

Thaukyegat (2) Hydropower Plant generates 120 megawatts President visits hydropower facilities in Bago Region



President U Thein Sein views machinery at Thaukyegat (2) Hydropower Station at its launching ceremony in Toungoo, Bago Region.—MNA

NAY PYI TAW, 30 Dec— President U Thein Sein attended opening ceremony of second Thaukyegat hydropower plant in Toungoo Township, Bago region, Tuesday.

The ceremony was also attended by union ministers, chief ministers of states and regions, deputy ministers, members of state/region government officials, local authorities, social organizations and locals.

U Khin Maung Soe, union minister for Electric Power, explained about power distribution plans of the plant.

He said that power consumption per capita has increased to 190 kW,

compared with 104 kW of previous government, adding that the existing electricity supply is still lesser than people from Southeast Asian countries.

The Union minister said plans are underway

to supply electricity generated from mini hydropower plants for remote areas such as Leshi, Lahe and Nanyun in Naga area in Sagaing region, as well as in Putao, Kachin state, with solar power and wind turbines will also be other power sources.

U Tun Myint Naing, chairman of Shwe Energy Company, clarified the project.

President U Thein Sein also explained two major focuses of government—peace and socio-economic development of people—since it has taken office four years ago.

The government has released many prisoners to invite their contributions in development efforts, aiming to stop civil conflicts over 60 years.

He said that Bago region is strategically located to link with other areas of the country, saying that the importance of electricity supply for development of education, knowledge and social status.

President urged local businesspersons to manufacture value-added (See page 3)



Turtles from pagoda's lake released into community forest in southern Myanmar

By Aye Min Soe

YANGON, 30 Dec— Local people in Dawei have released more than 80 turtles from a pagoda's lake into a community forest recently as part of efforts for conservation of the species endemic to Myanmar.

This is the first time to release 82 turtles, 80 *Sauk*

Leik (*Morenia ocellata*) and two soft shell turtles, from a lake into a natural sanctuary area.

There may be thousands of turtles that are breeding in dense populations in lakes at some pagodas across the country, said U Win Ko Ko, a technical coordinator (Reptiles), of the Wildlife Conservation Society (Myanmar).

According to Myanmar culture, people set turtles free that they find into lakes at pagodas for the safety of the turtles.

However, the population of turtles at pagoda lakes has grown high, causing impact on their reproduction, said the turtle expert.

There are more than 10 species of turtles in pagoda

lakes, he added.

A local community society in Dawei has also proposed to the WCS (Myanmar) to find a suitable natural sanctuary for the turtles in another pagoda lake, he added.

The WCS (Myanmar) can arrange to release turtles from lakes into natural sanctuaries, according to the group.—GNLM

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Schedules to confer honorary title on 2015 Independence Day

NAY PYI TAW, 30 Dec—The honorary title awarding ceremony 2015 will take place at Thabin Hall of the Presidential Palace after the 67th Anniversary Independence Day and Grand Military Review ceremonies on 4 January 2015.—MNA

Press conference on fatal shooting of four forestry officers in Langkho Township

NAY PYI TAW, 30 Dec — The Forest Department of the Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry held a press conference at its office on Tuesday on the seizure of illegal logs and a fatal shooting of foresters.

Directors U Zaw Min and U Kyaw Kyaw Lwin of the department explained the incident in which four forestry officers were killed by armed men.

U Zaw Min said that the Ministry of Forest and Mining of Shan State informed the Shan State Forest Department of illegal logging near Wamsalaung village in the Langkho district by phone at about 2 p.m. on 23 December. According to the information, a group of foresters led by



Forestry officers measure logs seized in Wamsalaung village, Langkho District in Shan State.—MNA

U Hla Min, assistant director, and U Khaing Mon, staff officer, went on a tour of inspection of the village

on 24 December, together with a four-member police contingent led by the head of Wan Hat police station.

As no evidence was found, they left for Langkho.

During their inspection tour of the village on 26 December, they seized around 202 tons of “ownerless” Padauk logs marked with three English letter Ss on the top of each log to the east and north of the village. They then left for Langkho.

On the following day, a seven-member forestry team consisting of the assistant director, the staff officer and five forestry officers went to the village in two vehicles at about 10:30 a.m. U Saw Sit Ma Tun, one of foresters, and three civilians drove back to Langkho first at about 5:30 p.m. The remaining forestry officers went back to Langkho in a vehicle and two motorbikes at about 6:15 p.m.

Union Attorney-General Office conducts law officer refresher course

NAY PYI TAW, 30 Dec — Law officers are to protect rights of defendants and plaintiffs under the laws, Attorney-General of the Union Dr Tun Shin said at the opening ceremony of Law Officer Grade-III refresher course No 26 at his office, here, on Tuesday.

He stressed the need for trainees to understand

legal affairs and management in their fields. He said that law officers are to be loyal to the people and themselves. He urged them to uplift capacity while carrying out the tasks.

The ceremony was also attended by Deputy Attorney-General U Tun Tun Oo and officials. The trainees are attending the 30-day course.—MNA

On their way back from the village, they were stopped by five armed men at a place about four miles from the village. While trying to drive away, the gunmen opened fire on the vehicle. In the shooting, U Win Lwin, one of foresters, managed to escape by jumping from the car.

Immediately after being informed of the incident, the authorities concerned accompanied by U Win Lwin and a military column went to the place where the incident occurred. They arrived on the scene at about noon on 28 December. They found the bodies of four persons together with a vehicle and motorbikes. U Win Lwin confirmed the four bodies were U Hla Min, assistant director, and foresters U Sit Htwe, U Than Htaik Aung and U Bo Min. During the shooting, U Khaing Mon, a staff officer, managed to escape. He met with the military column where he hid about a mile from the scene.

Investigations revealed

that the vehicle was shot at from the front and the victims were shot dead after getting out of the vehicle. The seized logs stamped with three Ss logo are thought to be connected with an armed group.

U Kyaw Kyaw Lwin, another director of the department, added that similar incidents which were not as bad as to this incident occurred in last three years—six incidents in 2011, nine in 2012 and three in 2013. The latest incident is a tragic loss to the department and the country as well.

Next, U Zaw Min explained a plan to provide assistance to the bereaved families and arrangements for enabling the children of the victims to complete their education.

Then, officials made a presentation of the department, revealed some armed groups involved in illegal logging and armed attacks against foresters with photos and answered questions about the incident.

MNA

Local people staged protests in Nawngkhio, Pindaya, making five demands



Local people join protests with five demands including opposing a six-party talks in Nawngkhio Township.—MNA

NAY PYI TAW, 30 Dec — Local people in Nawngkhio Township, Shan State (North) took to the streets peacefully for two hours in Nawngkhio on 27 December, making five demands including opposing a six-party talks.

About 11,000 people from six wards and 35 village-tracts participated in the protest with the permission of the local authorities, holding placards.

They made five demands to the government to carry on its peace making process till achieving success, to implement the development of the country and socio-economy of the peoples, to seriously consider that the six-party talks which is related to the affair of the national people in Shan State is impossible and to adopt inclusive policy so that all national people can participate in the

political processes including amending the constitution. They also protested the six-party talks and demanded to include representatives of the national people in the political processes.

Similarly, about 300 local people staged a protest in Pindaya in Danu Self-Administered Zone on 24 December, making the same five demands.

MNA



Local people release turtles from a pagoda's lake into a community forest area in Dawei on 13 Dec. 2014.

PHOTO : SUPPLIED BY WCS (MYANMAR)

NATIONAL

Thaukyegat (2) Hydropower Plant

(from page 1)

products for more job opportunities for locals.

Another hydropower plant in Pyu township will soon generate 30MW for the region.

President emphasized the requirement of good transportation, modern technologies and human resources, as well as peace and cooperation of people for the regional development programmes.

U Thein Sein and senior government officials sprayed scented water to the stone inscription monument of the power plant.

Thaukyegat hydropower plant (2) is located 14 miles east of Toungoo Township, and its water storage facility is the type of Concrete Faced Rock Fill Dam (CFRD) designed by Chinese experts.

The initial survey of this power plant was first carried out by experts from UNDP and Myanmar engineers in 1964. The project was then transferred to Shwe Energy Company with BOT system in May 2008. The facility has three generators with a total capacity of 120 MW, and will be able to generate 604.7 million kW/h each year into national grid.

President finally looked around Pyuchaung hydropower project which is scheduled to open on 8 January 2015.—MNA

**Thaukyegat (2)
Hydropower Plant in
Toungoo, Bago Region.**
MNA

Thura U Shwe Mann meets social organizations at Yangon govt's headquarters

YANGON, 30 Dec—Speaker of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw and chairman of Pyithu Hluttaw Thura U Shwe Mann met social organizations here at the headquarters of regional government Tuesday.

The meeting was attended by Vice-chairman of Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) U Nanda Kyaw Swa, Yangon region's chief minister U Myint Swe, chairman of Yangon region Hluttaw U Sein Tin

Win and chairmen of Pyithu Hluttaw committees.

Thura U Shwe Mann expressed his appreciation for contributions of social organizations as links between government and public, followed by his explanation on the functioning of Hluttaw in adjustments for three estates of legislation, executive role and juridical system.

He continued that Hluttaw also prioritizes unity, national reconciliation and

internal peace, together with the legislation task.

U Myint Swe, chief minister of Yangon region, said almost all social organizations were invited to this meeting where they discussed the needs and development programmes in the regions.

He explained some proposed plans are concerned with regional government, while some others must be taken over by the union government and par-

liament.

Chief minister said the implementation of projects after they have been agreed by the members of regional government, while some projects are submitted to the union level for approval and budget allocation.

Yangon region Hluttaw's chairman U Sein Tin said the interim period between the two Hluttaw sessions of regional Hluttaw is not more than six months, and Yangon Hluttaw calls on special meeting for urgent issues.

The regional Hluttaw accepted 50 complaint letters in 2011, 150 in 2012, more than 500 in 2013, and nearly 500 up to now this year.

As a conclusion, Thura U Shwe Mann said the law enacted by Pyidaungsu Hluttaw should be fair and acceptable, with the needs of norms in international conventions and treaties.

MNA

Tatmadaw joins democratization process of the nation

NAY PYI TAW, 30 Dec—New generation youths are to carry out development tasks of the region and the nation, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services, said at the ceremony to donate computers and books at the city hall in Dawei, the capital of Taninthayi Region, on Tuesday.

The senior general said that the Tatmadaw joins the democratization process of the nation. As peace and stability plays a pivotal role in development of the nation, all the people are to abide by the laws for

ensuring prevalence of law and order. Unity among the people will help develop not only Taninthayi Region but the nation.

On behalf of the families of Defence Services (Army, Navy and Air) and well-wishers, the senior general presented 300 sets of computers, parts and 3,000 dozens of note books to Chief Minister of Taninthayi Region U Myat Ko.

