

The New Light of Myanmar

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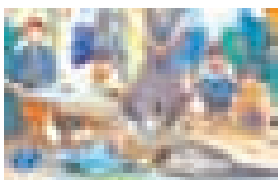
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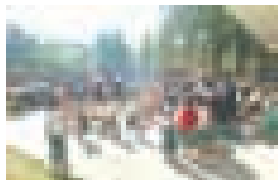
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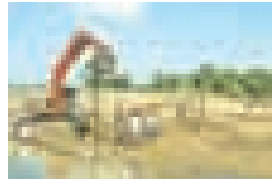
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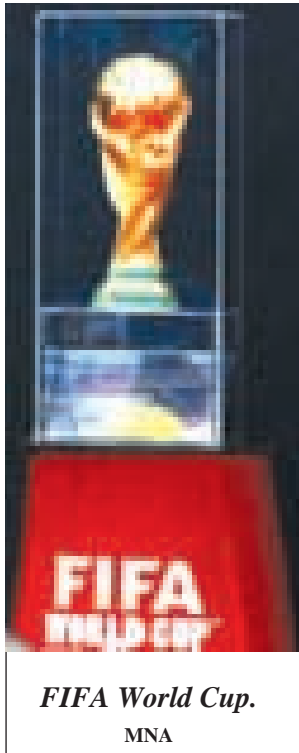
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Khontha Bridge under construction in Kalay



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FIFA World Cup Trophy arrives in Yangon



FIFA World Cup.
MNA

YANGON, 25 Dec— World Cup Trophy arrived at Yangon International Airport via Kolkata of India this afternoon. It is the first visit of the Trophy to Myanmar.

Myanmar has become the 53rd nation of the Trophy's world tour plan in which the World Cup will visit 90 countries around the world within a period of nine months ahead of 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil.

Managing Director Mr. Rehan Khan of Coca-Cola (Myanmar) said at a press conference held at Thuwunna Stadium today that FIFA's World Cup Trophy tour started in September, 2013 and will stop in Bra-

zil in April, 2014 after flying more than 92,000 miles around the globe. The tour covers 51 countries including Myanmar where it has never been before.

During the Trophy's stay in Myanmar on 26 December, the World Cup will be on display at Thuwunna Stadium from 10 am to 10 pm.

Moreover, football fans will get chances to enjoy a 3D hologram presentation, to pose for photos with 2014 FIFA World Cup mascot, to receive autographs of Myanmar football stars including goalkeeper U Tin Aung from the golden era of Myanmar football and entertainment programs of Myanmar ce-

lebrities.

World Cup football tournament started in Uruguay in 1930, the first World Cup (Jules Rimet) was permanently awarded to Brazil in the 9th World Cup football tournament in 1970 as it won the titles in 1958, 1962 and 1970.

The new trophy, FIFA World Cup, designed in 1974 started going on tour in 2006. The new trophy made of solid 18 carat gold is 36 cm in height and 6175 grams in weight.

According to Coca-Cola Company, it is expected that about 16,000 Myanmar football fans will turn up to catch a glimpse of the Trophy.

MNA



FIFA World Cup Trophy arrives at Yangon International Airport.—MNA

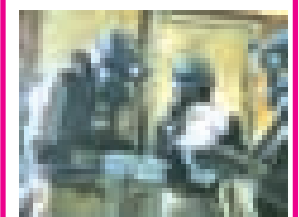
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Storms wreak havoc in Britain, France on Christmas Eve



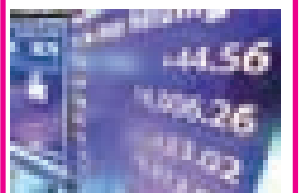
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First phase of Kaladan Multipurpose Project to be completed by 2014 June

First phase of Kaladan Multipurpose Transportation Project which is jointly being implemented by Myanmar and India, will be completed by June, 2014, according to the project's contractor Essar Company. The installation port-cum-inland waterway, the first phase of the project, has been completed by 70

percent. Essar Company is implementing the project in three phases. Phase one is the construction of Sittway Deep Seaport and Paletwa jetty, dredging the Kaladan waterway and construction of six vessels.

In the second phase, finalization of design for a 109.2 km-long-road linking Paletwa with the border region is being carried out.

According to Mizoram State Government, construction of a highway between Mizoram State and Chin State has completed about 60 km as third phase.

President U Thein Sein said at the 11th ASEAN-India Summit held in New Delhi that the completion of waterways and highways crossing Rakhine and Chin

States would help support better transport and trade between the regional countries.

Upon cent-per-cent completion of the project, India will hand over it to Myanmar, and Myanmar will carry out maintenance works. Myanmar government and Indian government signed the contract for Kaladan Multipurpose Transportation Project in 2008.

The Project is expected to be fully operational by

Byline: CL Htan Ngar, Photo: Asianfame Media Group



2015. The financing for the entire Project is estimated at US \$214 million.

Myanma Alinn:
19-12-2013
Trs: MT

LOCAL NEWS

Talks on rural development given

TOUNGGOO, 25 Dec— Talks on conservation of fish resources, boosting of fish production and rural development were held at the hall of Affiliated Basic Education Middle School in Nyaunggon Village of Kyaukkyi Township in Toungoo District in Bago Region recently.

Head of Bago Region Fisheries Department U

Kyaw Min, Head of District Fisheries Department U Win Tin, Kyaukkyi Township Administrator U Myint Khaing and Head of Township Fisheries Department Daw Khin Myo Naing gave lectures on rural development.

It was attended by about 300 students and local people.

Kyaikkyi Township

Fisheries Entrepreneurs presented two exercise books each to students.

Region Fisheries Department Head U Kyaw Myint awarded K 50,000 and a certificate of honour to U Saw Kwala of Kywegyan Village of the township who arrested two fishermen who committed battery short circuit in catching the fish.

MMAL-115

Culture

Buddhist culture course opened in Bago

BAGO, 25 Dec— Bago Region Women's Affairs Organization and Maternal and Child Welfare Supervisory Committee jointly organized the Buddhist culture course at the town hall in Hanthawady Ward of Bago on 21 December.

Chairperson of Region WAO and MCWSC Daw May Thu made a speech on the occasion.

The course run two days.

The course was



conducted by Sayamagyi Maha Saddhamma Jotika Daw Khin Hla Tin of Dhamma Byuha Sasana Mamaka Group and party.

The course was also attended by Patron of Bago Region WAO and MCWSC

Daw Myint Myint Soe and Daw Tint Maw, chairpersons of district and township WAOs and MCWAs, teachers and members of Bago Region Police Force, totalling about 600.

MMAL-Thant Zin

Migratory bird lands in football ground in Hpa-an Township

HPA-AN, 25 Dec—A migratory bird arrived at the football ground of Hlaka Village in Hpa-an Township of Kayin State on 20 December afternoon, according to the villagers.

A large bird landed in the football ground near the house of U Myat Thway in Hlaka Village. He did not know the species of bird. But he thought it may be a rare species.

“Due to the falling, the chest and left wing were broken. I gave it first aid treatment with the use of traditional medicine. Next, I referred it to a veterinarian

to vaccinate it. I informed the police station to know the contacts for keeping the bird on 21 December. Thanks to surveillance policeman Aung Myint Oo, I have got contact with District and Township Forest Departments. Officials of the township Forest Department examined the bird but it died at 3.30 pm,” said U Myat Thway.

The bird weighed five viss and 15 ticals. Each wing were 2.5 feet long. Two stretching wings were five feet wide.

It is estimated that the vulture species bird dropped

Odd News



there while flying to the southern part to take shelter in the cold season due to lower temperature in the

northern part.

The bird was incinerated at 4pm on that day.—MMAL-Tun Tun Htwe (Hpa-an)

Myint Htay, Township Administrator U Naing Win Zaw, staff and officials of Khaing Htoo Construction Co.

They drove a stake for the new building.

The new court will be 50x26x28 feet to be built in 2013-14.—MMAL-Thant Naing Oo (Ngaphe)

Ground breaking ceremony for new court in Ngaphe

NGAPHE, 25 Dec—The ground breaking ceremony for construction of new

court was held in Ngaphe of Minbu District in Magway Region on 13 December

morning.

It was attended by Pyithu Hluttaw MP U

Mass walk activity of December continues for third week



PATHEIN, 25 Dec—The third week of mass walk activity in December was held in Pathein of Pathein District in Ayeyawady Region on 21 December early morning.

The participants of the mass walk started walking in front of Ayeyawady Region government office.

Ayeyawady Region Chief Minister U Thein Aung, the Chief Justice of the Region High Court,

the Deputy Speaker of the Region Hluttaw and wife, the Region Ministers and their wives, the region advocate-general, the region auditor-general, the secretary of the region government and wife, region, district and township level officials, service personnel, faculty members of universities, colleges and teachers of basic education schools, students, members of social organizations and local

people totalling 67,463 joined the mass walk activity.

They walked along Maha Bandoola Road, and arrived at Shwe Statue as the finish line. Together with the Commander of South-West Command and wife and party, the mass walk participants took physical exercises. The region government served the participants in the mass walk with refreshments and foods.

MNA

Charity Affairs

Vehicle donated to Phyu Sin Myitta Social Association

PATHEIN, 25 Dec—A ceremony to donate a vehicle by Shweyinaye Mahasi Sasana Yeiktha Sayadaw Bhaddanta Pannajota to Phyu Sin Myitta Social Association was held at Dhamma Sitagu Pathana Dhammayon of Ayeya Min ward in region 8 of Pathein in Ayeyawady Region on 19 December.

Sayadaw Bhaddanta Paññajota administered the

Five Precepts.

The Sayadaw explained the purpose of donation and handed over documents related to the vehicle to Chairman of the association U Than Tun Naing.

On behalf of the association, Patron of the association Captain Nyunt Lwin (Retd) spoke words of thanks.

MMAL-Pathein Hla Kyi

Take fire preventive measures

Hsipaw's firefighters put out fire of 12-wheeled truck

HSHIPAW, 25 Dec—A fire broke out at a truck driven by Ko Mya Win loaded with wires and bulbs heading for Mandalay from Muse on Mandalay-Lashio Highway near Khonlon Village of Nawngan Village-tract in

Hsipaw Township of Shan State (North) at 4 am on 21 December.

Members of Fire Services Department and Auxiliary Fire Brigade led by Head of Township FSDU Aung Kyi Tun rushed to the

scene and put it out in time.

Due to their concerted efforts, the flames finally died down at 5 am.

The vehicle lost over K 10.5 million in outbreak of fire.

MMAL-Sai (Hsipaw)



WORLD

Storms wreak havoc in Britain, France on Christmas Eve

LONDON/ PARIS, 25 Dec— Hurricane-force winds and torrential rain disrupted transport networks and cut power supplies in Britain and France on Tuesday, one of the busiest travel days of the year just before Christmas, pushing the death toll to at least six people.

Winds of up to 90 mph hit both sides of the Channel with heavy downpours causing flooding, traffic jams, and cancellations of rail, flight and ferry services.

In Britain the number of people killed in two days of storms rose to at least five after a man died trying to rescue his dog

from fast-flowing waters in Devon, southwest England. A teenager died in France on Monday after a wall collapsed on him.

Airports in southern England were disrupted, with some flights from Britain's busiest airport, Heathrow, canceled or delayed. Britain's second busiest airport, Gatwick, said one terminal had been hit by a major power outage on Tuesday and storm damage had temporarily cut all trains to the airport. Passengers on a train heading to Plymouth in Devon spent the night stranded in the town of Taunton, tweeting photos

of their 'bed', a seat, but praising staff. British train operators canceled hundreds of services on Tuesday morning, by which time the storm had abated, leaving hundreds of thousands of people scrambling to get onto later services in and out of London. The weather was expected to hurt British retailers, eager to cash in on the traditional pre-Christmas rush. "Given retailers' hopes that the last couple of days before Christmas would see a final strong surge in sales, the awful weather could not have come at a worse time," IHS analyst Howard Archer said.—Reuters



A Chelsea pensioner waits amongst crowds who were delayed or had trains cancelled due to storms, at Waterloo Station in London on 24 Dec, 2013.

REUTERS



A UN chemical weapons expert, wearing a gas mask, holds a plastic bag containing samples from one of the sites of an alleged chemical weapons attack in the Ain Tarma neighbourhood of Damascus on 29 Aug, 2013.

REUTERS

Russia to host talks on eliminating Syria chemical arsenal

Moscow, 25 Dec—Russia will host international talks on Friday on the elimination of Syria's chemical weapons, Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said.

The meeting in Moscow will draw together experts from Russia, the United States, Syria, the United Nations and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), Ryabkov told Voice of Russia radio on Tuesday.

Syria agreed to abandon its chemical weapons under a deal proposed by Russia to avert potential US military action after a deadly on 21 August sarin gas attack the United States blamed on President Bashar al-Assad's government.

A plan adopted by the OPCW in The Hague last month called for the most critical chemicals to be

transported out of Syria by 31 December and destroyed by mid-March. All other declared chemical materials would be eliminated by 30 June.

"We are certain that we will be able to complete this process in the agreed timeframe, meaning in the first half of the coming year," said Ryabkov.

Russia sent trucks and armored vehicles to Syria last week to transport toxins to the port city of Latakia for shipment out of the war zone by sea. Russia has been Assad's most powerful supporter during the Syrian conflict, blocking attempts to push him from power or punish him with sanctions. Along with the United States and the United Nations, Russia is helping to organize a peace conference scheduled to start on 22 January in Switzerland.

