that Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi would exercise his authority regarding a pardon or a clemency plea in advance of the appeal,” Bishop told the Australian Broadcasting Corp.

Yet, in the meantime, the Egyptian foreign minister has said to me that we have to await the appeal, so there are different messages coming from the Egyptian government,” Bishop said.

Sisi suggested in November he was considering pardoning Greste and two other journalists working for Qatar-based Al Jazeera, who mark their 36th day in prison on Monday. Greste’s brothers, Mike and Andrew Greste, told reporters in Australia they did not believe their brother would be released before the appeal.

“The Egyptian president has said a few days after he was convicted that he wouldn’t pardon Peter until the legal processes have been finalized,” Mike Greste said.

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 tension between Egypt and Qatar.

Boko Haram militants stage attacks in northern Cameroon

YOUANDI, 29 Dec — Some 1,000 suspected Boko Haram fighters from Nigeria attacked five towns in northern Cameroon over the weekend and briefly occupied a military camp on Sunday before being removed by the air force, an army spokesman said.

The heavily armed group attacked the military camp in Achigacha near the Nigerian border at around 4 am. Following an intense battle, the army abandoned the camp. Lieutenant Colonel Didier Badjeck told Reuters by phone.

“After that, the head of state ordered the air force to carry out strikes. With the bombardment, the fighters were forced to decamp from Achigacha,” Badjeck said.

He could not immediately give the number of casualties from both sides. It is the first time Cameroon has used the air force against Boko Haram.

Islamist Boko Haram, which is fighting to create a caliphate in northern Nigeria, has stepped up attacks both on sides of the border, prompting Cameroon to send thousands of soldiers to the region to stop the militants.

Cameroon state radio CRTV said the militants carried out attacks on five towns over the weekend and at least one Cameroonian soldier was killed.

The attacks were carried out simultaneously at the localities of Mokolo, Guirvidig, Waza, Amchide and Makari, villages along the frontier with Nigeria, CRTV radio reported.

Boko Haram has made several incursions in the Far-North Region of Cameroon this year, killing over 40 soldiers and recruiting hundreds from mainly unemployed youths in the area.

Cameroon army said last week it dismantled a training camp for the militants in north Cameroon, arresting or killing dozens and seizing 84 children who were being trained there.

French-Japanese couple untraced since leaving for Islamic State area

Tokyo, 29 Dec — A French and Japanese couple in Tokyo who had expressed their desire to go to areas controlled by the Islamic State militant group have been missing since leaving Japan for Turkey in November, sources close to the matter revealed on Monday.

The Algerian French husband and his Japanese wife, both Muslims in their 20s, had told Japanese security authorities they wanted to travel to the region to engage in “humanitarian assistance” and denied they intended to take part in any fighting.

The authorities questioned the couple after obtaining information about their plan. Although the Japanese government, along with the French Embassy in Tokyo, tried to persuade the couple not to travel to the region, in early November they left Japan from Narita airport and entered Turkey, the sources said.

It is not known, however, whether the couple actually entered Syria, which borders Turkey, as the checkpoints are not functioning properly, they added.

The Japanese government is trying to collect information on their whereabouts. —Kyodo News

Reuters
China’s first 3,000-metre-deep engineering ship put into operation

GUANGZHOU, 29 Dec — China’s first multifunctional offshore engineering ship that can operate 3,000 metres under the water was put into operation on Sunday, a major progress of China to proceed into the deepwater.

The “Offshore Oil 286” ship, built with an investment of more than 1 billion yuan (163 million US dollars), belongs to the Offshore Oil Engineering Co Ltd, an affiliate of China National Offshore Oil Corporation, the country’s largest offshore oil and gas producer.

The ship, 141 metres long and 29 metres wide, has a maximum loading capacity of 11,228 tons and can accommodate to 150 crew members. It is equipped with a 400-ton crane to fulfil installing missions under the water. The ship can undertake hoisting and pipe-laying missions and support underwater robot and diving missions. It can also carry out underwater equipment maintenance work.

The ship was built by the CSSC Huangpu Wenchong Shipbuilding Company Limited.—Xinhua

New York, 29 Dec — Apple Inc said its iTunes store is now carrying Sony Corp’s “The Interview”, the film that angered North Korea and triggered a cyberattack against the studio.