The senior general and party paid homage to Abhidhaja Agga Maha Saddhamma Jotika Bhaddanta Arindama of Zeyawady Monastery in Dawei.

Myawady



Senior General Min Aung Hlaing presents computers and note books to Chief Minister U Myat Ko of Taninthayi Region.—MYAWADY

UEC reaffirms general elections in late Oct or early Nov

NAY PYI TAW, 30 Dec—General elections will be held in late October or early November in 2015, with the Union Election Commission (UEC) reaffirming that it will make every effort in line with the law to ensure that elections are free and fair.

UEC Chairman U Tin Aye at a meeting in Hpa-an of Kayin State on Tuesday called for collective participation of political parties, social organizations, media and people, stressing that lack of impartiality, transparency, freedom and fairness will tarnish the repu-

tation of government and parliament.

Only when parliament is filled with brilliant people will national development become a reality, he said, adding that elected representatives are to implement executive, legislative and judicial powers.

The State Constitution says that elections occur every five years, that the first parliamentary session come to an end on 30 January 2016, and that elections must be held within 90 days to the deadline.

According to the statement, elections are just 10

months away.

UEC Chairman U Tin Aye urged political parties to observe laws and cooperate in educational campaigns to raise public awareness of voting.

In the evening, the UEC chairman met peace groups in Hpa-an of Kayan State and discussed electoral issues.—MNA



NAY PYI TAW, 30 Dec — Ottara District Election Sub-commission held a meeting with officials of Township Election Sub-commissions and political parties in the district at the hall of the district office in Nay Pyi Taw Council Area on Tuesday.

Chairman of the district sub-commission U Aung Lwin made an opening speech. Assistant Director U Thant Zin Soe explained compilation of the voters list. Responsible persons of political parties participated in the discussions.

It was also attended by members of the district sub-commission, chairmen of township sub-commissions and departmental officials, totalling 35.

Shwe Ye Yint

Election sub-commissions meet in Ottara District



Merchants, brokers discuss business at annual general meeting

MYINGYAN, 30 Dec — Merchants and Brokers Kathina Association held the second annual general meeting at its office in Myingyan Township, Mandalay Region, on 28 December.

Chairman of the association U Tin Hlaing made an opening speech.

Officials read the executive report, audit report and financial report.

It was also attended by Myingyan District's deputy commissioner U Myint Thin Aung, Commander of District Police Force Police Lt-Col Maung Win and officials.—Zaw Min Naing (Myingyan)

MEIKTILA, 30 Dec — Meiktila Township is formed with Shande, Nyaunggaing, Aleywa and

Shanmange stations and 58 village-tracts.

Meiktila Township Irrigation Department dredged

canals to supply water from south and north parts of Meiktila Lake to monsoon and summer paddy and

other crops.

At present, 10-year canals became silted. The township department dredged a 4000-foot-long canal from South Lake to irrigate farmlands in Tawma and Htamonkan villages. Moreover, a 16,400-foot-long Chaukpin drain was re-dredged for supply of water to Tawma and Yondawgyi villages. The department also improved Uyin drain, Kangyi drain, Meechitpon drain, Chaing drain, Kon drain, Kaukwaytaw drain, Ale drain, Nat drain and Nweniaing drain.

Thanks to 159,260 feet long dredged drains, local farmers can grow paddy and other crops conveniently.

GNLM-018



Bilin Township gets social security clinic

BILIN, 30 Dec — New social security clinic was commissioned into service in Bilin, Mon State, on 26 December.

Chairperson of Social Security Board Deputy Minister for Labour, Employment and Social Security Daw Win Maw Tun, Mon State Minister for Finance Dr Khin Maung Thwin and Bilin Township Pyithu Hluttaw representative Dr Soe Moe Aung formally opened the clinic.

On the occasion, the deputy minister explained the board is extending its

clinics for social security of employees and trying to sign agreements with private hospitals and clinics so as to provide health care services.

Mon State Minister for Forestry and Mining U Win Maw Oo spoke words of thanks for opening the social security clinic in Bilin Township.

The deputy minister and acting director-general of Social Welfare Department presented commemorative pennants to state ministers and officials.

Township IPRD



Malaysia flood response denounced anew as nearly quarter million flee

KUALA LUMPUR, 30 Dec — Malaysia's worst flooding in a decade has forced nearly a quarter of a million people from their homes, officials said on Tuesday, with the government coming under renewed fire for its perceived slow response.

The National Security Council said that "exceptionally high" water levels had cut off rescuers from relief centres as the death toll rose to 21 across the northeast. Fifteen people have been killed in neighboring southern Thailand.

Most criticism was directed at Prime Minister Najib Razak for his absence as the disaster unfolded



People ride past a road damaged by flooding at Kuala Krai in Kelantan on 30 Dec, 2014. — REUTERS

after being photographed playing golf with President Barack Obama in Hawaii. "No matter how prepared we are, there will always be a bigger and more devastating disaster that tests the capability and resources of the country," the council said in a statement to the online news portal, the Malaysian Insider.

Opposition member Tony Pua denounced the government's reluctance to declare a state of emergency and its "complete lack of urgency" in calling a council meeting. "We are running a headless government with no urgent, cohesive and proactive response to the arising chaos," Pua

said in a statement. Northeastern Malaysia and southern Thailand are hit by flooding during the annual northeast monsoon but this year the rain has been particularly heavy. Malaysia's eastern states are home to many rice fields but officials have not provided an initial estimate of damage. Najib on Tuesday visited Kelantan, one of eight flooded states where the water levels have receded to allow many of the major roads to reopen. Five southern Thai provinces — Narathiwat, Yala, Pattani, Phatthalung and Songkhla — were still flooded. Nearly 10,000 people have been evacuated.—Reuters

Thai PM vows to fight human trafficking in sex trade, fishing industry

BANGKOK, 30 Dec — Thai Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha has vowed to crackdown on human trafficking in the sex trade and fishing industry in 2015 and punish any public officials involved after international criticism of Thailand's failure to tackle the crime.

Prayuth, an army general who took power in a coup in May, said he would implement a raft of measures to stop human trade in prostitution, child trafficking, forced begging and in the fishing industry.

He called for legal action against anyone involved to be expedited, in particular cases against government officials.

The move comes after the US State Department in June named Thailand as one of the world's worst centres for human trafficking, saying it was "not making significant efforts" and was a source, destination and transit country for forced labour.



Thai Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha

The State Department said most victims of trafficking in Thailand are from neighbouring countries and forced, coerced, or defrauded into labour, with "tens of thousands" exploited in the commercial sex trade, on fishing boats or as domestic servants.

A statement from the Thai government said the prime minister held a meeting last week to set out the challenges ahead including protecting victims and witnesses, working with the

private sector and other organizations, and raising awareness. "Discussions sought to increase the effectiveness of human trafficking prevention and suppression measures so as to yield tangible results in the first phase, or within one year," said the government statement. "The Prime Minister also instructed concerned agencies to look out for officials suspected of being involved with illegal immigration and human trafficking and if caught to swiftly and resolutely proceed with legal procedures against them."

Prayuth will head a committee on human trafficking that will be divided into five sub-committees focused on the fishing industry, child labour, forced and migrant workers, women's issues, and legal affairs and public relations. Each committee will submit a plan of action to Prayuth by 7 January and then update him with monthly progress reports.

The prime minister called for prompt action on legal cases involving human trafficking, saying all agencies should expedite procedures "efficiently, fairly and transparently, in particular cases involving government officials".

"The Prime Minister also called for agencies to enforce the law and pursue investigations to reach influential figures and criminal masterminds," the statement said. Prayuth outlined plans for a campaign to publicise a hotline to report suspected cases of human trafficking and corruption.

While numbers of people trafficked are hard to know, a global slavery index by Australia human rights group Walk Free Foundation estimates almost 36 million people were living as slaves, trafficked into brothels, forced into manual labour, victims of debt bondage or born into servitude.

Reuters

Three nabbed for S Philippine city bomb blast

ZAMBOANGA CITY, 30 Dec — Philippine police have arrested three men suspected of being related with a bomb explosion in the country's southern city of Zamboanga, police said here on Tuesday.

A powerful blast occurred at 8:40 pm at a massage parlor in Tomas Claudio Street in downtown Zamboanga. Fortunately, no one was reported injured from the blast, said Zamboanga City Police Director Angelito Casimiro.

The three suspects were nabbed on tips from a local witness. Two of the suspects were natives of Indanan town in Sulu Province, while the other was a resident of Tandubas town in Tawi-Tawi Province, Casimiro said.

Police and military bomb squad were trying to reconstruct pieces of evidences to determine the type of bomb and its signature to pinpoint possible group behind the blast.—Xinhua

Bodies, debris from missing AirAsia plane pulled from sea off Indonesia

JAKARTA, 30 Dec — Indonesian rescuers searching for a missing AirAsia plane carrying 162 people pulled bodies and wreckage from the sea off the coast of Borneo on Tuesday as relatives of those on board broke down in tears on hearing the news.

Indonesia AirAsia's Flight QZ8501, an Airbus A320-200, lost contact with air traffic control early on Sunday during bad weather on a flight from the Indonesian city of Surabaya to Singapore.

Indonesia's search and rescue agency confirmed the debris was from the plane. The agency's chief, Soelistyo, said "more than one" body had been recovered.

The plane has yet to be found

and there was no word on the possibility of any survivors.

Pictures of floating bodies were broadcast on television and relatives of the missing gathered at a crisis center in Surabaya wept with heads in their hands. Several people collapsed in grief and were helped away, a Reuters reporter said. "You have to be strong," the mayor of Surabaya, Tri Rismaharini, said as she comforted relatives.

"They are not ours, they belong to God." A navy spokesman said a plane door, oxygen tanks and one body had been recovered and taken away by helicopter for tests.

AirAsia chief Tony Fernandes, who has been in Indonesia since the plane went missing, said

he was rushing back to Surabaya.

"Whatever we can do at AirAsia we will be doing," he said on Twitter.

About 30 ships and 21 aircraft from Indonesia, Australia, Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea and the

United States had been involved in the search of up to 10,000 square nautical miles.

The plane, which did not issue a distress signal, disappeared after its pilot failed to get permission to fly higher to avoid bad weather be-



Search and rescue workers prepare to load body bags onto a flight to Kalimantan in Pangkal Pinang, Bangka on 30 Dec, 2014. REUTERS

cause of heavy air traffic, officials said. Flight QZ8501 was traveling at 32,000 feet (9,753 metres) and had asked to fly at 38,000 feet, officials said earlier.

Pilots and aviation experts said thunderstorms, and requests to gain altitude to avoid them, were not unusual in that area.

The Indonesian pilot was experienced and the plane last underwent maintenance in mid-November, the airline said.

