Senior General Than Shwe receives Vice-Chairman of CPPCC Mr Luo Haocai

YANGON, 23 Feb—Chairman of the State Peace and Development Council of the Union of Myanmar Senior General Than Shwe received visiting Vice-Chairman of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) and Vice-President of the Chinese Association for International Understanding (CAIFU) Mr Luo Haocai at the Pyithu Hluttaw this morning.

Also present at the call were Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt, member of the State Peace and Development Council General Thura Shwe Mann, Secretary-2 of the State Peace and Development Council Lt-Gen Thein Sein, Minister for Foreign Affairs U Win Aung, Deputy Minister U Khin Maung Win, Director-General of the State Peace and Development Council Office Lt-Col Pe Nyan, and Director-General of Protocol Department Thura U Aung Htet.

Vice-Chairman of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) and Vice-President of the Chinese Association for International Understanding (CAIFU) Mr Luo Haocai was accompanied by Vice-President of the Political Affairs Committee of CPPCC and CAIFU Mr Li Beihai and Chinese Ambassador Mr Li Jinjun.

At the call, Senior General Maung Aye, Chairman of the State Peace and Development Council, Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Commander-in-Chief (Army) Vice-Senior General Maung Aye, accompanied by Secretary-1 of the State Peace and Development Council Lt-Gen Soe Win, members of the State Peace and Development Council Lt-Gen Ye Myint, Lt-Gen Aung Htwe, Lt-Gen Tha Tha Thura Tin Aung Myint Oo, Lt-Gen Kyaw Win and Lt-Gen Tin Aye, Commander-in-Chief (Navy) Rear-Admiral Soe Tin, Commander-in-Chief (Air) Maj-Gen Myat Hein, Chairman of Mandalay Division Peace and Development Council Commander of Central Command Maj-Gen Ye Myint, Chairman of Shan State (North) Peace and Development Council Commander of North-East Command Maj-Gen Myint Hlaing, senior militia Vice-Senior General Maung Aye and party heard a report presented by Minister for Industry-1 U Aung Tun presented by Minister for Industry-1 U Aung Tun and party inspected bio-medical research work being carried out at the department, research work on common diseases stricken in Upper Myanmar and health problems. Next, Acting Director-General of MRD (Upper Myanmar) Dr Thein Tun reported to Vice-Senior General Maung Aye and party on location of MRD (Upper Myanmar), aims of establishment of the department, strength of staff, organizational set-up and appointment of staff, progress in construction of buildings for the department, research work being carried out at the department and cultivation of herbal plants.

In response to the report, Vice-Senior General Maung Aye gave instructions on the salient points in conducting the research work in Upper Myanmar. Next, Acting Director-General of MRD (Upper Myanmar) Dr Thein Tun reported to Vice-Senior General Maung Aye and party on location of MRD (Upper Myanmar) and greeted service personnel there. After that, Vice-Senior General Maung Aye and party inspected bio-medical library, electronic library and reading room.

Collection of herbal plants, research work on malaria, TB, diabetes, hypertension and dengue haemorrhagic fever and reproductive health and socio-medical research work are being carried out at the department. At the briefing hall of Pharmaceutical Factory Project (PyinOoLwin),Anisakhan Airport

Emergence of the State Constitution is the duty of all citizens of Myanmar Naing-Ngan.
**Towards speedy implementation of Myanmar-China Economic Cooperation Agreements**

In accordance with its independent and active foreign policy, the Union of Myanmar is cooperating with all the nations in the world, especially those in the southeast Asian region, in every field. Moreover, being a member of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), it is trying to promote social, cultural and economic development of the region in cooperation with the other members of the association as well as her other neighbours.

The Union of Myanmar has signed agreements on bilateral economic cooperation with her neighbours. During the State visits by Head of State Senior General Than Shwe to the Republic of China and by Chinese leaders Mr Jiang Zemin and Mr Hu Jintao to the Union of Myanmar, agreements on economic cooperation were inked.

The Sino-Myanmar relations have been flourishing satisfactorily and the People’s Republic of China has rendered assistance to work for the development of the Union of Myanmar. As the Republic of China has taken measures to promote economy and trade with the Union of Myanmar, the trade volume between the two nations increased by 30 per cent in 2002.

Now the committees for speedy implementation of bilateral agreements have been formed. The meeting of the Leading Committee for Implementation of Myanmar-China Economic Agreements was held in Yangon on 21 February and Chairman of the Leading Committee Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt delivered an address on the occasion.

The Prime Minister said in his address that ministries concerned were to report on the work being done and measures to be undertaken. Some agreements have been successfully implemented and it is necessary to systematically carry out the others.

Therefore, we would like to call upon all the ministries concerned to work in concert for the speedy implementation of Myanmar-China Economic Cooperation Agreements in the interests of both nations.
Oil pipeline attacked in southern Iraq

BAGHDAD, 23 Feb—An oil pipeline was sabotaged in southern Iraq while deadly violence flared in the north, as the war-torn country awaited the release Monday of the UN’s findings on the best way forward.

A series of explosions were heard in the vicinity of Baghdad airport late Sunday but the cause was not immediately known, said a US airforce spokeswoman at the facility used as a military base.

As the debate over Iraq’s future rages amid fears of a civil war, US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld warned on his way to the Gulf.

In the first attack of its kind in the south since the collapse of Saddam Hussein’s regime last spring, an oil pipeline was targeted near Karbala, 110 kilometres (70 miles) from Baghdad, an official Iraqi source said.

The blast on the Kirkuk-Baghdad-Basra pipeline set off a fire around the site of the attack, and thick black smoke could be seen billowing from kilometres (miles) around.

Saboteurs have frequently targeted oil pipelines in oil-rich northern Iraq, where a gunbattle on Saturday night left one Iraqi dead and another seriously wounded when they attacked the home of a police chief, a police officer said.—Internet

Central Asian countries to strengthen security cooperation

ALMATY, 23 Feb—Members of the Central Asian Cooperation Organization agreed Friday that deepening regional security cooperation is a priority for the organization.

Foreign ministers of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan attended the one-day ministerial meeting and discussed the urgency and importance of security cooperation in Central Asia.

The ministers indicated that Central Asia is facing potential threats from extremist religious organizations and drug smuggling.

The Central Asian Cooperation Organization will work together with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Commonwealth of Independent States’ Collective Security Pact Organization to maintain regional security, the ministers said.

The Central Asian Cooperation Organization was formed by the four countries in December 2002. It is a successor to the Central Asian Economic Union which was founded in 1993. MNA/Xinhua

US Court to decide Bush’s powers in Padilla case

WASHINGTON, 23 Feb—The US Supreme Court said on Friday it would decide whether President George W Bush has the power to order an American citizen seized on US soil held as an enemy combatant, another case arising from Washington’s war on terror.

Expanding its review of the government’s actions, the high court agreed to decide the case of Jose Padilla, who has been held since May 2002 as a suspect in an alleged al-Qaeda plot to detonate a radioactive “dirty bomb” in the United States.

His case involved fundamental constitutional questions about Bush’s powers as commander in chief. It has pitted the government’s national security arguments adopted after the September 11, 2001, attacks against concerns that civil liberties have been violated.

Padilla, a former Chicago gang member and convert to Islam, has been held in a military prison in Charleston, South Carolina, without any charges brought against him and without access to his lawyers.

The Pentagon said on February 11 it would allow him access to a lawyer, subject to appropriate security restrictions. Padilla’s lawyers said a meeting has yet to be arranged.

As part of its broad assertion of presidential authority, the Bush Administration has sought to sharply limit the role of federal judges to review the government’s decisions in the designation and treatment of enemy combatants.

The Justice Department appealed to the top court after a US appeals court in New York ordered Padilla’s release because Bush overstepped his authority. That ruling has been stayed, pending the appeal.

