Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt and party tour Chittagong, Bandarban, Cox’s Bazar in Bangladesh

YANGON, 7 April—The Myanmar goodwill delegation led by Prime Minister of the Union of Myanmar General Khin Nyunt flew to Chittagong from Zia International Airport in Dhaka on 5 April morning. The delegation that was on a goodwill visit to Bangladesh was accompanied by Minister for Foreign Affairs Mr M Morshed Khan of the host country and officials. The Prime Minister and party were seen off at the airport by staff and families of Myanmar Embassy and Military Attaché’s Office.

At 8.30 am local time, General Khin Nyunt and party arrived at Shah Amanat International Airport in Chittagong by special aircraft of Bangladesh Airlines.

Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt and party were welcomed there by Adviser to Foreign Affairs Mr Reaz Rahman, Chittagong Divisional Commissioner Mr Ashrafol Mokbel and officials.

 Afterwards, the Prime Minister and party flew to Bandarban by Air Force helicopter of Bangladesh where they were welcomed by Bandarban Hill District Additional District Magistrate Mr Syed Md Hashim and officials. Next, they went to Tadagyi Village in Yawdaw.

At the pandal in Tadagyi Village, the ceremony to plant Maha Bo tree and lay cornerstone for Nat Nagamin Lake Monastery was held. Present were 130 members of the Sangha led by Natchaung Thari Sayadaw Bhaddanta Asapha and Bangladesh Bahaddanta Pahhajota, Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt and party, Myanmar people in Yawdaw and local people.

The congregation opened the ceremony with three-time recitation Name Tassa. Next, Hill Region Sangha Council Chairman Khammung-cu-ong Sayadaw Bhaddanta Vanna administered the Five Precepts. The General and party offered provisions to the Sayadaws. Similarly, the General presented donations to Bangladesh Bahaddanta Pahhajota for carrying out propagation of Theravada Buddha Sasana.

Next, townswelders presented pictures of Maha Sukha Hsutaungpyay Pagoda to General Khin Nyunt and party and the Bangladesh Minister for Foreign Affairs U Saw Pau of Yawdaw gave deer horns as gifts to Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt. Afterwards, the General planted the Maha Bo Tree and sprinkled scented water on it.

Next, Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt, Secretary-1 of the State Peace and Development Council Lt-Gen Soe Win and Chairman of Rakhine State Peace and Development Council Commander Maj-Gen Maung Oo laid cornerstone for construction of Nat Nagamin Lake Monastery.

The Prime Minister formally unveiled the plaque to mark the planting of Maha Bo Tree and cornerstone-laying of the monastery. Later, Sayadaw Bhaddanta Asapha delivered a sermon and the General and party shared merits.

After the ceremony, the General and party paid homage to Maha Sukha Hsutaungpyay Pagoda. Next, the Prime Minister donated cash to the pagoda funds and signed in the visitors’ book.

On arrival at Cox’s Bazar from Bandarban, the General and party were welcomed by State Minister for Communications Mr Salah Uddin Ahmed, Deputy Commissioner for Cox’s Bazar District Mr Saifuddin Ahmed and officials. At Seagull Hotel in Cox’s Bazar, State Minister for Communications Mr Salah Uddin Ahmed hosted a luncheon in honour of the Myanmar Prime Minister and delegation members. (See page 8)
PERSPECTIVES
Thursday, 8 April, 2004

Strengthening bilateral relations and cooperation between Myanmar and Bangladesh

At the invitation of Prime Minister of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh Begum Khaleda Zia, Prime Minister of the Union of Myanmar General Khin Nyunt paid a goodwill visit to Bangladesh from 4 to 6 April. Myanmar and Bangladesh have established diplomatic relations for long and their cultural heritage and aims concerning regional peace, security and development are identical. The two countries being friendly neighbours, their leaders have paid reciprocal goodwill visits. Chairman of the State Peace and Development Council Senior General Than Shwe paid a goodwill visit to Bangladesh in 2002 and Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia reciprocated it in March, 2003. The goodwill visits of the leaders of the two countries have not only cemented the bilateral relations but also contributed a lot towards bilateral cooperation. The recent visit of Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt was shot in the arm for already strong bilateral relations and cooperation. As bilateral trade and economy have improved much, the peoples of the two countries will be able to enjoy a lot of mutual benefit.

The Prime Minister of Bangladesh hosted a dinner in honour of the Myanmar delegation headed by Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt at Hotel Sonargaon in Dhaka on 4 April. The prime ministers delivered speeches at the dinner. Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt, in his speech, said, “Our two countries enjoy good neighbourly relations and there exist no big issues between our two countries. We can rightly be proud that Myanmar and Bangladesh have nurtured good relations and our border is one of peace and stability. It is also incumbent on both of us to turn our border into one of prosperity.” Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, in her address, said, “Bangladesh and Myanmar are developing countries with similar economic challenges. We need to intensify our efforts to face these challenges together through closer political and economic links. Our talks today were a clear reflection of our resolve in this pursuit.”

During the visit, the two prime ministers discussed the promotion of bilateral relations and cooperation, especially in international affairs, trade, land and water transport and investment sectors, in a friendly atmosphere and the MoU’s were also inked. We strongly believe that Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt’s goodwill visit to Bangladesh will not only strengthen the bilateral relations but also increase cooperation between the two countries in trade and economy.

Sitagu Sayadaw and Religious Affairs

Minister arrive back

YANGON, 7 April — Sitagu International Academy Buddhist University’s Chancellor Sitagu Sayadaw Bhaddanta Dr Namascara and Minister for Religious Affairs Brig-Gen Thura Myint Maung arrived back here by air this evening after attending the preliminary coordination meeting held in Japan for the holding of the Fourth World Buddhist Summit.

The Sayadaw and party were welcomed back at Yangon International Airport by SWBU Administrative Officer Sayadaw Bhaddanta Mahasudha Pandita, Pro-Rector Sayadaw Bhaddanta Orasda, Assistant Registrar Sayadaw Bhaddanta Pinhajita, Minister for Culture Maj-Gen Kyi Aung, Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Maj-Gen Sein Htwa, Deputy Minister for Religious Affairs Brig-Gen Thura Aung Ko and officials.

Religious Affairs Department Director-General Dr Myo Myint, who accompanied the Sayadaw and the minister, also arrived back here on the same flight. — MNA

Mingon Model Village in Hlegu Township opened

YANGON, 7 April— Under the arrangement of Yangon Division Supervisory Committee for Maternal and Child Welfare Association, the ceremony to open Mingon Model Village was held in Hlegu Township this morning, attended by Chairman of Yangon Division Peace and Development Council Commander Maj-Gen San Win and Maj-Gen Myint Swie and wife Paton of the divisional association Daw Khin Thet Huy.

First, Daw Khin Thet Huy formally opened the model village. The commander formally unveiled the sign-board of the village.

Next, the commander and wife and party inspected the village. The commander formally unveiled the sign-board of the village.

The commander and wife and party inspected the village. The commander formally unveiled the sign-board of the village.

World Health Day observed


It was attended by Deputy Minister for Health Dr Myo Oo, departmental heads, medical superintendents, WHO resident representative Dr Agostino Borra, officials of the UN agencies, members of social organizations and guests.

The deputy minister delivered a speech on the occasion.

Next, the WHO resident representative read out the message of WHO Director for Southeast Asia region Dr Sam Lee Plambang Chang.

Afterwards, the deputy minister and guests viewed the photos of activities to mark the World Health Day. — MNA

NPE auxiliary fire brigade members demonstrate fire fighting drills

YANGON, 7 April— The auxiliary fire brigade members of News and Periodicals Enterprise, led by Ye Thurein Ko Ko Soe and party of Tamway Township Fire Services Department and Bahan Township Auxiliary Fire Brigade, demonstrated measures for fire prevention and drills of practical fire fighting at Myanmar Alin Daily at No 53, 1st Natmauk Lane, Bahan Township, this morning, inspected by NPE Managing Director Col Soe Win.