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



Firemen spray water to douse a fire that engulfed a factory in the Jinshan District in Shanghai, east China, on 29 Dec, 2014. No casualties were reported after the fire. —XINHUA

Suspect in 2008 Mumbai attacks rearrested in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD, 30 Dec — Pakistani police have rearrested the main suspect in the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks on suspicion of involvement in a kidnapping incident six years ago, police officials on said on Tuesday.

Zaki-ur-Rahman Lakhvi was presented before Islamabad Duty Magistrate Malik Aman on Tuesday for judicial remand under heavy protection of police and paramilitary troops.

On 18 December, an

anti-terrorism court decided to release him on grounds of insufficient evidence linking him to the November 2008 attacks.

However, immediately after bail was granted, the government had him arrested under the Maintenance of Public Order law, which empowers the government to detain a person for six months.

On appeal, the Islamabad High Court on Monday allowed him to be conditionally released if he posted bail of 1 million

Pakistani rupees (about \$10,000).

He was arrested on Monday night and taken to a police station, a police official said.

The Indian External Affairs Ministry on Monday summoned Pakistani High Commissioner Abdul Basit to protest against Lakhvi's possible release on bail.

Lakhvi was named by India as the mastermind of the 2008 attacks in which 164 people were killed.

Kyodo News

Cambodian PM extends condolences over missing AirAsia plane

PHNOM PENH, 30 Dec — Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen has expressed his condolences to the family members of the passengers on board the AirAsia Flight QZ8501 which went missing over the Java Sea off Indonesia on Sunday.

He was deeply shocked to learn of the missing plane of AirAsia over the Java Sea, flying from Surabaya in Indonesia to Singapore, Hun Sen said in separate messages of condolences sent to Indonesian President Joko Widodo and Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak on Monday and the messages were released to the media on Tuesday.

In the messages, he extended his deepest sympathy and profound condolences to Indonesia and Malaysia as well as the bereaved families for such huge loss in the most unfortunate and tragic incident.

The AirAsia passenger plane with 162 people aboard lost contact with ground control on Sunday after it departed from Surabaya in Indonesia's East Java Province to Singapore.

Established in 2001, AirAsia, a Malaysia-based budget airline, has dominated cheap travelling in the region for years with about 100 destinations.

Xinhua

IMF satisfied with Serbia's 2015 budget

BELGRADE, 30 Dec — The mission of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) welcomed the adoption of the Serbian budget for 2015, Resident Representative of the IMF in Belgrade Daehaeng Kim stated and noted that the IMF management would decide on the announced precautionary arrangement in the second half of February.

The adopted budget is in keeping with the agreement reached by the Ser-



bian government and IMF in November concerning the economic programme

that could be backed by a 36-month stand-by precautionary arrangement,

he said. Kim noted that the Serbian authorities are also working to implement other measures agreed on with the IMF mission that would help Serbia conduct a reform of its economy.

The IMF management and Executive Board will decide on the arrangement during the session scheduled for the second half of February 2015, Kim said as released by the IMF's Belgrade Office.

Tanjug

Australian shoots spear gun into shark's throat after it kills friend

SYDNEY, 30 Dec — An Australian teenager who watched a shark attack which killed his friend revealed on Tuesday how he fought it off when it came for him.

Matt Pullella and his friend Jay Muscat, 17, were spear fishing in waters near the Western Australian town of Albany in the south of the

state when a Great White shark mauled Muscat's leg.

The shark, believed to be 4.5 metres long, then reportedly turned on Pullella, but he was able to shoot the shark in the mouth with his spear gun.

Matt Pullella paid tribute to his mate in a Facebook message. "The shark hit me

first then attacked Jay," he wrote. "The shark turned and came for me, I pushed the spear gun down its throat and fired the gun."

The action saved his life, *Nine News* reported.

It was the 15th shark attack in Western Australia since 2010, 10 of them fatal.

Monday's shark attack

came two weeks to the day after the fatal savaging of another young man on the other side of country.

He was Queenslander Daniel Smith, 18, whose leg, groin and arm were mauled while he too was spear fishing off the world renowned tourist town of Port Douglas.—Xinhua

Japanese, S Korean vice foreign ministers meet for talks

SEOUL, 30 Dec — Japanese Vice Foreign Minister Akitaka Saiki and Cho

Members of a South Korean civil group block a car carrying Japanese Vice Foreign Minister Akitaka Saiki, who met with Cho Tae Yong, South Korea's first vice foreign minister, on 29 Dec, 2014, in Seoul.

The group was protesting over a memorandum of understanding signed by Japan, South Korea and the United States on sharing and safeguarding sensitive defence information.—KYODO NEWS

Tae Yong, South Korea's first vice foreign minister, met on Monday to discuss bilateral and regional issues.

The meeting was delayed by a South Korean citizens' group's blocking a car carrying a person from the Japanese side in front of the South Korean Foreign Ministry.

The meeting comes at a time Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and South Korean President Park Geun-hye have not yet held a formal one-on-one summit meeting since the two leaders took office, Abe in 2012

and Park in 2013, due to strained bilateral ties.

Tensions exist between Japan and South Korea because of issues such as that of women who worked in wartime Japanese military brothels and are euphemistically known as "comfort women" in Japan.

The two countries have held director general-level talks five times to tackle concerns such as the comfort women issue but have failed to find common ground, leading them to upgrade the talks to the vice ministerial level.

Kyodo News



WORLD

New York City mayor heckled, booed at police graduation

NEW YORK, 30 Dec — New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio drew heckles and boos along with applause when he addressed graduating police cadets on Monday, two days after thousands of uniformed officers turned their backs on him at a slain policeman's funeral.

With the city a focal point in a national debate over the killings of unarmed black men by white police, the mayor has been struggling to mend the most toxic rift in decades between City Hall and the country's biggest police force.

Some booed as the mayor began his speech before 884 graduating cadets at Manhattan's Madison Square Garden arena. He warmly praised the police department.

"You will confront all the problems that plague our society," de Blasio told the new officers. "Problems that you didn't create."

A heckler cried out, "You created them!"

Some in the audience applauded and cheered the outburst. De Blasio, briefly flustered, continued his speech.

A dozen or so audience members turned their backs on the mayor, repeating a gesture by thousands of officers from around the country at Saturday's funeral for Police Officer Rafael Ramos. Police first turned their backs on the mayor a week earlier when he arrived at the hospital where Ramos and his partner, Wenjian Liu, were taken.

After the ceremony, some of the new officers said they appreciated de Blasio's support.

Before the mayor had even finished speaking, his press office sent journalists an email, apparently prepared in advance. It said this was not the first time a New York mayor was booed at a



New York Mayor Bill de Blasio walks away from the podium after speaking to the New York City Police Academy Graduating class in New York on 29 Dec, 2014.—REUTERS

police graduation, and cited old news reports about de Blasio's three predecessors getting similar treatment.

Asked whether police had turned their backs on other mayors, Marti Adams, a spokeswoman for de Blasio, said she would have to double-check.

The rift between de Blasio and many in the po-

lice department preceded his taking office in January. De Blasio made police reform a theme of his campaign.

The rift deepened when de Blasio expressed qualified support for protests sparked by the deaths of unarmed black men at the hands of white police officers.

Some officers began openly shunning de Blasio

after Ramos and Liu were ambushed and shot dead as they sat in their squad car in Brooklyn. The shooter wrote online that he was avenging the deaths of two unarmed black men who died in confrontations with white officers last summer in Ferguson, Missouri, and New York.

De Blasio and Police Commissioner Bill Bratton are due to meet the leaders of the city's five police unions on Tuesday, according to the mayor's public schedule.

In Los Angeles on Monday, police detained one man and were searching for a second after what they said was an unsuccessful sniper attack on two police officers in their patrol car on Sunday night. No one was injured, and it was not clear whether the incident was connected to the police protests.

Officer Liu's wake was scheduled for Saturday in Brooklyn and his funeral for

Sunday.

The slaying of Ramos and Liu has become a rallying point for police forces beleaguered by months of demonstrations against police tactics in New York and other cities.

The demonstrations began in August after a white police officer fatally shot an unarmed black man, Michel Brown, 18, in Ferguson, Missouri. The shooting and a grand jury's decision not to indict the officer, Darren Wilson, triggered months of often-violent protests in the St Louis suburb.

On 17 July, Eric Garner, a 43-year-old black man, died after New York police put him in a banned chokehold while arresting him for illegally selling cigarettes.

The grand jury in that case decided not to indict the officer who applied the chokehold, Daniel Pantaleo.

Reuters

Russia's Lavrov, US Kerry discuss prospects for Palestinian-Israeli settlement



US Secretary General John Kerry and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov

MOSCOW, 30 Dec — Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and US Secretary General John Kerry on Monday discussed prospects for the Palestinian-Israeli settlement, including the situation at the United Nations Security Council, the Russian Foreign Ministry said.

"They also looked at a

possibility of bilateral contacts in 2015," the ministry said.

The telephone conversation was initiated by the US side.

On 18 December, Jordan submitted to the United Nations Security Council a draft resolution prepared by the League of Arab States. The draft resolution gives

12 months for a comprehensive settlement of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, which envisages the creation of a "sovereign and viable" Palestinian State. The document says that all Israeli forces must be withdrawn from the occupied territory no later than 2017. The draft resolution says that a negotiated solution should be based on several parameters including the 1967 borders, security agreements, and "Jerusalem as the shared capital of the two States which fulfils the legitimate aspirations of both parties and protects freedom of worship." The text also "calls upon both parties to abstain from any unilateral and illegal actions, including settlement activities that could undermine the viability of a two-state solution." The voting date has not yet been appointed.—*Itar-Tass*

Syriza lead over Greek conservatives narrows to three points

ATHENS, 30 Dec — Greek left-wing opposition party Syriza's poll lead over the ruling conservatives has narrowed slightly to 3.0 percentage points, according to a poll published after Prime Minister Antonis Samaras proposed a 25 January parliamentary election.

The survey conducted by Marc for Alpha TV showed the anti-bailout Syr-

iza party would get 28.1 percent of the vote if an election were held now, versus 25.1 percent for Prime Minister Antonis Samaras's New Democracy party.

Support for the co-ruling Socialists was 4.6 percent.

A poll by the same pollster published last week showed Syriza was leading New Democracy by 3.5 per-

centage points.

The poll was published hours after lawmakers failed to elect a president on Monday, triggering the dissolution of parliament and an election next month.

The telephone survey of 1,017 households, conducted on 26-28 December nationwide — before Monday's presidential vote — showed that 58.6 percent of Greeks were against snap elections.

About one third of the respondents said they would prefer a New Democracy-led coalition government after the election versus 23.7 percent who would like a Syriza-led coalition government.