The high court already has agreed to decide a similar enemy combatant case involving Yaser Esam Hamdi, an American-born citizen and suspected Taliban soldier who was captured in November 2001 in Afghanistan.

By hearing both cases, the court could decide at the same time the rights of US citizens who have been captured abroad, like Hamdi, and those seized in this country, like Padilla. Both Hamdi and Padilla challenged the constitutionality of their open-ended detentions and being held incommunicado.

A US appeals court in Virginia upheld Hamdi’s detention.

In another case related to Washington’s terror war, the Supreme Court will decide whether foreigners captured abroad can go to American courts to challenge their incarceration at the US military base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

About 650 foreign nationals, also designated enemy combatants, are being held at the base as suspected al-Qaeda members or Taliban fighters. MNA/Reuters

Report says seven UK veterans of Iraq war “have committed suicide”

LONDON, 23 Feb—Seven British soldiers have died after apparently committing suicide since major military campaign against Iraq was over and 119 have been evacuated from the Gulf because of severe psychiatric problems, the British Telegraph newspaper quoted the Ministry of Defence as disclosing on Sunday.

A House of Commons adjourned Friday by running a front wheel back and forth a few times while a US airforce spokeswoman at the facility was talking about the Iraq war.

Britain, the staunchest US ally on Iraq, sent about 45,000 troops to the Gulf to join the Iraq war. There are still about 9,000 troops positioning in Iraq, most of them in the area of southern Iraqi city of Basra.

To date, 59 British servicemen have been killed on service in the Gulf since the Iraq war broke out on March 20 last year. MNA/Xinhua

“Spirit” rover explores Mars trench

PASADENA, 23 Feb—Spirit rover manoeuvred its arm within a Mars trench on Saturday to search for signs of water, NASA scientists said.

The rover took pictures on the wall and floor of the trench with a microscopic imager on its arm and placed the Moessbauer spectrometer in position to read the mineral composition of the soil on the trench floor, said Spirit Mission Manager Jim Erickson.

Spirit dug the 3-inch-deep trench on Friday by running a front wheel back and forth over a stretch of ground in a depression.

It would further investigate the trench with its alpha particle X-ray spectrometer on Sunday and Monday. After that, it will march for a crater called “Bonneville”, about 445 feet away.

On the other side of Mars, Opportunity rover has brought itself 13 inches closer to a rock called “El Capitan” on Saturday, which would allow its arm to be better poised for the use of the rock abrasion tool over the next four or five days.

It was the first time for Opportunity to use its rock abrasion tool. MNA/Xinhua

Oil pipeline attacked in southern Iraq

IRAQI Ali Kassem lies in a hospital bed in Baghdad after a roadside bomb exploded near his car, apparently intended to strike against a US military convoy which passed by moments earlier on 21 Feb. 2004.—AFP

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It was the first time for Opportunity to use its rock abrasion tool. MNA/Xinhua
Chinese President pledges to further ties with Republic of Congo

BEIJING, Feb. 23 — Chinese President Hu Jintao said on Sunday that his country is willing to make joint efforts with the Republic of Congo in further expanding political exchanges and cooperation in various fields between the two countries.

At the meeting between the two leaders, Hu Jintao said the two countries have already established diplomatic relations and established each other's understanding and support in international affairs.

China is willing to join hands with the Congolese side to further expand political exchanges and deepen cooperation in all fields, push for new development in bilateral friendship and cooperation.

In his message, the Congolese President said the two countries have made tremendous achievements in cementing and expanding their cooperation. The two countries are in agreement on international issues of great importance and this constitutes an impetus and reliable guarantee for the continuous development of their ties.

Ten percent of US casualties evacuated from Iraq have psychiatric conditions

LANDSTUHL (GERMANY), Feb. 23 — As many as 1 of every 10 soldiers from the war on terror evacuated to the Army's biggest hospital in Europe was sent there for mental problems.

Between 8 and 10 percent of nearly 12,000 soldiers from the war on terror, mostly from the Landstuhl Regional Medical Centre in Germany had "psychiatric or behavioural health issues," according to the commander of the hospital, Col. Rhonda Cornum.

That means about 1,000 soldiers were evacuated for mental problems. The hospital has treated 11,754 soldiers from the war on terror, with 9,651 from Iraq and the rest from Afghanistan, according to data released by the hospital.

"We certainly have seen an average, I would say, of 8 to 10 percent of our casualties have some psychiatric or behavioural health issues for which they were evacuated," Cornum told United Press International in an interview at the hospital.

Number excludes soldiers who arrived at Landstuhl for physical injuries who also suffer from mental problems. It also excludes soldiers who do not realize they suffer from mental trauma until they returned to the United States.

A veterans' advocate called the data an "alarming" barometer of the psychological toll from the war in Iraq.

"It is an incredible sum and an alarming number," said Wayne Smith, an adviser to the Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation. Smith said the number reflects only a fraction of the mental toll from Iraq.

He said soldiers need better help in Iraq and when they return. "This is a wake-up call," Smith said.

Landstuhl, located just south of Ramstein Air Base, is the largest US hospital outside the United States. It is the main transfer point and treatment center for soldiers medically evacuated from Iraq, Kuwait or Afghanistan on their way back to the United States.

Soldier arriving from Iraq by plane at Ramstein are taken by bus up a winding road through the wooded hills overlooking the picturesque town of Landstuhl to the sprawling hospital complex.

An average of 35 soldiers each day arrive at Landstuhl — though 160 patients arrived after the bombing of the UN compound in Baghdad — for treatment in eight operating rooms or to stay in the 148-bed facility.

The nearly 2,000 medical staff includes an increase of 350 workers to help deal with soldiers from the war on terror. Some who are used, in part, to stabilize patients before sending them home, the average stay is just 4 days.

Cornum would not say how many soldiers from Iraq have required hospitalization in Landstuhl's 22-bed in-patient psychiatric facility. Twelve of those beds were occupied one day last week. Hospital data show that 2,489 of the soldiers who have arrived from Iraq have required some kind of in-patient medical care.

Dhaka filled with cocktail of toxic gases

DHAKA, Feb. 23 — People in the Bangladeshi capital are facing health hazards because of intensified air pollution during the dry season, which began two months ago.

According to the latest data provided by the department of environment, from December 2003 to February 2004, the air quality index value (AQVI), an indicator of the daily levels of pollution, ranged from 198 to 200, while an AQVI of above 100 is considered unhealthy.

Officials from the department attributed the high levels of air pollution in Dhaka mainly to vehicular emissions unlikely to improve till the monsoon.

The air in the city now has high levels of carbon monoxide, hydrocarbons, sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxides. Most gases are emitted by vehicles, brick kilns and industries.

Quamrul Islam Chowdhury, general secretary of the Environment Journalist Forum, told Xinhua last week that the government has prepared a campaign in the capital against plying of old vehicles which are emitting the most waste gas.

He said the government would request the government to ban the plying of old vehicles in the city streets and make urban dwellers more conscious about their health hazards due to highly polluted air here.
NO LET-UP IN ANTI-OCCUPATION ATTACKS

A member of the coalition forces, centre, frisks an Iraqi at the entrance to their base which is under construction in Samawa, 360 kilometres southeast of Baghdad, Iraq, on Saturday, 21 Feb, 2004. —Internet

Lithuanian soldiers secure a multinational base in Hilla after two explosives-packed trucks were detonated at the base killing at least seven Iraqis and wounding dozens including 58 coalition troops recently. —INTERNET

Iraqis remove the remains of a civilian car which was attacked near Haswa, 40 kilometres (25 miles) south of Baghdad, on Saturday, 21 Feb, 2004. Guerrillas fired on a US military convoy killing an Iraqi translator and wounding four American soldiers, the US command in Baghdad said. —INTERNET

A US army tank secures a street of Baghdad recently. —INTERNET

A US Army convoy drives on a highway south of Kuwait City on Saturday, 21 Feb, 2004 on its way from Iraq under troops rotation programme. —INTERNET
Four US troops wounded, Iraqi killed in ambush

Baghdad, 23 Feb—Four US soldiers were wounded and their Iraqi translator was killed on Saturday when gunmen ambushed their convoy south of Baghdad, the US Army said.

