Established 1914

Sippaño ca, to acquire skill in sciences; this is the way to auspiciousness.

The New Light of Myanmar

Volume XI, Number 327                                          3rd Waning of Tabung 1365 ME                  Monday, 8 March, 2004

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 attends ceremony to hoist Shwehtidaw, Hngetmyatnadaw and Seinbudaw of Zabu Okshaung Myatphonekaung Datpaungzone Pagoda

YANGON, 7 March — A ceremony to hoist Shwehtidaw, Hngetmyatnadaw and Seinbudaw of Zabu Okshaung Myatphonekaung Datpaungzone Pagodas was held in Mingaladon Garden City this morning, attended by Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt.

Present were member Sayadaws led by Secretary of the State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee Abhidhaja Maha Rattha Guru Abhidhaja Agga Maha Saddhammajotika Magway Sayadaw Bhaddanta Kumara, Abhidhaja Agga Maha Saddhammajotika Kyaikhtihsaung Sayadaw Bhaddanta Panñadipa and member Sayadaws of Yangon Division Sangha Nayaka Committee.

It was also attended by wife of Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt Dr Daw Khin Win Shwe, Chairman of Yangon Division Peace and Development Council Commander of Yangon Command Maj-Gen Myint Swe, the ministers, the Chairman of Yangon City Development Committee Yangon mayor, the deputy ministers, officials of the State Peace and Development Council Office, heads of departments, Adviser U Arnt Maung, members of Division, District and Township Peace and Development Councils, social organizations, religious associations, disciples led by Agga Maha Thiri Thudhamma Manijotadhara title recipient U Khin Shwe, wellwishers and guests.

Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt and wife Dr Daw Khin Win Shwe and party took the Nine Precepts from Magway Sayadaw Bhaddanta Kumara. Members of the Sangha recited Metta Sutta and parittas.

Next, Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt and wife Dr Daw Khin Win Shwe presented Seinbudaw and Hngetmyatnadaw of the replica of the Shwedagon Pagoda and offertories to the Secretary Sayadaw of the State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee and Kyaikhtihsaung Sayadaw. Afterwards, the disciples led by U Khin Shwe presented Seinbudaw and Hngetmyatnadaw to the members of the Sangha. U Khin Shwe reported on the purpose of the building of the pagodas.

Kyaikhtihsaung Sayadaw Bhaddanta Panñadipa delivered a sermon, followed by sharing of merits gained.

Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt and wife Dr Daw Khin Win Shwe convey Seinbudaw round Zabu Okshaung Myatphonekaung Datpaungzone Pagoda. — mna

Emergence of the State Constitution is the duty of all citizens of Myanmar Naing-Ngan.

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Invaluable force on which the womenfolk can rely

Today, 8 March 2004, is the International Women’s Day. In striving in all sectors for the Union of Myanmar to be developed, the Government is making arrangements for the womenfolk to be able to participate in the nation-building tasks.

Myanmar National Committee for Women’s Affairs was formed to promote the women’s sector, and now, Myanmar Women’s Affairs Federation has been formed with the aim of extending the functions of the federation across the nation.

The MWAF has been formed with the following lofty aims:
- To promote the women’s sector in building a peaceful, modern and developed nation
- To promote the women’s force and to take the task of sharing responsibilities by themselves, till the Federation is able to participate in the nation-building tasks.
- To be made to further consolidate their national and to serve the well-being of the nation and the people
- To cooperate with international, regional and local bodies in ensuring the rights of women in accord with the traditions and culture and customs of the national races

As the Government has been making systematic efforts for the progress and firmness of the Myanmar women’s sector, the women’s spirit to love the nation and the race, patriotism to preserve the race, and the spirit to serve the well-being of the nation and the people have been further vitalized, and their participation in various social organizations promoted.

About 27 million of women make up the nation’s population of over 52 million, and 15 million of them are young ones or in their prime age. In addition, the women have been serving the national interest as a strong force throughout the course of history. Thus, efforts are to be made to further consolidate their strength.

We firmly believe that the MWAF has been formed for the women to lead the invaluable force and to take the task of sharing responsibilities by themselves, till the Federation becomes a united organization on which the womenfolk can rely.

59th Anniversary Armed Forces Day Objectives
- 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 in hand with the entire people
- To build up a strong and efficient Tatmadaw to uphold “Our Three Main National Causes”

China’s national revenue hit record high in 2003

Beijing, 7 March — China’s national revenue exceeded two trillion yuan for the first time to reach 2.1691 trillion yuan in 2003, said Minister of Finance Jin Renqing Saturday at the Second Session of the Tenth National People’s Congress (NPC).

The central and local budgets were implemented fairly well last year despite a complex and volatile international situation, the unexpected outbreak of the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and frequent natural disasters, Jin told the national legislature.

National revenue excluding revenue from generation of debt, was 278.7 billion yuan or 14.7 per cent more than the previous year and 105.8 per cent of the budgeted figure, the minister said in a report on the implementation of the central and local budgets for 2003 and on the draft central and local budgets for 2004.

National expenditures totalled 2.4607 trillion yuan, an increase of 235.4 billion yuan or 11.6 per cent year-on-year and 103.8 per cent of the budgeted figure. Expenditures exceeded revenue by 291.6 billion yuan. Total revenue in the central budget amounted to 2,465 trillion yuan after allowing for the additional 82.9 billion yuan used in export tax rebates, up 109.3 billion yuan or 9.6 per cent over the previous year and 104.4 per cent of the budgeted figure.

Total expenditures in the central budget came to 1,566.3 trillion yuan, including 824 billion yuan in tax rebates and subsidies for local authorities, 119.5 billion yuan or 8.3 per cent more than the previous year and 103.5 per cent of the budgeted figure. The deficit in the central budget was held to 319.8 billion yuan as approved at the First Session of the Tenth NPC, the minister said.

Minister says energy investors back to Indonesia

Jakarta, 7 March — After being considered a pariah nation for years by power investors, Indonesia has started to regain investor confidence, largely due to the successful resolution of disputes with independent power producers (IPPs), a minister has said.

Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources Purnomo Yustianto said in an interview with The Jakarta Post published Saturday that proposals from IPPs to set up new power projects had been on the increase.

The government, which until recently was gripped by worry over a possible power crisis in the future, has become more optimistic that such a crisis will not materialize. The investment climate (within the power sector) has been improving,” Purnomo said.

Indonesia was embroiled in disputes with dozens of leading global power investors for years after the economic crisis, following the government’s decision to suspend the power projects, and state electricity firm PT PLN’s refusal to honour the contracts. After years of negotiation, the government managed last year to settle disputes with all 27 IPPs, apart from American firm PT Karaha Bodas Company, which is still pursuing legal redress in the US to win compensation for its suspended project.