Syriza has been ahead of the government in opinion polls for months but its lead has shrunk in recent days as the showdown in parliament neared.—*Reuters*



Alexis Tsipras, opposition leader and head of radical leftist Syriza party, talks to reporters outside the parliament building after the last round of a presidential vote in Athens on 29 Dec, 2014.—REUTERS

Ice-cream shop closure stirs Venezuela's economic blame game

CARACAS, 30 Dec — Venezuela's Tourism Ministry denied on Monday that a famous ice-cream store had closed due to lack of milk, the latest quirky twist in the bitter national debate over who is to blame for the nation's economic problems.

"It's false," the ministry tweeted after the Coromoto shop, which holds a

Guinness world record for its 863 different flavours, announced it was closed over the Christmas holiday because of a milk shortage.

An article on the ministry's website said Coromoto's Portuguese owner was on holiday in his homeland while other ice-cream parlors in Venezuela's western city of Merida, where the shop is located, were find-

ing enough milk to function normally.

"Manuel da Silva is an opposition supporter, with every right to be so, except that he's telling a lie and his action was planned, through the media, as part of the low-intensity war against the present government," the article said.

Although it is a small controversy, the ice-cream

affair underlines how the country's polarized politics have seeped into many areas of Venezuelan life.

Opponents seized on the Coromoto announcement as a telling symbol of what they view as President Nicolas Maduro's economic failure. He says foes, egged on by the United States and foreign media, exaggerate and make up problems.

Da Silva could not be reached for comment.

Venezuelans have been suffering from shortages all year amid an economic slowdown, the highest inflation in the Americas and restrictions on foreign currency for businesses.

Opposition leaders say 15 years of socialist policies, which began under Maduro's predecessor,

Hugo Chavez, are to blame, while the government says its foes are undermining the economy with sabotage and speculation.

The recent plunge in the price of oil, which accounts for 96 percent of the country's foreign currency revenues, has exacerbated Venezuela's economic problems.

Reuters

PERSPECTIVES

Wednesday, 31 December, 2014

Goodbye 2014

By Aung Khin

Year 2014 has generated emotional matters for us. It is just about to leave us, with pending issues. The world has suffered stresses and strains of shocking events, from terrorist threats to wild currency fluctuations.

Some developing countries have seen better economies, increasing foreign investments and better social welfare programmes, while some people in some corners of the world are still un-

der the stress of poverty, labour abuses and discrimination.

While ceasefire agreements could be made between the governments and rebel armed groups, some relevant parties could not stop attacks, leading to the increasing number of internally displaced persons amidst conflicts and wars.

Though the United Nations is trying to settle disputes, hatreds have been resulted from protectionism, with efforts to expand the maps of territories.

Natural disasters such as floods, earthquakes and typhoons have cost thousands of lives. Casualties in air accidents have been considerable in 2014. Major economies have agreed to take measures to reduce global warming and carbon emissions. It is not too late, but environmental changes have turned into many disasters.

Malnutrition and unhygienic lifestyles have

been underlying causes for diseases such as Ebola, but HIV/AIDS cases have declined considerably due to strenuous efforts in educative programmes.

With great prospects of a peaceful world, we need more unity and cooperation to leave miserable happenings in the past and bring about a better and brilliant future.

Write for us

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

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

Is vaping e-cigarette safe?

By Min Soe Oo

After reading two articles about cigarette smoking namely "Should Smoking at Public Places be Banned?" and "Is Secondhand Smoke Dangerous?", written by (U) Khin Maung Myint in the Global New Light of Myanmar, I have an idea to write this article. Although health hazards of both first-hand and secondhand smokes are well established

and many public spaces and hospitals are smoking prohibited, many smokers are reluctant to quit smoking habit and are ignorant to the prohibition of smoking in the public places, especially in our country. Some affordable persons switch to vape electronic cigarettes instead of totally quitting smoking as electronic devices were invented in the hope of contributing smokeless smoke and helping the habitual smokers quit

cigarette smoking.

The earliest electronic cigarette can be traced to Herbert A. Gilbert, who in 1963 patented a device described as "a smokeless non-tobacco cigarette" that involved "replacing burning tobacco and paper with heated, moist, flavored air". This device heated the nicotine solution and produced steam. It was never commercialized. In 2003, a Chinese pharmacist named Hon Lik came up with the idea of using a piezoelectric ultrasound emitting element to vaporize a pressurized jet of liquid containing nicotine which is diluted in a propylene glycol solution. This design produces a smoke like vapor that can be inhaled

and provides a vehicle for nicotine delivery into the blood stream via the lungs. Hon patented his device in China in the same year. Then first generations of electronic cigarettes were produced and commercialized in 2005 to 2006 before receiving first international patent in 2007.

What is electronic cigarette or e-cigarette and how does it work? It uses a battery-powered heating element known as an atomizer to heat a propylene glycol or glycerin-based liquid solution which is labeled as e-liquid into an aerosol mist. The mist can contain nicotine and may be flavored with menthol or other flavors. The mist is directed through a tube, and it can then be inhaled, simulating

the act of tobacco smoking, but without delivering the toxic products of tobacco combustion.

There are many reasons why people use e-cigarettes. Many cigarette smokers use them because they think they are safer than regular cigarettes. In addition, they are attracted to e-cigarettes because they seem less harsh than conventional cigarettes, and because of the many flavors available. At this point of time, there are numerous unregulated manufacturers of e-liquid, and they are producing dozens of flavors. Flavors can be anything from menthol and tobacco-flavor to coconut, chocolate, vanilla, or mango. Moreover, with some types of e-cigarettes the user can mix his or her own

e-liquid, and can therefore mix up any variety of flavor combinations.

In contrast to conventional cigarettes, e-cigarettes do not have dangerous effect of second hand smokes so one can vape them in public places and they emit lesser amount of toxicants such as acrolein, toluene, formaldehyde and acetaldehyde etc. However, vaping e-cigarette is not without health hazards such as irritations of users' eyes and lungs. Long time hazards of vaping e-cigarettes are not known properly. Up to now, no long-term studies have shown that e-cigarettes are "healthier alternatives" to conventional cigarettes so total giving up of smoking is advisable for the benefits of one's own health.

Myanmar Accountancy Council presents certificates to CPA, DA holders

YANGON, 30 Dec—Professional accountants are to abide by accountancy rules and regulations with their prestige and integrity, Deputy Auditor-General U Myo Myint, Vice Chairman of MAC, said at the ceremony to present certificates of Certified Public Accountants and Diploma in Accounting courses the training school of the office of the Auditor-General of the Union in Yangon on 28 December. He urged the graduate trainees to try hard to

uplift their capacity by studying laws, bylaws, rules and regulations, orders, directives and procedures related to accountancy.

The ceremony was also attended by executives of Myanmar CPA Association, lecturers of the training schools and well-wishers.

So far, Myanmar Accountancy Council have turned 2,189 Certified Public Accountants and 4,348 Diploma in Accounting holders.

MNA



MPF combats trafficking in persons as military operations

NAY PYI TAW, 30 Dec—As prevention plays a key role in trafficking in persons, the committee co-operates with media, artistes and social organizations in giving educative talks on anti-human trafficking to the people, Union Minister for Home Affairs Lt-Gen Ko Ko told the Central Committee for Prevention of Trafficking in Persons meeting 2/2014 at the ministry in Nay Pyi Taw on 29 December.

The union minister who is also chairman of the central committee stressed the need to uplift capacity of community watch group members for prevention of trafficking in persons. He said that the legal affairs and prosecution working group are to draw the 2005 Anti-Human Trafficking Law together with local and foreign experts. He revealed that Australia-Asia Program



Union Minister Lt-Gen Ko Ko highlights plans of combating trafficking in persons.—MNA

to Combat of Trafficking in Persons-AAPTIP, Warnart Group and Human Trafficking Work Group will provide technical assistance for reviewing the law.

He noted that Myanmar Police Force implements a plan for combating human trafficking as a military operation across the nation.

The union minister explained tasks of the central

committee, successful hosting of meetings at region level and opening of a home for the human trafficked victims in border town Myawady on 19 December with the assistance of the Japanese government.

He urged all to beef up trafficking in persons in a transparent manner in the entire nation up to February 2015 as the U.S. Depart-

ment of State collects data for issuance of the trafficking in persons report.

Deputy Ministers Brig-Gen Kyaw Kyaw Tun and Daw Su Su Hlaing, Deputy Attorney-General U Tun Tun Oo, Chief of MPF Police Maj-Gen Zaw Win and officials discussed progress of anti-human trafficking in 2014 and a new plan for 2015.—MNA

LOCAL NEWS

Price of watermelon down in Natogyi Tsp

MYINGYAN, 30 Dec — Watermelons are available at K1,000 per three fruits in of Myingyan and Natogyi fruit market. Local growers and merchants do not export these fruits to Chinese market and sell the in the domestic market, said a local watermelon grower.

Number of watermelon growers is on increase in Natogyi, Pyinsi and Kanna year after year.

They put croplands under 850 acres of watermelon. Agricultural companies grow watermelon plants on the plots. So, local farmers get K150,000 per acre as tenancy.

Harvest of watermelon in Natogyi Township is earlier than other regions. As a result, local farmers face decline of prices for watermelon.

Khin Zar Mon Myint (Law)



Local growers face declining prices of watermelon in Natogyi-Myingyan market.

Midwifery Training School confers diploma on trainees of first batch

MYEIK, 30 Dec — The Midwifery Training School under the Department of Medical Science conferred diploma certificates on trainees for the first time in Myeik, Taninthayi Region, on 28 December.

The trainees have completed writing and viva examinations after studying two-year course of midwifery science.

At first, Principal Daw Khin Mar Cho made

a speech, and the trainees took oaths.

The principal conferred certificates of diploma on 35 trainees.

It was attended by district and township level departmental officials, Medical Superintendent Dr Daw Thanda Myo Win of Myeik People's General Hospital, trainers of the school and relatives of trainees.

Khaing Htoo (Myeik District IPRD)



MCDC substitutes Zaygyo clock tower with new one

MANDALAY, 30 Dec — Mandalay Zaygyo clock tower was built as a symbol of Mandalay City in 1909.

The England-made clock was substituted with Japan-made brand Seiko in 1985. Due to impact of weather, the 29-year-old second clock was substituted again with a new one by Mandalay City Development Committee in December 2014.

The clock has three-foot diameters of surface. It cannot be searched in the market. Electrician U Ye Win imported parts of clock to make the clock tower. He made preparations for machinery, electronics



and sound effects of the clock. The new clock tower has been installed with battery back-up system for its run.—*Tin Maung (Mandalay)*

MCDC celebrates 22nd anniversary

MANDALAY, 30 Dec — In accord with the guidance of Mandalay Region government, Mandalay City Development Committee emphasizes upgrading Mandalay to be a world-class city with greening and smooth transport facilities, Mandalay Region Minister for Development Affairs Mandalay Mayor U Aung Moun said at the 22nd anniversary celebration of the committee at the city hall on 29 December.