“Four US soldiers were wounded and their Iraqi translator was killed in a small arms fire ambush 14 miles south of Iskandariya (near Baghdad). Two civilian type SUVs were destroyed in the attack,” a US military spokeswoman said.

A guerilla campaign of bombings and shootings has killed 378 American soldiers since the war began in March.

China to blast two people into space in 2005

Beijing, 23 Feb—China, which last year became the third nation to blast a man into space, plans to send two astronauts up on a five-to-seven-day mission in 2005 and later build a space station, state television reported on Saturday.

Wang Yongqing, chief designer of the nation’s secretive manned space programme, told CCTV preparations for the launch of Shenzhou VII, Shenzhou VIII and so on, carry out spacewalks, make space dockings and set up a space laboratory,” Wang told CCTV.

He said astronauts would stay aboard the orbiting lab for short periods, with spacecraft ferrying them back and forth. Eventually China would launch a larger space station with better experimental capabilities, he said.

Wang’s remarks were broadcast just a day after he and another scientist received China’s annual State Science and Technology award from President Hu Jintao, along with a cash prize of five million yuan (605,000 US dollars). — MNA/Reuters

Bilingual atlas on natural disasters in China published

Beijing, 23 Feb—A Chinese-English atlas on natural disasters in China, the first of its kind in the country, has been published by the Science Publishing House here.

The Systematic Atlas of Natural Disasters in China contains 400 maps and 50 charts with information on the formation, general features and regional distribution of major natural disasters which have taken place across the country in the past 500 years. It was compiled by the Centre for Research on Natural Disaster Risks and Insurance attached to Beijing Normal University. The centre was jointly established by the university and the Swiss Reinsurance Co in 1999.

“The atlas was completed on the basis of a database on calamities, developed by a key research lab at the Department of Environmental Evolution and Education in Natural Disasters of Beijing Normal University,” said a spokesman for the centre at a function specially organized here Friday to mark the publication of the atlas.

“The atlas will be a great help for insurance companies to develop practical policies against natural disaster risks, the spokesman noted. — MNA/Xinhua

Russia says Iraqi elections almost impossible under US

Moscow, 23 Feb — Russia said Saturday that nationwide elections in Iraq would be almost impossible while the Arab country remains occupied by the US-led military coalition.

“Such elections will require in-depth preparation by all sides and it is very hard to imagine conducting such preparations under conditions of occupation of Iraq,” Deputy Foreign Minister Yuri Fedotov was quoted as saying by the Interfax news agency.

However, Fedotov emphasized that “there is no alternative to nationwide elections in Iraq and they will be held sooner or later”.

Fedotov made the statement after the US civil administrator for Iraq Paul Bremer, said earlier Saturday that it would be impossible to organize elections in Iraq for another year to 15 months, citing the absence of electoral laws and voter rolls as the main obstacles to speedy elections.

Fedotov reiterated Russia’s doubts about the validity of the agreement signed between the US Administration in Iraq and the temporary Iraqi authorities on gradual transfer of power to the Iraqi people. — MNA/Xinhua

China tries to fight rats with contraceptive

Chengdu, 23 Feb—In this capital city of southwest China’s Sichuan Province, some people were busy preparing a special kind of food for rats Saturday, by mixing peanuts with fluid that looks like egg white.

The fluid is nothing but a kind of contraceptive for rats, said Ye Qinglin, a scientist with the city’s disease control centre. Male rats will lose their capability to reproduce within two months after eating the contraceptive, Ye noted.

The rat-use contraceptive has passed official appraisal, and it will be produced in batches this March.

Traditionally, people kill rats with raticides, but the newly-developed contraceptive is aimed at reducing the numbers of the animal, said Zhao Erbi, a member of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, who attended the appraisal. — MNA/Xinhua
41st Myanma Gems Emporium soon to be held

Myint Lwin

Myanmar is rich in land and water resources. Out of the natural resources, Myanmar gems and jewellery, jade and pearl are in high demand in the world market. A public transport company under the Ministry of Mines has been holding Myanma Gems Emporia since 1964 to sell more Myanmar gems and jewellery that are popular in the world and earn more foreign currency, and the emporium has now entered its 41st anniversary in 2004.

Progress has been made in the holding of Myanmar Gems Emporium. The Myanma Gems Enterprise is taking systematic efforts of the Myanma Gems Emporium Central Committee under the Ministry of Mines and Myanma Gems Enterprise. Arrangements are being made to hold the 41st Myanma Gems Emporium from 13 to 21 March.

Foreign citizens who are engaged in the gems mining in accord with rules and regulations of Myanmar Gems Law and Myanmar nationals who are engaged in the sale of gems and jewellery in foreign currency in accord with rules and regulations prescribed will be allowed to attend the 41st Myanma Gems Emporium and buy gems and jewellery through competitive bidding.

The national gems entrepreneurs have been allowed to buy gems and jewellery through competitive bidding to enable them to meet with foreign gems merchants for comparative study and research. They are free to sell their gems and jewellery business abroad, to increase earning from the sale of gems and jewellery through competitive bidding and to carry out the sale of gems and jewellery in accord with the market-oriented economic system.

The Myanma Gems Enterprise is taking systematic measures to be able to sell gems and uncute jade owned by the national entrepreneurs during the time when the gems emporium is not held.

Gems mining was undertaken only by the State in the past. But, it is now being jointly undertaken by the State and the private companies, making the gems enterprise of the State develop more and more.

The Myanma Gems Law was promulgated for development of Myanmar gems business. The gems enterprise benefits not only the State but also the gems entrepreneurs.

Jade lots with a floor price of euro 10,000 and above and jade lots with a floor price from euro 1,000 to 9999 where an inferno in the Mont Blanc tunnel killed 48 people and injured nearly 200 others.

There are about 500,000 households using electricity in Yangon. Thus, saving a four-foot fluorescent lamp everyday by each household amounts to saving power that is equal to the capacity a 20-megawatt power station can supply.

Fire alert briefly shuts French Alpine tunnel

PARIS, 23 Feb: French authorities briefly shut an Alpine tunnel on Saturday when they saw smoke spewing from a truck, a region where an inferno in the Mont Blanc tunnel killed 39 people in 1999.

The blaze was so intense that many of the victims and their cars were burned to near cinders.

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France and Italy. The Mont Blanc disaster in March 1999 was caused by a Belgian-registered Volvo truck full of flour and margarine catching fire.

The blaze was so intense that many of the victims and their cars were burned to near cinders.

In Saturday’s alert, there were just four or five cars in the Frejus tunnel at the time, and the truck did not go up in flames, the spokesman said. — MNA/Reuters

59th Anniversary Armed Forces Day Objectives

— To strive hand in hand with the people for successful realization of the State’s seven-point policy program
— To crush internal and external destructive elements hindering the stability and progress of the State through people’s militia strategy
— To implement border area development tasks and the five rural development tasks hand in hand with the entire people
— To build up a strong and efficient Tatmadaw to uphold ‘Our Three Main National Causes’

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

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

Runaway bus kills five in Dublin

DUBLIN, 23 Feb — A double-decker bus mounted a pavement in central Dublin on Saturday, killing five people and injuring nearly 20 others, seven of them seriously, police said.

The bus, which was not carrying any passengers at the time, appeared to have run out of control, swerving onto the pavement and ploughing into a queue of several people waiting to board another bus, a police spokesman said. The dead were three women and two men.

A public transport spokesman said it was the worst in the history of Dublin Bus, which runs a fleet of 1,100 vehicles and carries half a million passengers a day.

“Our never we’ve never had anything on this scale before,” said spokesman Grainne Mackin told reporters.

