Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt receives national race leaders

YANGON, 25 Dec—Border Areas and National Races Development Work Committee Chairman Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt received Kayan Pyithit Party Vice-Chairman U Than Soe Naing and members at Zeyathiri Beikman Hall on Konyinntha, here, at 4 pm today.

Present at the call were Minister for Mines Brig-Gen Ohn Myint, Minister for Progress of Border Areas and National Races and Development Affairs Col Thein Nyunt, and Minister for Forestry Brig-Gen Thein Aung, Director-General of the State Peace and Development Council Office Lt-Col Pe Nyein and officials.

At the call, national race leaders expressed their support for the seven-point future programme of the State and pledged to attend the National Convention without fail. Afterwards, they discussed matters relating to health, education, road and bridges and economic sectors for regional development.

Next, Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt gave instructions on enabling visitors to the Union National Races Village to view more about traditional buildings, nurseries of mangrove forest, cage plantation and areas of mangroves on trees on a manageable scale for enjoying natural beauty.

The General inspected progress in construction of Nanyint Tower, the archway of the main gate and recreation halls, paving of roads in the village, building of Zwegabin Hill, extension of food stalls of national races, decoration of traditional buildings, arrangement of mangrove forest, cage plantation and arrangements for holding the traditional festivals with the use of slides.

Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt inspects progress in implementing Union National Races Village Project

YANGON, 25 Dec—Chairman of Work Committee for Development of Border Areas and National Races Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt arrived by plane in the Union National Races Village Project at Thakayta Township at 2 pm today. The Prime Minister and party were welcomed there by ministers, deputy ministers and officials.

At the briefing hall, Minister for Progress of Border Areas and National Races and Development Affairs Col Thein Nyunt reported in detail on progress in construction of Nanyint Tower, the archway of the main gate and recreation halls, paving of roads in the village, building of Zwegabin Hill, extension of food stalls of national races, decoration of traditional buildings, nurseries of mangrove forest, cage plantation and arrangements for holding the traditional festivals with the use of slides.

Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt inspects progress of Union National Races Village in Thakayta Township from Nanyint Tower. — MNA

Emergence of the State Constitution is the duty of all citizens of Myanmar Naing-Ngan.
The 57th Anniversary Union Day objectives
— for all national races to safeguard the national policy— non-disintegration of the Union, non-disintegration of national solidarity and perpetuation of sovereignty
— to keep the Union spirit ever alive and dynamic among the national people
— for all national people to defend and safeguard the Union for its perpetual existence
— to prevent, through national solidarity, the danger of internal and external destructive elements undermining peace and stability of the State and national development, and
— for all national races to make concerted efforts for successful implementation of the seven-point future policy programme.

Hospital equipment donated to Zalun station hospital
YANGON, 25 Dec.— The suction machine donated by Minister for Progress of Border Areas and National Races and Development Affairs Col Thein Nyunt and the oxygen cylinder by Deputy Minister for Information U Thein Sein were presented to Yaye Sayadaw U Kalyana who is the patron of the self-reliant station hospital in Yaye Village, today.
These hospital equipment will be used at the hospital in Yaye Village, Zalun Township. — MNA

MRA English courses conducted
YANGON, 25 Dec.— Intermediate level English grammar, speaking, writing and reading proficiency courses are being conducted at the Myanmar Royal Academy (MRA) at No 57, ground floor, 9th Street, Lammadaw Township, here. There are also general English courses, GCE English courses and Medical English courses. One-month, three-month and six-month special English courses are also conducted. At the end of this month, English in business studies (accounting, finance, marketing, management and writing for business) course, TOEFL special English courses and Chinese language courses will be conducted. — MNA

All this needs to be known
* Do not be frightened whenever intimidated
* Do not be bolstered whenever flattered
* Do not be softened whenever appeased

People’s Desire
* Oppose those relying on external elements, acting as stooges, holding negative views
* Oppose those trying to jeopardize stability of the State and progress of the nation
* Oppose foreign nations interfering in internal affairs of the State
* Crush all internal and external destructive elements as the common enemy

Efficient use of electricity
* Use daylight as the main source of light
* Use the least possible amount of electricity only if there is not enough natural light
* Use the least possible amount of electricity required in production and service enterprises
* Preventing waste of electricity benefits the user and others
There are about 500,000 households using electricity in Yangon. Thus, saving a four-foot fluorescent lamp every day by each household amounts to saving power that is equal to the capacity a 20-megawatt power station can supply.

Efficient use of fuel
* Saving one gallon of fuel per car per month will save the nation US$1.75 in a year
* Thus, a total of 455,822 cars in Myanmar can save US$ 5.5 million in a year
* The amount, US$ 5.5 million, can build a major bridge across Ayeyawady River

School Family Day
(27 December 2003 to 3 January 2004)

Bangladeshi delegation leaves
YANGON, 25 Dec— Bangladeshi Rifles Director-General Maj-Gen Md Ihabantr Alam Chowdhury ndc psc and party this morning left here by air after attending the Director-General Level Border Coordination Conference at Grand Plaza Park Royal Hotel on Signal Pagoda Road, here, on 22 December. They were seen off at the airport by Director-General U Muang Huay of Immigration and National Registration Department, officials and the Charge d’Affaires as of the Bangladeshi Embassy. — MNA

The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago.
The second best time is now.
464 US service members killed since beginning of military operations in Iraq

BAGHDAD, 25 Dec—464 US service members have died since the beginning of military operations in Iraq, according to the Department of Defense in Iraq. Of those, 317 died as a result of hostile action and 147 died of non-hostile causes, the department said.

The British military has reported 52 deaths; Italy, 17; Spain, eight; Denmark, Ukraine and Poland have reported one each.

On or since May 1, when President Bush declared that major combat operations in Iraq had ended, 326 US soldiers have died 202 as a result of hostile action and 124 of non-hostile causes, according to the Defence Department’s figures.

Since the start of military operations, 2,326 US service members have been injured as a result of hostile action, according to the Defence Department’s figures. Non-hostile injuries numbered 370.

The latest deaths reported by the military:

Three Task Force Ironhorse soldiers were killed when their vehicle was struck by a roadside bomb on 24 December near Samarra. The latest identifications reported by the military:

Army Spc Todd M Bates, 20, Bellevue, Ohio; was on a river patrol on the Tigris River on 10 December south of Baghdad when his squad leader fell overboard. Spc Bates dived into the water and did not surface. Bates’ body was recovered and his status changed to deceased on 23 December, assigned to the 135th Military Police Company, Army National Guard, Brookpark, Ohio.

Army Reserve 1st Lt Edward M Salz, 27, Bigfork, Mont., and Army Reserve Pfc Stuart W Moore, 21, Livingston, Texas; killed when an explosive struck their convoy on 22 December in Baghdad; both assigned to 2nd Battalion, 3rd Field Artillery Regiment, 1st Armored Division, US Army Reserve, Giessen, Germany.—Internet

Malaysian Prime Minister to visit Singapore

SINGAPORE, 25 Dec—Prime Minister of Malaysia Abdullah Ahmad Badawi is scheduled to visit Singapore on 12 January, 2004, the local press reported on Tuesday, citing visiting Malaysian Culture, Arts and Tourism Minister Kadir Sheikh Fadzir. This will be Abdullah’s first visit to Singapore as Prime Minister of Malaysia.

Four dead in suicide blast in northern Iraq as bomb kills three US soldiers on Wednesday, in three separate incidents.

A roadside bomb ripped through a US military convoy north of Baghdad, killing three soldiers.

A military vehicle was destroyed in the blast that occurred at around 9 am (06:00 GMT) near the town of Samarra, 100 km north of Baghdad, a US military statement said. In the northern city of Arbil, four people were killed and 20 others injured in a car bomb explosion, our correspondent reported.

The explosion took place at the entrance of the Interior Ministry headquarters at 08:50 GMT, setting the building ablaze and killing the security guards.

The blast also shattered the windows of nearby residential buildings. The cause of the explosion was not immediately known. The police cordoned off the area.

China enforces intellectual property protection

BEIJING, 25 Dec—China’s State Intellectual Property Office (SIPO) organized Tuesday an inter-agency consultation for strengthening administrative enforcement, together with law enforcement, to effectively protect intellectual property.

Since China gained access to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001, more destructive intellectual property disputes have occurred. Against this backdrop, the SIPO decided to coordinate with other agencies to further enhance intellectual property protection. Wang Jingchuan, commissioner of the SIPO, said that the Chinese still lack awareness of intellectual property. The Chinese Government has already listed intellectual property protection as a key area for regulating the market economy. In an order issued to local intellectual property watchdogs, the SIPO urged a focus on restricting intellectual property violations in large-scale commodity fairs, technological and intellectual exhibitions and in industries that make medicines, food and construction materials.