Also present were Chief Editor U Ye Myint Po of Myanmar Alin Daily, Deputy Director (Admin) U Mya Hlaing of NPE, Manager U Zaw Win of the daily, course in-charge and course instructors. Course in-Charge Ye Thurein Ko Ko Soe and instructors and 25 auxiliary fire brigade members of NPE, demonstrated the fire fighting drills with one fire engine, two light fire engines and extinguishers. After the demonstration, Managing Director Col Soe Win gave instructions on measures to be taken to prevent outbreak of fire due to negligence and short circuit.

He also urged the fire-fighters of the enterprise to try hard to be equipped with fire fighting skills. — MNA

Commander, Minister, Mayor attend opening of Multipurpose Community Telecentre in Phaunggyi

YANGON, 7 April — The opening ceremony of Multipurpose Community Telecentre, was held in the centre in east village of Phaunggyi, Hlegu, Yangon North District this morning. The centre was built by Directorate of Telecommunications of the Ministry of Communications, Posts and Telegraphs and International Telecommunications Union (ITU). Present on the occasion were Chairman of Yangon Division Peace and Development Council Commander Maj-Gen Myint Swie, General Secretary of the Union Solidarity and Development Association Minister for Cooperatives Maj-Gen Htay Oo, Minister for Livestock & Fisheries Brig-Gen Maung Maung Thein, Minister at the Prime Minister’s Office Maj-Gen Thein Swie and Mayor Brig-Gen Aung Thein Lin.

First, Director-General of Directorate of Telecommunications U Kyi Than and Asia-Pacific Telegram Communications Development Bureau Senior Consultant Mr E Behad gave speeches and formally opened the telecentre. Later, Commander Maj-Gen Myint Swie and party viewed round the telecentre and the students learning at the computer training course.

The telecentre was built at a cost of US$ 55,600 with the contribution of ITU and an equivalent to US$ 44,600 contributed by Directorate of Telecommunications.

With the opening of the telecentre, computer course and Internet and E-mail training course can be conducted and services such as desktop printing, copier works, film developing are provided to local people and it contributes much towards the development of education, health, economic and social affairs of local people and the students become familiar with IT. — MNA

NPA Managing Director Col Soe Win views the demonstration on fire prevention and fire fighting at Myanmar Alin daily. — MNA
Sources say al-Sadr supporters take over Najaf

BAGHDAD, 7 April—Supporters of maverick Muslim cleric Muqtada al-Sadr controlled government, religious and security buildings in the holy city of Najaf early Tuesday evening, according to a coalition source in southern Iraq.

The source said al-Sadr's followers controlled the governor's office, police stations and the Imam Ali mosque, one of Shiia Muslim's holiest shrines. Iraqi police were negotiating to regain their stations, the source said.

The source also said al-Sadr was busing supporters into Najaf from Sadr City in Baghdad and that many members of his outlawed militia, Mehdi's Army, were from surrounding provinces.

Business people are closing their shops and either leaving the city or hoarding their wares in their homes, the source said.

Late Tuesday, U.S. Marines moved into Fallujah from several directions, coming under heavy fire from insurgents.

The operation has been dubbed Operation Vigilant Resolve.

Seven Marines have been killed since Saturday in the Al Anbar province -- where Fallujah is located -- but the coalition has only confirmed one as a direct result of the Fallujah conflict.

Greek fiscal deficit reaches 2.95% in 2003

ATHENS, 7 April—Greek Economy and Finance Minister George Alogoskoufis said on Monday the country's 2003 fiscal deficit reached 2.95 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) staying just within limits set by the European Union (EU).

Alogoskoufis pledged his ministry would make coordinated efforts to keep the deficit below the 3.0-per-cent limit set by the EU's Stability and Growth Pact.

However, he said a fiscal discipline apparently sought by the new government would not undermine the priority of ensuring a successful Olympic Games.

Russia concerned over deterioration of situation in Iraq

MOSCOW, 7 April—Only "extensive participation of the world community, including the neighbour countries of Iraq, together with the active role of the United Nations Organisation could give positive dynamics to the Iraqi settlement," Russian Foreign Ministry spokesmen Alexander Yakovenko said here on Tuesday in connection with the worsening of the situation in Iraq. "Russia is willing to promote that process in every way in cooperation with the US, its partners in the region and in the UN Security Council," he said.

According to Yakovenko, "it is important now to stop a wave of violence in Iraq. With this in view, it is necessary for the Iraqi nation to decide their destiny by themselves, to restore the sovereignty of their country and to become again a member of the world community in their own right. The world community, in its turn, should express solidarity with the aspirations of the Iraqi people and should render effective assistance to them in the creation of a democratic state and in the preservation of the unity and territorial integrity of the country."

"Russia has stated on more than one occasion that this goal could be attained through the convocation of an international conference under the UN aegis, at which all the political forces of Iraq would be represented, and which would outline the strategy of durable Iraqi settlement with the participation of all political forces of Iraq, members of the UN Security Council and other parties concerned."

Moscow is extremely worried over the continuing deterioration of the situation in Iraq, whose character is changing. Massive unrest, attacks on the coalition troops and the reciprocal use of force, not in proportion to the scope of the attacks, are further spreading and involving numerous casualties. Iraq is turning into a base of the activities of international terrorists," he said.
US poll shows support for Bush on Iraq falling

WASHINGTON, 7 April — Support among Americans for US President George W Bush’s handling of the Iraq war has fallen to 40 per cent after last week’s mutilation killings of US contractors, according to a new poll issued on Monday.

The President’s overall job approval and other ratings were also at or near record lows.

The Pew Research Centre survey of 790 adults taken April 1-4 showed that confidence in Bush’s handling of the Iraq situation had fallen 19 points since mid-January and was at its lowest ebb since researchers first asked the question in October 2002.

The poll was taken after last Wednesday’s heavily-publicized murder and mutilation of four US contractors in Fallujah, Iraq, which prompted new questions about the US-led occupation. The poll had a margin of error of plus or minus four percentage points.

Only 32 per cent thought Bush had a clear plan of what to do in Iraq while 57 per cent disagreed. Half of those questioned said US troops should remain in Iraq, down from 63 per cent in January.

Bush’s ratings on other issues were no stronger. His overall approval rating was 43 per cent — the lowest ever recorded by the Pew poll. His approval for handling of the economy was 39 per cent and of energy policy was 29 per cent. Bush still had a 53-per-cent approval rating for his handling of terrorist threats, according to the Pew poll.

Other national polls have shown Bush with somewhat higher ratings on Iraq and overall job approval. A CBS poll taken March 31-April 1 showed a 44 per cent minority supported his handling of Iraq. A Gallup poll taken March 26-28, before the Fallujah attacks, gave him a 51-per-cent approval rating on Iraq, which Gallup said was an increase over January.

A Los Angeles Times survey taken March 27-30 found US overall job approval rating was 51 per cent, down slightly from November and just above the 50-per-cent level that heralds a danger zone for candidates seeking re-election.

Six killed in US troops clash with militants in Fallujah

BAGHDAD, 7 April — Six people were killed and several others wounded on Monday when US troops clashed with militants in the Iraqi restive city of Fallujah, west of Baghdad, witnesses said.

The US soldiers blocked all the roads leading to Fallujah as the predawn clashes which lasted more than two hours erupted, they said.

The US troops bombed some residential neighbourhoods with rockets and cluster bombs, they added.

The US-led coalition forces has closed the highways from Baghdad to Jordan indefinitely due to military activities in the area, according to a statement issued Monday.

A number of gunmen attacked on Wednesday four American contractors and mutilated their bodies, hanging some human parts on one of the bridges in Fallujah.

The US military vowed to avenge for them.

US ally Qatar says it fears civil war in Iraq

Doha, 7 April — Qatar, a firm ally of the United States, said on Monday it feared a civil war could break out in Iraq and that the country was becoming a “fertile ground for terrorists”.

“The developments in Iraq in the last few days are alarming and we fear that we are facing a civil war in Iraq reminding me of what happened in Afghanistan and Lebanon,” Qatar Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim al-Thani told reporters on the sidelines of a conference on democracy in the Middle East.