“Will be carrying out a full investigation as soon as we can,” she said.

The accident happened beside Dublin’s River Liffey, at a bus stop directly in front of the landmark Clarence Hotel, owned by members of Irish rock group U2.

Most of those injured or injured were waiting at the bus stop, Mackin said, adding that no children had been hurt. The drivers of both buses were taken to hospital.

Several people were trapped under the bus until emergency crews arrived at the scene.

Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern, who arrived shortly after announcement directly to speak to fire and ambulance crews, described the scene as “terrible carnage” and “a dreadful sight”, and offered his sympathies to the families of the dead and injured.

MNA/Reuters

Libya extradites people-trafficking Madame to Italy

Rome, 23 Feb — Libya extradited to Italy one of the main traffickers of illegal immigrants from North Africa, Italian authorities said on Saturday.

“Madame Gennet”, an Eritrean citizen whose real name is Gnan Tewelde Barhe, was flown into Rome’s main Fiumicino Airport, a police statement said. Authorities believe “Madame Gennet” charged immigrants up to 800 US dollars for passage to the Italian islands of Lampedusa — which is closer to North Africa than to mainland Italy — and Sicily.

— MNA/Reuters

Tale of two cities

THE NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR Tuesday, 24 February, 2004

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— MNA/Reuters
Vice-Senior General Maung Aye inspects…
(from page 16)

Later, Chief Engineer (Airport) U Tun Paw of Public Works reported on survey work for extension of the runway to Vice-Senior General Maung Aye and party.

Minister for Construction Maj-Gen Saw Tun gave a supplementary report.

Next, Director of Mandalay Division Irrigation Department U Aye Thein reported on creeks flowing near the airport and arrangements being made to build spillway.

After giving necessary instructions, Vice-Senior General Maung Aye inspected the runway of the airport.

The runway is 4,450 feet long and 200 feet wide and it is of granite type. Arrangements are being made for turning the runway into a concrete one to enable the 737-400 jets to touch down. — MNA

Forestry Minister arrives back from Malaysia

Yangon, 23 Feb — A Myanmar delegation led by Minister for Forestry Brig-Gen Thein Aung attended the 7th Ministerial Meeting on Bio-diversity Conservation held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The minister attended the meeting held at Pan-Pacific Hotel, Kuala Lumpur on 18 February and Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister Dato Sri Mohd Najib Tun Adbul Razak made an opening speech.

The meeting continued on 19 February and Minister Brig-Gen Thein Aung presented a report on scientific assessment of bio-diversity, technical cooperation and exchange, sharing the benefit of bio-diversity, importance of bio-diversity in socio-economic development of developing countries, extension establishment of natural conservation areas in the nation and systematic management of forestry.

During his stay in Malaysia, Minister Brig-Gen Thein Aung met with Minister of Natural Resources and Environment of Thailand at Pan-Pacific Hotel and discussed matters related to establishment of natural conservation areas along border of the two countries and cooperation for development of wood-based industries.

Minister Brig-Gen Thein Aung on 21 February arrived back at Yangon International Airport where he was welcomed by Minister for Livestock and Fisheries Brig-Gen Maung Maung Thein, Minister at the Prime Minister’s Office Maj-Gen Thein Swe, Deputy Minister for Forestry Brig-Gen Tin Naing Thein and officials. — MNA

Vice-Senior General Maung Aye inspects the scale-model of the Medical Research Department (Upper Myanmar) in PyinOoLwin. — MNA

Vice-Senior General Maung Aye inspects the scale-model of the Medical Research Department (Upper Myanmar) in PyinOoLwin. — MNA

Vice-Senior General Maung Aye at the Medical Research Department (Upper Myanmar) in PyinOoLwin. — MNA

Vice-Senior General Maung Aye at the Medical Research Department (Upper Myanmar) in PyinOoLwin. — MNA

Vice-Senior General Maung Aye hears a report on health matters presented by Minister for Health Dr Kyaw Myint at the Medical Research Department (Upper Myanmar) in PyinOoLwin. — MNA

Application Systems Engineer Examination Course

Yangon, 23 Feb — Under the arrangement of the Myanmar Computer Federation and the Association for Overseas Technical Scholarship (AOTS), Application Systems Engineer Examination Course (MYAE) was opened this morning at MICT Park in Hline Township. A total of 47 trainees are attending the course. — MNA
YANGON, 23 Feb — Members of Myanmar Women’s Affairs Federation met members of Kachin State Organization for Women’s Affairs in Myitkyina on 14 February. Present were Chairman of Kachin State Peace and Development Council Commander of Northern Command Maj-Gen Maung Maung Swe, Vice-President of MWAF Daw Khin Lay Thet, General Secretary Professor Daw Khin Aye Win, Patron of Kachin State Organization for Women’s Affairs Daw Tin Tin Nwe, Secretary of Kachin State Peace and Development Council Lt-Col Maung Myo and officials. Vice-President Daw Khin Lay Thet explained about organizational set-up of the federation and Commissioner U Ye Myint and officials for formation of district and township organizations for women’s affairs. On 15 February, Daw Khin Lay Thet and General Secretary Professor Daw Khin Aye Win explained about functions of the federation. On behalf of wellwisher Lt-Col Khin Latt and Daw Khin Khin Win (Nilar Win Garment Factory) of Yangon, Head of Planning Department U Tha Doe presented clothes worth K 1.6 million for Kachin State Organization for Women’s Affairs Daw Tin Tin Nwe. Vice-President Daw Khin Lay Thet and officials accepted K 13.9 million donated by wellwishers for MWAF.

MNA

Vice-Senior General Maung Aye hears a report presented by Minister Maj-Gen Hla Myint Swe during inspection of Anisakhan Airport.

MNA

Ambassador of Brunei Pehin Dato Haji Hussin bin Haji Salamaan and wife welcome Minister for Foreign Affairs U Win Aung and wife at reception to mark the National Day of Brunei Darussalam. — MNA

MIFFA Chairman leaves for Bangkok

YANGON, 23 Feb—Chairman of Myanmar International Freight Forwarders’ Association U Aung Kyaw Min left here by air for Thailand on 23 February to attend GMS Cross-border Transport Agreement (Stage 2) Workshop on Annexes and Protocols sponsored by UNESCAP to be held in Bangkok, Thailand from 24 to 27 February 2004.

MNA

Goodwill delegation visits Drugs Elimination Museum

YANGON, 23 Feb—Members of delegation led by Vice-Chairman of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) and Vice-President of the Chinese Association for International Understanding (CAIFU) Mr Luo Haocai on a goodwill visit here at the invitation of Secretary-2 of the State Peace and Development Council Lt-Gen Thein Sein, accompanied by Chinese Ambassador Mr Li Jinjun and officials arrived at Drugs Elimination Museum at the corner of Hanthawady Road and Kyundaw Road in Kamayut Township this morning. Deputy Director of Drugs Elimination Museum Police Col Se Maung and officials explained Myanmar’s efforts for elimination of narcotic drugs in successive periods. The guests observed booths of drugs control under Myanmar kings, documentary photos of Operation Moe Hein Phase-6 of Head of State Senior General Than Shwe, documentary photos of Operation Moe Hein launched by the Tatmadaw, scale models of opium refining camps seized by the Tatmadaw and documentary photos on the ground floor. Vice-Chairman Mr Luo Haocai signed in the visitors’ book of the museum.

MNA

Cash donation for Shwephonepwint Pagoda renovation

YANGON, 23 Feb — The 1st cash donation ceremony for the third all-round renovation of Shwephonepwint Pagoda in Pazundaung Township will be held soon. Those wishing to donate cash may dial 290425, 245595, 245615, 245609, 245619, 245624. Among the two renovation tasks, Sattawya prayer hall of the pagoda has been renovated. The renovation of the Payagyikosu prayer hall, the second task, is being launched. Moreover, the new prayer hall will be built at the southern part of the pagoda.