Three US soldiers killed in Iraq blasts

BAGHDAD, 25 Dec—Eight people, including three US soldiers, were killed in an Iraq blast on Wednesday, in three separate incidents.

A roadside bomb ripped through a US military convoy north of Baghdad, killing three soldiers.

A military vehicle was destroyed in the blast that occurred at around 9 am (06:00 GMT) near the town of Samarra, 100 km north of Baghdad, a US military statement said. In the northern city of Arbil, four people were killed and 20 others injured in a car bomb explosion, our correspondent reported.

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The blast also shattered the windows of nearby residential buildings. The cause of the explosion was not immediately known. The police cordoned off the area.

The suspected guerrillas attack highlighted the fresh wave of violence on the eve of the first Christmas in post-Saddam Iraq.

Three US soldiers died when guerrillas detonated a roadside bomb near their convoy near Samarra early Wednesday.

A suicide bomber exploded outside an Iraqi government building in the northern city of Arbil midday, killing at least four people and injuring 20 others.

Meanwhile a roadside bomb detonated in a busy area in western Baghdad around noon resulted in one Iraqi dead and at least two others wounded.—Internet

Indian Govt to divest 10% equity each in ONGC and GAIL

NEW DELHI, 25 Dec—Indian Government on Tuesday night decided to divest 10 per cent equity each in oil Public Sector Undertakings ONGC and GAIL, valued at $12 billion rupees at current market prices, during the current fiscal, a move that would help meet the disinvestment target set for 2003-04.

Announcing the decision taken at the meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Disinvestment, Disinvestment Minister Arun Shourie told reporters that “market is buoyant and the Prime Minister and the Finance Minister wanted retail investors to take the buoyancy in the market.”

The equity sale in the domestic market would be completed during the current financial year and an inter-ministerial Committee comprising Ministers of Finance, Law, Petroleum and Disinvestment would take day-to-day decisions including procedural issues and quantum of equity to be carved out for retail investors, Shourie said.

Asked about the value of the equity to be sold in the market, Shourie said at current market prices, the equity to be offered offloaded is valued at Rs 107 billion rupees and 18 billion rupees (stock) together.

On whether government could consider divestment through overseas ADR issue, he said the Committee of Ministers would have to approach the CD with such a proposal in case it does not find depth in the market (domestic).

The CDD meeting was chaired by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.—MNA/PTI

Tokyo hesitant to grant Iraq debt relief

TOKYO, 25 Dec—Tokyo was a strong backer of the US-led invasion, is a top contributor to reconstruction and just approved a plan to send troops to the region. But when it comes to the recent US campaign for debt relief for Iraq, top creditor Japan is so far keeping its hands on its wallet.

While war critics France, Germany and Russia have voiced support for reducing Iraq’s crushing debt burden during recent visits by US envoy James A Baker III, Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi’s administration has been quiet on whether it’s willing to join the effort.

Japan estimates its Iraqi credit at $4.54 billion, saying the figure rises to $7.76 billion when penalty fees are included. That puts it in competition with Russia—owed an estimated $8 billion—as the top holder of Iraqi debt in the 19-nation Paris Club.

“Japan has not made any decisions concerning that matter,” said Yu Kamuro, a spokesman for Koizumi.

The former American secretary of state has already visited Paris, Rome, Berlin, London and Moscow to call for help in reducing Iraq’s crushing debt.—Internet

Explosion rocks Sheraton Hotel in Baghdad

BAGHDAD, 25 Dec—A huge explosion rocked a luxurious hotel, which houses western journalists and merchants, in Iraq’s capital city of Baghdad late Wednesday, witnesses said.

The witnesses said they saw a projectile hit the Sheraton Hotel in central Baghdad around 5pm (1700 GMT). There was no report of casualties or injuries.

Meanwhile a roadside bomb detonated near a car, near al-Shurta flyover in Baghdad, the correspondent reported.

In the third incident, one person was killed and four, including a child, were injured when a landmine exploded under a car near al-Shurta flyover in Baghdad, the correspondent reported.

Baghdad bombing

Meanwhile, US aircraft and artillery units blasted suspected rebel hideouts in Baghdad overnight.

Since the start of military operations, 2,326 US service members have been injured as a result of hostile action, according to the Defence Department’s figures. Non-hostile injuries numbered 370.

The latest deaths reported by the military:

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Polish President describes situation in Iraq as unstable

WARSAW, 25 Dec — Polish President Aleksander Kwasniewski said on Tuesday that the situation in Iraq is extremely unstable.

Poland will face a difficult task to stabilize Iraq in 2004, the President told a Press conference here after a surprise pre-Christmas visit to Polish peacekeepers in Iraq on Monday. He added that the number of multinational peacekeeping troops in Iraq is expected to be reduced in 2005 if everything goes well.

Kwasniewski said there are 2,400 trained Iraqi soldiers to assist the peacekeepers in the Poland-run stability zone in Iraq and 3,700 Iraqi police officers will also be trained for work in the zone.

Italy cancels Zambia's debt

LUZAKA, 25 Dec — The Italian Government has cancelled Zambia's external debt amounting to 28 million US dollars.

An agreement to the effect was signed Monday between Zambian Finance Minister Ng'andu Magande and Italian Ambassador to Zambia Tullio Guma, in the Zambian capital Lusaka.

The Paris Club agreed to give Zambia a 100-per-cent write-off of all debts due during the period between January 2001 and March 2003.

Magande said this means that Zambia did not make any debt service payments to Italy during this period.

Blix optimistic about restricting spread of banned weapons

LONDON, 25 Dec — Former chief of the United Nations weapons inspector Hans Blix still remains optimistic about preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the British Financial Times newspaper reported on Tuesday.

Events in Iraq would not in any way subvert the value and credibility of future weapons inspections around the world, Blix said in an interview with the paper.

Iraq did not dare to restart its weapons programmes in 1998, when UN inspectors were thrown out of the country, for fear that they would be detected, said Blix, whose team were not allowed to finish their job and provide a definitive answer as to whether or not Iraq had banned weapons and intended to use them.

Blix said terrorists have so far failed to launch any devastating attacks with them.

In the interview, Blix also claimed that “everybody is becoming convinced that there are not any weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and in all likelihood have not been for a long time.”

China supports Afghanistan reconstruction

BEIJING, 25 Dec — China will try its best to support Afghanistan's reconstruction, said Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesman Liu Jianchao here Tuesday.

According to Liu Jianchao, Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Lu Xinhua started his visit to Afghanistan on 20 December and held meetings with Vice-President of Afghanistan’s interim government Namtullah Shaharan and Afghan Foreign Minister Abdullah Abdullah Shaharan.

Liu said Afghanistan valued its relations with China and thanked China for its assistance ever since, hoping China would continue to help boost economic development.

Arab League’s chief calls for Arab involvement in Iraq

BAGHDAD, 25 Dec — Arab League chief Amr Mussa called on Arab nations to back efforts to rebuild war-torn Iraq after talking with members of the Governing Council, amid ongoing US efforts against anti-coalition guerrillas in Operation Iron Grip.

The US-led coalition that administers Iraq also warned its members to be on heightened alert against attacks over the holiday season, as Christians in Baghdad celebrated Christmas Eve mass amid security fears.

“Coalition members are cautioned to be especially alert over the next 10 days and to take appropriate steps to increase their security awareness,” said a notice from the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) Regional Security Co-ordinator.

“We are seeing continuing indications following the capture of Saddam Hussein that elements are planning actions against CPA and Iraqi interests in order to demonstrate that they are still a significant force,” the notice said.

The Arab League meanwhile was entreated to play a key role in rebuilding war-torn Iraq Wednesday, by Governing Council member Iyad Allawi.

In response, Mussa, speaking at the opening of the 20th session of the Arab council of ministers urging attended ministers, Arab companies, state and private, to join in force in the international competition for Iraq’s reconstruction”.

“The door is open to Arab companies to enter the Iraqi market,” said Musa, adding that “there is no reason to fear the competition of conglomerates, because they could not drive the reconstruction alone.”

Earlier in the day, Mussa had warned that foreign troops in Iraq would come under attack for as long as they remain in the country despite Saddam’s capture.

“As long as there are foreign troops (in Iraq), there will be resistance,” he told the BBC.

US mum on talks to explore UN role in Iraq

UNITED NATIONS, 25 Dec — UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan will meet with Iraqi officials next month to explore a UN role in guiding Baghdad’s return to self-government, but the United States is keeping silent on whether it will attend the talks, a UN spokesman said on Wednesday.

