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Parade columns participate in rehearsal for flag hoisting of Independence Day, Grand Military Review ceremony

NAY PYI TAW, 1 Jan— Vice President U Nyan Tun who is also chairman of Grand Military Review organizing committee inspected a flag hoisting ceremony for 67th Anniversary Independence Day 2015 and the rehearsal of Grand Military Review ceremony in Nay Pyi Taw on Thursday.

At 4.20 am, the Guard of Honour hoisted the flag of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar saluted by national races.

When parade columns marched to the grand military review deck, artistes from Fine Arts Department of the Ministry of Culture presented songs on nationalistic spirit.

Parade columns of Defence Services (Army, Navy and Air), bands, men and women military officers, Myanmar Police Force, Myanmar Red Cross Society, Fire Brigade,

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***Parade columns comprising personnel of Defence Services (Army, Navy and Air), bands, Myanmar Police Force, Myanmar Red Cross Society, Fire Brigade and departmental personnel take part in Independence Day flag hoisting ceremony and grand military review ceremony.*—MNA**

Myanmar to host ASEAN Tourism Forum 2015 on 22-29 January

By *Ye Myint*

YANGON, 1 Jan— Myanmar is going to host the ASEAN Tourism Forum 2015 from 22 to 29 January in Nay Pyi Taw, aiming to help ensure the country's tourism industry growth and deliver broad and equitable social, economic and environmental benefits to its people.

This will be the first time the forum takes place in Myanmar since its inauguration in 1981, said the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism.

A total 1,500 visitors from 40 countries, including tourism ministers and officials, ASEAN exhibitors and international buyers, and international and local media are expected to visit the 34th edition of this

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Amendment of mining law to allow machinery with limitation in small-scale mining sector

YANGON, 1 Jan—Ministry of Mines has a plan to include a section in the bill amending the mining law to allow use of machinery, but with horse power limitation, in small-scale mining blocks, according to the ministry.

Though the use machinery is prohibited in the small-scale mining sector, the nature of work has prompted use of machinery in small-scale mining sites, an official of the ministry told the Earth Journal which mainly covers issues related to mining.

Since the current use of machinery in the small-scale mining sector is illegal by the law, the ministry has to amend the law to legitimize use of machinery in the small-scale mining sector, he added.

However, the law would limit the hourse power of the machinery, he said.

GNLM

With the sharp rise in foreign tourist arrivals, Myanmar becomes one of popular tourist destinations in ASEAN, offering ecotourism and opportunities for recreation in locations of great scenic beauty and high cultural heritage.
PHOTO CREDIT TO ATF-2015.COM

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Myanaung to get new school building at BEMS branch in rural area

MYANAUNG, 1 Jan — A ceremony to drive stake for construction of new school building took place at Basic Education Middle School Branch in Petakhwe Village-tract in Myanaung Township, Ayeyawady Region, on 31 December.

Amyotha Hluttaw representative U Khin Maung Yi, Region Hluttaw representative U Aung Myo Nyunt, Township Administrator U Min Min Tun, Township Education Officer U Win Myint and officials drove stakes for construction of the school building.

The Ministry of Education allotted a budget for construction of a 90 by 30 feet building in 2014-15 fiscal year.

Win Bo (Township IPRD)

Trainees in practical works of driving tractors

MYINGYAN, 1 Jan — A total of 30 trainees led by Head of Myingyan District Agricultural Mechanization Department U Myint Lwin and Head of Natogyi Township Department U Sein Maung Toe participated in skill demonstration with the use of tractors of the department on 31 December at the farmlands.

The trainees are attending the 15-day tractor driving course at No 44 tractors station.

Htay Myint Maung

Trainees under training of driving agricultural machinery in Natogyi.

University students, faculty members donate blood at Dawei General Hospital

DAWEI, 1 Jan — Hailing the 67th Anniversary Independence Day 2015, faculty members and students of Dawei University of Computer Studies donated blood at Dawei General Hospital in Taninthayi Region on 30 December.

Medical Superintendent Dr Myint Myint Khaing of Dawei General Hospital, Dr San San Win of National Blood Bank of Dawei, Principal of the university Daw Khin Aye Thant, faculty members and students attended the ceremony.

A total of 32 faculty members and students donated blood at the hospital.

Po Shwe Thun-Dawei

Myanmar martial arts training school improves skills of trainers

MANDALAY, 1 Jan — Jointly conducted by Myanmar Martial Arts Federation and Mandalay Region Martial Arts Subcommittee, the Myanmar martial arts trainer course and referee course No. 1/2014 concluded at the hall of Mandalay Region Football Federation at Bahtoo Stadium in Mandalay on 30 December.

Principal of the training school U Aung Htay made a speech and presented certificates to 60 trainees. A total of 19 trainees from Mandalay, Patheingyi, Amarapura, Wundwin, Meiktila and Monywa attended the region and state level technical course, five at the main leading trainer course, six at the main trainer course, nine at the deputy main trainer course, three at the branch trainer course and 18 at the assistance trainer course.

Principal U Aung Htay and four trainers gave trainings to them from 24 to 30 December.

Tin Maung (Mandalay)

District and township election sub-commissions meet in Yinmabin

YINMABIN, 1 Jan — Chairman of Sagaing Region Election Sub-commission U Tin Oo and officials of township sub-commissions in Yinmabin District at the hall of Township General Administration Department, Sagaing Region, on Thursday.

Chairman of the Region Sub-commission U Tin Oo and member Dr Nyan Lin made speeches.

Chairman of the District Sub-commission U Than Sein explained duty and functions of the district sub-commission. Officials submitted reports on requirements of sub-commissions in Yinmabin, Salingyi, Pale and Kani townships.

It was attended by district and township subcommittee officials and departmental personnel totalling 200.

Tun Ko Ko (Yinmabin)

Press conference highlights community-based policing works

NYAUNGSHWE, 1 Jan — A press conference on community-based policing tasks, conducted by Myoma police station in southern Shan State, was held at the police station in Nyaungshwe on 30 December evening.

Commander of the station Police Captain Nyan Hlaing Oo explained policing tasks, root causes of criminal cases, a transparent process of community-based policing and plans to hold monthly press conference.

IP Hsan Ko Ko Aye urged the people to inform of suspects and criminal cases to the police station in time and efforts of the police for ensuring security and prevalence of law and order.

Myat Thu (IPRD)

Parade columns participate in rehearsal for flag hoisting...

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social organizations, departmental personnel, regions and states, Myanmar scouts, armoured and artillery corps participated in the rehearsal under the programmes together with helicopters and fighter planes of Defence Services (Air).

Vice President U Nyan Tun together with Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, union ministers, Chief of the General Staff (Army, Navy and Air) General Hla Htay Win and senior military officers viewed the rehearsal of the parade columns.—*MNA*

***Parade columns take part in Independence Day's Grand Military Review ceremony in Nay Pyi Taw.*—MNA**

Challenges to environment and ecosystems discussed

***Deputy ministers from Working Committee for Conversation of Natural Resources and Cultural Heritage discuss environmental conservation.*—MNA**

NAY PYI TAW, 1 Jan—The Working Committee for Conversation of Natural Resources and Cultural Heritage, held a coordination meeting at the Ministry of Environmental Conversation and Forestry here on Thursday, to discuss how to meet challenges posted by government and private industries to the environment and ecosystems.

The meeting focused on collective cooperation in conservation of natural resources and cultural heritage, ways of how to combat environmental degradation, environmental impacts associated with the land use of government and private industries, reviews of environmental and social impacts, guidelines on the management of aspects of environmental impacts, and challenges posed by industries to the environment and the ecosystems.

The committee is a central level organization under the Environmental Conversation Committee.—*MNA*

Inntha peacefully stage protests, including five demands in Nyaungshwe Tsp

NYAUNGSHWE, 1 Jan—A total of 3,726 local national people from wards and villages in Nyaungshwe Township, southern Shan State, participated in protest along Phaungdawseik, Strand and Phaungdawbyan streets in Nyaungshwe, holding placards, on 1 January morning.

They made five demands to the government to carry on peace-making process till achieving success, to undertake development tasks and uplift of socio-economy of the people, to emphasize consideration that the six-party talks related to the national race affairs in Shan State is impossible, to create opportunities for all national races to participate in constitutional amendment and political process and to include participation of ethnic representatives in the talks.

Township IPRD

***Local people in Nyaungshwe Township stage a protest demanding five points including opposing six-party talks.*—IPRD**

Fire destroys guest house in Inlay

NAY PYI TAW, 1 Jan—A fire started by an electric mosquito repellent destroyed a wooden guest house worth about K 4 million at the Inle Princess Resort Hotel near the edge of the Inlay Lake in Mankyisin Village, Nyaungshwe Township, in southern Shan State at 9.50 pm on 29 December.

About 400 firefighters were able to put out the fire successfully at about 10.30 pm with the use of three fire engines from Nyaungshwe Township fire brigade, two fire engines from Shwenyaung Township fire brigade, three fire machines from the hotel and three fire boats.

The township administrator, the township police officer, officers from Tourism police force arrived at the scene and local and foreign tourists at the hotel were temporarily relocated to hotels in Nyaungshwe. No causality was reported during the fire incident.

IPRD

Armed ethnic groups, KIA/KIO, TNLA leaders invited to attend Independence Day ceremony in Nay Pyi Taw

NAY PYI TAW, 1 Jan—The 67th Anniversary Independence Day's Grand Military Review ceremony will be held in Nay Pyi Taw on 4 January.

Invitation has been extended to heads of three pillars, officials, senior military officers, chairmen of committees and commissions from two Hluttaw, leaders of political parties, border guard forces, non-governmental organizations and social associations to attend the ceremony.

Moreover, responsible persons from 14 armed ethnic groups that have signed the ceasefire agreement and leaders of KIA/KIO and TNLA that are holding peace talks to sign the ceasefire agreement have also been invited to the ceremony.—*MNA*

Thousands of students sent abroad in gov't scholarship programme in 2014

NAY PYI TAW, 1 Jan—According to the foreign scholarship scrutiny and selection committee under the Union Civil Services Board, arrangements have been made to send three government service personnel to attend doctoral course and 112 to training courses to 12 countries in December 2014.

The majority of scholarship students were sent to India, China and Singapore.

The government has sent 311 personnel to 49 countries to attend Ph.D, M.A./M.Sc. degrees and diploma courses and 2,540 to training courses, totalling 2,851 from January to December 2014.