“We are worried about the cluster of resistance and terrorist organizations in Iraq which has become a fertile ground for these people to implement their extremist ideology,” said Sheikh Hamad, whose Gulf Arab state hosted the US advance headquarters in last year’s war in Iraq.

US helicopters blasted targets in Baghdad on Monday in an intensifying showdown with Shi’ite Muslim radicals resisting America’s postwar plans for Iraq. US forces also tackled Sunni guerrillas in Fallujah, where four American security men were killed last week.

China donates 400 books to Syria

DAMASCUS, 7 April — The Chinese Embassy in Syria donated 400 books to Syria’s Assad National Library on Monday.

The books, classified in 52 categories and provided by the Chinese Ministry of Culture, showed a colourful view of the Chinese history, culture, literature, customs and arts.

Zhou Xinhua, Chinese Ambassador to Syria, and Mahmoud Sayyed, Syria’s Cultural Minister, attended the donating ceremony.

Sayed showed great interest in the books and asked journalists from the Syrian TV stations at the spot to make special programmes of China so as to further introduce the Chinese culture to ordinary Syrian people.

The minister spoke highly of the Syrian-Chinese friendly relationship during his talks with Zhou. He also extended an invitation to the Chinese Ministry of Culture to the annual book exhibition held by the Assad National Library.

The Assad National Library, built in 1985, is located in central Damascus, covering an area of 22,000 square metres with an collection of over 700,000 books.

Putin supports leading UN role in world affairs

MOSCOW, 7 April — Russian President Vladimir Putin reaffirmed on Monday that his country would continuously support the United Nations playing a leading role in world affairs.

“We are hearing everywhere that the United Nations is not doing a good job of solving the difficult problems it faces. I would like to see how the world would develop if the United Nations did not exist,” said Putin when meeting with visiting UN Secretary General Kofi Annan in the Kremlin.

“We have no other effective mechanism for solving international problems today,” Putin said in a televised statement.

The recent appointment of Sergei Lavrov, Russia’s former UN envoy, as the Foreign Minister has Underlined Russian support of the world body and its development, said the President.

He said Russia backs the idea proposed by Annan to create an expert group to discuss issues relating to UN reforms.

Lavrov, who also met with Annan later Monday, said Iraq still poses an international threat today and the international community should join forces to find solutions to the problems rather than “digging through the past”.

“We should focus on what we are to do in Iraq. It is necessary to focus on the search for constructive solutions, and this must only be done under the aegis of the UN,” Lavrov told a Press conference following the meeting.

Annan, who arrived here Sunday for a three-day visit, said the UN is already working to find a way to form a new Iraqi government by the end of June and that the organization is doing its best to help the Iraqi Government.

Speaking of the process of the Mideast settlement, Lavrov said that all moves being made by the parties must fit with the roadmap peace plan, proposed by the Mideast four mediators of the United States, Russia, the European Union and the United Nations.

He said Russia and the United Nations have similar approaches to the basic measures for settling the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

“First, bloodshed must be prevented and then long-term measures should be considered;” he was quoted as saying.

Lavrov also praised Annan’s efforts to broker a deal to heal a rift between the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities and restore the island as a unified state.

US soldier killed in blast in northern Iraq

MOSSUL, Iraq, 7 April — A roadside bomb attack on a US convoy in the northern Iraqi city of Mosul on Sunday killed one American soldier and wounded another, a US military spokesman said on Monday.

The attack was on a main road in Mosul, 240 miles north of Baghdad. Since the US-led invasion to oust Saddam Hussein last year, 420 American soldiers have been killed in action in Iraq.

US Marines with the 2nd Battalion 1st Marine Regiment pause after a gun battle with the Iraqi insurgents on the outskirts of Fallujah, Iraq, on Tuesday, 6 April 2004.

MNA/Reuters
US told early on that Iraq had no WMDs

LOS ANGELES, 7 April — Weapons inspector David Kay warned the CIA last July that there were no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq but it took months before the US Congress and the American people were told, according to a special report in the May issue of Vanity Fair Magazine.

Iraq's alleged weapons of mass destruction was the main reason cited by President George W. Bush when he launched a war against President Saddam Hussein four months earlier.

Kay told Vanity Fair that in July, less than a month after he arrived in Iraq at the behest of the CIA, he was sending e-mail to the intelligence agency's Director George Tenet that "it looks as though they did not produce weapons." He also said he was ready to quit his job in December but was urged to stay on because it would look bad if he left early. He quit about a month later. The former weapons hunter's comments appear in a 22,000-word Vanity Fair article that the magazine said was the longest piece of reporting it has ever published.

Kay said that after he concluded that there were no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq he received a phone call in Baghdad from CIA Deputy Director John McLaughlin, who told him: "We have to be very careful how we handle this."

The magazine said that as a result it was months before Congress and the public learned the truth.

Last October after briefing Congress, Kay told reporters, "We reported at this point actual weapons. It does not mean there were no actual weapons. It means at this point in time, and it's a huge country with a lot to do, that we have not yet found weapons."

Kay, at that point, said his team would have a better handle on the status of Iraq's banned weapons in six to nine months. But Vanity Fair said Kay was ready to quit by December and that Tenet pleaded with him not to do so. Kay said Tenet told him, "If you resign now it will appear like we don't know what we're doing and the wheels are coming off."

Kay resigned on January 23. A CIA spokesman had no immediate comment on the Vanity Fair article.

The magazine also reported that Vice-President Dick Cheney visited the CIA about 10 times prior to the war to argue his views, according to a member of his staff. — MNA/Reuters

US Marines with the 2nd Battalion 1st Marine Regiment stand guard at a railway on the outskirts of Fallujah, Iraq, on Tuesday, 6 April, 2004. — INTERNET

Australian PM urges Pacific nations to work together

CANBERRA, 7 April — Australian Prime Minister John Howard on Monday called on Pacific nations to continue to work closely together for the common goal of a secure and prosperous region.

Howard made the call on the eve of a special retreat of Pacific Islands Forum leaders in Auckland, New Zealand.

"Australia and our regional friends and neighbours must and will continue to work closely together towards the common goal of a secure and prosperous region. The forum has a valuable role to play in achieving this," Howard said in a statement, in which he announced he will attend the meeting.

The meeting was called by Prime Minister of New Zealand Helen Clark, the forum's chairwoman, to discuss a report on forum reform commissioned by leaders in the 34th Pacific Islands Forum in New Zealand in August last year.

Howard's call came at a time when some regional leaders are rejecting the idea of establishing a European Union-style Pacific Union, proposed by Australia last year.

MNA/Xinhua

Road accidents are major health problem in Asia, Pacific

MANILA, 7 April — Road accidents are a major public health problem in Asia and the Pacific, with some 10 million people severely injured or killed annually on the region's roads, the World Health Organization (WHO)'s Western Pacific Regional Office (WPRO) warned Monday.

The WPRO said in a statement that the Asia-Pacific region, where 16 per cent of the world's vehicles run, accounts for about 60 per cent of global road deaths.

Road deaths jumped by nearly 40 per cent in Asia between 1987 and 1995 while in developed nations, they fell by about 10 per cent because of better safety measures, it said.

"If current trends continue, road accidents will be the third global cause of disability or injury by 2020, after heart disease and depression, with the numbers of those killed and disabled up by 60 per cent," the statement said.

In the coming WHO’s World Health Day on 7 April, the road safety will serve as the theme for 2004.

WPRO’s Director Shigeru Omi said roads, which is the gateway for the development in the region, have been where many people are injured, disabled or killed. “This is a public health crisis which demands our attention."

WPRO cited in the statement the use of seat belts, restrictions on speed and alcohol intake, and enhanced vehicle standards and road design and conditions as key preventive measures of more car accidents.

MNA/Xinhua

Bremer cancels Washington trip amid Iraq violence

WASHINGTON, 7 April — The US administrator in Iraq, Paul Bremer, has cancelled a trip to brief lawmakers in Washington and will stay in Iraq as occupation forces battle an uprising by radical Shi’ites, lawmakers said on Monday.

