Significant night temperatures

- Haka (2°C)
- Mogok (3°C)
- Pinlaung (4°C)
- Namhsam (5°C)
- Heho (5°C)

Emergence of the State Constitution is the duty of all citizens of Myanmar Naing-Ngan.
Safeguard cultural heritage and national character with national outlook

Literature is the pillar of national culture. Myanmar alphabets and literature have already flourished since more than one thousand years ago. The national prestige and integrity, high capability and firm conviction of Myanmars have been born out of literature.

While striving for development of such fine traditions the literati of today are to try their utmost in uplifting the standard of national culture to be able to keep pace with changes and developments.

The government is making all-out efforts for flourishing of Myanmar literature. Regarding this, handsome literary prizes are presented yearly.

A ceremony to present prizes to winners of National Literary Life Time Achievement Award, National Literary Award and Sarpay Beikman Manuscript Award for 2006 was held at the Ministry of Information in Nay Pyi Taw on 23 December.

The literati are to try to be highly knowledgeable in imparting literary knowledge to the people. It is incumbent upon the literati to inculcate the people with nationalistic fervour and national outlook, reviewing history and drawing lessons from the past.

At a time when big nations are meddling in the internal affairs of the nation and the penetration of alien culture and customs is unavoidable, the literati need to create sound literature capable of safeguarding the national culture. And they are to continue compiling fine literature in the interest of the State and the people while safeguarding cultural heritage and national character. Only then, will they be able to shoulder the duty of literature.
KPA blames US for tense situation on Korean Peninsula

PYONGYANG, 24 Dec — A senior officer of the Korean People’s Army (KPA) on Sunday criticized the United States for causing tension on the Korean Peninsula with its hostile policy toward the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK).

“The situation of the Korean Peninsula still remains tense owing to the US invariable war moves,” the official Korean Central News Agency quoted Kim Kyok Sik, chief of the General Staff of the KPA as saying.

Kim made the remarks at a national meeting to mark the 16th anniversary of leader Kim Jong Il’s take-over of the country’s Army.

“All the facts...show that the US is talking about dialogue and negotiation, but it is actually scheming to destabilize DPRK’s system,” he said.

Kim reiterated DPRK’s determination to fight against the hostile policies of the United States and Japan with more powerful means.

The DPRK renewed its criticism of Washington for its hostile policy after both sides reached an agreement on the nuclear issue on the Peninsula.

Study says African giraffes are endangered

Nairobi, 24 Dec — At least six distinct species of giraffe, the world’s tallest land animal, may be in existence and some of them are critically endangered, scientists in the United States and Kenya have found.

It had previously been thought that there was only one species of giraffe ranging across Africa’s golden savannahs. “Some of these giraffe populations number only a few hundred individuals and need immediate protection,” said the study’s lead author, geneticist David Brown of the US-based Wildlife Conservation Society.

“Lumping all giraffes into one species obscures the reality that some kinds of giraffe are on the very brink.” The most threatened potential species include the reticulated giraffe (currently Giraffa camelopardalis reticulata) in Kenya, Ethiopia and Somalia. Its population was estimated at around 27,000 until the 1990s, when poaching and conflicts slashed numbers to just 3,000 individuals.

In west and central Africa, there are thought to be only 160 Nigerian giraffes (Giraffa camelopardalis peralta) left.

Tibet forecasts 5 mln tourists in 2008

LHASA, 24 Dec — Tibet is forecasting to receive at least five million tourists in 2008, an official with the region’s development and reform commission said.

Jin Shixuan, director with the Commission, said Tibet expected a 25-per-cent increase in tourists next year. He would push tourism revenue in the autonomous region to six billion yuan (about 800 million US dollars).

Snow avalanche kills 16 in Tajikistan, more trapped

DUSHANBE, 23 Dec — An avalanche killed at least 16 people in the mountains of Tajikistan on Saturday while more people remained trapped under snow, an Interior Ministry official said.

The avalanche occurred after several days of heavy snowfall and hit a road that connects the Central Asian state’s capital Dushanbe with another city, Khudjand.

Pictures shown on Russia’s Vesti-24 news channel showed heavy tractors clearing snow from a narrow mountain road and trucks trapped at the site, 70 kilometres (45 miles) north of Dushanbe.

Mountains occupy 93 per cent of Tajikistan’s territory.

“Our report from the site says 16 bodies have been dug out,” colonel Khaidar Makhmadiyev from the Interior Ministry said.

The Emergency Ministry said three people were killed and many more were still trapped under snow. “There are still people under snow, we cannot say how many at the moment.”

Brazil has over 11,000 seniors aged above 100

RIO DE JANEIRO, 24 Dec — Brazil has a total of 11,422 people aged 100 or above, according to a study released by the Brazilian Geography and Statistics Institute (IBGE) on Friday.

Those citizens mainly live in cities of northeastern Brazil, the study showed. Fifteen of the 20 cities with the largest centennial populations are located in the region. The northeastern city of Bahia tops the list with 1,877 citizens who were born at the end of the 19th Century or in the beginning of the 20th Century. According to the study, 7,950 of the citizens aged 100 or above are women, more than double the number for men.

The study was carried out in cities with less than 170,000 inhabitants, which represent 97 per cent of all Brazilian municipalities.

Argentina not to buy “F-16” from US

BUENOS AIRES, 24 Dec — Argentina will not buy F-16 fighters from the United States as the latter slandered the Argentine Government, said the Defence Ministry on Saturday.

The negotiation between Argentina and the United States on the purchase of fighters was suspended, said a spokesman for the ministry.

Argentina will rely mainly on its own efforts to improve the Air Force’s fighting capacity through strengthening the maintenance and repair of its current fighters, said the spokesman. — MNA/Reuters

A boy sells reindeer horns to be installed at cars’ windows prior as a Christmas decoration in Mexico City, Saturday, Dec. 22, 2007. —INTERNET

Tourism revenues were double the number for men. According to the study, 7,950 of the citizens aged 100 or above are women, more than double the number for men.

The study was carried out in cities with less than 170,000 inhabitants, which represent 97 per cent of all Brazilian municipalities. —MNA/Reuters
Man accused of bus killer detained in London

LONDON, 23 Dec—A paranoid schizophrenic was ordered to be detained indefinitely on Friday for killing a bus passenger who had tried to stop him throwing chips at his girlfriend.

Anthony Joseph, 23, from Islington, north London, admitted manslaughter on the grounds of diminished responsibility last month.

He had been formally acquitted of murder after two Old Bailey juries failed to agree a verdict.

Events manager Richard Whelan, 28, from Kentish Town, was stabbed seven times, including once through the heart, on the top of a double-decker in Holloway, north London, in July 2005.

Joseph, who had been taking drink and drugs before the attack, should have been in custody but was released by mistake it emerged later.

The government announced an investigation into “a number of failings” in the justice system as a whole following the case.

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France, India seek closer ties

NEW DELHI, 23 Dec—French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner said here Friday his country is interested in forging civil nuclear cooperation with India but it will await the outcome of talks between India and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on a safeguards agreement.

“We are in favour of initiating a sort of strategic agreement but we have to wait for the (International Atomic Energy) Agency,” Kouchner said after meeting Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. — MNA/Reuters

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Poland detects new deadly bird flu case

WARSAW, 23 Dec—A new outbreak of the deadly H5N1 bird flu has been detected in northern Poland, the PAP news agency reported on Saturday.