They all could enjoy exemption of signing the bonds for serving their mother units from 1 January to 31 December 2015.—*GNLM*

Department of Rural Development makes straight inter-village road

MYINGYAN, 1 Jan — An inter-village road section linking Magyikan and Aungtha villages in Natogyi Township, Mandalay Region, is under construction with the use of heavy machinery, officials of the Department of Rural Development told media.

The department spent K2.5 million on construction of the road.

Wellwisher Daw Khin Nyunt and family donated their 110 feet long and 22 feet wide land plot for straightening the road.

Htay Myint Maung

Locals join December sports activities

MANDALAY, 1 Jan — As December sports activities, Kinsanamahi Ward administrator organized the Futsal and race events on 77th street between 31st and 32nd streets in Chanayethazan Township, Mandalay, on 30 December 2014, with participation of 50 men's teams and 120 youth teams.

Ward administrator U Myint Han and officials presented trophy and cash award to prize winning teams in the Futsal event and prizes to winners in the race.—*Tin Maung (Mandalay)*

TODAY'S MYANMAR NEWS SITES

Mobile team gives healthcare to TB suspects in Pyinmana

PYINMANA, 1 Jan — A mobile team of National TB Control Project of the Health Department and Global Fund searched TB patients and gave medical treatment at the TB suspects in Nyaungbintha Village, Pyinmana Township, on 31 December 2014.

Under the leadership of Head of Nay Pyi Taw Health Department Dr Daw Hla Hla Kyi, leader of TB control project Dr Tun Kyaw Soe and 15 health staff of Pyinmana Township Health Department provided free health care services to 200 TB suspects.

On 30 January morning, the medical team gave health care services to 90 TB suspects at the administrator office in Uyinsu Village and 117 villagers at Taungtha Dhammayon in Taungtha Village.

The mobile team plans to provide health care services to the locals for treatment of TB disease.

Min Min Latt (Physics)

Traffic accident damages water pump in Mandalay

MANDALAY, 1 Jan — A Hilux bus hit a light truck on Shwetachaung canal at the corner of 86th and 41st streets in Mahaaungmye Township, Mandalay, on 30 December early morning.

A brick crossing and a compressor bar of the water pipeline were damaged in the incident. The damage of the bar caused suspension of water supply task to the dwellers.

Officials of Mandalay City Development Committee and local authorities repaired the water pipeline and compressor bar in the morning and resumed supply of water.

Mandalay Region Minister for Development Affairs Mayor U Aung Moung inspected the repairing works. The head of water and sanitation department reported on progress of repairing the compressor bar.

MCDC plans to take action against drivers and set compensation for the damaged parts of water supply facility.

Tin Maung (Mandalay)

India exchanges with Pakistan list of nuclear installations

NEW DELHI, 1 Jan — India said on Thursday that it has exchanged with Pakistan a list of their nuclear installations according to a bilateral pact in place since 1992.

"India and Pakistan today exchanged, through diplomatic channels simultaneously at New Delhi and Islamabad, the list of nuclear installations and facilities covered under the Agreement on the Prohibition of Attack Against Nuclear Installations," a spokesperson for the Indian External Affairs Ministry said. Under the pact, inked by the two countries nearly two decades back, both India and Pakistan are to inform each other of nuclear installations and facilities every year.

India and Pakistan are both nuclear powers, but they are also arch rivals and have fought at least three major wars over the disputed territory of Kashmir in the last 60 years.—*Xinhua*

Photo taken on 31 Dec, 2014 shows a general view of a giant number on Marina Bay in Singapore to mark Singapore's 50th anniversary of independence in 2015.—XINHUA

Abe to outline vision for new Japan, promote bold reform in 2015

TOKYO, 1 Jan — Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said on Thursday he hopes to unveil his vision for a new Japan in 2015 that builds on its pacifist postwar trajectory, as the country marks the 70th anniversary since its defeat in World War II.

With the highest priority on economic revitalization, Abe pledged in his New Year address to push for "bolder and speedier" reforms, after his government tackled post-disaster reconstruction, educational and social security reforms, and the rebuilding of Japan's diplomacy and security.

"I hope this year will be a year (for Japan) to show to the world the future shape of a country that we aim to create, and make a strong start toward building that new country," Abe said. The prime minister is expected to issue a new statement this year to mark the 70th anniversary in August of the end of World War II, a document that will be closely watched due to its implications for relations with China and South Korea that suffered from Japan's wartime aggression.

With Japan having recovered from the devastation of the war and stood up on its feet again to become a global player in the postwar years, Abe said it is time to consider how Japan will make future contributions to the world.

The government plans to seek passage of a slew of security legislation that will enable the exercise of the right to collective self-defence, or defending allies under armed attack even if Japan is not.

In his previous two New Year messages since taking office in 2012, Abe expressed his determination to defend Japanese territory against the backdrop of an increasingly assertive China. But he made no reference to the issue this year.

Signs have emerged of a thaw in Japan-China relations since Abe held his first meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing in November.

Abe won a fresh mandate in December for proceeding with his "Abenomics" economic policies, after an economic contraction in the July-September period forced him to postpone until 2017 a second scheduled consumption tax hike to 10 percent, originally planned for 2015.

"Our government will continue to place its highest priority on the economy and bring the warm winds of economic recovery all over the country," Abe said in his message to the Japanese people.

The Cabinet approved in late December an emergency economic stimulus package worth around 3.5 trillion yen to help regional economies cushion the impact of the tax hike in April 2014 and the yen's sharp fall, a byproduct of Abenomics.

Kyodo News

Search for missing AirAsia black box recorders could 'take a week'

PANGKALAN BUN / SURABAYA, (Indonesia), 1 Jan — Divers looking for the wreck of an AirAsia Indonesia jet off Borneo were unable to resume full-scale operations on Thursday in poor weather and heavy seas and an air safety official said it could take a week to find the black box flight recorders.

Crews were on standby to descend to a large object detected by sonar on the ocean floor, lying just 30-50 metres (100-165 feet) deep. Rescuers believe it is the *Airbus A320-200*, which was carrying 162 people when it crashed on Sunday en route from the city of Surabaya to Singapore.

"I am hoping that the latest information is correct and aircraft has been found," airline boss Tony Fernandes tweeted on Thursday. "Please all hope together. This is so important."

Toos Sanitiyoso, an air safety investigator with the National Committee for Transportation Safety, said he hoped the black box flight data and voice recorders could be found within a week, suggesting there was still doubt over the plane's location.

"The main thing is to find the main area of the wreckage and then the black box," he told reporters.

None of the tell-tale black box "pings" had been detected, he said.

"There are two steps of finding the black box. One is we try to find the largest portion of the wreckage," he said.

Frogman commander Lieutenant Edi Tirkayasa said the weather was making it difficult for even professional rescue divers.

"What is most difficult is finding the location where the plane fell — checking whether the aircraft is really there," he told *Reuters*.

"This is very difficult even with sophisticated equipment. With weather like this, who knows. We are still hopeful and optimistic that they'll find it. They must."

Investigators are working on a theory that the plane stalled as it climbed steeply to avoid a storm about 40 minutes into the flight.

So far, at least seven bodies have been recovered from waters near the suspected crash site, along with debris such a suitcase, an emergency slide and a life jacket.

The bodies are being taken in numbered coffins to Surabaya, where relatives of the victims have gathered, for identification. Authorities have been collecting DNA from relatives to help identify the bodies.

"We are asking universities to work with us — from the whole country," said Anton Castilani, executive director at Indonesia's disaster victims identification committee.

Most of those on board were Indonesians. No survivors have been found.

Relatives, many of whom collapsed in grief when they saw the first grim television pictures confirming their fears on Tuesday, held prayers at a crisis centre at Surabaya airport.

The plane was travelling at 32,000 feet (9,753 metres) and had asked to fly at 38,000 feet to avoid bad weather. When air traffic controllers granted permission for a rise to 34,000 feet a few minutes later, they received no response.

A source close to the probe into what happened said radar data appeared to show that the aircraft made an "unbelievably" steep climb before it crashed, possibly pushing it beyond the *Airbus A320's* limits.

"So far, the numbers taken by the radar are unbelievably high. This rate of climb is very high, too high. It appears to be beyond the performance envelope of the aircraft," he said.

Indonesia Marine divers prepare their gear on deck of SAR ship Purworejo for search operation of passenger onboard AirAsia flight QZ8501 at Kumai port, Pangkalan Bun District on 1 Jan, 2015. —REUTERS

The source, who declined to be identified, added that more information was needed to come to a firm conclusion.

Online discussion among pilots has centered on unconfirmed secondary radar data from Malaysia that suggested the aircraft was climbing at a speed of 353 knots, about 100 knots too slow, and that it might have stalled.

Some of the bodies recovered so far have been fully clothed, including a flight attendant in her uniform. That could indicate the Airbus was intact when it hit the water and also support the aerodynamic stall theory.

The Indonesian captain, a former air force fighter pilot, had 6,100 flying hours under his belt and the plane last underwent maintenance in mid-November, according to AirAsia Indonesia, which is 49-percent owned by Malaysia-based budget carrier AirAsia.

Three airline disasters involving Malaysian-affiliated carriers in less than a year have dented confidence in the country's aviation industry and spooked travellers.—*Reuters*

Photo taken on 1 Jan, 2015 shows the firework display in combination with light performance on the New Year's Eve at the Bitexco Financial Tower in Ho Chi Minh city, Vietnam. —XINHUA

S Korean lawmakers hail DPRK leader's New Year address

SEOUL, 1 Jan — South Korea's rival political parties on Thursday hailed the New Year's address made by Kim Jong Un, top leader of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), who said there is no reason not to hold the "highest-level" inter-Korean talks.

Kim Young-woo, spokesman of the ruling Saenuri Party, said in a commentary that it is meaningful for the top DPRK leader to show a "principled but somewhat positive" response to South Korea's dialogue offer. The main opposition New Politics Alliance for Democracy more actively expressed its welcome to Kim's address. Spokesman Kim Seong-soo said that the party "hails" the New Year speech opening the door for inter-Korean summit and actively participating in other South-North talks. Top DPRK leader Kim Jong Un said in his New Year's message that "If South Korean authorities sincerely want to improve North-South relations through talks, stalled high-level contacts can be resumed and other talks can be held issue by issue."

"If the atmosphere and environment is created, there is no reason not to hold the highest-level talks (with South Korea)," Kim said. It was the first time since Kim took power in December 2011 that the top DPRK leader commented on the inter-Korean summit.

Xinhua

Emperor calls for learning from history in New Year thoughts

TOKYO, 1 Jan — Emperor Akihito released his "New Year Thoughts" on Thursday, issuing a call to learn from history in the year that marks the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II.