Bremer had been slated to brief senators, some of whom have begun to question the US timetable for transferring sovereignty to Iraqis, at the Capitol on Tuesday. "I think it is because of the activity that is going on there — that he felt he should or he should stay there," said Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist, a Tennessee Republican. — MNA/Reuters

Venezuela to supply fuel to Argentina

CARACAS, 7 April — Venezuela is to supply Argentina with fuels worth 200 million US dollars through an accord to be signed by the governments of both countries.

Venezuelan Energy and Mines Minister Rafael Ramirez said Monday the state-run oil company PDVSA is to supply Argentina with five million barrels of fuel oil and 250,000 barrels of diesel oil.

Ramirez said an Argentine mission, led by Julio de Vido, an official in charge of planning, was due to arrive shortly to sign the accord on fuel supply.

The accord was reached on 29 March, under which Venezuela will provide fuel for the Argentine electric companies to guarantee heating for the coming winter, a season that lasts approximately from May to September.

Ramirez added that the Argentine mission includes more than 15 important officials who will discuss payment conditions that might include a food swap.

MNA/Xinhua

US death toll from Baghdad clashes rises to eight

BAGHDAD, 7 April — An eighth US soldier has died from wounds sustained in fighting with Shi’ite militiamen in the impoverished Baghdad suburb of Sadr City on Sunday, the US Army said on Monday.

An Army statement said its previous reports that a US soldier was also killed in Sunday in clashes with Shiites near Najaf was incorrect. It said a Salvadoran was the only foreign soldier killed in the fighting near Najaf, 100 miles south of Baghdad.

Since the US-led invasion to oust Saddam Hussein last year, 423 American soldiers have been killed in action in Iraq. — MNA/Reuters

Iraqis chant anti US slogans in Najaf, 170 kilometers, 105 miles south of Baghdad, Iraq, on Tuesday, 6 April, 2004. — INTERNET

MNA/Xinhua

Bank of America to cut 12,500 jobs

WASHINGTON, 7 April — Bank of America Corp said Monday that it will cut 12,500 jobs, or about 7 per cent of its work force. The reductions will occur over the next two years and will begin this month.

Bank of America completed its merger with FleetBoston Financial Corp last week, which created the third biggest bank in the United States. The bank said approximately 30 per cent of the cuts will come through attrition. Ken Lewis, chief executive of Bank of America has said that he wants to achieve about 1.6 billion US dollars in cost savings by the end of 2005.

Bank of America Corp and FleetBoston Financial Corp do not have a large number of overlapping branches that can be closed, which is a major source of savings in many bank mergers. Instead, Lewis has said that the bank expects to get a net 650 million dollars in savings from trimming overlapping operations and processes. The bank will be able to consoli-date headquarters for combined business lines.

MNA/Xinhua

Vanity Fair's Director George Tenet that "it looks as though they did not produce weapons."
Gunbattles cast shadow over Iraq handover deadline

BAGHDAD, 7 April — As US forces battle militants with helicopter gunships and heavy arms, plans for Iraqis to take power within three months look increasingly doubtful.

The US administration is due to hand sovereignity to an Iraqi government on June 30 which will take charge of a raft of affairs from trade policy to foreign relations as well as more responsibility for security.

More than 120,000 US and coalition troops will remain in Iraq, conducting daily anti-guerrilla operations, but the intention is for Iraqis to steadily take over authority for policing and security in a country awash with insurgency.

“There’s no way Iraq is ready to take over 90 per cent of the responsibility for running the country in less than three months,” Jonathan Stevenson, a Middle East expert at London’s International Institute for Strategic Studies, told Reuters.

“For US policy in Iraq to be vindicated, the country has to be made stable, which means US forces staying to fight an insurgency and stave off a civil war.”

In a statement following an explosion in the Shiite district of Sadr City in Baghdad, two members of the US Senate’s foreign relations panel said the Bush Administration should consider extending the June 30 handover deadline or risk seeing Iraq fall into even deeper trouble.

“We’re going to end up with a civil war in Iraq, if in fact we decide we can turn this over — including the bulk of the security — to the Iraqis,” Democrat Senator Joseph Biden told Fox News Sunday, saying an Iraqi force would not be ready to assume security duties for at least another three years. “Something’s got to be worked out between now and then or else we’re going to end up with a civil war there. We’re going to end up with the worst of all worlds.”

Republican Senator Richard Lugar, the chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, was equally stern, criticizing the White House for its lack of a plan for what happens after Paul Bremer, the US governor of Iraq, leaves the country on July 1.

“At this point, I would have thought there would have been a more comprehensive plan,” he told ABC’s “This Week” on Sunday. “The fact is that we don’t know what’s going on.”

Asked whether it was time for Washington to consider extending the sovereignty deadline, Lugar said: “It may be. And I think it’s probably time to have that debate.”

MNA/Reuters

Spanish troops come under mortar fire in Iraq

MACAO, 7 April — Spanish-led troops in Iraq came under mortar fire on Monday, one day after deadly clashes with protesters in and near the holy Shia site city of Najaf, Spain’s Defence Ministry said.

“Both in Najaf and in Dhi Qar, the besieging forces and the (Spanish-led) Plus Ultra Brigade have been under sporadic attack from mortar launchers, although none of the rounds has caused personal or material damage,” a Defence Ministry statement said.

The Spanish-led brigade, which includes Central American troops, clashed with mortars on Sunday who were upset over the arrest of an aide to a radical cleric.

MNA/Reuters

US urged not to interfere in other countries’ affairs

KUALA LUMPUR, 7 April — The United States should not try to interfere in the affairs of other countries under the guise of fighting international threats, Malaysian Foreign Minister Syed Hamid Albar said on Monday.

“One you (the US) start to place your Navy in the Straits of Melaka, you are actually interfering with our rights in that area,” Syed Hamid told reporters at his office in Putrajaya.

In a clear jab at the US Government, they said they had negotiated discounts of 30 per cent or more on HIV diagnostic tests and on drugs whose safety has been questioned by the Bush Administration.

“Simply put, the Clinton Foundation will negotiate the drug prices, UNICEF will employ its procurement capacity and the Global Fund and World Bank will provide the funding, “ Stephen Lewis, United Nations Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa, said in a statement.

About 15 Iraqis killed in Nassiriya clashes

ROMN, 7 April — About 15 Iraqi civilians and Iraqi soldiers were killed in clashes between Italian troops and Shiite militants in the southern town of Nassiriya on Tuesday, the Italian news agency ANSA quoted an official as saying.

ANSA quoted Paola della Casa, a spokeswoman for the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) as saying that the number was an estimate and that isolated clashes were continuing.

There were victims during the clashes and right now it seems the number of dead is about 15, although this is just an approximate estimate,” she was quoted as saying.

MNA/Reuters

Australia to push for free trade talks with ASEAN

CANBERRA, 7 April — Australia aims to push forward four years of free trade talks with the 10-member Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) when the head of the group visits next week, Foreign Minister Alexander Downer said on Tuesday.

Secretary-General Ong Keng Yong was to visit Australia in five days from April 12 as part of the 30th anniversary celebrations of relations between Australia and ASEAN, Downer said.

“It’ll be an opportunity for us to reinforce our commitment to strong security relations with ASEAN, to build the trade relationship,” Downer told a news conference.

“Our long-term vision is the Free Trade Agreement between Australia and ASEAN,” he said.

However, he said ASEAN was not ready for a free trade deal despite talks with the Australian Government that began in 2000.

Instead, Canberra was pursuing deals with more advanced nations in ASEAN.

Last year Australia, a leading agricultural exporter, sealed a free trade agreement with Singapore and a recently concluded deal with Thailand was expected to come into force in early 2005.

Australia struck a free trade deal in February with the United States, its second-largest trading partner after Japan, which is set to go into effect in 2005.

A police officer joins supporters of Iraq Shi’ite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr celebrating on the roof while occupying the governor’s residence in the southern city of Basra, on 5 April, 2004. The costs of the war in Iraq, which contributed to a destabilization of the Middle East, have outweighed the benefits of removing Saddam Hussein, former UN weapons inspector Hans Blix told a Danish newspaper on 6 April. —INTERNET

Clinton, UN announce cheap generic “AIDS” drug plan

WASHINGTON, 7 April— The UN, World Bank, the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and former US president Bill Clinton on Tuesday said they had set up a joint plan to buy and distribute cheap generic AIDS drugs in poor countries.

