

## Commander-in-Chief delivers speech at graduation parade of 12<sup>th</sup> intake of DSINPS

NAY PYI TAW, 23 Dec — Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing delivered a speech at Graduation Parade of the 12<sup>th</sup> Intake of Defence Services Institute of Nursing and Paramedical Sciences held in Yangon on Tuesday.

At the graduation ceremony, the Senior General said that nursing profession, a fundamental for healthcare services, needs

sympathy, kindness and unselfishness which can result in effective treatments to the patients.

The Commander-in-Chief then presented Best Trainee Award to trainee Thaw Zin Aung and Excellent Award in Studies and Excellent Award in Training to the respective trainees.

He also urged the cadets for further studies in medical knowledge as more experts are needed

for researches in traditional medicines and western medicines.

Recounting the history of military nursing, Senior General said that a group of volunteer nurses joined Burmese Independence Army when it first entered into the country through Dawei, southern Myanmar town, after being formed in Thailand.

A total of 202 cadets were officially employed

at the respective branches of defence services.

DSINPS was first founded in 2000 as the Defence Services Institute of Nursing and Paramedical Sciences with assistance from the Yangon University of Nursing and the Mandalay University of Nursing.

The Senior General attended the graduation dinner for the trainees at DSMA in the evening.

*Myawady*

## UPWC-NCCT nationwide ceasefire accord coordination meeting concludes, moving closer to final deal in mid-January meeting



**UPWC and NCCT officials pose for documentary photos after conclusion of a nationwide ceasefire accord coordination meeting prior to the seventh round of peace meetings set to take place in mid-January.—PHOTO: YE MYINT**

**By Ye Myint**

YANGON, 23 Dec — Two days of talks between the Union Peace-making Work Committee-UPWC and the Nationwide Ceasefire Coordination Team-NCCT concluded on Tuesday, with the release of a five-point statement saying both sides had agreed to make a joint effort to prevent a recurrence of unwanted incidents during the ongoing peace process and to reconvene peace meetings on 15 or 16 January.

Compromises acceptable to the two sides were made on the remaining points and they will be brought to respective leaders for further approval, said the joint statement, asserting that both sides are moving towards peace

in quick strides with a set of plans for signing a truce deal, establishing political framework and holding a political dialogue.

Taking the floor after the two-day meeting which was geared up for the next round of UPWC-NCCT regular meetings in January, U Hla Maung Shwe, senior adviser of Myanmar Peace Centre, and Pado Saw Kwe Htoo Win, NCCT deputy leader, revealed an ambitious plan proposed by the NCCT to sign the nationwide ceasefire accord on 12 February, a red letter day for the country, which saw the Union Treaty, also called the “Panlong Agreement”, to gain independence from British government.

“At least two coordination meetings are due before the seventh round of peace

meetings which is expected to be final,” they said.

The sooner the two sides have a nationwide ceasefire accord, the sooner they can fulfill the people’s wish for peace, voiced the two spokespersons

According to an agreement included in the NCA and that needs no further coordination between UPWC and NCCT, a framework meeting shall be held within 60 days and a political dialogue within 90 days after

the signing of a nationwide ceasefire agreement.

“Almost all points in the text have been discussed, but only three points remain to seek compromise,” the MPC adviser told the media.

The NCA was the main focus of attention at the first-day meeting, but matters including the Laiza issue and inviting observers to the next meeting brought by the NCCT to UPWC

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Republic of the Union of Myanmar

President Office

(Order No. 28/2014)

3<sup>rd</sup> Waxing Day of Pyatho, 1376 ME

(23 December, 2014)

### Appointment of Judge of Sagaing Region High Court

Under the paragraph (iv), Sub-Section (b) of Section 308 of the Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, Sub-Section (d) of Section 82 of the Union Government Law, Section 50 of the Union Judiciary Law and Sub-Section (d) of Section 18 of the Region or State Government Law, Shan State Judicial Officer of Shan State High Court Daw Cherry Kyi has been appointed as Judge of Sagaing Region High Court.

**Sd/Thein Sein**

President

Republic of the Union of Myanmar

## Ministry says fishery expo and contest next month to promote public awareness

**By Khaing Thanda Lwin**

YANGON, 23 Dec — The Ministry of Livestock, Fisheries and Rural Development will organize a Myanmar fishery expo and contest from 1 to 3 January at Union National Races Village in Thakayta Township here with the aim of promoting of public awareness on fisheries and developing valued-added products in the industry.

The expo, to be held 8 am to 6 pm each day, is also aimed at implementing a model of continuous improvement for fisheries, increasing number of rare fish species and disseminating knowledge about natural resources protection, according to the ministry, which has invited local fishery entrepreneurs nationwide to actively participate in it.

A local producer said transportation is the main barrier for some producers from regions and states to take part in the event, urging the ministry to provide more support for them.

During the fair, at least eight kinds of contests are scheduled to be held, including design for traditional fishing gear, backyard hatchery design and

aqua-feed production.

The ministry plans to present awards to the winners of the contests, except for the aqua-feed one in which only a certificate of honour will be conferred on all aquatic feed manufacturers.

The ministry had worried that picking up the best entrepreneurs in that sector could create a dispute, thereby leading to the collapse of aquatic feed market. Some entrepreneurs, however, had wanted the ministry to provide awards for aquatic feed producers in order to encourage them to develop more high quality products.

Director U Hla Tun of the Fisheries Department said, “People will gain precious knowledge on fisheries management, including how to protect native fish species and share fishing methods.”

According to the department’s data, about 300 species of native fishes have been recorded across the country, but an expert estimated that the actual number of species now may be significantly lower.

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**Agreement signed for first stock exchange in Myanmar**

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**Well-wishers donate 506 gold plates, gold paint to Uppatasanti Pagoda**

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**Forestry and land survey courses conclude in PyinOoLwin**

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**Union Minister says Myanmar has won int’l recognition for its democratic reform amid challenges**

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## Agreement signed for first stock exchange in Myanmar

NAY PYI TAW, 23 Dec—An agreement was inked Tuesday to set up the Yangon Stock Exchange, the first of its kind in Myanmar, by the Ministry of Finance and two Japanese firms.

The joint venture will involve Myanma Economic Bank, with 51 percent of shares, Daiwa Institute of Research Ltd., with 30.25 percent, and Japan Exchange Group, with 18.75 percent.

In a speech at the signing ceremony held at Thinhaha Hotel in Nay Pyi Taw,

Union Finance Minister U Win Shein said a stock exchange is like an instrument to gauge the economic development of a country, as well as a business source.

He noted that business firms listed on YSX will be able to collect capital for long-term investments, while people can buy and sell shares in those firms.

The agreement on setting up the Yangon Stock Exchange Joint Venture Co. Ltd. was signed by Daw Yin Mya, Myanma Economic Bank's managing direc-

## Well-wishers donate 506 gold plates, gold paint to Uppatasanti Pagoda

NAY PYI TAW, 23 Dec—A cash donation ceremony for offering gold

plates and gold paint at Uppatasanti Pagoda was held at its prayer hall on the platform in Nay Pyi Taw on 23 December.

Union Minister U Thein Nyunt supplicated on offering of gold plates and paint at the pagoda to members of the Sangha.

The Union minister, the deputy speaker of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw and officials accepted 95 gold plates weighing one tical each donated by 52 well-wishers from ministries, offices and departments, 200 gold plates weighing one tical each by families of Defence Services (Army, Navy and Air), 124 one-tical gold plates by 21 companies and three hotels and 87 one-tical gold

plates by 72 well-wishers.

At the ceremony, well-wishers donated 506 gold plates and K15.399 million for gold paint.

Those wishing to donate gold plates and gold paint may dial 09-49236444 and 067-550212 of Nay Pyi Taw Council member U Than Htay, 067-414205 of council member U Kan Chun and 067-25943 and 22020 of member of the pagoda board of trustees U Tun Kyi.

MNA

## Forestry and land survey courses conclude in PyinOoLwin

NAY PYI TAW, 23 Dec—The Ministry for Environmental Conservation and Forestry does not earn income from timber extraction by ending export of timber logs as of April 2014, Union Minister U Win Tun said at the graduation parade of the training courses of the ministry in PyinOoLwin, Mandalay Region, on Monday.

The union minister said that Myanmar cooperates with European Union and ASEAN countries on Forest

Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade-FLEG-T for protection of forest resources and prevention of illegal timber extraction.

He highlighted that plans are underway to establish public-owned forests to grow crops in the forests, adding that arrangements are being made to conduct land utilization and development of human resources in cooperation with Food and Agriculture Organization so as to adopt the National Forest

Monitoring System.

The union minister presented certificates to trainees from the basic forestry course No 110 of Myanmar Forestry School and officer course No 49 and basic land survey course No 73 of Myanmar Land Survey Training School.

So far, Myanmar Forestry School has turned out 5,864 forestry staff since 1898. The land survey training school has also produced 11,970 officers and staff since 1947.—MNA



Trainees at graduation parade of basic forestry and land survey courses.—MNA

## People of grassroots level get apartments at low-cost buildings

buildings. The committee arranged with banks for some people to get loans to enable them to purchase the apartments. It will issue permits for the apartments to those who paid cash to the committee."He continued, "MCDC plans to construct more buildings to meet the target of 5,000 apartments."

MANDALAY, 23 Dec—Under the supervision of the Mandalay Region government, the Mandalay City Development Committee allotted low-cost Myayi Nanda housings to the dwellers at the buildings in Chanmyathazi Township, Mandalay, on 22 December.

The housing consists of 57 four-storey buildings with 1,344 apartments.

The apartments were allotted to 377 people who were among 1,057 applicants from Chanmyathazi and Pyigyidagun townships.

MCDC Secretary U Khin Maung Tint said, "MCDC supervised sales of apartments to 377 people through a draw lot system. It means random allotments for them. The allotted apartments were different from flats, apartments and

A total of 1,285 pensioners, 16 widows of posthumous military servicemen, four disabled persons, 7,209 staff and 665 other people, totalling 9,179, applied for purchase of apartments from Myayi Nanda low-cost buildings.—Min Htet Aung (Mandalay Sub-printing House)



Union Minister U Win Shein attends signing ceremony of agreement on establishment of Yangon Stock Exchange.—MNA

## Well-wisher companies donate cash to purchase of sports gear

NAY PYI TAW, 23 Dec—Thukha Yadana Company and Marga Landmark Development Co Ltd donated cash to be spent on purchase of sports equipment for Myanmar athletes for the 28<sup>th</sup> SEA Games at Gold Camp in Nay Pyi Taw on Tuesday morning.

U Thauung Htaik Min and Mr Alex Wong of Drag-on City Project of Thukha Yadana Company and Marga Landmark Development Co Ltd donated K500 million and U Sai Kham Hlaing and U Tin Tun of Olympic Hotel, K25 million to Union Minister for Sports U

Tint Hsan. Deputy Minister for Sports U Thauung Htaik spoke words of thanks

The 28<sup>th</sup> SEA Games will be held in Singapore with 36 sports events from 5 to 16 June 2015. Myanmar sports contingent will take part in 31 sports events.

MNA

## Plan to host 2<sup>nd</sup> Special Senior Officials Meeting Responsible for Information in Ngwe Saung

NAY PYI TAW, 23 Dec—A coordination meeting on holding the 2<sup>nd</sup> Special Senior Officials Meeting Responsible for Information-SMORI took place at the Ministry of Information in Nay Pyi Taw on Tuesday.

Deputy Minister for Information U Pike

Htway in his speech said the 12<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Information Ministers Meeting and related meetings from 9 to 13 July. According to the agreements among delegates of ASEAN countries, the Special Senior Officials Meeting Responsible for Information will be held at Ngwe Saung Yatch

Club and Marina Hotel at Ngwe Saung Beach in Ayeyawady Region on 25 and 26 March, he added.

Chairman of the Work Committee for the meeting Director-General U Tint Swe and officials of subcommittees reported on preparations for the meeting.—MNA



Deputy Minister U Pike Htway speaking at coordination meeting on holding 2<sup>nd</sup> Special Senior Officials Meeting Responsible for Information-SMORI.—MNA





Senior General Min Aung Hlaing presents best trainee award to trainee Thaw Zin Aung at graduation parade of Defence Services Institute of Nursing and Paramedical Sciences.  
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## UPWC-NCCT nationwide . . .