“We’re pleased to offer ‘The Interview’ for rental or purchase on the iTunes Store,” Apple spokesman Tom Neumayr said in a statement.

The movie, steeped in gross-out humour depicting the travails of two journalists who get enlisted to assassinate North Korea leader Kim Jong Un, costs $14.99 to buy and $5.99 to rent on iTunes, according to the website.

Apple was one of the later tech companies to sign on to carrying the film via video-on-demand, and waited four days after competitors first released it on their digital video platforms on 24 December. Sony Pictures released the movie online via Google Inc’s YouTube and Google Play, Microsoft Corp’s Xbox gaming console and a Sony dedicated website first made the movie available last week after large movie theatre chains refused to screen the comedy following threats of violence from hackers who opposed the film.

The movie was also shown in 331 mostly independent theatres, which helped generate more than $1 million in sales on Christmas day.

Until Sony discloses the online revenues, it will be hard to know if the studio will come any closer near recouping the $44 million it cost to make the film, plus the $30 million-$40 million that some estimate was spent on marketing the film and its stars, Seth Rogen and James Franco.

Sony says PlayStation still has problems, gradually coming back online

Boston / New York, 29 Dec — Sony Corp’s PlayStation Network suffered connectivity problems for a fourth straight day since hackers attacked the video game network, and the company said on Sunday that service was gradually being restored.

The hacker activist group known as Lizard Squad has claimed responsibility for disrupting both the PlayStation Network and Microsoft Corp’s Xbox Live on Christmas Day. Service was restored to Xbox Live on Friday.

“We are currently experiencing widespread network issues that are being addressed,” Sony said in a statement on PlayStation’s maintenance website.

Hours earlier, Cathe- rine Jensen, vice president of consumer experience at Sony Computer Entertainment America, said on the PlayStation blog that the network was “back online.” Some gamers said on Twitter that they were able to access the PlaySta- tion Network on Sunday, but others took to the microblogging site to com- plain about the continuing outage. It was not clear how many of the 56 million video gamers who use PlayStation still suffered problems.

Gmail blocked in China, Great Firewall suspected

People are silhouetted as they pose with laptops in front of a screen projected with a Google logo, in this picture illustration taken in Zenica on 29 Oct, 2014.—REUTERS

BEIJING, 29 Dec — Google Inc’s Gmail was blocked in China after months of disruptions to the world’s biggest email service, with an anti-censorship advocate suggesting the Great Firewall was to blame.

Large numbers of Gmail web addresses were cut off in China on Friday, said GreatFire.org, a China-based freedom of speech advocacy group. Users said the service was still down on Monday.

“I think the government is just trying to further eliminate Google’s presence in China and even weaken its market overseas,” said a member of GreatFire.org, who uses a pseudonym.

Imagine if Gmail users can’t access it not through to Chinese clients. Many people outside China might be forced to switch away from Gmail. Google’s own Transparency Report, which shows real-time traffic to Google services, displayed a sharp drop-off in traffic to Gmail from China on Friday.

“We’ve checked and there’s nothing wrong on our end,” a Singapore-based spokesman for Google said in an email.

Almost all of Google’s services have been heavily disrupted in China since June this year, but until last week Gmail users could still access emails downloaded via protocols like IMAP, POP3. These had let people communicate using Gmail on apps like the Apple iPhone’s Mail and Microsoft Outlook.

The country is host to the world’s most sophisticated internet censorship mechanism, known as the Great Firewall of China. Critics say China has stepped up its disruption of foreign online services like Google over the past year to create an internet cut off from the rest of the world.

The Google disruption began in the run-up to the 25th anniversary of the government’s bloody crackdown on pro-democracy demonstrators around Beijing’s Tiananmen Square on 4 June, 1989.

Gmail’s setback could make email communication difficult for companies operating in China which use Google’s Gmail for their corporate email system, said GreatFire.

One popular way for companies and people to get around China’s internet censorship is to use a Virtual Private Network (VPN) which allows unhindered access to blocked sites and services.

