**Commander attends coordination meeting on cultivation of crops**

**YANGON, 28 Dec.—** Division-State, District and Township Agricultural Supervisory Committees held the coordination meeting to fully cultivate summer paddy, beans and pulses, vegetables and other crops in Yangon Division, at the meeting hall of Yangon Command this afternoon, attended by Chairman of Yangon Division Peace and Development Council Commander of Yangon Command Maj-Gen Myint Swe.

Also present were Col Myat Thu of No 11 LID, Mingaladon Station Commander Col Win Naung, local authorities and officials.

The commander gave a speech. He said summer paddy, beans and pulses, oil crops, vegetables and other crops are to be cultivated on the farmlands where monsoon paddy has already been harvested. As the greening project is being implemented in the environs of Yangon International Airport, departments concerned participate in the tasks for construction of dams, sluice gates and digging of drains for supplying water to farmlands. District and township agricultural supervisory committee members are required to supervise the local farmers for cultivation of summer paddy, beans and pulses, edible oil crops and vegetables in vacant and virgin lands.

Next, local authorities reported on requirements of cultivation tasks. Departmental officials submitted reports on assistance for the agriculture sector. In conclusion, the commander said that efforts are to be made for greening 30-mile radius of Yangon International Airport all the year round by exploiting natural resources. And members of division/state, district and township agricultural supervisory committees should try their best for exceeding the target. Later, the commander attended to their needs.

**Progress in every region**

With the aim of constructing a comprehensive development network encompassing the entire country, 24 Special Development Regions have been set up to promote the economic, educational and health conditions and develop the highly-qualified human resources. In addition, to ensure that no area is left unattended, the five rural development tasks are being implemented. As a result of these endeavours, economic and social indicators of the Union of Myanmar today show that the targets have been fulfilled exceeding expectations.

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**Industry-1 Minister inspects Pulp Factory in Thabaung**

**YANGON, 28 Dec.—** Minister for Industry-1 U Aung Thaung, on Saturday morning, met with officials of Pulp Factory Project (Thabaung) and bamboo merchants at the factory near Hlaygyitet Village, Thabaung Township.

Pulp Factory under Myanma Paper and Chemicals Industries is being implemented for producing 200 tons of the bleached pulp a day.

At the meeting, Managing Director U Than Shwe of MPCI reported on implementation of the project, future tasks and engineering works. After hearing the reports, the minister gave instructions on tasks to be carefully carried out on civil and engineering works and project works to be implemented on time.

The bamboo merchants reported on production of bamboo in Ayeyawady Division. The minister urged those present to make efforts for opening of the factory in October 2004.
### PERSPECTIVES
**Monday, 29 December, 2003**

**Towards development of advanced industries**

Head of State Senior General Than Shwe has given guidance on striving for gradual development of the entire industrial sector, with agro-based industries as the starting point.

As Myanmar is an agro-based nation, the agricultural sector’s contribution to the gross domestic product is 48 per cent, while the industrial sector’s participation is nearly ten per cent.

Thus, the government has been building more and more irrigation facilities, and up to now it has built 155 dams and 265 water pumping stations. The annual sown acreage of the nation has reached over 40 million acres at present.

Both the State-owned and the private sectors are manufacturing and using various kinds of power tillers, harvesters and threshers on an extensive scale in transforming from conventional farming to mechanized one.

As regards private-owned industries, there are now over 100,000 factories and workshops in the whole country, up from only over 39,600 in the past. Over 6,800 industries have been relocated at the 18 industrial zones. And the industrial sector is enjoying qualitative and qualitative improvement.

Secretary-1 of the State Peace and Development Council Lt-Gen Soe Win met with industrialists at the Ministry of Industry-1 on 26 December.

On the occasion, the Secretary-1 said that as the industrial zones play a key role in developing the industrial sector of the State, the industrialists will have to gradually develop their industries from manual control system to mechanized and computerized control system.

The industrialists are to study the use and manufacturing of advanced machinery and rubber processing methods at the State-owned factories to invent goods that will be actually useful for the nation.

At a time when the State is placing emphasis on development of the private-owned industrial sector and development of the industrial zones, industrialists are urged to strive under the leadership of the State for flourishing of industries with high technical knowledge that produce import-substitute items.

### Objectives of 56th Anniversary of Independence Day

— All the national people to collectively safeguard the national independence and ensure perpetuation of sovereignty
— All the national people to be united to ensure non-disintegration of national solidarity
— All the national people to strive for the emergence of enduring State Constitution and for the building of a new, modern and developed nation
— All the national people to participate with full sense of Union Spirit and patriotism in successful implementation of the seven-point roadmap of the State.

### Golden Pigeons Donated to Shwedagon Pagoda

**Yangon, 28 Dec**— Minister for Communications, Posts and Telegraphs and for Hotels and Tourism Brig-Gen Thein Zaw, accompanied by officials, discussed communication and hotel works with Chairman of Ayeawady Division Peace and Development Council Commander of South-West Command Maj-Gen Soe Naing, in Pathein on 25 December.

At Ngwe Hsaung Beach, the minister inspected arrival of tourists and then met with hoteliers. Next, he inspected along the beach on board the vessel. On 26 December morning, the minister proceeded to Hsinma and Ngayokkaung regions and saw over the places for extension of tourist destinatinos. While in Chaungtha Beach, the minister met with hoteliers and attended to their needs.

In Pathein, the minister inspected Pathein Hotel, the Microwave Station and Anti-exchage. — MNA

### 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 one US dollar
- 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

### All this needs to be known

- Do not be frightened whenever intimidated
- Do not be bolstered whenever flattered
- Do not be softened whenever appeased

### Russia, Ukraine agree compensation for downed plane

**Moscow, 28 Dec**— Moscow and Kiev agreed compensation on Friday for the families of people killed when a stray Ukrainian missile downed a Russian airliner two years ago.

The 78 passengers, who were mainly Israeli and Russian citizens, died when a surface-to-air missile hit a Tupolev-154 airliner over the Black Sea in October, 2001.

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Kostiantyn Gryshchenko and Igor Ivanov, his Russian counterpart, signed an agreement on Friday, according a Russian Foreign Ministry statement.

“The ministers paid special attention to settling the situation of paying compensation to the families of those killed in the crash of the Russian...plane,” the statement said.

“...as a result of the talks, an agreement was signed.”

The ministers did not reveal how much compensation would be paid, although Ukrainian media reported two months ago — after Kiev signed a similar deal with Israel — that relatives would receive 200,000 US dollars for each person killed.

The plane, operated by Russian company Sibir, was on its way to the city of Novosibirsk from Tel Aviv.

— MNA

### Peru slaps temporary ban on US beef imports

**LIMA, 28 Dec**— Peru said on Friday it had placed a temporary ban on its small imports of US beef and live cattle with immediate effect after the United States discovered its first case of mad cow disease.

Peru’s decision follows similar bans by other Latin American importers, including Mexico, Chile and Venezuela, after a cow slaughtered earlier this month in the US triggered a temporary ban on its small imports of US beef and live cattle.

Although Peru is only a minor importer of US beef, the matter takes on added significance because it is the first case of mad cow disease.

Peru, which relies on imports of specialty meats for steak and hamburger as well as on beef for restaurants, as well as on lower quality meat for pet food and animal feed. Peru imports the bulk of its beef from Argentina.

— MNA/Reuters

### Myanmar Printers and Publishers Association meets

**Yangon, 28 Dec**— The Myanmar Printers and Publishers Association held the 12th annual meeting at the Grand Plaza Park Royal Hotel on Alapnya Pagoda Road in Dagon Township on 26 December morning.

Present on the occasion were President of Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry U Win Myint, Chairperson of Myanmar Women Entrepreneurs’ Association Daw Khin Myint Swe and Chairperson of Myanmar Writers and Journalists Association U Hla Myaung (Ke Hlaung), Director of Press Scrutiny and Registration Division U Aye Tun and Chairman of Myanmar Printers and Publishers Association U Maung Maung and members.