Tests conducted by the State Veterinary Institute discovered the H5N1 virus in dead chickens in an egg-producing farm in Zuromin in the country’s 8th outbreak of bird flu case.

About 200,000 chickens from four farms will be slaughtered, the statement said. This is the country’s 8th outbreak of bird flu in the month.

On 1 December, the country’s first reported case of the deadly virus in domestic birds was confirmed in a poultry farm in Poland’s central region. After that, several new cases of bird flu were detected in the country.

Neighbouring countries have banned fowl imports from the infected regions of Poland.

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Iran says no information on missing ex-FBI agent

TEHRAN, 23 Dec—Iran said on Saturday it did not have any information about a former FBI agent who reportedly went missing in the country nine months ago, comments likely to disappoint the American’s visiting family members.

The wife and son of Robert Levinson say they have not been able to find out more about his fate.

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Baby panda goes on public display

LOS ANGELES, 24 Dec—Zhen Zhen, the newest charismatic baby panda went on display on Saturday at the San Diego Zoo, about 80 miles (about 108 kilometres) south of Los Angeles, zoo officials said.

Since birth four months ago, the panda had been visible only on the zoo’s website.

Only four US zoos have pandas: San Diego, Washington and DC, Memphis, Atlanta and the National Zoo in Washington and DC.

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Singapore receives year’s 10 millionth foreign tourist

SINGAPORE, 23 Dec—Singapore on Saturday welcomed its 10 millionth foreign tourist of the year, celebrating a milestone for the tourism sector as it is seeking to achieve its tourism 2015 targets for receiving 17 million tourist arrivals and increasing tourism receipts to 30 billion Singapore dollars (about 20.68 billion US dollars).

According to Channel NewsAsia reports on Saturday night, the lucky tourist was a 36-year-old Indian, who arrived in the Changi Airport with his wife and two children to celebrate the coming Christmas Day in the city state.

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A 1.8 kilometre Olympic gallery lit up in the bund area in Shanghai, on 20 Dec 2007. — INTERNET

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Moderate quake jolts eastern Indonesia

JAKARTA, 24 Dec—An earthquake with magnitude of 5.6 rocked eastern parts of Indonesia on Sunday evening, no report of damage or casualty, meteorology agency said here.

The quake struck at 20:10 Jakarta Time (1310 GMT) with epicentre at 104 kilometres northeast of Kupang of East Nusa Tenggara province and at 128 kilometres beneath the earth, an official of the agency Novita Hendrastuti told Xinhua. Twenty-three people were killed and thousands of buildings were destroyed in September 2007 after a 7.9 Richter Scale quake rocked Bengkulu Province in Sumatra Island of western Indonesia.

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Fatal fire shuts Mitsubishi ethylene unit

TOKYO, 23 Dec—A fire killed two workers at Japan’s biggest ethylene plant on Friday, forcing operator Mitsubishi Chemical Corp to shut one of two units at the facility in Kashima, near Tokyo.

Two more workers were missing. Japan’s top petrochemicals firm said it will investigate the cause of the fire, which accounts for more than one-tenth of Japan’s capacity to make ethylene, the building block of the petrochemicals industry.

By Friday evening, fire fighters had brought the fire under control after the blaze broke out near a furnace. Television footage had shown a blackened plant with small flames still flickering.

After hours of searching for four missing workers, the fire department retrieved two bodies. The four workers were the employees of two other companies.

It was not immediately clear how long the 516,000 ton-per-year No 2 unit will be shut.

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Singapore, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, on 21 Dec, 2007. The bear will perform at the zoo during the Christmas period. — INTERNET

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Nanning, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, on 21 Dec, 2007. The bear will perform at the zoo during the Christmas period. — INTERNET

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A bear dressed in a Santa Claus costume is trained to applaud at a zoo in Nanning, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, on 21 Dec, 2007. The bear will perform at the zoo during the Christmas period. — INTERNET

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**ECONOMIC NEWS**

**Analysis: US credit card defaults high**

BEIJING, 24 Dec—An Associated Press analysis of financial data from the country’s largest card issuers shows that Americans are falling behind on their payments at an alarming rate.

It results in a surge of delinquencies and defaults by double-digit percentages in the last year, indicating that the problems are about to get a lot worse.

The analysis also found that the greatest rise was among accounts more than 90 days in arrears.

Experts said these signs of the deterioration of finances of many households are partly a byproduct of the subprime mortgage crisis and could spell more trouble ahead for an already sputtering economy.

“The debt eventually leaks into other areas, whether it starts with the mortgage and goes to the credit card or vice versa,” said Cliff Tan, a visiting scholar at Stanford University and an expert on credit risk.

“We’re starting to see leaks now.”

The value of credit card accounts at least 30 days late jumped 26 percent to 17.3 billion US dollars in October from a year earlier at 17 large credit card trusts examined by AP.

Meanwhile, defaults rose 18 percent to almost 961 million dollars in October, according to filings made by the trusts with the Securities and Exchange Commission.

The analyzed data represents about 325 million individual accounts held in trusts, similar to how many banks packaged and sold subprime mortgage loans.

Together, they represent about 45 percent of the 920 billion dollars the Federal Reserve counts as credit card debt owed by Americans.

Many economists expect delinquencies and defaults to rise further after the holiday shopping season.

“Credit card quality will continue to erode throughout next year,” said Mark Zandi, chief economist and co-founder of Moody’s Economy.com. —Internet

**Cuba and Venezuela sign 14 oil agreements**

HAVANA, 24 Dec—Visiting Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez and acting Cuban President Raul Castro signed agreements on Saturday in the energy, mining and oil sectors, including a 170-million-dollar deal to build a new power plant.

The agreements, closing a four-day visit by Chavez to Cuba, also include a 122-dollar loan for Cuba to buy tanker ships to transport crude oil and its derivatives.

Two agreements will almost double the new southeastern Cienfuegos oil refinery’s capacity from 65,000 to 150,000 barrels per day, and reopen an oil pipeline between the eastern Matanzas and the refinery, located 260 kilometres (160 miles) south of Havana.

Two agreements provide a 170-million-dollar loan to build a new power plant in northeastern Holguin and expand the existing power network supplying Havana.

During his visit, Chavez met with ailing Cuban leader Fidel Castro, inaugurated the Cienfuegos refinery and attended the fourth summit of Petrocaribe, a Venezuelan initiative to provide oil to Caribbean neighbours at preferential prices. —Internet

**UAE bank eyes 25% stake in Malaysia’s RHB Capital**

DUBAI, 24 Dec—Abu Dhabi Commercial Bank (ADCB) is negotiating to buy a 25 percent stake in RHB Capital, the fourth largest banking group in Malaysia, the official WAM news agency said on Sunday.

“ADCB has confirmed that exclusive negotiations are under way to snap up a 25 percent holding in RHB Capital,” owned by the state-run Employees Provident Fund, WAM reported without indicating how much the stake would be worth.

It said the bank had sent a memorandum to the Abu Dhabi Securities Market informing it of the talks.

ADCB announced in January that it made a record net profit of 2.147 billion dirhams (then 584.7 million dollars) in 2006, up 12 percent on the previous year.

Last month, the state-run Abu Dhabi Investment Authority (ADIA) became one of Citigroup’s biggest shareholders in Malaysia’s Employees Provident Fund hold its 25.25 percent stake in RHB Capital, the agency said. —Internet

**ECB president Trichet pledges to focus on eurozone inflation**

The headquarters of RHB in Kuala Lumpur.