Reuters

Pakistan, India senior commanders hold rare border meeting

ISLAMABAD, 25 Dec — Pakistan and India held the first face-to-face meeting of senior military commanders in 13 years, since the Kargil crisis in 1999 which brought the two countries to the brink of a full-scale war.

Pakistan Army Major Gen Aamer Riaz and his Indian counterpart Lt Gen Vinod Bhatia, who are responsible for deployment of troops in the two countries in times of peace and war, led the

delegations from two sides to the meeting held on the Pakistan side of the Wagah-Attari border crossing near Lahore.

The two men usually talk to each other on a hotline.

"Both sides reiterated resolve and commitment to continue efforts for ensuring ceasefire, peace and tranquility on the Line of Control," said a joint statement issued after the talks, referring to the de facto border in divided Kashmir.

It said they also agreed to make the hotline "more effective and result oriented," to inform each other if any innocent civilian inadvertently crosses the Line of Control in order to ensure his or her early return, and to hold another meeting of local brigade commanders from the two sides "to ensure maintenance of peace and tranquility" along the de facto border.

Kyodo News



Policemen examine the bomb blast site in southern Pakistani port city of Karachi on 24 Dec, 2013. At least four people were killed and 30 injured in three bomb blasts targeting Shiite in Karachi, local media reported.

XINHUA

US calls for immediate political talks in S Sudan

WASHINGTON, 25 Dec—The United States urged South Sudanese President Salva Kiir and former Vice President Riek Machar to end hostilities and begin mediated political talks, according to a statement issued by State Department on Tuesday.

US Special Envoy to Sudan and South Sudan, Donald Booth, is in the South Sudanese capital Juba to secure final commitment from Kiir and Machar to begin talks that could begin "in the coming days", State Depart-

ment spokesperson Jen Psaki said in the statement.

Booth is working with leaders from the Inter-Governmental Authority for Government nations to arrange for the negotiations, Psaki added.

Kiir said he was ready to begin talks with Machar "without preconditions" to end the current crisis in South Sudan, Booth told reporters on Monday.

Deadly clashes have escalated in South Sudan since 15 Dec, following what

Kiir's government claimed was an attempted coup by soldiers loyal to Machar, who was dismissed in July.

"The US urges all parties in the crisis in South Sudan to implement an immediate cessation of hostilities," Psaki said.

An end to hostilities will offer critical humanitarian access to people in dire need and open a space for a mediated political dialogue between the opposing sides, she added.

Xinhua

Iran parliament pushes for changing capital

TEHRAN, 25 Dec—Iran's Majlis (parliament) voted on Tuesday for the generalities of a plan which calls for changing the political and administrative capital of the country, official IRNA news agency reported.

The plan, if receives final approval, will turn into a law which will enforce the formation of a council to study the new location of the political and administrative capital of Iran.

Iran urges the decentralization move following the problems like overpopulation, severe pollution, high rate of crimes and heavy traffic jam in Teheran over the past years.

Changing the capital has been at the core of discussions among officials and scholars in the past decades, but critics have been drawing on the financial burden of the plan and thwarted it.

Teheran, with around nine million population, is Iran's largest city. Centralization policies of the Iranian government, after the Islamic revolution in 1979, have pushed hundreds of thousands of people to move to Teheran each year in search for job, good education, health care services, and a better life.

Xinhua

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Spacewalkers install new station cooling pump

CAPE CANAVERAL, 25 Dec — Two NASA astronauts spent more than seven hours working outside the *International Space Station* on Tuesday and successfully repaired a critical cooling system.

It was the second spacewalk in three days for flight engineers Rick Mastracchio and Mike Hopkins, who wrapped up the cumbersome work with only one problem.

As they were installing a spare cooling pump, a sprinkling of ammonia crystals leaked out from one of four fluid lines. The toxic liquid turns to flakes in the cold and weightlessness environment of space.

The astronauts spent an extra 15 minutes in the station's Quest airlock to bake out any potential residue on their spacesuits. The 7.5-hour spacewalk was broadcast live on NASA Television.

"It took a couple of licks to get her done, but we got it," Hopkins radioed to flight controllers at NASA's Mission Control Centre in Houston.

The new pump will not be fully tested until later



NASA astronaut Mike Hopkins is seen during the spacewalk in this photo courtesy of NASA, received on 22 Dec, 2013.—REUTERS

on Tuesday, but an initial check in the final hour of the spacewalk showed it was "alive and well," reported NASA mission commentator Rob Navias.

During a spacewalk on Saturday, the astronauts removed a failed cooling system pump and attached it to a temporary storage site at the base of the station's mobile rail cart.

NASA is considering a potential future spacewalk to repair the refrigerator-size pump and use it as a spare, officials said.

In addition to the new

pump installed on Tuesday, there are two other spare pumps aboard the station, a \$100 billion research complex that flies about 260 miles above Earth.

The US side of the station, which includes Japanese and European laboratories, has been without half its cooling system since 11 December when a valve failed inside a pump.

The six-member crew was never in any danger, NASA said, but both cooling systems are needed to radiate heat from the station's modules and labora-

tories.

With just one cooling loop, astronauts had to turn off unnecessary equipment and some science experiments. The Russian part of the station has a separate cooling system.

The spacewalks were NASA's first since July when the water-cooled spacesuit worn by Italian astronaut Luca Parmitano developed a leak. His helmet began filling with water, a situation that could have caused him to drown if the spacewalk was not quickly aborted.

Engineers at the time traced the problem to contaminated water in a device that circulates water and air in a spacesuit and takes moisture out of the air. How the water became contaminated remains under investigation.

As a precaution, the helmets worn by Mastracchio and Hopkins were outfitted with moisture-absorbent pads and snorkels that could draw air from the belly of the spacesuits in case the problem recurred. No leaks were reported, Navias said.

Reuters

Softbank mulls acquiring T-Mobile

TOKYO, 25 Dec — Softbank Corp is considering acquiring T-Mobile US Inc. as early as next spring, sources close to the matter said on Wednesday.

Softbank, one of Japan's largest mobile phone carriers, is studying the possibility of buying a majority stake in the US No 4 carrier through Sprint Nextel Corp that was bought by the Japanese company in July, according to the sources.

The deal is expected to top 2 trillion yen in value, they said.

In the US mobile phone market, the top two of Verizon Wireless and AT&T boast more than 100 million subscribers each, against about 55 million for Sprint. With the acquisition of T-Mobile, if realized, Softbank would come close to the top two with a subscriber base of nearly 100 million.

Softbank is in talks with T-Mobile's German parent, Deutsche Telekom, according to the sources.

But Softbank will have to overcome a regulatory hurdle. Deutsche Telekom



Signage for a T-Mobile store is pictured in downtown Los Angeles, California on 31 Aug, 2011.

REUTERS

agreed in 2011 to sell T-Mobile to AT&T, but the deal was opposed by the

US Justice Department because of antitrust concerns.

Kyodo News

Google-Doodle-Happy-Holidays



NEW YORK, 25 Dec — Like last year, there've been some complaints about Google not being sufficiently 'Christmasy' with its doodles, and once again, Google is wishing its users 'Happy Holidays!' instead of Merry Christmas, diplomatically spreading good cheer to those regions or users that aren't celebrating the Christian festival.

While the "Merry Christmas vs Happy Holidays" debate is unlikely to get settled in a hurry, we suggest you enjoy the time off with family and friends, regardless of the name it carries. Also read about recent Google doodles or check out the best Google doodles of 2013 in our photo gallery.



For the second day running, Google is saying happy holidays to all its users via a doodle. Just like the doodle on Christmas Eve, Wednesday's Google doodle is rather simple, instead of the more interactive ones we've seen in recent times.

The latest Google doodle, which depicts an unidentified city enveloped in festive cheer, with buildings lit up and a Christmas tree marking the occasion, features a message from the company when users roll their cursors over it, saying "'Tis the season!" The doodle first appeared early Christmas morning for regions near the international dateline, such as New Zealand. It is now visible in India as well, at the google.co.in page.

On clicking the image, users are redirected to a Google search page, with results for the search term 'Happy Holidays' being shown. Unfortunately, the results page doesn't show too much cheer, with news results, followed by images and videos, and a relatively irrelevant Wikipedia entry for the song, "Happy Holiday", written by Irving Berlin in 1941.

Google's Christmas Eve doodle consisted of a plain image depicting two people riding a horse-driven sled in a barren winter landscape.

PTI

Handheld food scanner, mobile app developed to 'check food as easily as mail'



MUMBAI, 25 Dec — Researchers have developed a handheld food

scanner that connects to your smartphone to inform you about allergens,

chemicals, nutrients and calories present in any food item.

The device 'TellSpec', developed in Toronto, can simply be pointed at a food item, to identify what's in it.

For the calorie conscious, TellSpec can breakdown the amount of sugars, fats and more per gram of a scanned food item.

The device aims to help people make clean food choices by letting them "check their food as easily as they check their

mail," its makers said.

The scanner utilises a small Raman spectrometer, a unique cloud-based algorithm and a simple smartphone app. Scanning a food item on the plate or in a shopping aisle is as simple as aiming TellSpec at it and pushing a button.

It beams a low-powered laser at the item and analyses the reflected light waves to identify the chemical makeup of the food,

'Gizmag' reported.

This data is uploaded to the analysis engine which processes the information, compares it to reference spectra, interprets the results with the help of a database, and downloads the results to the user's smartphone.

Successfully identify foods and their ingredients approximately 97.7 percent of the time after scanning the food's surface.—PTI

BUSINESS & HEALTH

Nikkei closes above 16,000 for 1st time in 6 yrs



Photo shows a display at an office of a money broker in Tokyo.—KYODO NEWS

TOKYO, 25 Dec — The Nikkei stock index finished above the 16,000 threshold for the first time in six years on Wednesday, extending its winning streak to a sixth trading day, as market sentiment was buoyed by continued gains on Wall Street following upbeat economic data.

The 225-issue Nikkei Stock Average ended up 120.66 points, or 0.76 percent, from Tuesday

at 16,009.99, its highest close since 11 December, 2007. The broader Topix index of all First Section issues on the Tokyo Stock Exchange finished 0.63 point, or 0.05 percent, higher at 1,258.18.

Major gainers included the paper and pulp, marine transport, and construction sectors, while the oil and coal, utility and mining sectors lost ground.

Kyodo News

Japan's top 3 automakers post record overseas output in November

TOKYO, 25 Dec — Japan's top three automakers posted record overseas production in November, due largely to solid demand in China, according to data released on Wednesday.

Toyota Motor Corp.'s overseas output increased 16.4 percent from a year earlier to 506,742 units on the back of improving market conditions in Asia, particularly China where the firm saw a sales slump last year.

Nissan Motor Co produced 381,950 units abroad, up 26.8 percent, while Honda's overseas output rose 21.0 percent to 301,403 units. Toyota's domestic production gained 3.5 percent from a year before to 266,817 units

following last year's slump triggered by the termination of the government's subsidy programme for the purchase of green cars, the company said.

Honda's domestic

production rose 34.5 percent to 96,835 units on solid sales of the latest Fit hybrid, which hit the market in September. Nissan's was down 14.9 percent to 79,613.

Kyodo News



Honda Motor Co Fit cars head down the assembly line at the firm's Saitama Prefecture plant in November.

KYODO NEWS

Many with diabetes unaware of vision loss

NEW YORK, 25 Dec — Less than half of people with diabetes-related eye disease have been told about it, which means they're also missing out on treatment that could save their sight, US researchers say.

In nationwide surveys of adults with diabetic macular edema — a condition that can ultimately lead to blindness — just 45 percent of respondents said they had been informed by their doctor that diabetes had affected their eyes. Nearly 30 percent already had vision loss in the affected eye.

It's important to catch the signs of diabetic macular edema (DME) early because it can be treated, Dr Neil M. Bressler said. He led the study at the Wilmer Eye Institute of Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine and Hospital in Baltimore.

Diabetes commonly causes DME, which is a thickening of the eye's

retina. That change can be detected in an eye exam that includes dilation of the pupils. Left untreated, DME is likely to cause progressive vision loss.

Degeneration of the retina in people with diabetes, known as diabetic retinopathy — which is often caused by DME — is the leading cause of blindness in the US, Bressler and his colleagues write in the journal *JAMA Ophthalmology*.

Many US medical authorities recommend annual eye checks for diabetics to monitor early signs of vision problems, but many people with diabetes do not get the proper type or frequency of eye care (see *Reuters Health* story of December 10, 2013 here).

The survey data Bressler's team used

included patient questionnaires and physical examinations, so people with vision loss could be identified even if they themselves were unaware of the changes in their sight.

The researchers considered a subset of 800 people from the survey who reported having diabetes, which affects 25.8 million people in the US, according to the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention.

Of the 800 self-reported diabetics, the physical exam confirmed that 238 had diabetic retinopathy without DME and 48 had DME.

Some 60 percent of those with DME said they had undergone an eye exam with pupil dilation within the past year. But only 45 percent said their doctor told them about the changes

in their eyes.

Physician and patient behavior seem not to have changed in recent years, despite wonderful new achievements in potential treatments for diabetic eye problems, Dr Lee Jampol told *Reuters Health*.