“We’re talking of fixed-dose combinations of generic drugs, pre-qualified by the World Health Organization, to be purchased overwhelmingly from generic companies based in India, at prices as low as 140 US dollars per person per year.”

There will be protocols and administrative requirements of course, but nothing should now stand in the way of rolling out treatment to hundreds of thousands — soon to be millions — in the immediate future.”

And they will be cheap.

Lewis said.

“With the Clinton Foundation negotiating the drug prices, UNICEF will employ its procurement capacity and the Global Fund and World Bank will provide the funding.”


About 15 Iraqis killed in Nassiriya clashes

ROMN, 7 April — About 15 Iraqi civilians and Iraqi soldiers were killed in clashes between Italian troops and Shiite militants in the southern town of Nassiriya on Tuesday, the Italian news agency ANSA quoted a local official as saying.

ANSA quoted Paola della Casa, a spokeswoman for the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) as saying the number of dead is about 15, although this is just an approximate estimate.”

MNA/Reuters

An Iraqi child looks at the damage on 6 April, 2004, following an explosion in the Shiite district of Sadr City, north Baghdad, Iraq, late Monday. —INTERNET

Sources:

Ansa

INTERNET

Australia to push for free trade talks with ASEAN

CANBERRA, 7 April — Australia aims to push forward four years of free trade talks with the 10-member Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) when the head of the group visits next week, Foreign Minister Alexander Downer said on Tuesday.

Secretary-General Ong Keng Yong was to visit Australia in five days from April 12 as part of the 30th anniversary celebrations of relations between Australia and ASEAN, Downer said.

“It’ll be an opportunity for us to reinforce our commitment to strong security relations with ASEAN, to build the trade relationship,” Downer told a news conference.

“Our long-term vision is the Free Trade Agreement between Australia and ASEAN.” However, he said ASEAN was not ready for a free trade deal despite talks with the Australian Government that began in 2000.

Instead, Canberra was pursuing deals with more advanced nations in ASEAN.

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Australia struck a free trade deal in February with the United States, its second-largest trading partner after Japan, which is set to go into effect in 2005.

A police officer joins supporters of Iraq Shi’ite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr celebrating on the roof while occupying the governor’s residence in the southern city of Basra, on 5 April, 2004. The costs of the war in Iraq, which contributed to a destabilization of the Middle East, have outweighed the benefits of removing Saddam Hussein, former UN weapons inspector Hans Blix told a Danish newspaper on 6 April. —INTERNET

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An Iraqi child looks at the damage on 6 April, 2004, following an explosion in the Shiite district of Sadr City, north Baghdad, Iraq, late Monday. —INTERNET

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INTERNET
An Introduction to Bioeconomic

Sein Sein Thein (Dagon University)

In this article I would like to present about bioeconomic. A bioeconomic approach means that it com- bines two elements: the biology of animal growth and the behavioral consequences that flow from eco- nomic decision made by humans. At first, I will present marine resources. Ocean and inland water cover more than two thirds of the surface of the earth on which the activities of organisms are concentrated. The aquatic ecosystem is the source of numerous products and services of value to humans. And then, we stated land and the ubiquitous natural resources. Human beings are land- dwelling creatures and for them land is both a spatial re- source for work, travel and play and a productive resource from which they draw their suste- nance of food, fibre and other materials, thus we find land is the ultimate resource in the sense that is the surface of the earth on which the activities of organisms are concentrated.

A minimal classification of natural resources would perhaps be: land resources, water resources and air resources. These are broken down into extractive and non-extractive resources. Extractive resources are those subject to some process of physical removal from their natural surroundings and perhaps physical transformation during their use. Non-extractive resources are those that yield valuable services without being removed from their natural setting. Class includes the mining and ores of various types and harvesting of timber. Commercial fishing, recreational fish- ing, and hunting are extractive. But the class of non-extractive resource is resources-based recreation, such as backpacking and river rafting. These may produce both extractive and non-extractive services. Forests may produce both tim- ber and backpacking. Water can be used for municipal and industrial goods and services. Twenty years ago, the word biodiversity did not exist. Now it is a household word and a major focus of research in biology and ecology. The newest natural resources, biodiversity is perhaps a special category of extractive resources. Biodiversity refers to the variation that exists at all levels of biological organization, individual species and ecosystems. We consider biodiversity protection and conservation using the analytical tools of economic of the developing countries today that are heav- ily dependent on natural resources, especially agricultural or fishery resources. There are two important linkages that need to be looked at closely the contribution that natural resources make to the rate of economic growth such as in Ecotourism. Tourists are a ubiquitous part of the modern world. Ecotourists are those whose visits are linked in some fashion to natural or environmental resources. Ecotourism is seen by people sometimes as a key element for stimulating economic development.

Ecotourism has a number of important bioeconomic aspects. And the differences will hinge on the trade-off between the values of the biological impacts and the eco- nomic value associated with the ecotourism. I assumed that tourism is a major contributor to the economy for many years. Economic growth in any country is related to the growth in its productive capacity relative to the growth of its population, growth requires increase in the quantity of inputs or in the productivity. We thus have a way of linking natural resources with economic growth. Natural resources can be thought of as natural capital, the quanti- ties and qualities of which are provided by nature. Human beings may make use of this capital, combining it with other inputs to produce goods and services. Natural re- sources economics is a study of how the flow of goods and services derived from natural resources is and ought to be managed in today’s world.

These cases show that linking natural resources with economic growth. Natural resources economics focuses on resources flows into an economy, in order to get out of that economy back into nature is studied under environmental economics. There is a great variety of types of natural resources goods and services. The most basic distinction between natural resources is that between renewable and non-renewable resources characteristics such as recyclability and reversibility are very important. So to analyze the problems of salt water fisheries, for example, we will try to understand the basic biologic operation of the interconnected system that includes the growth and decline of fish stock together with the human fishing effort expended on them. We must try to understand the main linkage between natural resources and such things as the rate of growth.

Hoisting of diamond bud atop Thabinnyu Pagoda coordinated

YANGON, 7 April — A coordination meeting was held at the meeting hall of the Ministry of Transport, Merchant Street here at 12 noon for the successful hoisting of diamond bud. Htingmyatnaaw and Shwehtiatd atop of Thabinnyu Pagoda, which will be constructed for pub- lic service, were seen off at Yangon International Airport by Director (News) of the News and Periodicals Enterprise U Hla Tun and officials. — MNA

PRC delegation concludes visit

YANGON, 7 April — The Chinese journalist delega- tion led by Editor of the Farmers’ Daily of the People’s Republic of China Mr Liu Zhanmin left here by air for home this afternoon. They were seen off at Yangon Inter- national Airport by Director (News) of the News and Periodicals Enterprise U Hla Tun and officials. — MNA
Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt and party receiving Five Precepts from Khamaukchaung Sayadaw Bhaddanta Vanna at cornerstone laying ceremony of a monastery in Bandarban.— MNA

At the luncheon, State Minister for Communications Mr Salah Uddin Ahmed and Prime Minister of the Union of Myanmar General Khin Nyunt delivered addresses. Next, the Prime Minister and party had lunch together with the Bangladeshi Minister and party.

Afterwards, the Prime Minister and party proceeded to Ramu (Parwa) and attended the ceremony to open the stone pillar to mark the construction of Bangladesh-Myanmar Friendship Road.

According to the programme, Minister for Transport Maj-Gen Hla Myint Swe and Bangladesh Minister for Communications Barister Nazmul Huda formally opened the stone pillar to mark completion of 36 kilometres long Ramu-Gundun road section of 133 kilometres long Bangladesh-Myanmar Friendship Road.

Next, they went to Aggameda Myanmar Monastery in Cox’s Bazar (Phalaungcheik) where they were welcomed by disciples and local Myanmar people.

General Khin Nyunt and party paid homage to Sayadaw Bhaddanta Pandita and members of the Sangha and offered a Buddha image and provisions to the Sayadaws. Next, the General cordially conversed with local Myanmar people.