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were under discussion on the second day of the meeting, officials said.

"UPWC has agreed to the proposals of NCCT in principle," said U Hla

Maung Shwe.

The UPWC-NCCT coordination meeting on the nationwide ceasefire agreement began on Monday and lasted two days.

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*Union Minister U Hla Tun highlights raising salaries of government service personnel in meeting with departmental officials.—MNA*

## Work committees highlights preparations for ASEAN Economic Community



Union Minister Dr Kan Zaw delivers speech at meeting to prepare ASEAN Economic Community.—MNA

NAY PYI TAW, 23 Dec — Participants are to discuss hosting the ASEAN Summit and related meetings and requirements to implement ASEAN Economic Community-AEC Scorecard within one year, Chairman of AEC imple-

## Union Minister says Myanmar has won int'l recognition for its democratic reform amid challenges

NAY PYI TAW, 23 Dec — The government has won international recognition for its unswerving efforts to keep up with its democratic reform amid challenges, with the president being described as a symbol of change, the union minister told government staff in a meeting here on Tuesday, sources said.

U Hla Tun, Union Minister at the President Office, expressed his gratefulness to government workers for their best endeavours to make the reform processes successful.

Regarding measures to satisfy the socio-economic needs of government employees, he stressed that the government is finding ways to raise salaries and provide financial help to meet educational, medical

and living expenses of their families.

Pay rises are found going hand in hand with price hikes, a consequence that he said hits hard all wage earners of government and private as well as casual labourers.

According to the union minister, the whole workforce of the government constitutes just two percent of the country's entire population and as a result increased prices always come as a terrible blow to the remaining population.

He pledged an establishment of employees'

provident fund, which will be designed to help employees and their families with expenses of house ownership, education and health after retirement.

He also heard briefings on finance, monetary crises, possible repercussions resulting from pay rises, and financial assistance to learning institutions and health care services.

He called for government employees to do their best to fulfill public requirements to achieve better results in the process of democratic transition.

MNA

tions for competitiveness in AEC, and Chairperson of monetary free circulation work committee Deputy Governor of Central Bank of Myanmar Daw Khin Saw Oo, easing restriction about monetary affairs, signing of agreements in ASEAN and foreign aid.

Officials, drawing of IAI Work Plan-III, progress of IAI Work Plan-II, IAI annual report, construction of ASEAN Highways, difficulties in seeking foreign loans, avoiding double taxation, tax payment of companies, more participation of private sectors, promulgation of intellectual property rights law, establishment of national IP office and training of staff for the office, smooth trade process, establishment of

ASEAN Single Window and National Trade Repository, participation of Myanmar in Self-Certification Pilot Project-I, drafting the competitiveness law, formation of consumer dispute groups in regions and states, matters related to manual books for one village, one product, establishment of ASEAN SME Service Center Web Portal, cash assistance for SMEs, economic cooperation between ASEAN and dialogue partner countries, effectiveness of agreements, investment matters in Myanmar, progress of AEC research and implementation of sectors.

The union minister reviewed the discussions of meeting participants.

MNA



## Students get knowledge about cervical cancer disease

NAY PYI TAW, 23 Dec — Under the arrangement of the Nay Pyi Taw Zabuthiri Specialist Hospital, a health educative event was held at Kandaw Mingala Hall in Pyinmana on Tuesday morning.

The honorary professor of the hospital, obstetrics and gynaecology (OG) specialist Dr Daw Win Win Mya, made a speech.

OG specialist Dr Tun Lin Maung explained birth-spacing methods for

women, while OG specialist Dr Daw Yu Yu Naing gave a talk on facts about cervical cancer disease, vaccination and medical treatment.

The event was also attended by Medical Superintendent Dr Kyaw Myint of Pyinmana General Hospital (200-bed), chairpersons of social organizations and female students of basic education high schools.

*Shwe Kokko*



## Government provides K1 million in funds to construct library



MYINGYAN, 23 Dec — A ceremony to donate K1 million in funds by

the union government for construction of a self-reliant library in Phayagyi

Village, Natogyi Township was held at Myingyan District Information and Pub-

lic Relations Department, Mandalay Region, on 22 December.

Staff Officer Daw Hnin Yi of District IPRD explained construction of the library to raise reading skills of the local people. She handed over K1 million to Phayagyi village administrator U Khin Maung Hla.

The ceremony was attended by officials of Natogyi and Myingyan township IPRDs and local authorities.

*Zaw Min Naing (Myangin)*

## Monastic education school gets two-storey building

MYINGYAN, 23 Dec — As a gesture of hailing the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Myanmar-Japan diplomatic relations, a two-storey, eight-classroom school building was commissioned into service at Sankya monastic education school in Myingyan Township, Mandalay Region, on 19 December.

The abbot of the school, Second Secretary Hideaki Higashi of Japanese Embassy, Deputy Commissioner U Myint Thin Aung and a school of-

ficial formally opened the new school building.

The Japanese second secretary explained the purpose of school building, which was constructed with K120 million in contributions of Japanese government and people.

The monastic education school is located on the right side of Myingyan-Mandalay Road, east of Myingyan. The school admits over 500 students from seven surrounding villages.—*Zaw Min Naing (Myingyan)*

## Mohnyin GTC opens AGTI courses in 2013-14 academic year

MOHNYIN, 23 Dec — Government Technological College (Mohnyin) has held its eighth convocation by admitting students to pursue Bachelor of Technology

(B.Tech) courses.

Students across Kachin State had to enter the entrance test at the college to attend Association of Government Technical Insti-

tute (AGTI) courses. The college opens the AGTI courses as of 2013-14 academic year. The college admits 100 qualified students from the entrance test so as to turn out qualified human resources.

At present, the college still conducts third and fourth years' B.Tech courses and Bachelor of Engineering (B.E.) courses, said the principal of the college.—*GNLM-001*



*Artistes from Fine Arts Department perform entertainment to tourists and audiences in Mandalay.*

## Traditional performing concert attracts both tourists and local audiences

MANDALAY, 23 Dec — Mandalay Region Government and Fine Arts Department under the Ministry of Culture jointly organized the Myanmar traditional performing concert at the National

Theatre in Mandalay.

On 21 December, students of National University for Arts and Culture (Mandalay) and Shan nationals in Mandalay presented dances and music to the audiences.

A puppet troupe and Chinlone squad demonstrated their skills.

Academy Maung Yin Aung presented an Opera entitled "Bagan of Myanmar".

*Thiha Ko Ko (Mandalay)*





## REGIONAL



People walk past a colourful jeepney during the Jeepney Design Challenge inside a mall in Pasay City, the Philippines, on 22 Dec, 2014. The Jeepney Design Challenge showcases 14 colourfully-designed jeepneys from various regions all over the country.—XINHUA

## India's ruling BJP set to form next gov't in eastern state of Jharkhand

NEW DELHI, 23 Dec — India's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party is all set to form the next government in the eastern state of Jharkhand after comfortably crossing the majority mark in the assembly polls. The results of the polls were declared on Tuesday. The state's ruling Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, a regional party, barely managed to grab somewhere

around 20 seats while the country's main opposition Congress has been wiped out in the 81-member assembly.

Though Jharkhand has been battling Maoist violence, it had registered an overall 66 percent voter turnout in the five-phase elections over four weeks.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi campaigned

in the assembly polls for the BJP, promising a stable government in Jharkhand, which over 14 years since its creation, has seen nine governments and three stints of President's Rule. However, the BJP did not name a chief ministerial candidate and built its campaign around Modi and his development agenda.

Xinhua

## Malaysian gov't urged to extend foreign workers' permit

BEIJING, 23 Dec — Four contractor associations in Malaysia have recently urged the government to reconsider the migrant workers' status under the present foreign worker bleaching plan, otherwise known as 6P amnesty programme. In the wake of the expiration of the 3-year 6P

amnesty programme started in 2011, foreign workers will have to leave the country by 15 February, 2015, making Malaysia's domestic construction sector fall short of 100,000 labourers by then.

Master Builders Association Malaysia (MBAM), Malay Contractor Associa-

tion of Malaysia (PKMM), Guild of Bumiputera Contractors (GBC) and Malaysian Indian Contractors Association (PKIM) said in a joint Press conference that they wanted a change of the migrant workers' status to a temporary visit pass which can be renewed every 12 months.—Xinhua

## Cambodian court charges medic with spreading HIV

PHNOM PENH, 23 Dec — A Cambodian court on Monday charged a medical practitioner with spreading HIV to more than 100 villagers in the country's northwestern province of Battambang.

Nuon San, prosecutor at Battambang provincial court, said Yem Chrin was charged late Monday with spreading HIV and running a medical business without a license from the Ministry of Health. The preliminary charge will pave the way for further investigation into this case, as blood samples are still being collected from people living in three villages in Roka commune, located 8 kilometres south-

east of Battambang provincial town. Roka commune has six villages and nearly 3,000 people are living there. About 1,000 people from Roka village and two other neighbouring villages have flocked to a local health center for HIV testing since last week. Yem Chrin, 56, was detained by the police on Wednesday and he was brought to the court on Sunday. The suspect admitted to the police using syringes and needles multiple times when treating patients in Roka commune, where he ran his medical business since 1996.

Didier Fontenille, director of the Pasteur Institute in Phnom Penh, told local me-

dia that, as of Saturday, the number of samples testing positive for HIV increased to 140. But Mean Chhi Vun, director of the National Center for HIV/AIDS, said he cannot provide an exact figure as samples are still being collected and some of them have been sent to the United States and South Korea for further testing in order to confirm that the findings are accurate. According to Cambodian law, if Yem Chrin found guilty, he may face up to life in prison. However, the cause of these mass HIV infections remains unclear and whether Yem Chrin is the sole responsible person.—Kyodo News

## Thai police see little hope of putting names to about 370 tsunami victims

TAKUA PA, (Thailand), 23 Dec — With the bodies of almost 400 victims of the Indian Ocean tsunami still unidentified a decade on, Thai police were holding out little hope of gleaning any new information from opening a cargo container packed with unclaimed personal items.

Watches, chunky gold necklaces with Buddhist amulets, an Egyptian souvenir coin purse, and a wad of \$1,800 in cash were pulled from tattered cardboard boxes and police evidence bags stashed in the container that has not been opened since 2011.

The three metre by 12 metre container was passed to various Thai police agencies after the 2004 Boxing Day disaster that killed at least 226,000 people in 14 countries. It was handed over to Takua Pa district police in southern Thailand in 2011.

But the Takua Pa police never looked inside until recently when, after requests from Reuters, they opened the container ahead of the 10-year anniversary of the 26 December tsuna-

mi when the items can, by official regulation, be put up for auction.

They initially believed the container held the belongings of unidentified victims, but found some items were identification cards and credit cards and could be claimed by relatives.

"I'm a bit surprised by the large number of valuables," Lieutenant Colonel Voravit Yamaree from Takua Pa District said as his team surveyed the items on a long, white table.

"I think back then everyone was so busy focusing on identifying the corpses they may have forgotten about this."

The tsunami left 5,395 dead and 2,932 missing in Thailand, including about 2,000 foreign tourists, when a wall of water several metres high ripped through resorts and fishing villages on the Andaman Sea coast in southern Thailand.

In the aftermath of the tsunami, forensics experts from 39 countries convened in Phang Nga, where about 80 percent of the victims in Thailand perished, to iden-

tify the bodies.

The Thai Tsunami Victim Identification unit was considered one of the largest and most successful projects of its kind, putting names and faces to the thousands of tourists, Thais and migrant workers killed in the Boxing Day disaster.

However, 10 years after the one of the most devastating humanitarian disasters in recorded history, about 400 unclaimed bodies — 369 of them still unidentified — rest in metal coffins, marked with coded numbers.

In the past four years, just 24 bodies have been claimed, all but one Thai nationals, according to various reports.

In Ban Nam Khem, a sleepy fishing village on the north end of Phang Nga, the tsunami left 661 dead and 765 missing.