While President Bush told Annn by telephone that he thought a three-way meeting was “a good idea,” the US-led Coalition Provisional Authority administering Iraq has not responded to a UN invitation for the meeting, set for Jan 19 in New York, said chief UN spokesman Fred Eckhard.

Iraq’s Governing Council has accepted the invitation and will be represented by Massoud Barzani, Abdul Aziz al-Hakim and Adnan Pachachi, the United Nations said.

Told by a reporter that coalition officials were insisting they had not been contacted about the meeting, Eckhard said Annn had personally extended the invitation to Bush.

“T’don’t think the secretary-general feels that he needs to extend an invitation directly to the CPA when he has already done so to President Bush,” Eckhard said.

In Washington, State Department spokeswoman Brenda Greenberg said the United States knew about the meeting and understood the coalition had been invited. “We have not formally accepted the invitation to attend the meeting,” she told Reuters.

Eckhard said Annn would prefer a single meeting with representatives of both the coalition and the Iraqi Governing Council but would meet separately with the two groups if a coalition representative could not make it on 19 January.

Annn suggested the meeting after Iraq Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari appealed to the United Nations on 16 December to immediately return to Iraq and assume a leading role in guiding the country’s reconstruction.

An Iraqi woman stands in front of a US Army tank outside Baghdad City Council, on Thursday, 25 Dec, 2003. The Council building was hit by one rocket early Thursday morning. —INTERNET
Thai Cabinet approves $3.43b budget

BANGKOK, 25 Dec — The Thai Cabinet Tuesday approved a budget of 135.5 billion baht (3.430 billion US dollars) aimed at stimulating the economy and providing compensation for civil servants taking early retirement.

Announcing the budget after Tuesday morning’s Cabinet meeting, Deputy Prime Minister Somkid Jatusripitak said that the budget had been divided into five parts.

The first part of 33.04 billion baht (836.8 million US dollars) has been earmarked for civil service pensions, while the second part of 14.59 billion baht (0.365 billion US dollars) has been earmarked for early retirement schemes. The third part of 16.57 billion baht (0.419 billion US dollars) will be given over as compensation to state officials, the fourth part of 59 billion baht (1.493 billion US dollars) will be used to boost national competitiveness, and the final part of 12.3 billion baht (0.311 billion US dollars) will be given to local administrative organizations.

MNA/Xinhu

US invade Iraq for oil, says Castro

CARACAS, 25 Dec — The US-led invasion of Iraq was aimed at taking control of the country’s oil, Cuban President Fidel Castro told Venezuelan state television in an interview shown on Tuesday.

“There is no moral argument, no possible justification to invade a country,” said the veteran communist leader.

The United Nations did not agree on it, rather the most powerful nation agreed to invade (Iraq): the main objective, let us be totally honest, was to win an essential raw material which is called petroleum,” said Castro, who made a quick Assessments were revised in La Orchila island in the Caribbean on Tuesday, invited by his closest regional ally, President Hugo Chavez.

“The arguments they have used to justify the invasion are not valid,” Castro argued.

“They accused them of having weapons of mass de-
struction and they are the ones who have a monopoly on weapons of mass destruct-

unions, no possible justifica-
tions that their dues had
jumped under the new scale.

“The arguments they have
used an order prohibiting
mandatory anthrax inocula-
tions until a trial can be held
on a lawsuit filed by six
named troops and Pentagon
civilian workers who chal-
lenged the policy. A senior
defence official earlier on
Tuesday had said the depart-
ment was proceeding with
the vaccinations but on a
deliberate basis and said that
perhaps hundreds of troops
had received the shots on the
Tuesday. The Pentagon said
it gives the shots to protect profes-
sional at the use of anthrax
terials as a biological
weapon.—MNA/Reuters

Heeding court order, Pentagon
halts anthrax shots

WASHINGTON, 25 Dec — The Pentagon defense, effectiveness and necessity of the anthrax vac-
cine it has made mandatory for US troops on Tuesday, but stopped administering it one day after a judge or-
directors without the consent of
service members.

In a statement issued late on Tuesday, the Department of Defense said, “The De-
partment will stop giving an-
thrax vaccinations until the
legal situation is clarified.”

On Monday, US District Judge Emmet Sullivan is-
lued a part of 16.57 billion baht
grown by about 15 per cent
or 1.58 billion US dollars
has been earmarked
for civil service pensions,
US dollars, but inflation and currency market volatility
are expected to eat up all the increased funding, UN
officials said on Wednesday.

The budget, adopted by the 191-nation Assembly by
consensus late on Tuesday, would authorize the world body to spend $16.9 billion US dollars in 2004 and 2005, or 1.58 billion US dollars annually.

The two-year budget has grown by about 15 per cent over the past 10 years and was nearly that between 1994 and
2001, but most of the decade’s increases reflect adjustments for inflation, the officials said.

The new budget com-
pares to 2.97 billion US dol-

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan requested 3.01
billion US dollars for 2004-
2005, but the extra funding approved by the Assembly was again limited to adjust-
ments required to keep up with inflation and the cost of the falling US dollar, said Warren Sach, the UN pro-
gramme planning and budget
council.

“In real terms, the budget remains at the same level,” Sach told reporters.

To help cope with future

American to spend $31b on pets for Christmas

New York, 25 Dec — Chad is receiving eight differ-
ent presents for Christmas this year. “He’s our son. We didn’t want to give each other Christmas presents, but not give Chad a present,” said Sarah Gerber, a technical writer in New York, who spent about 60 US dollars on holi-
day gifts for Chad this year.

Chad, though, is not Gerber’s son — he’s her dog. Americans will spend a whopping 31 billion US dol-
ars in 2003 on their pam-
ered pets, up 5 per cent from a year earlier, according to the American Pet Products Manufacturers Association (APPMA), a trade group.

The Greek synchronized swimming team perform in a pool in the newly constructed diving
training centre at Athens’ Helliniko suburb on 22 Dec, 2003. The venue will be used for the training needs of the athletes during the Athens 2004 Olympic Games.—Reuters

The New Light of Myanmar Friday, 26 December, 2003 5

Syria on the defensive at summit with Egypt

SHARM EL-SHEIKH (Egypt), 25 Dec — The presidents of Syria and Egypt started a one-day summit in the Egyptian Red Sea resort of Sharm el-Sheikh on Wednesday on Syria on the defensive against Israel and the United States, analysts said.

The agenda for the meet-
ing between Presidents Bashar al-Assad of Syria and Hosni Mubarak of Egypt in-
cluded: “Israeli threats to Syria, Syria’s Cooperation
Act and the situation in Iraq,” official Egyptian news
agency MENA said.

The Accountability Act 2001 gives President George W
Bush the power to impose sanctions on Syria as pun-
ishment for supporting anti-
Israeli groups and maintain-
ing a military presence in its neighbour Lebanon. Bush
signed it at month.

Egypt, despite its close
friendship with the United
States, has sympathized with
Syria, saying negotiations
rather than sanctions are the 
best way to settle interna-
tional disputes.

Egypt and Syria coordi-
nate closely on regional
policy despite their different
relationships with Israel.

Egypt signed peace treaty
with Israel in 1979, while
peace talks between Syriain
Israel, which has occupied
the Syrian Golan Heights since 1967, broke down more than three years ago.

Analysts said they also
expected Assad and Mubarak to discuss Libya’s decision to
abandon its programmes to
develop weapons of mass
destruction, which adds to US
and European pressure on
Syria to follow suit.

On Tuesday, Syria accused
the United States of ac-
tively pursuing plans to make
chemical weapons, welcomed
the Libyan decision and called
for pressure on Israel to do
likewise. Egypt has taken the
same line.

But analysts say that be-
hind the scenes Arab govern-
ments are wary of a unilateral
Libyan step taken independ-
ently of an Arab campaign for
multilateral regional disarma-
tment.

Egyptian state television
showed Assad and Mubarak
starting talks in Sharm el-
Sheikh, a swimming and div-
ing resort at the southern tip of the Sinai Peninsula.

MNA/Reuters

Four men survive plane crash in South Africa

JOHANNESBURG, 25 Dec — Four men escaped death when a plane in which they were flying crashed and
burst out shortly after taking off on Tuesday at the Kronestad Airfield, about 200 kilometres southwest of
Johannesburg.

Northern Free State police spokeswoman Captain Rosa
Benade said on Wednesday that police suspect the plane had
mechanical fault and fire had broke out on the plane.

One of the men was admitted to a hospital with neck,
back and arm injuries. The three others were slightly injured
and their identity was not known, Benade said.