The mayor presented prizes to two five-distinction winning students in the 2013-14 matriculation examination and outstanding staff from 14 departments.

Secretary U Khin Maung Tin and officials gave prizes to outstanding students, photographers in the photo contest of Anawma magazine and winners in the sports meet.

On the occasion,



MCDC presented prizes worth over K8,492 million to the staff and students.

In the morning, the

mayor and party offered alms to members of the Sangha in commemoration of the 22nd anniversary

of the committee at State Pariyatti Sasana University (Mandalay).—*Tin Maung (Mandalay)*

Tourists difficult to read old railway station's signboard

MOHNYIN, 30 Dec — Mohnyin is a district level town which is home to over 200,000 people of national races.

Famous Indawgyi Lake is located in Mohnyin Township, attracting both local and foreign travelers. In open season, globetrotters arrive in Mohnyin by train and proceed to Indawgyi from Mohnyin railway station by car.

Some of tourists face difficulties to read the signboard of Mohnyin station because the spelling in Myanmar language of the signboard is different from the map reference.

“Local authorities upgraded Mohnyin Station, spending a large sum of money from the government budget. But, they did not substitute the signboard with new one. They depicted

station's name on the signboard for many times. Such act tarnishes the integrity of the town and causes difficulties to tourists,” a local told media.

GNLM-001



Iraqi security forces recapture large sections of Dhuluiya town

BAGHDAD, 30 Dec — Iraqi security forces and pro-government militias took control of large parts of the Tigris River town of Dhuluiya north of Baghdad on Monday from Islamic State fighters, police and army sources said.

The assault, which began on Sunday and ran into Monday, enabled militia fighters and Iraqi army and federal police to break the militants' siege of the town 70 km (45 miles) north of Baghdad.

Iraq's Shi'ite-led government, backed by US-led air strikes, has been trying to push back Islamic State since it swept through mainly Sunni Muslim provinces of northern Iraq in June, meeting virtually no resistance.

"Iraqi security forces backed by volunteers (militias) are controlling central parts of Dhuluiya where the government offices are located," said Khalaf Hammad, a police captain from Dhuluiya. "Now Islamic State fighters are trapped in small areas in the town's northwest."

Islamic State fighters had occupied the town's northern half since June and surrounded the southern half of Dhuluiya where members of the Sunni al-Jubouri tribe had refused to swear allegiance to the militants.

"Since early morning we have been trapped inside homes. The only thing we can hear is the warplanes bombing and machine gun barrages," said

Bado Ahmed, a resident of Dhuluiya. "We are desperately waiting to be liberated from Islamic State."

Iraqi police said Iraqi helicopter and fighter planes conducted the air strikes.

The Sunni militants had used neighbouring villages to isolate not only the Jubouri tribesmen fighting Islamic State but also to attack the nearby Shi'ite town of Balad.

The new offensive, launched on Sunday, was meant to break Islamic State's grip around both Balad and Dhuluiya.

The rural areas north of Baghdad between Iraq's capital and Samarra, a shrine city for Shi'ites, has many Islamic State strongholds. — Reuters



A Libya Dawn fighter aims his weapon during clashes with pro-government forces near Wetia airbase, Libya, on 29 Dec, 2014. Clashes continued between Libya Dawn fighters and pro-government forces on Monday near Wetia airbase, some 170 kilometres southwest of the capital Tripoli. — XINHUA

Syrian deputy minister says peace talks to start in Moscow on 27 January

DAMASCUS, 30 Dec — Syrian Deputy Foreign Minister Faisal Mekdad said on Monday that peace talks between the Syrian government and opposition groups will be held in Moscow from 27 to 29 January.

Speaking to *Kyodo News* in Damascus, Mekdad cited information he received from Russia, which is serving as a mediator of negotiations for the country mired in a protracted civil war. The deputy minister said that "we are not going to have any substantive discussion about the developments in Syria" at the Moscow event. He described the nature of talks as preliminary consultations for a "national dialogue" expected to be

held in Syria later.

In the context of such dialogue, Mekdad noted the importance of discussing how all the parties can contribute to combating terrorism, citing threats from forces such as the Islamic State.

The opposition, however, is anticipated to press for moves toward the establishment of a transition government, including a demand for the resignation of President Bashar al-Assad, which would likely pit them against the government. In Moscow, opposition groups and individuals from both inside and outside of Syria including people from business and cultural sectors will first sit down for talks amongst themselves

on 27 January, according to Mekdad. On the following days, Syrian government officials will hold talks with the opposition members. The Syrian government and the pro-western opposition group National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces, which operates outside Syria, were engaged in talks in Geneva in January and February, but failed to stop the violence. In Geneva, the government called for a halt to violence from terrorism, while the coalition prioritized setting up a transition government. Russia, which has stood behind President al-Assad, is urging opposition groups in Syria to take part in the upcoming talks. — *Kyodo News*



A vehicle belonging to Shi'ite fighters fires a multiple rocket launcher during clashes with the Islamic State on the outskirts of Balad, north of Baghdad on 26 Dec, 2014. — REUTERS

Yemeni intelligence officer killed, general escapes in ambushes

ADEN, 30 Dec — A senior Yemeni intelligence officer was shot dead on Monday by suspected al-Qaeda militants and an army general escaped a separate ambush in eastern Yemen, security sources said.

The intelligence officer, Colonel Nasser Ahmed, was targeted as he was driving in the southern city of al-Bayda, the sources told *Reuters*.

In a separate attack, suspected al-Qaeda militants planted bombs in a road on which General Abdulrahman Al Hulaili's convoy was travelling near al-Qatan in eastern Hadramout Province, security sources and local officials said.

The attackers also opened fire on the convoy. Three of Hulaili's bodyguards were wounded but the general, the head of the First Military Region, was unharmed, the sources said. The al-Qaeda affiliate Ansar al-Shariah claimed responsibility for the two attacks on the group's Twitter account. Authorities have not yet identified the attackers but said the ambushes mirrored scores of previous attacks blamed on al-Qaeda. Those attacks killed more than 200 army officers in different areas of Yemen in the past three years. Yemen has been in turmoil since 2011 pro-democracy protests forced long-ruling President Ali Abdullah Saleh to step down. — *Reuters*

Libya contracts US firm to extinguish port storage tanks fire



A firefighter stands near the fire of a storage oil tank at the port of Es Sider in Ras Lanuf on 29 Dec, 2014. — REUTERS

TRIPOLI, 30 Dec — Libya's recognized government has contracted a US firefighter firm to help extinguish fires at storage tanks at the Es Sider oil port, a spokesman said on Monday.

Work would start within five days, government spokesman Mohamed Bazaza said, confirming a statement on a government website. The value of the contract was \$6 million, the statement said, without naming the company. Fire has been raging for days at several storage tanks at Es Sider, Libya's biggest oil port, due to clashes of brigades allied with competing governments vying for control of the country's oil facilities. — *Reuters*

BUSINESS & HEALTH

Asian shares wilt as worry over Greece saps risk appetite



A cameraman films a stock quotation board at the Tokyo Stock Exchange in Tokyo on 15 Dec, 2014.

REUTERS

TOKYO, 30 Dec — Asian shares extended losses on Tuesday, as a sharp selloff in commodities overnight and political uncertainty in Greece made investors less willing to take risks in the final trading days of 2014.

Activity was thin ahead of the New Year holiday, with many traders having closed out positions. Japanese markets will be shut from Wednesday to Friday, reopening next Monday.

MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan was down about 0.6 percent on the day, and off less than 1 percent for 2014. Japan's Nikkei stock average fell 0.8 percent on Tuesday but is up around 8 percent this year. With reflationary policies of the Bank of Japan and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe set to continue in 2015, investors maintained a bullish outlook. "The new year will be very positive, with stocks boosted by likely additional easing by the BOJ and corporate earnings growth," predicted Takashi Hiroki, chief strategist at Monex, Inc. On Wall Street overnight, the Dow Jones industrial average ended slightly down, while the S&P 500 and the Nasdaq Composite managed to eke out modest

gains despite the overhang of concern about Greece's political woes.

Greek Prime Minister Antonis Samaras failed to get enough support for his presidential nominee on Monday, and will call a national election for 15 January.

The news caused Greek shares to plunge as much as 11.3 percent before closing down 3.9 percent, and yields on 10-year Greek bonds touched their highest since September 2013.

The election could open the way for Greece's Syriza party to come to power. That party says it wants to wipe out a big part of the country's debt and cancel the terms of the bailout Athens received from the European Union and International Monetary Fund.

Developments in Greece weighed on the euro, which fell to a fresh low of \$1.2130 on the EBS trading platform on Tuesday, its lowest since mid-2012. It was last down about 0.1 percent on the day at \$1.2139.

"Our bearish view on EUR/USD rests on the assumption that monetary policy settings on both sides of the Atlantic are likely to diverge markedly next year," strategists at UBS wrote in a note to clients.—Reuters

3rd bird flu case confirmed in Japan this winter

TOKYO, 30 Dec — Local government officials in Japan have confirmed the detection of a highly pathogenic strain of bird flu virus at two chicken farms in Miyazaki and Yamaguchi prefectures — the second and third cases of avian influenza in Japan this winter.

The Miyazaki prefectural government announced the detection of the virus at a farm in the city of Miyazaki late Sunday night and culled all 42,000 birds raised there, officials said on Monday.

The first case was confirmed on 16 December in the city of Nobeoka also in Miyazaki Prefecture, which is known as the country's top producer of broiler chickens.

In Yamaguchi Prefecture, western Japan, the prefectural government announced early on Tuesday morning that a genetic test confirmed the virus at a farm in Nagato city, about 275 kilometers north of Miyazaki city, after a



Local officials of the southwestern Japan prefecture of Miyazaki prepare to bury all of the 42,000 chickens culled in the early morning on 29 Dec, 2014, at a farm where a highly pathogenic bird flu virus was detected.

KYODO NEWS

total of 21 chickens died on Sunday and Monday. All three cases involve the H5 variety of the virus, according to officials.

In the latest case in Miyazaki Prefecture, the farm in Miyazaki city reported to the prefecture at about 11:30 am on Sunday that increasing numbers of chickens were dying. Chickens later tested pos-

itive in a genetic test for bird flu.

The Miyazaki prefectural government has asked five other chicken farms located within a radius of 3 kilometres of the affected farm to refrain from moving their approximately 145,000 chickens from their farms.

It also asked farms within 10 km not to take

their chickens out of the 10-km radius zone. A total of 55 chicken farms are located within the 10-km radius, excluding the five in the 3-km zone. The prefectural government called on poultry farmers to take thorough disease control measures during an emergency meeting on Monday morning, but one of the participants said the situation is distressing because the poultry farm in question "got infected even though it was taking proper protective measures." Yamaguchi Prefecture is following similar procedures — culling around 37,000 birds and placing bans on the movement and shipment of chickens in the area. In January 2004, Yamaguchi Prefecture reported chickens at a farm in what is now Yamaguchi City were infected with a highly pathogenic strain of bird flu, the first avian flu case in Japan in nearly 80 years. At that time about, 34,000 birds were killed.