**INTERNET**

Trichet holds in a 7.5-billion-dollar deal that was designed to help shore up the ailing US bank’s coffers. Malaysia’s Employees Provident Fund holds 25.25 percent stake in RHB Capital, the agency said. —Internet

**China grain output exceeds 500 mln tons this year**

BEIJING, 22 Dec—China’s grain output, which includes rice, wheat, corn and soybeans, exceeded 500 million tons this year, making it the fourth consecutive year of output increase since 2004.

The announcement by China’s Minister of Agriculture Sun Zhengcai on Saturday came as the country hoped a bumper grain output would help slow current price rises.

Huge rises in food prices lifted the nation’s consumer price index (CPI) to an 11-year high of 6.9 percent in November. Prices of food, which has a 33 percent weighting in CPI, soared 18.2 percent last month.

The high inflation had become a major concern of the government for fear it could worsen in the future and make the lives of poor people much more difficult.

However, Sun said the output still fell short of demand this year, without giving the exact figure for grain demand. —Internet

**Farmer Yin Xixin of Guizhou Province, southwest China smiles before her harvested corns. Xinhua**

**A fan of euros.**

LONDON, 24 Dec—European Central Bank President Jean-Claude Trichet pledged, in an interview published Monday, to focus on eurozone inflation, and not let interest-rate cuts in the United States and Britain distract the bank from tightening monetary policy.

Speaking to the Financial Times from Frankfurt, in an interview conducted on 13 December, Trichet said any evidence of “second-round effects” leading to an acceleration in inflation would be “decisive”.

“Other colleagues are in a different situation,” Trichet told the business daily, while noting that the ECB was in contact with other major central banks to co-ordinate a response to the global credit crunch.

“I was very clear on behalf of the governing council (of the ECB); we would not let those second-round effects materialise,” he added, referring to effects such as demands for wage increases among eurozone workers.

The ECB’s main interest rate currently stands at 3.0 per cent.

Eurozone inflation hit 3.1 per cent in November, the highest level in six and a half years owing to rising costs of energy and food products.

ECB directors have a mandate to keep inflation slightly below 2.0 per cent.

Trichet, whom the FT named as “Person of the Year”, downplayed the impact of the global credit crunch on the 13-nation eurozone economy, telling the paper that “is not our baseline scenario.” He noted, though, that risks were inevitable in any market economy, and it would be wrong “to say, now we want to eliminate creativity.” —Internet

**China grain output exceeds 500 mln tons this year**
Russia still willing to sign N-agreement with India

New Delhi, 23 Dec — Russia is willing as always to sign a nuclear agreement with India, if it stated clearly the reactors would be supplied after the lifting of international restrictions, the influential Hindu newspaper reported on Friday.

The signing of a deal for supply of four additional reactors to the Koodankulam power project, where two Russian reactors are being set up, was expected to become a highlight of Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh’s visit to Moscow last month, but the signing was called off at the last minute.

New Delhi later said no bilateral deals could be signed before India got a waiver from the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), which signed an India-specific safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

However, the newspaper quoted a well-placed Russian official source familiar with the situation as saying that nothing could prevent India and Russia from signing a four-reactor accord, provided it stated clearly that reactors would be supplied after the lifting of the international restrictions on technology transfers to New Delhi.

The source claimed that the signing of the pact got derailed because India inserted in the agreed draft a clause on the deal being “irrevocable”. The Indian side said there was nothing wrong with the clause as “any legally binding agreement is irrevocable”.

UN approves $4.17b budget despite US objections

United Nations, 23 Dec — The General Assembly on Saturday approved a two-year UN budget of 4.17 billion US dollars despite the only rejection from the United States.

The budget, proposed by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, was approved by a vote of 142 to one. Ban welcomed the approval and also expressed his regret that the budget was not adopted by consensus, marking a break with tradition after 20 years, the UN spokesman’s office said in a statement.

The Secretary-General urges all member states to return to consensus decision-making and to demonstrate a greater sense of flexibility and compromise, beyond individual national interests and in common cause of multilateralism for the good of humankind.

The US negative vote was due to a special fund of 6.7 million US dollars in the budget for a follow-up to the 2001 World Conference Against Racism. Developing countries insisted that the 6.7 million should be funded from the regular UN budget rather than by voluntary contributions.

Garuda to revise incorrect tourism slogan

Jakarta, 23 Dec — The Indonesian flag carrier Garuda Indonesia is willing to rectify the Visit Indonesia Year 2008 slogan painted on its 10 planes serving international routes.

The slogan, “Celebrating 100 Years of Nation’s Awakening”, has been criticized as “grammatically incorrect” and “awkward”. The Ministry of Culture and Tourism has said it would accommodate critics by revising the slogan to “Celebrating 100 Years of National Awakening”.

“We haven’t got orders to change the slogan on our aircraft, but we will make a revision soon after we get a request from the Ministry of Culture and Tourism,” Garuda spokesman Pujobroto was quoted Saturday by English-language newspaper The Jakarta Post as saying.

Pujobroto added that Garuda would foot the bill and would not complain to the ministry.

“We used the tag line as part of our responsibility to support the tourism industry. If there is any change to the tag line, we will pay.”

The replacement is estimated to cost up to 20 million rupiah (about 2,139 US dollars) per plane.
China imports soybean at higher cost

BEIJING, 24 Dec — China imported 21.7 million tons of soybean in the first three quarters of this year, a growth of 2.1 per cent over the year-earlier level.

Customs sources said the arrivals were valued at 7.36 billion US dollars, up 32.5 per cent.

The import price averaged 339.8 US dollars per ton, up 29.8 per cent.

The higher import cost was due largely to mounting demand, production decrease and rising transport charges worldwide, the sources said.

Of the total imports, 99.1 per cent came from Brazil, the United States and Argentina.

Between January and September, China bought 8.43 million tons of soybean from Brazil, down 10.1 per cent, and 4.85 million tons from Argentina, down 0.1 per cent. The imports from the United States amounted to 8.22 million tons, up 23.4 per cent.

Of the total arrivals, foreign-funded companies made up 13.66 million tons, up 11.3 per cent, state-owned enterprises, 4.73 million tons, down 20.1 per cent, and private businesses, 2.64 million tons, up 2 per cent.

A CD with the names and addresses of 160,000 patients had been authorized by the Department of Health.

The paper said patient details were lost in 10 data protection breaches in the country’s 190 trusts.

There are strict guidelines and procedures for dealing with such breaches. Investigations are under way in all the trusts involved and action will be taken against anyone who has failed to fulfil their legal responsibilities.”

MNA/Reuters

World’s first electric plane test-flown in France

PARIS, 24 Dec — A team of French engineers has for the first time ever successfully test-flown an electric plane, an electric motor and lithium-polymer batteries, conducted a flight of 48 minutes from an airport in Hautes-Alpes, Lavrand said, adding that this flight had been authorized by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), the reports reaching here said.

The plane, created by “Electra F-WMDJ”, equipped with a 25 HP electric motor and lithium-polymer batteries, conducted a flight of 48 minutes from an airport in Hautes-Alpes, Lavrand said, adding that this flight had been authorized by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), the reports reaching here said.

“Exceptional technological breakthrough in the luxury aviation sector is capable of providing an alternative to the current unprecedented use of heat engines on aircraft that require between 15 and 50 HP,” the engineers, who are working on the project, said in a statement.