Best stamps contest to begin in China

Beijing, 7 March — All-China Philatelic Federation announced here Friday to organize an annual national contest for the best stamps. A spokesman from the federation said the best stamps would be voted from all the commemorative and special stamps issued by the State Post Bureau in 2003.

People who are interested in stamp collection could vote for the best stamps between April 1 and 15. The best stamps are to be chosen by voters while professional printing awards will be decided by an expert team, the spokesman said.

In order to encourage public participation, the federation provides ten lucky slots for people who vote. The ten will have free journeys to Singapore in August when the world philatelic exhibition is held.

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

The 59th Anniversary Armed Forces Day commemorative postcard.
US soldiers hurt in raid on truck

Baghdad, 7 March—US soldiers opened fire on a truck packed with explosives yesterday, killing the driver, and three Americans were wounded when the truck crashed on a bridge. Meanwhile, politicians conferred with Iraq’s top Shia cleric to resolve a dispute that held up the signing of the interim constitution.

The apparent vehicle-bomb attack came in Habaniyah, west of Baghdad. After soldiers fired on the truck, it veered off the bridge and exploded, wounding the three. Several unexploded artillery and mortar rounds were recovered. A suspected bomb was found in a bag on a street next to Baghdad’s Palestine Hotel, where many foreigners are based, and US soldiers blocked off the area while a disposal unit was called in. Four people near to the package had been detained, said a soldier on a checkpoint at the scene. “It’s a bag, a dog hit it on a bag down here,” the soldier said, adding that the bag contained explosives. “We are waiting for a team to come down,” he said. —Internet

Kerry accuses Bush of neglecting safety of US troops in Iraq

WASHINGTON, 7 March—White House hopeful Senator John Kerry accused President George W Bush of neglecting the safety of US soldiers in Iraq and called for recruiting another 40,000 active duty troops to ease the burden on reservists.

“If I am President, I will be prepared to use military force to protect our security, our people, and our vital interests. But I will never send our troops into harms way without enough firepower and support,” he said in the Democrats’ weekly radio address.

Kerry accused Bush of sending troops to Iraq without supplying them with enough body armour, without enough armour for their Humvee vehicles, and without appropriate defences for helicopters to evade missiles.

“Tens of thousands of other troops arrived in Iraq to find that — with danger around every corner — there wasn’t enough body armour to protect them,” he said.

Families had dipped into savings to buy body armour, “which the army should be providing,” he said.

Kerry called on Bush to support a law that would reimburse families who had bought body armour on their own.

“Today our security is being weakened, our military is being overextended, our reserves overstretched, and our allies driven away,” he said. “That’s why I believe we need to relieve the reserves by temporarily expanding the size of our active duty forces by 40,000 troops.”

In response, Bush’s campaign issued a statement accusing Kerry of voting against bills that would have provided the resources he calls for in the speech.

“John Kerry says he supports body armour for the troops, yet he voted against sending it to our soldiers. John Kerry voted against higher danger pay for our troops and against health care for active duty reservists,” Bush campaign spokesman Scott Stanzel said.

Chinese Premier, Vice-President urge officials to work for people’s interest

BEIJING, 7 March — As its power is bestowed by the people, the government has to be held accountable to them, works for their interest wholeheartedly and accepts their supervision voluntarily,” said Premier Wen Jiabao in a National People Congress (NPC) panel discussion Friday afternoon.

Meanwhile, Vice-Presi dent Zeng Qinghong joined in another panel discussion of NPC deputies from east China’s Jiangxi Province, during which he spoke highly of remarkable achievements made by Jiangxi people in the past year despite the prolonged dry spells that were most serious in history. Wen and Zeng made these remarks during panel discussions of NPC deputies from northwest China’s Gansu Province and eastern China’s Zhejiang Province in the Great Hall of People in Beijing following the opening of the plenum of the Second Session of the 10th NPC in the Chinese capital in the morning.

Lu Hao, Li Mui, Sheng Weide and other deputies from Gansu province aired their views on how to increase farmers’ income, improve economic macrocontrol, strengthen and enhance agriculture as the foundation of the national economy and deepen the reform of state-owned enterprises.

Wen listened to them attentively, and conferred with them time and again on some related issues.

Acceptance of the people’s supervision, said Wen, is a basic guarantee for government departments to wield power for the people, perform their administrative duties in strict compliance with laws and do a good job pertaining to their government work.

Only with the supervision of government departments by the people, can they be prevented from being lax in its duties and its functions from misusing their administrative power, Wen said.

Government departments at various levels must wield their power and perform their duties well within the scope of their authority as defined by law and report the performance of their duties honestly to the people’s congresses and their deputies, he said.

—MNA/Xinhua

Italian police smash international drug ring

Rome, 7 March — An operation of arrests were carried out on Friday in Italy as part of a crackdown on an international drug smuggling racket run by the Mafia ‘Ndrangheta’ in the southern Italian region of Calabria, the local media reported Friday.

According to the report, the operation was ordered by prosecutors in Reggio Calabria, a city of southern Italy, who have issued 47 arrest warrants.

Several clans linked to ‘Ndrangheta’ have been accused of smuggling vast quantities of heroin and cocaine into Italy and recycling the profits by making important property investments in Belgium and the Netherlands, the report said.

In January, Italian Interior Minister Giuseppe Pisani had sounded the alarm over the ‘Ndrangheta’ describing it as the “biggest and most powerful criminal organization” in Italy.

He also said the ‘Ndrangheta’ was believed to be the biggest trafficker in drugs in Europe and called on Parliament to step up the fight against the organization.

—MNA/Xinhua

Rifkind attacks Blair over Iraq war

London, 7 March—Sir Malcolm Rifkind, the last Conservative foreign secretary, has accused Tony Blair of taking Britain into the Iraq war “on a false prospectus”.

Sir Malcolm has also urged that no government should ever again publish intelligence material in order to build up a case for war. He has added his name to the list of those demanding that the Attorney General Lord Goldsmith QC should publish the advice he gave at the time on whether the war was legal. However, Sir Malcolm added that he was content for the advice to be withheld from the public if it could be revealed to a properly constituted committee of inquiry.

Sir Malcolm, who lost his Commons seat in 1997, was adopted last month as Conservative candidate in the safe seat of Kensington and Chelsea, and is expected to join the Tory front bench after the next election.

His comments, in an article for The Independent on Sunday, will add to Labour’s fears that the consensus with the Conservatives over Iraq is breaking down.

Last week, Michael Howard withdrew his party’s support for the inquiry headed by Lord Butler of Brockwell into intelligence reports of Iraqi weapons, although he subsequently supported Mr Blair’s call for a change in international law to permit intervention against tyrannical regimes.

Today Mr Howard will give a major speech at the party’s spring conference in Harrington, in which he is expected to say that public services will be the main battleground of the general election. He is also likely to call for cannabis to return to its old classification as a Class B drug, with greater penalties for users.