Ban Nam Khem resident Hin Chan-ngern lost five family members in the tsunami — his wife, brother and three daughters. In the three years after the disaster, four of their bodies were found, but his eldest daughter remains among



Boxes with personal possessions of 2004 tsunami victims are put back into a container outside a police station in Takua Pa, in Phang Nga Province on 19 Dec, 2014.—REUTERS

the missing.

"We provided all of the information — dental records, tissue and DNA samples ... but they still can't find her. I don't know what more I can do," said Hin, sitting amid photos of his loved ones killed in the tsunami.

The unidentified and unclaimed bodies are all in a cemetery in Bang Maruan

village, just south of Takua Pa.

The graveyard, with a metal plaque at the gate listing the nations involved in the project, is often overgrown with weeds.

Of the bodies there, authorities have identified 26 Thais and 26 Myanmar, but their families have not come to claim their bodies, according to Colonel

Yuthaphong Intaraphone, the police superintendent overseeing the Police Forensic Science Office.

"It would cost them (the relatives of Myanmar migrant workers) a decade of life savings to come to Thailand and reclaim the bodies," Yutaphong said in an interview at the Disaster Victim Identification Centre in Bangkok.—Reuters



## S Korea's Park says leak of nuclear plant data a "grave situation"



South Korean President Park Geun-hye

SEOUL, 23 Dec — A recent series of leaks of data from South Korea's nuclear operator was a "grave situation" that was unacceptable as a matter of national security, President Park Geun-hye said on Tuesday.

Korea Hydro and Nuclear Power Co Ltd (KHNP), which runs South Korea's 23 nuclear power reactors, said on Monday its computer systems had been hacked, raising alarm in a country that remains at war with North Korea.

The nuclear operator said only non-critical data had been stolen and operations of the nuclear plants were not at risk. South Ko-

rea's law enforcement authorities have opened an investigation.

"Nuclear power plants are first-class security installations that directly impact the safety of the people," Park said at a cabinet meeting, according to her office.

"A grave situation that is unacceptable has developed when there should have been not a trace of lapse as a matter of national security," she said.

She ordered inspections of safeguards at national infrastructure facilities, including the nuclear power plants, against what she called "cyber terrorism."

Earlier, a South Korean official said Seoul had not ruled out the possible involvement of North Korea in the cyberattack on South Korea's nuclear power plant operator, although Park did not make any mention of it.

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

## China drafts new law to fight air pollution

BEIJING, 23 Dec — China plans tougher pollution limits and heavier penalties in a revision of its air pollution law, state-run news agency Xinhua said, as the government battles to reduce smog that takes hundreds of thousands of lives each year.

The Standing Committee of the National People's Congress is this week considering a draft that would impose fines of up to 1 million yuan (\$160,000) or even shut down factories that exceed emission limits, Xinhua reported late on Monday.

China's current law came into force in 1987, and despite a 2000 revision has not been updated to address the nation's recent rapid economic growth, which has left major urban centres choked by smog.

Last month, a study by green group Natural Resources Defence Council said that pollution from the coal industry alone killed 670,000 people in China in 2012.

"Air pollution problems in certain regions have become prominent and smoggy days are often seen, all of which demonstrate that the existing law cannot fit in the current situation,"

Environment Minister Zhou Shengxian said, according to Xinhua.

A first draft of the new law was released by the State Council, China's cabinet, in September.

The revised law will set stricter standards for China's 264 million vehicles as well as for the coal industry and heavy-polluting manufacturing.

It will also include an early-warning system and contingency procedures for when pollution spikes in particularly affected areas, such as in the Beijing-Hebei-Tianjin region, which in the third quarter of 2014 suffered from pollution 45 percent of the time, Xinhua said.

Some of the measures outlined in the draft have already been put into place, although environmental policies are difficult to implement in China, partly because local agencies often lack the authority to penalise powerful state-owned companies.

A new environmental protection law will enter into force on 1 January, giving more power to environmental authorities to enforce pollution laws.

Reuters

## Abe vows to "steadily achieve" fiscal reform goal in FY 2015

TOKYO, 23 Dec — Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said on Monday the Japanese government will "make every effort to steadily achieve" its fiscal rehabilitation goal in fiscal 2015, while promising to streamline public spending without exception.

Abe's remarks came during a meeting of the Council on Economic and Fiscal Policy, where the government presented the basic outline of the annual budget for the next fiscal year starting April 2015.

In the outline, the government said it will keep new debt issuance in fiscal 2015 below that in fiscal 2014 and will review its expenditures including those for social security programmes that have been ballooning with the country's population rapidly graying. Tokyo has pledged internationally to halve the ratio of the primary balance deficit to gross domestic product by fiscal 2015 from

the fiscal 2010 level, and turn the balance into a surplus by fiscal 2020.

A deficit in the balance means the nation cannot finance government spending other than debt-servicing costs without issuing new bonds. An improvement in the balance is viewed as the critical first step toward fiscal consolidation.

The basic outline is scheduled to be endorsed by the Cabinet Saturday and will be reflected in the fiscal 2015 budget that will be crafted next month. The government vowed in the outline it will "absolutely" implement a consumption tax hike to 10 percent in April 2017, which was postponed by 18 months amid an economic slowdown in the wake of the 1 April tax increase to 8 percent from 5 percent. It also committed to mapping out a concrete strategy by next summer to attain its fiscal reform goal in fiscal



Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (C) attends a meeting of the Council on Economic and Fiscal Policy on 22 Dec, 2014, in Tokyo. — KYODO NEWS

2020. Japan's fiscal health is the worst among major industrialized economies, with public debt at more than 200 percent of GDP.

In another development, the government and the ruling bloc decided to reduce the tax exemption for stock dividends companies receive, as a measure to

fund a corporate income tax cut planned in fiscal 2015, lawmakers said. They also agreed to provide tax breaks to newly formed enterprises, in an attempt to support venture business and business restructuring as well as to invite foreign firms to Japan, the lawmakers said.

Kyodo News

## Australian PM says increased terrorist chatter following Sydney siege

SYDNEY, 23 Dec — Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott said on Tuesday security officials had intercepted a heightened level of "terrorist chatter" in the aftermath of last week's deadly Sydney cafe siege.

"The national secu-



Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott

rity agencies today indicated that there has been a heightened level of terrorist chatter in the aftermath of the Martin Place siege," Abbott told reporters in Sydney. "That's why it's important that people remain alert."

Man Haron Monis,

a self-styled sheikh, held hostages in a 16-hour siege at the Lindt Chocolate Cafe in Martin Place, a central Sydney shopping and office precinct, a week ago. Two hostages and Monis were killed when police stormed the cafe.

Reuters

## Establishment of Islamic State chosen as top int'l story in 2014

TOKYO, 23 Dec — The establishment of the Islamic State militant group has been chosen by Japanese media editors as the top international story in 2014, a Kyodo News poll showed on Tuesday.

The poll covered senior editors at Kyodo News, and its member and subscriber newspapers and broadcasters in Japan, who were asked to pick the 10 biggest international news events of the year.

The following are the top international news stories of 2014.

(1) **Islamic militants establish Islamic State**

The Islamic State was established in June by Islamic militants in Iraq and Syria. They persecuted Kurds and Christians in the region and killed people taken as hostage. The United States launched air strikes on some targets.

(2) **Ebola epidemic**

spreads in West Africa

The Ebola epidemic spread in West Africa, including Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. The death toll exceeded 7,000 in December, according to the World Health Organization.

(3) **Russia annexes Crimea**

Russia said in March that it has annexed Crimea, southern Ukraine. Japan, the United States and European countries announced sanctions against Russia over the Ukraine crisis.

(4) **South Korean ferry sinks in April**

A South Korean passenger ferry sank off the country's southern coast in April, leaving at least 295 people dead.

(5) **Democrats lose in US midterm elections in November.**

The Democrats led by US President Barack Obama suffered a crushing setback, with the Republicans

taking back the Senate and adding to their majority in the House of Representatives in the midterm elections in November.

(6) **Pakistan's Malala wins Nobel Peace Prize**

Pakistani teenager Malala Yousafzai, who was shot in the head two years ago for advocating girls' right to education, received Nobel Peace Prize for this year in December. Later in the month in Pakistan, a group of gunmen and suicide bombers linked to Pakistan's Taleban militants stormed a school in northwestern Pakistan, killing 141 people, mostly children.

(7) **Hong Kong students stage pro-democracy movement**

Prodemocracy students in Hong Kong staged protests from late September against authorities over the territory's leadership election. The authorities cleared the last remaining protest

site, ending the marathon street occupation campaign on 15 December.

(8) **Malaysia Airlines plane shot down over Ukraine**

Malaysian Airlines' flight MH17 was shot down over conflict-ridden eastern Ukraine in July, killing all 298 people on board.

(9) **US central bank ends asset buying stimulus**

The US Federal Reserve decided to end its asset purchase stimulus in October on the heels of continued improvement in the labor market. The Fed introduced the asset purchase program in September 2012 as a third round of quantitative easing.

(10) **Scotland votes to remain within UK.**

Residents of Scotland voted in September to remain within the United Kingdom in a referendum on independence.

Kyodo News



## US Senate Republican leader McConnell opposes Obama on Cuba



*US Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) walks to the Senate floor during a long series of votes, many on procedural matters or to confirm members of the Obama administration, at the US Capitol in Washington on 13 Dec, 2014.—REUTERS*

WASHINGTON, 23 Dec — Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell said on Monday he opposed US President Barack Obama's plans to normalize relations with Cuba, and spoke of steps lawmakers might take to rein in the new policy.

Interviewed by *Reuters*, McConnell also said that he and the president, a Democrat, had discussed

possible major tax reform legislation and that any effort should not focus on the country's biggest corporations alone, but also include help for small businesses.

On another international matter McConnell, who takes over in January as Senate majority leader, said North Korea's computer hacking of Sony Corp was more serious

than an act of vandalism, taking issue with a characterization Obama had used to describe the cyberattack. McConnell declined to spell out steps he thought the United States should take in response.

"This is a serious threat to the United States," he said.

Speaking by telephone from his home state of Kentucky, McConnell said he agreed with the Senate's most outspoken critics of Obama's new Cuba policy, Republican Senator Marco Rubio of Florida and Democratic Senator Robert Menendez of New Jersey, "that it was a mistake."

Obama's actions to forge relations and expand commercial ties with the Communist-led island after half a century of hostility has divided Republicans in Congress and could weigh on the 2016 campaign for president.

McConnell said there were some "pretty obvious" ways to keep the policy from being fully implemented. Only Congress has the power to remove some barriers to relations

with Cuba since "a number of sanctions" were written into law, he said. He said any US ambassador to Cuba would require Senate approval.

"Look at Vietnam," McConnell said. "We normalized relations with them and they are a Communist regime that still represses people. Sometimes engagement works, sometimes it doesn't."

With many Republicans and Democrats backing tax reform, it could become an issue in the last two years of Obama's presidency. The last major reform was in 1986.

While McConnell repeatedly referred to "comprehensive" legislation, he also stressed that such a measure had yet to take shape and would require bipartisan agreement.

In pressing for broad reforms that include small businesses, McConnell said, "It's pretty hard to argue it's a good idea to take Fortune 500 companies down to 25 percent (tax rate) and leave a mom-and-pop operation in Louisville in the high 30s."—*Reuters*

## Russia's invitation to Obama to attend 70th jubilee of VE-Day not dismissed



*President Barack Obama*

WASHINGTON, 23 Dec — Russia's invitation to President Barack Obama to attend festivities on the occasion of the 70th anniversary since VE-Day that will be held in Moscow next May has not been dismissed, Celeste Wallander, the chief presidential adviser on Russia in the White House staff said on Monday night in a brief conversation with *TASS*.

The invitation was being scrutinized, she said, adding that it was not clear yet when the final decision

might be taken.

White House officials answered a question about the invitation earlier by saying they had no announcements for the time being on any possible trips by the President to Russia.

Russian President's aide Yuri Ushakov said in Moscow earlier on the same day the Kremlin had invited Obama to attend the VE-Day festivities as the leader of a nation that used to be a member of the anti-Hitler coalition.

*Itar-Tass*

## Record number at Germany's anti-immigrant rally

DRESDEN, (Germany), 23 Dec — More than 17,000 people took part in Germany's largest anti-immigrant rally to date on Monday in the eastern city of Dresden, gathering to sing Christmas carols and listen to speakers complain about immigrants and asylum-seekers.