At the meeting, participants approved the report of the executive committee and the annual financial statement. Then, officials answered queries raised by members of the association.

Next, 23 executive committee members including President Tin San Myint and Secretary U Tin Sae were elected for 2003-2004 and 2004-2005 financial years. Later, the chairman gave concluding remarks. — MNA

### People’s Desire

- Oppose those relying on external elements, acting as stooges, holding negative views
- Oppose those trying to jeopardize the 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

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The plane, operated by Russian company Sibir, was on its way to the city of Novosibirsk from Tel Aviv.

— MNA/Reuters
Bloody week shows Iraq far from peace despite Saddam’s capture

Baghdad, 28 Dec — Deadly attacks in the Shiite Muslim holy city of Karbala climaxed a particularly bloody week in Iraq, confirming US warnings that Saddam Hussein’s arrest would not immediately end the violence.

After a series of Christmas Day attacks on Baghdad which the military dismissed as “weak and ineffective,” the guerrillas showed Saturday they can still strike with deadly precision nine months after US and British forces invaded.

Six coalition soldiers and seven Iraqis died and at least 129 people were wounded as guerrillas attacked Karbala with four suicide car bombs, machine-gun fire and mortars.

Earlier in the week, bomb and mortar attacks claimed the lives of 10 US soldiers, and assailants gunned down two Iraqi officials in Mosul, while a suicide bomber in Arbil killed four others plus himself and wounded 101.

Guerrillas also hammered Baghdad with rocket and mortar fire over Christmas. Although there were no fatalities, US forces hit back with artillery and airborne cannon fire in the capital’s biggest anti-guerrilla operation in weeks.

Bombs killed two US soldiers Friday in the area around Baquba, 60 kilometres (35 miles) north of Baghdad, after a Christmas night mortar attack claimed the lives of two other soldiers in their fortress-like base.

On Christmas Eve, three US soldiers died in a roadside bombing near Samarra, about 65 kilometres (40 miles) northwest of Baquba.

The anti-US insurgency has claimed the lives of 209 American soldiers since US President George W. Bush declared major combat in Iraq over on 1 May, according to an AFP count.

In the northern city of Mosul on Saturday, 400 kilometres (250 miles) from Baghdad, US forces shot dead four guerrillas after the last fired a rocket-propelled grenade (RPG), a US soldier from the 101st Airborne Division told AFP.

One US officer based north of the capital said Saturday that although the number of resistance fighters is declining, those who are left remain strong and prepared to fight to the end.

“We do not expect at this time that we will have a complete elimination of these attacks,” the coalition’s ground forces chief, Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez, warned shortly after Saddam’s capture.

“I believe these will continue for some time.” — Internet

Bush says US faces “time of great challenge”

Crawford (Texas), 28 Dec — President George W. Bush said on Saturday the United States faced a “time of great challenge” amid efforts to quell guerrilla attacks in Iraq and keep the peace in Afghanistan.

Bush, who is spending the week after Christmas at his Texas ranch with his family, used his weekly radio address to offer a holiday wish for Americans facing hardships, such as poverty and unemployment. But he gave particular emphasis to those serving abroad in the military.

“We are grateful for the courage and commitment of our troops, and we are safer because of their skill and sacrifice,” Bush said.

“This Christmas season comes at a time of great challenge for our country,” he added.

Ahead of the November 2004 election, Bush has come under criticism from Democrats for his decision to go to war in Iraq. Although the main reason cited for the war was a charge that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction, none have been found in the war’s aftermath.

Former Vermont Gover-nor Howard Dean, consid-ered the front-runner for the Democratic presidential nomination next year, has made his anti-war stance a major theme in his campaign.

While casualties stem-ming from guerrilla attacks on US troops in Iraq eroded some of Bush’s support, the capture earlier this month of former Iraqi president Saddam Hussein gave Bush a lift in the polls.

In their own radio ad-dress, Democrats criticized Bush for his economic poli-cies, saying his tax cuts and spending on the mission in Iraq have drained money away from domestic programmes, including education.

“If we have enough money to provide a huge tax cut to the wealthiest in this country, if we have enough resources to rebuild a coun-try far away, to put resources into their schools and their educa-tion system, surely — surely — we can find re-sources for our own,” said Iowa Governor Tom Vilsack.

Vilsack, delivering the radio address on behalf of Democrats, also faulted Bush for not taking action to ex-tend emergency benefits for unemployed workers.

UN warns new US agricultural law could harm Latin America

Santiago, 28 Dec — The new US agricultural policy is a protectionist system that will reduce even further the exports of Latin America and affect the international prices, the United Nations said Friday.

The Economic Commiss-ion for Latin America and the Caribbean (CEPAL) of the United Nations said this policy increases the number of protectionist mechanisms and raises the level of subsidies and other subventions for the US farm sector.

The US Agricultural Law of 2002 defines protectionist measures for the US farm sector. On the other hand, the article said, “seeks to change the rules of the game of international agricultural exchange.”

The United States will increase the competetiveness of its wheat over Argentina and Canada while the US subsidies for corn and soymum will affect the small producers in Latin America, who will “have difficulties to survive.”

The big producers in the region will see their income from exports reduced, even though local consumers will benefit from the lower prices, the article said, indicating that US subsidies to soyoan farmers will mainly affect Brazil and Argentina.

Unemployment benefits for unemployed workers.

EIGHT US SOLDIERS KILLED IN IRAQ

Baghdad, 28 Dec — Eight US soldiers have been killed across Iraq over the Christmas period, as a series of attacks battered the capital. The latest US troop fatalities came Friday with one soldier killed defusing a roadside bomb near Baquba, northeast of Baghdad, and another when his con-voy hit a booby-trap explosive between Baquba and Samarra, said Captain Jefferson Wolfe.

“I believe there will be a continued series of attacks on a convoy, two soldiers were injured, one of whom later died,” Wolfe said.

Their deaths took to eight the number of US soldiers killed in action in Iraq since Christmas Eve.

On Thursday night, two US soldiers died during a mortar attack on a US army base near Baquba, military spokes-woman Josslyn Aberle said Friday.

Four other soldiers were wounded in the attack, she said, while an officer in Baquba put the wounded toll at six.

Two US soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 22nd Regiment of the 4th Infantry Division secure the parameters during a foot-patrol along a street of former Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein’s hometown Tikrit, on 27 Dec, 2003. — Internet

Ukraine suspends US beef imports due to BSE

Kyiv, 28 Dec — Ukraine has suspended US beef im-ports after the discovery in the first case of mad cow dis-ease, Ukrainian veterinarians said Friday.

“We do not expect at this time that we will have a complete elimination of these attacks,” the coalition’s ground forces chief, Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez, warned shortly after Saddam’s capture.

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Annan resists calls to send UN staff back to Baghdad

UNITED NATIONS, 28 Dec — It is the quick-fix remedy prescribed by many critics of the American-led effort in Iraq — send in the United Nations.

For Europeans, the United Nations’ presence would provide a global-law seal of approval and a countervailing influence to American influence.

For the American-appointed Iraqi Governing Council, it would introduce a notion of outside acceptance.

Public opinion surveys of Americans showing 60 percent approval of President Bush’s conduct of the Iraq operation also show nearly 70 percent of those polled calling for greater United Nations activity there. Even the United Nations was busier joining in the calls for the world body to get more involved right away.

Yet, with these urgent summons coming into its New York headquarters from all sides, the United Nations itself is resisting. It is doing so despite being a champion of joint international endeavours, an experienced hand at helping restore post-conflict societies and an institution hounded by detractors’ charges that its performance in Iraq is proving its irrelevance.

The issue for Kofi Annan, the Secretary General, is what the United Nations’ precise role would be and whether its people would be safe.

He pulled out 1,500 US and 450 UN staff members in October after a surge of attacks on relief workers and diplomats and the bombing of the organization’s Baghdad headquarters in which 22 people, including the mission chief, Sergio Vieira de Mello, were killed.