A professor of ophthalmology who studies diabetes and vision at Northwestern University in Chicago, Jampol was not involved with the new estimate.

"This study is very important as it shows that many diabetics are not aware of potential or actual real risk to their eyesight from diabetic retinopathy," Jampol said.

Physicians and patients need to be more aware of the vision risks involved in diabetes and insist on yearly visits to the ophthalmologist, he said.

Reuters

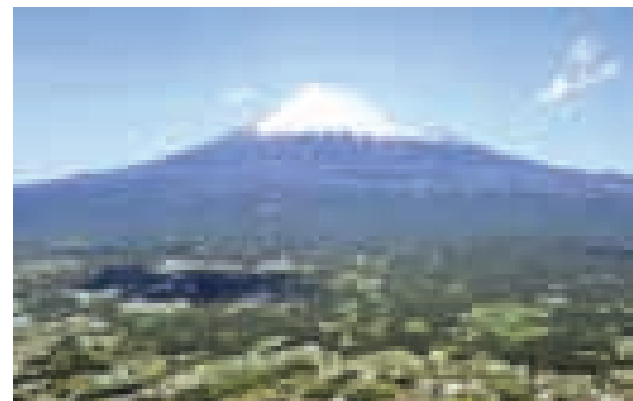
Mt Fuji's admission fee set at 1,000 yen

KOFU, (Japan), 25 Dec — Local prefectures on Wednesday agreed to collect a 1,000 yen admission fee from climbers on Mt Fuji from next summer on a voluntary basis.

Yamanashi and Shizuoka prefectures, which the volcanic mountain straddles, will allocate the revenue from the scheme to environmental projects and safety measures around the trails to counter the increasing number of climbers, prefectural officials said.

Upon Mt Fuji's registration on the UNESCO world heritage site this year, the local authorities are speeding up the measures to accommodate an increased number of climbers, including restoration of toilets and first aid stations along the trails.

The authorities aim to collect the fee in principle from every adult who enters further than the fifth station of Mt Fuji while seeking



File photo shows Mt Fuji, seen from near the border between the cities of Fuji and Fujinomiya in Shizuoka Prefecture.—KYODO NEWS

contributions from children and disabled visitors to the extent they can. The prefectures may make admission fees compulsory in the future if necessary, the officials said. The fees are to be collected at the entrances to the trails in the summer peak season. The prefectures will also consider a scheme allowing climbers to pay the fee in advance online or at convenience stores, the officials said.

The authorities will solicit opinions from the public from late December to early January regarding the new scheme before officially adopting it at a meeting on 22 January. During the 10-day trial period this summer, about 34,000 climbers paid a total of some 34 million yen. The total number of climbers in the summer peak season of July and August reached 370,000 this year.—Kyodo News

Sony, Panasonic to dissolve tie-up in OEL TV display business

TOKYO, 25 Dec — Sony Corp. and Panasonic Corp. will dissolve their partnership developing organic electroluminescent television displays as they have not been able to establish a cost-effective means of mass production, sources close to the two companies said on Wednesday.

The Japanese electronics makers, which

have jointly developed the displays for one and a half years, will end the tie-up as the contract expires at the end of this year.

But the two companies will continue development of OEL TV technology independently.

Improving the profitability of their respective TV divisions has been an urgent challenge for both Sony and Panasonic. For

the time being, the companies will focus their financial and personnel resources for the development of "4K" liquid crystal display TVs, which show images at four times the resolution of high definition, the sources said.

Under the partnership, Sony and Panasonic were planning to catch up with South Korean rivals LG Electronics Inc and



Photo shows Sony OEL TV.—KYODO NEWS

Samsung Electronics Co. but they could not maintain the quality of the panel nor lower production costs. Uncertain market outlooks for the next-generation TV displays also prompted them to end the deal, the sources said.

The South Korean pioneers have also been struggling with its OEL display business due to high costs.—Kyodo News

At first Christmas as pope, Francis urges openness to God



Pope Francis celebrates the Christmas night mass in the Saint Peter's Basilica at the Vatican on 24 Dec, 2013.

REUTERS

VATICAN CITY, 25 Dec — Pope Francis, celebrating his first Christmas as leader of the world's 1.2 billion Roman Catholics, on Tuesday urged people to shun pride and selfishness and open up their hearts to

God and their fellow man.

Francis, who last March became the first non-European pope in 1,300 years, celebrated a solemn Christmas Eve Mass for some 10,000 people in a packed St Peter's

Basilica as hundreds of others watched on megascreens in the square outside. The great bells of the basilica, the same that rang to announce his election on 13 March, sounded when the Sistine Chapel Choir intoned the Gloria, a prayer which starts with the words the Bible says angels sang on the night Jesus was born in Bethlehem.

Francis delivered a short homily that was as simple as his white vestments: Man can choose between darkness and light. "... On the part of the people there are times of both light and darkness, fidelity and infidelity, obedience, and rebellion; times of being a pilgrim people and times of being a people adrift," he

said, speaking in Italian.

"In our personal history too, there are both bright and dark moments, lights and shadows. If we love God and our brothers and sisters, we walk in the light; but if our heart is closed, if we are dominated by pride, deceit, self-seeking, then darkness falls within us and around us," he said.

Francis, who celebrated the Mass with more than 300 cardinals, bishops and priests, urged people not to be afraid to reach out to God. "Do not be afraid! Our Father is patient, he loves us, he gives us Jesus to guide us on the way which leads to the promised land. Jesus is the light who brightens the darkness. He is our peace," he said.—Reuters

5,000 homes in west Ireland

without power

DUBLIN, 25 Dec — Some 5,000 homes in west Ireland are without power due to a lightning storm on Tuesday, state media reported. State broadcaster RTE quoted ESB, Ireland's premier electricity utility, as saying that the areas worst affected was north County Mayo.

Repair crews have now restored power to most of west County Galway. Repair crews are also working to restore power to homes on the Aran island in County Galway after power outages were reported there over the past 24 hours. Earlier on Tuesday, as many as 17,500 homes were without power, according to ESB.

Meanwhile, Irish telecommunications company Eircom said almost 8,000 of its customers were without power in the west, south-west and east of the country due to lightning strikes. It said it expected to clear 800 faults on Tuesday.

Met Eireann, the Irish national meteorological service, said an Orange wind warning was still in place and the weather would remain blustery. However, it expected there conditions will improve by the end of the day. Irish ferries service has cancelled fast ferry sailings on Tuesday due to the stormy weather and passengers will now be accommodated on conventional crafts.—Xinhua

Italian migrant centre cleared after protests



Migrants rest at the immigration centre on the southern Italian island of Lampedusa on 5 Oct, 2013.

REUTERS

ROME, 25 Dec — Italian authorities began clearing a migrant reception centre on the island of Lampedusa on Tuesday after a row over harsh living conditions that prompted detainees to sew their lips together in protest.

The facility, originally intended to house up to 850 migrants for up to 48 hours

before transfer to other centres, has been steadily transformed into a long-term refugee camp where detainees are housed in overcrowded, unsanitary conditions, prompting domestic and international criticism.

Deputy Interior Minister Filippo Bubbico told the daily *Avvenire* newspaper that 200 migrants

would be transferred to other centres. Only 17 individuals, still caught up in registration processes that require their identities be established before they are moved, would remain, he said.

Khalid Chaouki, a deputy of the centre-left Democratic Party who went to the island to demand action, announced on his Facebook page that transfers had started with two planes chartered to take migrants off the island.

"We should finally manage to free this center up by today," he wrote.

Lampedusa, midway between Sicily and Tunisia, has been the centre of a chronic migration crisis which has worsened this year due to turbulence in the Middle East and Africa and the civil war in Syria.

Reuters

Venezuela's Maduro visits Cuba for anniversary of Chavez-Castro meeting

HAVANA, 25 Dec — Visiting Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro on Monday reaffirmed strong ties with Cuba during talks with Cuban leader Raul Castro, the state-run *Granma* daily said.

Maduro travelled to Havana to celebrate the 19th anniversary of former Venezuelan President Hugo

Chavez's first visit to Cuba and his historic meeting with retired Cuban leader Fidel Castro in 1994, it said. Maduro met Fidel on Saturday. Chavez died of cancer on 5 March. During a two-year battle with cancer, he had undergone four operations in Cuba and spent months receiving treatment on the island.—Xinhua

Ex-pilot says he performed duty in shooting down S Korea plane in 1983

Gennady Osipovich, a former lieutenant colonel, is pictured during an interview at his home in Mykop, the capital of southern Russia's Republic of Adygea, in November 2013.

KYODO NEWS



MYKOP, (Russai), 25 Dec — The former Soviet fighter pilot who shot down a South Korean jumbo jet in 1983, killing 269 people on board, has said he carried out his duty as a military officer but that he has had frequent nightmares about the incident. Gennady Osipovich, 69, a former lieutenant colonel, made the comment in a recent interview with *Kyodo News* in Mykop, capital of southern Russia's Republic of Adygea, where he now lives.

Osipovich was 38 when he flew one of the 10 Soviet fighters which were scrambled from various air bases in Russian Far East after a Korean Air Lines' *Boeing 747* intruded into Soviet airspace over Sakha-

lin on 1 Sept, 1983.

The jumbo jet of Korean Air Lines, which was renamed Korean Air after the tragedy, had strayed off course when it flew over Sakhalin. Osipovich, who began flying *Sukhoi Su-15* fighters in Sakhalin in 1976, said he performed his duty in response to orders over the radio from his superior on the ground and fired four rounds of warning shots at the South Korean jetliner, which failed to change its course.

Following an order to shoot down the airliner, Osipovich said, he fired two missiles at the jetliner from a distance of about 5 kilometres, hitting the tail of the jumbo which then burst into flames.—*Kyodo News*

Israeli civilian, Palestinian girl killed in Gaza flare-up

GAZA, 25 Dec — A Gaza sniper shot dead an Israeli civilian over the border on Tuesday and Israel hit back with air strikes on two Hamas training camps which hospital officials said killed a Palestinian girl near one of the targets. The Israeli man, who the military said was working on Israel's security fence, was the first Israeli killed on the Gaza frontier in more than a year.

His death, which drew a swift threat of retaliation

from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, came amid heightened tensions after two suspected Palestinian attacks — a bus bombing near Tel Aviv on Sunday that caused no casualties and the wounding of an Israeli policeman in a stabbing on Monday.

Officials from Hamas, the Islamic group which rules Gaza, and witnesses said Israeli aircraft bombed the group's training camps in Khan Younis and al-Bureij. Witnesses said Israeli



Israeli military medical workers treat an Israeli worker wounded near the Israel-Gaza border, on 24 Dec, 2013.

REUTERS

tanks had fired shells east of Gaza city. Gaza hospital officials said a three-year-old girl was killed by shrapnel during the Israeli strike on the Bureij facility. They had initially estimated her age at two years.

She was standing with other family members outside their home near the camp and two of her brothers were wounded, the officials said. In a statement, Hamas condemned the girl's death as "a criminal and cowardly act".—Reuters

WORLD

40 trucks of int'l relief aid to be delivered to Syria

ISTANBUL, 25 Dec—An international convoy with 40 trucks loaded with relief supplies, including food, medicine, clothing and heating material will leave from the Turkish borders for Syria on Wednesday, a Turkish NGO said on Tuesday.

The announcement was made in a Press conference in Istanbul with the participation of members of Syrian National Coalition (SNC), the biggest opposition umbrella in exile and the representatives of

International Union of Muslim Scholars.

All trucks have gathered in Turkish border areas of Hatay, Gaziantep and Sanliurfa on Tuesday and they will enter Syria on Wednesday, as the weather conditions deteriorate in the war-worn country.

As many as 36 local and international civil society organizations took part in the relief efforts initiated by the Turkish Foundation for Human Rights and Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief (IHH) under the

slogan of "Pulse of Life," and have gathered 1 million US dollars worth of aid.

The convoy, which is expected to distribute the relief inside Syria within a month, is also joined by activists from Qatar, Kuwait, Sudan, Pakistan, Bahrain, Lebanon, Turkey and France. Currently, the total number of Syrian refugees has reached 6 million. Turkey hosts 600,000 of them. According to UN's latest report, this figure is expected to be doubled by the end of 2014.—Xinhua



"Ice king" Jin Songhao shows talent in snow in Tianjin.—XINHUA

Russia says preparing to lift Lithuanian dairy ban



A worker loads a packs of milk at a milk plant in Minsk, on 17 June, 2009.—REUTERS

MOSCOW, 25 Dec—Russia is preparing to lift a suspension it imposed on the import of Lithuanian dairy products in October,

Russian news agency RIA reported on Tuesday.

The head of Russian's consumer protection agency indicated that Russia and

Lithuania had resolved differences in talks.

"As of today, based on the results of the meeting, documents allowing for the delivery of (dairy) products are being drafted, state-run RIA quoted Rospotrebnadzor's acting director, Anna Popova, as saying.

Russia halted dairy imports from Lithuania on 7 October, putting pressure on the cheese-producing European Union member before a summit there on 28-29 November at which Ukraine had been expected to sign a trade deal with the EU.

Ukraine balked at the last minute, shelving

preparations for the EU deal and instead pledging to forge closer ties with Russia. Russia last week agreed a \$15 billion bailout for Kiev and promised to cut the price it pays for gas.

Lithuania had threatened to refer Moscow to the World Trade Organization over what its president called "trade obstacles."