She said the plane was completely burnt out and only the
tail was left.—MNA/Xinhua

An Iraqi youth looks at an apartment near the German Embassy in Baghdad, which was
destroyed in a rocket attack, on 25 December, 2003. About a dozen rockets and mortar
rounds slammed into central Baghdad on Thursday in fresh guerrilla attacks, as the US
military said a roadside bomb killed a British soldier.

Westerners and an apartment block were struck, as well as the area where
the headquarters of the US-led administration is situated.—Istvaner

MNA/Reuters

An Iraqi youth looks at an apartment near the German Embassy in Baghdad, which was
destroyed in a rocket attack, on 25 December, 2003. About a dozen rockets and mortar
rounds slammed into central Baghdad on Thursday in fresh guerrilla attacks, as the US
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MNA/Reuters

MNA/Reuters

MNA/Reuters

MNA/Reuters

MNA/Reuters

MNA/Reuters
Military operations in the North-East Command region between 1972 and 1987 were launched with the effective support of Myanmar Air Force.

Ketu Nila

The Tatmadaw had to withdraw from the bases and there occurred 25 major military operations lasting 25 days from 23 October to 6 November and 23 minor ones and 30 bayonet fights. Fifty-one Tatmadaw members including four officers were killed and many others wounded. Ninety officers, rankers and privates of the Tatmadaw sacrificed lives for the nation, and 176 were wounded. As the Tatmadaw was driving out and crush- ing the BCP, the latter was seen to be striking a blow of the political and military fronts. In order to save itself from the decline on the two fronts, the BCP attacked Mongyawng region in the Eastern Command area with a large number of men on 19 April 1980 and again in July of the same year. In the attack, the Tatmadaw seized seven weapons and captured 81 insurgents dead. In the second battle, the Tatmadaw killed two BCP members and another 115 were wounded. Sixty-eight officers, rankers and privates of the Tatmadaw sacrificed lives for the nation, and 72 were wounded. About 8,000 BCP camps. The battles under the command of the North-East Command, No 51 Infantry Division and No 99 Light Infantry Division launched a major offensive to prevent the BCP from recapturing the camps. The Tatmadaw columns were able to retake all the camps and their insurgents dead and 10 alive. Another 109 enemy troops surren- dered.

The BCP launched all-out attacks on Mongyawng region for eight days from 23 to 30 September 1988. The BCP’s scheme was to grab power by launching attacks on both political and military fronts, while trying to take the military and political advantage. The BCP’s plot was that it won the Mongyawng region, it would continue to seize Mue, Namhkam and Ywama in the Shan states and then to slice the whole Shan State from the Union, and to blackmail the Tatmadaw Government.

However, the Tatmadaw daringly and fiercely fought back the BC’s attempts to stop and crush their offensive which began on 23 September 1988. The Tatmadaw launched 591 insurgent dead and 10 alive. Another 109 enemy troops surren- dered.

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Hailing the 56th Anniversary Independence Day:

**Endeavours to safeguard independence**

With the support of artillery, Myanma Tatmadaw crushed the insurgents who trangressed the territorial integrity of the State.

Arms and ammunition seized from insurgents by the Tatmadaw.

The Tatmadaw fighting the insurgents who threaten the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the nation.

An insurgent base in Shan State.

The Tatmadaw fighting the insurgents threatening the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the nation.

**Independence was thus safeguarded**

(from page 6)

the changes in the Socialist countries had contributed to the eruption of the 1988 unrest. But the main cause of the unrest came from the instigation of the aboveground and underground leftist and rightist groups from inside and outside the nation who were taking advantage of the political and economic weaknesses and decline of the ruling BSPP.

People of various races, various walks of lives and different ideologies took part in the 1988 unrest. The leftist and rightist politicians and minions of foreign countries also took part in the unrest to grab the State power through shortcut means, using organized criminal activities as a weapon to blackmail the then government.

The general discontent rejected the government’s decision made at the Hluttaw to hold the parliamentary election soonest. Instead, they demanded the formation of an interim government. As anarchy reigned throughout the nation during the time, the people were living without security, and facing social hardships, and that had no one to rely on.

The administrative machinery of the then government came to a stop. The country was like a nation without a government. An aircraft carrier was intruding into the Myanmar waters, and the Tatmadaw had to make efforts for it to leave the territorial waters. During those periods, the Tatmadaw launched military operations to crush the insurgents in its respective commands.

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The Tatmadaw fighting the insurgents who threatened the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the nation.

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The danger of the break up of the national solidarity and Union and the loss of independence was looming. As the total situation had come to threaten the national cause, the Tatmadaw, always standing tall as the consolidated national force, has to take over the national duty — non-disintegration of the Union; non-disintegration of the national solidarity; and perpetuation of the sovereignty — on 18 September 1988. In other words, it is the brilliant endeavour of the Tatmadaw to save the independence and sovereignty of the State for the fourth time.

In this context, it will be found that the national solidarity is the prime mover for the perpetuity of independence and sovereignty when looking back the course of the history of struggles for the restoration of the hard-won independence since the times of kings and for the safeguarding of the independence from losing again in the post-independence period.

In order to build a prosperous nation, we need to draw lessons from incidents such as 1949-50 incident, the incident of AFPFL in 1958, the incident in the time of the Pa-hta-sa government in 1962, and the incident in the time of the BSPP in 1988 considering that these incidents could lead the nation to a dangerous situation in which independence might be lost. It is the necessity of all entire national races to uphold Our Three Main National Causes: Non-disintegration of the Union. Non-disintegration of national solidarity and Perpetuity of sovereignty, to prevent destructive elements.

(Translation: KTY+TMT)
Indonesia eyes higher investment in oil, gas

JAKARTA, 25 Dec — The Indonesian Government is confident that investment in oil and gas sector will increase next year in line with the climbing crude oil price in international market, an official said here Wednesday.

“The oil and gas sector provides a bright future because oil price stays high and will keep climbing,” said Arifin Takhyan, director-general of oil and gas department under the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources, was quoted as saying by Detik.com online news service.

He claimed that investment in the sector rose to 6 billion US dollars this year from 5 billion in 2002.

To attract investment, the government next year will open tender for 10 new oil and gas blocks for any eligible investors, foreign or local, he said.

Indonesia is one of the world’s major oil producers with an output of around 1 million barrels per day. It is also the only member of the Organization of Petroleum-Exporting Countries (OPEC) in Southeast Asia.

Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt inspects progress in construction of multi-purpose assembly hall on Mindhamma Road in Mayangon Township. (News on page 16) — MNA/Xinhua

Indonesia needs infrastructure financing agency

JAKARTA, 25 Dec — Indonesia needs to set up an infrastructure financing agency to help boost private investments in the sector, which has largely been neglected, said the National Development Planning Board (Bappenas). As the state budget will continue to limit the government’s spending on infrastructure, the involvement of the private sector is a must, the Jakarta Post Wednesday quoted a Bappenas report as saying.

Private investment is the only means through which the government could expect to bridge the financing gap — the margin between the real investment needs for the sector and the budget the government can afford to allocate, said Suwono Dikun, Bappenas deputy chairman.

The breadth of the gap should serve as further evidence of how badly the country’s infrastructure sector needs private investment. Citing a Bappenas study, the report forecast that in order to support an economic growth of between 5 per cent to 7 per cent during the 2004-2009 period, some 613 trillion rupiah (72 billion US dollars) in investment would be needed. The figures are a minimum estimate as the study only covered investment for the construction of roads, power plants, fixed and mobile phone services, and irrigation and sanitation systems.

With an estimated government spending of 366.5 trillion rupiah (40.8 billion dollars) in the sector, the financing gap will be about 266.5 trillion rupiah (31.4 billion dollars), which is expected to come from the private sector. — MNA/Xinhua
Cornerstones laid for construction

(From page 16)

and family, K 7.3 million by Daw Tint Tin May; K 500,000 by Lt-Col Hla Moe (Retd) (Naing Ngan Gonyi Class I)-Daw Khin Ma Lay and family, K 300,000 by Deputy Minister for Hotels and Tourism Brig-Gen Aye Myint Kyu and wife Daw Khin Swe Myint (Professor, Myanmar Language Department of Yangon University); K 2.8 million by Daw Khin Kyi; K 1 million by U Ba Khin (Daw Thaung Sein) and family; K 500,000 by Thiri Tin May Htut; and K 300,000 by U Kyaw Hsan-Daw Khin Mya and family.

Cambodia's "IT" industry still faces many hurdles

PHNOM PENH, 25 Dec— A two-day seminar was opened here on Wednesday, aimed to highlight the challenges facing small businesses and teach them practical ways to benefit from the Internet.

"We have to be more conscious, more vocal, more aggressive in pushing policy that helps the poor," Commerce Ministry Secretary of State Sok Siphana said at the seminar.