"I think it is most important for us to take this opportunity to study and learn from the history of this war, starting with the Manchurian Incident of 1931, as we consider the future direction of our country," the 81-year-old emperor said in the statement released via the Imperial Household Agency.

"This year marks the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II, which cost many people their lives. Those who died on the battlefields, those who died in the atomic bombings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, those who died in the air raids on Tokyo and other cities — so many people lost their lives in this war," he said.

The emperor and Empress Michiko plan to visit Palau in early April to console the souls of the war dead. The couple visited Saipan for the same purpose in June 2005 on the 60th anniversary of the war's end.

The emperor mentioned disasters — heavy snow, torrential rains and the eruption of Mt Ontake — that occurred in 2014, saying, "My thoughts go out to those who lost their loved ones and their homes in those disasters."

He also touched on the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake, tsunami and nuclear plant disaster, saying, "It pains me to think that there are still so many people who cannot return to the places they used to live because of radioactive contamination and so many who face the prospect of a cold, harsh winter in temporary housing."

The couple plan to attend a ceremony in Kobe on 17 January marking the 20th anniversary of the Great Hanshin Earthquake and a ceremony commemorating the 2011 disaster on 11 March. The emperor and empress received New Year's greetings at the Imperial Palace in Tokyo on Thursday from other members of the imperial family, lawmakers and the ambassadors of around 120 countries.

"As a new year begins, I wish for the prosperity of the nation and the happiness of its people," the emperor said.—*Kyodo News*

N Korean leader says open to summit talks with S Korea

BEIJING, 1 Jan — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un said on Thursday he is open to a summit meeting with South Korea, an unusual overture made amid his country's heightened tensions with the United States, Seoul's closest ally, over a damaging cyberattack on Sony Pictures Entertainment Inc.

"If South Korean authorities want to improve North-South relations through sincere dialogue, we can resume suspended high-level contacts and sectoral meetings," Kim said in a nationally televised New Year's address.

Depending on the atmosphere and environment, he said, "There is no reason not to be able to" hold a summit meeting with South Korean President Park Geun-hye.

Kim said he can no longer allow "the tragedy of ethnic division" and called for easing tensions on the Korean Peninsula.

Since inheriting power following the death of his father in December 2011, Kim for the first time in North Korea's official media touched on the possibility of holding talks with South Korea's top leader, according to Tokyo-based Radiopress, which monitors Pyongyang's media around the clock.

Kim's remarks came after South Korea proposed earlier this week the resumption of high-level talks in January with North Korea to discuss issues of "mutual concern" to prepare for a "peaceful unification."

The last high-level talks between North Korea and South Korea were held in February last year, which resulted in a rare reunion of families separated by the 1950-1953 Korean War.

But since then persistent tensions between the two neighbouring countries have again prevented both sides from sitting together at the negotiating table. The two Koreas are still technically in a state of war as the war ended in an armistice, not with a permanent peace treaty.

Kim characterized 2015 as a "significant year" since it marks both the 70th anniversary of the liberation of the peninsula from Japan's colonial rule and of the foundation of the ruling Workers' Party of Korea.

Kim, however, made no reference to North Korea's current relations with Japan. Kim, presumed to be 31 years old and who will have his birthday next week, also said that he will seek the strengthening of his country's economy and military. The New Year's address, which lasted about 30 minutes, was his third one. His speech in 2013 was the first by a North Korean leader in 19 years.

His late father Kim Jong Il never delivered an address on New Year's Day during his 17-year rule. His message was conveyed in the form of an editorial in the country's major newspapers.—*Kyodo News*

Chinese artists perform during the celebration for the new year at Times Square in New York, the United States on 31 Dec, 2014. Performances staged by the artists from China's Yunnan Province started the new year celebration here.—XINHUA

Indian gov't blocks 32 websites over national security concerns

NEW DELHI, 1 Jan — The Indian government has blocked at least 32 websites, citing national security concerns, sources said on Thursday. "The access to these websites have been blocked as the government believes that they were carrying anti-India views and spreading propaganda of the militant outfit Islamic State," the sources said.

The websites have been blocked by the telecom department under Section 69 of the Information Technology Act, 2000, and under Information Technology (Procedure and Safeguards for Blocking for Access of Information by Public) Rules, 2009. These laws give the Indian government powers to block websites in the interest of the country.—*Xinhua*

Italy president says he will step down soon

Italy's President Giorgio Napolitano waves during a Liberation Day ceremony at the Unknown Soldier's monument in central Rome on 25 April, 2014, in this handout photo provided by the Italian Presidency Press Office.—REUTERS

ROME, 1 Jan — Italy's 89-year-old President Giorgio Napolitano said on Wednesday that he would step down soon because of his age, leaving Prime Minister Matteo Renzi facing a delicate political challenge to replace him.

After dropping hints for months, Napolitano began the president's annual end-year address by saying he was speaking also to his successor, who would "soon" take his place.

"I'm about to step down, to resign as the constitution expressly allows," he said. "I've reached an age that brings with it growing limitations and difficulties for me to do my institutional duties, which are complex and very demanding."

While he did not say exactly when he would go, he is widely expected to tender his resignation in January when Italy completes its handover of the rotating European Union presidency.

If Renzi cannot steer an acceptable candidate through the complicated presidential election process, it will raise doubts about his ability to push through economic reforms and planned changes to the constitution and electoral system. That would fuel speculation about early elections, adding to the political uncertainty surrounding the euro zone. The Italian head of state holds wide but loosely defined powers, including appointing prime ministers, and can veto legislation as well as using the office's moral weight to influence the political agenda.

Napolitano, a former communist respected in Europe and Washington who first took office in 2006, reluctantly agreed to a second term last year after a deadlocked election threatened to leave Italy politically adrift, but said he would not serve the full seven years.

Months of speculation about potential successors have thrown up names ranging from European Central Bank President Mario Draghi to current Economy Minister Pier Carlo Padoan or Defence Minister Roberta Pinotti.

Renzi, 39, appointed by Napolitano less than a year ago as Italy's youngest-ever prime minister said on Monday he was "absolutely certain" a successor could be elected. But the process is full of hazards that could absorb valuable political energy as Italy struggles to pull out of recession. Electing a president involves about 1,000 voters — members of parliament and representatives from the regions. It allows for multiple rounds of voting by secret ballot, offering ample opportunity for revenge to the many party enemies Renzi has made during his whirlwind months in charge.

Former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi has insisted that an agreement on the president will be needed for his support for wider constitutional reforms.

The experience of 2013, when former Prime Minister Romano Prodi was rejected by around 100 disgruntled lawmakers in his own party, also underlines the danger from within. That fiasco toppled the then-leader of the Democratic Party Pierluigi Bersani, who had proposed Prodi, ultimately paving the way for Renzi to seize control of the party a few months later. —*Reuters*

Cuba frees dissidents from crackdown condemned by US

Cuba's best-known dissident, blogger Yoani Sanchez, speaks to reporters outside Havana's Jose Marti International Airport on 30 May, 2013.—REUTERS

HAVANA, 1 Jan — Cuba freed some leading dissidents on Wednesday after holding them overnight to thwart an unauthorized demonstration in a crackdown that has tested its new detente with the United States.

Police arrested several political opponents on Tuesday and kept others under virtual house arrest ahead of an open microphone protest that was to have taken place outside the communist government headquarters in Havana's Revolution Square.

The detentions were typical of how Cuba breaks up opposition protests but took on greater significance coming just two weeks after US President Barack Obama and Cuban President Raul Castro said on 17 December they would restore diplomatic ties and end decades of hostility.

Among those released on Wednesday was performance artist Tania Bruguera, who organized the demonstration. After about an hour of freedom, she was picked up again by police and lectured for about two-and-a-half hours, she said.

Between her back-to-back detentions, she told *Reuters* in an interview that she planned to hold a similar, scaled down event on the seafront near her mother's home. But as she walked toward it she was picked up by plainclothes officers for a second time. The planned event never took place.

"I'm not doing this as a dissident, I'm doing it as a normal person," she said at her mother's apartment just minutes before her second arrest. "I'm not a counter-revolutionary, like they say. I'm from a revolutionary family. ... I'm going to continue the project."

A Cuban government official declined to comment. One of the other high-profile detainees, Reinaldo Escobar, the husband of prominent dissident blogger Yoani Sanchez, was released late on Tuesday night.

The dissident Cuban Commission for Human Rights and National Reconciliation said more than 50 Cubans were detained and that about 10 of them were still being held on Wednesday night.

"At the same time the Cuban government is normalizing its relations with the US government, it has not decided to normalize relations with the people of Cuba," said Elizardo Sanchez, who heads the commission.

"We don't think there will be a cause-and-effect relationship between renewing diplomatic relations with the United States and an improvement of human rights in Cuba."

Cuban officials do not reveal information about police activity, and *Reuters* could not verify the numbers of detentions.

Obama's policy shift on Cuba has drawn some opposition inside the United States, led by Cuban-American senators Marco Rubio and Robert Menendez.

They both criticized Obama anew after the detentions, arguing that Cuba now has even less incentive to improve its human rights record and asking how the president would respond.

The US State Department condemned the Cuban actions, but gave no indication they would derail a high-level visit to Havana in January for talks on restoring diplomatic ties.

Obama has said Cubans should not face harassment or arrest for expressing their views and that Washington will continue to monitor human rights on the island.

Castro applauded Obama for changing US policy but says Cuba will not change its one-party system.

He also warned two weeks ago that "virulent critics," including Cuban-Americans in the US Congress and Cuban exiles, would "do everything possible to sabotage the process, without ruling out provocative actions of any kind."

Under the deal with the United States, Cuba agreed to release 53 people described by Washington as political prisoners, but they have not yet been freed and dissidents complain they do not even know who is on the list.—*Reuters*

Brazilian president to be sworn in for second term

BRASILIA, 1 Jan — Brazil's President Dilma Rousseff will be sworn in for a second four-year term on Thursday in the capital city of Brasilia.

Rousseff is set to ride in an open-top vehicle from Brasilia's Cathedral to the National Congress at 2:45 pm local time (1745 GMT), escorted by a motorcade of both motorcycle police and mounted police.

She is expected to reach the Congress building at 3 pm (1800 GMT), where she will take the oath of office and deliver a speech.

Afterwards, she will be greeted with a 21-gun salute, before heading to the presidential Palace of Planalto to address the nation and receive the oaths of office from 39 members of her cabinet.

The ceremony will conclude with a reception at the Itamaraty Palace, headquarters of Brazil's Foreign Relations Ministry.