Sir Malcolm has gone further than other leading Tories in his criticism of the dossier published by Mr Blair in September 2002, six months before the Iraq war, which set out the evidence that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction and warned that they could be made ready for use at 45 minutes’ notice. Sir Malcolm said that—accurate or not—it should not have been published in the first place. He writes: “I was in receipt of top-secret documents for five years both as Minister of Defence and as Foreign Secretary. Neither I nor any previous Labour or Tory minister would have dreamt of publishing material in the name of the Joint Intelligence Committee. That would have been to politicise the JIC on an issue that divided the nation.”

Sir Malcolm calls for a wide-ranging inquiry modelled on the Franks inquiry, which looked into the causes of the Falklands conflict. “What the Government cannot do is refuse both publication and a full inquiry,” Sir Nicholas Lyell QC, an attorney general in John Major’s government, said there were a number of precedents for publishing law officers’ opinions: he had done so on the legality of the Maastricht Treaty, for instance. “I do think that the Government is going to find it very hard to resist the pressure on this,” he said. —Internet

Foreign tourists take part in tug-of-war competition against an elephant during the Elephant Festival in Jaipur, capital of India’s desert state of Rajasthan on 6 March , 2004. —Internet

MNA/Xinhua

A US soldier guards handcuffed Iraqis on 6 March , 2004—INTERNET

Elephant Festival in Jaipur, capital of India’s desert state of Rajasthan on 6 March , 2004—INTERNET

THE NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR Monday, 8 March, 2004 3
Expert says Iraq could rewrite archaeology books

BAGHDAD, 7 March—Iraq, torn apart by years of war and sanctions, remains so rich in hidden ancient wonders that a leading expert believes the world’s archaeology books will have to be rewritten over the next decade.

As security improves to allow excavation, evidence may emerge that advanced societies existed in the area much earlier than previously thought, said Dr John Russell, professor of archaeology at the Massachusetts College of Art in Boston.

"A decade of research in Iraq could rewrite the books of archaeology, no question," Russell, who is currently serving as a senior advisor to Iraq’s Ministry of Culture, told Reuters on Thursday at the opening of a new conservation and restoration laboratory at Iraq’s National Museum in Baghdad.

"There is just a phenomenal amount of history in this country and much of it is yet to be discovered. But over time it will be and we’ll have to totally rethink what we know," he said.

In 1989 and 1990, Russell led excavations at the site of Nineveh, the ancient capital of the Assyrian empire, which lies on the Tigris river in northern Iraq, near modern-day Mosul.

In each year, he said, his team made discoveries that essentially pushed back the timeline for ancient civilization by a millennium. "It was just absolutely incredible, they were unprecedented discoveries. But Iraq is like that," he said.

Often referred to as the cradle of civilization, Iraq’s modern-day boundaries encompass ancient Mesopotamia, the area between the Euphrates and Tigris rivers, which was the foundation for the world’s earliest societies.

Over the centuries, hugely important discoveries have been made in the area, from the Sumerian city of Ur in southern Iraq with its massive ziggurat, to ancient Babylon south of Baghdad.

Beyond those widely known sites, there are scores of other, lesser known settlements that are steadily being excavated and perhaps dozens more that have yet to be discovered.

But the situation is precarious. About a year after Saddam Hussein was overthrown, many areas remain unsafe and armed looters are a common enemy, particularly at remote sites.

Some 5,000 cylinder seals, small cylindrical stones carved with decorative designs and used to identify tablets and ceramics, were stolen, along with the so-called Sumerian Mona Lisa, a 5,000-year-old alabaster sculpture of a woman’s face. That mask and some 1,000 of the seals have been recovered, but Russell, who is helping to oversee the restoration of the museum, says about 20 “unique, world-class pieces” are still missing, along with an estimated 10,000 smaller works.

Some of the pieces were smuggled out of Iraq, and investigators are working through the courts to try to recover items taken to Switzerland, the United States and Britain.

But Russell believes most of the outstanding artifact’s are still in Iraq, and says the recovery rate for those stolen around 25 percent, is far better than it might have been.

He hopes the museum, which has been extensively renovated, will re-open in the next couple of months if security permits, allowing many of Iraq’s greatest treasures to be on show again.

"This is one of the great museums of the world," he said. "In time, we hope to turn it into a truly viable academic research institute that draws art historians and archaeologists from all over the world."
IRAQ UNDER US OCCUPATION

A US soldier rushes to his post to carry out security duty in Baghdad, Iraq on Saturday 6 March, 2004. —INTERNET

An Iraqi man walks past a US tank during a demonstration in Baghdad, on 6 March, 2004. —INTERNET

Iraqi youths weep during a memorial service on 6 March 2004 to honour their friends who were killed in Tuesday’s suicide attacks in the Iraqi capital Baghdad and Karbala. —INTERNET

A US soldier sits on top of a M1 battle tank in front of Iraqi Health Ministry during a demonstration in Baghdad on 6 March, 2004. —INTERNET

US troops put plastic cuffs to an Iraqi health worker when the Iraqi workers tried to enter the Health Ministry office in Baghdad, Iraq on Saturday 6 March, 2004. —INTERNET

A British trooper frisks an Iraqi commuter as British soldiers stepped up their security in Basra, approximately 342 miles south of Baghdad, Iraq on Saturday 6 March, 2004. Four British troopers were injured during a clash with militants overnight in Amara, north of Basra. —INTERNET

Iraqi youths weep during a memorial service on 6 March, 2004 to honour their friends who were killed in Tuesday’s suicide attacks in the Iraqi capital Baghdad and Karbala. —INTERNET

A US soldier sits on top of a M1 battle tank in front of Iraqi Health Ministry during a demonstration in Baghdad on 6 March, 2004. —INTERNET

A British trooper frisks an Iraqi commuter as British soldiers stepped up their security in Basra, approximately 342 miles south of Baghdad, Iraq on Saturday 6 March, 2004. Four British troopers were injured during a clash with militants overnight in Amara, north of Basra. —INTERNET
US cancels big Army contract

WASHINGTON, 7 March — The US Army cancelled a $277-million-US dollar contract to equip the Iraqi Army on Friday, citing technical problems with the bidding process, and denied cronies played a role in awarding the original deal.

An Army official told reporters that the original contract, awarded to Texas-based company Nort USA, whose chairman is a close friend of Iraqi Gov- ernment Council member Ahmed Chalabi, had been withdrawn and new propos- als for the work would be sought.

The official said a review of the contract found a huge spread in competing bids, an indication competing suppli- ers had not understood the contract requirements in a uniform way. “When we looked at the statement of work we saw that there were some ambi- guities in there,” said the official who spoke on condi- tion he was not further identi- fied.

The contract covers items from military vehicles and assault rifles to basic equip- ment such as backpacks. The cancellation is a blow to the US military, which is racing to equip the Iraqi Army ahead of the scheduled handover from US forces to the Iraqis on June 30.