In the evening, the General and party arrived back in Chittagong.

While in Chittagong, the General received reporters from news agencies and newspapers at Agrabad Hotel and explained the purpose of the goodwill visit and agreements reached for cooperation in various sectors of the two countries. Also present at the call were Bangladeshi Minister for Foreign Affairs Mr M Morshed Khan, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs U Khin Maung Win, Director-General Lt-Col Pe Nyein of the State Peace and Development Council Office and Director-General U Soe Tint of the Government Office.

In the evening, Bangladeshi Minister for Foreign Affairs Mr M Morshed Khan hosted a dinner in honour of the General and party at Agrabad Hotel in Chittagong. At the dinner, Minister M Morshed Khan and General Khin Nyunt delivered addresses. Next, the General and party had dinner together with the Bangladeshi Minister and party. Also present at the dinner were Secretary-1 Lt-Gen Soe Win, Commander Maj-Gen Maung Oo, the ministers, the deputy ministers, the Myanmar Ambassador and departmental officials, the Bangladeshi Minister for Foreign Affairs and ministers, deputy ministers, members of Parliament, local authorities, the Chittagong Mayor, consuls-general, merchants and guests. After the dinner, traditional dances were presented to the audience. — MNA

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Nursery Market Festival continues

YANGON, 7 April — The Nursery Market Festival continued at Myayha Padetha Park in Bahan Township here today with the aim of providing necessary assistance to growers and attracting the public to be interested in agriculture, horticulture, livestock breeding and vegetable farming.

Kitchen crops, fruits and saplings of herbal plants are being shown at the festival. Poultry farming and fish breeding are also exhibited there. Booklets and pamphlets on utilization of fertilizers are also available there. MNA

Traditional dances being presented to Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt and party at the dinner in Chittagong.— MNA

Secretary-1 Lt-Gen Soe Win laying cornerstone of Nat Nagamin Lake Monastery in Bandarban.— MNA

Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt addresses the dinner hosted in Chittagong by Minister for Foreign Affairs Mr M Morshed Khan of Bangladesh.— MNA

Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt and party receiving Five Precepts from Khamaukchaung Sayadaw Bhaddanta Vanna at cornerstone laying ceremony of a monastery in Bandarban.— MNA

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Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt and party tour Chittagong, Bandarban, Cox’s Bazar in Bangladesh

Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt donates cash for use in propagation of Theravada Buddhism in Tadagyi Village, Ywadaw.—MNA

Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt offers Maha Bo tree to Sayadaws at the ceremony to plant Maha Bo tree in Tadagyi Village, Ywadaw.—MNA

Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt plants Maha Bo tree at ceremony to lay cornerstone for building the monastery in Tadagyi Village, Ywadaw.—MNA

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Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt meets with reporters from news agencies and newspapers in Chittagong.—MNA

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Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt and party being welcomed in Chittagong by Adviser to Foreign Affairs Mr Reaz Rahman and party.—MNA

Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt being welcomed by officials in Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh.—MNA

Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt cordially converses with local Myanmar people at Aggamedha Myanmar Monastery in Cox’s Bazar.—MNA
Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt and party tour
Chittagone, Bandarban, Cox’s Bazar in Bangladesh

Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt offers provisions to Aggameda Monastery Sayadaw Bhaddanta Pandita in Cox’s Bazar. — MNA

Bangladeshi State Minister for Communications Mr Salah Uddin Ahmed presents souvenir to Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt at the dinner in Cox’s Bazar. — MNA

Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt signs in the visitors’ book at Maha Sukha Haungpyay Pagoda. — MNA

Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt offers provisions to Aggameda Monastery Sayadaw Bhaddanta Pandita in Cox’s Bazar. — MNA

Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt unveils the plaque to mark cornerstone laying ceremony of Nat Nagamin Monastery in Bandarban. — MNA

Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt addresses the luncheon hosted by State Minister for Communications Mr Salah Uddin Ahmed in Cox’s Bazar. — MNA

State Minister for Communications Mr Salah Uddin Ahmed addresses the luncheon in Cox’s Bazar. — MNA
Ever like the Padauk

* Thingyan Festival is Myanmar’s Cultured festival since long ago
  Water’s splashed and you feel refreshed
  The waterfest is New Year Fest.
* Of all Myanmar’s festivals
  The Festival to douse water
  Is enjoyed by all throughout the land
  It’s traditional and touches the heart.
* Traditional Waterfest, the grandest occasion
  Captures Myanmar’s honour, displays culture
  These are displayed as vital points.
* At Festival time, in summer
  Throughout the land, Golden Padauk
  Buds and blooms, nationwide
  Its fragrance is wafted.
* Every year, without losing fervour
  The branches of yellow padauk
  As if beautifying the nation
  Myanmar blood, Myanmar kin
  Our Myanmar’s being cultured
  As tradition goes we must together
  Display at the festival
  The Waterfest
  We believe we’ll celebrate
  We’ll feel everfresh in mind
  And keep enhancing beauty of Myanmar.
  May Yu (Trs.)

Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt offers provisions to a Sayadaw at cornerstone laying ceremony of the monastery in Bandarban. — MNA

Wellwishers invited for sinking tube-wells

YANGON, 7 April — The Development Affairs Committees under the Ministry for Progress of Border Areas and National Races and Development Affairs are making concerted efforts to sink tube-wells for sufficient safe 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 following telephone numbers.

Director-General (Tel: 01-245420 & 253088), the Deputy Director-General (Tel: 01-240118), the Director (Engineering) (Tel: 01-291967), the Directors (Sagaing Division Development Affairs Committee) (Tel: 071-21012), the Director (Mandala Development Affairs Committee) (Tel: 063-23164) and the Director (Magway Division Development Affairs Committee) (Tel: 02-54657). — MNA

U Saw Pra of Ywadaw presents horns of deer to Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt. — MNA

Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt presents cash donations towards Maha Sukha HsuTaungpyay Pagoda. — MNA

A townelder presents picture of HsuTaungpyay Pagoda to Secretary-1 Lt-Gen Soe Win. — MNA

Secretary-1 Lt-Gen Soe Win signs in the visitors’ book at Maha Sukha HsuTaungpyay Pagoda. — MNA

Bangladesh Minister for Foreign Affairs Mr M Morshed Khan delivers an address at the dinner in Chittagong. — MNA

First Leg of Myanmar Golf Tour 2004 12-15 April

YANGON, 7 April — The 46th PyinOoLwin invitational golf tournament, the first leg of Myanmar Golf Tour, organized by Myanmar Golf Federation and PyinOoLwin Golf Club, will be held on a grand scale at PyinOoLwin Golf Club from 12 to 15 April.

The golf tournament included professional event, amateur event, individual handicap event, senior event and women event.

The tournament was mainly sponsored by KM Golf Centre and PyinOoLwin Golf Club and co-sponsors were Maruman, Shwe Sar Yan Golf Resort, Eden Group, Air Mandalay, Imperial Jade, MK Fashion Shop, VES, AK Company, Wilson, Tiger and Sun Far Travels and Tour.

Those wishing to participate in the tournament are to enlist at PyinOoLwin Golf Club and can contact for any further information. It was organized by Han Event Management and PyinOoLwin Golf Club for ensuring successful holding the tournament. Rothmans of Pall Mall Myanmar Pte, Ltd will provide as tour sponsors throughout the Myanmar Golf Tour 2004. — MNA

The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago.

The second best time is now.
Philippine exports up 7.5% in February

MANILA, 7 April — Philippine merchandise exports went up 7.5 per cent year-on-year in February, reaching 2.999 billion US dollars, the government said Tuesday.

Electronic products, which accounted 65.9 per cent of all exports in February, rose by 6.6 per cent over the same period last year to 1.976 billion US dollars, the National Statistics Office said in a statement.

Apparel and clothing accessories, the second largest export accounting for 62.6 per cent of the total in February, was down 6.8 per cent over the same period last year to 185.03 million US dollars, the office said.

Japan was the single largest buyer of Philippines exports, accounting for 17.4 per cent of the total or 523.14 million US dollars in February, followed by the United States with 17.2 per cent of the total or 516.1 million US dollars, it added.