During the whole ceremony, security will be tight, with 4,000 policemen to be deployed in case of protests, and police barricades to be set up along the president's route and at Planalto. Security forces went through a rehearsal on Sunday at the National Congress, though authorities said no major demonstrations are expected.

Brazil's President Dilma Rousseff

Delegations from 70 countries and major international organizations are expected to attend the ceremony, including Chinese Vice President Li Yuanchao and US Vice President Joe Biden.

The Brazilian government expects 10,000 people to gather for Rousseff's inauguration, while the ruling Workers' Party (PT) estimates as many as 30,000 people may converge to the capital from different parts of the country.—*Xinhua*

PERSPECTIVES

Friday, 2 January, 2015

2015 gives another chance for general public

By *Myint Win Thein*

The election for Yangon City Development Committee was successfully held recently and victorious candidates are about to start their new jobs soon. The YCDC election was the first municipal election in Myanmar in more than half a century and is a sign of change as it allows members of the general public to participate in the management of the largest city in Myanmar.

However, only a few residents of Yangon voted in the YCDC election. Low turnout at the election indicates the general public was not interested in it. It does not necessarily mean that they are not willing to get involved in the affairs of the country. They are really interested in the affairs of the state. They want to vote in elections that can result in fundamental changes.

This can be seen in 2010 and 2012 elections which has led to the formation of the parliament and the government. During the elections, the general public massively voted for their representatives and election turnouts were very high. There is another chance for the general public who are desirous of fundamental changes to elect a new parliament and a new government in the near future. The general election to be held this year is awaiting them. It is certain that turnout in 2015 general election will be very high.

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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.

Avarice, Intimidation and Fraudulence

BY TOMMY PAUK

When there are prevalence of inordinate greed, inordinate selfishness or avarice, intimidation and fraudulence in a certain society, there will be no peace, justice and tranquility. If there are many people who commit these immoral, anti-social and illegal acts or crimes in a certain society, the chaotic situations will definitely appear in that society. No unity and trust can be found in that society. The inordinate greed, intimidation and fraudulence lead to disagreement, animosity, distrust, conflicts and tensions and violence among themselves. Generally, greed belongs to human nature, but extreme desire and behavior do great harm to the society and its people. If a person has lust for power and wealth, he or she would act unlawfully for his or her personal gain or benefits. Basically, we do accept that greed, anger and ignorance are inherent human traits. However, we humans must conscientiously control the extreme desires, emotions and cravings. If a person or a group practice for robbing and taking advantages of others, the unpleasant situation or atmosphere will surely arise. The problems will arise out of the equality and fairness. In these days, there are lots of modern luxuries or, materials which tempt or allure the humans. So, these temptations always give trouble to those who cannot afford them. Likewise, the persons who act unlawful power or influence inevitably meet nemesis before they die. This means that they owe to pay for their sins or unjust behavior. Their abominable acts are injurious to all mankind and insulting to our mother earth. All human beings are equally awarded by our mother earth i.e. The equal privileges for survival and adequate human habitation on earth surface with sustenance. The extremely greedy people will inevitably end their life disastrously because they do not deserve the peaceful end on earth.

Obviously, the act of intimidation is a brazen act of violation of law. So the perpetrators must be brought down before the justice. The Judiciary must also practice professional integrity and penalize the culprits with severe punishment so that we can protect the defenseless or innocent people from that kind of peril. The honest and innocent people are safe and secure under the rule of law. The act of intimidation can be frequently seen in the country in which rule of law is absent. In these circumstances and situation, the perpetrators are the tyrants, government officials, terrorists or rebellious armed groups and the victims are general people indeed. For examples: forced labor, child soldier, abducting more than 200 school girls and forced them to convert to different religion by Nigerian so-called militants led by Bokhoharam militants. According to the recent news about Nigeria, it says that a thirteen-year-old girl was coerced by these militants to commit suicide bomb attack at a certain market in Nigeria. She was so unwilling that she utterly refused the instruction and fled to the police, station. Moreover, the Bokoharam terrorists forcibly recruit or abduct the young Nigerian girls and coerce them to commit suicide bomb attack to the targets such as markets, school, shopping centre and even worshipping sites. Evidently, this incident shows that the extreme outlaws are using the tactic of intimidation on innocent people to fulfill their barbaric scheme. The enormity of their serial crimes shocks the global people. Normally, the tyrants, rebels, barbarians, bandits and outlaws commit coercion, intimidation and abduction on ordinary people for their benefits to some degree. In some despot-reigned countries, the most luxurious hotels, resorts, golf courses are exclusively built or created for the despots. Even most of the businesses belong to the families of despots and their minions or lackeys. The general public are poor and the families of despots and their sycophants or corrupt officials are becoming elite or billionaires. They are unkind to their own citizens and crazy to grab the power selfishly. Of course, it is very obvious to see their acts of avarice, inordinate-selfishness, exploitations, intimidation and the endless passion for mighty power.

The afore-said acts are regarded as unlawful and despicable too. The tyrants and their subservient followers high-handedly behave towards those who are simply striving for their survival, but lower than in social positions or power or ranks. Nowadays, the issues of forced labor, child soldier, unjust coup, enslavement, torture, sex-trade and forced abortions are related to high-handed acts indeed.

The limitless greed, uncontrollable anger and great ignorance create unlawfulness to gain unjust benefit. There must be limited greed, controllable anger and little ignorance in our minds as we are being lay- men in the secular world. Naturally, we seek hard to achieve numerous cravings and worldly pleasure every day. However, human beings never satisfy with the present positions such as social status, positions, power, income etc. Avaricious persons are the ones who are extremely greedy for power and wealth. It is a natural law that everything is impermanent but those greedy persons repeatedly say and use the pronouns " I " and 'my' in order to show off their positions or authority. Even then, they deeply concentrate on selfhood and do nothing for charity or philanthropic conduct on their own. In addition, they usually show off their positions and think of highly themselves .They misjudges the worth of other persons and they blindly think that they know everything. So such disgusting manners are totally deplored or disapproved by ordinary people in any society indeed. Actually, they are hoity-toity, stupid and selfish persons and cannot deserve the title-'Gentlemen'. They do not have clear conscience as they cannot control avarice or greediness. They dare to neglect and violate the ethical values and religious teachings though they profess some religious faith. They are pretending as if they were deeply pious. Otherwise, such persons must be free-thinkers or atheists because they do neglect fundamental human decencies for the sake of doing unjust attempt or conducts. Avarice stimulates the persons to be selfish enough to exploit others. It forcibly misguides the person concerned to commit bad deeds for gaining his unjust benefit.

These violent acts are motivated by avarice and inordinate selfishness. In other words, this unethical practice is a kind of exploitation between man and man. The one who commits is extremely selfish and the victim is a simple person. The exploitation hurts the victim's body and mind and that grievance cannot be nursed due to lack of justice and equality. It is an absolute violation of human rights happening in that society. Actually, a powerful person or a powerful group intimidates the powerless person or weaker group for the great benefits of intimidators. In fact, they are armed or tyrants who try to strengthen their might or reign by means of using intimidatory tactics to dominate or influence on the majority people in their society. The general public have been intimidated or oppressed inhumanely by the illegitimate government or despotic ruler, in some countries in the world. Therefore, this act cannot be considered as a misdemeanor because it is absolutely a severe crime.

Fraudulence is a criminality which intends to cheat or deceive for gaining benefit of the criminal. The tactic of fraudulence is slyly used by tyrants or fraudsters. They make tricky ways to rule the people in order to sustain their power. Among the general public, there may be some fraudulent cases while doing business. For instances, one businessman was defrauded of his or her money by a dishonest businessman or a fraudster; the citizens were cheated out of their political rights and social privileges by the tyrants in some countries in the world; election rigging; rigged bid, jiggery-pokery etc.

When we study these cases, we find that the perpetrators manipulate ordinary people or persons fraudulently in order to make illegal profits or privileges or benefits. The people, who are deceived, usually lose their money, profits, legal rights, privileges and benefits. The suffer victims physically and mentally.

(See page 9)

GOLD PRICE, FE RATE (1-1-2015)

Yangon Gold Price

Buying K659,800 per tical: Selling K660,800

Mandalay Gold Price

Buying K659,600 per tical: Selling K660,600

FE RATE

USD Buying K	1032:	Selling K----
SGD Buying K	779:	Selling K789
Euro Buying K	1,240:	Selling K1,260

Conveyance of large marble stone to be carved as Buddha image launched

MANDALAY, 1 Jan — A large marble stone to be carved as Maha Thakyaranthi Buddha Image was conveyed from Sagyin Village in Madaya Township to Nay Pyi Taw at 8.10 am on Thursday.

The image will be kept on Aungmawli Peak of Nay Pyi Taw Posaung Hill.

Local people in Madaya, Patheingyi, Aungmyethazan, Chanayethazan, Mahaaungmye, Chanmyathazi, Pyigyidagun, Amarapura and TadaU townships along the route of conveying the marble stone donated cash to the fund for carving the Buddha Image and departmental officials provided necessary assistance for conveyance of the stone.

A large marble stone to be carved as Maha Thakyaranthi Buddha Image being conveyed from Sagyin Village to Nay Pyi Taw.—MNA

The stone was conveyed by heavy modular trailer along 12th street from the western part of Mandalay Hill, 80th, 26th, 78th streets in Mandalay and Yangon-Mandalay Highway to the venue near Saga-in toll gate for spending a night.

The conveyance will continue to Thigon station on 2 January.—*MNA*

Myanmar to host ASEAN Tourism . . .

(from page 1)

annual event, the ministry added.

During the Forum of ASEAN Tourism 2015 which is due for eight days, ASEAN Tourism Ministers' Meeting, Ministerial Meeting on Tourism between ASEAN and its dialogue partners, ASEAN Tourism Authorized Persons' Meeting and related meetings including seller-meet-buyer and buyer-meet-seller sessions will be held at Myanmar International Convention Centre I and II in the new capital of the country.

The first ASEAN Tourism Forum was hosted by Malaysia in 1981 to provide a platform for the selling and buying of tourism products of ASEAN member countries. Thanks to its amalgam of diverse cultures, the region has become known for its enchanting sights, breathtaking natural wonders and unforgettable destinations, welcoming more hordes of globe trotters year after year.

Regional tourism statistics show 99.2 million of 1,087 million international tourists travelling the world in 2013 visited ASEAN.

With its significant progress in tourism since 2012, Myanmar's tourism industry is growing at an impressive pace as the country welcomed 2.04 million foreign visitors with the 93% growth in 2013 and it hit 3 million visitors mark with the total number of tourists visiting Myanmar up to 28 December 2014 at about 3 million.