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Timber companies urged to protect China’s forests

BEIJING, 7 March — Timber dealers and wooden floor- ing manufacturers must contribute to forest protection in order to preserve the natural environment and their own livelihoods, said analysts here Friday.

Yang Meixin, deputy di- rector with the China Tim- ber Distribution Association, said excessive felling was defi- nitely short-sighted and would bring disaster to the environment and the timber industry.

On Friday, about 30 wood flooring manufacturers signed an agreement to do- nate three million yuan ($1.2 million) to the China Green Foundation for tree planting projects over five years. “It’s a good ini- tiative, and we expect more to join us,” Yang said.

Zhu Lieke, acting direc- tor with the State Forestry Administration, said that pro- tection and exploitation were not contradictory. This priority was to pro- tect natural forests and sus- tain forests in areas under state protection. Felling of natural forests is prohibited in China.

Meanwhile, the adminis- tration supported deve- lopment of the timber indus- try and the State Council had approved a general plan of fast-growing trees to meet the rising demand for tim- ber, he said.

In 2003, China reported 310,600 hectares of fast- growing plantations in 18 provinces and a total of 333 new nurseries covering 4,667 hectares.

The state administration would provide more favour- able tax and financing poli- cies for their development, Zhu said.

The value of China’s wood flooring market, which exceeded 20 billion yuan ($2.4 billion US dollars) in 2003, was growing very fast partly because of the thriving real estate and home decoration sectors, so it was important to ensure a bal- anced development for the sake of consumers, compa- nies and the environment, said Yang.

Alleged bribes could derail Lockheed-Titan deal

SAN FRANCISCO, 7 March — Top US defence contrac- tor Lockheed Martin Corp and Titan Corp on Friday said they had learned of allegations of bribes by Titan consultants, which could jeopardize their proposed merger.

The two companies said the US Justice Department had launched a criminal probe of the alleged payments to foreign officials, possibly opening a door for either side to cancel Lockheed’s 1.8 billion US dollars buyout of Titan, which makes military communica- tions gear.

A joint review by Lockheed Martin and Titan, as well as a Securities and Exchange Commission investigation and the Justice Department’s inquiry might not be completed by a Titan stockholders meeting to consider the buyout deal on March 16, the companies said.

“If the merger is not completed by March 31, 2004, either Lockheed Martin or Titan may terminate the agree- ment,” the companies said.

Bethesda, Maryland-based Lockheed Martin announced plans to buy San Diego-based Titan last September for 22 US dollar per share. Titan shares closed at 20.93 US dollar on Friday.

Explosions echo across Baghdad

BAGHDAD, 7 March — Several explosions echoed across Baghdad on Friday, hours before the Iraqi Governing Council was due to sign a transitional Constitution.

A loud blast reverberated through the city centre at 11.30 am (0830 GMT), rattling windows across the river from the main US headquarters. There were no further details.

Earlier, a US military spokesman said there had been six or seven blasts at Baghdad International Air- port southwest of the city, where there is a major US base. Between 10.15 and 10.30 am There were no reports of damage or injuries.

US bases across the coun- try regularly come under fire from mortars and grenades.

Police in the Ameriyah District in the west of the capital said a roadside bomb had detonated at around 9.30 am (0630 GMT), leaving a crater in the street but caus- ing no casualties.

The Council had delayed the signing for two days out of respect for at least 181 people killed in a series of attacks on Tuesday.

Three people were killed in the capital on Thursday in a rocket attack. There are frequent explosions in Bagh- dad, some caused by road- side bombs planted by gue- rillas, others controlled by US troops destroying ord- nance.

Kerry blasts Bush’s eco stewardship

HOUSTON, 7 March — Democratic White House candidate John Kerry blasted President George W Bush’s economic stewardship on Saturday and declared in the ‘Texan’s own backyard’, “Houston, we’ve got a problem.”

During a Southern swing through four states — Texas, Mississippi, Florida and Louisiana — that is racing to equip the Iraqi Army ahead of the scheduled handover from US forces to the Iraqis on June 30.

The official said a review of the contract found a huge spread in competing bids, an indication competing suppli- ers had not understood the contract requirements in a uniform way. “When we looked at the statement of work we saw that there were some ambi- guities in there,” said the official who spoke on condi- tion he was not further identi- fied.

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Myanmar pearl: a popular jewel around the world

Myanmar Tasaki Company Ltd (MTC), a branch of Tasaki Shinju Co Ltd of Japan, displayed 117,124 pieces of standard quality pearl in Thiri Yadana Hall at the Ministry of Mines in Yangon on 23 February. Myanmar Tasaki is a foreign company running a joint-venture business together with Myanmar Pearl Enterprise (MPE) of the ministry. Minister for Mines Brig-Gen Ohn Myint, Deputy Minister U Myint Thein, Managing Director of MPE U Maung Toe and officials visited the pearl exhibition.

Production of more quality pearls in cooperation with joint-ventures in the coming years and their penetration in the global market are required, said Minister Brig-Gen Ohn Myint in his instructions given to officials at the exhibition. The 117,124 pearls weighing 52,965.5 mommes worth six million euro. At the exhibition, Myanmar Tasaki officials announced that the company would increase production of natural pearls and quality cultured pearls, while trying to maintain the status of the Myanmar pearls at the global markets. The MPE is producing and selling natural and cultured pearls of its own and also running joint-venture operations with local and foreign enterprises. The MTC netted the highest number of pearls during the current fiscal year in its history. The company will sell its pearls at the 41st Myanmar Gems Emporium to be held from 13 to 21 March, and is expecting to earn a large amount of foreign currency.

There are four kinds of pearl in the world. They are — Japanese pearl, South Sea pearl, black pearl and sea pearl. The type of Myanmar pearl is same with the South Sea pearl. Australia, Indonesia and the Philippines are also producing South Sea pearls, famous for their brightness and compactness. Their colours vary from pink, gold to silver. The pearls with golden hue are produced only in Myanmar, Indonesia and the Philippines. They are formed inside the oysters of larger species. These large oysters are found in the coastal seas in the south of Myanmar starting from Maungmagan islands in the north to Zadetgyi Island in the south.

Myanmar started the South Sea pearl production business in cooperation with Japan in 1954. In 1957, it started to produce South Sea pearls. Because of their quality, Myanmar pearls were famous in the world once. The foreign entrepreneurs came to buy the Myanmar pearl at the Myanmar Gems Emporium in 1964, once again, Myanmar pearls have become popular in the world.