Kyodo News

Food and medication insecurity tied to poor diabetes control

NEW YORK, 30 Dec — People without reliable sources of food and medicine are more likely to have poor control over their diabetes, compared to those without such concerns, according to a new study.

Researchers found the likelihood of a person having poorly controlled diabetes increased by about 39 percent for each of the so-called economic insecurities they reported.

"What we found is that food and medication are a big deal and probably account for the bulk of it, but it doesn't look like there is any one thing," said Dr Seth Berkowitz, the study's lead author from Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston.

Approximately 29 million Americans — about 9 percent of the US population — have diabetes, according to the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention.

Type 2 is the most common form of diabetes and is often linked to obesity. In type 2 diabetes, the body's cells may be resistant to the hormone insulin, or the body may not make enough of the hormone. Insulin gives blood sugar access to the body's cells to be used as fuel.

There's been speculation that the 2010 Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act — better known as Obamacare — would increase access to healthcare for people with dia-

betes, Berkowitz and his colleagues write in JAMA Internal Medicine.

People with low incomes may not benefit as much from that increased access, they add, because getting more healthcare services does not mean also having access to food, medications and other items needed to control diabetes.

For the study, the researchers used data collected from June 2012 through October 2013 from 411 people with diabetes at clinics and health centers in Massachusetts.

Massachusetts expanded healthcare access years before the rest of the country.

"I think what we're

looking at in Massachusetts is where the rest of the country will be in a few years," Berkowitz said.

Most of the participants had insurance, about 46 percent of the participants had uncontrolled diabetes and about 40 percent reported some sort of inability to get food, medicine or other necessities.

Specifically, about 28 percent reported not taking their medicines because they couldn't afford the drugs. About 14 percent said they couldn't pay their utility bills, about 20 percent said they didn't have reliable access to food and about 11 percent said their housing situation wasn't stable.

Reuters

Toyota to miss China 2014 sales goal of over 1.1 million vehicles — executives



A worker walks in front the Toyota Motor Corp stage prior to the opening of the 15th Shanghai International Automobile Industry Exhibition in Shanghai on 19 April, 2013. — REUTERS

BEIJING, 30 Dec — Toyota Motor Corp is likely to miss its 2014 objective of selling over 1.1 million vehicles in China because of a faster-than-anticipated economic slowdown and resulting price war in the local auto market.

Toyota and its two Chinese joint ventures will miss the goal and will sell slightly more than 1 million vehicles in 2015, two company executives told Reuters. Researcher IHS

Automotive puts sales at 1.09 million in 2014 and 1.15 million in 2015.

The shortcoming reveals continued difficulty for Japanese automakers in China even as diplomatic relations recover from a territorial spat that turned Chinese consumers against Japanese goods. Compounding matters is an increase in models from premium German brands priced within reach of mainstream Japanese cars.

"Toyota can resort to

a fire sale and meet our sales targets, but our philosophy is to produce and sell as many as a market wants, not much more," said one of the executives. "We try to stay away from price wars as much as we can."

The Japanese automaker has unofficially aimed for 1 million vehicles in China since 2010, coming close with 917,500 vehicles in 2013.

But with economic growth nearing its slow-

est rate in 24 years, Toyota has had to revise sales plans gradually since the third quarter, said the executives, who were not authorised to speak with media on the matter and so declined to be identified.

Projected 2014 sales for the automaker's luxury brand Lexus, for example, are now roughly 75,000 cars from an original target of 85,000, they said. Toyota is scheduled to release full-year figures on 6 January.—Reuters

Ferry stricken by blaze fully evacuated, 10 dead



A man (C) and his daughter (2nd L), both rescued from the *Norman Atlantic* ferry, disembark from a Greek Airforce C-130 military cargo aircraft at the Elefsina military airport near Athens on 29 Dec, 2014.

REUTERS

ROME / ATHENS, 30 Dec — Rescue teams evacuated more than 400 people from a car ferry that caught fire off Greece's Adriatic coast in a 36-hour operation on roiling seas, but 10 people were killed in the disaster.

Italian and Greek authorities continued an air search of the sea around the vessel while they sought to verify the number of passengers who had been on board, fearing that many people could be missing.

The fire broke out on Sunday on a vehicle deck of the *Norman Atlantic* ferry,

whose manifest said should be carrying 478 passengers and crew and more than 200 vehicles. Rescue efforts were complicated by bad weather.

Italian and Greek helicopters began airlifting passengers from the upper deck as the ferry drifted in rough seas between Greece and Italy on Sunday afternoon and continued throughout the night. Ten people aboard the ferry were killed, the Italian coastguard said.

"It was hell," Dimitra Theodossiou, a Greek soprano opera singer, told Ita-

ly's *la Repubblica* newspaper. She was evacuated by helicopter during the night.

"It was very cold, terribly cold. Nearby ships sprayed water from their hydrants (to fight the fire) and we were completely wet," she said.

She was treated for a mild case of hypothermia at a hospital in Lecce, Italy, and later released.

The Italian captain, Argilio Giacomazzi, abandoned the ship once all others had been evacuated, Italian Transport Minister Maurizio Lupi said.

Fifty-six crew members were evacuated, while 234 of those rescued were Greek, 54 Turkish, 22 Albanians and 22 Italians, Lupi said.

He would not confirm a report from Greece that there were 38 still missing.

"It's absolutely premature" to say how many are missing, Lupi said.

Some of those rescued were not on the original ship's manifest, and Italian authorities are looking for a definitive list of passengers to cross-check it with the names of the survivors, he said, adding that it was possible that there were illegal

migrants aboard.

A medical team and a flight operator had boarded the vessel to assist the passengers and crew during the rescue, the Italian navy said. Its San Giorgio amphibious transport ship coordinated the rescue operation.

A merchant ship carrying a reported 49 of the ferry passengers, including four children, arrived in the southern Italian port of Bari early on Monday.

Bad weather hampered efforts overnight to attach cables to the ferry for towing. Pictures from Monday afternoon showed the ship still smouldering, and Lupi said tow cables attached overnight broke.

Italian and Albanian magistrates ordered that the ship be seized in order to investigate the cause of the fire, which is still unknown, and magistrates in both countries are deciding together where the vessel should be towed, Italy's Transport Ministry said in a statement.

The Italian-flagged ferry, chartered by Greek ferry operator Anek Lines, was sailing from Patras in western Greece to Ancona in Italy.

Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi, speaking at a year-end news conference in Rome, praised the

work of the Italian-led rescue effort, which he said had helped avoid a "massacre".—Reuters



Photo taken on 29 Dec, 2014, in Kushiro on Japan's northernmost main island of Hokkaido shows swans on the Ninishibetsu River, which is located near a large supermarket and residential area.—KYODO NEWS

Heavy snow makes driving conditions difficult in Serbia

BELGRADE, 30 Dec — The snow that fell during the night and low temperatures causing icy roads made driving in Serbia difficult on Monday, the Automobile and Motorcycle Association of Serbia (AMSS) said in a release Monday morning.

A lot of snow is expected during the day and evening, so motorists are being warned to drive with caution.

According to the border police directorate, current wait times at border crossings are up to 30 minutes.

All maintenance services at the Belgrade Nikola Tesla Airport's have been working around the clock since the snowfall moved in and will continue doing so during the forthcoming New Year's and Christmas holidays if needs arise, the release says.

The Airport's winter maintenance service has the most advanced snow clearing equipment in this part of Europe, and the airport has been open for landings and takeoffs regardless of winter conditions for the past eight

winter seasons.

In most of Serbia, the Republic Hydrometeorological Service of Serbia says, the cold front will be there until Friday, bringing the lowest temperatures to between 10 and 20 degrees Celsius below zero and highest to between minus four and minus 10.

The cold weather alert for Serbia valid until 2nd January says strong northwest winds could cause massive piles of snow locally.

Tanjung



Autos drive by the snow-covered forest of Berlin's Tiergarten Park, in Berlin, Germany, on 29 Dec, 2014. Winter weather hit Germany's capital city of Berlin as the temperature dropped to minus four degrees centigrade on Monday.

XINHUA

Japan, Britain eye 1st "2-plus-2" meeting next month in London

TOKYO, 30 Dec — The Japanese and British governments are arranging their first "two-plus-two" meeting involving foreign and defence ministers late January in London to bolster security cooperation, a source close to Japan-Britain relations said on Tuesday.

Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida and Defence

Minister Gen Nakatani are expected to discuss with their British counterparts issues such as speeding up joint research on missile technology and measures to deal with the Islamic State militant group.

Britain will be the fifth nation to hold a two-plus-two security meeting with Japan, following the Unit-

ed States, Australia, Russia and France.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and his British counterpart David Cameron agreed to set up the framework when they met in May.

The two countries are considering holding the dialogue sometime around 21 January, according to the

source. The agenda will include early signing of an acquisition and cross-servicing agreement, or ACSA, to enable Japan's Self-Defence Forces and the British military to share supplies and transportation services during UN peacekeeping operations.

The ministers also intend to reaffirm cooperation

in dealing with tensions in Ukraine, the source said.

Japan, meanwhile, wants to gain Britain's understanding of its planned move to submit security legislation including legalizing the exercise of the right to collective self-defence, or coming to the aid of allies under armed attack, to parliament next year, ac-

cording to the source.

Japan also wants to secure British support for its bid to join the UN Security Council as a nonpermanent member in next year's election, the source said. Britain is one of the permanent members of the council along with China, France, Russia and the United States.—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.

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WEATHER REPORT

FORECAST VALID UNTIL EVENING OF THE 31st December, 2014: Isolated light rain are likely in Sagaing and Magway Regions, Chin and Rakhine States, weather will be partly cloudy in Mandalay, Yangon, Ayeyawady and Taninthayi Regions, Kachin and Shan States and generally fair in the remaining Regions and States. Degree of certainty is (60%)

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Likelihood of isolated light rain in the Upper Myanmar Areas.

12 killed as fire erupts in shopping plaza in E Pakistan

ISLAMABAD, 30 Dec — At least 12 people were killed when fire erupted in a four-story shopping plaza in Pakistan's east city of Lahore on Monday night, officials said.

Deputy Commissioner of Lahore Rashid Mahmood said that the fire erupted at the third floor of the plaza and the dead included a woman and a kid.

The 12 bodies and an injured man were shifted to the Mayo Hospital.

Medical superintendent of the hospital Dr Amjad said that four bodies have been identified and handed over to the relatives of the deceased while the others are still undergoing the process of identification.