A report issued Wednesday by the International Trade Centre, a body created by the UN and the World Trade Organization, which sponsored Wednesday's seminar, showed that Cambodia has the "dubious distinction" of having the lowest Internet penetration in Southeast Asia and at the highest prices.

A major reason for this, the report said, is that the country has only 27 fixed phone lines for every 10,000 people. "Although important progress has been made in the last two years, Cambodia remains one of the least connected countries in the region and perhaps the only country in the world with mobile penetration rates double that of fixed line penetration," the report said.

It also noted that investors shy away from investing in fixed lines because of excessive bureaucracy at the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications and the lack of a clear framework for awarding licences and setting regulatory rules.

Though the seminar revealed many shortcomings of the country's information technology infrastructure, it also showcased local companies using Internet to increase sales.

Industry leaders said Phnom Penh youths were driving the IT sector here, which includes everything from computer sales to installing Internet networks to designing Web pages. But the industry still has many hurdles. For instance, the number of fixed phone lines for Internet connections remains inadequate, computers are too expensive for many families to afford and students in computer-related courses often lack essential skills. — MNA/Xinhua

Modern Mya Yadana Cinema opened

YANGON, 25 Dec— A ceremony to open the modern Mya Yadana Cinema was held at the venue at the corner of Zingama and Myundawtha Roads in Ward 5, Thakayta Township, this morning.

Present were Minister for Information Brig-Gen Kyaw Hsan, departmental heads of enterprises and departments and engineers under the Ministry of Information, the manager and staff of the cinema and guests.

First, Managing Director U Bo Kyi of Myanmar Motion Picture Enterprise, Managing Director U Kyi Lwin of the cinema and wife Daw Lwin Lwin Maw formally opened the cinema.

Next, the minister and party viewed round a hall. On the opening day, Kyar-mee-swe Ko-Kohnint Myauk-moo-le Ma-Ma film was shown at the cinema. From now on, there will be four shows a day—11 am, 2 pm, 5 pm and 8 pm daily. — MNA

Over 40% of Vietnamese men heavy smokers

HANOI, 25 Dec — Up to 49.2 percent of Vietnamese men smoke cigarettes and 38.9 percent of them are addicts, showed a latest survey by the Vietnam Association for Standard and Consumer Protection.

Twenty-one percent of local smokers started smoking when they were juveniles, the association said on Wednesday.

Vietnamese smokers spend a total of 30 billion Vietnamese dong (1.92 million US dollars) on cigarettes each year, said the survey.

In a bid to reduce the number of smokers, the government has decided to impose higher taxes on cigarettes from January 2004. All kinds of cigarettes will carry a value-added tax of 10 percent in addition to fairly high existing special consumption taxes.

It has also decided not to approve investment in new tobacco factories and production expansion. However, renewing equipment to improve the quality of cigarettes is permitted. — MNA/Xinhua
Minister hosted in honour of Japanese Buddhist delegation

YANGON, 25 Dec — Minister for Religious Affairs Brig-Gen Thura Myint Maung hosted a dinner in honour of the Japanese Buddhist delegation led by Most Ven Dr Kori Yoshihiko at the Hotel Nikko here yesterday evening.

Also present on the occasion were Deputy Minister for Religious Affairs Brig-Gen Thura Aung Ko, Director-General Dr Myo Myint of the Religious Affairs Department, Director-General Dr U Saun Lwin of the Department for Promotion and Propagation of the Sasana, Pro-Rector (Administration) Dr Hla Pe of the International Theravada Buddhist Missionary Association, and officials of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Thidagu Missionary Association.

Before the dinner, the minister made a speech. Afterwards, the minister presented gifts and handed over gifts and documentary photo album presented by Thidagu Missionary Association to the leader of the delegation.

The leader of the delegation spoke words of thanks. The delegation left for home by air this morning. — MNA

Myanmar sports team bags 17 gold, 10 silver, 7 bronze

YANGON, 25 Dec — The Myanmar sports team of disabled led by Director of Resettlement of the Ministry of Defence President of Myanmar Sports Federation for Disabled Maj-Gen Aung Tin (YCDC) won one gold each in the men’s 100-m race and women’s javelin event, young Mya Khaing (17) 10 gold, 1 silver and seven bronze, totalling 34 in the II ASEAN Countries Sports Meet for Disabled in Ha-noi, Vietnam, from 18 to 28 December.

Gold Medals
Kyaw Khang (Defence) won one gold each in the men’s 100-m race event and the men’s long jump event; Tin Tin Khang (YCDC) one gold each in the women’s 100-m race event and the women’s javelin event; Nga Sin Aung (YCDC) in the women’s javelin event; Win Khaing (SWD) in the women’s shot-put event; San San Hla (YCDC) in the women’s long jump event; and N Aung Khan (Commerce) in the men’s shot-put event.

Silver Medals
Min Lin (Defence) in the men’s shot-put event; Naw Myint (YCDC) in the women’s shot-put event; San San Hla (YCDC) in the women’s javelin event; Win Naing (Agriculture & Irrigation) in the men’s 200-m swimming event; Mya Khaing (SWD) in the men’s 200-m swimming event; Min Naing (YCDC) in the men’s 50-m swimming event; Win Myint (Agriculture & Irrigation) in the men’s long jump event; San San Aung (YCDC) in the men’s long jump event; and N Aung Khan (Commerce) in the men’s shot-put event.

Bronze Medals
Win Lwin (Agriculture & Irrigation) in the men’s 50-m swimming event; Win Htun Aung (Agriculture & Irrigation) in the men’s 200-m swimming event; San San Aung (YCDC) in the women’s shot-put event; Win Htun Aung (Agriculture & Irrigation) in the women’s 100-m race event; San San Aung (YCDC) in the women’s long jump event; Mya Sein (YCDC) in the women’s long jump event; Win Naing (Agriculture & Irrigation) in the men’s long jump event; San San Hla (YCDC) in the men’s shot-put event; Win Lwin (Agriculture & Irrigation) and Tin Tun (Industry-I) in the men’s double tennis event.

MNA

Top German TV comedian quits despite pleas to stay on

BERLIN, 25 Dec — Germany’s top comedian Harald Schmidt pulled the plug on his popular late-night television show on Tuesday, ignoring pleas from Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder and thousands of viewers to stay on the air.

Schmidt’s eight years of bringing satire and self-deprecating humour brought laughter into the lives of millions of Germans and he was a ratings star at the struggling Sat-1 network.

Schroeder said recently he was a big admirer of Schmidt, 46, and joined other fans in urging the comedian to reconsider his shock decision to quit at the peak of his career.

‘He’s a brilliant entertainer,’ Schroeder said. ‘Sometimes he cracks too many jokes at the expense of others, especially at my expense. But in his show it’s all okay. It would be a terrible shame if it quits for good.’

Sat-1’s share price dropped about 10 per cent in early December after Schmidt announced he was quitting. Investors were worried about the network’s loss of its most recognizable name.

In 1,363 shows, Schmidt enjoyed a fiercely loyal following of well-educated and wealthy viewers loved by advertisers.

‘We don’t want to bore you anymore’, Schmidt said with a deadpan look at the start of his final show on Tuesday.

‘Final shows are often big disappointments. I feel sorry for our audience if they’re expecting something special tonight.’

Schmidt unabashedly copied the studio setting of American late-night entertainer David Letterman, but ‘The Harald Schmidt Show’ had a distinctly German format tailored to German humour and developed a cult-like following. — MNA/Reuters

Netherlands provides Rwanda 5m for agricultural sector

NAIROBI, 25 Dec — The Netherlands has provided Rwanda with five million euros (about six million US dollars) to market oriented agricultural production and export promotion, Rwanda News Agency reported Tuesday. Four Rwandan organizations representing rural producers will be involved in the cooperation action and investment plans of commodities aimed at boosting internal and export markets, the report said. ‘Targeted investments in the commodity chains will assist farmers, small scale entrepreneurs and public service agencies such as Research Institute for Agriculture, will benefit to increased production and convenient regional and international markets,’ the report said.

Meanwhile, Rwanda’s 2004 budget proposal shows that the government intends to spend 5.2 million US dollars and 3.7 million US dollars to help promote tea and coffee production.