MNA/Xinhua

Indonesia sends medical team to flood-stricken area

JAKARTA, 23 Dec — The Indonesian Health Ministry has dispatched a medical team to flood-stricken Gorontalo Province in northern Sulawesi Island, national Antara news agency reported on Saturday.

Head of the Health Ministry’s Crisis Control Centre (PPK) Dr Rustam S Pakaya said here the PPK’s regional office in Manado, capital of northern Sulawesi Province, had sent the relief aid to Gorontalo.

The team included six surgeons, eight internists, four pediatricians and three nurses, he said.

According to Pakaya, the floods in Gorontalo had already started to subside, but the health ministry was anticipating the outbreak of water-borne diseases in the floods aftermath.

Flooding in Gorontalo Province had inundated thousands of houses over the past few days. In Gorontalo city, four sub districts were submerged in flood waters reaching a height of up to 70 centimetres.

In Bone Bolango District, at least three sub districts and 15 neighbourhoods were flooded following incessant rains over the past week.

MNA/Xinhua

Jakarta beefs up security ahead of Christmas

JAKARTA, 24 Dec — The Indonesian capital of Jakarta is increasing its security profile to anticipate militant attacks ahead of Christmas, police said on Saturday.

The police will deploy 15,000 personnel who will be stationed in churches and other public places during the celebrations. Jakarta Police Chief Adang Firman told reporters here.

“The terror threat remains potent. We have collected reports (on terror plots) although none can be considered seriously at the meantime,” he said.

He reminded that several terror suspects were still at large. That includes Malaysian Noordin Moh Top who is accused of masterminding deadly bombings in Bali and Jakarta between 2002 and 2005. — MNA/Xinhua

MNA/Xinhua

The castle at Tokyo Disneyland is colourfully lighted as part of Christmas show in Tokyo. Disney characters performed for visitors as Christmas approaching.—Xinhua

Uzbekistan wants equality in ties with others

TASHKENT, 24 Dec — Uzbek President Islam Karimov said on Sunday the principles of equality and non-interference in others' internal affairs should be the basic norms governing Uzbekistan’s relations with other countries.

Karimov spoke as Uzbekists began to cast their ballots in the Central Asian country’s presidential election, in which he is seeking a new term in office against three other candidates.

Karimov, who cast his ballot at a polling station in the capital Tashkent, told reporters there that Uzbekistan always maintains that any countries, big or small, rich or poor, should develop relations on the basis of mutual respect and benefit.

Every nation has its own tradition and its own pride and Uzbekistan wishes to develop ties with other countries on an equal footing, Karimov said.

Any attempt to impose its ideas on Uzbekistan by exerting pressure is “unacceptable”, the Uzbek leader said. The 69-year-old Karimov, if re-elected, will lead the country for another seven years.

Karimov was elected president of Uzbekistan in 1991, when Uzbekistan declared independence from the former Soviet Union. He won re-election in 2000. — MNA/Xinhua

An Indonesian man zips down a water slide at an amusement park in Jakarta, Indonesia.—INTERNET

Report says NHS Trusts lose patients’ data

LONDON, 24 Dec — Nine National Health Service have lost the records of hundreds of thousands of adults and children in the latest embarrassing loss of data by government bodies, the Sunday Mirror reported.

The paper said patient details were lost in 10 incidences at the NHS Trusts.

A CD with the names and addresses of 160,000 children was lost by the City and Hackney trust in east London and records of 244 cancer patients had been misplaced by the Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells Health Trust in Kent, it said.

The Department of Health said affected patients had been told and there was no evidence the information had fallen into the wrong hands.

“Since the recent heightened concern about data protection a small number of trusts have reported breaches of their own security rules,” the department told media.

“There are strict guidelines and procedures for dealing with such breaches. Investigations are under way in all the trusts involved and action will be taken against anyone who has failed to fulfil their legal responsibilities.”

MNA/Reuters

China imports soybean at higher cost
13th graduation of State Pariyatti Sasana University (Yangon, Mandalay) held

YANGON, 24 Dec — The 13th graduation of State Pariyatti Sasana University (Yangon, Mandalay) was held at the convocation hall of the State Pariyatti Sasana University (Yangon) in Mayangon Township today.

Chairman of Yangon Division Peace and Development Council Commander of Yangon Command Maj-Gen Hla Htay Win attended the graduation ceremony and supplicated on religious affairs.

Firstly, the graduation was opened with three times recitation of Namo Tassa and the congregation led by the commander received the Five Precepts from Secretary of State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee Abdihdaja Maha Raththa Guru Abdihdaja Agga Maha Saddhamma Jotika Bhaddanta Osada Bhivamsa.

On behalf of the chancellor of the State Pariyatti Sasana universities, Vice-Chancellor Bhaddanta Osada Bhivamsa and Vice-Chairman of State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee Chairman of the central management committee of the State Pariyatti Sasana universities Agga Maha Pandita Agga Maha Saddhamma Jotika Jotikadha Bhaddanta Kondalata Joti delivered an Ovadakatha.

Afterwards, Commander Maj-Gen Hla Htay Win and Minister for Religious Affairs Brig-Gen Thura Myint Maung supplicated on matters related to religious affairs.

The graduation ceremony concluded with three times recitation of Namo Tassa and the congregation shared merits gained. The graduation ceremony concluded with three times recitation of Namo Tassa and the congregation shared merits gained.

Yogi Phwa Ein Pyae celebrates 103rd birthday

YANGON, 24 Dec — Yogi Phwa Ein Pyae, a native of Welaung Kyaukka Village of Taungtha Township in Myingyan District, celebrated his 103rd birthday on a grand scale at Kyaukkon Kyaung of Pariyatti Monastery, 14 Ward, Yankin, this morning.

A total of 108 monks were invited to the ceremony.

Yogi Phwa Ein Pyae donates K 10.3 million for supplying water to pagodas, monasteries, Pariyatti Sarthintaikas and schools.

Commander inspects road works in Myitkyina

NAY PYI TAW, 24 Dec — Chairman of Shan State (East) Peace and Development Council Commander of Triangle Region Command Maj-Gen Min Aung Hlaing attended the coordination meeting on the work sector of Mongphyat-Mongkhok road, Mongphyat-Mongyawng road and Panle-Bushichatuleik roads at the briefing hall of the local battalion on 19 December.

He heard reports by State Superintending Engineer U Thaung Htay and officials on completion of 56-mile Mongphyat-Mongkhok road and 45/2-mile Mongphyat-Mongyawng road and future programmes to be carried out, and gave necessary instructions.

Upon arrival at 2007-08 Summer Paddy Modal Plantation and collective ploughing ceremony in Mongphyat, the commander heard reports by township chairman U Thein Tun on acres of land put under plantation of summer paddy and per acre yields, and inspected ploughed fields.

At the ceremony to hand over computers at Mongphyat Township BEHS the commander made a speech after the township education officer had reported facts on education sector.

At the ceremony to hand over computers at Mongphyat Township BEHS the commander made a speech after the township education officer had reported facts on education sector.

The commander also visited Myitkyina University and met with the rector, professors and faculty members. During the visit, the commander viewed the preparations for the examination of University of Distance Education.

Mongphyat-Mongkhok, Mongphyat-Mongyawng and Panle-Bushichatuleik roads inspected

NAY PYI TAW, 24 Dec — Chairman of Shan State (East) Peace and Development Council Commander of Triangle Region Command Maj-Gen Min Aung Hlaing attended the coordination meeting on the work sector of Mongphyat-Mongkhok road, Mongphyat-Mongyawng road and Panle-Bushichatuleik road at the briefing hall of the local battalion on 19 December.