GNLM

UNICEF applauds Myanmar's first-ever social protection strategy

NAY PYI TAW, 1 Jan — UNICEF congratulates the Government of Myanmar on the adoption of the country's first national social protection strategy. The document, which has been developed in the last year by the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement-with technical support from UNICEF and inputs from UN agencies, bilateral development partners, NGOs- was endorsed by the president of Myanmar and officially launched today in Nay Pyi Taw.

"This is an historical milestone in the recent reform history of Myanmar, and in an exceptionally short time," said Bertrand Bainvel, UNICEF representative in Myanmar. "The document presented today represents a major opportunity to change the life of children and families in Myanmar, and in particular the most vulnerable ones," he added.

The first-ever National Social Protection strategy is both comprehensive and innovative, and sets new standards for the Asian region. The strategy takes a universal approach to cash benefits and highlights key flagship programmes with calculated costs in terms of GDP % and impacts on poverty reduction. In addition, the document clearly articulates social vulnerabilities and the need to hire and deploy 6000 social work case managers to facilitate an integrated approach to social services at decentralized level. It also gives prominence to disaster risk reduction, in recognition to the impact natural and human-made disasters have on vulnerable populations, especially children.

UNICEF applauds the strong focus on the first and very critical 1,000 days of life, with cash transfer to pregnant women and children up to 2 years of age – as well as the inclusion of a long-term support for children up to 15 years, a school feeding programme, and another programme to assist children with disabilities. With today's launch, Myanmar is positioning itself with Thailand as the two countries in ASEAN with the most progressive vision on social protection for families and children.

"For the past two years, we have been discussing the opportunities for Myanmar to invest a great part of its revenues into services for families and children, and hopefully the Social Protection policy, strategy, and strategy plan will help make the case. It now all depends on policy makers, including the Parliamentarians, to make social protection a reality for millions of children and their families, right now, right from the 2015/2016 budget," concluded Bertrand Bainvel.

UNICEF Myanmar reaffirms its commitment to continue supporting the reforms undertaken by the Government of Myanmar, namely by providing technical support and coordinating with donors and international agencies in key areas such as Education, Water and Sanitation, Nutrition and Social Protection- all areas critical for child survival, development and protection.

UNICEF

Avarice, Intimidation...

(from page 8)

Every sensible person regards this act as injustice or crime because the perpetrators take advantage of the public ignorance. The grievances caused by fraudulence are rather immense indeed. Unless the rule of law prevails, the immense grievances cannot be remedied. So we ought to seek a remedy for injustice or losses. The particular society essentially requires the judicial system which does not judge arbitrarily. Besides, it must be a free and independent so that the impartial judgment cannot prevail. When the rule of law flourishes and independent judicial system exists in a certain society, there can be no terrible miscarriage of justice. The innocent people can have equal rights given by existing laws and they will be able to enjoy happiness without any fear. Whenever extreme selfishness, avarice, lust, passion and cravings overwhelm a person, he or she dares to commit crimes or violate the rule of ethics stupidly. According to limitless desires or greed, they eventually come across with terrible troubles even in the secular world and cannot avoid punishment for crimes they commit. This is the absolute trend or outcome of demerits or misconducts. If we really wish to see pleasant and happy life in human society, we must avoid doing bad things and practice fairly for our survival and livelihood. Otherwise, the violence, conflicts, injustice will always appear on the stage of human life. We must treat each other with warmth, compassion, sympathy, and humanity so that we can create the paradise on earth. Contentment and humility lead a successful and peaceful life. If a person is humble and contented, he or she is free from anxiety, avarice and jealousy. Consequently, he or she can promote or contribute to the social welfare or interests of his or her society effectively. We should bear in mind that there exist the deterrent principles of shame and fear which guard the world from falling into chaos. Purify your hearts and abstain from committing sins in your life!!!!

Tommy Pauk is the pseudonym of U Thein Swe, who is B.A (English) and (Registered Law) R.L I. 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 Translator/ Interpreter for foreign firms.

Netanyahu wins Likud nomination ahead of Israel general election

JERUSALEM, 1 Jan — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has been voted in as head of the right-wing Likud party, overcoming his first hurdle toward winning a fourth term in office in a March general election, results of a party primary published on Thursday showed.

Israeli opinion polls put Likud slightly behind left-of-centre Labour, giving the parliamentary contest a taste of unpredictability, but surveys still give Netanyahu the largest number of potential allies with whom to form a governing coalition, making his re-election seem more likely, for now.

Likud officials were still counting the votes from Wednesday's primary election, but Netanyahu's sole contender, former defence minister and far-right lawmaker Danny Danon, conceded defeat soon after balloting ended, essentially making Netanyahu the winner.

Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (C) and his wife

"Based on the results we see now, Prime Minister Netanyahu has won the election. I congratulate the prime minister," Danon said in a videotaped statement broadcast by Israeli media web sites. "We shall work together as a united party for victory in the coming elections."

More than half of some 96,000 eligible voters cast ballots at 600 polling booths across Israel and occupied territory. Party members also chose a slate of parliamentary candidates, but those votes were still being counted, with results not expected to be announced until later on Thursday.

Whether or not Netanyahu secures key slots on the list for his own political allies may influence his electability in March, pundits say.

An opinion poll published on Channel 10 television on Wednesday showed Netanyahu's Likud trailing by two parliamentary seats behind Labour led by Isaac Herzog, but also predicted other right-wing and religious parties more likely to team up with Netanyahu winning a larger majority than Labor's allies. Most surveys published in the past month have shown similar results. Some analysts see Netanyahu as potentially vulnerable to defeat if centrist parties focusing on hot button economic issues wind up swaying more voters over the next three months.

In past elections, Israelis have focused more on foreign and defence issues which may still prove decisive should there be an uptick in violence with Palestinians or other Arab neighbors before the election. Netanyahu is widely seen as having an edge over his competitors on foreign policy matters.

Netanyahu, 65, is serving his third term of office, but his second consecutive term, after being elected in 2009 and again in 2013. His first term was in 1996, lasting through 1999.

Reuters

At least 26 killed in Yemen suicide bombing: security official

SANAA, 1 Jan — A suicide bomber killed at least 26 people in central Yemen on Wednesday when he blew himself up at a cultural centre where students were celebrating the Prophet Mohammad's birthday, a security official said.

At least 48 people were also wounded, including many women and children, the official said, according to state news agency *Saba*. The celebration, in the city of Ibb, was organized by the Houthis, the Shi'ite Muslim group that controls most of Yemen.

No one claimed responsibility for attack, but similar bombings have been carried out by al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), which operates in Yemen and regards Shi'ites as heretics.

Tensions have increased in Yemen since the Houthis captured the capital Sanaa in September and expanded south and west. The Western-allied country, which shares a long border with the world's top oil exporter, Saudi Arabia, had been trying to overcome an al-Qaeda threat before the Houthi advance.

The official said the bomber mingled with guests as they arrived at the cultural centre and detonated his suicide belt at the back of the hall.

The official told *Saba* that all local government officials escaped unharmed, except for the director of the culture department, who suffered serious injuries. A local resident had earlier said the director general of the Ibb governorate was among the dead.

President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi, in a condolence message to the Ibb governor and families of the victims, condemned "the terrorist and criminal" attack and instructed the government to ensure the wounded receive full medical attention, *Saba* said.

Reuters

*A soldier is seen outside a cultural centre following a suicide attack in Ibb, central Yemen on 31 Dec, 2014. —*REUTERS

At least six killed by suicide bomb in bus in Nigeria's Yobe state: witness

KADUNA, (Nigeria) 1 Jan — At least six people were killed and others were injured when a suicide bomb went off in a bus in Fika in Nigeria's northeast Yobe state on Wednesday, one of the injured told *Reuters.*

The state has frequently seen attacks by Boko Haram militants, although no group immediately claimed responsibility for the bus attack.

"A suicide bomber, I think he was on his way to bomb the market in Fika ... but unfortunately while he was still in the bus to the market the bomb strap on him exploded and killed six people.

This happened early this afternoon at about 1 pm (1200 GMT)," the man said in hospital.

He said others were injured but did not know how many.

Yobe is one of three Nigerian states put under a state of emergency by President Goodluck Jonathan last year as an insurgency by Sunni jihadi group Boko Haram intensified.

The militants are mainly active in the northeast of the country.

Borno, one of the other states under a state of emergency, increased security for New Year and Eid-Maulud celebrations, banning all transport by motor vehicles, bicycles and animals in the state over the 1-2 January period. In Yobe state, the government has banned vehicle transport across its borders over the same period.—*Reuters*

Afghan army mortars kill 20 civilians at wedding, officials say

LASHKAR GAH, (Afghanistan), 1 Jan — Afghan army mortar rounds killed at least 20 civilians and wounded scores attending a wedding party in Afghanistan's volatile southern Helmand, provincial officials said on Thursday.

General Mahmoud, the deputy Commander of the Afghan 215 corps in the province, said artillery was fired from three directions at a village in Sangin district where the wedding was held on Wednesday.

"What we know so far is that our soldiers fired mortar rounds from three outposts but we do not know whether it was intentional," Mahmoud told *Reuters.*

"We have launched our investigation and will punish those who did this."

Gul Pasha Bakhtiar, deputy provincial police chief, said 26 civilians, including women and children, were killed and 41 wounded by mortar shells fired from the army side.

At least 3,188 Afghan civilians were killed in the intensifying war with Taleban insurgents in 2014, making it the deadliest year on record for non-combatants, the United Nations said in a report last week.

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

China December factory PMIs suggest economy cooling further

BEIJING, 1 Jan — China's factory activity sputtered in December, underlining the challenges facing the country's manufacturers as they fight rising costs and softening demand in a cooling economy.

After a rough 2014, the world's second-largest economy looks set to start the new year on a weak note, reinforcing expectations that Beijing will roll out more stimulus to avert a sharper slowdown which could trigger job losses and debt defaults.

A property slump is expected to last well into 2015, companies will continue to struggle to pay off debt and export demand may remain erratic, leaving only the services sector as the lone bright spot in the economy.

China's official Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) slipped to 50.1 in December from November's 50.3, a government study showed on Thursday, its lowest level of the year and clinging just above the 50-point level that separates growth from contraction on a monthly basis.

Analysts polled by *Reuters* had forecast a reading of 50.1.

"This indicates that industrial growth is still in a downward trend, but the pace (of declines) is slowing," Zhang Liqun, an economist at the Development Research Centre, said in a statement accompanying the report.

"The current economic situation is in the process of returning to stability from slowing down," Zhang said.