The 2004 budget project also indicates that the government would set up an agricultural guarantee fund to stimulate bank lending to the sector. The agriculture sector today faces a miser-able 2-per-cent of total bank loans. — MNA/Xinhua

MNA/Reuters

Myanmar sports team bags 17 gold, 10 silver, 7 bronze

MNA

Minister for Religious Affairs Brig-Gen Thura Myint Maung hosts a dinner to Japanese Buddhist delegation led by Most Ven Dr Kori Yoshihiko. — MNA

Minister for Religious Affairs Brig-Gen Thura Myint Maung hosts a dinner to Japanese Buddhist delegation led by Most Ven Dr Kori Yoshihiko.
Hailing the 56th Anniversary Independence Day:

Factories of the Ministry of Industry-1 constructed in the time of the State Peace and Development Council

New factories to fulfil the requirements of the people constructed from 1988 to 2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Total factories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Textile</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Foodstuff</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Pharmaceutical</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Ceramic</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>General and Maintenance</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Paper</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Projects under implementation</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Projects to be implemented</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Ministry of Industry-1 produces household goods and consumer products to fulfil the daily food, clothing and shelter needs of the people including foodstuff, medicines, construction materials and other items. List of the factories under the Ministry of Industry-1 fulfilling the requirements of the people is shown in the table:

- Textile
- Foodstuff
- Pharmaceutical
- Ceramic
- General and Maintenance
- Paper
- Projects under implementation
- Projects to be implemented

Total factories: 230

500-ton cement plant in Kyaukse Industrial Zone, Kyaukse Township, Mandalay Division, constructed by the Ministry of Industry-1 in 2002.


Myanmar Pharmaceutical Factory in Insein Township, Yangon, producing medicines of international standards required for national people.
Argentina President accuses IMF of asking high price for accord

BUENOS AIRES, 25 Dec—Argentina President Nestor Kirchner said on Tuesday that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) was demanding a high price for its economic aid agreement with Argentina.

In a speech on the newly released Local Development Plan and Social Economy, Kirchner said the IMF wants to “go for” economic recovery in Argentina.

“We want to generate investments. At the same time, we have to fight day by day the decision of international organizations, which go for that recovery when seeing Argentina recovering fast,” said Kirchner.

“I tell the international organizations, we want to be responsible for our obligations but the Argentine recovery has to reach the Argentine people,” he said.

The economic recovery is not “miraculous,” so Argentina will not “go from hell to heaven,” said the President.

The IMF decided last week to postpone approval of the agreement with Argentina, and asked the Argentine Government to speed up negotiations with the international hostel of creditors and the IMF over new debt and treasury bonds on the defaulted payment of private debts.

The IMF agreed in September to grant a three-year loan package of $12.5 billion to Argentina, a key step in helping the country recover from the worst economic crisis in its history.

The package will also allow Argentina to restructure 21 billion dollars of debt to the IMF, the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank.

Under the agreement, Argentina is committed to controlling spending at the federal and provincial levels to achieve a budget surplus of 3 per cent of its gross domestic product in 2004.

China's FM talks with public first time via Internet

Beijing, 25 Dec—China's Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxiong answered questions raised by Chinese people through the Internet Tuesday afternoon, saying ordinary people’s questions about whether China should adopt more aggressive diplomatic policies often left them deep in thought.

It was the first time that a Chinese Foreign Minister had communicated with ordinary Chinese people via the Internet.

“Many of the Internet users’ viewpoints are helpful for the government’s dipломatic ‘policy making,’” Li said. “We need help and support from our people.”

The 105-minute-long online communication via the Foreign Ministry’s website and Xinhua News Agency’s website was arranged at the request of the public, ministry sources said.

People asked more than 2,000 questions of the minister, including “Will China participate in the reconstruction of Iraq?” and “How are diplomatic policies made?”

“Are there any shortcomings in China’s current diplomacy?” Observers say the communication was a signal that ordinary Chinese are increasingly interested in discussing their country’s diplomatic policies openly.

“The public will have more significant influence on China’s diplomacy as they are motivated by this fast-changing world,” said Professor Shi Yinhong of the School of International Relations of Beijing’s University.

Shi said different voices and even fierce controversies arose among the public in recent years as the country directly pressure from major international events like the September 11 terrorist attacks, the war on the Korean Peninsula and the EEC war.

“China’s surrounding security environment, and its status and role in the international arena will remain among the hottest topics for public discussion for the next few decades,” Shi said.

More and more ordinary people in China are expressing their views boldly about diplomatic policies in the mass media, and this has begun to win support from the country’s media, especially the popular Internet websites.

Even the official website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has already opened an online diplomatic forum welcoming ordinary people’s opinions and perspectives.

China provides $100,000 to Philippines for disaster relief

MANILA, 25 Dec — The Philippine Government Wednesday received 5.5 million pesos (100,000 U.S. dollars) from China for disaster relief work in several provinces in central and southern areas, landslides, and floods recently.

The donation delivery was made during a meeting between Chinese Ambassador to Manila Wang Chungui and the Philippine Foreign Affairs Secretary Delia Domingo Albert and Chinese Ambassador to Manila Wang Chungui.

During the meeting, Wang also conveyed Chinese President Hu Jintao’s message to his Philippine counterpart Gloria Macapagal Arroyo which expressed China’s sympathy and condolences to the Philippine people and victims.

He also extended Chinese Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxiong’s congratulations for Albert’s appointment as the Philippine Foreign Min-

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Arroyo appointed Albert Monday as the first Philippine Foreign Minister to replace the late Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas Ople, who died of heart attack earlier this month at a hospital in China’s Taipei.

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India, Myanmar, Thailand to take up Trilateral Highway Project

NEW DELHI, 25 Dec— Embarking on a new spell in trilateral relations, India, Myanmar and Thailand on Tuesday decided take up from early next year the first phase of the 700 million dollar, 1,360-kilometre-long Trilateral Highway Project linking the three countries.

The first phase of the highway running from Moreh (India), Mae Sai (Thailand) through Bagan in Myanmar includes construction of 78 kilometres of new roads and upgrading about 400 kilometres of single lane roads into two-lane ones. External Affairs Minister Yashwant Sinha told reporters at a joint Press meet here with his counterpart from Thailand Surakarti Sathitthai and from Myanmar Foreign Minister.

Sinha said the first phase is estimated to cost 252 million dollars of which India will contribute about 100 million dollars, Thailand about 90 million dollars and the remaining coming from Myanmar.

The second phase would involve 154 million dollars and the final phase likely to cost 284 million dollars.

A decision on constructing the trilateral highway was taken by the three foreign ministers when they met in Yangon in April last year to discuss transport linkages.

Sinha said the three sides have decided to appoint a group of senior officials to continuously review the progress of the project. This will be at the level of Directors General (Joint Secretary) and the group’s first meeting will be held in Myanmar in January, he said.

The three foreign ministers would meet again in Myanmar in the first half of next year to review the progress of the work, Sinha said.

He said the effort was on to bring political will to bear on administrative issues to ensure that this was translated into intensive trilateral cooperation.

With the implementation of the first trilateral project, the second project for the promotion of a highway from Kanchanaburi in Thailand to Dawei deep seaport in Myanmar and shipping links to seaports in India would be on the fast track, he said.

Both the projects are expected to facilitate movement of goods and peoples across borders and cooperation in other areas.

Sathithai said “It is a win-win situation for all the three countries and would lead to all round prosperity besides promoting tourism, trade and investments.”

Bad weather leaves nearly 300 Filipinos dead or missing

MANILA, 25 Dec— The Philippine authorities said Tuesday the number of the dead or missing reached nearly 300 in the series of disasters caused by the recent spate of bad weather across much of the Philippines.

The National Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC) said the death toll of last week’s heavy landslides in the central Visayas and the southern Mindanao reached 133 persons as efforts were stepped up to account scores of others who are still missing.

“A total of 133 persons were confirmed dead and numbers of fatalities are expected to increase as recovery operations continue,” said the NDCC, adding that 109 persons remained missing in the Southern Leyte, Central Visayas, Cagayan, and Southern Mindanao.

Philippine Defence Secretary Eduardo Ermita, who is also chairman of the disaster agency, said he was considering calling off search operations and declaring those missing as dead as hopes for more survivors dimmed.

The official number of injured victims was placed at 53 persons Tuesday, against the erroneously reported 120 injured on Monday in the calamity.

The number of evacuees also rose to 2,816 families or 13,365 individuals, and the initial assessment on the damage incurred by the disaster on infrastructure and agriculture and private properties was placed at 151.45 million pesos (2.733 million US dollars). — MNA/Xinhua

Russia, India discuss strategic partnership

MOSCOW, 25 Dec— India and Russia on Tuesday exchanged views on countering the new global challenges and threats along with a range of key international and regional issues to further advance their strategic partnership.

Indian Ambassador Krishnan Raghubahat and First Deputy Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Trubnikov also discussed the current state of Indo-Russian strategic partnership and a Russian Foreign Ministry release on their meeting here.

MNA/PTI

Researchers warn of higher cold death toll in Britain

LONDON, 25 Dec — British researchers on Tuesday warned of higher death toll from cold around the Christmas season in Britain, describing Britain as one of the worst countries in the world at coping with icy conditions.