“It’s becoming harder and harder to connect and do work in China when services like Gmail are being blocked,” said Zach Smith, a Beijing-based digital products manager at City Weekend magazine. “Using a VPN seems to be the only answer to doing anything these days online in China.”
Acknowledgement

Donor of pagodas, ordination ceremonies, ordination halls, prayer halls, Dharmayons (community centres), transportation facilities, Sangha Hospital, meditation centres, homes for the aged, roads, bridges, vehicles, wells and lakes, and also donor of four prerequisites for 5th Sangha Meeting of All Orders

U Thein Win (a) Lin Kam Sein
Patron of Shwe Than Lwin Co., Ltd.
Yogi of Aung Thukha Dhamma Yeiktha (Bago)
Aged (76) years

Family of Shwe Than Lwin Co., are deeply grateful to members of the Sangha, nuns, Yogis, friends, departmental heads, foreign diplomats, officials from associations, organizations and companies, colleagues, relatives and friends home and abroad for paying tribute at the funeral; those who comforted the bereaved family in person and through telephone, e-mail and newspapers; those who donated offertories and wreaths at the funeral; and those who attended the donation ceremony on 27 December of meals, robes and offertories to 118 members of the Sangha and 47 nuns in dedication to the demise of U Thein Win (a) Lin Kam Sein, (Excellent Performance in Social Field-First Class Award winner), Thiha Thudhamma Manijotadhara, Thiri Thudhamma Manijotadhara, Agga Maha Thiri Thudhamma Manijotadhara, Patron of Shwe Than Lwin Co., Ltd, Yogi of Aung Thukha Dhamma Yeiktha (Bago), donor of pagodas, ordination ceremonies, ordination halls, prayer halls, dharmayons (community centres), transportation facilities, Sangha Hospital, meditation centres, homes for the aged, roads, bridges, vehicles, wells and lakes, and also donor of four prerequisites for the 5th Sangha Meeting of All Orders, who passed away on 21 December, 2014 (Sunday), at No. 2/3/4 on Lower Pazundaung Road in Botataung Township.

Family of Shwe Than Lwin Company
Six feared dead after merchant ships collide off Italy

Rose, 29 Dec — Two people drowned and four were missing at sea and feared dead after two merchant ships collided in rough seas off the Italian coast on Sunday, Italian officials said.

A Turkish ship with 11 crew members sank after the collision with a vessel carrying a Belize flag in poor visibility a mile from the Italian Adriatic port of Ravenna, a coastguard official said.

The mayor of Ravenna Fabrizio Matteucci said on Italian state television that the dead and missing were all Turkish men from the ship Gokbel which sank after the collision with the Belize-flagged Lady Aziza at around 0800 GMT.

“There are two victims and four missing,” he said, adding that he had received the latest information from the coastguard leading the rescue operation, which was hampered by “prohibitive” sea conditions and fog.

The names of the dead and missing have not been released. Earlier on Sunday the coastguard said one person was dead and two missing, and they were trying to save four people they had located in the water.

Five members of the Turkish ship have been rescued and are in good condition and there were no casualties among the crew of the other ship, Matteucci said.—Reuters

Flights between Malaysia’s Kuching, Hong Kong, Shenzhen may begin

BANG, 29 Dec — Direct chart flights between Kuching of Malaysia’s Sarawak state and south China’s Hong Kong and Shenzhen may be added, according to the minister of tourism of Malaysia’s Sarawak state.

The minister said on Tuesday several Chinese airlines including Dragonair, Hong Kong Express and China Southern Airlines are considering open the new route.

He said the Sarawak state government will offer subsidy to the above mentioned airline companies for six months.

The Sarawak state government is working on Malaysia Airlines flight route from Beijing or Shanghai via Kuala Lumpur to Kuching, he added.—Xinhua

Claire's Day Notice

mv new energy voy no (11/14)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV NEW ENERGY VOY NO (11/14) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 29.12.2014 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of A.W.P.T where it will lie in 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.

Shipment Agency Department

Myanmar Port Authority

Agent for: M/S RK Shipping & Trading Pte Ltd.

Phone No: 2301186

Siamese Day Notice

mv ubc chile voy no (67)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV UBC CHILE VOY NO (67) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 30.12.2014 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.L.T.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.

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**John Hurt to receive knighthood**

LONDON, 29 Dec — Veteran British actor John Hurt is set to receive a knighthood from Queen Elizabeth II in 2015, according to a report.

The ‘Alien’ star will be named on the British monarch’s annual New Year Honours list, which will be released on 1 January, 2015, for his services to drama throughout his 50-year stage and screen career, reported Daily Telegraph. The 74-year-old received a Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (Cbe) medal in 2004.