A similar private survey on Wednesday showed activity shrank for the first time in seven months in December. That survey focuses on smaller companies, which are facing greater strains, notably higher financing costs and problems getting loans.

The official survey looks more at larger, state-owned firms, which have been more resilient to the protracted downturn, partly due to generous government subsidies and better access to credit.

Many analysts expect economic growth in the fourth quarter to slow only marginally from 7.3 percent in the third quarter, though a raft of weak data suggest that may be too optimistic.

That means full-year growth will undershoot the government's 7.5 percent target and mark the weakest expansion in 24 years.

Economists who advise the government have recommended that China lower its growth target to around 7 percent in 2015.

In a bid to spur growth and keep borrowing costs down, the central bank unexpectedly cut interest rates for the first time in more than two years on 21 November. It has also injected more funds into the banking system in recent months and relaxed restrictions to persuade risk-averse banks to lend more.

In addition, the economic planning agency has been approving more infrastructure projects.

While its recent moves may have bought the central bank some time to see if conditions improve, many economists still expect more interest rate cuts as well as reductions in banks' required reserve ratios (RRR) this year, perhaps as soon as the first quarter.

That would allow banks to lend more money at more attractive rates, but authorities will still need to find a way to stimulate genuine demand at a time when domestic demand is sluggish and many businesses are in no mood to expand.

"We believe that investment in the manufacturing sector will only see single-digit growth this year, compared with 13 percent in 2014," economists at ANZ said in a research note.

Reuters

An employee works at the production line of an automobile factory in Dalian, Liaoning Province on 18 Oct, 2014.—REUTERS

British Ebola patient being treated with survivor blood plasma

LONDON, 1 Jan — A British nurse diagnosed with Ebola earlier this week is being treated with blood plasma from a survivor of the virus and an experimental antiviral drug, the London hospital treating her said on Wednesday.

Pauline Cafferkey, a health worker who returned from an Ebola treatment centre in Sierra Leone on Sunday, became the first person to be diagnosed with the deadly virus on British soil, after complaining of a raised temperature.

"We have decided to treat her with two things, the first of which is convalescent plasma, that means a product taken from the blood of another patient who has recovered from Ebola," said Dr Michael Jacobs of London's Royal Free hospital.

The plasma, which would contain antibodies to help fight the disease, was selected from a Europe-wide pool, donated by survivors of the disease, he told reporters, declining to name the specific donor.

"The second thing we're giving her is an antiviral drug, it's an experimental antiviral drug," Jacobs said. "She's very well aware it's an experimental treatment."

Jacobs said no supplies were available of the drug ZMapp, which was used at the same hospital to help successfully treat a patient, William Pooley, who was diagnosed abroad and flown home for treatment earlier this year.

He declined to name the experimental drug being used on Cafferkey but said it had previously been used to treat Ebola patients, as well as other illnesses.

Jacobs said that although Cafferkey was feeling ill, she was as well as could be hoped for at such an early stage. But he stressed the unpredictable nature of Ebola and said the hospital would expect to have a clearer idea of her progress in a week's time. The patient was sitting up, reading and eating a little and had been visited by her family, who communicated with her via an intercom.

Reuters

An Ebola patient is put on a Hercules transport plane at Glasgow Airport in Scotland on 30 Dec, 2014, to be transported to London. A healthcare worker has been diagnosed with Ebola a day after flying home to Glasgow from Sierra Leone, the Scottish government said on Monday.—REUTERS

Euro zone no longer obliged to rescue Greece, Merkel ally says

BERLIN, 1 Jan — Euro zone politicians are not obliged to rescue Greece as the country is no longer of systemic importance to the single currency bloc, a senior member of German Chancellor Angela Merkel's party was quoted as saying.

In an interview with *Rheinische Post* newspaper published on Wednesday, Michael Fuchs also said Greek politicians could not now "blackmail" their partners in the currency bloc.

"If Alexis Tsipras of the Greek left party Syriza thinks he can cut back the reform efforts and austerity measures, then the troika will have to cut back the credits for Greece," he said.

"The times where we had to rescue Greece are over. There is no potential for political blackmail anymore. Greece is no longer of systemic importance for the euro."

The remarks are the clearest warning yet to Greek voters from a senior German politician that Athens might lose support if it flouts the terms of its 240 billion euro (187 billion pounds) EU/IMF bailout after early elections next year.

Fuchs, deputy parliamentary floor leader of Merkel's Christian Democrats, has frequently expressed frustrations felt by many politicians and the German public about the pace of reform and political hold ups in twice-rescued Greece.

Polls suggest that Syriza will emerge as the strongest party in the 25 January election, although its lead has narrowed. The party wants to cancel austerity and a big chunk of national debt but says it will keep Greece in the euro zone.

The head of Germany's influential Ifo economic research institute, Hans-Werner Sinn, meanwhile called a Greek exit from the euro zone an option.

"Further debt cuts will be needed again and again, unless the country is released from the euro zone and allowed to regain its competitiveness by devaluation," he told *German daily Tagesspiegel.*

On Monday, German Finance Minister Wolfgang Schaeuble warned Greece against straying from a path of economic reform, saying any new government in Athens would be held to the pledges made by the current government of premier Antonis Samaras.

Reuters

Assistant foreign minister: 2015 crucial for China-Japan relations

BEIJING, 1 Jan — The year of 2015 will be crucial for China-Japan relations, Chinese assistant Foreign Minister Liu Jianchao said here on Wednesday.

Liu said in an interview with *Xinhua* that China and Japan should push for improvement of bilateral relations by continuous steps forward and gradually putting relations back on an even keel.

He said the two sides should proceed from a long-term vision to maintain and implement the four-point agreement and on this basis, properly handle such major sensitive issues as history and territories.

Liu said over the past few years, China-Japan relations have faced a stern situation due to historical and Diaoyu Islands issues, which have seriously undermined mutual trust and exchanges and cooperation between the two countries in all areas.

"This is neither in the basic interests of the two countries, nor in conformity with aspirations of the international community," Liu said.

He said recently, the two sides have reached a four-point principled consensus on handling and improving bilateral relations, including the consensus on the issue of Diaoyu Islands. Leaders of the two countries have met as bilateral relations took an important step toward improvement, according to Liu.

Liu said over the past year, China and Japan have conducted a few rounds of diplomatic consultations on the issues of East China Sea and the Diaoyu Islands. He said in 2015, China is ready to work with Japan to continue negotiations on sea issues on the basis of equality and mutual respect.

He said China is ready to work with Japan to gradually set up a mechanism on controlling sea and air situations. China is also ready to expand sea cooperation with Japan.

Other countries should make their own efforts to seek dialogue and advance cooperation while putting aside disputes.

Xinhua

Modest but cheerful New Year's Eve celebrations in Serbia

BELGRADE, 1 Jan — New Year's Eve celebration was traditionally organized at city squares throughout Serbia in the past few years, but this year's celebrations will not be organized in some cities due to the financial situation.

In the New Year's Eve, citizens who decide to take part in public celebrations in Belgrade will be able to enjoy a number of concerts due to take place on three stages, including rock, pop and folk and DJ stage.

The rock stage at the Republic Square will feature performances of popular Serbian bands including Balkanika, Alisa, Kiki Lesendric, Neverne Bebe and Kraljevski Apartman, while the pop and folk stage in front of the Serbian National Assembly will feature concerts by Emina Jahovic, Vlado Georgijev, Nikola Rokvic and Mira Skoric. The DJ stage at the Students Square will feature sets by Marko Nastic, Lea Dobricic and Marko Milosavljevic.

The concerts at all three stages will begin at 8 pm and go on until 3 am. Around 100,000 local and foreign tourists should attend the celebration, which should bring in around EUR 15 million.

The City of Novi Sad will organize the New Year's Eve celebration this year for the tenth time in a row, and the programme will include concerts by Garavi Sokak, The Frajle, Crvena Jabuka and a host of popular DJs.

The city decided to redirect the funds planned for the New Year's Eve celebration, around RSD 19 million, to other purposes.

During the celebration at the central city square in Subotica, citizens will be able to hear performances by Dejan Cukic and Spori ritam bend and Hungarian Vegas Showband. The city will traditionally mark the first minutes of the New Year by the performance of The Blue Danube waltz.

The citizens of Cacak who decide to celebrate New Year at the city square will have a chance to attend the concert by Dejan Petrovic and Big Band. The city square is expected to gather around 7,000 people. Fireworks will traditionally be organized at midnight.

Some cities like Nis and Kragujevac decided to renounce public celebrations of the New Year's Eve this year due to the lack of funds in the city budget.

Tanjug

Revellers sport 2015 glasses while taking part in New Year's Eve celebrations in Times Square, New York on 31 Dec, 2014.—REUTERS

Shanghai New Year stampede kills 35

A man walks past the bund area with a bouquet in his hand in Shanghai, east China, on 1 Jan, 2015. New Year celebrations in Shanghai's bund area went astray Wednesday night as a stampede resulted in 35 people dead and 42 injured. —XINHUA

SHANGHAI, 1 Jan — At least 35 revellers were killed and 42 others injured in a stampede at New Year celebrations late on Wednesday in Shanghai, local authorities confirmed.

The tragedy happened on a crowded square of Shanghai's gleaming Bund area at around 11:35 pm. There are 25 female among the deceased whose ages range from 16 to 36, said the authorities of Shanghai, a metropolis home to a population of over 23 million.

Most of the injured are youths at around 20 years old with a majority of them being female. There are also college students and children, medical sources told *Xinhua.*

Police are investigating the cause of the stampede.

The Bund, a stretch of riverbank on the west side of the Huangpu River in Shanghai, is a popular destination for New Year celebrations, as historical architecture and skyscrapers along the river show dazzling lights at night.

Survivors described the stampede as "horrific and hellish." Some said they were standing on the steps adjoining the major road and the sightseeing platform when the deadly incident happened.

"The steps leading to the platform were full of people. Some wanted to get down and some wanted to go up," said a witness who gave her surname as Yin. "We were caught in the middle and saw some girls falling while screaming. Then people started to fall down, row by row."

The woman said she covered two kids in front of her with arms in the chaos. Her own son followed her.

"When we brought him out of the crowd, his forehead bruising, two deep-creased scars on his neck, and his mouth and nose all bleeding," said the teary mother.

Dirty shoe prints were all over the clothes of her son when the 12-year-old boy came to safety.

"The crowds were in panic. We stood in the crowd, feeling squeezed almost out of breath," another witness surnamed Yu said. "Some yelled for help but the noise was too loud."

Other survivors said police rushed the scene and tried to pull out people stuck in but generally failed. "The whole chaos lasted a dozen minutes, then some injured were seen being carried out of the crowd," Yu said.