The rally by a fast-growing grass-roots movement calling itself PEGIDA, or Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamization of the West, was its 10th and largest so far.

"Germany is not a land of immigration," PEGIDA leader Lutz Bachmann told the cheering crowd, which waved Germany flags and chanted criticism of media it accuses of biased reporting. Bachmann started PEGIDA in October with an appeal on social media in Dresden to protest plans to add 14 centres for about 2,000 refugees locally. Demonstrators reject charges they are far-right extremists or neo-Nazis.

Monday's rally took

place in front of Dresden's famous Semper Opera house in the city's historic centre.

A counter-demonstration of 4,000 people tried to disrupt the PEGIDA rally, which grew from a previous record of 15,000 a week ago and has embarrassed the political establishment with claims that Germany is being overrun by Muslims and other immigrants.

Justice Minister Heiko Maas has called PEGIDA a disgrace for Germany.

PEGIDA's demands have attracted support from some on the far-right as well as ordinary Germans alarmed by a sharp rise in refugees, many fleeing conflict in the Middle East. The rallies have spread across Germany even though Dresden, with a tiny immigrant community, remains the movement's hotbed.

Instead of their usual marches through the nighttime streets, the rally remained at the crowd sang Christmas classics



*Participants of an alternative rally hold a banner reading 'Refugee welcome.de' as they protest against a demonstration called by anti-immigration group PEGIDA, a German abbreviation for "Patriotic Europeans against the Islamization of the West", in Dresden on 22 Dec, 2014.—REUTERS*

as "Stille Nacht" (Silent Night) and "Oh, du froehliche". The Semper opera

turned off its lights to protest the rally.

The number of asy-

lum-seekers in Germany has surged to some 200,000 this year, more than any

other western country, due in part to an influx of Syrians.—*Reuters*



## PERSPECTIVES

Wednesday, 24 December, 2014

## Adequate transportation infrastructure is a national pride

By Kyaw Thura

A network of transportation is essential for a nation to be socially and economically modern and developed. Business can thrive only when goods can reach their destinations in good condition and in a short time. That is why transportation is vital to the well-functioning of economic activities that can ensure the well-being of the entire populace

across the country.

What is however important to note is that a good transportation system is not just for boosting trading. It is also helpful to other things. For example, we can prevent unwanted deaths if we can take patients in serious condition to hospital in time.

Ten years ago, my friend's uncle met a tragic and untimely death owing to lack of reliable transportation facilities in his native town. He was bitten by a snake, but not lucky enough to be hospitalized in time. If we had had a better transportation infrastructure at that time, we could no doubt have saved his life. In addition, improved transportation facilities will reduce the number of traffic accidents which can occur when roads are in terrible conditions.

After all, there is no person who does not want to use safe and smooth transportation facil-

ities. They somehow represent not only the wealth of a nation but also the discipline of its people. In fact, adequate transportation infrastructure is a national pride.

Convenient transportation can ensure everyday mobility of people while it remains crucial to the production and distribution of goods. Therefore, the quality of transportation facilities is the lifeblood of national development.

### Write for us

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

## Are the foods we are eating really safe for consumption?

By Khin Maung Myint

The foods and drinks we are consuming daily are contaminated with, either toxic chemical compounds or germs—bacteria, viruses, fungi, and protozoa. If you are aware of the dangers they can cause to your health, you would not want to eat them, if you can help. I don't intend to discuss the dangers of toxic chemical compounds present in foods, as there is a non-governmental organization (NGO) already conducting public awareness campaigns, and I believe it is doing a great job. What I will attempt to do is to convey to the public how the drinking water and food-stuffs, especially the fresh commodities, can get contaminated with germs, due to improper transportations, handlings and preparations. As I am not a medical professional, I will draw on my own observations and what little health knowledge I had gained, by watching documentaries on the televisions, reading books and magazines, in presenting this article.

### Contamination during transportation and handling

Let's start with the drinking water, the most essential commodity for us. Here, I will not touch the production side as I don't have the firsthand knowledge of how they are done. So there won't be any mention of whether they really are of PH7 level or not, or

they really are produced by the double osmosis process or whatever modern processes as claimed by the manufacturers. I am sure most of you have seen how drinking water bottles are transported and handled. The large, 20 litres bottles and smaller sized ones are transported on open cargo trucks, stacked full without leaving any space for the labourers to sit or even stand. They sat or stood on the stacks of water bottles, with their dirty slippers or bare feet on the bottles. It was not rare to see their feet or slippers resting on the faucets or taps fitted on the large water bottles. When they reached their delivery points, the labourers would unload the water bottles at the roadsides or sidewalks covered in dusts and muds or slushes. From the health or medical point of view, the dusts and the slushes are infested with swarms of germs. Also their feet and slippers too are swarming with all kinds of germs as they trod on such filthy places. These germs would definitely cling to the water bottles, and as you may know some types of germs can survive even at very high temperatures, they will remain active for a long time and enter the bottles once the seals are broken. Imagine what can happen when one drinks the water from these bottles. I won't be elaborating what kind of diseases can be caused by them. In most

countries they deliver water bottles in enclosed trucks and placed in their proper storage places. Nowhere had I ever seen water bottles randomly left by the roadsides or on the sidewalks.

I will continue with the edible fresh goods, such as vegetables, fruits, fish, poultry and meat. There is a street market place in my neighbourhood, not an official but a makeshift one, that operates from dawn till noon only, and the streets returned to the motor traffics in the afternoons. As it is not a proper market, it lacks proper facilities for sanitation such as garbage dumps, or water supply system to wash down the place after closing time, or proper drainage system. During the rainy seasons, as the streets are damaged, slushes covered the low lying parts. Those who went to that market early and were observant would witness how the foodstuffs were brought in and handled. The vegetables arrived either on trishaws or on light trucks and sometimes in taxis, bundled in old dirty longyis, men's wrap around wears. Just imagine what that can cause. Supposing the owners of those longyis are infected with STDs (sexually transmitted diseases). Luckily the viruses cannot survive outside a living body, so chances of contracting HIV from food are almost impossible. However, the bacterias, fungi and protozoa have their own potentials of causing

illnesses or diseases. Some drivers of the vehicles that brought in the goods are always in hurries, they threw the bundles onto the road and left. The poor hawkers had to carry the heavy bundles themselves, and those who cannot lift and carry had to drag them along the slush covered street to their respective places. There, they would display their goods on small sheets of thin worn out plastic, placed over the slush without any rack or board underneath.

The fruits enjoy a little better transportation and handling as they came in proper packaging and at least displayed on some sort of racks, a few inches above the dirty surfaces.

The fish, poultry and meat traveled to the market in the same way as the vegetables. They are dumped on the floorboards of light trucks or pickups, where people used to set their dirty foot wears, or carried on the seats of trishaws. All these goods came without any packaging or container, without any sort of refrigeration, except for some kinds of fish covered in crushed ice. (In advanced countries, they are delivered in refrigerated or enclosed trucks.) At the market they met the same treatment as the vegetables. They were dumped by the roadsides, as the drivers were impatient to wait.

To make my presentation more sound, I would like to mention the numerous carcasses of dead rodents, which were ran over

by cars during the night, are ever present on the streets on our block and the streets inside that market are no exceptions. No one bother to clear those dead rodents as though they don't matter. There are many more, unthinkable, dirty things like dog and cat feces, poultry intestines, fish scales and sometimes rotting beef, pork and mutton trimmings strewn on those streets. I don't think it would be necessary to explain what these disregards for the health and hygiene could lead to. However, I would like to say that their effects can be devastating, if an epidemic like cholera or plague should break out.

### Contamination of foods during preparations

This too cannot be ignored, as they are the sources of contagious diseases. One of the most common diseases caused by unhygienic foods is hepatitis, that can cause cirrhosis of liver, which in turn can lead to liver cancer. Please correct me if I'm wrong, so as not to frighten the readers with my wrong information. I realize I should not touch the subject that was not in my field of expertise, but I took the liberty of doing so with good will and intentions—to make the public aware of the consequences of unhealthy practices in food preparations.

### Conclusion

All these unhygienic practices are to be blamed on the ignorance or rather,

the unawareness on the part of the persons who commit them. So awareness campaigns should also be conducted by NGOs as they are doing with the use of unapproved chemical compounds in food processing.

Some readers may judge me to be overly obsessed with health and hygiene issues, as I had gone into details in describing the risks involved in the transportations and handlings of water and food-stuffs. I'm getting used to being judged so, by many with whom I had discussed this subject. I don't mean any offence or disrespect to them; I welcome and value their opinions. However, I have my reasons to go to the extremes in describing in this manner, and that is to achieve what I set out to do—to make the public aware of the importance of hygiene.

Before concluding, I would like to share something I had seen, long time ago, in a documentary video clip. The buttons on a computer keyboard were swapped with a cotton bud and when placed under a microscope, there were numerous and various types of germs, crawling and creeping. What would you expect from the dusts, slushes, dead rodents and all the dirty things infested places, I had mentioned?

Please remember, "hygienic foods and drinks are beneficial to your health"

**Looking forward to a healthy society.**

**The author is Retired Deputy General Manager, Admin: Dept; Myanmar Posts and Telecommunications**



## LOCAL NEWS

# Thai entrepreneurs seek economic opportunities in Mandalay



MRCCI Chairman U Aung Win Khaing and officials pose for documentary photo.

MANDALAY, 23 Dec — The union government gives encouragement to development of the private sector while realizing the market-oriented economic system in a transparent manner, Mandalay Region Minister for Planning and

Economic U Aung Zan told a workshop on financial market and investment opportunities on 22 December.

Mandalay Region Chambers of Commerce and Industry and Thailand-based Asset Pro Man-

agement Company Ltd jointly organized the workshop at Mandalay Hill Resort Hotel.

MRCCI Chairman U Aung Win Khaing extended greetings, while Executive Vice President Mr Chanitr Charn Chainarang

explained about the stock exchange in Thailand, aims of foreign direct investment, and assistance to be provided to emergence of a stock exchange in Mandalay.

MRCCI Joint Secretary Dr. Maung Maung discussed economic opportunities in Mandalay.

*Tin Maung (Mandalay)*

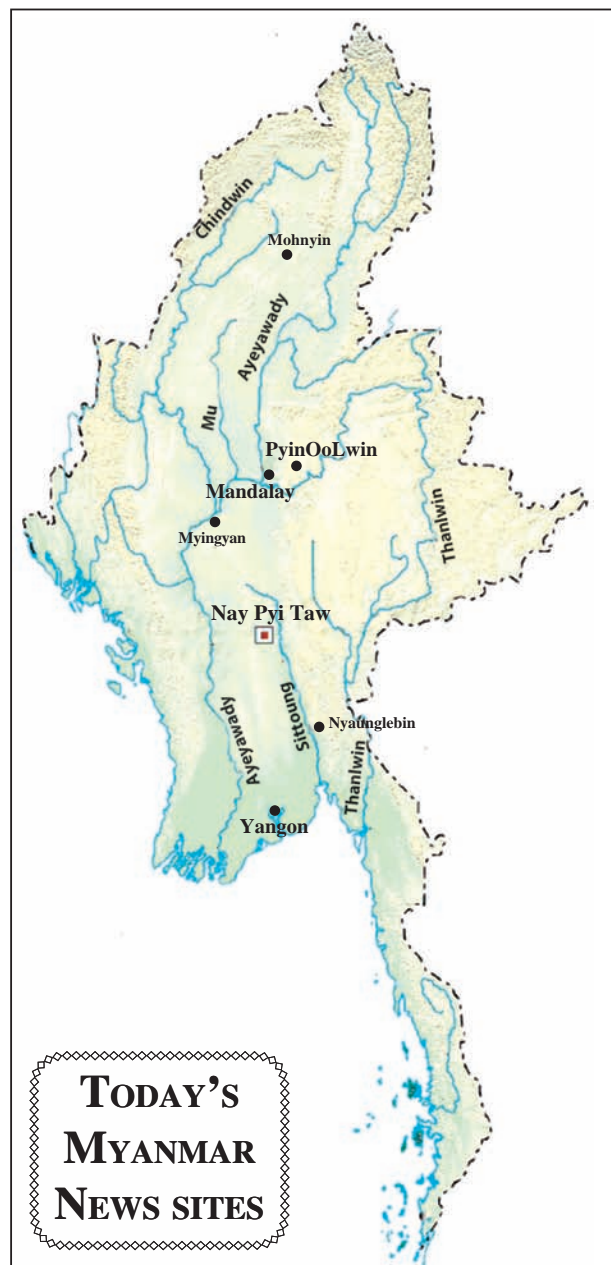
## Township Cooperative Syndicate disburses loan for village electrification

MYINGYAN, 23 Dec — A ceremony to disburse loans for village electrification took place at the Dhammayon in Myaukon Village in Myingyan Township, Mandalay Region, on 22 December.