In the past, the whole pearl industry was totally under the State’s control. Starting from 1993 the Government has permitted two local joint-venture firms and three foreign joint-venture companies to take part in the industry. Of the foreign joint-ventures, MTC is the most successful firm, producing 117,124 pearls valued at over six million euro. At the State-owned pearl production centre at Pearl Island, over 100,000 oysters will be grown artificially starting from Maungmakan islands in the south of Myanmar as foreign companies, each of the three foreign joint-venture companies to take part in the industry. Of the foreign joint-ventures, MTC is the most successful firm, producing 117,124 pearls valued at over six million euro. At the State-owned pearl production centre at Pearl Island, over 100,000 oysters will be grown artificially beginning coming year, as a means to boost pearl production. They will yield about 70,000 pearls within a two-year period. Plans are under way to artificially raise 50,000 oysters annually at another State-owned centre at Mali Island.

Under the agreement reached with the three foreign companies, each of the company will raise 200,000 oysters annually, and the total production of the three will reach 400,000 and 500,000 pearls every year. The following table shows the year-wise pearl production of the MPE and local and foreign companies in Myanmar.

According to the table, the nation’s annual pearl production has exceeded 100,000 since fiscal 2002-2003. As the MPE and the local and foreign companies are successfully conducting pearl culture, it is sure that the nation will be producing a greater number of standard quality pearls in the coming years, and will be earning more foreign currency. Myanmar pearls are the one among the nine precious jewels. Myanmarese believe that wearing pearl brings glory, health, youthfulness, longevity, prosperity and happiness.

Thus, efforts are required for the Myanmar pearls to find ready markets abroad, to produce more standard quality pearls, to make Myanmar pearls popular in the world, and to earn more foreign exchange.

* 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 everyday by each household amounts to saving power that is equal to the capacity a 20-megawatt power station can supply.

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

Efficient use of electricity

Efficient use of fuel

All this needs to be known

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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

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Prime Minister attends ceremony to hoist...

(from page 1)

Next, Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt and wife Dr Daw Khin Win Shwe conveyed the Seinbudaw and Hngetmyatnadaw of the Shwedagon replica Pagoda to the commander, the ministers, the Yangon mayor, the deputy ministers and disciples the Seinbudaws, Hngetmyatnadaw and Shwehtidaw of Datpaungzone Pagodas.

At the auspicious time, Kyakhithsaung Sayadaw and the Prime Minister hoisted Hngetmyatnadaw and Seinbudaw atop the pagoda and sprinkled scented water on them.

Kyakhithsaung Sayadaw and the Prime Minister hoisted Hngetmyatnadaw and Seinbudaw atop Mandalay Maha Muni Buddha Image and Kaylatha Hsawdawshin replica Pagoda atop the pagoda and sprinkled scented water on them.

Next, Kyakhithsaung Sayadaw and the Prime Minister hoisted tiers of Hngetmyatnadaw and Seinbudaw atop Mandalay Maha Muni Buddha Image and Kaylatha Hsawdawshin replica Pagoda and sprinkled scented water on them.

Kyakhithsaung Sayadaw and the Prime Minister hoisted tiers of Seinbudaw and Seinbudaw atop Bagan Dhammarazaka Pagoda. Afterwards, he enshrined the pagoda, and fixed the Hngetmyatnadaw and Seinbudaw and sprinkled scented water on it.

At the auspicious time, the Prime Minister hoisted a religious flag on the Dagunduang and performed rituals of golden and silver showers to mark the success of the ceremony.

Next, Kyakhithsaung Sayadaw and Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt cleansed the replica image of Mandalay Maha Muni in the reliquary and offered flowers and Shwethigaung to the pagoda.

The Prime Minister cleansed the replica images of Shwehtidaw and Shwethigaung to the pagoda. Afterwards, Prime Minister plant the Bandara mango tree in the compound and performed the rituals of silver and golden showers to mark the successful completion of the ceremony. MNA

Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt fixes Seinbudaw atop Mandalay Maha Muni Replica Pagoda.—MNA

Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt and wife Dr Daw Khin Win Shwe offer Hngetmyatnadaw to Kyakhithsaung Sayadaw.—MNA

Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt hoists Seinbudaw atop Maha Muni Replica Pagoda.—MNA

Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt fixes Seinbudaw atop Kelasa Hsawdawshin Replica Pagoda.—MNA

Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt unveils bronze plaque of Zabu Okshaung Myatphonekhaung Datpaungzone Pagoda.—MNA

YANGON, 7 March—The prize presentation ceremony of the Yangon Division Peace and Development Council Chairman’s Trophy Women’s Football Tournament was held at the sports ground of Myitnaywa Railway in Insein Township this afternoon, attended by Chair- man of Yangon Division Peace and Development Council Commander of Yangon Command Maj-Gen Myint Swe and wife Patron of Yangon Division Organization for Women’s Affairs Daw Khin Thet Htay.

In the final match, Yangon North District women’s team beat Yangon West District women’s team 2-1. After the final match, officials presented cash prizes to the winning teams. Wife of the commander Daw Khin Thet Htay presented K 200,000 to Yangon North District women’s team.

Later, the commander presented championship trophy to Yangon North District women’s team. —MNA

Yangon North District women’s team wins championship trophy in soccer

Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt unedges bronze plaque of Zabu Okshaung Myatphonekhaung Datpaungzone Pagoda.—MNA

Htida Yad soist atop Zeyatheikdi TadaU Pagoda in Myitnaywa

YANGON, 7 March—Minister for Construction Maj-Gen Saw Tun today attended the ceremony to hoist Htida Yad atop Zeyatheikdi TadaU Pagoda near Myitnaywa Bridge construction project in Mandalay and hoisted the tiers of Htida of the pagoda.

First, the congregation received the Nine Precepts from Sayadaw of Hsipyumae Monastery Bhaddanta U Uttara, and the members of the Sangha recited the Puritas.

Next, officials of the ministry donated Seinbudaw, Hngetmyatnadaw and offertories to the members of the Sangha. To mark the successful completion of the ceremony, the minister and wellwishers performed the rituals of golden and silver showers.

MNA

Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt hoists Seinbudaw atop Mandalay Maha Muni Replica Pagoda.—MNA
Thai delegation tours Yangon, Mandalay, Bagan-NyaungU

YANGON, 7 March—
A visiting Thai delegation led by Minister of Sports and Tourism Mr Sontaya Kunplome together with Deputy Minister for Hotels and Tourism Brig-Gen Aye Myint Kyu, the Thai ambassador to Myanmar and officials viewed exhibits on display at the National Museum on Pyay Road here on 5 March.

Next, the visiting delegation proceeded to Lawka Chantha Ahlaya Labha Muni Image on Mindhamma Hill in Insein Township where they paid homage to the image and made cash donations.

Accompanied by Deputy Minister Brig-Gen Aye Myint Kyu and officials, the visiting delegation on 6 March arrived in Mandalay where they viewed Myanmar Sankyaw Golden Palace, Shwe Kyaungdawgyi, U Sein Myint embroidery and Lunyakyaw lac industry.