He said that most of the deaths happened due to suffocation.

The fire erupted due to short circuit in the plaza located in the Anar Kali market of Lahore, the capital city of Punjab Province.



Pakistani security officials and rescue workers gather outside of a four-story shopping plaza where a fire broke out in eastern Pakistan's Lahore on 29 Dec, 2014. At least 13 people were killed when fire erupted in a four-story shopping plaza in Pakistan's east city of Lahore on Monday night, officials said. — XINHUA

Rescuers backed by four fire engines extinguished the fire and pulled out the bodies and injured people from the ashes.

The chief minister

of Punjab Shahbaz Sharif expressed sorrow over the incident and sought report from the concerned officials. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif also expressed

grief and directed the hospital administration to provide best possible medical treatment to the injured people.

Xinhua

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**New Year holiday
exodus peaks in Japan**

TOKYO, 30 Dec — The New Year's holiday exodus from Tokyo and other urban areas peaked on Tuesday, with major train stations and airports crowded throughout the day. Domestic flights departing from Tokyo's Haneda airport were almost fully booked, according to Japan Airlines Co and All Nippon Airways Co.

Shinkansen bullet trains departing from Tokyo were also nearly fully booked in the morning, with all nonreserved seats occupied on some trains and people standing in the aisles. Outbound expressways were clogged, with vehicles backed up for 27 kilometres on the Tomei Expressway in Kanagawa Prefecture, according to the Japan Road Traffic Information Centre.

The rush of travellers returning from the New Year's holidays is expected to peak on Friday and Saturday on highways, while flights and trains will likely be most congested on Saturday and Sunday.—Kyodo News

**At least six dead, one missing as
tropical storm Jangmi hits Philippines**

MANILA, 30 Dec — At least six people have died of flood-triggered incidents and one was reportedly missing as Tropical Storm Jangmi (local name Seniang) hit central Philippines, government sources said on Tuesday.

Five people, including three adults and two children, were buried by mud and rocks when a landslide occurred in Tanauan town in the central province of Leyte, Blanche Gobencong, director of the Office of Civil Defence in Western Visayas said on Tuesday.

The landslide, one of the four happened in Visayas region, buried a house early on Tuesday morning. The identities of the five fatalities have not been confirmed, but their bodies have been recovered, Gobencong said.

Gobencong said they have received text messages about other deaths in other parts of the region, also due to landslides, but these are subject to verification.

Meanwhile, the National Disaster Reduction and Rescue Management Centre (NDRRMC) said

in its report on Tuesday morning that a 65-year-old man, Mik Cipriano, died of drowning in Compostela Valley province on Monday as heavy rain lashed the province.

According to the report, a 24-year-old man was reported missing while crossing a river in Compostela Valley province on Monday. NDRRMC said that 23,629 people in more than 5,500 families in Central Visayas, Northern Mindanao and other regions, have been affected by tropical storm Jangmi.

Xinhua



Residents walk in flood brought by Tropical Storm Jangmi in Cebu Province, the Philippines, on 30 Dec, 2014. At least six people died in flood-triggered incidents and another one was reportedly missing as Tropical Storm Jangmi (local name Seniang) hit central Philippines, government sources said on Tuesday. — XINHUA

Jennifer Lawrence tops Forbes' Highest-Grossing Actors list



BEIJING, 30 Dec — Oscar-winning actor Jennifer Lawrence topped Forbes' annual list of the top-grossing actors in Hollywood.

Forbes studied data from Box Office Mojo for "global movie grosses," and then totaled each actor's grosses for 2014 to finalize the lineup.

Jennifer Lawrence reigns the Forbes' list of "Highest Grossing Actors at the Box Office 2014" with "The Hunger Games: Mockingjay – Part 1" and "X-Men: Days of Future Past." The two films grossed a total of 1.4 billion US dollars worldwide.

On the list of top 10 actors, whose movies generated massive revenues, also includes "queen of science fiction this year" Scarlett Johansson and Christ Pratt, whose leading man charisma emerged this year in "Guardians of the Galaxy," which earned a total of 1.2 billion US dollars worldwide.

Mark Wahlberg's roles in "The Gambler" and "Transformers: Age of Extinction" give him the fourth spot, with gross earnings of 1 billion US dollars globally. Also on the list are Chris Evans, Emma Stone, Angelina Jolie, James McAvoy, Michael Fassbender and Hugh Jackman.—Xinhua

'James Bond' stuntman Richard Graydon dies at 92

LONDON, 30 Dec — British stuntman Richard Graydon, who performed in 10 James Bond films, has passed away. He was 92. Graydon died on 22 December. He is survived by his wife, Hermione Bedford. The couple did not have children, reported the *Telegraph*.

Graydon's first screen credit was in 1952, as one of Robin Hood's 'merrie men' in the Disney film 'The Story of Robin Hood and His Merrie Men'. His stunt career started in 1963 with 'From Russia With Love'.—PTI



British stuntman Richard Graydon

Angelina Jolie recovers from chickenpox

LOS ANGELES, 30 Dec — Actress-director Angelina Jolie has been spotted for the first time with her daughters Zahara and Shiloh for shopping, after recovering from chickenpox.

The 39-year-old star was seen in an all black ensemble carried a matching black leather shoulder bag, reported E! Online.

Jolie was diagnosed with chickenpox two weeks ago, which forced her to miss 'Unbroken' premiere.—PTI



Angelina Jolie

Britney Spears celebrates first anniversary of Las Vegas residency

LOS ANGELES, 30 Dec — Pop star Britney Spears celebrated the first anniversary of her Las Vegas residency. The 33-year-old mother of two performed her first 'Piece of Me' show in seven weeks to mark the occasion, and celebrated with her crew after the concert. The singer also posted a video featuring her highlights from the past 12 months, including the inaugural Britney Day in Las Vegas on 5 November. Earlier this year, Spears signed up to perform at Planet Hollywood for a further two years, meaning her run in the city is now set to conclude at the end of 2017.—PTI



Pop star Britney Spears celebrated the first anniversary of her Las Vegas residency. — PTI

Miley Cyrus royalties paid my rent for three years: Jessie J

LONDON, 30 Dec — Singer Jessie J has revealed that the royalties from Miley Cyrus's hit 'Party In The USA' paid her rent for years.

The 26-year-old singer penned the track for inclusion on Cyrus's 2009 EP *The Time of Our Lives*, reported Digital Spy.

"You've got to write songs, that's where the money is, being an artist. 'Party In The USA' paid my rent for, like, three years.

"Actually it was way longer than that. That's

where I get most of my money. I write songs. I'm a singer. I love endorsements and stuff, but that's all added on," she said.

Meanwhile, the 'Bang Bang' singer said that all female artists are "speaking about the same thing" in their songs.

"All women are saying, singing and speaking about the same thing, but in their own way — love, heartbreak, reassurance, sexiness, belief, how we look, how we feel. We're all singing about it and doing it," she said. — PTI



Singer Jessie J has revealed that the royalties from Miley Cyrus's hit 'Party In The USA' paid her rent for years. — REUTERS

As 'Interview' takes streaming plunge, Hollywood tests waters



LOS ANGELES, 30 Dec — Consumers paid \$15 million (9.7 million pounds) in just four days to watch "The Interview" from the comfort of their couches, building expectations that other hot, new films might also make their debut online. But Hollywood is not quite ready to give that to viewers, experts say. Even so, Sony Pictures' initial success streaming its controversial

comedy will add momentum to the industry's slow adoption of same-day theatre and video-on-demand (VOD) release.

The experiment, a last-ditch effort by the unit of Sony Corp to keep "The Interview" alive despite a cyber attack on the studio and threats to movie theatres, has shown the technology works and people like it.

That outcome could embolden studios to short-

en wait times between theatrical release and VOD and put more small films on same-day distribution. New platforms could muscle their way into movie streaming after seeing a relative VOD novice such as Google Inc's YouTube Movies score with "The Interview." Two big obstacles stand in the way of a rush to emulate distribution of "The Interview": close ties that have developed

over the years between movie theatres and Hollywood studios, and the fact that movies still make a lot of money in theatres.

"The vast majority of revenues will still be generated three or five years from now at the theatre," said Hal Vogel, the chief executive of Vogel Capital Management.

Analysts are uneasy about reading too much into the online success of a comedy that is now in a class of its own because the movie triggered a cyber attack that the US government blames on North Korea. But studios have experimented with shortening the so-called "theatrical window", which now averages three months and 14 days compared with nearly six months back in 1997.

"You look over the next five, 10 years you're going to see a lot of change," said Daniel Ernst, an analyst at Hudson Square Research. "You're already seeing the windows change and a lot of the windows that exist don't make sense to consumers, let alone digital natives."

Reuters

Fans line up at the Silent Movie Theatre for a midnight screening of "The Interview" in Los Angeles, California on 24 Dec, 2014. REUTERS

New Year's resolutions may be more procrastination than motivation



A child waits in his pram while his mother participates in an aerobics class at the gymnasium of a sports centre in Cartago, east of San Jose on 10 July, 2012.

REUTERS

NEW YORK, 30 Dec — People seeking to get or stay fit in 2015 might do better to start today rather than rely on a New Year's resolution to shape up tomorrow, fitness experts say.

Losing weight and getting fit and healthy are among the top five resolutions every year, even though most of winter's great expectations wither by spring.

"The New Year's resolution is a kind of grand,

glorified, long-term goal that people, for societal reasons, tend to begin on the first day of the calendar year," said Gregory Chertok, a sports psychology consultant with the American College of Sports Medicine.

Goals set because people feel they should make them tend to be pressure-filled, unrealistic and less likely to be accomplished, he says.

"I'd like to cut down

on junk food a little bit,' is a goal more likely to be accomplished than 'I'll completely revamp my lifestyle,' which is the kind of goal we set as a New Year's resolutions," Chertok said.

While about 45 percent of Americans make New Year's resolutions, only about 8 percent succeed, according to a University of Scranton study published in the *Journal of Clinical Psychology*.

Dr Michele Olson, professor of exercise science at Auburn University Montgomery said a resolution can be a way of putting off what can be done today.

"If there is a fitness need, such as to increase strength or decrease body fat, I say, 'Let's make a plan now,'" Olson said, adding that what is essential is to set a long-term plan with short-term goals.

"This is why athletes stay in shape year-round. They have a programme scheduled and planned over

an entire year with variation, rest days, more-intense and less-intense workout periods," she said. "It's like one's job: there's very little vacation time."

Dr Cedric X Bryant, chief science officer of the American Council on Exercise, said the New Year may be the worst time to make a lifestyle change.

"For many it's the busiest, most hectic time," he said, "and most people have an all-or-nothing mentality."

Bryant said people who succeed focus on progress, not perfection, and plan for the inevitable slip-up.