Staff Officer U Zaw Win of Township Cooperative Department and Chairman of Township Cooperative Syndicate U Thein Aung urged local people to spend the loans on installation of electric meters and pay them back on time.

Chairman of the syndicate U Thein Aung delivered K24 million to 160 households.

*Zaw Min Naing (Myingyan)*



## Rural Development Dept to upgrade gravel road in Nyaunglebin Township



NYAUNGLEBIN, 23 Dec — Department of Rural Development officials held a meeting on upgrading of an earthen road to a gravel road in Nyaunglebin Township, Bago Region, on 21 December.

The department will allot K13 million for upgrading the 2.5-mile-long Zigongyi-Kyachaung-Zeebyukhin-Kyaban inter-village earthen road.

*Amyotha Hluttaw rep-*

resentative U Ye Myint urged local people to cooperate with local authorities for upgrading the road.

Bago Region Hluttaw representative U Saw Lin Aung explained plans to tap the Pyithu Hluttaw development fund for the roads linking the gravel road.

Head of Township Department of Rural Development U Than Lwin discussed the ways to upgrade the gravel road in respective sectors.

*Nay Lin (Nyaunglebin)*

## Book donations contribute to raising reading skills of locals

NAY PYI TAW, 23 Dec — A ceremony to donate books and publications was held at the office of Maungyan Village-tract administrator in Ottarathiri Township, Nay Pyi Taw Council Area, on 22 December morning.

Village administrator U Wunna made an opening address.

U Salai Tong Si of Ottara District Information and Public Relations Department gave talks on advantages of reading for development of so-

cio-economy of the local people.

He then handed over books and publications to libraries of Kungyansu and Phayagon villages. Local authorities spoke words of thanks for donations of books.—*Shwe Ye Yint*

*U Salai Tong Si of Ottara District Information and Public Relations Department explains advantages of reading to locals.*





## Satellite images show 290 heritage sites in Syria damaged by war

BEIRUT, 23 Dec — Satellite imagery indicate that 290 cultural heritage sites in Syria, whose history stretches back to the dawn of civilization, have been damaged by its ongoing civil war, the United Nations' training and research arm (UNITAR) said on Tuesday.

Syria's heritage spans the great empires of the Middle East but cultural sites and buildings around the country, such as Aleppo's Umayyad Mosque, have been looted, damaged or destroyed in the three-year-old conflict.

Using commercially available satellite pictures, UNITAR found that 24 sites were completely destroyed, 189 severely or moderately damaged and a further 77 possibly damaged.

This is "an alarming

testimony of the ongoing damage that is happening to Syria's vast cultural heritage", UNITAR said in a new report. "National and international efforts for the protection of these areas need to be scaled up in order to save as much as possible of this important heritage (for) humankind."

Clashes between President Bashar al-Assad's forces and rebels have damaged historical sites and buildings throughout Syria. Pillaging has threatened tombs in the desert town of Palmyra and Roman temples have been damaged.

The report documented widespread damage to cultural heritage sites including UNESCO World Heritage Sites, mostly in the northern city of Aleppo.

Both sides in the conflict have used ancient for-

treasures as military bases. The army has positioned snipers on Aleppo's Citadel, one of the oldest and largest castles in the world.

Insurgent forces also overran the 900-year-old Crac des Chevaliers Crusader castle. The army retook it in March but only after months of bombardment.

The satellite imagery also found that sites in Raqqa and the millennia-old oasis city of Palmyra have been exposed to major damage. The ancient city of Bosra and abandoned settlements from the Byzantine period in Syria's north have been damaged as well, according to UNITAR.

Radical Sunni Muslim insurgents have also destroyed ancient sites which they consider to be heretical. Maamoun Abdulkarim, head of Syria's antiquities and museums, told *Reuters* last year that tens of thousands of artefacts spanning 10,000 years of history had been removed to specialist warehouses to avoid looting.

The United Nations says more than 200,000 people have been killed in Syria's conflict, which began in March 2011 with popular protests against Assad and spiralled into civil war after a violent crackdown by security forces.

*Reuters*



A general view of damage in the Umayyad mosque of Old Aleppo, on 15 Dec, 2013.

REUTERS



Afghan security forces keep watch during their operation in Dangam District of Kunar Province in eastern Afghanistan, on 22 Dec, 2014. The Afghan army has waged an offensive in Dangam District of eastern Kunar Province, which has been the scene of fierce clashes within the past 10 days, an army source said on Monday. — XINHUA

## Five bombs explode in Yemeni capital, killing one

ADEN, 23 Dec — Five bombs exploded on Tuesday in Sanaa's old quarter, where many supporters of the Shi'ite Muslim Houthi group live, killing at least one person and wounding another, a Yemeni security official said. No one has claimed responsibility for the attacks, but the Houthis have been fighting the Sunni Islamist militant al-Qaeda group and allied tribesmen since its gunmen captured Sanaa in September and forced the resignation of a government they had long seen as corrupt.

Witnesses said the blasts occurred early in the morning at a time when only

a few people were on the streets. One of the bombs exploded when a member of the Houthi militia tried to dismantle it, residents said.

Several houses and some cars were damaged from the explosions.

Yemen has been in turmoil since mass protests in 2011 forced long-ruling President Ali Abdullah Saleh to step down. But tensions have increased after the Houthi takeover of Sanaa in September.—*Reuters*



People gather at the site of a bomb explosion in Sanaa on 23 Dec, 2014. — REUTERS

## Iraq says Jordan to begin training Iraqi troops soon

AMMAN, 23 Dec — Jordan will begin training the first group of army troops from neighbouring Iraq in the next few weeks as part of the international effort to fight Islamic State, the Iraqi defence minister said on Monday.

Speaking after meeting Jordanian King Abdullah, Khaled al Obeidi said Amman would also supply the Iraqi army with arms needed for its drawn-out fight against the radical Islamists who have seized wide swathes of the north and west of his country.

Obeidi aims to rebuild the Iraqi army, which fell apart last summer in the face of Islamic State's blitz across northern Iraq during which at least four Iraqi divisions crumbled.

"I think in the next weeks the first batch of Iraqi army will get training in Jordan," the defence minister told *Reuters* in Amman. "The arms warehouses of Jordan from weapons and ammunition will be open to the Iraqi army."

King Abdullah, a US ally whose country has joined the military campaign against Islamic State militants in Syria, said on Sunday it was crucial to support both Iraqi and Syrian tribes threatened by Islamic State fighters.

Jordan has in recent months

beefed up its troops along the 180-km (112-mile) border with Iraq, where Islamic State fighters have control over stretches of the Baghdad-Jordan highway, a major Middle Eastern trade route.

Obeidi was due to visit Jordanian army camps on Tuesday. He said his talks with the army's

chief of staff would focus on ways of regaining control of the crucial overland trade and passenger artery.

The fall of large parts of Anbar Province bordering Jordan to Islamic State poses a major security risks for the kingdom, officials say.

Tribes currently fighting the jihadists in Anbar have long-standing ties with Jordan.

Jordan has provided a logistics base for the US-led air campaign against Islamic State in Syria and is a hub for intelligence gathering operations against the jihadists, a western diplomatic source said.

The kingdom, which helped train thousands of Iraqi army troops in the post-Saddam Hussein era as part of US plans to rebuild the former Iraqi military, now sees Sunni tribal fighters playing a lead role in battling Islamic militants in their own areas.

*Reuters*



Iraqi Defence Minister Khaled al-Obeidi speaks to the media in Amman on 22 Dec, 2014. — REUTERS

## Algeria troops kill chief militant behind Frenchman's murder

ALGIERS, 23 Dec — Algeria's army has killed the leader of the militant group responsible for kidnapping and beheading French tourist Herve Gourdel in September, a local television station close to the government said on Tuesday. Ennahar TV, citing an unnamed security source, said troops had killed Gouri Abdelmalek, leader of the Caliphate Soldiers group, which declared its allegiance to jihadist Islamic State fighters in Iraq and Syria.

It said Abdelmalek and two other militants were killed east of the capital Algiers in a clash with special forces. His group had kidnapped and beheaded the Frenchman in retaliation for French military action against Islamic State.—*Reuters*



## BUSINESS &amp; HEALTH

## Asia pauses after Wall Street peak, oil pares losses



A woman looks up at a Tokyo Stock Exchange in Tokyo on 1 Nov, 2005.—REUTERS

SYDNEY, 23 Dec — A holiday hush settled over Asian markets on Tuesday after Wall Street closed at historic highs while oil prices recouped just a little of the losses suffered when Saudi Arabia quashed all thought of curbing supply.

A revival in risk appetite undermined the safe haven yen and kept the US dollar elevated across the board, while sovereign bonds were content to sit on recent gains.

Equity investors chose to focus on the benefits that falling fuel prices would

have for consumer spending power. "Overall, we see this as a shot in the arm for the global economy," Olivier Blanchard, chief economist at the IMF, and Rabah Arezki, head of the commodities research team, wrote in their blog on Monday.

They estimated the boost to world growth would be between 0.3 and 0.7 percentage points above the Fund's baseline forecast of 3.8 percent in 2015, with the gain to China ranging from 0.4 to 0.7 percentage points.

Trading was light in

Asia with Japan on holiday and markets moved only marginally. MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan eased 0.3 percent.

Australian stocks ran into profit-taking after three sessions of sharp gains and slipped 1.0 percent.

On Wall Street, the S&P 500 had put on 0.38 percent to score an all-time closing high on Monday, while the Dow added 0.87 percent and the Nasdaq 0.34 percent. In Europe, opening gains of between 0.3 percent and 0.5 percent were pro-

jected for the FTSE, DAX and CAC. Stocks have been helped in part by further evidence the European Central Bank was set to buy euro government bonds. Expectations the ECB will act as soon as January saw the euro touch a 2-1/2 year trough at \$1.2215 on Monday and it was last trading at \$1.2227.

In contrast, the Federal Reserve remains on track to hike rates at some point in 2015 which has widened the premium offered by two-year US debt to 75 basis points over German bunds, the fattest margin since early 2007. The attraction of US yields lifted the dollar to 120.12 yen, leaving last week's 115.56 low as a distant memory. The dollar index reached its highest since April 2006.

The steady climb in the dollar made life miserable for gold buffs with the precious metal stuck at \$1,179.61, after falling from \$1,201.80 on Monday.

Oil bulls also suffered a cruel blow when Saudi Arabia's powerful oil minister said OPEC would not cut production at any price. Ali al-Naimi said the Saudis might instead boost output to grow market share and that oil "may not" trade at \$100 again.—Reuters

## Gold inches up after losses, but still near three-week low

SINGAPORE, 23 Dec — Gold edged up on Tuesday after sharp overnight losses, but was still stuck near its lowest in three weeks due to weaker oil prices and strength in global equities and the dollar. Spot gold was up 0.3 percent at \$1,178.60 an ounce at 0328 GMT. It tumbled nearly 2 percent in the previous session, dropping to \$1,170.17 an ounce - its lowest since 1 December.

"Skyrocketing equity markets, a firm dollar and weakening oil prices finally caught up to gold, triggering long liquidation and position squaring ahead of the Christmas and New Year break," said Jason Cerisola, a metals dealer at MKS Group. Rising equities and a stronger dollar dull demand for gold as a safe-haven asset. Lower oil prices decrease its appeal as a hedge against oil-led inflation. Gold should likely see some support at \$1,170, but more stop-loss orders will be triggered if the level is breached, Cerisola said.