Philippine exports growth in February was a sharp improvement over the 4.1 per cent growth in January, with the total export reaching the first two months this year up 5.8 per cent year-on-year to 5.843 billion US dollars.

The Philippines is expecting to register a 10-per cent export growth this year, setting up 20 polling stations in the first two months this year from 5:00 a.m. to 11:00 am at home and abroad were delayed as their crew members cast their votes on Monday.

The delay which occurred from 5:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. mostly affected money-making routes linking Jakarta to Medan, Denpasar, Pontianak, Balikpapan and Batam, state news agency Antara reported.

The report said the delay also affected flights from Jakarta to Hong Kong, Singapore, Guangzhou and Kuala Lumpur.

Baaski, head of the airport’s flight safety service, said the delay was mainly caused by a small number of passengers and the legislative election.

Actually, PT Angkasa Pura II, the airport’s operator, has anticipated the delay by setting up 20 polling stations in the airport, he said.

32 flights delayed as crew members cast votes in Indonesia

JAKARTA, 7 April — Thirty-two flights from the Soekarno-Hatta Airport in Jakarta to a number of cities at home and abroad were delayed as their crew members cast their votes on Monday.

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Brazil denies barring inspectors from nuclear plant

RIO DE JANEIRO (Brazil), 7 April — Brazil on Monday denied it was refusing to allow UN inspectors into a uranium enrichment plant, saying it was strictly following the conditions set out in international treaties.

Foreign Minister Celso Amorim acknowledged, however, that Brazil was negotiating with the United Nations’ atomic watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), so that a proposed expansion of its inspections regime would not undermine national proprietary research at risk.

On Sunday, the Washington Post reported Brazil was denying access to inspectors at the Resende plant in order to comply with a promise the IAEA made to the United States and Israel at their demand would further support Brazil’s case for becoming more influential in the international market and become more prosperous.

Accoding to CEPA, which has been implemented from the beginning of this year, more Hong Kong films will have the access to China’s mainland market.

Quite a number of Chinese mainland film directors and stars such as Feng Xiaogang, Jiang Wen, Zhou Xun and Xu Jinglei were in attended the award conferring ceremony Sunday night.

China’s economic stimulates demand for petrochemical products

HONG KONG, 7 April — China’s economy will further stimulate the increase in petrochemical products in 2004, said Du Guosheng, chairman of the board of Sinopine Beijing Yanzhua Petrochemical Company Limited, here Tuesday.

Announcing the annual results of the company, Du said that looking forward to 2004, since the international economic situation has seen further improvement recently, the board of the company believes that international commodity prices will not only intensify market competition, but will also exert significant influence on the production and operations of the petrochemical industry in China, said Du.

In 2003, despite the outbreaak of the Iraqi war and the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), China’s economy nonetheless continued to grow at a high speed and the demand for petrochemicals remained strong, said Du.

Due to strong market demand for petrochemicals and an increase in the prices of raw materials in 2003, petrochemical products in China maintained a high price level, which resulted in about 20 per cent increase in the weighted average sales price of the eight principal products of the company.

Russian nuclear expert convicted of spying

MOSCOW, 7 April — A Russian nuclear weapons expert was convicted of passing secrets to the United States and Britain was found guilty of treason on Monday, Russian news agencies reported.

Igor Sutyagin, an arms expert from Moscow’s respected USA-Canada Institute, could receive a jail term of up to 20 years from a judge in the Russian capital. The judge is to pass sentence on Tuesday.

“The jury were unanimous in finding him guilty,” Sutyagin’s lawyer Boris Kuznetsov was quoted as saying by Interfax news agency.

“Moreover only four of them felt he deserved leniency. Most — eight — came to the conclusion that he did not.” MNA/Reuters

Los Angeles Times tops list with five Pulitzer Prizes

New York, 7 April — The Los Angeles Times won five Pulitzer Prizes on Monday, winning journalism’s top awards for coverage of California wildfires and Wal-Mart, offshore car reviews, editorials on the troubled state government and photographs of Liberia’s civil war.

In a year when the war in Iraq dominated much of the news, only two prizes went to journalists covering the US-led invasion.

The international reporting award went to Anthony Shadid of The Washington Post and the Pulitzer for breaking news photography went to David Leeson and Cheryl Diaz Meyer of The Dallas Morning News for photographs depicting the violence of the war with Iraq. Winners received 10,000 US dollars, up from 7,500 US dollars, in a tumultuous year in journalism, rocked by false reporting scandals that hit at The New York Times and USA Today. The 88th annual awards were announced on Monday at New York’s Columbia University.

Beside the Los Angeles Times, The Wall Street Journal was the only other multi- prize winner. Beat reporting honours went to Daniel Golden for stories on admission preferences given to children of alumni and donors at US universities.

The Journal’s other award came for explanatory reporting by Kevin Helfiker and Thomas M Burton for coverage of aneurysms.

The New York Times won its sole 2004 prize for Public Service reporting for the work of David Barstow and Lowell Bergman that examined death and injury among US workers and exposed employers who break basic safety rules. The winners in this category got a gold medal rather than a financial award.

The staff of The Los Angeles Times was honoured for breaking news coverage of wildfires in southern California.

Tung said his government will further support Hong Kong’s film industry and expects Hong Kong films to become more influential in the international market and become more prosperous.

According to CEPA, which has been implemented from the beginning of this year, more Hong Kong films will have the access to China’s mainland market.

Quite a number of Chinese mainland film directors and stars such as Feng Xiaogang, Jiang Wen, Zhou Xun and Xu Jinglei were invited to the award conferring ceremony Sunday night.

Two crocodiles lie by their feeding pond. Footprints found on a mud bank in a suburban Hong Kong town may belong to wild dogs and not a runaway crocodile, the government said after the discovery caused panic among villagers. —INR

China develops powerful semiconductor chip for illumination

SZEZENZ, 7 April — A powerful semiconductor chip used for illumination has been developed by a Chinese high-tech company here.

Two to three semiconductor chips of this kind are able to form a high-powered illumination, said China Fangda Group, a high-tech company based in Shenzhen, Monday.

Usually over 100 semiconductor chips are needed to make a reading lamp.

The illumination industry worldwide has agreed that LED (light-emitting diodes) semiconductors will be a trend for the industry’s future development but without powerful semiconductor chips they are not widely used as a light source, the company said.

A LED semiconductor lamp uses one tenth of the electricity that an incandescent lamp of the same power needs and lasts 100 times longer.

The Chinese Government has listed high-powered LED semiconductor chips as one of the major scientific and technological research projects during the period of the tenth Five-Year Plan (2001-2005).

MNA/Xinhua

China’s economic stimulates demand for petrochemical products

HONG KONG, 7 April — “Running on Karma” produced by One Hundred Years Film Co Ltd won the Best Film prize of the 23rd Hong Kong Film Award conferred on Sunday night.

Johnnie To obtained Best Director prize for the film “PTU”. Andy Lau won the Best Actor prize for his role in “Running on Karma” for his years efforts on playing various roles in Hong Kong films.

The Best Actress prize was awarded to Cecilia Cheung who played a character in the film “Lost in Time”. Tony Leung Ka Fai ob- tained Best Supporting Ac- tor prize for his role in “Men Suddenly in Black” while Rosie Ho won Best Support- ing Actress prize for her role in film “Naked Ambition”.

Hong Kong Chief Execu- tive Tung Chee Hwa at- tended the award confering ceremony and conferred Best Asia Film prize to a representative from Japan’s Shockiku Co Ltd for film “The Twilight Samurai”.

He said he likes Hong Kong films and Hong Kong Chinese Mainland made films. He said quite a number of Hong Kong films are of international fame and felt proud of Hong Kong films.

He has seen “Infernal Af- fairs”, “Hero”, “Crouching Tiger and Hidden Dragon” and some other films.

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MNA/Xinhua

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**SPORTS**

**Beckham denies newspaper allegations**

LONDON, 7 April — England soccer captain David Beckham has denied newspaper allegations that he had an affair with his former personal assistant but failed on Monday to stop media speculation about the state of his marriage.