Next, the visiting delegation paid homage to Shwesikhon Pagoda, Lawkananda Pagoda, Ananda Pagoda and Dhammarazaka Pagoda in Bagan-NyaungU. They also observed the production process of lacquerware there.

This morning, the visiting delegation together with Deputy Minister Brig-Gen Aye Myint Kyu and officials visited Shwedagon Pagoda where the Thai minister signed in the visitors’ book and made cash donation for the pagoda.

The visiting Thai delegation and Myanmar hoteliers and tour operators led by Deputy Minister Brig-Gen Aye Myint Kyu discussed matters related to tourism development between the two countries at Kandawgyi Palace on Kanyeiktha Road this morning.

MNA
Secretary-2 inspects upgrading... 

companies and construction of under 50-foot long bridges. 
Chairman of Bago Division Peace and Development Council Commander Maj-Gen Ko Ko gave a supplementary report. 

Yangon City Kandawgyi. He called for making efforts in harmony.

zones. He called for making efforts in harmony.

Gen Myint Swe said signific-

nt progress has been made in implementation of the tasks for development of Yangon City Kandawgyi Garden and upgrading Yangon Zoological Gardens.

He said departments concerned are carrying out the tasks for upgrading Kandawgyi Garden in four zones. He called for making efforts in harmony.

Heads of departments reported on progress of work in the respective zones and arrangements for maintenance.

Yangon, 7 March — Work Committee for development of environs of Yangon City Kandawgyi Garden and upgrading Yangon Zoological Gardens held its coordination meeting at briefing hall in relaxation 

The commander then fulfilled the requirements. Next, the commander inspected construction of conference hall in relaxation zone and timer walkway and gave instructions on early completion of the projects in accord with the standard set.

Yangon Zoological Gardens (Yangon).—

Next, the Secretary-2 and party proceeded to the briefing hall in relaxation zone. He called for making efforts in harmony.

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Yangon Zoological Gardens (Yangon).—

Next, they inspected completion of upgrading tasks for Yangon City Kandawgyi Garden and upgrading Yangon Zoological Gardens.

Work Committee for development of environs of Kandawgyi Garden and upgrading Yangon Zoological Gardens meets

Stake driven for building Youth Nurturing Unit in Muse

Yangon, 7 March — A ceremony to drive stake for the building of Youth Nurturing Unit, to be built by Central Committee for Drug Abuse Control, was held in Tima Village, Namh-un Village-tract, Muse Township, Shan State (North) on 4 March morning.

At the ceremony, Police Brig-Gen Zaw Win gave a speech, saying that there are a sizeable number of drug addicts in Shan State (North) area according to the current data. This is why drug addict treatment hospitals and clinics are required in the region. In meeting with high-ranking officials of the State, local national race leaders reported to open the drug addict treatment camps in the region. So, the CCDAC Special Meting No 2/2003 led by Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt held on 7 September 2003 decided to open a drug addict treatment and rehabilitation unit in the suitable region of Shan State (North) area. In accord with the decision of the meeting, the place near Tima Village, Namh-un Village-tract, Muse Township, was chosen for opening the Youth Nurturing Unit.

Next, Additional Head of Shan State (North) Health Department Dr Nyio Win Myint explained functions of the Health Department to participate in carrying out drug addicts treatment and rehabilitation tasks.

Then, Deputy Commander Brig-Gen Hla Myint, Deputy Director-General of MPF Police Brig-Gen Zaw Win, Director Police Col Sit Aye of CCDAC Office Police Force, Director of CCDAC Office Police Col Sit Aye, Shan State (North) Additional Police Command Police Col Win Naing, local authorities and people, totalling about 1,000.

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Wellwishers invited for sinking tube-wells

YANDON, 7 March—The Development Affairs Committees under the Ministry for Progress of Border Areas and National Races and Development Affairs are making concerted efforts in sinking tube-wells in order to get sufficient fresh water in rural areas in states and divisions where water is scarce.

One 200 feet deep two-inch diameter tube-well costs K 250,000; one 400 feet deep two-inch diameter tube-well costs K 500,000; and one 200 feet deep four-inch diameter tube-well costs K 500,000.

Those wishing to donate cash for the tube-well sinking projects for rural areas may contact the Deputy Director-General, the Director (Engineering), the Director (Sagai Division Development Affairs Committee), the Director (Magway Division Development Affairs Committee) and the Director (Mandalay Division Development Affairs Committee).

— MNA

The 59th Anniversary Armed Forces Day commemorative postcard.

Chinese President reaffirms support for HK, Macao governments

BEIJING, 7 March—President Hu Jintao said Saturday that the central government will continue to implement the basic policy of “One Country, Two Systems”, pledging full support for the governments of Hong Kong and Macao special administrative regions (SAR) to maintain long-term prosperity and stability in the two regions.

President Hu made the remarks while meeting with Tung Chee Hwa, chief executive of the Hong Kong SAR, and Edmund Ho Hau Wah, chief executive of the Macao SAR, on two separate occasions Saturday evening in Beijing.

The two chief executives are attending the ongoing session of National People’s Congress (NPC) as non-voting delegates.

During his meeting with Tung Chee Hwa, Hu acknowledged that the economy of Hong Kong has shown the momentum of recovery with increased confidence of local residents, which is the result of common efforts of all walks of life in Hong Kong under the support of the central government.

The President pledged the central government would continue support the Hong Kong SAR Government’s work in line with the Basic Law, and help Hong Kong to recover its economy. He called on personalities from all walks of life in Hong Kong to concentrate their efforts through planning as one in their efforts to overcome difficulty and constantly strive for a better future of Hong Kong.

Hu spoke highly of the positive discussion on the principle of “One Country, Two Systems” in Hong Kong, and said that it is necessary to review Deng Xiaoping’s theory on “One Country, Two Systems”, which is still playing a significant role in guiding the practice.

During his meeting with Edmund Ho Hau Wah, the President praised the government for its efforts and progresses in maintaining the good situation in Macao.

Hu hoped that the Macao SAR Government and all walks of life in Macao would continue to implement the “One Country, Two Systems” principle and the Basic Law, and press ahead with the momentum of economic development and stable society, and explore and accumulate new experiences on successful practice of “One Country, Two Systems” policy. Vice-President Zeng Qinghong was present at the two meetings.

— MNA/Xinhua

Sri Lankan PM calls for strong mandate to boost economy

COLOMBO, 7 March—Sri Lankan Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe has called on the people in the country to extend a strong mandate to his United National Front (UNF) in the forthcoming general election to boost the country’s war-affected economy, the official Daily News said on Saturday.

“We have to establish an economy which could create employment and increase the income level of the people. The UNF has comprehensive plans to improve the economy and we have already identified relevant sectors that need to be upgraded,” Wickremesinghe said while addressing several election rallies in the country on Friday.