Wall Street closed at historic highs on Monday, boosting global equities. The dollar index, a measure of the greenback's strength against a basket of major currencies, was holding close to a nine-year peak. A

stronger greenback makes dollar-denominated gold more expensive for holders of other currencies.

Oil prices resumed their downward march on Monday, after Saudi Arabia's powerful oil minister said OPEC would not cut production at any price, though they edged up modestly on Tuesday. Bullion found some support in the physical markets, where top consumer China saw bargain hunters emerge after the price drop on Monday. Prices on the Shanghai Gold Exchange were at a premium of \$4-\$5 an ounce over the global benchmark, compared with \$2-\$3 in the previous session. "While emerging market buying on dips is likely to moderate further potential price declines, ongoing oil market weakness is a significant weight on bullion and may very well cap rallies," HSBC analysts said in a report. In central bank activity, data from the International Monetary Fund data released on Tuesday showed that Russia raised its gold reserves for an eighth month in a row in November, while Ukraine reduced bullion holdings for a second straight month.

Reuters

## Risk of dengue increases due to climate change, city growth: research

NEW YORK, 23 Dec — Large parts of Europe, West and Central Africa, and South America face the threat of outbreaks of the deadly dengue virus due to climate change and urbanization, according to the first-ever maps of dengue vulnerability published on Tuesday.

Research by the United Nations University found dengue fever, that is transmitted by the bite of female mosquitoes and causes severe pain, is on the move with the maps pinpointing vulnerable areas as a tool to help prevent outbreaks.

"Changes to climate could result in increased exposure and pose a serious threat to areas that do not currently experience endemic dengue," the report said.

The researchers said as the planet warms, dengue could spread to

large parts of Europe and mountainous regions of South America which are too cold currently to sustain mosquito populations year-round.

The disease is also predicted to spread in Central and West Africa which have poor water and sanitation services and insufficient healthcare coverage.

The new maps illustrate the expansion and contraction of dengue vulnerability throughout the year, revealing hotspots and showing where the virus could become a danger so countries can set up surveillance.

"We've seen from Ebola that in this global world that we're living in that infectious diseases can travel around," Corinne Schuster-Wallace, senior researcher at the UN University, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation in a phone interview from Can-



A worker from the municipality of Sucre carries out fumigation to help control the spread of Chikungunya and dengue fever, which are caused by viruses carried by mosquitoes, in the Petare slum district of Caracas on 22 Sept, 2014.—REUTERS

ada. "The conditions for these diseases are dynamic over time and given that we're changing our social and environmental dynamics, the global distribution of these infectious diseases like dengue is going to change."

Although the maps are not designed to predict outbreaks, she said if the

mosquitoes and the virus arrived in vulnerable areas, dengue would become endemic there.

There is no vaccine for dengue, which kills an estimated 20,000 people each year and infects up to 100 million, according to the World Health Organization (WHO).

Reuters

## Reading iPad before bedtime may adversely impact sleep

WASHINGTON, 23 Dec — Use of a light-emitting electronic device (LE-eBook) such as iPad before bedtime can adversely impact sleep and overall health, a US study comparing LE-eBook to printed books said on Monday. The study, published in the *US journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, found reading an LE-eBook in the hours before bedtime may suppress release of a hormone linked to sleepiness and shift the circadian clock, an internal biological clock that synchronizes the daily rhythm of sleep to external environmental time cues.

"We found the body's natural circadian rhythms were interrupted by the short-wavelength enriched light, otherwise known as blue light, from these electronic devices," said study corresponding author Anne-Marie Chang, assistant professor at the Penn-

sylvania State University.

Chang and her colleagues compared the quality of sleep after participants used an LE-eBook before bed with the quality of their sleep after reading a printed book before bed.

Over a 14-day study period, 12 participants read LE-eBooks on an iPad for four hours before bedtime each night for five consecutive nights, and also read a printed book before bed for five consecutive days under similar conditions.

The study found that participants reading on the iPad took longer to fall asleep, were less sleepy in the evening, and spent less time in rapid-eye-movement sleep, the stage of sleep during which dreams prevail. The iPad readers also had reduced secretion of melatonin, a hormone which normally rises in the evening and plays a role in inducing sleepiness.

Xinhua



## Russia's long-range aviation marking centenary jubilee

Moscow, 23 Dec — Russia's long-range (fighter-bomber) aviation is marking the centenary anniversary since its foundation on Tuesday. Gala functions devoted to the jubilee will be held in all the branches and units of the Air Force, its official spokesman Igor Klimov told reporters.

"Long-range aviation is a crucial component element

of Russia's forces of nuclear deterrence," Colonel Klimov said. "Its status and the span and character of its combat tasks make it a service reporting directly to the country's Commander-in-Chief. It fulfills strategic tasks."

Units of long-range aviation operate the strategic missile carriers *Tupolev-160* and *Tupolev-95MS*, long-range strategic bombers *Tu-*

*polev-22M3*, refueling jets *Ilyushin-78*, special-task aircraft *Antonov-30b*, the transport turboprops *Antonov-12* and *Antonov-26*, as well as *Mi-8* and *Mi-26* helicopters. Long-range aviation units are currently amid a massive modernization of the aircraft and engines of all types. "A priority goal of the State Defence Order for 2015 is to supply overhauled *Tupolev-160*, *Tupolev-95M* and *Tupolev-22M3* jets to long-range air force units," Col Klimov said. "All the modernized aircraft will be fitted out with new equipment complexes that will boost their combat capabilities substantially."

In 2015, strategic air force units will make flights to remote parts of the globe located at the distances equal to the full operating range of the aircraft. These flights will be part of the strategic deterrence plan and will include refueling in midair. The plan also includes a ma-

jor command staff strategic exercise, Centre'2015. Col Klimov recalled that Russian strategic air force jets had resumed long-range flights recently in line with the strategic deterrence plan. Specifically, the *Tupolev-160* jets made landings on airbases in the Caribbean /in Venezuela and Nicaragua/ and the use of refueling jets stationed on bases in Egypt and Vietnam enabled the Russian jets to operate in the Mediterranean and to reach the water area of the South China Sea.

In 2014, the *Ilyushin-78* refueling jets made the first-ever landing in Cairo and the *Tupolev-95MS* strategic missile carriers made flights along the coastlines of Norway, Britain, Spain, and Portugal with refueling in midair.

"In the course of these flights, five inceptions by fighter jets of the Norwegian, British and Portuguese Air Forces were registered," Col Klimov said.—*Itar-Tass*

## Accumulated total of Narita airport users reaches 900 mil



US engineer James Collins (R) receives commemorative gifts from the operator of Narita International Airport east of Tokyo on 22 Dec, 2014, after becoming the 900 millionth user of the airport. Collins was returning to the United States following a business trip to Japan. —KYODO NEWS



Long-range aviation units are currently amid a massive modernization of the aircraft and engines of all types.

ITAR-TASS

## Australian court approves record compensation payout to wildfire victims

SYDNEY, 23 Dec — An Australian court has approved a record payout of almost A\$500 million (\$406 million) to survivors and families of some of the 173 people killed in the 2009 Black Saturday bushfires, the country's worst-ever natural disaster.

A class action lawsuit by more than 5,000 people sued electricity provider AusNet Services and asset manager Utility Services Corporation Ltd after a Royal Commission found that the Kinglake fire, the most deadly of the series of wildfires, was caused by an aging AusNet power line.

AusNet and Utility Services denied liability. The settlement, which includes the Victorian state

government, excludes any admission of liability.

On 7 February, 2009, bushfires tore through much of the southern state of Victoria, killing 173 people. More than 1,000 people were injured and 1,172 homes were destroyed.

"While we can never compensate people for what they've lost, particularly those who've lost loved ones, we have recovered in this proceeding A\$494 million," Rory Walsh from Maurice Blackburn Lawyers said after the ruling in the Victorian Supreme court. "We hope that that money can help people alleviate some of the hardships that they continue to experience today," he said.

AusNet will pay



The remains of a house destroyed by bushfires is seen in the town of Kinglake, about 46 kms (29 miles) north east of Melbourne on 8 Feb, 2009.—REUTERS

A\$378.6 million, with Utility Services paying A\$12.5 million and the Victorian

government paying the remainder.

AusNet said its liabil-

ity insurers have paid its entire contribution. The company is still facing an-

other lawsuit over the Murrumbidgee series of bushfires on Black Saturday and "intends to vigorously defend that claim".

The company said its insurance should also cover any payout in that case, but noted that "the ultimate resolution of this matter cannot be known with certainty". The near A\$500 million payout is more than double the previous Australian class action settlement of A\$200 million paid by Centro Properties Group and accounting firm PricewaterhouseCoopers [PWC. UL] in 2012 to shareholders of Centro who alleged they were deceived by the group's failure to properly disclose its debt levels.

Reuters

## Japan Post set for listing with banking, insurance arms

TOKYO, 23 Dec — Japan Post Holdings Co will list its shares in Tokyo next year, together with those of its banking and insurance arms in one of the biggest stock listings in the country, sources close to the plan said on Tuesday.

Taizo Nishimuro, president of the state-owned company, is expected to announce the plan at a Press conference on Friday, the sources said.

The listings, part of the

government's plan to privatize the nation's gigantic postal services, will also involve Japan Post Bank and Japan Post Insurance Co.

The initial public offerings could possibly be as large as the one by NTT Docomo Inc. in 1998, when the mobile carrier was valued at about 8.8 trillion yen (\$73 billion).

Japan Post is planning to file with the Tokyo Stock Exchange by next March for approval of the listings of the

three companies altogether on the bourse.

With the bourse's approval, the firms could be listed as early as next fall. But the timing of their IPOs will largely depend on the government, which will likely consider the situation in the stock market and economic conditions as a whole before deciding to go ahead.

The IPOs will mark the final phase of the postal privatization, a long-standing reform initiative launched in

2005 by then Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi.

The government currently holds all shares in the holding company, which completely owns the two financial entities.

Japan Post has not revealed so far any specific plan for the listings, only saying that the IPOs could come within the business year starting next April.

The stock offerings are likely to help the companies do business more freely

from government influence, particularly when they try to launch new financial products such as housing loans.

Moves by the banking and insurance units to launch new services have been always controversial, with both domestic and foreign rivals expressing their concerns about possible threats to fair competition from the two companies backed by the government.

To prevent potential disturbance in the stock market,

where both the government and holding company are set to unload a huge number of shares, they will start by releasing only around 10 percent of their holdings.

The government will eventually sell around two-thirds of its Japan Post shares, using some 4 trillion yen out of gains on the sale to finance the rebuilding of the country's northeastern areas devastated by the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami.—*Kyodo News*



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

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

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

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

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

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For **Axiata Group Berhad** and **Hello Axiata Company Limited**

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Dated: 24.12.2014

**Monkeys huddle  
around open fire  
to keep warm**

**Monkeys huddle  
around an open fire to  
keep warm at Japan  
Monkey Centre in the  
central Japan city of  
Inuyama on 22 Dec,  
2014. It is a rare scene  
as animals usually fear  
fire. — KYODO NEWS**

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**American Airlines flight from  
China makes unscheduled  
stop in Japan**

CHIBA, (Japan) 23 Dec — An American Airlines *Boeing 777* bound for Los Angeles made an unscheduled stop at Narita International Airport near Tokyo on Monday night after a report of odor from the cargo storage area. The plane from Shanghai was carrying 253 passengers and crewmembers but no one was hurt.

According to the Japanese transport ministry's Narita office, odor was detected when the plane was flying over the Pacific around 500 kilometres

northeast of Narita. The flight declared emergency just before 11 pm and landed at Narita approximately 50 minutes later. An oven in the galley in the passenger cabin was reportedly charred. The cause of the incident is being investigated. No smoke or fire was observed. This was the second unscheduled stop at Narita by an American Airlines flight since Wednesday. That day, a flight from Seoul to Dallas, Texas, encountered turbulence and 12 people were injured.—*Kyodo New*

**WEATHER REPORT**

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

**FORECAST VALID UNTIL EVENING OF THE 24<sup>th</sup> December, 2014:** Weather will be partly cloudy in Taninthayi Region and generally fair in the remaining Regions and States.