In a chilling comment later to foreign ministers meeting in Geneva, Mr. Annan underlined how gravely he viewed the responsibility of having clear orders for his people. “Bad resolutions,” he said, “kill people.”

He is now committed to running the Iraq mission from offices in Cyprus and Jordan and only beginning to relocate staff members to Baghdad next summer when the transfer to Iraqi authorities is to begin. But he is facing pressure to move back into the country sooner than that, and as in many other instances concerning Iraq, the debate has cast the United Nations and the United States in opposition to one another.

Mr. Annan’s suspicions of the United States are palpable.

In a year-end news conference, he betrayed his irritation at the absence of any mention of the United Nations in the November agreement on the political timetable in Iraq.

“There have been some questions about whether this was an omission or a message,” he commented.

Mr. Annan says he will not send his people back until their function is more clearly spelled out. American diplomats counter that Security Council resolutions to which they agreed this fall provide that clarity — Internet

Bulgarian soldiers among 13 killed in ‘Iraq

BAGHDAD, 28 Dec — At least 13 people, including four Bulgarian soldiers, were killed and 172 people injured in almost simultaneous bomb attacks on a military base, city hall and other facilities in Karbala in central Iraq on Saturday.

Among the dead were four Bulgarian soldiers, who were deployed in the area as part of Polish-led multinational forces, according to media reports.

Insurgents detonated four suicide car bombs and fired mortar shells and grenades.

US Army Brig Gen Mark Kimmitt told reporters in Baghdad.

Seven Iraqi police and civilians were killed and 153 others injured in the attacks.

Karbala is a holy Shiite city located some 50 kilometres south of Baghdad.

Internet

Iraqi promises level playing field for contracts

CAIRO, 28 Dec — A member of Iraq’s Governing Council assured Egyptians on Saturday that the council would not follow the United States in discriminating against companies from countries that opposed the US invasion.

Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari told reporters after talks with Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Maher that the US decision to discriminate in giving reconstruction contracts applied only to contracts financed by the United States.

This is an American decision and the money is American money and comes from the grant offered to Iraq, which is 18 billion US dollars. They are free to dispose of this money,” he said.

“But as for us as Iraqis, we do not discriminate. The Governing Council will have a major role in preparing the budget for 2004 and in this budget, and in future contracts, Iraq will take into account all the interests of countries in the reconstruction process,” he added.

The United States decided earlier this month to make US-funded reconstruction contracts available only to companies from countries which supported the invasion of Iraq, but not to those which opposed the war, such as Egypt.

The decision was a blow to Egyptian companies, some of which could be well placed to operate in Iraq. One Egyptian mobile phone company, Orascom Telecom, has a contract to operate in Iraq but it is not funded by US taxpayers.

The measure for awarding contracts would be “the best and the most appropriate price, without discrimination,” Zebari said.

Apart from a US grant of 18 billion US dollars, Iraq also has access to revenue from the export of Iraqi oil.

MNA/Reuters

Yearbook of PRC published

BEIJING, 28 Dec — Both the Chinese and English-language versions of the 2003 Yearbook of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) have been published by the Xinhua news agency.

The yearbook will be distributed at home and abroad, according to official sources. The yearbook, the 23rd since 1981, contains over three million Chinese characters, and all its figures have been checked by experts from different central and local government departments.

It is a handy reference work for both Chinese and overseas readers.

MNA/Xinhua

Pertamina to restart oil exploration in Iraq

JAKARTA, 28 Dec — Indonesia’s state-run oil and gas company Pertamina will resume oil exploration in Iraq. Bimas Indonesia newspaper reported Saturday.

The company will send a team to conduct a seismic test in Iraq’s western desert next year as part of the exploration activities, said the report.

Pertamina reportedly planned to invest 24 million US dollars in the western desert bloc after the Iraqi Government last year awarded the company three large oil fields with a combined reserve of three million barrels of crude oil.

But the legality of the contract is in question as it was signed under former Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein’s regime without being preceded by a competitive bidding process.

“Pertamina signed the contract with the Iraq legitimate government of Saddam Hussein at that time. We rely on this,” Pertamina spokesman Ridwan Nyak Baik was quoted as saying.

He said the new Iraqi Government should not arbitrarily annul the contract signed by a legitimate government.

Meanwhile, oil and gas director-general Ion Arifin Tahykin said that Pertamina has opened a branch office in Iraq to follow on the contract. His remarks came after a report saying that Iraqi officials refused Pertamina to start oil exploration activities in the country.

MNA/Xinhua

Latvia bans US beef imports

RIA, 28 Dec — Latvia announced Friday it had banned beef imports from the United States, following the discovery of one case of mad cow disease in the US state of Washington.

Izve, an expert from the country’s food and veterinary bureau, said Latvia made the decision as the case had been confirmed by a British laboratory as mad cow disease.

The US Government announced on Tuesday that a Holstein cow in a Washington State farm had tested positive for mad cow disease.

More than 20 countries, including top importers like Japan and Mexico, suspended imports of beef and related products from the United States after detection of the disease.

Mad cow disease, also known as bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), is a brain-wasting disease thought to be transmitted from animal feed containing animal parts. The disease is also linked to a fatal brain-wasting disease in humans. The disease, first found in Britain in 1986, was then spread to other European and Asian countries. This is the first time the disease has been reported in the United States.

MNA/Xinhua

US soldiers secure the area in Karbala, about 110 kms south of Baghdad, Iraq, where rebels unleashed a massive and coordinated assault on a pair of military bases and the governor’s office on 27 Dec, 2003, killing four coalition soldiers.
Guerilla bombs injure six US troops in Iraq

BAGHDAD, 28 Dec — Guerillas detonated three homemade bombs in separate incidents Saturday that set aflame a fuel depot and injured six American soldiers, the military said. Four US troops were killed in bomb blasts and a mortar attack Thursday and Friday, and another died in a traffic accident, bringing the death toll for US troops in Iraq this week to 11.

The violence serves as a reminder that guerillas remain defiant despite the capture of Saddam Hussein. In the northern city of Mosul on Saturday, witnesses said guerillas fired from a car on a US convoy.

The soldiers pursued the attackers, and shot and killed four of them. The military, which usually only reports deaths of coalition soldiers, did not confirm that report.

Also in Mosul, rebel gunmen on Friday assassinated a tribal leader who backed the coalition. Anti-US guerillas have targeted Iraqi police and other officials who cooperate with the US-led occupation authorities.

Air Force Capt. Patricia Teran-Matthews, a US military spokeswoman, said five soldiers were injured when a US convoy hit a “daisy chain” of two homemade roadside bombs in Baghdad, and another soldier was hurt in a similar roadside blast at Hanabiyah, west of the capital.

Another bomb exploded at a fuel depot near Latifiyah, south of Baghdad, causing no injuries but igniting a big fire, she said.

Angry witnesses in Baghdad’s Al-Qalani district charged US troops fired indiscriminately after their convoy was attacked, and pointed to bullet holes in the windshields and windows of three cars in a line of vehicles in which owners had spent the night in hopes of getting rationed fuel.

China to adopt direct management system for land officials

BEIJING, 28 Dec — The Chinese government has decided to put land officials below the provincial level under the direct management of superior land departments in a bid to tighten its control over land resources, according to sources at the Ministry of Land and Resources.

This is an important decision of the central government for improving the land management system, said Sun Wensheng, Minister of Land and Resources, at the National Conference of Land Officials here Saturday.

At present, local land officials are managed by local governments, which has set up barriers to the smooth implementation of orders from the superior land departments.

The direct management system will ensure the implementation of orders in local regions, and tighten central government’s control over land resources, said Sun.

In recent years, many local governments have abused land-use rights on the excuse of economic development, which has seriously affected the security of agriculture and grain production. In 2003, the central government reinforced its efforts to regulate the rules governing the land market, and has put a halt to the trend of abuse of land requisition in economic development zones.