He said that his government has already prepared plans to strengthen the economy in the south of the country. “We have focused our attention to further improve the tourism sector, specially in the southern area and already several projects have been earmarked for implementation,” he added. He noted that with those plans the tourism sector in the south will be upgraded to a greater extent creating thousands of employment.

The Sri Lankans are set to cast their votes to select a new 225-member Parliament on April 2. — MNA/Xinhua

Ugandan army rescues 148 abducted people in two weeks

KAMPALA, 7 March—The Uganda People’s Defence Forces (UPDF) has rescued 148 abducted people in the last two weeks in the three northern districts of Lira, Pader and Kitgum.

UPDF 5th Division spokesman Chris Mageri was quoted Saturday by local media as saying that “the majority of them are girls who were wives of senior commanders of the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) rebels in the bush in the Sudan.”

Mageri, who handed over the former abducted children to a rehabilitation centre in Lira, said among those rescued were 70 girls who are now child mothers, aged between 14 and 19 years, but with a few as young as seven years old. There were 60 children born in the abducted period, among them 37 girls and 23 boys.

The spokesman said nine children had come back without their mothers who were killed in the bush.

Some of the former abducted children were taken to Kampala on Wednesday to meet President Yoweri Museveni.

“We are hunting for the remaining LRA rebel commanders responsible for these abductions,” the spokesman said. “We must track down and punish these terrorists for harming our children.”

The LRA rebels, based in the southern part of Sudan, have abducted over 20,000 children and displaced over one million people in northern Uganda in their 18-year rebellion.

— MNA/Xinhua
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S African President urges more input in education

JOHANNESBURG, 7 March — South African President Thabo Mbeki said the government should put more money into further education Friday.

Campaigning for the general election in April, Mbeki braved the driving rain to meet the students and staff in Tshwane North College’s Mamelodi campus outside Pretoria, executive capital of the country.

“I have learnt a lot, I am ashamed to say,” he said while visiting an engineering repair class. Mbeki said he realized that the government would have to provide more support in funding and scholarships.

“What is being done here is critical to the future of the country,” he said, adding that it should not be treated as a sideshow.

Students screamed and shouted as the President made his way to the campus, bodyguards working hard to fend off his admirers. “We love you Mr President,” the star-struck students screamed.

And when Mbeki asked jokingly whom they would vote for, the students answered: “Isn’t it obvious, Mr President?”

Thousands stranded after South Korean snowstorm

SEOUL, 7 March — Helicopters dropped food and fuel supplies to thousands of drivers marooned on highways linking the capital to cities in the south, the Korea Highways Corporation said.

Besides deploying vehicles to clear the roads, the government mobilized 34 helicopters to clear the roads, the news agency said. About 2,200 cars with 4,000 passengers were stranded on two major highways linking the capital to cities in the south, the Korea Highways Corporation said.

World’s oldest man dies at 114 in Spain

MALDON, 7 March — A retired Spanish shoemaker born in the same year as Adolf Hitler and officially the world’s oldest man has died at his home at the age of 114, his family said on Saturday.

The finding comes three days after the deaths of 29-year-old Tan, a Singapore court ruled on Saturday.

Tan, a Singapore court ruled on Saturday.

Second NASA Rover finds signs of water on Mars

LOS ANGELES, 7 March — The Mars rover Spirit found the first indications that small amounts of water may have welled up in the soil of Gusev Crater when it formed or shortly thereafter, Ray Arvidson, deputy lead scientist at NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, said on Friday.

Arvidson, deputy lead scientist at NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, said on Friday.

The 120-kilo Guoqing, also 114, in September.

A neurosurgeon in Germany, 114, has said he was too closely related to George W Bush’s Council of Criminals.

Guoqing’s records showed that he was a teenager — and electricity.

Most of the students and staff in Tshwane North College’s Mamelodi campus outside Pretoria, executive capital of the country.

EU opens trade probe into salmon imports

BRUSSELS, 7 March — The European Commission decided on Friday to launch a probe into whether salmon imports are flooding the EU from Norway, Chile and the Faroe Islands.

On March 3, the Shangh hai Safari Park published a nationwide notice seeking some of their famous pandas.

Commission trade spokes woman Arancha Gonzalez told a news conference.

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The Chengdu Giant Panda Breeding Centre, in southwest China’s Sichuan Province, on Friday turned down a request for one of its 16 adult female giant pandas to mate with Guoping, the only fertile male raised at Shanghai Safari Park.

Commission trade spokes woman Arancha Gonzalez told a news conference.

On March 3, the Shanghai Safari Park published a nationwide notice seeking a suitable mate.

Giant pandas are famous for their low propagation rates. They mature at four or five years old, and often run in spring and deliver cubs in autumn, said Yu. Yu said Chinese re searchers had overcome three major difficulties in propagation of the giant pandas.

On March 3, the Shanghai Safari Park published a nationwide notice seeking a suitable mate.

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**SPORTS**

**Wenger says FA Cup replays part of English culture**

LONDON, 7 March — FA Cup replays are a cherished part of English soccer culture and the Premier League should remain a 20-club competition, Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger said on Friday.

FIFA president Sepp Blatter said on Monday he was considering changing FIFA's statutes to force a cut in leagues to 18 clubs from 20 and said officials should also consider cutting out replays in the FA Cup, soccer's oldest competition.

"Replays in the FA Cup are part of the English culture and I prefer 20 clubs in the league," said Frenchman Wenger, who guided Arsenal to their second successive FA Cup triumph last season.

"Many countries have tried 18 clubs and have come back to 20. There is no basic reason to change it in England," he told the London Evening Standard newspaper.

Blatter wants to cut the number of games so that top players stay fit and clubs and countries can fit into a coordinated soccer calendar.

"There is a minimum of freedom you have to protect in every country so they can make their own decisions," Wenger added.

"This kind of freedom is linked with culture, tradition and history. You have to leave that.

"In England the replay is part of the culture of the country and I don't want them scrapped. No one wants to give up the chance to play at home if you have earned a draw in a difficult tie (away). "You sense the passion in England in the FA Cup. Am I committed to it? Just look at our record."

"Arsenal travel to Portsmouth for an FA Cup quarterfinal on Saturday. If they reach the final on May 22, they will be the first club to reach four consecutive finals."

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**Transexual misses cut at women's Australian Open**

MELBOURNE, 7 March — Transexual golfer Mianne Bagger missed the cut at the women's Australian Open in Sydney on Friday, finishing at 4-over par after two rounds. Bagger, whose participation in the event has been widely criticized as a publicity stunt, fired a respectable second round of 74 after shooting a disastrous opening round 84.

Briton Laura Davies shot a second round 68 for a 36-hole total of eight-under-par 136 to lead Italy's Sophie Sandolo by four strokes.

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**Keane escapes with one-match ban for Porto red card**

LONDON, 7 March — Manchester United captain Roy Keane escaped the minimum one-match Champions League ban on Friday for his dismissal against Porto last Wednesday.