“If we see much more of the cold weather of recent days, it is likely that as many as 50,000 people will die unnecessarily over this winter,” said Professor Sian Griffiths, president of the Faculty of Public Health.

She noted that many of the illnesses and deaths resulted from people living in damp and cold housing.

“Although the government has shown commitment to tackling the problem, it has not given sufficient priority to such an important public health issue,” she said, urging everyone to look out for vulnerable family, friends and neighbours. Researchers from her institute said the death toll from cold might be higher than those in Finland or Russia, Sky News reported.

An estimated 40,000 more people may die between December and March in Britain than at other times of the year. Most of the victims are elderly. More than half of the deaths are due to heart attacks, strokes and circulatory problems and a third from lung disease, researchers said.

MNA/Xinhua

Greek officials refuse to take extra measures on flu outbreak

ATHENS, 25 Dec— Greek Health Ministry staff and experts decided Tuesday against additional measures to cope with an outbreak of influenza detected in Greece, saying that the existing mobilization of health services was adequate.

In statements after a meeting, Health Minister Costas Stefanis said that hospitals and health services had already been placed on alert and no further measures were deemed necessary.

Scientists said the Greek outbreak was probably due to the fujian variety of virus that had caused epidemics in the United States and Europe but noted that its clinical image was less virulent than that seen in other countries.

MNA/PTI

WFP cuts food rations in Zimbabwe amid cash crunch

JOHANNESBURG, 25 Dec— The UN food relief agency has slashed rations for more than 2.6 million people in Zimbabwe after global donors failed to contribute sufficient funds, officials said recently.

“WFP officials said Zimbabwe food aid recipients who normally would get a monthly allocation of 10 kilos of maize meal per person were now receiving only five kilos.

They could receive even less in January as the WFP seeks to expand food distribution services to a total of four million Zimbabweans deemed at highest risk, WFP spokesman Mike Huggins said.

“It is going to diminish in January, and again in February and March unless there is a drastic cash injection from donors,” Huggins said.

MNA/Reuters
Club chairman says Leeds do not have to sell players

LONDON, 25 Dec — New Leeds United chairman Trevor Birch told disgruntled shareholders on Tuesday that the club’s fight for its Premier League and financial future did not have to sell any players in the January transfer window.

Strikers Mark Viduka and Alan Smith have been linked with moves away from the club following the exodus of a number of key players including Harry Kewell and Jonathan Woodgate to cut debts.

“It was good that the meeting finished on a more upbeat note. Everyone was particularly pleased when Trevor Birch said there was no need for Leeds to sell players when the January window opens,” said Ray Fell, Leeds Supporters’ Club chairman, after the club’s annual meeting.

Birch, appointed as chief executive in October, was named as the club’s new chairman after John McKenzie stepped down last week to avoid any conflict of interest in negotiations with potential investors.

Leeds’ current and previous boards came in for much criticism during the meeting for their running of the club, which has resulted in debts of around £80 million. — MNA/Reuters

Bergkamp doubtful for Arsenal’s game against Wolves

LONDON, 25 Dec — Striker Dennis Bergkamp is Arsenal’s only injury concern for the London side’s Premier League match against bottom club Wolverhampton Wanderers on Friday, manager Arsene Wenger said on Tuesday.

“We have no big injuries,” Wenger said. “There is a slight doubt for Dennis Bergkamp with a calf injury but that is basically it.”

The in-form Dutchman scored in Arsenal’s last home match against Blackburn Rovers and set up Gilberto in the previous game, a 1-1 draw at Leicester.

Wenger said defender Lauren was expected to make a comeback over the busy end-of-year period after being sidelined for six weeks with a knee injury and also because of a suspension.

Arsenal travel to Southampton for their second match of the holiday season on Monday.

Arsenal, the only team unbeaten in the league this season, are joint second in the table with big-spending Chelsea, one point behind leaders Manchester United.

Wenger said he was pleased with the team’s good start, which has seen them go through to the next phase of the Champions League, particularly after spending very little on strengthening the squad in the English summer.

“At the start of the season, we were not calculated as one of the teams that could fight for the championship,” Wenger told reporters. “We’ve been remarkably consistent, we’ve turned it round in the Champions League.

“I knew we could be in there, but you never know the mental impact of Chelsea being buy Ukrainian United buying, and us not buying,” he said.

Chelsea spent £111 million on new players in the off-season transfer window after Russian billionaire Roman Abramovich bought the club in July. United spent around £25 million. — MNA/Reuters

Kewell to be back, Owen follows

LONDON, 25 Dec — Harry Kewell should be fit to play for Liverpool against Bolton Wanderers on Friday and Michael Owen is also recovering from his injury for a return, Liverpool manager Gerard Houllier said on Tuesday.

Houllier said Australian international Kewell trained with team well on Tuesday after missing three weeks with an ankle injury.

England striker Owen would be likely to be back against Yeovil Town in the FA Cup third round on Sunday, January 4.

Harry Kewell trained today without any problem. He is improving every day and I think he will be back on Boxing Day (December 26),” Houllier told reporters.

“Michael needs another fortnight but I hope he can be there against Yeovil. Owen and Kewell have scored 13 of Liverpool’s 23 Premier League goals this season and their absence has left the team adrift of the race title in ninth place.

Owen has been suffering from various leg injuries and has not played since Liverpool’s 1-0 UEFA Cup win over Steaua Bucharest on November 27 when he tore a thigh muscle.

English defender Jamie Carragher is also back in training after a broken leg and should be fit in mid-January.

Houllier has been under mounting pressure but the French manager predicted Liverpool’s honeymoon players back would enter next season’s Champions League. — MNA/Xinhua

Wenger has no plan to buy any new players

LONDON, 25 Dec — Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger has no plan to buy any new players in the January transfer window, local reports said Wednesday.

Wenger told a news conference on Tuesday he could see no immediate need to bolster an Arsenal squad already well placed in joint second with Chelsea, a point behind leaders Manchester United.

Arsenal, double winners in 2001-02, added only German keeper Jens Lehmann to their squad in the close season while Chelsea owner Roman Abramovich splashed out over £100 million pounds (176.5 million US dollars) on fresh talent from around Europe.

“At the moment, I’m not in the market. I don’t see any reasonable target,” Wenger said. — MNA/Xinhua

Buffon, Nesta, Maldini named in “L’Equipe’s” ideal team

ROM, 25 Dec — Juventus goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon and AC Milan defenders Alessandro Nesta and Paolo Maldini made it into this year’s ideal team selected by the prestigious French sports daily L’Equipe, the local media reported Wednesday.

Juventus defender Lilian Thuram and his midfield teammate Pavel Nedved, recently named European footballer of the year by France Football, were also voted into the team dominated by Real Madrid.

— MNA/Xinhua

Mboma recalled to Cameroon squad for African Nations Cup

Yaounde, 25 Dec — Striker Patrick Mboma’s on Wednesday was recalled to the 31-man Cameroon squad for the African Nations Cup finals next month.

The 33-year-old was on loan named Mboma, who plays in Japan’s J-League, in their preliminary roster after he returned to international action in a friendly against Japan last month.

The 33-year-old is one of eight players who were also part of Cameroon’s winning squads at the last two Nations Cups finals in 2000 and 2002.

The squad will be cut down to a final list of 22 before the deadline of January 14. — MNA/Xinhua

Ireland winger Damien Duff is hopeful of making his Celtic comeback within three weeks following the dislocated shoulder he suffered in the win over Fulham last weekend. — INTERNET

Everton freezes contract talks to season end

LONDON, 25 Dec— English Premiership side Everton have decided to freeze negotiations with all its players including shelving new contract talks with teenage star Wayne Rooney, who was targeted by Chelsea, until the end of the season.

It had been expected that Everton would open negotiations to improve and extend Rooney’s contract when he passed his 18th birthday in November, but that did not happen. Now the cash-strapped will suspend talks with any of its players until the summer.

A statement on the club’s web site says that Everton have made the decision to wait until the summer to leave boss David Moyes enough time to take “fully take stock of all his options.

Chief executive Michael Dunford revealed: “All contract talks will take place in the summer. The club is unlikely to be entering into any talks before then.”

Rooney still has two and a half years of his current deal left and has consistently expressed his desire to continue to play for his boyhood heroes.

Contract talks are also expected to begin with Tomasz Radzinski in the summer.