Russia has been criticized for using trade restrictions as a political lever. Similar import bans in the past decade have included Georgian wine and mineral water, Moldavian wine and vegetables from the European Union.

Reuters

Dutch parents let teenagers drink at home despite age restrictions

THE HAGUE, 25 Dec—Eight out of 10 parents will let their children drink at home, according to a poll by a Dutch TV programme Eenvandaag.

The age at which Dutch teenagers can buy alcohol is going up to 18 on 1 January. Yet, two out of three parents with teenagers younger than 18 said that their children were allowed to drink with them. The majority of them (81 percent) said that they would not forbid their children from drinking alcohol at home.

In fact, when parents

were asked if they would continue to buy alcohol for their 16 and 17-year-olds, nearly all responded that they would do so. However, 74 percent of the parents think that the age limit for drinking alcohol to 18 years is a good thing.

In addition, more than half of the 16 and 17-year-olds questioned by the Dutch programme said they did not expect to drink less once the ban came into effect and one-third said that they drink more than their parents were aware of.

Xinhua

Snowden says mission already accomplished

WASHINGTON, 25 Dec—Edward Snowden, a former National Security Agency (NSA) contractor who disclosed the agency's secrets and forced the US government to reevaluate its surveillance policies, has said his mission is accomplished.

"For me, in terms of personal satisfaction, the mission's already accomplished," Snowden told the *Washington Post* in his first in-person interview published online on Tuesday since his June arrival in Russia, which granted him a one-year temporary asylum.

"I already won. As soon as the journalists were able to work, everything that I had been trying to do was validated," said Snowden, whose revelations showed secret legal authorities empowered the NSA to sweep in the telephone, Internet and location records of whole populations.

"Because, remember, I didn't want to change society. I wanted to give

society a chance to determine if it should change itself," Snowden said.

"All I want was for the public to be able to have a say in how they are governed," he said. "That is a milestone we left a long time ago. Right now, all we are looking at are stretch goals."

At his year-end news conference held on Friday, US President Barack Obama defended the NSA's domestic spying programmes while promising some reforms in the upcoming new year. Obama said he would review the reform recommendations by a presidential advisory panel during his holiday break starting on Friday, and would make a "pretty definitive statement" in January about some reforms.

Obama's comments came in a week in which a federal judge declared the NSA's collection programme probably was unconstitutional.—Xinhua



Children enjoy artificial snow at a shopping mall in Singapore, on 24 Dec, 2013. XINHUA

Britain extradites ex-billionaire to Algeria

ALGIERS, 25 Dec — Britain on Tuesday extradited Algerian former billionaire Abdelmoumene Rafik Khalifa to his homeland, APS news agency reported citing a statement of the Justice Ministry.

Khalifa was wanted by the Algerian justice on charges of embezzlement, fraud and conspiracy, as he was tried in absentia in 2007 and was sentenced to life imprison-

ment. In 2009, the wanted billionaire took refuge in Britain after his business collapsed.

He was refused to leave to appeal to the British Supreme Court on 3 Dec, and was due to be extradited within 28 days of that date, media reported, quoting a statement of the British Home Office.

The extradition of Khalifa was proceeded on 24

December, as it is "in line with legal procedures and provisions of the relevant judicial agreement between Algeria and the United Kingdom," APS said quoting the statement. Earlier this month, a source close to the file revealed to *Xinhua* that the British Home Office notified Algerian authorities that Khalifa suffers mental problems and takes anti-depression drug.—Xinhua

Mali to pardon rebel group of Ansar Dine

ALGIERS, 25 Dec — Senior Algerian officials are currently brokering peace talks between the Malian authorities and Ansar Dine, one of the rebel groups in northern Mali, a local security source told *Xinhua* on Tuesday, adding that the mediation would lead to an amnesty.

The Malian authorities would declare an amnesty for the Islamist fighters, who participated in the 2012 uprising in Mali to achieve a permanent end of hostility between the two parties, the source said.

The peace talks were first launched in last April in Algeria's southernmost province of Tamanrasset, on the border with Mali, between representatives of the rebel movement and Algerian officials, the source said, adding the Malian authorities then joined the negotiations.

Xinhua

PERSPECTIVES

Thursday, 26 December, 2013

Welcome to selling season

The shopping season has just entered with flock of ads of discounts and promotion by supermarkets alongside the Christmas and holiday season. There is no distinct shopping season for us as the western culture does not have much influence. For us, the whole year round is yet the shopping season.

We, the Myanmar people, tend more to be excessive buyers than smart sellers. We mostly trade the raw materials rather than selling the fine products. We are great producers but poor sellers. Since the new government took office, the President has laid down the policies to steer the country into selling the fine products rather than trading raw materials. The most distinct example is that the country will no more trade timber logs as from 2014.

In revitalizing the country's economy, we should pay due attention to raise spending power of each individual in the economy through stronger manufacturing industry while raising the consumption. We should no more be consumers with limited spending power, but producers with strong consumption. To encourage production, the government and monetary service providers should provide loans to innovative producers. The great importance should also be attached to the relaxation of procedures to register the small-scaled and medium-scaled enterprises and protect them in a legal framework.

Surprise check made on vehicles in Ottarathiri Tsp

NAY PYI TAW, 25 Pyi Taw Council Area. Dec—With the aim of decreasing the incident of traffic accidents and ensuring traffic rules enforcement, a surprise checking of vehicles and motorbikes is being carried out by members of Nay Pyi Taw Traffic Police Force in Nay

A combined team led by Police Inspector Win Zaw Oo carried out a surprise check on vehicles near the junction of Ottarathiri Hospital in Ottarathiri Township this morning.

Khin Zaw (Mingala)



Traffic police are carrying out surprise check on vehicles and motorbikes in Nay Pyi Taw Council Area.—KHIN ZAW (MINGALA)

Historic Town “Sale”

*Maha Saddhamma Jotika dhaja
Sithu Dr Khin Maung Nyunt*

(Continued from yesterday)

Jataka story depicted in carvings were well chosen to teach the viewers Buddha's Dhamma and moral instructions so that even illiterates could understand and practise the teachings and instructions. To give but a few prominent jatakas are (1) Buridat jataka [No. 543] Maha Wanija jataka [No. 493] (3) Omandanti jataka [No. 527] (4) Vidura jataka [No. 546] and many stories from Dhammapada.

Sticking features of these carvings are detail and expressive presentations of daily lives of Sale and Bagan societies—court scenes, market places, agricultural activities, daily chores of a family, etc, etc. Viewers learn a lot about economic, social, political and cultural aspects of life of that time. Even nat worship was not omitted. The story of two Taungbyone nat brothers and lady nat Ma Shwe U were vividly told in carvings. To amuse the viewers and to raise laughter many young people, some facial expressions and hand gestures and body postures and positions are comic and clownish.

On the whole, the monastery is a silent university of a sort, teaching and imparting knowledge of Buddha Dhamma moral lessons, and history of the people of Bagan and Sale of the time to people of all ages, ranks and climes.

As your tour bus moves out of the monastic compound and drivers a few hundred yards in the town, a sumptuous gilt temple comes into your view. That is where the great lacquered wicker Buddha Image (commonly known as Sale Hni Phaya Gyi) is sheltered. Its origin and its donors and the year of its making are still unknown. As you enter the temple you find two stone pillars, each on either side, bearing inscriptions. The lines on the right side pillar say

“U Ponna's teachers, the two brothers Khin Gyi Tha and Khin Gyi Sa organized the public in making this religious merit.”

The lines on the left side pillar read

“Sakarit 1185, Shin Maha Labha Man Phaya or Yun Phaya Gyi”

U Ponna, a native of Sale became a famous writer-playwright in late Konbaung Period of Myanmar history. Khin Gyi “was an honorific prefix to the name of a learned monk teacher. “Sakarit means Myanmar Era and the year 1185 corresponds to AD 1823. Shin Maha Labha is the name of the Image meaning “Lord Great Fortune Buddha.” “Man Phaya means the Image of Lacquered wicker work.” Yun Phaya Gyi means Great Lacquered Image of the Buddha. ME 1185 is not the year of the making of the image. It is the year in which the image was enshrined in the building.

Local history of the image is a make-believe story one early morning of high monsoon season, while the River Ayeyawaddy was flooding, some fishermen saw the image among billows of water. When they broke the news, towns people excitedly came down to the river side to retrieve the image from the mighty waves. But their attempts were obstructed by heavy rain and rapid current casting away all boats and drivers. They decided to give up their salvage work. At that moment an old woman named Daw Bwe of Pwesadan quarter came down to the river side and paid homage to the image on the waves making her vow “Oh, Sacred Image, Pray take residence in Sale. I'll be the donor to provide care and support for you!” Soon after that vow was made the image miraculously moved upstream, defying waves and came with the salvage party.

The Image was taken to a lake, to the south of the town, where it was put on a sledge and carried to the present site, which was originally a small natural mound. Its top was fashioned into a pedestal for the Image to rest on. A monk named U Prvie brought local lacquer master to renovate the Image. Daw Bwe fulfilled her vow by building a wooden shrine to house. The Image and gilding the Image. She initiated an annual festival in honour of the Image in the month of Tabodwe (February). A Myanmar delicacy “htamane” which is glutinous rice boiled and fried and seasoned with many ingredients was of-

fered to the Image, monks and all comers to the festival Daw Bwe and towns people took turns in offering monthly alms food to the Image. The present Image house was built by Daw Bwe's grandson U Pe and family in ME 1301(1939 AD).

The Image was first nicknamed Shinpin Lar Bar. Shinpin means Lord Buddha and Lar Bar means “Please come” Towns people called out to each other “Lai Bar” [Please come to help salvage the Image]. Later a better and a more auspicious name was chosen. It was “Labha”, a Pali word meaning “luck” or good fortune. Besides, since the Image faces west and west is the direction of Thursday Planet according to Myanmar cosmology, “Labha” befits the Thursday Planet.

Today the Image is a sacred object of veneration. For the worshippers believe that the Image brings good fortune and prosperity. This also a marvelous at work for it is the oldest and largest of its kind in Myanmar. Its height is 18 feet and the breadth from knee to knee is 14 feet and 6 inches and thickness of the knees is 11 feet. Because of too much gilding the image looks like a gold image. But there is a peeping hole at the back through which you cast your eyes to see its wooden frame and lacquered wicker work.

Regarding U Ponna, a native of Sale who became a poet-cum playwright of great fame, his life story was a mixture of comedy and tragedy. Though he was physically handicapped as his right hand was very small and immobile, he used his left hand and his hand writings, it is said and found, were very fine and artistic. At early age, he mastered both religious and secular literatures as well as Vedic astrology. His writings were lucid and pertinent. He was a contemporary and literary rival of another writer-cum playwright U Kyin U who was also equally famous. At the court circle and reading public of Mandalay of Kings Mindon and Theebaw there were two groups of fans—one for U Ponna and the other for U Kyin U. Elderly readers and old generations much prefer U Kyin U's writings as being matured and dignified. Whereas

younger generations cherished U Ponna's products and they relished his jokes and social and political satires. While U Kyin U's humour was dry and subtle, U Ponna's writings were crammed with blatant wards, biting sarcasm and wit, sometimes amounting to the point of obscenity. So quick naturally young generations, especially male youths often quoted lines and jokes from his plays, mostly based upon Buddha's jataka story pioneered later modern pyazats (slap-sticks). Even preacher monks and puppeteers quoted some passages from his plays and wutthu [novels] because they were poetic, eloquent and humorous. In spite of his brilliant literary career U Ponna unfortunately, met his untimely end. One prominent play of his, Wizaya Pyazat involved him, rightly or wrongly in the Palace rebellion led by two sons of King Mindon, Princes Myint Kun and Myin Khone Taing. U Ponna was accused of inciting the two princes to turn against their royal father by writing Wizaya Pyazat. Without fair investigation and trial he was given death punishment on charge of high treason, not by royal order but by his enemies at the court.

Till today “Sale” is prefixed to his name “U Ponna”. So he was better called Sale U Ponna. His manuscripts and original plays were taken to the British Museum in London. Today towns people of Sale are proud of U Ponna. They should set up some kind of memorial in his honour.

Sale seedless plums are now gaining international fame. But no one, right now, seems to cultivate it on commercial scale. Like the people of Manx Island of the United Kingdom, Sale people like to say that Sale seedless plums cannot grow elsewhere, just as Manx tailless cats cannot breed elsewhere other than The Isle of Manx. Modern genetic science may one day give answer to these two monopolistic assumptions—tailless cats of Manx and seedless plums of Sale.

Seeing is believing. So come to Sale to get eye witness account of all in this article.

LOCAL NEWS

66th Anniversary Independence Day, 2014



Wunna Theikdi Gymnasium, Nay Pyi Taw for XXVII SEA Games

Photo: Kyaw Swe Moe (IPRD)

Four objectives of 66th Anniversary Independence Day

- All the national people to live together in the Union forever in weal or woe;
- All the national people to strive together for non-disintegration of the Union, non-disintegration of national solidarity and perpetuation of sovereignty;
- All the national people to participate in efforts for ceasing armed conflicts and gaining genuine peace;
- All the national people to work hard in building a developed and discipline-flourishing democratic nation

National Sports

Happy Learning with sports for children

YEKYI, 25 Dec—As part of efforts for enabling the students to happily learn education in the mass sports activity of December, Basic Education High School No 2 (Myoma) of Yekyi Township in Patheingyi District of Ayeyawady Region held the December sports

competitions at its sports ground on 23 December morning.