He heard reports by State Superintending Engineer U Thaung Htay and officials on completion of 56-mile Mongphyat-Mongkhok road and 45/2-mile Mongphyat-Mongyawng road and future programmes to be carried out, and gave necessary instructions.

Upon arrival at 2007-08 Summer Paddy Modal Plantation and collective ploughing ceremony in Mongphyat, the commander heard reports by township chairman U Thein Tun on acres of land put under plantation of summer paddy and per acre yields, and inspected ploughed fields.

At the ceremony to hand over computers at Mongphyat Township BEHS the commander made a speech after the township education officer had reported facts on education sector.

The commander also visited Myitkyina University and met with the rector, professors and faculty members. During the visit, the commander viewed the preparations for the examination of University of Distance Education.

Afterwards, the commander met with committee members of organizing Manaw Festival to mark the Kachin State’s Day and inspected the preparations for the festival.

First Inter-ministry men’s Volleyball tournament continues

NAY PYI TAW, 24 Dec — The second semi-final of the 1st Inter-ministry men’s Volleyball Tournament was held at the Volleyball Ground-4 in Nay Pyi Taw this morning. In the event, Ministry of Sports won over Ministry of Home Affairs with 3-2 and reached to the final.

On 27 December, Ministry of Industry-1 and Ministry of Home Affairs will compete for the third place. For the final match, Ministry of Sports will play against Ministry of Progress of Border Areas and National Races and Development Affairs on 29 December.
**Industry-1 Minister inspects Brick Factory Project**

**NAY PYI TAW, 24 Dec—** Minister for Industry-1 U Aung Thaung inspected the brick factory project in Mingon (Nay Pyi Taw) of Myanma Ceramics Industries yesterday afternoon.

At the briefing hall of the project, officials concerned explained the production process of the factory.

Next, the minister looked into bricks produced for Uppata Thanti Pagoda and sample bricks produced by the factory.

After that, the minister also inspected functions of the factory, the site chosen for construction of the factory and staff quarters. And he gave instructions on increased production of the bricks in the open season and swift implementation for the projects.

**Vietnamese delegation calls on Foreign Minister**

**NAY PYI TAW, 24 Dec—** Mr Dao Viet Trung, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, and party paid a courtesy call on U Nyan Win, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Union of Myanmar, at Ministry of Foreign Affairs here today.

Mr Dao Viet Trung and party arrived in Myanmar this morning to participate in the 3rd Policy Consultation between Myanmar and Vietnam. During the call, U Nyan Win and Mr Dao Viet Trung frankly exchanged views on a wide range of issues.—MNA

**Ceremony to provide health care, donate offertories to nuns held**

**YANGON, 24 Dec—** Organized by Myanmar Women’s Affairs Federation, a ceremony to provide health care and to donate offertories to the nuns was held at Aungtawtha Nunnery in Shwepyitha Township this morning.

Present also at the ceremony were Head of Organizing Department of MWAF Dr Daw Nyunt Nyunt Oo, Secretariat Member of MWAF Dr Thet Thet Zin and members of Organizing Department, Insein Township Medical Superintendent Dr Daw Tin Aye Myint and specialists and members of WAOs from Yangon Division and Yangon North District.

Dr Daw Nyunt Nyunt Oo and families donated rice, edible oil, salt and robes worth K 450,000 and Physician of Hman Cho Medicine Store U Hla Htay and wife Daw Tin Ngwe Oo traditional medicines worth K 450,000.

Later, the doctors team led by Insein People’s Hospital Dr Daw Tin Aye Myint gave free medical care to 94 nuns from Aungtawtha Nunnery and near by 80 nunneries.—MNA

**District News in Brief**

**Executive officer U Phone Lwin and the engineer in charge of Sittway Township Development Affairs Committee supervising measures for the maintenance and cleaning of the pipeline and supply of water in the township on 10 December.**

**Director U Soe Lwin of Bago Division (West) Development Affairs Committee inspecting construction of rural and village roads and bridges and water supply and greening tasks being implemented by Padaung Township DAC for fiscal 2007-2008 on 23 November.**

**Executive Officer U Nay Myo Lin of Kayan Township Development Affairs Committee briefing Yangon Division DAC Director U Khin Maung Cho and officials on sinking of a two-inch tube-well and setting up of a water tank in Ward-3 in Kayan Township on 9 December.**
Britons seek greener Christmas, New Year

LONDON, 24 Dec – A series of studies show that Britain is embarking on its greenest Christmas, according to a report of the Independent on Sunday.

Four separate surveys show that most British people are planning to make their celebrations more environmentally friendly to reduce the impact of what are traditionally the most polluting three days of the year and to make green resolutions for the new year, the Independent reported.

Three-quarters say that they are actively trying to reduce the amount of waste they generate over the holiday, four in five mean to dispose of their Christmas trees in an environmentally responsible way, and nine out of 10 intend to recycle their Christmas cards and wrapping paper, the report said.

More than 80 percent say they have decided to live greener lives in 2008, it said. — MNA/Xinhua

Alitalia board picks Air France-KLM’s bid

Rome, 24 Dec—The Board of Directors of Alitalia has decided to choose Air France-KLM as its preferred bidder and considered its offer the best guarantee for the national carrier’s future, Italian media reported Saturday.

The decision came after a board meeting, which lasted almost seven hours and saw Air France-KLM win out over a rival offer presented by the AP Holding, the parent company of Italy’s biggest private carrier Air One.

The board’s decision is, in fact, only a suggestion to the government which has the final word on the sale of the Treasury Ministry’s controlling 49.9 percent stake in Alitalia.

The Italian Government said earlier this week that it would make a decision on the board’s recommendation by the middle of January.

The French-Dutch carrier said it is a top priority to renew Alitalia’s fleet and that the combination of the three European brands “will be able to offer clients an unparalleled international network.” — MNA/Xinhua

Eight killed in storm across central US states

WASHINGTON, 24 Dec—At least eight people have been killed and tens of thousands of people left without left without electricity as a major storm continues to sweep the US states of Michigan, Illinois and Wisconsin on Sunday.

The storm causing the heavy snow and howling wind left in the dark about 74,000 people in Michigan, about 58,000 in Chicago metro area and 4,500 others in southern and central Wisconsin, said a CNN report.

So far, at least eight deaths had been blamed for the storm, including three people in Minnesota, three in Wyoming and one person each in Texas and Kansas, who were killed in traffic accidents according to the report.

The one fatality in Texas came in a car pileup involving more than 50 vehicles on Saturday, including several ractortrailer rigs, on Interstate 40, police said. At least 16 people were taken to hospitals, two of whom were with life-threatening injuries, police said.

Authorities said they believe the pileup was caused by very poor visibility in blowing snow and slippery pavement.

Winter storm warnings were posted for parts of Minnesota, Wisconsin and Illinois on Sunday as the core of the storm headed north across the Great Lakes. — MNA/Xinhua

Turkey to rely on own satellite system

ANKARA, 24 Dec—Turkish Armed Forces would soon be able to gather intelligence through surveillance by Gokturk, a Reconnaissance and Surveillance Satellite System, the semi-official Anatolia news agency reported on Sunday. The Gokturk project, which was expected to cost around 200 million US dollars, would be concluded in three months, said the report.