"People don't take time to celebrate the little successes," he said. "Because they're so focused on, say, an arbitrary weight goal, they don't notice that they are sleeping better or feeling less anxious."

Chertok suggests setting goals that don't depend on the calendar to achieve the best results.

Reuters

Two dead, four missing in S Korean fishing boat fire

SEOUL, 30 Dec — Two sailors were confirmed dead, with four missing, in a South Korean fishing boat fire accident that occurred on Tuesday morning, local media reported.

The *Munseong 103* caught fire in waters about five nautical miles north-east of South Korea's easternmost islets of Dokdo, called Takeshima in Japan, at about 5:13 am local time (2013 GMT), *Yonhap News Agency* reported citing the Ministry of Public Safety and Security.

Aboard the 29-ton vessel were eight South Koreans and two Vietnamese.

Six were rescued from the ship, but two of them died later. Two South Koreans and two Vietnamese went missing.

Search operations are still under way. A rescue ship was sent to the site, and six naval vessels and four airplanes were dispatched to help search the fishermen.

The *Munseong 103*, which departed from the country's southern resort island of Jeju on 16 November, was en route to Hupo, the country's southeastern city while catching blowfish.

The blaze is estimated to have started from the engine room, but the exact cause is still under investigation.—Xinhua

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Ebola case numbers top 20,000, deaths approach 8,000

GENEVA, 30 Dec — The number of people infected by Ebola in the three countries worst affected by the outbreak has passed 20,000, with more than 7,842 deaths in the epidemic so far, the World Health Organization said on Monday.

Cumulative case num-

bers in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea stood at 20,081, the WHO said in a statement. More than a third are laboratory-confirmed cases in Sierra Leone, which has become the worst-hit country in the worst outbreak of the disease on record.

Reuters



Elephants race held in Nepals race in a competition during the 11th Elephant Festival at Sauraha in Chitwan, Nepal, on 29 Dec, 2014.—XINHUA

West Brom axe coach Irvine after poor start



West Bromwich Albion's manager Alan Irvine looks at his watch during their English Premier League soccer match against Stoke City at the Britannia Stadium in Stoke-on-Trent, central England on 28 Dec, 2014.

REUTERS

LONDON, 30 Dec — English Premier League strugglers West Bromwich Albion have sacked head coach Alan Irvine, the club announced on their website late on Monday.

The Midlands club made the move following a run of seven losses in their past nine games, a series of results that has caused them to slide to 16th place, just one point above the relegation zone.

Irvine becomes the second managerial casualty in three days after relegation-threatened Crystal Palace dumped Neil Warnock

on Saturday.

And with Alan Pardew in line to swap Newcastle for Palace, the Premier League managerial merry-go-round has suddenly gathered pace after an unusually quiet start to the season in which nobody was fired for the first four months.

Irvine is the third head coach dismissed by West Brom in little over 12 months, following the short reigns of Steve Clarke and Pepe Mel.

His fate was sealed after a 2-0 away defeat against Stoke on Sunday,

which followed a 3-1 home loss to Manchester City two days earlier.

"Securing a sixth season in the Premier League is the over-riding target and sometimes unpleasant decisions have to be taken to serve that imperative," Albion technical director Terry Burton says on the club's website.

"Alan has impressed everyone with his manner, dedication and diligence but he knows that results have simply not been good enough."

Irvine was surprise choice when he was hired

as West Brom manager in June this year after the 56-year-old Scot had spent the previous three seasons as youth team coach at Everton.

Bookmakers have installed former Tottenham Hotspur manager Tim Sherwood as favourite to succeed Irvine with ex-Stoke and Crystal Palace boss Tony Pulis close behind in the betting.

West Brom travel to West Ham on New Year's Day with Rob Kelly, helped by fellow assistant head coach Keith Downing, in caretaker charge.—Reuters

Lallana double helps Liverpool end 2014 on a high



Liverpool's Adam Lallana (R) scores his second goal against Swansea City during their English Premier League soccer match at Anfield in Liverpool, northern England on 29 Dec, 2014.—REUTERS

LONDON, 30 Dec — Liverpool ended their top-sy-turvy 2014 on a high after two goals from Adam Lallana, one excellent and one freakish, helped in-

spire their 4-1 trouncing of Swansea on Monday in the last Premier League game of the year.

Brendan Rodgers, whose side came so close

to winning the title in May but have laboured so often since, could afford a festive smile after his side's biggest home win of the season which at last re-

prised some of the best of the goal-hungry, early-2014 Liverpool.

Alberto Moreno both started and finished off an excellent team move to score after 33 minutes before Lallana was gifted one of the strangest goals of the season after 51 minutes.

Swansea keeper Lukasz Fabianski took an age to make a clearance, then struck the ball straight at the England midfielder only for the ball to thump into Lallana and balloon into the empty net.

Within a minute Swansea responded through a close-range Gylfi Sigurdsson strike but Liverpool soon took complete command, Lallana scoring an authentically excellent third in the 61st minute, ghosting past two

defenders and firing home after being freed by a delightful flick from Philippe Coutinho.

When Jonjo Shelvey netted a 69th minute own goal, flicking a header past his own keeper from Jordan Henderson's corner, it completed a miserable night for the former Liverpool man.

In the first half, Shelvey could have been sent off after he lashed out with his arm and struck Emre Can in the face right in front of referee Andre Marriner, who ignored it.

Raheem Sterling also could have been in hot water late in the game after a retaliatory half-push, half-slap into the face of Federico Fernandez but Rodgers felt neither Shelvey nor Sterling deserved punish-

ment for heat of the moment antics.

The victory, only Liverpool's third in their last nine Premier League games at Anfield, pushed them into eighth place on 28 points, jumping above Swansea on goals scored and just five points off the top four.

Lallana felt that Liverpool had turned a corner here after all their struggles — a feeling Rodgers seemed to echo.

"It's something we've been searching for all season," said Rodgers, of the combination between Lallana, Coutinho and Sterling.

"There's a lot of work to do but there's a real exciting second half of the season for us."

Reuters

Newcastle striker Cisse charged with violent conduct



Newcastle United's Papiss Demba Cisse celebrates after scoring a goal against Everton during their English Premier League soccer match at St James' Park in Newcastle, northern England on 28 Dec, 2014. REUTERS

LONDON, 30 Dec — Newcastle United striker Papiss Cisse has been charged with violent conduct, the FA said in a statement on Monday referring to an incident in the Premier League match

against Everton.

The charge, which could lead to a three-match ban, came after a video review panel re-examined footage during which Cisse elbowed defender Seamus Coleman at St James' Park on Sunday.

The incident was unseen by the match officials.

Everton manager Roberto Martinez called the failure to punish Cisse "unacceptable", saying the Senegalese attempted to "hurt" Coleman.

Cisse equalized a minute later for Newcastle who went on to win 3-2.

"Those are not actions we want to see on a football pitch and the referee should have seen it," Martinez said.

Reuters

Senior Japan players defend under-fire coach Aguirre

TOKYO, 30 Dec — Japan's senior players have leapt to the defence of their under-fire head coach Javier Aguirre, who again denied any involvement in a match-fixing case that continues to overshadow their Asian Cup preparations.

The Mexican was among 41 people named by Spain's anti-corruption prosecutor in court this month following a probe into Real Zaragoza's 2-1 win at Levante on the final day of the 2010-11 campaign. The victory ensured Zaragoza, coached by Aguirre, avoided relegation.

It led to suspicions the Japanese Football Association might remove Aguirre but they stuck by the coach they appointed in July and said he would lead them at the 9-31 January Asian Cup despite the ongoing investigation.



Japan's national soccer team head coach Javier Aguirre of Mexico walks into a news conference at the Japan Football Association headquarters in Tokyo on 27 Dec 2014. —REUTERS

The JFA stance has failed to quell the questions from outside the camp for Aguirre as he prepares his side for Group D matches against Palestine, Iraq and Jordan.

However, the former Atletico Madrid manager said his 23-man Japan squad were only interested in winning a record-ex-

tending fifth Asian Cup after they met up for training.

"He has said he didn't do it, so he didn't do it," Japan's most capped player Yasuhito Endo was quoted as saying by Kyodo News on Monday.

Borussia Dortmund midfielder Shinji Kagawa echoed the sentiment.

"We have just got to

concentrate on defending the Asian Cup. We have to believe what the coach has told us and follow his lead," the former Manchester United player added.

On Saturday, Aguirre told reporters in Tokyo that he was innocent.

"I worked in Spain for 12 years and have never done anything unethical or unprofessional," he said. "The only way to win matches is through effort."

"I have never been given gifts by anybody and never expected them. I will cooperate with authorities and defend myself until the end," Aguirre said he offered the same explanation to his squad and gave them opportunity to ask any questions about the matter.

Japan captain Makoto Hasebe said he was happy to continue working with the Mexican.—Reuters



Manchester City's Yaya Toure stands in the snow during the English Premier League soccer match between Manchester City and West Bromwich Albion at The Hawthorns in West Bromwich, central England on 26 Dec, 2014. REUTERS

Premier League quartet in Ivory Coast squad for Nations Cup

LONDON, 30 Dec — Manchester City's Yaya Toure heads a list of four players from the Premier League included in the Ivory Coast squad for the African Nations Cup finals in Equatorial Guinea.

French coach Herve Renard named his final 23-man selection for the 17 January - 8 February tournament on Monday and also included Liverpool's Kolo Toure for the final time as the defender will retire from international football after the event.

Newcastle United midfielder Cheick Tiote and Swansea City's top scorer this season, striker Wilfried Bony, have also been included.

Centre-back Eric Bertrand Bailly, 20, from Spanish side Espanyol receives a first call-up.

Renard had been hoping to persuade veteran Didier Drogba to reverse his decision to retire from the national team after the World Cup in Brazil, but the Chelsea striker has opted to remain with his club.

Ivory Coast are looking to end a decade of disappointment at the continental finals.

Squad:

Goalkeepers: Bou-bacar Barry (Lokeren), Sylvain Gbohouo (Sewe Sport), Sayouba Mande (Staebek)

Defenders: Jean-Daniel Akpa Akpro (Toulouse), Serge Aurier (Paris Saint-Germain), Eric Bertrand Bailly (Espanyol), Wilfried Kanon (ADO Den Haag), Sakia Tiene (Montpelier), Kolo Toure (Liverpool), Ousmane Viera (Riz-

espor)

Midfielders: Roger Assale (Sewe Sport), Seyrey Die (Basle), Ismael Diomande (St Etienne), Cheick Doukoure (Metz), Max Gradel (St Etienne), Cheick Tiote (Newcastle United), Yaya Toure (Manchester City)

Forwards: Wilfried Bony (Swansea City), Seydou Doumbia (CSKA Moscow), Gervinho (Roma), Salomon Kalou (Hertha Berlin), Junior Tallo (Bastia), Lacina Traore (Monaco).—Reuters