MNA

Vice-President of MWAF explains functions of MWAF

YANGON, 23 Feb—Members of Myanmar Women’s Affairs Federation met members of Kachin State Organization for Women’s Affairs in Myitkyina on 14 February. Present were Chairman of Kachin State Peace and Development Council Commander of Northern Command Maj-Gen Maung Maung Swe, Vice-President of MWAF Daw Khin Lay Thet, General Secretary Professor Daw Khin Aye Win, Patron of Kachin State Organization for Women’s Affairs Daw Tin Tin Nwe, Secretary of Kachin State Peace and Development Council Lt-Col Maung Myo and officials. Vice-President Daw Khin Lay Thet explained about organizational set-up of the federation and Commissioner U Ye Myint and officials for formation of district and township organizations for women’s affairs. On 15 February, Daw Khin Lay Thet and General Secretary Professor Daw Khin Aye Win explained about functions of the federation. On behalf of wellwisher Lt-Col Khin Latt and Daw Khin Khin Win (Nilar Win Garment Factory) of Yangon, Head of Planning Department U Tha Doe presented clothes worth K 1.6 million for Kachin State Organization for Women’s Affairs Daw Tin Tin Nwe. Vice-President Daw Khin Lay Thet and officials accepted K 13.9 million donated by wellwishers for MWAF.

MNA

Vice-Chairman CPPCC and Vice-President of CAIFU Mr Luo Haocai and delegation visit Drugs Elimination Museum.

MNA

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MNA
Tasks of Union Day Management Committee reviewed

YANGON, 23 Feb—A meeting to review the tasks of the 57th Anniversary Union Day Observance Management Committee was held at the Pyithu Hluttaw building this afternoon.

Chairman of the Management Committee Chairman of Yangon Division Peace and Development Council Commander-in-Chief Engineer U Kyaw Lin (Kalewa) spoke on the occasion. He said the Union Day was successfully observed according to the plans laid down. Various sub-committees reported on work done.

Next, officials of various sub-committees attended the Union Day ceremony in accord with the instructions of Chairman of the Union Day Observance Central Committee Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt. He stressed the importance of unity among the national races and consolidate Union Spirit.

Mr. U Hla Thaung Myint and Su-Chin of Myanmar Pearls Enterprise also inspected the quality pearls put on display at the 41st Myanmar Gems Emporium which will be held from 13 to 21 March 2004. MNA

Myanmar delegation to attend ASEAN transport meeting

YANGON, 23 Feb — Myanma delegation led by Deputy Minister for Transport Col Nyan Tun Aung left here by air today for Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam to attend the first ASEAN senior transport officials meeting there. The meeting will be held from 24 to 26 February 2004.

The delegation was seen off at Yangon International Airport by Minister for Transport Maj-Gen Hla Myint Swe.

The delegation members are Director General of Road Administration Department U Hla Thaung Myint and Superintending Engineer of Public Works U Khin Maung also left on the same flight. The minister next inspected the YIA Extension project.

Minister inspects Myittha Bridge (Kalewa) construction

YANGON, 23 Feb—Minister for Construction Maj-Gen Saw Tun yesterday afternoon inspected the construction of Myittha Bridge (Kalewa).

At the briefing hall, Senior Engineer U Kyaw Lin and Chief Engineer (Bridge) U Khin Maung Aye reported to the minister on future tasks.

Next, the minister said that as the bridge will be the main one on Moebywa-Yagyi-Kalewa Road, border trade will increase rapidly on completion of it. Moreover, it will link Kalewa, Kale and towns on the Chin hills, he added. He also gave instructions on timely completion of the bridge, work-site safety and minimizing loss and wastage, and fulfilled the needs.

Minister inspects quality pearls

YANGON, 23 Feb—A total of 117,124 quality pearls of Myanmar Tasaki Co Ltd were put on display at the Myanmar Pearls Enterprise in PyinOoLwin. MNA

Minister for Mines Brig-Gen Ohn Myint and Deputy Minister U Myint Thein inspected the quality pearls and they were conducted round by Managing Director of Myanmar Pearls Enterprise U Maung Toe and officials of the company.

Next, the minister gave instructions on production of more quality pearls and penetration of world pearl market.

The weight of 117,124 quality pearls is $2965.5 momme and those pearls are worth euro 6 million. The quality pearls will be put on sale at the 41st Myanmar Gems Emporium which will be held from 13 to 21 March 2004.

Minister inspects zinc smelting plant

YANGON, 23 Feb—Deputy Minister for Mines U Myint Thein inspected the zinc smelting plant and also the zinc oxide factory of Myanmar Ahtut Ahteik Company in Namtu on 20 February. The next day, he observed coal production at Sanlaung coal mine. In the afternoon, he inspected mining of gypsum, the essential requirement in producing cement, in Hsipaw. He also observed the production process of the No 1 Steel Mill in PyinOoLwin.

Mr. U Myint Thein inspected the quality pearls put on display at the 41st Myanmar Gems Emporium which will be held from 13 to 21 March 2004. MNA

Erection of the main tower of the Myittha Bridge (Kalewa) is near completion. — MNA
Japan calls for active UN engagement in Iraqi reconstruction

Tokyo, 23 Feb — Japanese Foreign Minister Yoriko Kawaguchi met with visiting UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan here on Sunday, calling for active engagement on the part of the United Nations in Iraq's reconstruction.

Annan, who arrived here Saturday for a five-day visit to Japan, told reporters after the meeting that unity in the international community is essential for Iraq's reconstruction.

"Let me stress that international cooperation must be advanced to help and assist the Iraqi people regain their sovereignty and build a peaceful, democratic and stable Iraq," Annan said.

Kawaguchi said at the Press conference that she stressed the importance of the UN engagement on the Iraqi issue while explaining Japan's financial assistance for the rehabilitation of Iraq.

Japan has said it hopes the United Nations will play an active role in the process of handing over power to the Iraqi people.

Annan told him Kawaguchi detailed about the results of an recent UN fact-finding mission led by his special envoy to Iraq, Lakhshad Brahimi, on Iraq's political situation.

The UN chief said a report on the matter will be issued Monday.

Kawaguchi also said that it will be difficult to hold direct general elections in Iraq before the proposed June 30 transfer of power to Iraqis by the US-led Coalition Provisional Authority, but that it is necessary to hand power over as scheduled.

According to Japanese Foreign Ministry, Kawaguchi and Annan also discussed a wide range of other issues, including UN reform, Afghanistan's reconstruction, and African development. On UN reform, Kawaguchi told Annan that the UN functions should be reformed to meet changes in the world.

Annan's visit is his first to Japan since January 2002, when he attended an international donor conference in Tokyo on Afghanistan reconstruction.

China to establish national botanical garden

BEIJING, 23 Feb — A world-class national botanical garden will be built in the northwest suburbs of this Chinese capital over the next five years.

The garden, to cover about 467 hectares, will merge two existing and neighboring botanical gardens at the foot of the Fragrant Hills, a scenic spot in the northwest suburbs of Beijing, namely, the Beijng Botanical Garden (BBG) under the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) and the Beijing Municipal Botanical Garden (BBMBG).

Three sections will be included in this national botanical garden, namely, an area for scientific research, an area for displaying plants bred by botanists in special and scientific ways, and an area for vegetation, nature scenes, and historical and cultural relics.

In fact, according to the blueprint for the national botanical garden, the garden will integrate the entire area of the Fragrant Hills into a whole, for the above-mentioned functions of the garden will be respectively shouldered by the BBG, BBMBG and Fragrant Hills Park.

Vajpayee says atmosphere conducive for talks with Pakistan

LUCKNOW, 23 Feb — With India and Pakistan chalkout- ing the time table for presidential talks to resolve outstanding issues, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee said Sunday the atmosphere was conducive for talks.