The project would provide high resolution imagery for military intelligence from any place in the world without any geographical restriction, it added.

Gokturk, which would be capable of detecting the movements of objects smaller than one square meter, would help to prevent the outlawed Kurdish Workers’ Party (PKK) rebels from infiltrating into Turkish borders, said Murad Bayar, Undersecretary of Defence Industries.

Meanwhile, Gokturk could also be used for monitoring civilian activities, such as control of forest land, determination of damage after natural disasters within a short time, and geographical map data production. — MNA/Xinhua

French tourism service urged to improve reception

PARIS, 24 Dec—French Finance Minister Christine Lagarde and the State Secretary for Tourism Luc Chatel have called on private and public service providers to improve the reception of foreign tourists in France.

Addressing a Press conference Thursday, the minister launched an appeal for the improvement of tourist reception, particularly of foreign tourists, to public and private service providers, including the state railway company, SNCF, and major shopping malls like Galerie Lafayette.

“France, world leader in tourist arrivals, must focus on excellence in all domains, including tourist reception,” she said, describing reception as “the first and last image of the country.” — MNA/Xinhua

Ecuador sees 2.65% economic growth in 2007

QUITO, 24 Dec—Ecuador’s gross domestic product will grow 2.65 percent this year, less than previously expected due to weakness in the oil sector, the Central Bank said on Saturday.

However, the bank expects the oil-producing country’s economy to climb 4.25 per cent in 2008 thanks to a rise in private and public investment and an increase in oil exports.

Ecuador’s economy grew 4 per cent in 2006.

Government officials have repeatedly revised the country’s economic growth forecast this year because falling state and private investment in the oil sector and violent protests in the oil-rich Amazon jungle have lowered oil output. The bank expects the oil sector to decline 9.8 per cent in 2007.

The bank’s last projection for 2007 GDP growth, made in August, was 3.4 per cent. — MNA/Reuters

Japan to review “GX” rocket plan

TOKYO, 24 Dec — Japan will review plans to produce a rocket to launch satellites that is being jointly developed by the government and the private sector, partly due to increased costs, the daily Yomiuri Shimbun reported on Sunday.

The daily said the rocket, known as the GX, was due to be launched in the financial year starting April 2011, five years behind an initial plan. Private investors were forced to look for a new engine manufacturer after a US company that was initially due to provide the part stopped production, the daily said. The move is expected to add another 45 billion yen (394.6 million US dollars) in costs. — MNA/Reuters

A muskrat with frozen water drops on its whiskers scampers on the ice of the Missouri River near Great Falls, Mont. — Internet

A new born male African giraffe plays with his mother at the Delhi Zoo in India in March 2007. Man and mother nature are threatening at least six distinct species of African giraffe, which are highly endangered and could face extinction if not protected, a study warned Saturday. — Internet

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The fish-shaped main tower of the Linjiang Bridge in Wuhu city, east China’s Anhui Province. The 433.5-meter-long Linjiang Bridge locates at the infall of the Qingyi River and Yangtse. — INTERNET

School children gather near a Santa Claus sand sculpture, created by sand artist Sudarshan Patnaik on the eve of Christmas at the golden sea beach of Puri, about 67 kilometers (42 miles) away from the southeastern Indian temple city Bhubaneswar, India, on 24 Dec, 2007. — INTERNET

A mahout in traditional costume gets his elephant to stand on its hind legs for tourists at the Surin Elephant Round-up festival in northeast Thailand. — INTERNET

A 40-meter-tall tower named ‘Sacred Tower of Olympics’ serves as a highlight of the Ninth Harbin Ice and Snow World in Harbin, northeastern China’s Heilongjiang Province, on 22 Dec, 2007. The annual festival marks the peak of tourism to the cold northern region of China. — INTERNET

Images of the Day
China, India hold strategic dialogue

BEIJING, 24 Dec—China and India finished a strategic dialogue here Friday. Vice-Foreign Minister Wu Dawei and Indian Foreign Secretary Shivshankar Menon exchanged views on bilateral relations and international and regional issues of common concern.

This is the third time for the two nations to hold strategic dialogue. The two sides reached wide consensus during the two-day dialogue.

Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi met with Menon on Friday. Yang said China and India enjoy rapid growth and great potential of bilateral relations. The enhancement of China-Indian cooperation will be of great influence for international situation.

Yang said the two countries should increase exchanges in various fields and properly solve disputes, in an effort to push for bilateral relations. Menon said India gives priority to the relations with China, and India-China relation was important for safeguarding regional and world stability.

India was confident for the development of India-China ties, Menon said.

Eight dead, 24 hurt in Egypt bus crash

CAIRO, 24 Dec—At least eight Egyptians were killed and 24 others injured when a bus collided head-on with another vehicle early on Friday on an intercity road south of Cairo, security and ambulance sources said.

The sources said the bus was trying to overtake a passenger car when it collided with another vehicle, either a truck or a minibus, near the oasis town of Fayoum. Several children were among the dead.

The accident came a day after a metro train jumped its track at a station on the outskirts of the Egyptian capital, injuring at least 34 people.

Security sources said they believed the train’s brakes had failed, as it entered the station too fast.

China ready to deepen cooperation with Micronesia

BEIJING, 24 Dec—Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao told visiting Micronesian President Emanuel Mori Friday that China is ready to strengthen cooperation with Micronesia in various fields.

Wen said in a meeting with Mori that the Chinese Government attaches great importance to China-Micronesia relationship and see Micronesia as a good friend and good partner.

He said China is ready to make joint efforts to deepen bilateral cooperation in various fields including economy and trade, culture, education and health, in a bid to continuously promote the development of China-Micronesia friendly and cooperative ties featuring lasting stability and mutual benefits.

“Facts have shown the friendly ties between China and Micronesia are in the common interests of both peoples and also conducive to peace and prosperity in the region of the Pacific islands,” Wen added.

He expressed his appreciation of the Micronesian Government’s long adherence to the one-China policy and opposition to “Taiwan independence”.

Mori said the friendly relationship between Micronesia and China has developed smoothly, and the two sides have developed successful cooperation in the fields of communication, energy, agriculture, fishery, trade and tourism, which has helped strengthen Micronesia’s ability of national construction.

Turkish planes bomb Kurds in northern Iraq

TUNCELI (Turkey), 23 Dec—Turkish warplanes bombed Kurdish guerilla targets in northern Iraq on Saturday in a new cross-border offensive, the General Staff said.

The Turkish military said the offensive against outlawed separatist Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) guerillas inside Turkey and across the border in northern Iraq would continue.

“Turkish Air Force warplanes struck important targets of the PKK/KONGRA-GEL terror group in northern Iraq ... between the hours of 14:25-15:00 (1225-1300 GMT),” the General Staff statement, posted on its website, said.

Turkey says it has the right to use force to combat separatist rebels who shelter in the semi-autonomous Kurdish region of northern Iraq and mount attacks in which they have killed dozens of Turkish troops in recent months.
US scientists find embryonic stem cells from skin

BEIJING, 24 Dec — US scientists reported on Sunday that they have found a way to convert an ordinary skin cell into valued embryonic-like stem cells, with the potential to grow batches of cells that can be directed to form any kind of tissue.

The study, carried out by a team led by Dr George Daley of Harvard Medical School and Children’s Hospital Boston, Massachusetts, was published in the scientific journal Nature. Daley said his team have been able to use the same four genes that Japanese scientists used to derive pluripotent stem (or iPS) cell from fetal lung and skin cells, from neo-natal skin cells as well as from skin samples taken from a healthy human volunteer. In November, Shinya Yamanaka of Kyoto University and colleagues announced they had reprogrammed human skin cells to have the multiple potency of stem cells culled from human embryos.