To date, 2,526 out of the 6,015 economic development zones or industrial parks have been abolished, and 294 have been merged with others. Meanwhile, about 168,000 land fraud cases have been dealt with.

Sun said there are still barriers to land protection and proper land use. It is hard to conduct strict supervision over the enforcement of land-related laws and regulations, he noted. Land management is very lax in some areas, and the abuse of land use is still serious, he warned.

He stressed that land resources departments should take the implementation of the policy on arable land protection as a major task, and improve land market management.

Sun urged the departments concerned to improve legislation concerning fixed assets registration and land use and requisition. In addition, he asked local land departments to start investigations into how to amend the present laws on land management and mineral resources.

Over one million Thais to pay tax via Internet

BANGKOK, 28 Dec — Some one million Thais were expected to pay their tax via Internet, the Finance Ministry said on Friday.

People would be able to make their tax payments via the Internet on a 24-hour basis, said the Revenue Department’s deputy general manager Jantima Sirisangtaksin.

There were figures showing that the decision to temporarily ban US cattle product imports has been taken since December 24 in an emergency meeting.

“The decree concerning this matter will be signed very soon. But we have ordered officials in charge to temporarily ban the imports,” said Bactari Moerad.

Indonesia’s cattle products from the United States include beef meat, animals, milk, cheese and leather. The imports amounted to 62.3 million US dollars in 2002.

The newspaper also said the US Embassy in Indonesia’s cattle products import regulations.

Indonesia bans US cattle products import

JAKARTA, 28 Dec — Indonesia temporarily bans the import of cattle products from the United States for fear of mad cow disease outbreak, a local newspaper reported Friday.

Kompas newspaper quoted a senior official at the Agriculture Ministry as saying that the decision to temporarily ban US cattle product imports has been taken since December 24 in an emergency meeting.

“ar decree concerning this matter will be signed very soon. But we have ordered officials in charge to temporarily ban the imports,” said Bactari Moerad.

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Hailing the 56th Anniversary Independence Day:

Emerging roads and bridges like blossoming flowers throughout the Union

There was no doubt it was the hallmark of armed insurgents. Having stopped for a long time at Kyaiuto station, our train continued. Passengers were in a state of panic. Luckily we reached Mottama station safely.

Passengers had to wait Z-craft ferry to go to Mawlamyine. As the number of Z-craft was little, we had to wait for long. Therefore, passengers relied on sampans plying Mottama and Mawlamyine. The sampans at that time were not motorized. The Gulf of Mottama was at the confluence of the Gainga river and the Thanlwin river and its current was very rapid. To cross the river by boat was a matter of life and death. We had to rely on train to continue to Ye from Mawlamyine.

The nearness of Ann station and Mawlamyine was the reason why insurgents were active most on Mawlamyine-Ye railroad. The insurgents coming from Mawkanin often blew up bombs around Lamagia station and committed robberies.

We arrived at Ye from Mawlamyine safe and sound. The railroad ended there. Although there was a motor road linking Ye and Ann village, the road was very rough and notorious for lootings committed by insurgents. Therefore, passengers had to stream down Ye river. But, sometimes the insurgents opened fire from the other bank of the river.

At last, we saw our native town. Peace did not prevail even there. Our family had to hide in a cell under the house as the insurgents entered the village and sprayed bullets to this day. The memory is still with me.

Although independence was regained in the country, the national races had no chance of enjoying the taste of independence to the full. The national people were living in constant fear because of the splits within parties and sects and the lootings and robberies committed by insurgents. It was also the time when internal stability, the rule of law and the economy of the people were all on the decline. Therefore, the development of national races was a distant reality. The insurgents creating chaotic conditions were in fact the national brethren living in the same land drinking water from the same source. On account of the sectarian and ideological differences, they went under cover. If efforts were made to develop the country with the combined strength of all national brethren, a modern nation would have taken shape.

Therefore, after 1988, the Tatmadaw government lowered the twelve political objectives and gave top priority to the tasks for stability of the State, community peace and tranquility. Stability and prevalence of law and order. It could make peace with the armed groups. The national race who had exchanged arms for peace had been taking part in development projects in the respective regions in full capacity and hand in hand with the Tatmadaw and the people.

As a result of the development of the political sector, peace has been restored successfully the length and breadth of the country. And Myanmar nationals can freely run their businesses and travel wherever they like across the country.

Thanks to the combined and united efforts made day in, day out by the government and the people in nation-building tasks, the nation has developed unprecedentedly.

The country has emerged a network of roads, bridges and railroads stretching the whole nation. So, now one can travel from Yangon to Mawlamyine and then to Ye without crossing any rivers and creeks by boat. And one can directly travel between Yangon and Mawlamyine by car passing Thanlwin Bridge (Hpa-an), Gyaing (Zarthabyin) Bridge and Attaran River-crossing Bridge through Hpa-an in Kayin State. Thanlwin Bridge (Mawlamyine) is in the course of construction to enable the people to travel to Mawlamyine by crossing the river from Mawlamyine bank to Mawlamyine bank.

In the past, construction of Tamadawon Bridge was just a dream because of powerful current in the gulf, vast water surface of the river and lack of peace and stability. (See page 7)
The 11,575-foot-long Thanbodhjen Bridge (Mawlamyine) Construction Project will be completed soon. On completion, it will be the longest bridge in the nation. The Ye River-crossing bridge was inaugurated on 25 November 2003. And there has emerged the railroad leading to Dawei. Mawlamyine-Ye-Dawei Road has been extended reaching up to Kawthoung directly. With the emergence of this road, people can directly travel by car to and fro between Kachin and the southernmost part of Myanmar. That road is a main Union Highway of the nation.

There are also several roads directly linking eastern part and northern part of the country. In the past, the transportation network coverage and measures for ensuring a smooth and secure transport will be carried out in the Union of Myanmar for all. Such a nation can achieve great success in carrying out nation-building tasks and development projects.

In a nutshell, I would like to answer that if there prevails independence and sovereignty, the citizens can build the whole nation leading to all directions. Among the new roads are Mandalay-Myaikyina, Mandalay-Bhamo, Myit-kyina-Pyai, Hpa-an-Zar-thabyin-Mawlamyine, Taunggyi-Wyangon-Hangmyinno, Pyinunma-Sittway-An-Minbu, Kayitson-Bogpyin-Dawe-Mawlamyine, Taungpy- Ma-ei-Kyaikkyu, Monywa-Khamti, Minbu-Seikpyu-Pakokka-Monywa, Minhla-Thayet-Pyay, Monywa-Kalewa, Pyinmana-Taungdwingyi, Pyawbwe-Nanmauk-Magway and Toung Pyy roads.

Among the railroads constructed in States and Divisions are Pyay-Aunglan-Taungdwingyi, Pakokku-Chauk, Shwenyanu-Taunggyi-Sakkhaung, Pakokku-ChaukU, Budalin-Yeu-Khin1, Yangon-Bagan, Namhsan-Mongnai, Nyaungshwe-Yaksaw, Aungpan-Loikaw, Ye-Dawei and Yaypokni-

Kitsapanady Bridge in Kyauktaw Township, Rakhine State.

in travelling from Rakhine State to Yangon. But, now one can travel Rakhine State-Yangon journey by car through Gwa. Furthermore, one can journey from Rakhine State to all parts of the nation through Taungup Pass, Oakshipton-Paduang the whole nation leading to all directions. Among the new roads are Mandalay-Myaikyina, Mandalay-Bhamo, Myit-kyina-Pyai, Hpa-an-Zar-thabyin-Mawlamyine, Taunggyi-Wyangon-Hangmyinno, Pyinunma-Sittway-An-Minbu, Kayitson-Bogpyin-Dawe-Mawlamyine, Taungpy-Ma-ei-Kyaikkyu, Monywa-Khamti, Minbu-Seikpyu-Pakokka-Monywa, Minhla-Thayet-Pyay, Monywa-Kalewa, Pyinmana-Taungdwingyi, Pyawbwe-Nanmauk-Magway and Toung Pyy roads.