**Nicaragua announces start of China-backed canal to rival Panama**

MANAGUA, 23 Dec — Nicaragua on Monday announced the start of work on a \$50 billion shipping canal, an infrastructure project backed by China that aims to rival Panama's waterway and revitalize the economy of the second-poorest country in the Americas.

The groundbreaking was largely symbolic, as work began on a road designed to accommodate machinery needed to build a port for the canal on the Central American country's Pacific coast.

Nicaragua's government says the proposed 172-mile (278-km) canal, due to be operational by around 2020, would raise annual economic growth to more

than 10 percent.

The canal could also give China a major foothold in Central America, a region long dominated by the United States, which completed the Panama Canal a century ago. Construction of the new waterway will be run by Hong Kong-based HK Nicaragua Canal Development Investment Co Ltd (HKND Group), which is controlled by Wang Jing, a little-known Chinese telecom mogul well connected to China's political elite. Flanked by Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega, who is a former Marxist guerrilla leader, Wang Jing said the tender for the preliminary design of the project would be offered by the end of the first quarter



**Journalists attend the inauguration ceremony of the inter-oceanic Nicaragua Canal project in the department of Rivas, Nicaragua, on 22 Dec, 2014. The construction of the inter-oceanic Nicaragua Canal started on Monday and will end in 2019, said Wang Jing, chairman of the Hong Kong Nicaragua Canal Development Investment Co, Ltd. (HKND), which will construct the canal, at the inauguration ceremony on Monday. — XINHUA**

of 2015, by which time an environmental impact study would also be finished.

By the end of the third quarter, excavation work would begin, with a tender for the design of the locks due by the end of the year, he said. More than a year since it was first announced, the project faces widespread skepticism, with questions still open about who will provide financing, how seriously it will affect Lake Nicaragua and how much land will be expropriated for it.

"Given how much this will cost, it's hard to take a stance on whether it will happen or not until there is a signal whether that money is available or not," said Greg Miller at consultancy IHS

Maritime.

In the Americas, only Haiti is poorer than Nicaragua. Earlier, Nicaraguan presidential spokesman Paul Oquist said feasibility studies, including a McKinsey report that experts say will define interest in financing the canal, had been delayed by changes to the route and would be ready by April.

Oquist said the "core financing" would come from public and private Chinese money, without giving a percentage.

But he added that Nicaragua is seeking international funding and rejected the idea that China will bankroll the project worth roughly four times Nicaraguan gross domestic product.—*Reuters*



## China charges Jackie Chan's son over drug offence



Hong Kong actor Jaycee Chan arrives at the Hong Kong Film Awards in this 19 April, 2009 file photo.

REUTERS

BEIJING, 23 Dec — China's state prosecutor said on Monday it had formally charged Jaycee Chan, son of kung fu movie star Jackie Chan, with a drugs offence, meaning he is almost certain to face trial.

The younger Chan, a 32-year-old actor and singer, was arrested in Beijing this year after testing positive for marijuana, with police saying they found 100 grams of the drug at his home.

In a brief statement on its official microblog, the Supreme People's Procuratorate said it had begun legal proceedings against him for "the crime of sheltering others to take drugs". It did not elaborate.

President Xi Jinping said in June that China would "harshly crack down" on narcotics, state media reported.

Action and comedy star Jackie Chan, 60, served as a goodwill spokesman for the China National

Anti-Drug Committee in 2009, state media reported, promoting anti-drug education.

Jaycee Chan was not available for comment. In August, his father offered the public a "deep bow of apology" for his son's arrest.

China has detained a string of other mostly B-list celebrities in recent months on drug-related charges, cases that have been publicised widely in both state and social media. They have included movie and television stars, film directors and a prominent screenwriter.

Drug crimes carry harsh penalties in China including death or life imprisonment in serious cases. Illegal drugs, especially synthetic substances like methamphetamine, ketamine and ecstasy, have grown in popularity in China in tandem with the rise of a new urban class with greater disposable income.

Reuters

## 'Guardians of Galaxy' not prequel to 'Avengers': James Gunn

LOS ANGELES, 23 Dec — Director James Gunn says the 'Guardians of the Galaxy' is not a prequel to 'The Avengers' third and fourth part.

The 44-year-old director said the next 'Avengers' film has been split into two parts 'Avengers: Infinity War Part I' and 'Avengers: Infinity War Part II' and there are possibility that 'Guardians' and 'Avengers' might meet somewhere in future but as of now there are no plans, reported Ace Show-



biz.

"The last thing I said was something about how the 'Guardians', we really are mostly focused on creating the 'Guardians'

as their own separate universe, creating the cosmic side of the Marvel Universe. It isn't all about leading towards Avengers. "We're not subser-

vient to 'The Avengers'. Whether or not at some point, some Guardians and some Avengers meet up and meet somewhere in the world, whether it's two years from now, three years from now, four years from now, fifteen years from now... I'm not going to say. But 'Guardians of the Galaxy' does not exist as a prequel to 'Avengers' 3 and 4," Gunn said.

Gunn also said he would be keen in joining Marvel projects in future.

PTI

## Rock star Sting buoys 'The Last Ship' with Broadway role



Musician Sting and his wife Trudie Styler arrive for the Kennedy Centre Honours in Washington on 7 Dec, 2014. — REUTERS

NEW YORK, 23 Dec — Grammy-winning rock star Sting has boosted ticket sales of his Broadway musical "The Last Ship" and won praise for his performance as a foreman in the show based on his childhood in a shipbuilding town in northeast England. "The Last Ship," the first Broadway musical written by Sting, opened on 26 October to mixed reviews, win-

ning praise for his rousing score but losing points for its confused, tangled story.

Ticket sales flagged, with the show losing a reported \$75,000 a week since previews began, and the former front man of rock group the Police announced he would join the cast for a limited time. Sting, 63, replaced British actor Jimmy Nail as Jackie White on 9 December as the foreman

of the closed shipyard in the town of Wallsend. In the first full week of Sting's performances, ticket sales rose to more than \$817,000 from \$491,000 the previous week.

"Brave captain takes the helm," said the *New York Post* in a headline on Monday, while USA Today added: "Sting steers 'Last Ship' with pride, charisma." "Sting approaches Jackie with the same graciousness and serious-mindedness he brought to the 'Ship's' music and lyrics," USA Today added. The musical follows Gideon Fletcher, a shipbuilder's son who leaves his girlfriend and his hometown in search of a better life. He returns 15 years later, after his father's death, to a town hit by recession, where the shipyard has shut its doors and his lover has moved on. Gideon decides to join the unemployed shipyard workers who take over the yard at the urging

of the town's priest to build one last ship. The trade magazine *Variety* described the show as "dark and gorgeously melodic" and credited Sting with galvanizing the cast, as well as the box office. "Although he plays a secondary role in the show, Sting is a huge presence, electrifying the house in his two big solos and inspiring the other members of the ensemble, who now perform as if possessed," it said.

The *New York Times* said Sting's foreman seems a less pivotal figure than with Nail in the role but added his acting is "capable and efficient." "His Jackie seems a leader more by the quiet integrity of his advice than his animal spirits," it said. The newspaper added that despite some flaws, "The Last Ship" remains a musically entrancing show performed with grit and passion by an excellent cast."—Reuters

## Joe Cocker, raspy-voiced British singer, dies at 70

LONDON, 23 Dec — Joe Cocker, whose distinctive raspy voice and soulful musical renditions made him a favourite of his peers with hits like Beatles' cover "With a Little Help from My Friends" and "You Are So Beautiful," died on Monday. He was 70.

The British rock singer, famous for flailing his arms during performances, lost a long battle with lung cancer, said his label, Sony Music Entertainment, in a statement.

The Sheffield-born Cocker's rocky but ultimately successful career took him from working-class pubs in Northern England to the



British singer Joe Cocker speaks after receiving the trophy for Category 'lifetime achievement award music' during the 48th Golden Camera award ceremony in Berlin, on 2 Feb, 2013. REUTERS

Woodstock festival in 1969, to the top of the charts in the 1980s.

Former Beatle Paul McCartney credited Cocker for giving "With a Little Help from My Friends," a mid-tempo melody, a whole

new life. "It was just mind blowing, totally turned the song into a soul anthem and I was forever grateful to him for doing that," McCartney said in a statement, calling the fellow Englishman a "lovely northern lad."

His explosive, at times unintelligible performance of that song at Woodstock helped him break through to larger audiences in what Rolling Stone magazine called "one of the most iconic sets from the legendary festival."

Cocker lived in Crawford, Colorado, and released nearly 40 albums as he toured the world during a career spanning five decades.

The Grammy winner was born into a working-class family and worked as a plumber while pursuing his singing career.

He was named an Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) at Buck-

ingham Palace in 2011.

"Goodbye and God Bless to Joe Cocker from one of his friends peace and love. R.," tweeted Beatles drummer Ringo Starr.

In the early 1970s Cocker's "Mad Dogs and Englishmen" tour and live album cemented his success. In 1974, "You Are So Beautiful," co-written with Billy Preston, was a big hit. It was voted the fourth-most popular love song in a US online poll in 2013.

In a memorable sketch in 1976, Cocker joined John Belushi as he parodied the singer's spasmodic style on the popular late-night comedy show "Saturday Night

Live." Cocker's career path was punctuated by struggles with alcohol and drugs.

In 1982, his career took off again with "Up Where We Belong," a duet with Jennifer Warnes for the film "An Officer and A Gentleman." The song earned Cocker his only Grammy and an Oscar for its writers.

His last studio album "Fire It Up" came out in 2012.

Cocker is survived by wife Pam, brother Victor, a stepdaughter and two grandchildren. He and his wife set up the Cocker Kids' Foundation to support local Colorado youth.

Reuters



## Spaniards celebrate 'El Gordo' victories in world's biggest lottery

MADRID, 23 Dec — Thousands of Spaniards including humble restaurant workers and care home residents celebrated wins in the world's biggest lottery draw on Monday, scooping up shares in over 2.2 billion euros (2 billion pounds) in prizes doled out across the country.

El Gordo, or "the Fat One", is the top award millions vie for every year in the traditional Christmas lottery, which had Spaniards on tenterhooks for four hours as the ceremonial draw took longer than usual to throw up the big prizes.

The Gordo pays out 400,000 euros for every 20 euros spent on a number and this year's jackpot was widely distributed. There were winners from the capital Madrid to southerly Murcia, flocking to local lottery outlets or bars

where they had bought their tickets to celebrate their good fortune.

Spain's Christmas lottery has been running for just over 200 years and remains a major fixture of the festive season. Sales had dropped off in recent years as the country went through a deep economic crisis, leaving over 5 million people, or nearly one in four workers, out of a job.

But this year, coinciding with Spain's recovery from recession, ticket sales were up for the first time since 2008. The taxman now takes a slice of the winnings - 20 percent from prizes above 2,500 euros.

The build-up to the yearly Gordo has added to the prize's fame. Superstitious players can queue for hours to buy tickets from the "luckiest" vendors, where the jackpot has hit before.



*Juan Lopez holds his lottery ticket with the winning number of Spain's Christmas Lottery 'El Gordo', together with his daughter Pilar in La Eliana near Valencia on 22 Dec, 2014.—REUTERS*

Companies, sports associations, local shops and bars also order series of ticket numbers for staff, which are then swapped and shared among relatives and colleagues trying to maximise their chances of getting a top prize. Workers from Madrid's central wax museum were among the big winners

on Monday, while staff from a neighbouring restaurant also got lucky.

"The first thing I'm going to do is go to Paraguay to see my family. I haven't been for years," Madrid-based Gonzalo Lovera, a caretaker who won 1.6 million euros, told state television.

Reuters

## Condition of Muhammad Ali 'vastly improved'



*Former boxer Muhammad Ali of the US sits in a wheelchair as he is taken to a photo session with attendees of the 50th Convention of the World Boxing Council in Cancun on 4 Dec, 2012.—REUTERS*

LOUISVILLE, (Kentucky), 23 Dec — The condition of Muhammad Ali has "vastly improved" since he was admitted to the hospital over the weekend with a mild case of pneumonia and doctors hope to discharge the boxing legend soon, a spokesman said on Monday.