Yamanaka’s team used a retrovirus to deliver four genes into skin cells taken from a mouse and an adult human, this turned the clock back so that these cells lost their differentiated profile and became iPS cells. However, the work of Daley’s team marks a step forward to “patient-specific” stem cells — in other words, transplanted stem cells that carry the same genetic code as the patient and thus cannot be rejected as alien by the body’s immune system.

A team of American scientists reported on Sunday that they had widened the scope of a Japanese breakthrough in stem cells that many experts have hailed as the greatest medical achievement of 2007. — INT

Psychologists to ease pressures for China’s police

BEIJING, 24 Dec — China’s Ministry of Public Security has set up a team of 13 psychologists to provide crisis intervention counselling to police who handle serious emergency or highly violent cases.

The ministry planned to provide all police nationwide with such service within two years, Saturday’s Legal Daily reported.

The team planned to draft a manual to the local police authority on how to help individuals out of psycho-crisis after undergoing extreme conditions such as shooting criminals, dead or witnessing colleagues killed, the Beijing-based newspaper quoted a ministry source.

They would also offer counselling to police in selected big cases. The issue of how to keep police mentally healthy was not previously properly addressed due to insufficient professionals and a lack of attention from the authority. But some measures have been tried in the past few years.

As of last year, nine psychological centres have been set up at Chinese People’s Public Security University, as well as in seven provinces and Shanghai municipality. To date, they have provided counselling for about 11,000 police.

Police authorities in three cities — Shanghai, Dalian and Hangzhou — have adopted crisis intervention counselling for their members who handle shooting and explosive cases or negotiate hostage rescue.

Study says green tea may reduce prostate cancer risk

BEIJING, 24 Dec — Men who drink five or more cups of green tea a day might reduce the risk of advanced prostate cancer by up to 50 percent compared to those who drink one cup a day, according to a study by researchers at Japan’s National Cancer Centre.

“This does not mean that people who drink green tea are guaranteed to have reduced risk of advanced prostate cancer,” said Norie Kurahashi, a scientist who took part in the study. “We are just presenting our results. But the study does point to the hope that green tea reduces the risk of advanced prostate cancer.”

Prostate cancer is much less common among Asian men than Western men, and that may be partly due to the effects of the high consumption of green tea in Asia, the study suggested.

But it said further studies are needed to confirm the preventive effects of green tea on prostate cancer, including well-designed clinical trials.

The study, published in the American Journal of Epidemiology, compiled data from 50,000 men aged 40-69 over a period of up to 14 years from 1990.

British charity Cancer Research UK says on its website that a study of almost 20,000 Japanese men published in the British Journal of Cancer in 2006 found no relationship between green tea and prostate cancer. — Internet

A team of American scientists reported on Sunday that they had widened the scope of a Japanese breakthrough in stem cells that many experts have hailed as the greatest medical achievement of 2007. — INTERNET

UK’s Royal Mail loses millions of X’mas parcels, letters

LONDON, 24 Dec — Britain’s Royal Mail faces an angry consumer backlash this weekend over more than two million parcels and letters lost or delayed in the Christmas post, according to a report of the Sunday Times.

Customers across the country are in danger of being left without their presents, the report said. The backlog has allegedly been compounded by postal workers deliberately failing to deliver presents to save time on their rounds.

On Saturday, at depots around the country, customers were being forced to brave the winter chill and wait in long queues to reclaim their Christmas parcels, the paper reported.

About 1.2 million letters and parcels are already estimated to have been lost in the Christmas post, it said.

Hundreds of thousands of other items are delayed or awaiting collection at depots where queues of up to two hours have formed.

The chaos disrupted the last weekend before Christmas for thousands as they were forced to queue up to collect undelivered packages, it said. At mid-morning there was a two-hour queue outside Totterdown depot in Bristol and long waits at depots in Brighton and London.

DONATE BLOOD
**SPORTS**

Inter beat Milan to extend lead at top

**ROME,** 24 Dec — Serie A leaders Inter Milan came from behind to beat city rivals AC Milan 2-1 on Sunday and extend their advantage over AS Roma to seven points.

Ibrahimovic volleyed the first chance over after being

Argentine duo Julio Cruz and Esteban Cambiasso scored in either half to cancel out Andrea Pirlo's 18th minute opener.

Unbeaten Inter's sixth consecutive league win gives them 43 points from 17 games, while Roma are on 36 after beating Sampdoria 2-0 on Saturday thanks to captain Francesco Totti's brace.

Defeat means Milan have still not won against Italian opposition at the San Siro this season and are 25 points behind Inter in 12th place, but with three games in hand.

Third-placed Juventus have 35 points after beating Siena 2-0 in Turin on Sunday.

"I think we played a good match and deserved to win," Inter coach Roberto Mancini told Sky television.

"They didn't have too many chances, except at the end. It's important that we have finished (the year) with a seven-point lead despite all the (injury) problems we have had."

At the San Siro, Inter's Swedish striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic volleyed the first chance over after being set up by Maicon in the fourth minute. — Internet

**FA official says UK managers not good enough for England**

**LONDON,** 24 Dec — No English managers were good enough to be appointed head coach of the national side, FA chief executive Brian Barwick has said.

Italian Fabio Capello, 61, was handed a four-and-a-half year contract by the FA earlier this month, an appointment that has divided opinion among fans, managers and players in England.

Capello, the second overseas coach to manage England following

Sven-Goran Eriksson (2001-06), succeeds Steve McClaren who was dismissed after the team failed to qualify for Euro 2008.


"I wrote out a template and put against our current crop of English managers and not one of them ticked all the boxes."

"So the reality is we can't find a suitable English candidate at present."

"It has to be our ambition to have an English boss, but we have to be realistic. This time around we had to get the right man regardless of nationality. And we believe we have done that."

Serie A matches played on Sunday:

**Juventus 2 Siena 0**

**Manchester United's Cristiano Ronaldo scores from the penalty spot against Everton during the English Premier League soccer match at Old Trafford on 23 Dec, 2007. Manchester won 2-1. — Internet**

Baptista sinks Barca as Real go seven clear

**MADRID,** 24 Dec — Leaders Real Madrid beat their arch-rivals and closest challengers Barcelona 1-0 at the Nou Camp to take the vice-like hold on the Primera Liga title race on Sunday.

Julio Baptista's well-taken first-half goal secured the Spanish champions only their second league victory in 24 years at Barca's ground, ended the Catalans' 100 per cent home record this season, and sent them seven points clear at the top.

Real looked sharper throughout while Barcelona appeared paralysed with nerves and offered little once their visitors had edged ahead.

Bernd Schuster, after his first 'clasico' as coach, goes into the mid-season break sitting pretty with 41 points. Barca are second with 34. Barca coach Frank Rijkaard sprung something of a surprise when he aligned Ronaldinho and Deco in his starting 11 after a week of heated speculation.

Although Barca dominated the ball early on, they were given little space to work their passes and Real had the first clear effort when Pepe headed straight at Victor Valdes from a Wesley Sneijder freekick.