According to reports, actress Joanna Collins will be made a Dame, along with talk show host and Child-Line charity founder Esther Rantzen. British stars Sheridan Smith and James Ordan will reportedly be in line for an Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (Obe) medal.

**Michael Imperioli joining ‘Hawaii Five-0’**

LOS ANGELES, 29 Dec — Former ‘Sopranos’ star Michael Imperioli is joining the cast of ‘Hawaii Five-0’.

Imperioli has been cast in the action drama series as an “ex-New York transplant who’s become a surf-champion and appreciating it. The song is an unfinished demo she had no intention of finishing or releasing along with many others,” he wrote in response to a fan’s question.

The song features lyrics like, “You’re a copycat, get back/I’m always on your mind,” which prompted the Gaga dis speculation.

When Keira Knightley mistaken for Anne Hathaway

LONDON, 29 Dec — Keira Knightley says she was once mistaken for Anne Hathaway in Canada.

The 29-year-old actress said she was approached by a fan at Toronto Airport in Canada who believed she was the 32-year-old “The Dark Knight Rises” star, reported Daily Telegraph.

At the airport a woman mistook me for Anne Hathaway. Actually I think I have to apologize to Anne Hathaway because the woman (at the airport) thought I was being really rude as Anne Hathaway not giving her a picture as Anne Hathaway but I was really only saying that I promised I wasn’t Anne Hathaway — which I am not.

Actually it’s the first Anne Hathaway I have had. Generally I get a lot of

**Madonna not disss Lady Gaga in leaked song, says manager**

LOS ANGELES, 29 Dec — Madonna’s manager Guy Oseary has denied that the recently leaked song “Two Steps Behind” is about Lady Gaga or anyone in particular.

More than two dozen songs from Madonna, 56, were prematurely released earlier this month, reported Ace Showbiz.

“The song is not about Gaga or anyone in particular. She has no ill will towards Gaga.

“It’s nonsense She was listening to the Tony Bennett duet album last week and appreciating it. The song is an unfinished demo she had no intention of finishing or releasing along with many others,” he wrote in response to a fan’s question.

The song features lyrics like, “You’re a copycat, get back/I’m always on your mind,” which prompted the Gaga dis speculation.
Ferrari, McLaren take a hit from Marussia collapse

LONDON, 29 Dec — Ferrari and McLaren stand to lose millions as a result of the collapse of the Marussia Formula One team, the Sunday Telegraph newspaper reported. It said documents from administrators of the team, who were appointed on 18 December, showed that the three 2014 cars — minus engines — will go under the hammer. The team scored just two points in five years, with those coming in Monaco this year thanks to French driver Jules Bianchi, who subsequently suffered severe head injuries in a Japanese Grand Prix crash. — Reuters

Emission control system

A pit crew of Marussia, which Formula One driver Jules Bianchi of France belongs to, wipes his face as he cleans up the pit after the Japanese F1 Grand Prix at the Suzuka Circuit on 5 Oct, 2014. — Reuters

S Korea to conduct first independent missile defence drill

SEOUL, 29 Dec — South Korea plans to conduct its first independent missile defence drill in the first half of next year, Yonhap News Agency reported on Monday citing government officials. The military authorities are pushing to independently carry out the first ‘missile defence exercise of the Korean Peninsula’ in the first half of next year,” a government official was quoted as saying. The official said the exercise will be staged to verify the effectiveness and identify any flaws of the Korea Air and Missile Defence (KAMD) and Kill-Chain systems, which the South Korean military has developed as its own missile defence capability. The missile defence system has been developed to detect and strike missiles, possibly fired from the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), at an altitude of less than 40 km. The system involves early warning radar with a range of 500-700 km, interceptor PAC-3 and surface-to-air missile M-SAM capable of intercepting missiles at an altitude of 15 km. The military aims to develop long-range surface-to-air missiles, called L-SAM, by 2020 to intercept missiles at an altitude of about 50 km. South Korea’s next year missile-defense drill would be based on the simulation model developed jointly with the United States. The two countries reportedly have developed the model since 2011, but the simulation results were not unveiled. — Yonhap