"There is a conducive atmosphere for holding a dialogue with Pakistan," Vajpayee who arrived here on two-day visit to his country's first president, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, on Sunday, told reporters at Amuri Airport.

About Indian cricket team's tour of Pakistan, he said the team was going there to play the game and not to fight a war.

"On Pakistan's invitation, the Indian cricketers are going there to play the game and not for any war," Vajpayee said in an apparent dig at those who opposed the team's tour of Pakistan.

The cricket team would tour Pakistan as scheduled, he said. MNA/PTI

“50 First Dates” reigns at N America box office for second week

LOS ANGELES, 23 Feb — Sony Pictures’ romantic comedy “50 First Dates" continued its reign for the second week at North America box office over the weekend, according to preliminary studio figures released Sunday.

The comedy, starring Adam Sandler and Drew Barrymore, is expected to rake in $28 million in the US this weekend, reported the box office tracker Exhibitor Relations Co Inc.

The take was more than twice the earnings of the closest competitor and boosted the film’s estimated North America gross in two weeks to 72.3 million dollars.

Walt Disney Pictures comedy "Confessions of a Teenage Drama Queen," which targeted at young girls, debuted in second place with about 9.2 million dollars, followed by "Miracle," which took in 8 million dollars.

Another new comedy, 20th Century Fox's "Well, I'm Coming to Moominport," took the fourth place with 7 million dollars, while the teen caper "Euripides" released by Dream Works wrapped up the Top Five with 6.6 million dollars.

MNA/Reuters

“Barbarian Invasions” wins top French movie award

Paris, 23 Feb — "The Barbarian Invasions", directed by Franco-Canadian Denys Arcand, won the Cesar award for best movie on Saturday in the French film capital, Hollywood on its opening day.

The film explores a left-wing professor’s reconciliation attempts on his deathbed with his stock trader.

Arcand became an international name when he made "The Decline of the American Empire".

France kept the annual Cesars ceremony this year with a line-up of mostly classic contenders for a top award which can only be in French-language features since a controversy by the French film academy a decade ago.

A Cesar vote for best foreign film went to Clint Eastwood’s "Mystic River", and a best movie award reserved for works from the 15-nation European Union was given to "Goodbye LENNY" by Wolfgang Becker.

The French awards took place on the heels of British BAFTA awards where the top prize went to "The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King", which is also among favorites for an Oscar next weekend but did not feature in the Paris lineup.

MNA/Reuters

Controversy swirls around British MMR vaccine study

LONDON, 23 Feb — A British MP on Saturday called for an independent inquiry into controversial research linking a triple vaccine for infants to autism after a medical journal said it should never have published the study.

The Lancet medical journal said it had learned of Schroeder arrives in Ankara

ANKARA, 23 Feb — German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder arrived here late Sunday, the first visit by a German head of government to Turkey since former Chancellor Helmut Kohl's visit in 1993.

Before his departure to Ankara, Schroeder said Turkey had achieved significant progress on the way to becoming a EU member due to reforms of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and Ankara can only rely on Germany's support for its membership efforts in the future.

Meanwhile, the German Chancellor also reaffirmed that Turkey is under an obligation to fulfill the Copenhagen criteria by the end of this year.

MNA/Xinhua

Boss of Italian Mafia "Ndrangheta arrested

Rome, 23 Feb — Italian police on Sunday arrested Orazio De Stefano, an important boss of Italy's most feared organized crime group the "Ndrangheta or Calabrian Mafia, in the southern city of Reggio Calabria.

De Stefano, who heads his family’s crime clan and is one of the "Ndrangheta" activitie s in the Calabrian capital, was arrested in a de luxe apartment in the centre, local media reported.

The 45-year-old Mafia boss had been on the run since he paid 100 million lire (66,615 US dollars) in bail in 1988, and was on the government’s list of most wanted gangsters.

Sunday’s arrest, which came just four days after the Italian government released the 70-year-old "Ndrangheta" chief thin Giuseppe Morabito, resulted from a two-year operation which alerted the Mafia to activities in the Calabria, in a de luxe apartment in the centre, local media reported.

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China’s longest submarine cable to send more power to south end

HAKOU, 23 Feb — China’s longest submarine electric cable with a high capacity will be laid through the south Qiongzhou Straits, connecting the power system of southern China’s Hainan Province with China Southern Power Grid. According to an official with Hainan’s development and reform department, the 34.7-kilometre-long submarine cable will extend from Xuyuan County’s Jiaotou Town, south China’s Guangdong Province, to Qiaotou Town, Hainan’s Chengmai County. Apart from the 900 million yuan (about 109 million US dollars) investment in the cable, another 1.7 billion yuan (about 206 million US dollars) would be invested in the construction of two 500-kilovolt transformer substations on both sides of the strait, said the official. Countries with advanced technologies of laying submarine cables like Italy, Norway and Japan have shown interest in the project. The Hainan power grid is an isolated one, whose installed capacity is merely 2.8 per cent of that of China Southern Power Grid, said the official.

New sea route to expand trade growth between China, Europe

TIANJAN, 23 Feb — A Cyprus-flagged ship laden with 2,500 containers left Tianjin Port late Thursday night for Britain via some European countries, marking the opening of a new route between China and Europe. Vessels running on the new route, which was opened by the China Shipping Corporation Ltd. (CSSL), will start from Tianjin and then stop at Qingdao, Shanghai, Ningbo, Hong Kong cities and ports in Malaysia, Malta, Belgium, Germany before reaching Britain.

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Win Mu Tim
M.A., H.G.P., D.B.L.
for PENTAX CORPORATION
P.O. Box 60, Yangon
Dated: 24 February 2004
India, GCC willing to work together to prevent terrorism

MUMBAI, 23 Feb — India and Gulf Cooperation Council countries have shown willingness to work together to ensure the security of terrorism in the region and double the bilateral trade turnover to 24 billion US dollars in next two-three years.

GCC has declared a war against terrorism which should be coordinated with international community, including India, for the purpose,” GCC chairman and Kuwait Commerce and Industry Minister Abdullah Abd al Hamad Al Attiyah told PTI after the conclusion of two-day India-GCC Industrial Conference here.

Terrorism is against the interest of Arab countries, which have taken stern steps against it, the minister, who is heading the Council as representative of Kuwait, said.

Official sources said the fight against terrorism is top on India’s agenda and the country would work with those who share the goal. New Delhi has already signed an extradition treaty with three GCC countries — Bahrain, United Arab Emirates and Oman — and is negotiating similar treaties with Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Qatar, the sources said.

Last week, GCC secretary-general Abdulhamid bin Hamad Al Attiyah, after meeting Deputy Prime Minister L K Advani, had said GCC condemns terrorism in all its forms and the international community should take all steps to effectively counter it.

On the growth in bilateral trade, Tawfeeq said the trade turnover of 12 billion US dollars is below potential and “we would like to double it over next two-three years.”

On the shift in the focus to India, Tawfeeq said the developed markets like US and European countries are saturated.

“We ignored Asia and see need to expand in the region including India.”

Tawfeeq said the huge Indian economy is growing at over 6-7 per cent making it an attractive investment destination.

The private sector should take a lead in bilateral trade and “governments should now pull back and work as a regular trader”, he said. Some GCC countries have signed free trade agreements with European countries and GCC-US, he said adding Indian companies and business could take benefit from these pacts.

German government wants new UN chemical agency in Bonn

BERLIN, 23 Feb — The German Government said on Sunday it was bidding to host a new United Nations agency to police trade in chemicals in Bonn, the capital of former West Germany.

The United Nations “Preliminary Informed Consent” convention secretariat,” it said. The secretariat is being housed temporarily at UN offices in Geneva and Rome.

A decision on a permanent location is due in September.

The German Government moved most of its ministries from Bonn to Berlin in 1999 and has since attracted to Bonn a number of UN secretariats, ranging in responsibility from global climate change to protection of the German Eagle.