Students participated in five sports events.

The sports competition was supervised by the headmaster and teachers.

Kyemon-Min Zaw Oo (Yekyi)



Construction

Khontha Bridge under construction in Kalay

KALAY, 25 Dec—A wooden bridge linking East Khontha and West Khontha villages in Kalay Township was damaged in floods of Nerinzara River in last rainy season. The bridge floated in the river, so the local

people faced difficulties in transport.

Under the instruction of Kalay District Management Committee U Maung Htoo, local people of West Khontha Village recently started reconstruction of

over 200 feet long wooden bridge crossing Nerinzara River on a self-reliant basis.

Kalay Township Irrigation Department provides them a backhoe to be used in construction tasks.—*Kyemon-Ju Nine*

Photo shows construction of a new wooden bridge across Nerinzara River in Kalay.



Health Care Activities

Hepatitis B vaccination given in Sagaing

SAGAING, 25 Dec—The medical checkup and vaccination of hepatitis B was held at the office of Town's Elders Office and Myoma Market in Sagaing on 21 December.

Liver specialist Dr U Than Sit and specialists plan to perform medical checkups and hepatitis B vaccination to the local people with Hepatitis B virus from Sagaing three times a year at fair prices.

At the health care services, over 410 patients



with Hepatitis B and C viruses received medical checkups provided by specialists with the assistance of townselders

committee chairman U Zaw Win and Dr Hnin Hnin Sein.

Kyemon-Nanda Min Lwin

69th Street in Mandalay under construction from Mandalay Hill to Kywehsegan

MANDALAY, 25 Dec—The Engineering De-partment (Road and Bridge) of Mandalay City Development Committee is

building the 69th Street which is the longest one from north to south of Mandalay.

The street will stretch from Mandalay Hill in Aungmyethazan Township to Kywehsegan of Pyigyidagun Township.

The Leprosy Office of Health Department between 35th and 36th streets have been removed and the remaining road section is under construction as of early

December.

In the early 2014, the road can be commissioned into use.

For the first phase, the four-lane road was constructed round the Education College between 33rd and 35th streets. On completion of the road section between 66th and 35th streets and Theikpan street, the traffic congestions on 69th street may be reduced

Business Course (Trial Course) concludes

MANDALAY, 25 Dec—Jointly organized by Myanmar-Japan Human Resources Development Centre and Mandalay Region Chambers of Commerce and Industry, the Business Course (Trial Course) concluded at its office in Mandalay on 21 December morning.

Mandalay Region Minister for Planning and Economic U Aung Zan, Director-General U Hla Maw Oo of Directorate of Trade and Vice-Chairman of Mandalay Region CCI U Soe Myint presented certificates to 124 trainees.

Kyemon-002

to some extent.

Thanks to the road construction, the prices of land plots and housing are rising day by day in Mahamyang Ward of Mahaangmye Township.

The price of land plot in Mahamyang Ward 1 rose to K 100 million from K 50 million.—*Kyemon-Thiha Ko Ko (Mandalay)*

Accident

Three dead bodies found under overturned car

DAIKU, 25 Dec—A Canter with the load of fish driven by Ko Thar Gyi (a) Thet Paing Oo of Ward 5 in DaikU heading for Yangon from DaikU overturned at mile posts 80/2 and 80/3 on Yangon-Mandalay Highway near Tapin Village of Phaungdawthi police station area in DaikU Township of Bago Region on 21 December night.

In the incident, five passengers were pressed

under the vehicle.

Policemen from Phaungdawthi Police Station and members of DaikU Township Fire Services Department led by Township Head U Myo Swe and members of Phayagyi Auxiliary Fire Brigade rushed to the scene and carried out rescue works in time.

They could remove Nyein Chan, 30 of Ward 3 in DaikU and Ko Thu, 27 of

Ward 3 in DaikU with serious injuries from the vehicle.

In the incident, U Thein Nyunt, 41 of Phaaungwe Village, U Tin Hsan, 44 of Phaaungwe Village and Ma Tu Mar, 25 of Ward 7 in DaikU died on the spot under the vehicle.

The injured were sent to DaikU Hospital in time.

Phaungdawthi Police Station opened a file of lawsuit over the case.

Kyemon-Thiha Yazar

WORLD

Ukraine receives first tranche of Russian bailout

Moscow, 25 Dec — Russia told Ukraine on Tuesday it had transferred the first \$3 billion tranche of a \$15 billion bailout, part of plans to keep Kiev firmly within Moscow's orbit and out of the European Union's embrace.

President Vladimir Putin offered Ukraine the lifeline last week, along with a big cut in the price Kiev pays for vital Russian gas supplies, as he tries to persuade Russia's Slavic neighbour to join a customs union of ex-Soviet republics. "Yesterday ... the first tranche of Ukrainian sovereign debt was acquired for \$3 billion," Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev told his Ukrainian counterpart Mykola Azarov at a meeting in Moscow, in televised comments.

"The money went to the central bank of Ukraine yesterday," he said. Azarov confirmed Ukraine had



Russia's Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev (R) speaks with his Ukrainian counterpart Mykola Azarov during a meeting in Moscow on 24 Dec, 2013.—REUTERS

received it. President Viktor Yanukovich's pivot back towards Moscow and away from an offer of closer trade ties with the EU has sparked huge protests in Ukraine, sometimes swelling to hundreds of thousands, and the creation of a tent camp in central Kiev.

The protesters accuse Yanukovich of selling out to Ukraine's Soviet-era overlord with the deal on debt and gas prices, which

looks to have headed off what could have been a funding crisis for the Ukrainian state next year.

Azarov later joined Putin and the leaders of Kazakhstan, Belarus, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan — ex-Soviet republics that have joined or plan to join trade alliances Russia is building, part of Moscow's drive to restore its influence in its former empire.

Reuters

Turkey vows no cover-up despite purge of graft investigators

ANKARA, 25 Dec — Turkey's president pledged on Tuesday there would be no cover-up in a high-level corruption case, despite a government-ordered purge of police investigating it that drew protests at home and a caution from the European Union.

The week-long scandal, which erupted with the arrest for graft of 24 people, including the chief of a state-run bank and the sons of two ministers, pits Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan against the judiciary and has rattled investor confidence.

Erdogan, a third-term premier under whom Turkey's economy has blossomed, portrays the probe as a foreign-orchestrated plot against national unity. He responded by sacking or reassigning some 70 of the police officers involved, including the chief of the Istanbul force.

The moves incensed

many Turks who see an authoritarian streak in Erdogan and his Islamist-rooted AK party, and who are still simmering from huge anti-government protests in mid-2013. President Abdullah Gul, a more unifying figure, sought to calm the furore.

"Turkey is not the same place compared to 10 or 15 years ago. Many reforms have been carried out, in politics as well as in the law,"

Gul said in his first public remarks on the case.

"In a country where such reforms have taken place, if there were corruption and mistakes they would not be covered up," he told reporters, adding that "the independent, objective and democratic legal system (will) adjudicate the allegations in a manner that will not leave any question marks".

Reuters



Supporters of Turkey's Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan shout slogans as they gather to welcome his arrival at Esenboga Airport in Ankara on 24 Dec, 2013.

REUTERS

India downgrades immunity of US consulate officers

NEW DELHI, 25 Dec — India on Tuesday downgraded the diplomatic immunity of certain category of United States diplomats and withdrew the immunity enjoyed by their family members in reaction to the arrest of an Indian woman diplomat by US police earlier this month, said local media. US consular officials in four consulates in India are being issued new ID cards specifying the limited immunity which will not protect them from serious offenses, said Press Trust of India.

The move is seen as a step forward by India in its standoff with United States over the arrest of Indian diplomat Devyani Khobragade in New York on 12 December. Tuesday also saw the end of the deadline for surrendering the identity cards provided to US diplomats as was ordered by India.

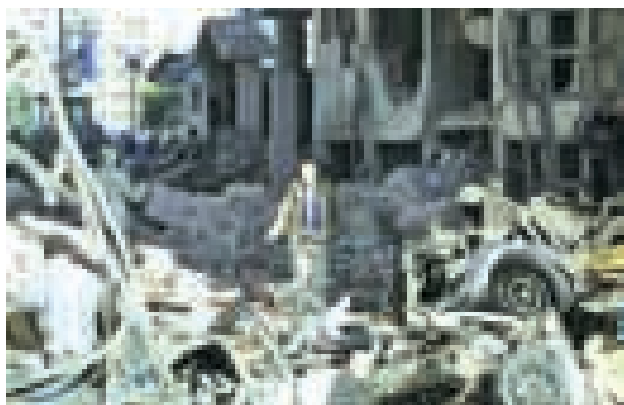
"India has decided to take firm reciprocal steps following the end of the deadline for surrender of identity cards provided to US consular staff in India," Indo-Asian News Service quoted unnamed sources as saying.

New Delhi has also decided that no cards will be given to family members of US consular officials, as the same courtesy is not extended to Indians in the United States, according to the news service. India earlier used to extend cards to the family members of US missions.

The government also took a series of measures to downgrade privileges granted to US diplomats here after Khobragade was arrested on criminal charges of visa fraud and making false statements about how much she paid her Indian housekeeper, Sangeeta Richard.

Xinhua

Suicide car bomb kills 15 at Egyptian police compound



A man walks near debris after an explosion near a security building in Egypt's Nile Delta city of Mansoura in Dakahlyia Province, about 120 km (75 miles) northeast of Cairo on 24 Dec, 2013.—REUTERS

CAIRO, 25 Dec — A suicide bomber detonated a car packed with explosives at a police compound in Egypt's Nile Delta on Tuesday, killing 15 people, the interior ministry said, in one of the deadliest attacks since the army deposed President Mohamed Mursi in July.

At least 12 policemen

were among those killed in the overnight blast in the city of Mansoura, north of Cairo, and about 140 people were wounded, security officials said.

The government vowed to fight "black terrorism", saying the attack would not upset a political transition plan whose next step is a

January referendum on a new constitution.

"We heard a loud noise and I found blood all over my body," one wounded man told state television, speaking from a hospital bed with his head wrapped in bandages. "We all ran downstairs to find our colleagues on the ground in blood."

The attack prompted a cabinet statement declaring Mursi's Muslim Brotherhood a terrorist organization, though officials did not directly accuse the group of staging the attack. The Brotherhood, which is already outlawed, condemned the bombing as "an attack on the unity of the Egyptian people".

Later on Tuesday, hundreds of angry people in Mansoura stormed and torched buildings and shops they suspected to be owned by Brotherhood members,

witnesses and state media said. Others attacked and torched an empty bus after earlier seeing one of its passengers flashing the four finger hand sign symbolizing the killing of hundreds of Mursi supporters at a protest camp broken up by the police in August.

The blast underlined the risk of militancy moving to the densely populated Nile Valley from the Sinai Peninsula, where attacks have killed some 200 soldiers and police since July.

"We face an enemy that has no religion or nation," Interior Minister Mohamed Ibrahim, the survivor of an assassination attempt in Cairo in September, said at the scene of the blast.

The interior ministry said the car bomb attack was carried out by a suicide bomber, citing evidence gathered at the scene.

Reuters

No Geneva talks unless Aleppo bombardment ends

BEIRUT, 25 Dec — Syria's opposition coalition said on Tuesday it would not attend international peace talks in Geneva next month if President Bashar al-Assad's forces continued a fierce air raid campaign on the northern city of Aleppo.

More than 300 people had been killed in a week of air raids on Syria's

biggest city, many of them by so-called barrel bombs dropped from helicopters, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a pro-opposition monitoring group, said on Monday. Syrian authorities say they are battling rebels in control of parts of the city, once Syria's business hub. But rights groups have condemned the

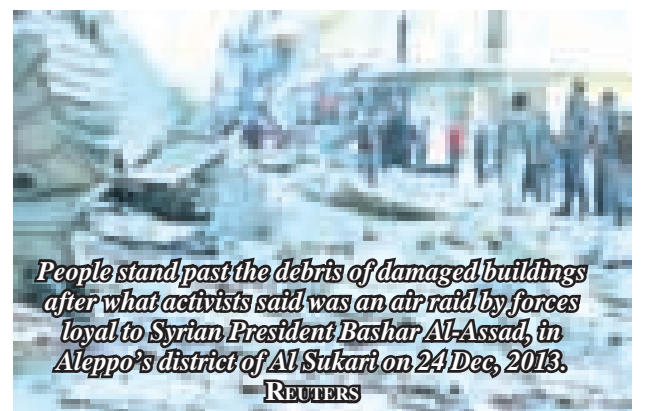
use of barrel bombs — oil drums or cylinders packed with explosives and metal fragments — in particular as an indiscriminate form of bombardment.

The opposition's Syrian National Coalition said in a statement that it "cannot in good conscience participate in peace talks in Geneva as Assad regime

forces continue to bombard the city of Aleppo and surrounding areas for the ninth consecutive day".

World powers, particularly the United States and Russia, have been working to bring the opposition and Assad to negotiations, dubbed "Geneva 2", due to begin on 22 January.

Reuters



People stand past the debris of damaged buildings after what activists said was an air raid by forces loyal to Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad, in Aleppo's district of Al Sukari on 24 Dec, 2013.