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Kitsapanady Bridge in Kyauktaw Township, Rakhine State.

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Kitsapanady Bridge in Kyauktaw Township, Rakhine State.
Cash donated to renovation of Myatsaw Nyinaung Pagoda

YANGON, 28 Dec.—The second cash donation ceremony for the round renovation of Myatsaw Nyinaung Pagoda in Toungoo was held at the Dhammayazika at the pagoda on 26 December morning. Present were Yangon Monastery Sayadaw Bhaddanta Silavamsa of Toungoo and members of the Sangha, Chairman of Bago Division Peace and Development Council Commander Brig-Gen Ko Ko and wife, Deputy Commander Brig-Gen Thura Maung Ni, Brig-Gen Thura Myint Thein of Toungoo Station, local authorities, departmental officials and wellwishers. Chairman of the All-round Renovation of the pagoda Chairman of Toungoo District Peace and Development Council Lt-Col Tun Aye supplicated on progress of work. Commanding Officer of the local battalion Lt-Col Win Myint handed over K 300,000 donated by Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt and wife Dr Daw Khin Win to the commander. Then, the commander and officials accepted K 26,065,720 donated by wellwishers including K 5.5 million by Vice-Chairman of City Bank U Khin Maung Aye-Daw Wutty Aye-K 3 million by U Kyaw Win Daw Tin Moe Moe Lwin; K 2.2 million by U Win Myint Daw-Swe Nwe Win; and K 1 million by Kanbawzah Bank Ltd Chairman U Aung Ko Win Daw Nan Tha Hwe. Next, the commander inspected renovation tasks at the pagoda and fulfilled the requirements. On 27 December morning, the commander attended the mass sports activities for the last week of December on Shwemawdaw Pagoda Road in Bago. Over 50,000 local people participated in it. Similar activities were held in the towns in Bago Division. — MNA

Tatmadaw and departmental vehicles checked on dry day

YANGON, 28 Dec.—At the main points in Yangon City from 7 am to 5 pm today, the dry day inspection teams checked Tatmadaw and departmental cars and drivers on observance of the dry day disciplines bearing of dry day passes, driver’s licences and wheel taxes, wearing of departmental uniforms by drivers and breaking of traffic rules. Vice-Chairman of Dry Day Supervisory Committee Minister at the Prime Minister’s Office Maj-Gen Thura Maung Ni and members Deputy Minister for Hotels and Tourism Brig-Gen Aye Myint Kyu, Deputy Minister for Energy Energy Brig-Gen Than Huy, Provost Marshal Maj-Gen Saw Hla and Director-General Brig-Gen Khin Yi of Myanma Police Force, senior military officers, directors-general, Secretary Deputy Director-General U Sein Hla of the Government’s Office and Acting Commander of Yangon Division Wireless and Traffic Police Force Police Maj-Gen Aung divided into two groups supervised dry day inspection teams which were checking Tatmadaw and departmental vehicles this morning and afternoon. — MNA

Minister of Culture and Information of Lao arrives

YANGON, 28 Dec.—A six-member delegation headed by Mr Phandouangchit Vongsa, Minister of Culture and Information of Lao People’s Democratic Republic, arrived here on a goodwill visit by air this evening. The delegation was welcomed at Yangon International Airport by Deputy Minister for Culture Brig-Gen Soe Win Maung, Ambassador of LPDDR to Myanmar Mr Chanthyvich Bodhisuana and officials. — MNA

Minister at the Prime Minister’s Office Maj-Gen Thein Swe and party supervise tasks of dry day inspection teams. — MNA

Drug traffickers sentenced

YANGON, 28 Dec.—A combined team comprising members of local intelligence unit, Yangon Special Anti-Drug Squad and Mingaladon Police Force, acting on a tip-off, on 4 January 2003 searched Maung So (a) Almyatha (a) Mya Win on Aungmingalar Street in Kusawtmyna. Mingaladon Township and arrested them together with 102.0561 grams of marijuana hidden under his shirt. Action was taken against Maung Su, son of U Nyo Yin, of Kyusawkhetthit Village, Mingaladon Township under Section 15/19 of Narcotic Drug and Psychotropic Substances Law. He was sentenced to 20 years’ imprisonment under Section 19(A) and 5 years’ imprisonment under Section 15 to serve separately by Yangon North District Court on 19 November. Likewise, a combined team comprising members of local intelligence unit, Yangon Special Anti-Drug Squad and the District Police Force, acting on information, on 1 February 2003 searched Ma Myint Myint Kyi, on 120th Street, Yedwingon Ward, Mingalar Taungnyunt Township and arrested her together with 1,260 stimulant tablets hidden in her handbag. Action was taken against Ma Myint Myint Kyi (a) Shanabi, daughter of U Soe Myint, of No 52, 54th Street, Ward 2, Pazundaung Township under Section 19(A) of Narcotic Drug and Psychotropic Substances Law. Ma Myint Myint Kyi (a) Shanabi was sentenced to 20 years’ imprisonment under Section 19(A) by Yangon East District Court on 11 November. — MNA

Industry-1

Minister inspects ... (from page 1)

Next, the minister inspected construction of the oil storage & pump house, the water purification station and clarifier water tanks No 1 and No 2, the chipper house, the screening and washing house and raft jetties on the bank of Ngawun River, installation of cranes and land preparation for building raw materials house. Afterwards, he saw over the place for building 60-ton newsmprint factory and 7,000 acres of tree plantations Kyaukchaungyi reserve forest of Thabaung Township Forest Department. While in Pathwin, the minister inspected production process of Pathwin Glass Factory. — MNA
Six resolutions of Bagan mass meeting on 1-1-2000 ushering in the 21st century

— We continue to regard Our Three Main National Causes as a national duty
— We shall steadfastly implement objectives laid down for political, economic and social development
— We shall safeguard our nation and citizens
— We shall build a peaceful and stable nation having high standard of living
— We shall strive for development of human resources of the State
— We shall strive for the flourishing and propagation of Union Spirit in the State.

Hockey coach arrives

YANGON, 28 Dec — A training course for hockey coaches will be conducted soon under the joint sponsorship of the International Olympic Committee, the Myanmar Olympic Committee, the Federation of International Hockey and the Myanmar Hockey Federation.

World’s No 1 hockey coach of Pakistan Mr Sultan Sikandar Ghuman arrived here by air this afternoon.

President of the Myanmar Hockey Federation Brig-Gen Myo Myint and Executive Committee members welcomed him at Yangon International Airport. The training course will be conducted from 29 December 2003 to 5 January 2004. Altogether 45 trainees from States and Divisions are attending the course.

World’s No 1 Hockey referee Mr Ky Koow Alia of India will also arrive here on 8 January 2004 and the referees training course will be conducted.

Fence to be set up against wild elephants in Bangladesh

DHALA, 28 Dec— The local authorities in southeast Bangladesh planned to erect barriers to fence off ravaging wild elephants, reported the Daily Star on Saturday.

According to the Forest Ministry, wild elephants have killed 12 people and injured scores of others in 2003 in Rangamati, the hilly frontier district in southeast Bangladesh.

The frequent attacks by the wild tuskers also damaged villagers’ property including houses and crops, leading to financial losses of some 113,333 US dollars. Many panic-stricken villagers had to flee home to safety elsewhere.

The wild elephants stormed into human habitats in search of food, and the attacks have now reached an alarming level.

Sri Lanka sees more accident victims during Christmas season

COLOMBO, 28 Dec— The number of accident victims in Sri Lanka has risen during the Christmas festive season compared to the corresponding period last year with road traffic accidents taking the heaviest toll, the official Daily News reported on Saturday. The total number of accidents reported to the Colombo National Hospital on December 24-25 increased from 508 to 553, up by 9 per cent compared to the corresponding period during the previous year.