Andres Iniesta sent Samuel Eto'o scampering into the area after 29 minutes but Iker Casillas was quick off his line to smother the danger and then poke the ball off the foot of Iniesta in the follow up. — MNA/Reuters

**Ligue 1 bottom club Metz sack coach**

**METZ (France),** 24 Dec — Metz coach Francis De Teddeo has been sacked following a string of poor results, the Ligue 1 side said on their Web site (www.fcmetz.com) on Sunday.

"Considering that the situation has got worse, Metz have decided to part ways with Francis De Teddeo," Metz said in a statement.

Metz are bottom of Ligue 1 with seven points from 19 matches. The club said they would name a new coach in the coming days. — MNA/Reuters

**Real Madrid's Sergio Ramos (obscured, C) jumps for the ball against Barcelona's goalkeeper Victor Valdes during their Spanish first division soccer match at Nou Camp in Barcelona on 23 Dec, 2007. Julio Baptista scored to give Real Madrid a 1-0 win over Barcelona on Sunday and a seven-point edge at midseason in the Spanish La Liga. — Xinhua**

**Italian Serie A reports**

**ROME,** 24 Dec — Brief reports from Serie A matches played on Sunday:

**Fiorentina 5 Cagliari 1**

Italian midfielder Fabio Firmani and Igli Tare scored his 13th goal of season with a right-footed shot from the edge of the area in the second half.

**Livorno 1 Atalanta 1**

Fernando Tissone's splendid free kick quickly cancelled out Livorno defender Fabio Galante's 26th-minute opening goal.

**Napoli 1 Torino 0**

Alessandro Rosina scored with a spot kick for Torino in the 36th minute although TV replays suggested the penalty was unjust as Napoli's Maurizio Domizzi had not handled the ball.

Torino's Australian defender Vincenzo Grella was sent off shortly before the break for a second yellow card.

In the second half Domizzi missed a penalty before substitute Marek Hamsik earned Napoli a point.

**Palermo 2 Lazio 0**

Goals from Fabio Liverani and Igli Tare earned the Romans a draw after Brazilian duo Fabio Simplício and Amauri had put Palermo in control.

— MNA/Reuters
Indian Air Force plane crashes, pilot safe

NEW DELHI, 24 Dec—An Indian Air Force plane caught fire and crashed during take off in eastern India on Saturday but its pilot escaped with minor burns, local newspaper The Hindu reported Sunday. The Surya Kiran aircraft caught fire when it skidded off the runway and crashed into a ditch during take off after refueling at the airport.

The entire aircraft was burnt and parts were scattered over an area of 30 to 40 metres radius at the Biju Patnaik Airport in Bhubaneswar, Orissa, said the report. The plane was among the four IAF aircraft which had landed for refueling at the airport.

Its pilot Wing Commander Rajat Tyagi, who came out of the aircraft on his own, sustained minor burn injuries on both legs and was given medical treatment, additional

The photo shows a Siberian tiger holding a tree branch at the zoo in Beijing. —INTERNET

Missing Madeleine’s parents issue Christmas plea

Lisbon, 24 Dec—The parents of missing British girl Madeleine McCann issued a video on Saturday with a new plea for information about her whereabouts and a special Christmas message to their daughter to “be brave”.

McCann disappeared more than seven months ago shortly before her fourth birthday during a family holiday in the Portuguese beach resort of Praia da Luz. Her parents, who Portuguese police have named as formal suspects, believe she was abducted from their holiday apartment as they had dinner with friends at a nearby restaurant.

“Madeleine it seems unlikely that you’ll hear this, but just in case it’s mum and daddy here,” her mother Kate, said in the appeal which included footage of Madeleine opening her Christmas presents from last year.

“Just know how much we love you Madeleine. We all miss you so much. We are doing everything we can Madeleine to find you. Be brave sweetheart, our only Christmas wish is for you to be back with us again.”

MNA/Reuters

Indian Air Force

Weather Map of Myanmar and Neighbouring Areas

 WEATHER

Monday, 24 December, 2007

Summary of observations recorded at 09:30 hours MST: During the past 24 hours, weather has been partly cloudy in Taninthayi Division and generally fair in the remaining areas. Night temperatures were (3ºC) to (4ºC) below December average temperatures in Chin and Kayin States, lower Sagaing and Ayeyawady Divisions, (5ºC) below December average temperatures in Rakhine State, Magway and Yangon Divisions and about December average temperatures in the remaining States and Divisions. The significant night temperatures were Huka (2ºC), Mogok (3ºC), Pinlaung (4ºC), Namhsan and Helo (5ºC) each.

Maximum temperature on 23-12-2007 was 89ºF. Minimum temperature on 24-12-2007 was 56ºF. Relative humidity at 09:30 hours MST on 24-12-2007 was 73%. Total sunshine hours on 23-12-2007 was (8.0) hours approx.

Rainfall on 24-12-2007 was (nil) at Mingaladon, Kaba-Aye and Central Yangon. Total rainfall since 1-1-2007 was (136.57) inches at Mingaladon, (141.38) inches at Kaba-Aye and (144.29) inches at Central Yangon. Maximum wind speed at Yangon (Kaba-Aye) was (6) mph from West at (21:30) hours MST on 23-12-2007.

Bay influence: Weather is partly cloudy in the Southwest Bay and generally fair in the Andaman Sea and elsewhere in the Bay of Bengal.

Forecast valid until evening of 25-12-2007: Weather will be partly cloudy in Taninthayi Division and generally fair in the remaining States and Divisions.

State of the sea: Seas will be slight to moderate in Myanmar waters.

Outlook for subsequent two days: Likelihood of slight decrease of night temperatures in the whole Country.

Forecast for Nay Pyi Taw and neighbouring area for 25-12-2007: Generally fair weather.

Forecast for Yangon and neighbouring area for 25-12-2007: Fair weather.

Forecast for Mandalay and neighbouring area for 25-12-2007: Generally fair weather.
People’s Desire

☆ We favour stability.
☆ We favour peace.
☆ We oppose unrest and violence.

95-mile Katha-Bhamo Railroad under construction

Minister Maj-Gen Aung Min inspects earth works of Katha-Bhamo railroad section.

RAILWAY

NAY PYI TAW, 24 Dec — Minister for Rail Transportation Maj-Gen Aung Min, Deputy Minister U Pe Than and officials inspected construction of Katha-Bhamo Railroad on 21 December.

Altogether 55 big and small bridges including the one across Ayeyawady River will be built along the 95-mile railroad.

The minister met officials at the briefing hall. He said the railroad that contributes toward the regional development is being built in accord with the guidance of the Head of State. Commodities can be transported to eastern and western parts of the country through Bhamo-Katha-Khinh-U-ChaungU Road and up to Kalay, he said.

The minister and party inspected earth works near Pawmamyay, Mehin and Katechaung Villages and land preparation for Minle Station. They cordially met local people there.

The minister explained the benefits of the construction of the railroad and nation-building endeavours to them. In meeting with secretaries and executives of District and Township Union Solidarity and Development Association, the minister clarified salient points on national development.

On 22 December, the minister and party visited the site for construction of a bridge across Ayeyawady River near Sinkhan Village in Bhamo Township.

MINISTRY OF RAILWAY

Weather Forecast for 25-12-2007

Nay Pyi Taw and neighbouring area Generally fair weather.
Yangon and neighbouring area Fair weather.
Mandalay and neighbouring area Generally fair weather.

☆ RFA, VOA and BBC airing skyful of lies
☆ RFA, VOA and BBC saboteurs, watch your step!
☆ The public be warned of killers in the air waves — RFA, VOA and BBC