REUTERS

REGIONAL

Okinawa governor arranging to approve landfill for US base relocation

TOKYO, 25 Dec — Okinawa Gov Hirokazu Nakaima is making final arrangements to approve within the week landfill work needed for the relocation of the US military's Futenma air base within his prefecture, a source close to the matter said on Wednesday.

Nakaima is slated to meet later on Wednesday with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe who seeks to obtain local approval for the work needed to build a replacement facility for the US Marine Corps Futenma Air

Station.

The governor's decision would mark a major breakthrough in Japan-US efforts to follow through on their 1996 agreement on the relocation after years of political maneuvering amid stiff local opposition in Okinawa.

The Abe administration has called on Okinawa to accept a plan made in 2006 to build a replacement airstrip in an offshore area in Okinawa's Nago to move the base from densely populated city of Ginowan.

Kyodo News



File photo taken in September 2012 shows the US Marine Corps Futenma Air Station in Ginowan, Okinawa Prefecture.—KYODO NEWS

Thai protesters vow to hound PM, cling to promise to thwart poll



Media vans leave after anti-government protesters open the gate of The Thai-Japan youth stadium during a rally in Bangkok on 24 Dec, 2013.—REUTERS

BANGKOK, 25 Dec — Thai anti-government protesters abandoned efforts to block candidates from signing up for a February election on Tuesday but vowed to hound Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra and thwart a poll she is expected to win.

The protesters want Thailand's fragile democracy to be suspended, fearing the 2 February election would only entrench the power of Yingluck's billionaire family, which is hugely popular among the rural poor of the populous north and northeast.

At their peak, rallies seeking to overthrow Yingluck and install an appointed government have attracted more than 200,000 people, with strong backing from Bangkok's middle classes. Many among the Bangkok elite believe rural voters have been bought off by populist policies that have fuelled government graft.

Thirty-five parties have signed up for the poll, despite attempts by protesters to stop them when registrations opened at a Bangkok sports stadium on Monday.

Reuters

Road accidents kill 1,727 people in Cambodia in 11 months

PHNOM PENH, 25 Dec — Road accidents killed at least 1,727 people in Cambodia in the first 11 months of 2013, down 0.5 percent from the 1,735 deaths for the same period last year, a report by the Ministry of Public Work and Transport said on Wednesday.

During the January-November period this year,

there were 3,934 road accidents, up 0.7 percent from the 3,905 cases over the same period last year, the report said.

Besides the deaths, the accidents injured 6,490 people, down 4 percent from 6,800.

Preap Chan Vibol, director of the Ministry's Transport Department,

Counterfeit HK\$1,000 banknotes found in HK

HONG KONG, 25 Dec — Several fake HK\$1,000 (\$129) banknotes have turned up in Hong Kong, prompting the territory's monetary authorities to call on local banks on Tuesday to speed up withdrawal of the 2003 series from circulation.

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority said the five banknotes bearing "fair resemblance" to genuine ones issued by the Bank of China Hong Kong in 2003 were spotted by two local banks on Monday.

"The HKMA will ask banks to speed up the

process of withdrawing the 2003 series HK\$1,000 banknotes from circulation," it said in a statement.

A 2010 series of HK\$1,000 banknotes with upgraded anti-forgery features is also in circulation.

The Hong Kong Police Force's Commercial Crime Bureau said the bogus banknotes have better counterfeiting features than those seized previously, but they can still be spotted by people with a careful eye.

Among the differentiating features of the counterfeit and genuine notes, patterns on the fake notes

are smudged, the intaglio printing is flat, the watermark is less clear, the optical variable ink and fluorescent fibers have different tones, and the holographic windowed thread lines up on rough edges.

According to police, seized fake Hong Kong dollar banknotes are insignificant in number and mostly of poor quality, being mainly produced by inkjet and toner printers with no security features and a smooth surface with no embossed feel. They sometimes even have the same serial number.—Kyodo News

Indonesia's Mount Sinabung may erupt again

BEKASI, (Indonesia), 25 Dec — Mount Sinabung, one of the most active volcanoes in Indonesia, may erupt again or find new seismic balance and be stable as its seismic activities remain high, agency said here on Tuesday.

Head of National Volcanology Agency, who goes with single name Surono, foresaw that the emergency relief period, which was to end on 4 January, is going to be extended as the

tremors are still intense, dashing hope for 18,412 evacuees, who have been in shelters since last month, of returning home soon.

"The seismic activity of Sinabung is still high. I have not found out whether it is part of Sinabung activities to find new seismic balance and stable or to erupt again," he told Xinhua.

Mount Sinabung in Karo district has rumbled to life since September after being dormant for 400

years, but it went into overdrive in November, pushing more evacuation, hence the authorities expanded evacuation zone to 5 km from 3 km earlier. "I think the emergency relief period by up to 4 January can not cope with the mount seismic activity. I foresee it will be expanded again," said Surono, referring to the one week extension.

On 3 November, the 2,457-metre Mount Sinabung volcano in Karo

district of North Sumatra witnessed its strongest eruption since September, shooting a column of ash up to 7,000 meters to the sky. The authorities have then raised the threat alarm of the volcano to top level.

The Mount Sinabung volcano is among the 129 active volcanoes in the vast archipelago country, which is vulnerable to seismic upheaval as it lays on the Pacific "Ring of Fire."

Xinhua

China, Malaysia eye closer military cooperation

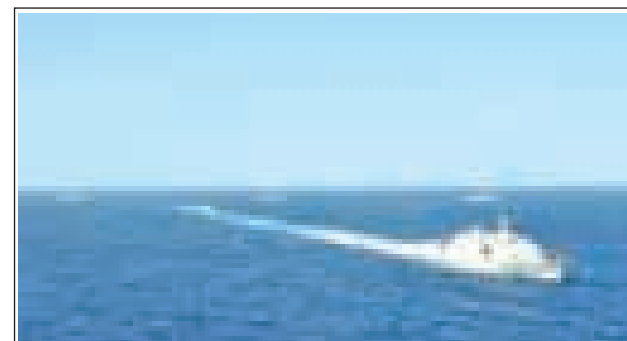
BEIJING, 25 Dec — China and Malaysia on Tuesday agreed to strengthen military cooperation through joint drills and exchanges between the two naval forces.

During the talks with Chief of Malaysian Armed Forces Zulkifeli Mohd Zin, Chief of General Staff of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) Fang Fenghui said the two armed forces have conducted fruitful cooperation in areas such as exchange of high-level visits, personnel training and exchange of visits of naval vessels.

China would like to lift bilateral military ties to a new height through joint drills, military education and exchanges between the two navies, said Fang.

Zulkifeli said Malaysia attaches great importance to the military ties with China, adding that the Malaysian side is ready to forge ahead the relationship.

Xinhua



Vessels of the 15th and the 16th Chinese Navy escort fleet break the sailing formation in Gulf of Aden, on 22 Dec, 2013. The 15th convoy fleet began to return home on Sunday and the 16th fleet officially started its escort missions on its own.—XINHUA

dents," he said.

Road accident is still the number 1 killer in Cambodia.

Last year, traffic accidents killed 1,894 people, according to the Ministry's report. The country lost about 300 million US dollars a year due to the accidents.

Xinhua

ADVERTISEMENT & GENERAL

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV MOROTAI VOY NO (224)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV MOROTAI VOY NO (224) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 26.12.2013 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.P where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S CMA CGM

Phone No: 256908/378316/376797

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV SINGAPORE BRIDGE VOY NO (057)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV SINGAPORE BRIDGE VOY NO (057) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 26.12.2013 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of A.W.P.T where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

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

Phone No: 256908/378316/376797

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV KOTA RAJIN VOY NO (831)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV KOTA RAJIN VOY NO (831) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 26.12.2013 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of H.P.T where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

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

Phone No: 256908/378316/376797

Storm causes minor damage in the Netherlands

THE HAGUE, 25 Dec— The storm that has hit Europe caused only minor damage to the Netherlands. Some trees fell, structural damage was reported but nobody got injured, Dutch media reported on Tuesday.

In the coastal areas and the IJsselmeer region, winds of up to 100 km/h were reported. The Dutch travel agency ANWB said strong gusts of winds were still troubling commuter traffic

in the morning. The KNMI weather bureau has issued a code yellow weather warning for the entire country.

On Monday, the fast ferry service to and from the Dutch northern islands Vlieland and Terschelling was taken out of service.

In addition, a few minor delays and cancellations at Amsterdam's Schiphol airport and at the Dutch railways were reported.

Xinhua

THE REPUBLIC OF THE UNION OF MYANMAR
MINISTRY OF ENERGY
MYANMA OIL AND GAS ENTERPRISE
(INVITATION FOR OPEN TENDER)
(17/2013)

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

Sr.No	Tender No	Description	Qty	Remark
(1)	IFB-147(2013-2014)	Down Hole Mud Motor Ex Horizontal Directional Drilling Rig	(1) Set	US\$
(2)	IFB-148(2013-2014)	Caterpillar C-9 Truck Engine for 30 Ton Mark Oil Field Truck	(1) No	US\$
(3)	IFB-149(2013-2014)	CNG Compressor Driven Electric Motor With Complete Package	(1) Lot	US\$
(4)	IFB-150(2013-2014)	Spares for IMW (Mother) Dispenser	(7) Items	US\$
(5)	IFB-151(2013-2014)	Arc Transformer Welding Machine with Complete Accessories	(8) Nos	US\$
(6)	IFB-152(2013-2014)	Mobile Welding Machine with Complete Accessories 600 AMP, Diesel Engine Driven	(10) Nos	US\$
(7)	IFB-153(2013-2014)	Spares for GM 6V 53 Engine	(15) Items	US\$
(8)	IFB-154(2013-2014)	Spares for GM 6V 71 Engine	(17) Items	US\$
(9)	IFB-155(2013-2014)	Spares for CAT D-3408PC Rig Engine	(26) Items	US\$
(10)	DMP/L-047(2013-2014)	Multi Grade Diesel Engine Oil SAE 15 W 40 (API- CF 4)	(700) Drums	Ks

- Tender Closing Date & Time - 22-1-2014, 16:30 Hrs

Tender Document shall be available during office hours commencing from 26th December, 2013 at the Finance Department, Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise, No(44) Complex, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar.

Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise
Ph. +95 67 - 411097 / 411206



Young people dressed as Santa Claus carry a hundred-metre-long Christmas card through the downtown of Zagreb, Croatia, on 21 Dec, 2013. The giant Christmas card with the best wishes from the people of Croatia will be exhibited at a Christmas Fair in Strasbourg, France.

XINHUA

Dutch company processes record number of gas in 2013

THE HAGUE, 25 Dec— In 2013, Gasunie processed a record number of 113 billion cubic metres of gas, the Dutch gas infrastructure company said on Tuesday.

The old record amount dates from 2010, when 111 billion cubic meters of gas were processed. The record amount is mainly due to the cold months in the beginning of 2013 in the Netherlands and surrounding countries. The Dutch firm is also responsible for the

transport of the Dutch natural gas supplies to neighbouring countries such as Germany and Belgium.

In the Netherlands, the heating of homes and buildings relies almost entirely on natural gas. Natural gas also plays an important role in the generation of electricity in power plants and industry.

In addition, the Netherlands has become an increasingly important transit country for natural gas

during the last couple of years. For example, gas flows through the Dutch Gasunie pipes to Britain.

Gasunie owns the Netherlands' gas transmission network with a total length of over 12,000 km, as well as a network of 3,100 km in Germany. The company was founded through a public-private partnership between Royal Dutch Shell, ExxonMobil and the Dutch state.—Xinhua

Tibet
constructs
6,000 low-rent
housing units
in 2013

LHASA, 25 Dec— Southwest China's Tibet Autonomous Region completed the construction of 6,000 low-rent apartment units in 2013, regional government authorities confirmed on Wednesday.

These low-rent apartments, with an overall floor area of 300,000 square meters, will benefit about 20,000 people in 74 cities and counties around Tibet, said the Department of Housing and Urban-Rural Development of Tibet.

Tibet is striving to ensure all low-income families with housing difficulties receive subsidies or low-rent housing by 2015, said the department.

In 2006, Tibet started the construction of low-rent apartments, one kind of low-cost housing in China, targeted to help low-income families with three or more members and experiencing housing difficulties.

To date, Tibet has invested over 2.1 billion yuan (about 345.87 million US dollars) in the construction of 20,000 low-rent apartment units, with an overall floor area of 1.21 million square metres.—Xinhua

ENTERTAINMENT

Brad Pitt, Angelina Jolie do Christmas shopping at discount store

Brad and Angelina are reportedly getting married soon.

SYDNEY, 25 Dec — Famous Hollywood couple, Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie were spotted at Target in Robina over the weekend, hitting a discount store to do some last-minute shopping for Christmas.

The A-list couple stopped by the budget retailers in Robina, north east Australia, on 22 December with their six children — 12-year old Maddox, 10-year old Pax, 8-year old Zahara, 7-year old Shiloh and 5-year old twins Knox and Vivienne — in tow.

The pair had made a special request to the store to stay open after its official hours so that they could shop without being disturbed by fans.

“They made sure no one was around to blow their cover. The store manager waited until everyone had gone home and opened it up secretly for them at 7:30 pm on Sunday.” An employee of the store told a newspaper.

“They shopped for around an hour and a half to buy presents for their children and friends. Who would have thought people like them would do their shopping at Target?” the source added.