The number of admissions to hospital due to accidents grew from 140 to 187 during the two days with 127 road accident victims. Most accidents were blamed on liquor while the majority of cases were reported in the night, a hospital official said. Drunk and reckless driving as well as careless setting off of firecrackers are the major causes of accidents in the small Indian Ocean island.

TATMADAW WUSHU COMPETITIONS. The opening ceremony of the Tenth Tatmadaw (Army, Navy and Air Force) Wushu Competitions for the Defence Services Commander-in-Chief’s trophy was held at the Shan State Gymnasium in Taunggyi of southern Shan State on 24-12-2003. New generation athletes seen presenting Wushu demonstrations at the opening ceremony.
Colombian drug kingpin surrenders to justice

BOGOTA, 28 Dec — Colombian drug kingpin Daniel Serrano surrendered himself to justice, police said on Saturday.

He went to the police department in the northern city of Bucaramanga to give himself up on Friday afternoon, according to police.

Serrano, whose extradition is sought by the United States, was immediately taken to Colombia’s capital Bogota. Serrano was known as accountant of brothers Miguel and Gilberto Rodriguez Orejuela, the founders of the so-called Cali cartel, who are currently imprisoned in Colombia.

The United States has urged Colombia to extradite Serrano, the Rodriguez brothers and William Rodriguez Abadia, Miguel’s son, as well as three other individuals, who were involved in cocaine trafficking.

The US authorities said that while the brothers were in prison, William was in charge of the operations of the Cali cartel, which is still involved in drug trafficking and other criminal activity.

The United States accused the seven Colombians of drug trafficking, money laundering, bribing and the murder of witnesses in Colombia.

China seals off source of deadly gas leak

BEIJING, 28 Dec — Chinese emergency workers sealed off a natural gas well on Saturday, capping the source of a toxic gas cloud that killed nearly 200 people and poisoned thousands in southwestern China.

Dressed in special breathing gear, a crew of 80 technicians began pouring hundreds of cubic metres of mud into the well, plugging a deadly flow of natural gas and sulphurated hydrogen that turned surrounding farmland into a death zone.

The capping of the Chuanxiong well has been completed successfully, “the official Xinhua news agency said soon after the operation began. In separate reports, Xinhua said air pressure around the cap had begun to drop 10 minutes after the capping procedure began. After the well was filled with mud, layers of cement would be added.

At least 198 people, mostly villagers, and large numbers of livestock were killed after the blow-out, which spewed a poisonous gas cloud into the night sky. Xinhua said the toll had risen from the earlier reported 191 but gave no explanation.

More than 40,000 people were evacuated from villages within a radius of three miles from the remote site of the gas field, operated by state-run China National Petroleum Corp, parent of listed oil major PetroChina.

More than 9,000 people poisoned to varying degrees of villagers, finding corpses strewn on roadsides. Others died as they slept.

State media have been full of photographs of children in hospital, their eyes sealed shut by the gas, and of dead livestock lying on village streets.

Rescue operations, delayed by a lack of protective equipment, ended on Saturday morning ahead of the capping operation.

The successful capping of the 400-metre deep gas well meant a recurrence of the blow-out was unlikely. Xinhua said dangerous substances lingering in the air would be cleared in an anti-chemical operation, the agency said but gave no details.
Hailing the 56th Anniversary Independence Day:

Increased production of the Ministry of Mines in the time of the State Peace and Development Council

Minerals exploited in the country from 1988 to 2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>1988</th>
<th>2003</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Iron and steel</td>
<td>metric ton</td>
<td>7840</td>
<td>8626</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Coal</td>
<td>ton</td>
<td>29780</td>
<td>550278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Cathode copper</td>
<td>metric ton</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>27173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Jade</td>
<td>Kilogram in thousand</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>10849</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Gems</td>
<td>Carat in thousand</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>54460</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Pearl</td>
<td>quantity (momme)</td>
<td>15275 (7335)</td>
<td>117852 (39318)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Limestone</td>
<td>ton</td>
<td>65862</td>
<td>128150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Common quartz</td>
<td>ton</td>
<td>30143</td>
<td>90002</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Ministry of Mines is making earnest efforts for fulfilling the needs in nation-building tasks and establishing various industries by providing minerals of the country. Moreover, under the Pivate Investment Law, the ministry is allowing the private firms from home and abroad and joint ventures to expand export.

To be able to exploit and use the minerals in the country in the long run, the ministry is supervising the tasks under Myanma Mines Law and Myanmar Gemstone Law.
Chinese media pay tribute to Mao on his 110th birth anniversary

BEIJING, 28 Dec.— Mao Zedong, the late Chinese leader and founding father of the People’s Republic of China, was born 110 years ago. All major Chinese newspapers on Friday dedicated special reports to Mao, which are now best sellers on the Chinese Mainland.

The Xinhu Daily Tele-graph filed a story about a couple’s legendary romantic marriage, matched by Mao Zedong. The paper also quoted Chinese young people’s views on Mao and his thoughts.

“His outstanding achievements, glorious ideas and great charisma influence people generation after generation far beyond his own days,” said the People’s Forum, a column of the People’s Daily. Meanwhile, the paper’s overseas edition carried reports on biographies and books in memory of Mao, lighted by Mao’s calligraphy and rare photos of the late leader. It also dedicated a full page to the memoirs of Mao’s daughter, grandson and granddaughter.

The China Daily, an English language newspaper, said in a front page report that Mao’s military, philosophical and literary teachings still influence China and many foreigners have learned through their personal experience of the influence of Mao on modern China’s economic and social development.

China Central Television (CCTV) has released a TV series “Mao Zedong the Poet” and a documentary serial “Mao Zedong—A Charismatic Leader” to commemorate the late leader.

“A Mao Zedong Memorial on the Internet has been established by 110 web sites to recall Mao. “We miss you forever. Chairman Mao,” postings said.

French thieves drive victim home for Christmas Eve

PARIS, 28 Dec.—A pair of thieves who seized a van loaded with pricey designer goods on Wednesday took a two-hour detour so they could drive the owner home for his Christmas Eve dinner, before fleeing with the loot.

Posing as police, the two men tricked the van driver into pulling over at a motorway intersection on the edge of Paris by chasing him in a car fitted with a flashing blue light, a sire and a “police” sign, local media reported on Friday.

Despite being armed with guns and wearing balacas, the thieves showed some sense of social goodwill when they asked their victim where he lived, explaining “we don’t want you to have too far to walk”, according to police sources.

They then drove the man around 185 miles to his home in Saint Soupplets in eastern France, so he could arrive in time for the traditional Christmas meal which in France is eaten on the evening of December 24. Showing that Christmas spirit only goes so far, the man, whose van was loaded with clothes from labels like Gucci and Yves Saint Laurent, has filed a complaint with police.—MNA/Reuters

Second herd quarantined in mad cow scare in Washington State

WASHINGTON, 28 Dec.—The US Agriculture Department on Friday quarantined a second herd of cattle in Washington State in connection with the first US case of mad cow disease, as cattle producers scrambled to minimize damage to the 27-billion-US-dollar industry.

The cattle industry, reeling from the discovery of the deadly, brain-wasting disease on Friday withdrew objections to tighter controls that would prevent sick animals from entering the food supply.

The second Washington State herd placed under quarantine brings to 4,400 the number of animals under observation.

China, S Korea sign agreement on development loans

BEIJING, 28 Dec.— South Korea will offer China 23 million US dollars in development loans, according to an agreement between the two governments signed here Friday.

China will use the loans to promote the mechanization of rice growing in Hubei, Hunan, Anhui and Yunnan provinces. The term of the loans will be 30 years, including a 10-year grace period. The annual interest rate of the loans is 2.5 per cent. Most of the money will be used to purchase farm equipment for use in the four provinces.