The Canadian international has 18 months remaining on his current deal, while injury-jinxed Alessandro Pistone is in the same situation and wants to continue his stay at the club. — MNA/Xinhua

Real Madrid will see in 2004 leading the Spanish first division with their bank balance considerably helped thanks to the arrival of England captain David Beckham (L), the central figure in Real’s lucrative pre-season tour of the Far East. The club’s merchandising sales have since hit record highs both in Spain and overseas. — INTERNET
Use
4:00 pm  1. Musical programme
4:15 pm  2. Song to uphold National Spirit
4:30 pm  3. Practice in Reading
4:45 pm  4. Musical programme
5:00 pm  5. Musical programme
5:15 pm  6. Musical programme
5:30 pm  7. Musical programme
6:00 pm  8. Song of Natural Races
6:15 pm  9. Song of mountains and valleys
6:30 pm  10. National News
8:45 am  11. Discussion
10.00 am  12. Evening news
11.00 am  13. Weather report
7:05 pm  14. Mido success in soccer
10:00 pm  15. Weather report
12:00 pm  16. Musical programme
7:30 pm  17. Musical programme
8:00 pm  18. News
8:15 pm  19. International news
9:00 pm  20. Weather report
9:15 pm  21. Commander video
9:30 pm  22. The next day’s programme
9:45 pm  23. News/Slogan
10:00 pm  24. News/Slogan
11:00 pm  25. News/Slogan
11:30 pm  26. News/Slogan
12:00 am  27. News/Slogan
1:00 am  28. News/Slogan
1:15 am  29. News/Slogan
2:00 am  30. News/Slogan
3:00 am  31. News/Slogan
4:00 am  32. News/Slogan
4:15 am  33. News/Slogan
4:30 am  34. News/Slogan
4:45 am  35. News/Slogan
5:00 am  36. News/Slogan
5:15 am  37. News/Slogan
5:30 am  38. News/Slogan
6:00 am  39. News/Slogan
6:15 am  40. News/Slogan
6:30 am  41. News/Slogan
6:45 am  42. News/Slogan

WEATHER
Thursday, 25 December, 2003
Summary of observations recorded at 09:30 hours MST: During the past 24 hours, weather has been generally dry in the whole country. Night temperatures were (3°C) to (4°C) below normal in Rakhine and Eastern Shan States, (3°C) to (4°C) above normal in Chin State, Sagyin, Mawlamyine, Maungdaw and Bago Divisions and about normal in the remaining areas. Maximum temperature on 24-12-2003 was 33.0°C (91°F). Minimum temperature on 25-12-2003 was 16.0°C (60.8°F). Relative humidity on 25-12-2003 was 76%. Total sunshine hours on 24-12-2003 was 8.0 hours. Rainfall on 25-12-2003 was nil at Yangon Airport, Kaba Aye and central Yangoon. Total rainfall since 1-1-2003 was 2211 mm (87.05 inches) at Kaba Aye and 2394 mm (94.1 inches) at Central Yangoon. Maximum wind speed at Yangon (Kaba Aye) was 14 knots East at 40.00 hours MST. Bay influence: Weather is partly cloudy in the south Bay generally fairly elsewhere in the western and central Baringa. Forecast valid until evening of 25-12-2003: Weather generally cloudy in the whole country. Sea of the state: Seas will be slight to moderate in Myanmar waters. Outlook for subsequent two days: Generally fair weather in the whole country. Forecast for Yangon and neighbouring area for 26-12-2003: Fair weather. Forecast for Mandalay and neighbouring area for 26-12-2003: Fine weather.
**Four political objectives**
- Stability of the State, community peace and tranquility, prevalence of law and order
- National reconsolidation
- Emergence of a new enduring State Constitution
- Building of a new modern developed nation in accord with the new State Constitution

**Four economic objectives**
- Development of agriculture as the base and all-round development of other sectors of the economy as well
- Proper evolution of the market-oriented economic system
- Development of the economy inviting participation in terms of technical know-how and investments from sources inside the country and abroad
- The initiative to shape the national economy must be kept in the hands of the State and the national peoples

**Four social objectives**
- Uplift of the morale and morality of the entire nation
- Uplift of national prestige and integrity and preservation and safeguarding of cultural heritage and national character
- Uplift of dynamism of patriotic spirit
- Uplift of health, fitness and education standards of the entire nation

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**Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt inspects construction of Water Treatment Plant Project, Assembly Hall Construction Project**

YANGON, 25 Dec — Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt, accompanied by officials of the State Peace and Development Council Office, arrived at the Water Treatment Plant Construction Project being undertaken by Yangon City Development Committee in Thanyetsoon, Botahtaung Township, this afternoon. They were welcomed there by Chairman of Yangon Division Peace and Development Council Commander of Yangon Command Maj-Gen Myint Swe, ministers, the mayor of Yangon and departmental heads.

Head of YCDC Assessor Department U Tun Than Tun reported on the layout of the plant, construction of sections of the plant phase-wise, civil engineering and electrical tasks and collection of construction materials with the use of audio-visual aids. Concrete expert U Toe Hlaing also reported on quality control tasks. Mayor Brig-Gen Aung Thein Lin gave a supplementary report.

The Prime Minister gave necessary instructions and inspected construction tasks round the project site.

Later in the afternoon, the General and party proceeded to the Assembly Hall Construction Project on Mindhamma Road, Mayangon Township. The Yangon mayor and officials welcomed the General and party, conducted them round the project site. Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt gave necessary instructions to the officials. — MNA

**Meeting on implementation of ASEAN economic agreements held**

YANGON, 25 Dec — The first coordination meeting of the work committee for implementation of ASEAN economic agreements was held at the Ministry of Commerce on Strand Road here this afternoon with an opening address by Chairman of the work committee Minister for Commerce Brig-Gen Pye Sone. It was also attended by deputy chairman of the work committee Minister for Finance and Revenue Maj-Gen Hla Tun, member of the work committee Minister for Foreign Affairs U Win Aung, the deputy ministers and officials.

At the meeting, those present discussed matters on ASEAN-China, ASEAN-Japan and ASEAN-India cooperation, establishment of sat-committees, cooperation in investment, industries, agriculture, fisheries, forestry, tourism, transport, communication and e-ASEAN and energy sectors.

The meeting came to an end with the concluding remarks by the work committee chairman. — MNA

**Cornerstones laid for construction of Buddha Adhivasa Gandakuti Kyaungsang and Atisukhavakha Sankyaung (Sanusaung) in Dagon Myothit (East) Township**

YANGON, 25 Dec — The cornerstone-laying ceremony for construction of Buddha Adhivasa Gandakuti Kyaungsang and Atisukhavakha Sankyaung (Sanusaung) of Thiri Lekkhanayama Dagon Sasana Yeiktha Akyarsaung in Ward 4, Dagon Myothit (East) Township, Yangon East District, took place at the Yeiktha this morning, attended by Secretary-1 of the State Peace and Development Council Lt-Gen Soe Win.

The ceremony was graced by the presence of State Owadacariya Sayadaws, member Sayadaws of the State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee and members of the Sangha. Also present on the occasion were Chairman of Yangon Division Peace and Development Council Commander of Yangon Command Maj-Gen Myint Swe, Minister for Religious Affairs Brig-Gen Thunta Myint Maung, Chairman of Yangon City Development Committee Mayor Brig-Gen Aung Thein Lin, officials of the State Peace and Development Council Office, departmental heads, wellwishers and guests. Thiri Lekkhanayama Dagon Sasana Yeiktha Akyarsaung also present.

Next, the cornerstone-laying ceremony followed. The Secretary-1 laid the silver casket and cornerstone. The commander, the ministers, officials and wellwishers put cornerstones at designated places.

The Secretary-1 laid the stone inscription and performed rituals of golden and silver showers.

The Secretary-1 presented offertories to Vice-Chairman of the State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee Abyadhita Maha Rattha Guru Aungmyoobban Monastery Sayadaw Bhaddanta Panditdabhaavam. Afterwards, offertories were presented to the Sayadaws.

Wellwishers presented over K 60 million for the construction including K 10 million donated by U Ba Khant Daw Tin Hlaing and family Ghaza Wabi Biscuit; K 8.1 million by U Shemt Myint-Daw Khin Than Myint (Gon Shemt Myint) (see page 9).

**Delivery room of MMCWA (Branch) of MPF opened**

YANGON, 25 Dec — The delivery room of the Myanmar Maternal and Child Welfare Association (Branch) of the Myanmar Police Force was opened this morning at the Kyekkasan police quarters on Saya San Road in Yankin Township. MMCWA President Dr Daw Khin Win Shwe formally opened the room.

At the opening ceremony, MMCWA Vice-President Dr Daw Tin Lin Myint accepted the membership applications of the MPF presented by the wife of the deputy-director general of the MPF.

Afterwards, wellwishers made cash donation for the delivery room through the officials. — MNA