Some survivors said the stampede was triggered when some started threw coupons that look like "US dollar banknotes" to revelers outside a bar in the windy night.

Witness Wu Tao said some coupons were being thrown from a building's third-floor window near the Bund and people standing along the river bank started to scramble for those coupons.

The coupon looks like a 100 US dollar banknote with "M18" printed in the middle, a reference to the bar of the same name on the Bund.

Phone calls to the bar were immediately hung up after getting through. Some said on social networking websites that they found pictures on the bar owner showing off those coupons before the incident.

But the blogger, who called herself Chaojidadadashabao_MissShen" on the Sina Weibo, denied she threw away any coupons in the incident.

Stampedes occurred in China mainly due to safety loopholes. In September 2014, six school student were killed in a stampede at a primary school in Yunnan Province after a stairway was blocked.

In January 2014, a mosque stampede killed 14 people and injured another 10 in the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region. In 2004, a stampede on a bridge in suburban Beijing killed 37 during a local lantern festival.—*Xinhua*

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Consignees of cargo carried on MV SHAMIM VOY NO (ISCOO66E) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 2.1.2015 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.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.

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

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

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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.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S G LINK EXPRESS PTE LTD.

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French Hollande's popularity rises by year end

Paris, 1 Jan — French President Francois Hollande ended 2014 with a good note after collecting more support to his controversial economic and social policy at the end of December compared to November's approval ratings, a poll showed on Wednesday.

A Harris Interactive survey showed Hollande's popularity rising by 7 percent to 25 percent, an increase that could offer the Socialist leader a ray of hope to start the new year with optimism and paint an euphoric picture of the eurozone's main powerhouse.

French President Francois Hollande

"Hollande's speech seemed to be more fluid and more appropriate according to the French in recent weeks and rifts in the government were less perceived by them. These two elements are behind the rise of the popularity," Jean-Daniel levy, director of Harris Interactive opinion division said.

Shortly after he was elected in May 2012, Hollande's popularity shrunk to a record low. Since his first months in office, he has been hit by anger over successive broken promises to lower long-running rise in unemployment, boost growth and reach healthy finances.

Struggling to revive record low approval ratings, Hollande is due to address the 66 million population in his third New Year Greetings message with the aim to reiterate determination to put the country's growth back on track, according to the Elysee.

"Hollande wants to show that, in a changing world, France is progressing, and that he made reforms that have not been completed yet," the daily Le Figaro quoted a source close to the president's office as saying.—*Xinhua*

Strong waves caused by storm break on the beach in Tripoli, capital of Libya on 31 Dec, 2014.—Xinhua

Bosnian indicted over recruiting militants for Syria and Iraq

Sarajevo,1 Jan — A Bosnian court indicted a Muslim priest on Wednesday for recruiting people to fight for the Islamic State group in Syria and Iraq, using a new law aimed at stopping people travelling to fight alongside militants in the Middle East.

Husein Bosnic, known as an unofficial leader of the ultra-conservative Salafi movement in Bosnia, was arrested in September along with four other men who were later released but who had their passports confiscated.

The indictment accused Bosnic of urging members of his community to join Islamic State militants, saying he had "publicly encouraged others to join terrorist organizations during 2013 and 2014, consciously and from a position of religious authority."

It was the first use of a law adopted in April which sets jail terms of up to 10 years for financing terrorist activities and recruiting and fighting abroad.

Bosnic, who is in custody, was not available to comment on the indictment. He has not yet been required to enter a plea.

Police say up to 180 Bosnians, including women and children, have left for Syria over the past three years, of whom more than 50 returned to Bosnia while more than 20 were killed.

Most Bosnian Muslims, known as Bosniaks, practice a moderate form of Islam. But some youths, particularly from rural areas, have in recent years adhered to the puritanical Salafi sect.—*Reuters*

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WEATHER REPORT

FORECAST VALID UNTIL EVENING OF THE 2nd January, 2015: Light rain are likely to be scattered in Chin State, isolated in Sagaing and Mandalay Regions, Kachin, Northern Shan and Rakhine States, weather will be partly cloudy in Magway Region, (Eastern and Southern) Shan State and generally fair in the remaining Regions and States. Degree of certainty is (60%).

BAY INFERENCE: According to the observation at (12:30) hrs MST today, the low pressure area over West Central Bay of Bengal still persists. Weather is partly cloudy in the Andaman Sea and partly cloudy to cloudy in the Bay of Bengal.

Wish Chris Martin and I hadn't consciously uncoupled: Paltrow

Los Angeles, 1 Jan — Oscar-winning actress Gwyneth Paltrow, who is friends with estranged husband Chris Martin, says sometimes she wishes they had not consciously uncoupled.

Paltrow, 42, and Martin split earlier this year after 11 years of marriage. They are parents to Apple Blythe Alison Martin, 11, and son Moses, eight, reported Aceshowbiz.

"It's painful, it's difficult, it might be easier to say, 'I never want to see you again. But what good does that do anyone? We've made a lot of mistakes, and we've had good days and bad days, but I have to say, I'm proud of us for working through so much stuff together and not blaming and shaming," she goes on and then admits that she sometimes wishes they hadn't broken-up," she said of the split.

"Of course, there are times when I think it would have been better if we had stayed married, which is always what your children want. But we have been able to solidify this friendship, so that we're really close," she added.—*PTI*

'Taken' has put Americans off travelling to Europe: Neeson

Actor Liam Neeson

London, 1 Jan — Actor Liam Neeson feels his hostage drama franchise 'Taken' has put Americans off travelling to Europe.

The Irish actor revealed on the Graham Norton Show that he had received letters from Americans who cancelled their trip to Europe after watching his taken franchise "Just the other day I got a letter from a school teacher in Texas who had tried to take 60 students to Europe and the families of 40 of them got the kids out of it because they had seen Taken 2."

"And then this year she wanted to take 20 of them and the parents all said, 'No, because we've seen that movie!'" he added.

Neeson said he agreed to star in 'Taken 3' because the story was different from the previous versions.

"I said I wouldn't do a third one if someone got taken.. It's insulting to an audience as well as me. It's a good storyline and I'm the hunted instead of the hunter," he said. 'Taken 3' hits theatres on 9 January.—*PTI*

New 'Star Wars' tops 2015 most-anticipated movie list: survey

Los Angeles, 1 Jan — The upcoming instalment of the "Star Wars" franchise tops moviegoers' lists of most anticipated films of 2015, ticket seller Fandango said on Tuesdaty in what Hollywood watchers expect to be a banner box office year for studios.

"Star Wars: Episode VII — The Force Awakens" highlights a year of big-budget franchise releases that includes runner-up films "Avengers: Age of Ultron" and "The Hunger Games: Mockingjay — Part 2." Those films are expected to push challenge 2013's record year of about $11 billion (7 billion pounds) in US ticket sales. This year so far, films have grossed $9.4 billion domestically, according to boxofficemojo.com.

The new "Star Wars" film, which will be the first produced by Walt Disney Co, is set to be released on 18 December and the reboot of George Lucas' sci-fi universe will be directed by "Star Trek" filmmaker JJ Abrams.

"Hunger Games" star Jennifer Lawrence was the top female actor moviegoers wanted to see for the second consecutive year, according to Fandango's survey of more than 1,000 people.—*Reuters*

Swift's '1989' edges out 'Frozen' for year's top-selling album

Los Angeles, 1 Jan — Taylor Swift stole the crown from the princesses of "Frozen" in the final week of 2014 as her pop-centric "1989" became the top-selling album of the year, Billboard reported on Wednesday.

In the nine weeks since its release, "1989" sold 3.66 million copies, clipping the 3.53 million in sales for the soundtrack of the Disney blockbuster, which was the top-selling album of the year every week except the final one.

"1989" held the No 1 spot in the weekly US Billboard 200 chart for the seventh time, selling 430,000 units in the week ending on 28 December, including 326,000 album copies and over 1 million songs, according to figures from Nielsen SoundScan.

The album, Swift's fourth No 1, first launched on the back of "Shake It Off," but the single "Blank Space" has taken over and is the top song downloaded digitally, according to Nielsen.

Swift, 25, does not have any streaming sales in a newly configured Billboard formula. She is one of a handful of top artists protesting some streaming sites like the popular Spotify.

In its second week, rapper Nicki Minaj's "The Pinkprint" retained its No 2 position in the chart with 156,000 total units sold, from 105,000 albums, 405,000 songs and 1.4 million hits on streaming.

A cappella quintet Pentatonix held at No 3 with "That's Christmas to Me" registering 131,000 total sales units.

The revamped Billboard 200 counts 10 songs downloaded as equal to one album unit, while 1,500 online streams equals one album unit.

The new chart formula unveiled this month is an effort to better represent current music consumption, Billboard said. Album sales have been in steady decline with the rise of individual song downloads and Internet streaming.—*Reuters*

Sam Raimi admits messing up 'Spider-Man 3'

***Sam Raimi said he faced many challenges while directing Sony's 'Spider-Man' trilogy.*—PTI**

Los Angeles, 1 Jan — Director Sam Raimi regrets messing up the third 'Spider-Man' film in the Tobey Maguire starrer series.

Speaking to the Nerdist podcast, Raimi said he faced many challenges while directing Sony's 'Spider-Man' trilogy.

"Each and every one of those 'Spider-Man' movies were pretty damn challenging," Raimi said of the films.

"I messed up plenty with the third Spider-Man, so people hated me for years — they still hate me for it. It's a movie that just didn't work very well."

Raimi now feels it was wrong to make the trilogy's final film because he "didn't really believe in all the characters." The director said he should have kept the focus on the relationships between the characters instead of trying to top the previous two films. Despite poor reviews, the film grossed USD 890 million worldwide, more than either of its two predecessors in the franchise.

The character was rebooted again by the studio with Marc Webb taking over Raimi while the web-slinging superhero was portrayed by Andrew Garfield in 'The Amazing Spider-Man' first and second.—*PTI*

Liberia suspends Ebola curfew to allow New Year's Eve worship

MONROVIA, 1 Jan — Liberia lifted a curfew imposed to curb the spread of Ebola so that people could attend New Year's Eve church services on Wednesday, as an aid group warned of growing complacency over the disease in the country.

The United Nations' health agency did not comment directly on the one-night suspension but called for authorities to keep up "social distancing" measures and encourage people to avoid large gatherings.

Liberia introduced the curfew in September at the height of an epidemic that has killed more than 3,400 people inside its borders and at least 4,400 more in Sierra Leone and Guinea, according to figures from the UN's World Health Organization.