The agreement was signed by Chinese Vice-Minister of Finance Li Yong and South Korean Ambassador to China Kim Ha Joong. The loans were part of the sixth batch of South Korean Economic Development and Cooperation Fund (EDCF).—MNA/Xinhua

Minor quake jolts southern Peru

LIMA, 28 Dec.— An earthquake measuring 6.4 degrees on the Richter Scale hit in the early hours of Friday the population of the southern Peruvian state of Ica, 320 kilometres south of Lima, causing no injuries or damage.

The quake had its epicentre 33 kilometres southeast of the capital of Ica, at a depth of 52 kilometres, said the Geophysical Institute of Peru. On Thursday night, another 4.4-degree jolt hit the southern states of Arequipa, Moquegua, Tacna and Puno, and no injuries or material damage were reported.

In June, 2001, a 6.8-degree earthquake jolted Arequipa, Moquegua and Tacna, with a death toll of 200 and 250 million US dollars in losses.

Storm leaves two dead, 15 injured in Argentina

BUENOS AIRES, 28 Dec.—At least two people died and 15 others were injured on Friday after a storm hit the northern Argentine province of Cordoba, officials said.

The storm, accompanied by howling winds, lighted up trees and snapped telephone and electric poles in the city of Cordoba, said the provincial emergency supply.

China Premier marks working for balanced growth next year

BEIJING, 28 Dec.— Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao has marked the government’s fiscal priorities for next year, stressing balanced growth.

The government will work to realize a balanced growth between urban and rural areas, between economic and social progress, and among different regions, Wen said.

More effort will be made to improve the living standards and environment for newly people and less developed regions, he added.

The country will better apply the proactive fiscal policy and further economic restructuring, Wen said.

Wen said taxation should be carried out in line with laws to guarantee a stable and affluent state treasury.

Taxation reform will continue next year while government funds will be better managed to reduce risk, he said. China’s fiscal revenue was estimated to exceed two trillion yuan (about 244 billion US dollars) this year thanks to fast economic growth and improved corporate returns, said the State Administration of Taxation on December 18.

MNA/Xinhua
US, Canada at odds over mad cow origin

WASHINGTON, 28 Dec — The US Agriculture Department said on Saturday the Washington State dairy cow infected with mad cow disease had probably been imported from Canada but Canadian authorities called the statement premature.

Ron DeHaven, the USAD’s chief veterinarian, told reporters the animal was likely imported into Idaho from Alberta, Canada, in August 2001. “The positive animal likely entered the United States as part of a group of 74 dairy cattle that were imported through the border crossing at Eastport (in Idaho),” DeHaven said.

But in Ottawa, chief Canadian veterinarian Dr Brian Evans told a news conference: “It would be premature to draw such a conclusion at this time... As yet, there is no definitive evidence that confirms that the BSE-infected cow originated in Canada.”

In May this year, Canadian officials reported a single case of mad cow disease in a black Angus cow in Alberta, but the USAD said it was too early to speculate on whether the two cases were related.

China’s steel giant set to enter world’s top 500

SHANGHAI, 28 Dec — The Shanghai Baosteel Group Corporation says it hopes to enter the world’s top 500 enterprises this year, with sales revenue forecast to top 13.25 billion US dollars.

The figure far exceeds the 10.173 billion US dollars reported by the lowest ranked on Fortune’s list in 2002, Baosteel’s President and General Manager Xie Qihua said Baosteel aims to enter the top 500 by 2005 and become a world-leading multinational firm by 2010.

The steel giant has been rated BBB this year by Standard & Poor’s, the prestigious international rating organisation, for its successful reforms in management and production, as well as the massive potential for further expansion.

Baosteel annexed two smaller state-owned, loss-making steel companies in 1998, which led Standard & Poor’s to downgrade its rating.

But the annexed companies performed well, with substantial drops in debt burdens, marked improvement in capital structure and cash flow, and an increase in capacity and optimized product structure.

The company recorded a net profit of 3.803 billion yuan (458 million US dollars) in the first half of 2003, 58 percent above the year earlier report said.

Fortune magazine began in 1990 to publish a ranking of the top 500 industrial enterprises worldwide. The ranking is based mainly on operational revenues. Factors taken into consideration also include assets, net income, sales volume, number of employees and investment and dividends.

Most Chinese firms that have made the list so far are either from monopolistic sectors such as telecommunications, power, gas and petroleum, or state-owned commercial banks.

MA/Xinhua

Cold wave in north India brings toll to 34

NEW DELHI, 28 Dec — North India reeled under intense cold wave Friday with temperature plummeting by a few degrees claiming a woman’s life and taking the toll of killed in the countrywide toll to 34, according to the Press Trust of India (PTI).

While sub-zero temperatures are keeping people indoors, the thick fog in the plains and hills disrupted normal life. In Delhi, a dense fog throughout the night reduced visibility to around 100 metres making operation of flights and running of trains virtually impossible. Several flights and trains were cancelled or rescheduled.

China reports one suspected SARS case

BEIJING, 28 Dec — A 32-year-old man who has been receiving treatment in quarantine in south China’s Guangdong Province was confirmed to be a suspected case of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), said a spokesman of China’s Ministry of Health Saturday afternoon.

The man, a freelance TV station worker, lives in Panyu District of Guangzhou City. He began to have a fever and headache in the evening of 25 December and was transferred to the quarantine ward of Guangzhou No 8 People’s Hospital on 24 December.

The Health Ministry and a panel of medical specialists confirmed this case of suspected SARS on 26 December.

Wang Zhiqiong, deputy head of the provincial health department, said that the patient had been in Guangzhou City and eaten no wild animals for one month before hospitalization.

The provincial health department was not sure about his claim and is organizing further epidemic investigation and lab examinations.

This is the first suspected SARS case ever found since 23 May when the World Health Organization (WHO) lifted the SARS-related travel advisory against Guangdong Province.

The first SARS case was found in Foshan City of the province in November, 2002. Chinese Mainland’s last two SARS patients were discharged from hospital on 16 August in Beijing after more than 100 days of medical treatment.

As of 10 am on 16 August, a total of 5,327 SARS cases were reported on the Chinese mainland, 4,959 patients were cured and discharged from hospital. Death toll from the disease stood at 349. Of the total figure, 2,521 SARS cases and 193 deaths from the disease were reported in Beijing.

MA/Xinhua

Israel launches second commercial satellite

JERUSALEM, 28 Dec — Israel launched its second commercial communications satellite from the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan on Saturday.

The television picture in the Middle East and Europe, serving Israeli satellite television company YES as well as a broad band HBO in Holland, Poland, Slovakia, Romania and the Czech Republic.

AMOS-2 will expand capacity and coverage, providing access to the east coast of the United States and offering broadband services in addition to direct-to-home television distribution.

MA/Xinhua

Egyptian human trafficker sentenced to seven years

CAIRO, 28 Dec — A Cairo court sentenced an Egyptian man to seven years in prison on Saturday for his role in the drowning of some 353 migrants on an overcrowded vessel trying to reach Australia in 2001.

The court in the Cairo district of Abdeen found Moataz Muhammed Hasan guilty of manslaughter on the grounds that the vessel was not seaworthy.

Hasan, also known as Abu Qassse, was deported to Egypt from Indonesia this year after serving a six-month sentence there for violations. Indonesia turned down an Australia extradition request, citing “technical reasons”.

Prosecutors told the court that Hasan and a colleague received 10,000 US dollars each from family which boarded the vessel on the journey from Indonesia to Australia, where they intended to seek political asylum.

The 353 migrants, mostly Egyptians and Afghans, drowned when the vessel sank in the Indian Ocean off the Indonesian island of Sumatra in October 2001. Only 44 people survived.

Indonesia did not charge Hasan for arranging the journey because it has no law dealing with trafficking in humans.

MA/Xinhua

Cambodia bans US beef imports due to mad cow disease

PHNOM PENH, 28 Dec — Cambodia has decided to temporarily ban the import of US beef due to the mad cow disease reported in the country, the Cambodia Daily reported Saturday.