European body UEFA could have imposed a three-match ban but opted for a lesser punishment which means the Irish midfielder will be able to play in the quarterfinals if United overturn their 2-1 first-leg deficit.

"UEFA said it on its website. Keane was sent off for stepping on Porto goalkeeper Victor Bau in the 87th minute of the first leg defeat. Keane will sit out the second leg at Old Trafford next Tuesday."

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**Crunch time for Man United, says Ferguson**

MANCHESTER (England), 7 March — Manchester United face a make-or-break week in their bid to win honours this season, their manager Alex Ferguson said on Friday.

United meet Fulham in the FA Cup quarterfinals on Saturday before trying to overturn a 2-1 first-leg defeat against Porto in the Champions League on Tuesday.

"The next five days are extremely important to our season, they really are. "We are going into two massive one-off games. The positive thing is that we are at home in both," Ferguson told a news conference on Friday.

"With United nine points behind Arsenal in the Premier League, their main chances of success are the FA Cup and Champions League.

"The Cup ties are always sudden death and we have two one-off games now," Ferguson said. "Although we are a goal behind against Porto, there is an away goal which is an advantage to us."

"And while Fulham have improved a lot this season, if you have a home draw in the quarterfinal, you have to take advantage of that."

United won the last of their record 10 FA Cups in 1999 and Ferguson, whose team missed the competition the following season to play in the World Club Championship, regards it as a priority.

"There could be a Nationwide League team in the final but I just say let's make sure we are in the pot for the semifinal."

"We haven't been in a final for five years. We are determined to get there."

"We have served our penance for withdrawing that year and hopefully we can go the whole way.

"We have a fantastic record in semifinals, if we get there hopefully that will stay strong."

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**China plays smart in 3-0 win over Germany**

Doha (Qatar), 7 March — China formed a clever lineup against the German team led by former world No. 1 Timo Boll and won the men's semifinal 3-0 at the world table tennis championships on Friday.

United in the 2002 Grand Finals in 2002 and Ferguson, whose team has played 17 grand finals, in 2002.

"We haven't been in a final for five years. We are determined to get there."

"We have served our penance for with-drawing that year and hopefully we can go the whole way.

"We have a fantastic record in semifinals, if we get there hopefully that will stay strong."

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**China rout Japan to meet China in championship final**

HONG KONG, 5 March — Hong Kong outplayed Japan 3-0 in 80 minutes to set up a championship clash with China, which survived Japan's challenge with a close 3-2 scoreline on Thursday.

"We were aware of Boll's threat, the defending champions sent Ma Lin, Wang Hao and Wang Liqin to the game, benching Liu Guozheng and Kong Linghu who both have poor records against the German left-handed star."

World No 2 Wang Liqin was relegated as a third player to avoid a meeting with Boll. Boll had beaten Ma Lin in the World Cup and Grand Finals in 2002 and Japan Open in 2003.

"Both players looked nerv-ous at the beginning yet as the game went on, the Chinese penhold attacker com-bined his usual array of table tennis moves to outplay his opponent. Boll had chance to turn the tables but his nerves cracked midway in the fourth set."


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Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt receives Thai Minister of Sports and Tourism

**Yangon, 7 March**—Prime Minister of the Union of Myanmar General Khin Nyunt received Thai Minister of Sports and Tourism Mr Sontaya Kunplome and party at Zeyathiri Beikman on Konmyinttha at 4 pm today.

Also present at the call were Minister for Foreign Affairs U Win Aung, Minister for Hotels and Tourism Brig-Gen Thein Zaw, Minister for Sports Brig-Gen Thura Aye Myint, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs U Khin Maung Win, Deputy Minister for Hotels and Tourism Brig-Gen Aye Myint Kyu, Director-General Thura U Aung Htet of the Protocol Department and Director-General U Thaung Tun of Political Department.

The Thai minister and party were accompanied by Thai Ambassador Mr Suphot Dhirakosol.

Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt receives Japanese entrepreneurs

**Yangon, 7 March**—Prime Minister of the Union of Myanmar General Khin Nyunt received Nissho Iwai Corporation President & CEO Mr Hidetoshi Nishimura and party of Japan at Zeyathiri Beikman on Konmyinttha at 4.45 pm today.

Also present at the call were Minister for National Planning and Economic Development U Soe Tha, Minister for Commerce Brig-Gen Pyi Sone, Minister for Foreign Affairs U Win Aung, Minister for Energy Brig-Gen Lun Thu, Minister for Science and Technology U Thaung, Minister for Electric Power Maj-Gen Tin Htut, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs U Khin Maung Win and Director-General Thura U Aung Htet of the Protocol Department.

Secretary-2 inspects upgrading of Yangon-Mandalay Union highway, Yangon-Nyaunglaybin railroad section

**Yangon, 7 March**—Chairman of Supervisory Central Committee for Ensuring Secure and Smooth Transport Secretary-2 of the State Peace and Development Council Lt-Gen Thein Sein, accompanied by Minister for Rail Transportation Maj-Gen Aung Min, Deputy Minister Thura U Thaung Lwin and officials of the State Peace and Development Council Office, inspected measures being taken at Bago-Nyaunglaybin section of Yangon-Mandalay Union highway in Bago Division and upgrading of Yangon-Nyaunglaybin railroad section being undertaken by Myanmar Railways of the Ministry of Rail Transporta-

On arrival at the place near Wannawdaw Bridge at the entrance to Bago Division along Yangon-Manda-

On arrival at the place near Wannawdaw Bridge at the entrance to Bago Division along Yangon-Mandalay Union highway, Secretary-2 Lt-Gen Thein Sein and party were welcomed by Chairman of Bago Division Council Commander of Southern Command Maj-Gen Ko Ko and officials.

Next, the Secretary-2 and party, accompanied by Commander Maj-Gen Ko Ko, arrived at the briefing hall of Shwe Than Lwin Highway Co Ltd which is undertaking the upgrading of Bago-Nyaunglaybin Section of Yangon-Mandalay Union highway. They were welcomed there by Superintending Engineer of the company U Saw Davad Tha, Managing Director U Maung Maung and officials.

At the briefing hall, Superintending Engineer of the company U Saw Davad Tha and Managing Director U Maung Maung reported to the Secretary-2 and party on upgrading of 48-mile long road section between milepost No 50/0 and milepost No 96/0 of Yangon-Mandalay Union highway and upgrading of 56-mile and 3-furlong long Phayagyi-Kyaikto road section between milepost No 60/4 and milepost No 116/7 of Yangon-Myeik Union highway and Bago Division Superintending Engineer of Public Works U Tin Htut on conditions of roads and bridges in Bago Division, roads and bridges being upgraded by Public Works, upgrading of road section in Bago Division of Yangon-Mandalay Union highway by four private companies.

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