The virus, which causes vomiting, diarrhoea and bleeding, is spread by contact with the bodily fluids. It has no known cure.

"The President has directed the Minister of Justice to suspend the curfew for today, 31 December, to allow religious leaders, churches and other religious groups to allow the watch night services, traditional in Liberian society," Deputy Information Minister Isaac Jackson said. Churches that hold services should observe measures to prevent the spread of Ebola such as hand washing, temperature testing and avoiding over-crowding on church benches, he added.

The midnight to 6 a.m. (0000-0600 GMT) curfew would be reimposed the following night, and anyone caught outside would be arrested, he said.

In a fresh measure to combat Ebola, Liberia on Wednesday suspended the activities of traditional societies, called Poro and Sande, that hold camps where female genital mutilation is practised and men are marked with knives or razor blade.

The societies are common in Liberia and traditional leaders were due to meet the government to express their concerns about the order, an official in the Information Ministry said after the announcement on state radio.

Medecins Sans Frontieres, a medical charity that has been at the forefront in the fight against Ebola in West Africa, warned of complacency in Liberia.

"Whilst progress has been made, it is of great concern to everyone at MSF that the population is now much less vigilant about Ebola and health promotion messages are being pushed aside," said MSF field communications coordinator Caitlin Ryan.

The rate of new cases has slowed in Liberia and health officials say the next phase of the fight against the virus will involve deploying teams of health workers to identify chains of infection.

Reuters

Christmas shoppers flock to a market despite concerns over Ebola in Monrovia on 23 Dec, 2014. — REUTERS

China science foundation exposes fraud cases

BEIJING, 1 Jan, — More than a dozen cases of scientific fraud over the past year were exposed by the National Natural Science Foundation of China on Tuesday.

Seventeen scientists were involved in 16 fraud cases, with violations ranging from plagiarism, stealing research results to forging academic degrees and papers, according a statement by the foundation.

Almost all the involved scientists have had their research programmes revoked and funds allocated for their programmes have been retrieved. All 17 are banned from applying for funding from the foundation for the next three to seven years.

The foundation said it has dealt with 227 cases of scientific violations in recent five years, with 195 people punished and 74 research projects revoked.

Xinhua

US pending home sales gain modestly in November

WASHINGTON, 1 Jan — US pending home sales improved slightly in November and are higher than a year ago level for a third straight month, a leading US industry group reported on Wednesday.

The National Association of Realtors (NAR) said its index of pending home sales, which measures the number of contracts that have been signed but not yet closed for purchasing previously- owned homes, rose 0.8 percent to 104.8 in November from October.

Lawrence Yun, NAR chief economist, said "the consistent economic growth and steady hiring we've seen in the second half of this year is giving buyers enough assurance to consider purchasing a home before year's end."

Yun also noted that record high rents, historically low rates and falling gas prices will likely entice more buyers to enter the market in upcoming months.

The national median existing-home price for all housing types this year will be close to 208,000 US dollars, which is 5.6 percent above 2013, and is likely to rise 4 to 5 percent next year. —*Xinhua*

Human feces map finds San Francisco's homeless

Vehicles drive past a Tenderloin Pit Stop station in the Tenderloin District in San Francisco, California on 30 Dec, 2014.—REUTERS

SAN FRANCISCO, 1 Jan — Jennifer Wong has found a way to track the homeless and determine where help is needed: mapping where people defecate on the streets of San Francisco.

Wong, a Web developer, used a city database to create the interactive maps, which she dubbed "(Human) Wasteland." They dramatically illustrate the problem of homelessness in a city of sharp divides between rich and poor.

Wong's maps won a competition at work. She donated some of her winnings to a project that provides mobile toilets and showers to the homeless.

The maps are based on the database of complaints about human feces and urine phoned in to the city's Department of Public Works in 2013. On the maps, the complaints are depicted with tiny images of what look like unwrapped chocolate Hershey's kisses.

From June-November 2014, more than 5,000 complaints were phoned in, most of them in the Tenderloin, the downtown neighborhood of the homeless, shelters and cheap hotels.

But the maps, published on Wong's website (mochimachine.org/), also show a concentration of poop in much of northeastern San Francisco and in the onetime hippie enclave of Haight-Ashbury.

The maps prompted some tongue-in-cheek humor about human excrement. But they also started a conversation about the need for affordable housing in the increasingly expensive Bay Area, as well as for toilets, laundry facilities and showers for the homeless.

"There's not much choice other than the street when a homeless person needs a bathroom," said Wong. "It's pretty clear where the need is."

She said her curiosity was initially piqued when she learned that the city tracks feces and urine complaints. She found the complaints in the Department of Public Works online database as she was working on a neighborhood tracking project for a subsidiary of the real estate company Zillow.

"I grew up in the Bay Area," Wong said. "San Francisco has a reputation as a city that offers lots of services for the homeless. But I realized there's so much more we should be doing, like providing toilets." —*Reuters*

MRTV
Entertainment Channel

(2-1-2015, Friday)

6:00 am
- Travelogue Programme

6:30 am
- Honour Song of Alinka Kyaw Swar Myoma Nyein

6:55 am
- TV Drama Series

7:20 am
- Musical Programme

7:35 am
- TV Drama Series

8:20 am
- TV Drama Series

9:10 am
- Musical Programme

9:25 am
- Pyi Thu Ni Ti

9:45 am
- ASEAN-China Cultural

10:00 am
- Myanmar Video

12:00 noon
- Close Down

MITV
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* Local News
* Kayin Child Boxer
* World News
* Myanmar Masterclass: 3D
* Local News
* … Changes
* World News
* Wholesale Fish
* Local News
* Kachin Traditional Wedding Ceremony
* World News
* Guiding Star of Song Birds
* Local News
* Mosaic Painting (Precious Stones & Gems)
* World News
* Myanmar Harpist
* Local News
* Back To A Paradise (Ep-1)
* World News
* Making of Nawarat Rings
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Tevez does not intend to extend Juventus contract

Juventus' Carlos Tevez eyes the ball during their Italian Serie A soccer match against Genoa at Luigi Ferraris Stadium in Genoa on 29 Oct, 2014. —Reuters

Buenos Aires, 1 Jan — Argentina striker Carlos Tevez, quizzed over the chances of him returning to Boca Juniors, has no plans to sign a contract extension with Juventus.

The Italian champions reportedly want to offer Tevez, whose contract runs until June 2016, a deal to stay in Turin to 2018.

"I said I wanted to fulfil my contract and that's my idea, I'm not thinking of signing an extension because that's not how I feel at the moment," Tevez told reporters in Buenos Aires on Wednesday before returning to Turin from the year-end holidays.

"As I always said, my idea is to complete my contract. Everyone knows I said so from the moment I arrived at Juve," the 30-year-old former West Ham United, Manchester United and Manchester City striker said.

Tevez, who has been in fine form since joining Juventus from City last year and earned an Argentina recall in October after a three-year international absence, said it was too soon for him to think of returning to his first club Boca.

"I have a year and a half left on my contract and it's complicated to leave when you're playing well at this level," Tevez said. "I have to take things calmly and enjoy and not go crazy with the idea of coming back (to Buenos Aires)."—*Reuters*

Lampard to stay with Man City till end of season

London, 1 Jan — Former England midfielder Frank Lampard will stay with Manchester City until the end of the season, the Premier League champions said on Wednesday.

Lampard initially joined City on loan for six months from the New York City Red Bulls after leaving Chelsea at the end of last season.

"Manchester City can confirm that it has extended Frank Lampard's contract up to the end of (the) season, enabling his continued participation in both domestic and European campaigns," City said in a statement on their website.

The 36-year-old Lampard has scored six goals for City this season.

Reuters

Manchester City's Frank Lampard runs with the ball during their League Cup soccer match against Sheffield on Wednesday at Etihad Stadium in Manchester, northern England on 24 Sept, 2014.—Reuters

Colombia's Gutierrez voted South American player of year

Montevideo, 1 Jan — Colombia striker Teofilo Gutierrez has been voted South America's footballer of the year and their Argentine coach Jose Pekerman the best coach for the third time in a row.

Gutierrez, who helped Colombia reach the World Cup quarter-finals in Brazil, was a key member of the River Plate side that won the Copa Sudamericana, the region's equivalent of the Europa League, this month.

Argentina's River boasted the top three players in the annual poll by the Uruguayan newspaper *El Pais* with Uruguay winger Carlos Sanchez second and midfielder Leonardo Pisculichi third.

The top three coaches were all Argentine with Alejandro Sabella, who steered Argentina to the World Cup final, second and River's Marcelo Gallardo third.

Libertadores Cup winners San Lorenzo, runners-up to Real Madrid in the Club World Cup, had three players to River's five in the year's best 11.—*Reuters*

Wrist injury rules Del Potro out of Brisbane event

Juan Martin Del Potro of Argentina returns the ball to Somdev Devvarman of Indiaduring their men's singles match at the ATP Dubai Tennis Championships on 25 Feb, 2014.
Reuters

Brisbane, 1 Jan — Argentine Juan del Potro has withdrawn from next week's Brisbane International due to a persistent left wrist injury, tournament officials announced on Thursday.

The injury-ravaged 2009 US Open winner, who has not played since undergoing surgery last March, had hoped to return to competition in Brisbane in preparation for the Australian Open.

Del Potro is the second US Open champion to pull out of the Brisbane event in the past 48 hours following the withdrawal of Marin Cilic with a shoulder injury.

Croatia's Cilic won his first grand slam when he claimed the US Open title last year.

Del Potro's withdrawal comes less than three weeks before the first grand slam of the year starts in Melbourne on 19 January.

Despite losing two high-profile players, a strong field is expected for the event, including Roger Federer, Kei Nishikori, Milos Raonic and Grigor Dimitrov, who have all confirmed their participation.—*Reuters*

Lancaster to speak to Hartley about disciplinary record

London, 1 Jan — England coach Stuart Lancaster will hold talks with hooker Dylan Hartley following his fifth career sending-off this month.

Hartley was shown the red card playing for Northampton against Leicester in a Premiership match two weeks ago for elbowing an opponent.

"He will have been disappointed in himself to put himself in that position," Lancaster told reporters. "I will have a conversation with him."

Hartley was sent off in last year's Premiership final against Leicester and received an 11-week ban which ruled him out of the British & Irish Lions tour of Australia.

He was suspended for three weeks for his latest offence but will be available for the start of the Six Nations in February.

Reuters

England's Dylan Hartley sits on the field after being defeated by Wales 30 - 3 during their Six Nations international rugby union match at the Millennium Stadium in Cardiff on 16 March, 2013.—Reuters

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