Vietnam’s volleyball teams to compete in four int’l tournaments

Ho Chi Minh City, 29 Dec — Vietnam will send its volleyball teams to compete in four international tournaments in 2015, reported the Vietnam General Department of Sports and Physical Training on its website on Monday. Accordingly, the first event will be the Asian Men’s Clubs Volleyball Championship held in Chinese Taipei from 12-20 May. Concurrently, the youth team will take part in the Asian Men’s U23 Clubs Volleyball Championship held in Myanmar. Meanwhile, Vietnam’s women volleyball teams will compete in the Asian Women’s Volleyball Championship held on 12-26 June in China, and the Asian Women’s Club Volleyball Championship in Vietnam from 20-25 September. — Xinhua

Heating and Cooling

Schalke 04’s Atsuto Uchida of Japan umpf in Qatar in 2011. The holders have been drawn in Group D of the 16-team tournament alongside Jordan, Palestine and 2007 winners Iraq. They open their campaigns on 12 January in Newcastle against outsiders Palestine. — Reuters

5 killed in San Antonio apartment building fire

HOUSTON, 29 Dec — A fire broke out at a senior-living apartment building in the US city of San Antonio on Sunday, killing five people and evacuating dozens more, local media reported. The blaze erupted Sunday morning at Wedgewood Senior Living Apartments, a 11-story high-rise located in the San Antonio suburb of Castle Hills, according to the San Antonio Express News. Five people were killed in the fire and at least 10 others were hospitalized for injuries. Their ailments included smoke inhalation, but none were burned and none were in critical condition, officials said. More than 200 residents were inside the building at the time of the fire. Many were able to evacuate the building on their own while scores of others, mostly elderly civilians, were carried out by approximately 150 firefighters from seven fire departments on scene. The evacuated residents were temporarily sheltered at a nearby high school. Some of them have been picked up by their families while others decamped to hotels. Officials said not all of the residents listed on the building’s rent rolls have been accounted for yet. Investigators said the fire apparently started from the third floor, but it was not immediately clear how it was ignited exactly. — Xinhua

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi (L) meets with Bangladesh’s former prime minister and Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) chairperson Khaleda Zia in Dhaka, Bangladesh, on 28 Dec, 2014. — Xinhua

Holders Japan lose fullback Uchida for Asian Cup

Tokyo, 29 Dec — Experienced Japanese full-back Atsuto Uchida has been ruled out of next month’s Asian Cup title defence in Australia after failing to recover from a knee injury. The Schalke defender was replaced by Kashima Antlers’ Naomichi Ueda in the 23-man squad, the Japanese Football Association said on Sunday. The 26-year-old Uchida has played 72 times for the Blue Samurai, including matches at the World Cup in Brazil earlier this year and the Asian Cup tri-

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Manchester City blow golden chance to close on Chelsea

MANCHESTER, 29 Dec — Manchester City squandered a gilt-edged opportunity to close the gap on Premier League leaders Chelsea when they let slip a two-goal lead to draw 2-2 at home to struggling Burnley on Sunday.

Chelsea stuttered to a 1-1 draw at Southampton and champions City looked poised to close the gap at the top to one point when they scored twice in the first half against Burnley, but Ashley Young lashed in a late equalizer.

Tottenham Hotspur goalkeeper Hugo Lloris inspired his team to a feisty 0-0 draw with third-placed Manchester United and Arsenal clinched with 2-1 win at a London rivals West Ham United.

Fourth-placed Southampton took a deserved 17-minute lead against Chelsea, Sadio Mane running clear to slot coolly past Thibaut Courtois at St Mary’s.

The visitors equalized just before halftime when Eden Hazard brilliantly controlled a fine pass from Cesc Fabregas, cut inside and stroked the ball into the net.

Chelsea poured forward but were frustrated by well-organized Southampton who had midfielder Morgan Schneiderlin sent off after receiving a second yellow card.

Jose Mourinho’s team remained three points clear at the top.

“I can believe Southampton defended with everything they have — with organization, spirit and solidarity of players and the effort they fought to get the point,” Mourinho told Sky Sports.

“A point is a point against a difficult team,” added the Portuguese who was fuming that his side were not awarded a penalty when Fabregas went down in the area but was booked for diving.

Manchester City, seeking a 10th successive win, eased into a 2-0 lead against Burnley thanks to goals by David Silva and Fernandinho but the visitors got a lifeline when George Boyd tapped in just after the interval.