MNA/Reuters

Putin urges improvement of army’s combat capability

MOSCOW, 23 Feb — Russian President Vladimir Putin on Sunday stressed the need to improve the Russian Army’s combat capability to ensure national security.

Speaking on the eve of Russia’s Fatherland Defender’s Day, Putin said Russia is reinforcing and upgrading the Armed Forces, particularly the strategic forces, to “reliably defend the country,” the Interfax news agency reported.

On strengthening national security is a fundamental condition for people’s peaceful and constructive life and development of domestic development.

At a meeting in the Kremlin to mark the festival, known as the Defender of the Fatherland Day in Soviet times, the President called on the Army to prepare itself to confront any threat “ranging from an act of terrorism or local conflict to a global challenge.”

He promised that Russia “does not have and cannot have aggressive objectives of imperial ambitions.”

“Russia’s defence potential is and remains a composite part of international relations and a guarantor of the country’s stability and prosperity that arises out of years of experience in dealing with chemicals, the German Environment Ministry said in a statement that Bonn would be the ideal location for its secretariat.

“Given the significance of the chemicals industry in Germany and the global responsibility that arises out of years of experience in dealing with chemicals, the German Environment Ministry said in a statement that Bonn would be the ideal location for its secretariat.

The Indian delegation also called on China to produce 1.7 billion tons of coal by 2003, or up 6.25 percent.

According to the forecast by the China Society of Coal Industry, coal consumption in China will continue to grow at about 12 per cent this year will increase due to the country’s strong economic growth.

New coal-fired power generating units with a combined capacity of 260 billion kilowatts will be operational this year, which translates into extra demand for 60 million tons to 70 million tons of coal, while the iron and steel sector will need an additional 30 million tons of coal, and the cement sector will consume an extra 10 million tons of coal. — MNA/Reuters

Few surprises in early SAG awards

LOS ANGELES, 23 Feb — Tim Robbins won best supporting actor for crime thriller “Mystic River” on Sunday at the Screen Actors Guild Awards and Renée Zellweger won supporting actress in Civil War drama “Cold Mountain,” giving both performers a major Oscar boost.

The Screen Actors Guild, or SAG, awards provide strong clues to potential winners of Oscars, the US film industry’s top honours which will be handed out next Sunday, as winners here often go on to claim Golden Globes.

SAG also gives out trophies for television and leading that group was a performance by the highly acclaimed Meryl Streep for cable TV network HBO’s “Angels in America,” about the AIDS epidemic in New York in the early 1980s.

Ongstge, Streep proved a poetically clear for the occasion and eschewed her off-the-cuff speech last month when she won the Golden Globe award for the same role and criticized President George W. Bush’s State of the Union speech for ignoring some national problems.

Also in TV categories, “Sex and the City,” which was airing its final episode on HBO on Sunday, won the SAG trophy for best ensemble cast in a TV comedy, and HBO drama “Six Feet Under” earned the award for best cast in a drama for the second consecutive year.

Tony Shalhoub won the SAG trophy for best actor in a TV comedy, and Megan Mullally earned the honour of best actress in a comedy. Keifer Sutherland earned the SAG award for best actor in a TV drama for “24,” and Frances Conroy was named best actress in a drama for HBO’s “Six Feet Under.”

Oscar voters at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences pick a best film, but SAG names only winners in acting categories, with the night’s top award going to a best ensemble cast.

In that group, Oscar front-runner “The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King” goes up against other Oscar hopefuls, “Mystic River” and horse racing tale “Seabiscuit.”

The two final nominees in that group are independent films “The Station Agent,” about a group of social misfits who form an unlikely bond, and “In America,” based on Irish director Jim Sheridan’s first year living in New York with his young family.

Putin urges improvement of army’s combat capability

22-month-old brothers Clarence, left, and Carl Aguirre, conjoined twins, are shown before surgery at The Children’s Hospital at Montefiore in New York, on 20 Feb, 2004. — Internet

Sino-Indian cooperation important for Asia’s stability, prosperity

BEIJING, 23 Feb — Observing that relations between India and China were vital for the stability and prosperity of the two countries, Asia and the world itself, a senior Chinese leader has said that “good momentum” in their ties should be maintained.

Developing Sino-Indian good-neighborly relations conforms to the fundamental interests of the two peoples, helps promote unity and cooperation among Asian nations, and benefits the stability and prosperity of the region and the world at large, Chinese State Councillor Tang Jiaxuan said here.

Tang, who oversees China’s foreign policy affairs, also stressed that China and India should maintain the good momentum of their bilateral ties, and realize the consensus reached by the heads of state accord-

ing to the declaration on the principles for relations and comprehensive cooperation between China and India. Tang made these remarks here on Thurs-

day while meeting R L Bhatia, co-chairman of the China-India eminent persons’ group (EPG), which concluded its fourth session here on a positive note.

Bhatia, former Junior Minister for External Affairs, said the EPG, as authorized by both governments, would continue its due role in promoting friendly cooperation between the two countries.

The fourth session was held in a very cordial atmosphere and both sides exchanged views in a frank manner on a range of issues and reached agreed on ways to further cement the bilateral ties, Bhatia told PTI.

He said the delegation members felt that India-China relations were developing at a faster pace after the historic visit to China by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee in June last year.

By exchanging views on cooperation in fields like politics, economy, culture, media, science and technology and putting out suggestions, the two sides promoted bilateral friendship and cooperation, he said.

The Indian delegation also called on Chi-

ese Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing and ex-
changed views with him on matters of com-
mon interest.

The EPG, which serves as an advisory agency for the two governments, was set up on a consensus reached between then Presi-

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23 Feb— Observing that relations between India and China were vital for

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Ronaldo double leads Real to win over Espanyol

MADRID, 23 Feb — Ronaldo scored twice to help leaders Real Madrid to a 4-2 victory at Espanyol in their Primera Liga match on Saturday.

The win gave Real 56 points from 25 matches and left Valencia, in second place on 51 points, needing a home win against fourth-placed Barcelona later on Saturday.

Real put away from the penalty spot in the 36th minute after Raul had gone down under little or no challenge from Espanyol keeper Erwin Lemmens, but the home side hit back with a penalty of their own from Raul Tamudo five minutes later.

Real regained the lead with an eye-catching goal from Roberto Carlos early in the second half, Raúl Bravo headed in a third after 66 minutes and Ronaldo danced past the keeper to score his 21st league goal of the season a few minutes later.

Albirex Niigata took advantage of some lazy Real defending to pull one back six minutes from time. Deportivo Coruna lost ground on the leaders when they were held to a goalless draw at Atletico Madrid.

Arsenal defeat Chelsea to take grip on title

LONDON, 23 Feb — Arsenal took a firm grip on the Premier League on Saturday with a 2-1 victory over Chelsea that dealt a hammer blow to the big-spending Londoners' title chances.

Arsenal came-from-behind to win at Stamford Bridge to extend their lead to seven points over Manchester United, who were held to a 1-1 draw at home by relegation-threatened Leeds United in another lunchtime kick-off.

Paul Scholes fired United ahead on 64 minutes but a fine header from Alan Smith three minutes later restored parity. It was Arsenal's second victory over Chelsea inside a week following their 2-1 FA Cup fifth round win on Sunday and Claudio Ranieri's side are now nine points adrift in fourth, facing a seemingly insurmountable task to reward billionaire owner Roman Abramovich with a title in his first season at the club.

Iceland striker Eidur Gudjohnsen, sent off on the hour for a second booking, fired Chelsea ahead after just 27 seconds but replies in the first 21 minutes from Patrick Vieira and Edu gave Arsenal the points.

Arsene Wenger's side, unbeaten in 26 league games since the start of the season, are now closing in on the record of 29 held by Leeds (1973-74) and Liverpool (1987-88).

In an explosive start, Chelsea went ahead from their very first attack, the goal stemming from Vieira losing possession to Geremi in midfield.