The famous family is staying on the Gold Coast while Angelina Jolie directs a war drama *Unbroken*.—PTI



Britney Spears: Feel too old for fun in the bedroom

LOS ANGELES, 25 Dec — The 32-year old singer, Britney Spears says she loves to have an active sex life, but at times she feels she is too old to have fun in the bedroom.

Britney Spears, who is currently dating David Lucado, has made the revelation in her documentary *I Am Britney Jean*, which aired in the US recently.

“I love sex. I think sex is great. But I feel a little different about it now that I’m older.”

Sometimes I feel like I’m 20 and then sometimes I feel like I’m 50.” she said.

She has sons 8-year old Sean Preston, and 7-year old Jayden James, with ex-husband Kevin Federline. She, recently, also said that she was keen to add to her brood, and that now she wants a baby girl.

PTI



Britney has made revelations about her life in her documentary *I Am Britney Jean*.



Charlie Sheen and Denise Richards had parted ways in 2006.—PTI

Denise Richards denies keeping Charlie Sheen away from children

LOS ANGELES, 25 Dec — Actress Denise Richards has denied reports that she has banned her ex-husband Charlie Sheen from spending Christmas with their kids.

The 42-year-old took to microblogging website Twitter on Monday to reply to a fan’s query about the report.

“That’s actually not true. I don’t know why he feels the need to do this publicly. I don’t keep him away from our kids.” Denise tweeted. “You done ranting? Keep it classy dude. Our kids don’t need to be privy to this, you are welcome to spend X’mas with us. Hope you still come.” She posted in a tweet directed to Charlie Sheen. “You were and are welcome to see them. I never asked for your plane.

We love you. Please for our kids stop this.” added she.

According to an earlier report, Charlie Sheen was angry because he could not exchange gifts with his daughters, 9-year old Sam and 8-year old Lola.

“Let me see if I got this straight, you won’t even spare the girls for 30 minutes, from the 10 mile house I gave you, 100 yards away, to come down and open the gifts their dad bought them before they leave.” Charlie texted Denise.

The report further read that the Anger Management star went to Denise Richards’ home to deliver the gifts and even pleaded her to change her mind, but she refused.

PTI

Universal takes writedown on new Keanu Reeves film

LOS ANGELES, 25 Dec — Comcast Corp’s Universal Pictures movie studio has taken unspecified write-downs for its \$175 million (106 million pounds), Keanu Reeves film “47 Ronin” that opens on Christmas Day, the studio has acknowledged, as Hollywood neared the end of a year of big budget bombs.

The film, a fantasy action film about a group of samurai in 18th century Japan, cost \$175 million to make, according to people with knowledge of its budget.

It is expected to gross between \$17 million and \$20 million for the five-day Christmas Day

holiday period through Sunday 29 December, Hollywood experts have forecast, a particularly weak showing for a big budget film.

“Universal Pictures regularly evaluates its film slate for potential adjustment,” said a Universal official. “In the case of ‘47 Ronin,’ we adjusted film costs in previous quarters and as a result, our financial performance will not be negatively impacted this quarter by its theatrical performance.”

Universal did not disclose the size of the earlier write-downs.

Although Hollywood executives cautiously

predict a record year at the box office, many had their own big budget misfires. Walt Disney wrote down the costs of the \$215 million Johnny Depp western “The Lone Ranger,” which it had said lost more than \$160 million.

Earlier in the year, Dreamworks Animation took an \$87 million write down for its 2012 holiday film “Rise of the Guardians,” while Warner Brothers’ “Jack the Giant Slayer” generated \$197.7 million in worldwide ticket sales and cost \$195 million to make. (Studios generally get half the ticket sales.)

Sony cited the “theatrical underperformance” of the \$150 million thriller “White House Down” as one reason its studio recorded a \$181 million loss in its second quarter. Universal’s “47 Ronin” tells the story of a half-Japanese former slave, played by Keanu Reeves, who joins a band of outcast samurai intent on avenging the death of their master and who battle mythic beasts and shape-shifting witches. It was initially scheduled for release in November 2012, but was moved to February 2013 for more work on the 3D visual efforts, before it was postponed to Christmas Day.

Reuters



Canadian actor Keanu Reeves talks with a fan as he leaves his apartment in Budapest on 11 March, 2011. Reeves is in Budapest for two months for the shooting of his new film “47 Ronin”.

REUTERS

Kate Winslet names baby boy Bear



Bear is Kate’s first child with husband Ned Rocknroll.

LOS ANGELES, 25 Dec — Actress Kate Winslet, who welcomed a baby boy earlier this month, has named him Bear Winslet.

A spokesperson confirmed that the baby’s name is Bear Winslet, who was born at an NHS Hospital in Sussex on 7 December, reports *aceshowbiz.com*.

Kate is also a mother to 13-year-old daughter Mia from her marriage with film producer Jim Threapleton and a 10-year-old Joe with director Sam Mendes.

Bear is her first child with husband Ned Rocknroll, who she got married to last December. The couple had announced the pregnancy in June.

PTI

America's Cup regatta may return to San Francisco in 2017

SAN FRANCISCO, 25 Dec —Oracle Team USA wants to stage the next America's Cup regatta in San Francisco in August 2017 in catamarans smaller than the one they sailed to victory last summer, team CEO Russell Coutts told Reuters on Monday.

Oracle Corp CEO Larry Ellison's team notched eight successive wins over Team New Zealand in September, coming from behind to take the 34th America's Cup in one of the sport's most remarkable comebacks.

The event's victor wins the right to choose the venue. Coutts wants to return the regatta to the Northern California city's waterfront, and hopes to convince civic leaders to agree to host the event a second time.

San Francisco Mayor Ed Lee on Monday sent

a letter to Coutts opening negotiations. The city and Oracle have a number of details to sort out and the board of supervisors must approve any deal.

Numerous hurdles remain before Ellison can reach an agreement with the city, including convincing critics of the economic benefits for the city, which turned out less than initially estimated.

Some supervisors criticized the last arrangement between the city and Ellison as being too generous to the event organizers.

But "the 34th America's Cup generated hundreds of millions of dollars in economic activity for San Francisco, created thousands of jobs and showcased our spectacular waterfront, the beauty of San Francisco Bay and the sport of sailing to millions of spectators around

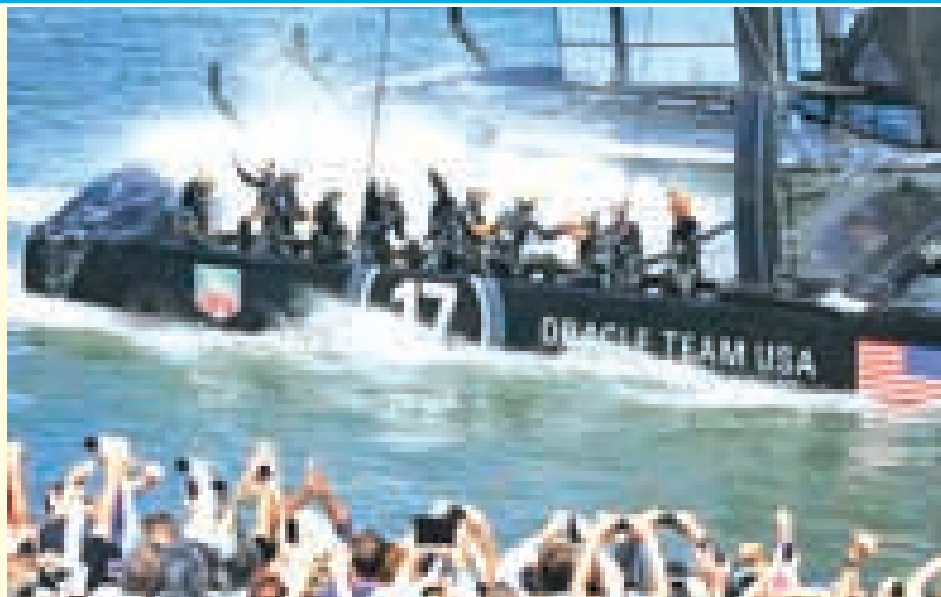
the world," Lee wrote in his letter.

Yet controversy dogged this year's event. Critics questioned the safety of the faster, high-tech 72-foot catamarans sailed in the last America's Cup, particularly after a sailor died in a tragic accident.

"Some people within the city are saying why should we support a race for a billionaire like Larry Ellison," Coutts said. "Most people have recognized that it was more about highly skilled, young athletes than it was about billionaires."

San Francisco and Ellison hope to finalize an agreement by 1 March, Lee said in his letter.

Coutts expects the next series of races for the world's oldest sporting trophy to be sailed in twin-hulled yachts between 60 and 65 feet long (18 and 20 metre), with hydrofoils to



Members of Oracle Team USA wave to spectators after winning Race 16 of the 34th America's Cup yacht sailing race against Emirates Team New Zealand in San Francisco, California on 23 Sept, 2013.—REUTERS

lift the hulls out of the water onto carbon-fiber blades.

"It will be a foiling catamaran for sure," Coutts said in a telephone interview. Coutts said the Australian challenger of record, led by winemakers Bob and Sandy Oatley, and Oracle have hired an entity to design the rules for the next Cup. To reduce costs, he

said they are considering shrinking the number of crew members from 11 to eight.

They also are considering re-imposing a nationality rule, Coutts said. Just one member of this year's winning American team hailed from the United States.

The races leading up to the final series last summer

lasted months. Next time, Coutts said, he plans to consolidate the races into just one month in August 2017.

That month was the best time to stage the event in San Francisco's cruise ship terminal because cruise ships rarely dock in San Francisco in August, Coutts said.—Reuters

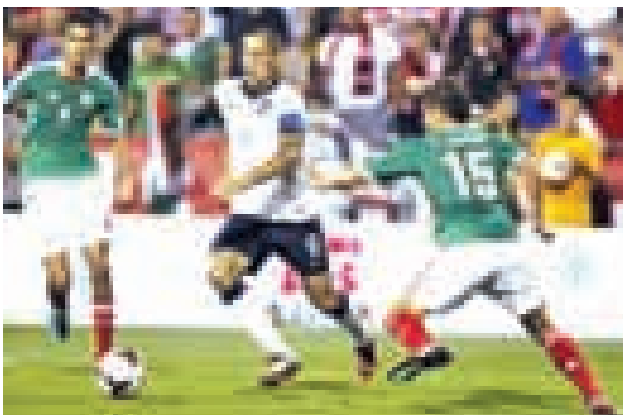
Dempsey returns to Fulham on two-month loan deal

LONDON, 25 Dec—United States forward Clint Dempsey is rejoining Fulham on loan for two months from Major League Soccer's Seattle Sounders, the struggling Premier League club said on its website (www.fulhamfc.com) on Tuesday.

The 30-year-old, who can play as a deep-lying striker or in midfield, returns to Craven Cottage having previously joined the west London club in January 2007 from New England Revolution.

Dempsey, who moved to Seattle from Tottenham Hotspur in the close season, scored 60 goals in 225 games in over five seasons at Fulham which included reaching the 2010 Europa League Final.

He was voted Fulham's player of the season in 2011-12 for the second straight season before moving to Spurs and the club will be hoping he can quickly recapture his best form as they battle against relegation under new manager Rene Meulensteen.



United States' midfielder Clint Dempsey (8) takes the ball past Mexico's Diego Reyes (4) and Hector Moreno (15) during the first half of their 2014 World Cup qualifying soccer match in Columbus, Ohio on 10 Sept, 2013.—REUTERS

Fulham are second from bottom of the table with 13 points from 17 games, level on points with Crystal Palace and one point

from the safety zone with Sunderland three points adrift. They visit Norwich City on Thursday and Hull City on Saturday.—Reuters

Arsenal playmaker Wilshere reacted to children jibes

LONDON, 25 Dec—The abusive hand gesture Jack Wilshere directed at Manchester City fans this month was a reaction to jibes about his children, the Arsenal and England midfielder explained on Tuesday.

The 21-year-old said he regretted his reaction, which resulted in a two-game suspension, and he would have to learn his lesson.

"Suppose I will just have to take the abuse about my kids in future," Wilshere said on his

Twitter account. "Anyway, one more game to go! Can't wait to be back."

Having missed second-placed Arsenal's goalless draw with Chelsea on Monday, Wilshere will complete his ban by sitting out Thursday's Premier League visit to West Ham United.

The player will be back for the match at Newcastle United on Sunday.

Arsenal were beaten 6-3 by City at the Etihad Stadium on 14 December.

Reuters

Suarez is best player in world, says Gerrard

LONDON, 25 Dec—England captain Steven Gerrard has acclaimed Liverpool team mate Luis Suarez as the best player in the world on current form.

In 12 appearances this season the red-hot Uruguay striker has scored 19 goals to fire Liverpool to the top of the Premier League. That is six more than his nearest rival, Argentina and Manchester City forward Sergio Aguero.

Suarez's prolific streak has earned him a new

long-term contract at Anfield where he has overcome widespread misgivings after several controversial incidents including one last season when he bit the arm of Chelsea defender Branislav Ivanovic.

"On current form he's the best player

in the world," Gerrard said of Suarez. "Lionel Messi's out injured and Cristiano Ronaldo's had a bit of an injury of late," the Liverpool skipper told Sky Sports television, referring to the number one players at Barcelona and Real Madrid respectively.