Ali, 72, was admitted to a hospital in an undisclosed location on Saturday morning. "The Ali family continues to request privacy and appreciates all of the prayers and well wishes," spokesman Bob Gunnell

said. "No further details are being released." A three-time world heavyweight champion and widely recognised as one of the best fighters ever, Ali, who suffers from Parkinson's disease, made a rare public appearance in September to attend a ceremony in his hometown of Louisville, Kentucky, for the Muhammad Ali Humanitarian Awards. Ali, nicknamed "The Greatest," was diagnosed with Parkinson's about three years after he retired from boxing in 1981 with a 56-5 record. —Reuters

## Opening ceremony of 2015 Asian Cup to celebrate Australian culture

BEIJING, 23 Dec — A spectacular opening ceremony lasting eleven minutes to celebrate Australian culture will be staged at Melbourne Rectangular Stadium on 9 January, according to the official website of Asian Cup.

It is introduced that Australian singer Havana Brown, pop band Sheppard and more than 200 junior footballers, dancers and professional performers will stage on the show.

LOC Asian Cup Chief Executive Officer Michael Brown expressed that it would be a memorable and dynamic opening ceremony. The Socceroos will kick off a 23-day festival of football featuring 32 games between the top 16 football nations in Asia, with an expected worldwide television audience of 800 million. —Xinhua

## Kuala Lumpur to launch 3,000 electric car charging stations

BEIJING, 23 Dec — A total of 3,000 electric car charging stations will be set up in Kuala Lumpur in about two years to provide so-called "Kuala Lumpur electric A-gogo" service, according to latest local media reports. A senior official of Kuala Lumpur's Municipal Electrical Bureau said, "Kuala Lumpur electric A-gogo" is point-to-point car renting service that offers a zero-emission alternative to the residents to get around in the city, replacing their driving private cars or taking a bus.

Starting in February 2015, it will take about two years to complete the construction.—Xinhua

## Englishman Willett secures Masters berth via world ranking

LONDON, 23 Dec — Englishman Danny Willett will be a big winner in the final world rankings of the year, to be issued next week, by narrowly punching his ticket to the 2015 Masters.

Willett is among a dozen players not previously exempt for the season's opening major who will lock up invitations to Augusta National next April by finishing 2014 in the top 50.

However, Willett cut it ever so close in earning his first invitation to the Masters and made his move by winning the Nedbank Challenge in South Africa on 7 December.

Though he was ranked 51st last week after not competing, he will climb to 50th in the year-end rankings with

no tournaments scheduled for this week and because points are reduced at differing rates in the world ranking formula.

Among the other players gaining Masters exemptions via the top 50 are Britons Jamie Donaldson, Ian Poulter and Stephen Gallacher, all of them members of Europe's triumphant 2014 Ryder Cup team. American Kevin Streelman will drop from 50th to 52nd in the final rankings of the year, but he is already in the Masters field because he won the PGA Tour's 2014 Hartford tournament.

There will be further opportunities for players to qualify for the April 9-12 Masters, including an updated top-50 world ranking heading into the week of the tournament.



*Danny Willett of England celebrates winning the Nedbank Challenge at Sun City on 7 Dec, 2014.—REUTERS*

Northern Irishman Rory McIlroy will end 2014 as the world number one after assuming the top spot on 2 August. McIlroy deposed Australian Adam Scott, who was the game's leading player for 11 weeks and will end the year ranked third.

American Tiger Woods started 2014 at the top of the world rankings and stayed there until on 17 May.

Woods, who played in only nine tournaments in 2014 due to a back injury that required surgery, will end the year in 32nd spot. —Reuters

## MYANMAR TV

(24-12-2014, Wednesday)

6:00 am

\* Paritta by Venerable Mingun Sayadaw

7:00 am

\* News / Weather Report

7:40 am

\* Teleplay

8:35 am

\* TV Drama Series

9:45 am

\* Documentary

10:20 am

\* Documentary (Road to Academy 2013) (Part- 3 & 4)

11:00 am

\* Teleplay

12:00 noon

\* News/ International News / Weather Report

1:00 pm

\* Myanmar Movies

2:35 pm

\* Song Varities

3:00 pm

\* News

4:30 pm

\* Science & Technology

5:15 pm

\* TV Drama Series

6:00 pm

\* News / Weather Report

7:20 pm

\* Teleplay

8:00 pm

\* News International News / Weather Report

8:35 pm

\* People's Talks

9:00 pm

\* News / Weather Report

9:30 pm

\* Documentary Fine Arts-Boson of Dramatic Performance

## MITV

MYANMAR INTERNATIONAL

(24-12-14 07:00 am~ 25-12-14 07:00 am) MST

- \* Local News
- \* Pretty Play Things From Pakokku
- \* World News
- \* Today Myanmar "YUFL"
- \* Local News
- \* The Making Procedure of Goldsmith
- \* World News
- \* Made in Myanmar "Mixxo"
- \* Local News
- \* Myanmar Leading Lady "Naw Sussana Hla Hla Soe"
- \* World News
- \* Walking Along Orchard Road
- \* Local News
- \* Jeyyanandi (A Day in the Life of a Nun)
- \* World News
- \* In The Studio "Ying"
- \* Local News
- \* Mya Setkyar Pure Silk Fabric from Inle Lake
- \* World News
- \* Myanmar Traditional Art Bronze Casting
- \* Local News
- \* Mosaic Painting (Precious Stones & Gems)
- \* World News
- \* Myanmar Puppet
- \* Local News
- \* Culture Show: Abdication of King Thibaw
- \* World News
- \* Ngapali Beach: Fishing Villages
- \* Local News
- \* A Day Out with Sarah (EP-7)
- \* World News
- \* Black Gold



## Nishikori earns top prize at annual pro sports awards



**Professional tennis player Kei Nishikori appears in a video message at the Japan Pro Sports Awards in Tokyo on 22 Dec, 2014, after being named winner of the grand prize.—KYODO NEWS**

TOKYO, 23 Dec — Kei Nishikori, who took the tennis world by storm this year, when he reached the finals of the US Open and competed at the season-ending Tour Finals, was named the winner of the grand prize at the Japan Pro Sports Awards on Monday.

The 24-year-old Nishikori was the first Japanese man to reach a Grand Slam singles final and saw his world ranking soar to No 5. Currently training in the United States, Nishikori was unable to attend, but addressed the event by video.

“This was a fulfilling year,” he said. “I want to do my best so I can return to more Grand Slam finals next year.”

Outstanding Performance Awards went to sumo grand champion Hakuho, the Pacific League and Japan Series champion Softbank Hawks baseball club, and baseball pitcher Chihiro Kaneko. “I want to do my best to win the grand prize next year,” said the 29-year-old Hakuho, who won his 32nd career grand sumo tournament this year to equal the total of legendary yokozuna Taiho. Kaneko, the 31-year-old ace of the Orix Buffaloes, led the PL in wins and ERA and won the Sawamura Award as Japan’s premier starting pitcher.

“Through baseball I want to excite the entire nation,” said Kaneko, who is currently a free agent and has yet to settle on a team for next season.

The award for outstanding new performer went to sumo wrestler Ichinojo. The 21-year-old Mongolian achieved promotion to sekiwake following his amazing debut in the elite makuuchi division in September and compiled a winning record in November in the sport’s third-highest rank.

Kyodo News

## Napoli edge Juventus in dramatic penalty shootout to win Super Cup

DOHA, 23 Dec — Napoli ended Juventus’s hopes of securing a record seventh Italian Super Cup after snatching a dramatic 6-5 shootout win in the final that stretched to 18 nerve-jangling penalties in Doha’s Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium on Monday.

Carlos Tevez fired league champions Juventus ahead twice but Gonzalo Higuain scored two equalizers to send the game to penalties. Tevez looked to have won the game in extra time when he handed Juventus a 2-1 lead with a low shot into the bottom corner of the net. But with three minutes to go, Higuain also found the back of the net for a second time to set up the electrifying finish.

In a thrilling penalty shootout that saw both keepers produce a string of stunning saves, Buffon made three saves but his acrobatic efforts were not enough as Juve missed four spot kicks. The shootout started ominously for both



**Napoli’s players celebrate with the trophy after winning their Italian Super Cup match against Juventus at Al-Sadd Stadium, in Doha, on 22 Dec, 2014.**

REUTERS

teams with Tevez and Jorginho failing to score. Both teams then scored each of their next five penalties, before missing the next two. When Kalidou Koulibaly put Napoli 6-5 ahead, goalkeeper Rafael Cabral finally brought the shootout

to an end by denying Simone Padoin, allowing Napoli fans to celebrate a memorable upset victory.

As Rafa Benitez’s side rejoiced at winning their second Super Cup, their first triumph in the competition since 1990, Juventus

were left to reflect on the missed chances that denied them a third straight title in the competition. The last time the teams met in the Super Cup final was in 2012 when the Turin giants secured a comfortable win in Beijing.—Reuters

## Chelsea go three clear after easing to win at Stoke

LONDON, 23 Dec — John Terry’s early header and Cesc Fabregas’s second-half strike restored Chelsea’s three-point Premier League lead heading into a busy Christmas programme after a 2-0 win at Stoke City on Monday.

Chelsea were ahead inside two minutes at the Britannia Stadium when Terry met a Fabregas corner with a powerful downward header. Stoke pushed forward after the break without ever causing fit-again Chelsea keeper Thibaut Courtois many problems and Fabregas sealed victory with a scuffed finish 12 minutes from time.

“These victories mean more than three points, to win and get three points the players need the right spirit and mentality, to win here they must be a really very good team with the capacity to adapt to Stoke’s style of play,” Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho told the BBC. Chelsea, who host West Ham United on Friday, have 42 points from 17 games with Manchester City, who visit West Brom the same day, on 39 and Manchester United on 32. “Now



**Chelsea’s John Terry (R in blue) heads the opening goal during their English Premier League soccer match against Stoke City at the Britannia Stadium in Stoke-on-Trent, northern England on 22 Dec, 2014. — REUTERS**

we have to focus on the three matches we still have until the end of this period,” Mourinho said of the clash with Sam Allardyce’s West Ham, the trip to Southampton on Sunday and another London derby with Tottenham on New Year’s Day. “Playing against Big

Sam is a hard job for us, we have to cope with it. The three point lead we have is a little advantage, it is a little pillow we have to protect us — we go home happy and pleased with what we did.” Stoke beat Chelsea in this fixture last season but the hosts were always up

against it after Terry timed his run to perfection and beat Asmir Begovic with a powerful header for his first league goal in over a year. Mark Hughes’s side tried to harry and hustle Chelsea but the superior class of the leaders always shone through. Courtois, back after a muscular injury, was rarely troubled although the Belgian needed to produce a fine save midway through the first half from Steven N’Zonzi’s deflected strike. Top scorer Diego Costa should have increased Chelsea’s lead when Stoke tried and failed to catch him offside, the Spaniard timing his run perfectly — only to the skew his shot wide. Fabregas might have been awarded a penalty when he appeared to be clipped by Ryan Shawcross soon after halftime but Stoke escaped. Charlie Adam drilled wide from edge of box following neat approach play from Stoke but Chelsea soaked up the pressure and made the points safe when Eden Hazard, who needed lengthy treatment in stoppage time, fed Fabregas and the Spaniard beat Begovic.—Reuters



**A young Arsenal fan waves his flag as he watches a victory parade after Arsenal won the FA Cup final soccer match against Hull City at Wembley Stadium on Saturday, in London on 18 May, 2014.—REUTERS**

## Premier first as Arsenal chalk up five million followers

LONDON, 23 Dec — Arsenal have become the first Premier League club to reach five million followers on Twitter.

The north London club said in a news release on Monday that they had consolidated their position as the third most followed team on the social network behind Real Madrid and Barcelona.

“We are delighted to have engaged so many passionate Arsenal fans around the world,” said Richard Clarke, managing editor of the club’s media group. “The interest continues to grow and we constantly evolve our approach to keep our fans engaged with what is happening across every aspect of the club,” he added in a news release. Arsenal are sixth in the league, 12 points behind leaders Chelsea, and play their next fixture at home to London rivals Queens Park Rangers on Friday. —Reuters

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