The Cameroonian surged down the left and his cross was flicked on by Adrian Mutu for Gudjohnsen, arrivating late, to convert at the far post.

Thierry Henry, recovered from a bruised foot, was off the mark with a speculative volley but the leaders were on level terms on 14 minutes.

Dennis Bergkamp was the provider, splitting Chelsea’s defence wide open with an incisive pass that Vieirakt in his stride to slot home his first league goal of the season.

Bayern close Bundesliga gap before facing Real

BERLIN, 23 Feb — Bayern Munich secured a morale-boosting win before facing Real Madrid by beating to a 1-0 home victory over Hamburg SV in the Bundesliga on Saturday.

The champions stayed second in the standings but closed the gap on Werder Bremen to seven points.

Werde, chasing a fourth German title and their first since 1993, were held to a 0.0 draw at Schalke 04. Argentine defender Martin Demichelis hit the winner with three minutes left in Bayern's last game before the opening leg of their Champions League first knockout round tie at home to Real Madrid on Tuesday.

Bayern were without goalkeeper Oliver Kahn and playmaker Michael Ballack, or as the ball back and a heavy cold respectively, but coach Ottmar Hitzfeld was hopeful both will return to face Real.

The home side showed little initiative in a dull game until substitute Franck Ribery scored in the box, marked down in the box, by striker Roli Santa Cruz to keep alive Bayern’s slim title hopes.

Third-placed VfB Stuttgart, who host Chelsea in the Champions League on Wednesday, prepared in poor fashion, dropping 10 points off the pace with a 1-0 defeat at lowly Kaiserslautern.

Poland notch easy 6-0 win over Faroe Islands

SAN FERNANDO (Spain), 23 Feb — Four goals from veteran striker Pawel Kryszalowicz powered an under-strength Poland to a 6-0 victory over the Faroe Islands in a friendly international in Spain on Saturday.

Kryszalowicz opened the scoring in the ninth minute and added three more inside four minutes before halftime, courtesy of good work from Wisiak Krakow forward Maciej Zuzwalski and a series of errors from the Faroe defence.

The Poles scored twice more in a pulsating derby on Saturday, a stunning 85th-minute strike from Paysan Hugueser to take a 1-1 draw against MSV Duisburg one point and 0.5 of four.


Seedorf strike earns Milan win in derby thriller

MILAN, 23 Feb — Serie A leaders AC Milan fought back from two goals down to beat city rivals Inter 3-2 in a pulsating derby on Saturday, a stunning 85th-minute strike from Clarence Seedorf completing the comeback.

Italian midfileder Dejan Stankovic put Inter ahead in the 15th minute from a direct corner and, after Brazilian striker Adriano had hit the post, Inter doubled their lead through a deflected 25-metre drive from Cristiano Zanetti.

Milan brought on Brazilian striker Jon Dahl Tomasson at the break and, after just 11 minutes, he pulled one back for the European champions, pouncing after Franceso Toldo had failed to hold on to a Seedorf shot.

A minute later, Milan equalised thanks to an outstanding solo goal from Brazilian Kaká, who picked up possession on the half-way line, raced towards the Inter defence unchallenged and fired home a pinpoint shot from the edge of the area.

The game looked to be heading for a draw until five minutes from time when Seedorf unleashed a spectacular shot from more than 25 metres out that rocketed into the top corner.

The result leaves Milan on 55 points, now eight clear of second-placed AS Roma, who play Siena at home on Sunday.

Third-placed Juventus, who have 46 points, are away to Bologna.
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WEATHER
Monday, 23 February, 2004
Summary of observations recorded at 09:30 hours MST:

During the past 24 hours, except for the isolated light rain in upper Sagaing Division, weather has been generally fair in the whole country. Night temperatures were (3°C) to (4°C) below normal in Chin, Kayin, Rakhine States, Yangon, Mandalay, Magway, Ayeyarwady and Taninthayi Divisions, (4°C) above normal in Mon State and about normal in the remaining areas. The significant night temperature was (1°C) in Hakha.

Maximum temperature on 22-2-2004 was 36.0°C (97°F). Minimum temperature on 23-2-2004 was 15.5°C (60°F). Relative humidity at 9:30 hrs MST on 23-2-2004 was 64%. Total sunshine hours on 22-2-2004 was 9.0 hours approx. Rainfall on 22-2-2004 was nil at Yangon Airport, Kaba-Aye and central Yangon. Total rainfall since 1-1-2004 was 3 mm (0.12 inch) at Yangon Airport and nil at Kaba-Aye and central Yangon. Maximum wind speed at Yangon (Kaba-Aye) was 10 mph from East at 12:30 hours M.S.T on 22-2-2004.

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

Forecast valid until evening of 24-2-2004: Expect for the possibility of isolated light rain in thunderstorms in Kachin State and Taninthayi Division, weather will be generally fair in the remaining areas. Degree of certainty is (40%).

For the state of Sittwe was with slight to moderate in Myanmar waters. Outlook for subsequent two days: Likelihood of isolated rain or thunderstorms in Northern Myanmar.


8.40 am  Summary of observations recorded at 09:30 hours MST:
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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

Prime Minister receives EU ambassadors
YANGON, 23 Feb — Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt received ambassadors of European Union (EU) led by Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to Myanmar Dr Klaus Peter Wild this afternoon at Komminyintha here.

Also present at the call were Minister for Foreign Affairs U Win Aung, Deputy Minister U Khin Maung Win and Director-General of the Protocol Department Thura U Aung Htet. — MNA

Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt receives Vice-Chairman-1 of the New Mon State Party Naing Htaw Mon and Vice-Chairman-2 Naing Raw Sa and party. — MNA

Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt receives Vice-Chairman-1 of the New Mon State Party Naing Htaw Mon and Vice-Chairman-2 Naing Raw Sa and party. — MNA

Vice-Senior General Maung Aye
Vice-Senior General Maung Aye hears a report on Pharmaceutical Factory Project in Pyin Oo Lwin presented by Minister U Aung Thaung. — MNA

Vice-Senior General Maung Aye inspects...
(from page 1)

Next, Managing Director of Myanma Pharmaceutical Industries U Myint Oo reported on requirement of water, electric power and energy, tablets, capsules, medical powder and lotion to be produced on completion of the project, sanitation measures and progress of construction tasks.

Vice-Senior General Maung Aye gave necessary instructions to officials.

Afterwards, Vice-Senior General Maung Aye and party inspected already-completed buildings and measures being taken for installation of machinery.

Next, Vice-Senior General Maung Aye and party proceeded to Anisakhon Airport where Minister for Transport Maj-Gen Hla Myint Swe reported on the brief history of the airport, existing runway and arrangements being made for extension of the runway.

(See page 8)

Prime Minister receives national race leaders of New Mon State Party

YANGON, 23 Feb — Chairman of the Work Committee for Development of Border Areas and National Races Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt received Vice-Chairman-1 of the New Mon State Party Naing Htaw Mon and Vice-Chairman-2 Naing Raw Sa and party at Zeyathiri Beikman on Komminyintha here at 5 pm today.

Also present were Minister for Mines Brig-Gen Ohn Myint, Minister for Livestock and Fisheries Brig-Gen Maung Maung Thein, Minister for Forestry Brig-Gen Thein Aung, Ministers at the Prime Minister’s Office Maj-Gen Thein Swe, Deputy Minister for Home Affairs Brig-Gen Phone Swe, Director-General of the State Peace and Development Council Office Lt-Col Pe Nyein, Director-General of the Government Office U Soe Tint and senior military officers of the Office of Military Intelligence.

At the meeting, the national race leaders said that they support seven-point future programme (road-map) of the State, adding that they will participate in the tasks for successful implementation of the roadmap under the leadership of the government. Next, the national race leaders reported on assistance of the State to be provided for development of education, agriculture, livestock breeding, road and economic enterprises of the region.