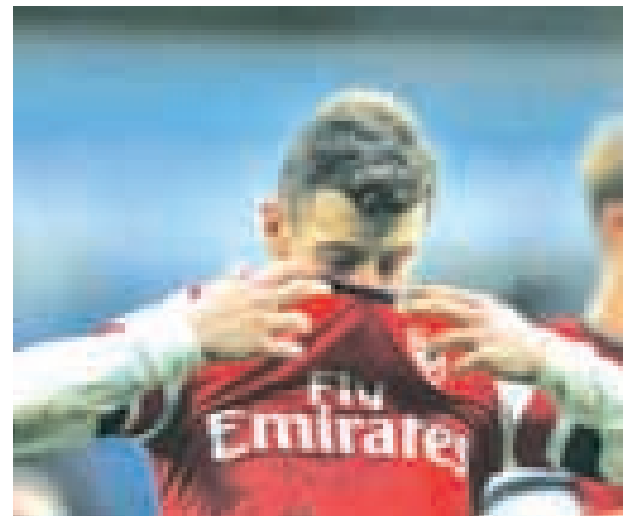
"He (Suarez) is certainly the best striker out there. He's proving that with his minutes-to-goals ratio."

The Ivanovic incident resulted in a 10-match domestic suspension that meant the Liverpool striker missed the start of this season. The 27-year-old Suarez has this season become the first Liverpool player to score at least twice in five consecutive home

matches. He is on course to surpass the Premier League record of 34 goals shared by former England strikers Andy Cole and Alan Shearer. Cole achieved his haul with Newcastle United in 1993-94. Shearer's was with Blackburn Rovers in 1994-95.

"He will certainly push it close," said Liverpool manager Brendan Rodgers after Suarez bagged two goals in a 3-1 win over Cardiff City on Saturday. "He looks like he can score a hat-trick in every game." Liverpool visit Manchester City, who are one point behind the leaders in third place, on Thursday.

Reuters



Arsenal's Jack Wilshere reacts after losing their English Premier League soccer match against Manchester City at the Etihad stadium in Manchester, northern England on 14 Dec, 2013.

REUTERS



Suarez

GENERAL



Photo taken on 20 Dec, 2013 shows children playing in Quito, capital of Ecuador. The city of Quito was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list in 1978

XINHUA

Trinidad oil spill caused by sabotage

PORT OF SPAIN, 25 Dec— One of the five oil spills that happened along Trinidad and Tobago's southwestern coast this month has been classified as sabotage, local media reported on Tuesday.

"The valves that were opened could have only been opened using a specialized type of wrench," Energy Minister Kevin Ramnarine told a news conference on Monday.

Since 17 December, five separate oil spills took place along the southwestern coast of the energy-rich southern Caribbean nation, affecting residents and marine life, and polluting the environment.

Fumes from the leaked oil have caused nausea and headache among residents, with 25 hospitalized. Doctors and ambulances were posted in affected areas to

respond to people who may feel sick.

The government has beefed up security at all state-owned energy facilities and formed an advisory committee to oversee the situation. Four foreign experts, two from Britain and two from the United States, arrived here on Monday to assess the impact of the oil spills and lead the clean-up efforts.—Xinhua

Belgium spends 2.24 pct GDP on research, development

BRUSSELS, 25 Dec— Belgium has beaten its record of investment in research and development in 2012, spending 2.24 percent of its gross domestic product (GDP), said the Secretary of State for

science policy Philippe Courard on Tuesday.

This represented 8.4 billion euros and nearly 95,000 jobs. Private companies were responsible for 68 percent of investment in research and development.

Investment in research and development was growing in Belgium for ten years, while its neighbours, with the exception of Germany, were mostly in a less favorable situation, said Courard.—Xinhua

Top Argentine teams face rest of season under new coaches

BUENOS AIRES, 25 Dec — Ricardo Gareca, the longest serving coach at one team in the Argentine top flight, has decided to leave Velez Sarsfield after winning four trophies during five years in charge.

Gareca, 55, told sporting manager Christian Bessedas, the former Velez, Newcastle United and Argentina midfielder, of his decision in a three-hour meeting late on Monday.

"...Ricardo Gareca communicated his decision not to continue as coach of... Velez Sarsfield after five years of maximum success and despite the board's offer to renew his contract," the club said on their website (www.velezsarsfield.com.ar).

The ex-Argentina striker, who took charge in January 2009, won three league crowns and the grand final between the 2012/13 season's two champions - his 'Inicial'-winning Velez and Newell's Old Boys, who won the 'Final' title.

Gareca, whose side finished joint second to San Lorenzo in the 2013/14 season's Inicial championship that ended on December 15, had hinted last month he wanted to try new pastures.

His successor looks likely to come from reserve team coach Hector Almandoz or former Velez striker Omar Asad, who has coached San Lorenzo and Mexico's Atlas.

San Lorenzo also face



Ricardo Gareca, head coach of Argentina's Velez Sarsfield, reacts during their Copa Sudamericana soccer match against Brazil's Ponte Preta in Campinas on 31 Oct, 2013.—REUTERS

the rest of the season under a new coach after Juan Antonio Pizzi decided to accept an offer from Valencia. Sports daily Ole has

MYANMAR TV

(26-12-2013, Thursday)

6:00 am	(Part-2)
1. Paritta By Venerable Mingun Sayadaw	3:00 pm
6:30 am	3:30 pm
2. Physical Exercises	18. News
6:40 am	3:45 pm
3. Songs Of Yester Years	19. India Drama Series
6:50 am	4:00 pm
4. Documentary	20. News
7:00 am	4:15 pm
5. News/Weather Report	21. India Drama Series
7:25 am	4:00 pm
6. People Talks	22. University of Distance Education (TV Lectures)
8:00 am	- Third Years (Chemistry)
7. News/ International News	5:00 pm
8:30 am	23. News
8. India Drama Series	5:15 pm
9. News/ International News	24. India Drama Series
9:40 am	6:00 pm
10. Documentary (Borobudur, Indonesia)	25. News/ Weather Report
10:00 pm	6:25 pm
11. News	26. Approaching Science Discovery World
10:20 pm	6:50 pm
12. Kyae Pwint Myaye Yin Khone Than	27. Teleplay
10:40 pm	7:00 pm
13. Documentary (AIDS)	28. News
11:10 pm	7:30 pm
14. Sing & Enjoy	29. Documentary
12:00 pm	8:00 pm
15. News/ International News/ Weather Report	30. News/ International News/ Weather Report
12:30 pm	8:35 pm
16. Myanmar Video	31. Pyi Thu Ni Ti
2:30 pm	8:50 pm
17. Fine Arts-Boson of Dramatic Performance	32. Hit Songs of Stars
	9:00 pm
	33. News
	34. Clever
	35. India Drama Series

MYANMAR INTERNATIONAL

26-12-13 07:00 am ~ 27-12-13 07:00 am) MST

- * Local News
- * Sagaing Hills & Nostalgic Panorama
- * World News
- * Kyaikkalawt Pagoda
- * Local News
- * Hiler's Journey (Taung Gyi City) (Episode-1)
- * World News
- * Moving Meditation: Aikido
- * Local News
- * Yathe Taung Township In a Nut-Shell
- * World News
- * A Pretty Custom of Kandayawady Asia Vut A @ Rice Pounding Competition
- * Mahar Thakya Atula Man Aung-Nga Htat Kye
- * World News
- * Product of Myanmar-Velvet Slipper
- * Local News
- * Truly Magical Pindaya
- * World News
- * Adventurous Journey to Bontalar Waterfall
- * Local News
- * Up Against the Tide
- * World News
- * Myanmar Movie Review "Superb"
- * Local News
- * Applied Myanmar Traditional Martial Art (Part-1)
- * World News
- * Traditional Snack

Chinese citizens evacuated from South Sudan

BEIJING, 25 Dec — The Chinese Foreign Ministry said on Tuesday that some of the Chinese citizens in South Sudan had safely left the country. "The Chinese Embassy to South Sudan, as well as embassies and consulates in neighbouring countries and cities where relevant flights will stop for transit, have offered assistance in consulting services, customs procedures, coordination and resettlement," Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said at a daily Press briefing.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry and the Embassy in South Sudan have issued safety alerts to warn Chinese citizens against travel

to South Sudan in the near future and have demanded non-essential personnel to evacuate as soon as possible, Hua said.

"So far, there have been no reports of death or injury of Chinese nationals," she said. Hua added that China has asked relevant authorities in South Sudan to reinforce security protection for Chinese citizens and organizations. "The Chinese Foreign Ministry and the Embassy to South Sudan will closely follow the developments of the situation and take necessary steps to safeguard the security and lawful interests of Chinese citizens and organizations in South Sudan," Hua said.—Xinhua

Workshop on Education Policies held at Meiktila University

MEIKTILA, 25 Dec— A workshop on Education Policies (University Level) was held at Learning Centre of Meiktila University yesterday afternoon, attended by Rector of Meiktila University Dr Maung Thin, professors, heads of departments and faculty members.

At the ceremony, the Rector explained formation of committee for implementation of the edu-

cation, future tasks for 17 working groups and the points discussed at workshop which was held on 17 and 18 December in Nay Pyi Taw.

Those present discussed policies related to 12 points of implementation of the education promotion, formation of central council of the universities and hierarchy levels of working groups.

U Tin Hlaing (Meiktila)



Workshop on education policies at Meiktila University in progress.

Carol singers rocking around NPE compound

NAY PYI TAW, 25 Dec—Carol singers sang special Christmas songs for the staff of News and Periodicals Enterprise (NPE) under the Ministry of Information at Khayebin junction in Zeyathiri Township, here, today.

General Manager U Ye Naing, Chief Editor Daw Than Htay of Myanma News Agency (External), Chief Editor U Aung Naing Oo of Myanma Alinn Daily, Chief Editor U Khin Maung Kyaw Din of the Mirror Daily, Chief Editor U Than Myint Tun of the New Light of Myanmar Daily and staff served the carol singers led by Pastor U Saw Toe Toe of Good News Baptist Church in Pyinmana Township food and snacks.

Carol singers wished X'mas blessings for the families of NPE.

Khin Yadana

Chin State Chief Minister meets Indian Ambassador



Meeting between Chin State Chief Minister U Hong Ngai and Indian Ambassador to Myanmar Mr Gautan Mukhopadhyaya in progress.—MNA

HAKA, 25 Dec— Chief Minister of Chin State U Hong Ngai received Indian Ambassador to Myanmar Mr. Gautan Mukhopadhyaya at the meeting hall of the Chin State government office on 22 December.

Also present at the call were state ministers, departmental officials and responsible persons of the embassy of India in Myanmar.

The chief minister and the Indian ambassador held talks on un-

dertakings for development, cultural exchange, transport and matters related to cooperation between Chin State and Mizoram, a state of India sharing border with Myanmar.

Chin State IPRD

BYLINE: TIN WIN LAY (KYIMYINDINE)

PHOTO: KOGYI TIN

Cooling auto sales drives prices down

“Car sales are more cooler than this winter”, said U Kyaw Naing, a freelance car dealer at Thiri Mingala Automobile Trading Centre.

Compared with the car sales in previous months when four or five Hijet light trucks with high demand are used to be sold a month, car mar-

ket has been cooling till the end of December. He continued that not just he but also his colleagues at other automobile trading centres were encountering the slowest car sales.

Some car dealers voiced that there would be a change in taxes on imported cars due to Cost, Insurance and Freight (CIF)

values which are thought to be the reasons that have driven car sales down in January, 2004.

So, all buyers and sellers are looking forwards to the New Year coming ahead. Car prices could be set after the new CIF values are released, dealers said.

As dealers at the centres cannot lower the car prices than their buying

prices unlike car sales centre owners, it has become another reason to cool car sales. Moreover, price of overage vehicle slip has also dropped.

Nonetheless, dealers and buyers are looking forwards to a great sales year in 2014 in the hope that car prices would fall thanks to CIF values change.

Myanma Alinn: 25-12-2013

Trs: YM



Photo shows Hijet vehicles that used to be in high demand in car market.



(From L) Yasutoshi Nishimura, senior vice minister of the Cabinet Office, and three officers of the Ground Self-Defense Force, attend a ceremony in Tokyo on 25 December, 2013, ahead of the GSDF staff's departure for South Sudan on 4 January to replace their colleagues at the UN headquarters in the capital Juba.—KYODO NEWS

Japan to continue peacekeeping missions in S. Sudan: spokesman

TOKYO, 25 Dec—The government said Wednesday that Japan's Self-Defense Forces will not withdraw from South Sudan, where the United Nations continues operations to protect civilians from increasing violence.

“We will continue to contribute to the nation-building of South Sudan along with the international society,” Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga told a press conference.

The Ground Self-Defense Force has engaged

in reconstruction and other work mainly in the capital of Juba in the African country. South Sudan became independent from Sudan in 2011 after decades of civil war.

The UN Security Council on Tuesday unanimously adopted a resolution to lift the number of peacekeeping troops and police in South Sudan to better protect civilians from violence.

Suga welcomed the decision, saying Japan hopes the missions will help ease the situation. Asked about

the possibility of dispatching more GSDF personnel to South Sudan, the top government spokesman said Tokyo is “not considering” the option.

Also Wednesday, the government said three GSDF staff will depart for South Sudan on Jan. 4 to replace their colleagues at the U.N. headquarters in Juba. They will be charged with procuring commodities and managing information for six months to a year, the government said.

Kyodo News