Barnes struck with a sweet 12-metre strike to level for Burnley whose entire squad cost a fraction of City’s injured 35 million-pound ($44.4 million) striker Sergio Aguero.

“It was a big opportunity to get two more points,” City manager Manuel Pellegrini said. “Everybody would think the game was over but I always say it is never over until the last minute.

“The pitch was very heavy. Two games in 48 hours but we were winning 2-0. Once it was 2-2 we didn’t have the legs to score.”

Spurs survived early United pressure before threatening to end the visitors’ eight-match unbeaten run in the closing stages at White Hart Lane.

United, who had won seven of their last eight games, stayed third in the table, 10 points behind Chelsea, and Tottenham are seventh.

“We lost two points. We had the best performance of the season in the first half and could have scored four or five goals,” United manager Louis van Gaal said.

“We were fantastic. But when you don’t score goals you cannot win. The second half was a struggle.”

The visitors, who named an unchanged starting line-up for the first time in 85 matches, dominated the first half.

Frenchman Lloris made a fine diving save to tip over Ashley Young’s fierce curling shot and Juan Mata’s deflected free kick crashed against the post.

Arsenal struck twice before halftime through Santi Cazorla’s penalty and a neat finish from Danny Welbeck but West Ham hit through Cheikhou Kouyate to set up a tense finish.

Newcastle United recovered from conceding an early goal to beat Everton 3-2 at St James’ Park, with Papiss Cisse, Ayoze Perez and Jack Colback scoring for Alan Pardew’s side.

Mame Diouf scored twice to lead Stoke City to a 2-0 victory over West Bromwich Albion, managerless Crystal Palace eked out a 0-0 draw at Queens Park Rangers and Aston Villa overcame the sending-off of Fabian Delph to draw 0-0 with Sunderland.

Rock-bottom Leicester City won 1-0 at Hull City, their first victory since September, but they stayed at the foot of the standings, three points behind Burnley, Palace and Hull.

Bayern Leverkusen extend contract with Karim Bellarabi until 2017

BERLIN, 29 Dec — Bayer Leverkusen extended the contract of Karim Bellarabi until June 2017. The club confirmed on Sunday.

The Leverkusen made use of an option in Bellarabi’s contract to bind the striker for another two years until June 2017.

“We have activated an option to extend the contract with Karim Bellarabi until 30 June 2017,” Leverkusen announced in an official statement. Bellarabi returned from a loan spell with Braunschweig to become one of the key players in Leverkusen.

The 24-year-old striker made 17 appearances this season to score eight goals. He played overall 81 Bundesliga games to mark 12 goals.

Bayer Leverkusen sit currently on the 3rd place of the Bundesliga standings, 6 points adrift of second placed Wolfsburg and 17 points away from front runners Bayern Munich.

Machida announces his retirement

NAGANO, 29 Dec — Sochi Olympic and world silver medalist Tatsuki Machida announced his retirement from competitive figure skating following the Japan national championships at Nagano Big Hat.

The 24-year-old Machida, who finished fourth in the men’s competition, was selected to compete at the upcoming world championships by the Japan Skating Federation, but turned down his spot on the team. His spot at the 23-29 March worlds in Shanghai was handed to Takahito Mura, who was fifth in the nationals at Nagano Big Hat.

Machida, who finished fifth at this year’s Sochi Games, followed that up with the men’s silver medal at the worlds in Saitama. This season, he won the Skate America event in the ISU Grand Prix series.

Former Brazil striker closer to Mexico move

RIO DE JANEIRO, 29 Dec — Former Brazil striker Rafael Sobis arrived in Mexico on Sunday to finalize details of his move to local club Tigres.

The 29-year-old met with Tigres officials in the northern city of Monterrey “to look over his contract”.

Tigres said on Twitter. Sobis was released by Brazil’s giant Flu-minense earlier this month after scoring just three goals in Brazil’s top flight this year. He is expected to join Tigres on a three-year deal.

The former Real Betis player signed with Fluminense in 2011 after unhappy spells at Al Jazira and Internacional.

He has been capped eight times by Brazil and was a member of the country’s 2008 Olympic team which took the bronze medal in Beijing.

Sobis said on Twitter.