The border checkpoints authorities were informed Friday by the Commerce Ministry of the temporary ban, said the newspaper. "The ministry has written to all vendors, importers and authorities will follow the order," Commerce Minister Cham Prasidh quoted as saying. Commerce Ministry statistics showed that the country imported about 5,800 US dollars of US meat in 2002. Japan, South Korea and China have hauled US beef imports due to the outbreak of mad cow disease. Some supermarkets around Phnom Penh said they would stop buying US beef, which is mostly eaten as steaks in expensive restaurants or at the hamburgers that have popped up around town.

MA/Xinhua

KONOS satellite image of historic Bam in southeastern Iran, taken from 423 miles in space on 27 Dec, 2003, just one day after the earthquake struck there. Whole blocks of homes that had collapsed onto their square lots may be discerned in the satellite imagery. Some smaller roads appear to be cluttered with debris and cars. — Internet
Para Games concludes in Vietnam

HAVAN, 28 Dec— The 2nd ASEAN Para Games, the biggest sporting event for the disabled in South-East Asia, concluded here on Saturday with Thailand topping the whole society towards disabled people,”

FA sees positives in Ferdinand drugs case

LONDON, 28 Dec— One positive to come out of the Rio Ferdinand drugs case was that no player would miss taking a dope test again, Football Association (FA) chief executive Mark Palios said on Sunday.

The 3rd ASEAN Para Games will be held in the Philippines in 2005. The host country is supposed to increase the programme to at least 10 sports. — MNA/Xinhua

Chelsea's Frank Lampard (C) looks on at his teammate Claude Makelele (R) challenges Louis Saha. Fulham manager Chris Coleman said his in-form striker Saha would stay with the club until the end of the season. — INTERNET

FA sees positives in Ferdinand drugs case

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It was Celtic’s 17th straight league win and swift revenge for Martin O’Neill’s side who suffered a shock 2-1 defeat by the same opponents in a League Cup quarterfinal this month.

Two goals each from Chris Sutton and John Hartson put Celtic 4-0 up after an hour before Henrik Larsson and Stilian Petrov completed the rout. Hibbs were reduced to 10 men just before halftime after Derek Riordan was dismissed.

Celtic have 52 points from 18 games, who played away at Dundee on Sunday, have 41 from 17 matches. The top two meet in the Old Firm derby next weekend.

“It closes off 2003 very nicely for us and we absolutely delighted with the run. We’re scoring goals, playing very strongly at the moment and are keeping the fans happy but, of course, we must start again next week,” O’Neill told reporters.

Sutton opened the scoring after four minutes and Hibbs crumbled after Riordan was red-carded for flying into a late challenge on Jackie McNamara.

Hartson headed home the second while Sutton netted the third from the penalty spot. Hartson made it four with a fizzing low strike and Larsson got in on the act with number five after some hapless defending.

Petrov completed the rout with 13 minutes left to leave a 59,609 home crowd, Celtic’s biggest of the season, in a buoyant mood. Third-placed Hearts, 11 points behind Rangers, were held to a 0-0 draw at home by Motherwell. Bottom club Partick Thistle thrashed Dunfermline Athletic 4-1.

MNA/Reuters

Approval poll shows Barcelona unsatisfactory

MADRID, 28 Dec— It is not a surprise to see the members of under performed FC Barcelona far from happy with their team.

This is the result of an opinion poll conducted among 500 members of different section, which was published on Friday by Catalan sports daily Mundo Deportivo.

About 57.2 per cent of the members consulted believe that the club should sign new players during the mid-winter transfer period despite new president Joan Laporta has made it clear that the club’s economic situation will not allow this.

In particular, 59.7 per cent want Laporta to sign a new striker, with 42.6 per cent desperate for the club to sell off the unpopular Patrick Kluivert. The only player to emerge from the pool with some credit, predictably, is Brazilian playmaker Ronaldinho, whom 86.4 per cent consider to be “the best player of the season so far”.

Coach Frank Rijkaard received little credit. 43.6 per cent of the members asked consider him to be responsible for the poor results, and 37.4 per cent think that Laporta should look for another coach immediately.

Barca are ninth in the table, no less than fifteen points behind leaders and hated rivals Real Madrid.

The opinion poll also demonstrates impatience with Laporta. Whilst 58.8-per-cent praise him for “having generated new enthusiasm” at the club, and whilst 76.7-per-cent praise him for raising the number of club members to a record 108,000, 46.4-per-cent criticize Laporta for having raised the price of season tickets by around one-third.

About 27.7 per cent, in addition, believe that Laporta needs to “begin to translate his good intentions into achievements”… mainly by constructing a new football team capable of challenging Real.

Paper concludes with the observation that “the members are anxious for the club to start to improve, but do not see the signs of that improvement at the moment… and are running out of patience”. — MNA/Xinhua

Answers for yesterday’s Cross Puzzle

EUSTON    NOHOW    STRAWA    CHASE    HIRUST    OTILAKR    RAIMETIZN    TOTELKZRN    GNATELESA    CRUEDEPRESS    EASLT    CARAVAN    HEETKEA    ELDER    PETROL

Chelsea’s Frank Lampard (C) looks on at his teammate Claude Makelele (R) challenges Louis Saha. Fulham manager Chris Coleman said his in-form striker Saha would stay with the club until the end of the season. — INTERNET

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16-bed Hospital opened under Yaungkha Village Project of Myanmar-Thai narcotic drugs eradication and all-round development of border areas

YANGON, 28 Dec — Under the arrangement of Myanmar-Thai narcotic drugs eradication and all-round development of border areas, the ceremony to open 16-bed hospital which was one of the Yaungkha Village Project in Monghsat District, Shan State (East), was held at the venue on 26 December morning.

Chairman of Shan State (East) Peace and Development Council Chairman of Triangle Region Command Maj-Gen Khin Maung, Deputy Minister for Livestock and Fisheries U Aung Thein, Deputy Minister for Health Dr Mya Oo, departmental officials of Tachilek and Monghsat Districts, local national race leader U Pau Yu Chan, officials of departments of Thailand and local people attending over 2,000.

Speaking on the occasion, In-charge of Yaungkha Village Project Col San Pwint said that the project is being implemented according to the agreement of Myanmar-Thai narcotic drugs eradication and all-round development of border areas after the meeting between the prime ministers of the two countries in 2001.

The Prime Minister of Thailand provided 20 million Baht to implement the project.

According to the agreement between officials of the two countries, Yaungkha Village-tract, 30 miles west of Tachileik, was chosen as the project area in 2001.

Since the project will benefit not only Yaungkha Village but also local people who are residing in cultural sector, the plan has been drawn to cultivate opium-substitute crops. Nowadays, 1,300 acres of opium poppy-substitute crops were distributed to local farmers and arrangements were being made to export poppy-substitute crops produced from the project area to Thailand.

Before conclusion, Col San Pwint said that fish, poultry and pig are being bred in the region in the livestock breeding sector for distributing them to the households of the villages.

Afterwards, Chennai District Lwetong Project Chief Executive Officer Mr Donnada Diskul, in-charge of the Thai side in Yaungkha Village Project, reported on arrangements for cooperation in education, health, agriculture and livestock breeding sectors related to the project.

Next, local national race leader U Pau Yu Chan presented fruit baskets to Commander Maj-Gen Khin Zaw and Lt-Gen Picharnmeth Muangmar of the Thai side in Yaungkha Village.

Then, Deputy Minister Brig-Gen Khin Maung handed over seeds of crops for local people to U Pau Yu Chan.

Commander Maj-Gen Khin Zaw and guests viewed agriculture and livestock breeding tasks in the compound of the school and the display of fruits produced from the area.

Then, Commander Maj-Gen Khin Zaw and Lt-Gen Picharnmeth Muangmar of Thailand formally opened the stone inscriptions to mark the opening of the hospital.

Next, the commander and party visited around the hospital — MNA

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