British tabloids were full of intimate details of the alleged affair between Beckham, 28, and 26-year-old Rebecca Loos following Sunday's Original News of the World story, including a series of explicit text messages the paper said was from Beckham.

The Real Madrid midfielder issued a statement describing the story as “ludicrous” and said he was happily married a “marvelous wife”. “There is nothing that any third party can do to change these facts,” he said.

Rumours regarding the state of the style icon’s marriage to his pop star wife Victoria started last September following his move to Madrid from Manchester.

As one of the biggest sports names in marketing, Beckham and his wife are regularly the focus of intense media speculation in Britain and Spain and are treated on a par with royalty by their millions of fans. — MNA/Reuters

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**Smith strikes dramatic late winner for Leeds**

LONDON, 7 April — Striker Alan Smith smashed in an 86th-minute winner to give Leeds United a dramatic three-goal late victory over fellow strugglers Leicester City on Monday and continue their push towards Premier League survival.

Two goals in two minutes early in the first half appeared to have put Leeds in control but a similar cross from the visitors late in the second saw them level at 2-2.

Smith’s late goal, however, earned three points that brought the Yorkshire club level with Leicester on 28 points and drew five of their last six league games, making the running.

The 27-year-old acrobatic over-the-wall effort came after Seth Johnson’s deep cross in the 11th minute with a financial takeover safely negotiated facing financial ruin two weeks ago but, with Leicester on 28 points. They stay second in the race for a UEFA Cup place after

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**Cambodia beat East Timor 3-1 in U-14 football match**

Phnom Penh, 7 April — The Under 14 year-old football team of Cambodia defeated East Timor 3-1 in the Asia Football Confederation (AFC) U-14 Festival of Football 2004.

The Cambodian team has put pressure on its counterpart for the whole first half.

Cambodian players Phnom Penh scored the opening goal in the 23rd minute. Another Cambodian player, Sen Chomnuch scored two goals in the second half, while Thanh My scored a goal in the third half.

— MNA/Reuters

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**Furtado’s “Forca” unveiled as official Euro 2004 song**

Lisbon, 7 April — Canadian-born singer Nelly Furtado’s “Forca” has been chosen as the official song of the Euro 2004 Soccer Championship being held in Portugal, tournament organizers said on Monday.

Furtado, who was born in Canada to Portuguese emigrants from the Azores, became a hit in Portugal in a corner for Manchester United before the final at the Stadium of Light on July 4 and is likely to release a new version in Portugal.

“My understanding is that there will be a Portuguese version and that it will be released in June in time for the start of the UEFA marketing director Pat Riley said at a news conference to launch the song on Monday.

Euro 2004, one of the world’s largest sporting events, runs from June 12 to July 4. Holders France are among 16 finalists at the tournament, which takes place every four years. — MNA/Reuters

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**Owen restores Liverpool to fourth, Villa held**

LONDON, 7 April — England striker Michael Owen grabbed a first-half double as Liverpool crushed Blackburn Rovers 4-0 at Anfield on Sunday to reclaim fourth place in the Premier League.

The result means Liverpool leapfrogged Newcastle United in the battle for the fourth and final qualifying spot for next season’s Champions League.

With seven goals left, Liverpool have 49 points, one more than Newcastle, who beat Everton 4-2 on Saturday.

In Sunday’s other game Aston Villa’s hopes of qualifying for Europe suffered a blow as they were held to a 1-1 draw at home by struggling Manchester City.

Liverpool made an electrifying start and Owen, who missed England’s 1-0 friendly defeat by Sweden on Wednesday, made it 1-0 in the first half with a stunning 25-yard unstoppable close-range volley.

Owen, 21, struck again after the break with an unstoppable volley to make it 2-0 after 22 minutes. Two minutes later Owen fired into the top corner from another Diouf pass to wrap up the points with barely a quarter of the match played.

Rovers improved slightly in the second half, but Liverpool’s confident play was enough to see them through. 

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**Real Zaragoza 2 — Racing Santander 1**

Attack-minded Racing fought their way from two goals down to claim an important away draw that keeps both sides well clear of the relegation zone.

Zaragoza, in front late in the first half when he added another after the break with an unstoppable close-range volley.

But Valladolid pulled one back when defender Pablo Cavallero they would have made off with all three points.

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**Ferguson banned for four matches, fined $10,000**

LONDON, 7 April — Everton striker Duncan Ferguson was banned for four matches and fined 10,000 pounds (18,470 US dollars) by the English Football Association Monday for violent behaviour and improper conduct in a Premier League match last month.

The Scot, dismissed for two yellow card offences in the 1-1 draw with Leicester City on March 20, grabbed opposing midfielder Steffen Freund around the neck and leaping the pitch at the Walkers Stadium.

He already faced an automatic one-match ban for the dismissal and will now miss a further three matches.

Ferguson also made an obscene gesture to the crowd as he departed. He pleaded guilty to both charges. The ban starts on April 14. — MNA/Reuters

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**Primera Liga reports**

MADRID, 7 April — Brief reports of Primera Liga matches played on Sunday:

**Athletic Bilbao 0 — Celta Vigo 0**

A result that will neither satisfy nor dissatisfy the people but they needed to be said and something that will keep us up,” Smith told Sky Sports.

But I got the response we wanted to today. I’m sure we can grab this four spot.”

At Villa Park French defender Sylvain Distin headed in a corner for Manchester City with eight minutes left to cancel out Colombian Juan Pablo Angel’s 26th-minute opener for Villa.

The result left Villa seventh on 3 points, five points adrift of Liverpool. City’s point lifted them four points above the drop zone in 15th place. — MNA/Reuters
WEATHER

Thursday, 7 April, 2004

Summary of observations recorded at 09:30 hours MST:
During the past 24 hours, rain or thundershowers have been widespread in Chin State, isolated in Shan, Mon and Rakhine States, Mandalay and upper Saviga Divisions and weather has been partly cloudy in the remaining areas. Day temperatures were (4°C) above normal in Taninjali Division, (5°C) above normal in upper Saviga Division and about normal in the remaining areas. The significant day temperatures were (41°C) each in Myingyan, Magway, Mibun and Aungban.
Maximum temperature on 7-4-2004 was 37.0°C (99°F). Minimum temperature on 7-4-2004 was 20.8°C (69°F). Relative humidity at 9:30 hrs MST on 7-4-2004 was 71%. Total sunshine hours on 6-4-2004 was (9.8) hrs approx. Rainfall on 7-4-2004 was nil at Yangon Airport, Kaba-Aye and central Yangon. Total rainfall since 1-4-2004 was (5 mm) at Yangon Airport and (12 mm) at Kaba-Aye and (3 mm) at central Yangon. Maximum wind speed at Yangon (Kaba-Aye) was (12) mph from Northwest at (08:20) hrs MST on 7-4-2004. Bayreferience: Weather is partly cloudy to cloudy in the Bay of Bengal. Forecast valid until evening of 8-4-2004: Scattered rain or thundershowers are likely in Kayin, Chin and Shan States, Mandalay and Saviga Divisions, isolated in Rakhine State, Yangon, Bago, Magway and Taninjali Divisions and weather will be partly cloudy in the remaining areas. Degree of certainty is (60%). State of the sea: Permissible in all areas in Myanmar coastal waters. Forecast for subsequent two days: Likelihood of isolated rain or thundershowers is above normal in upper Myanmar areas. Forecast for Yangon and neighbouring area for 9-4-2004: Light rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (40%). Forecast for Mandalay and neighbouring area for 9-4-2004: Wide spread isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (40%).

Saturday, 10 April, 2004

SCATTERED RAIN (Issued on 10:00 hrs M.T. on 7 April, 2004) According to the observations at 09:30 hrs M.T today, scattered rain or thundershowers in Kayin, Chin and Shan States, Mandalay and Saviga Divisions, isolated in Rakhine State, Yangon, Bago, Magway and Taninjali Divisions and weather will be partly cloudy in the remaining areas. Degree of certainty is (60%). State of the sea: Permissible in all areas in Myanmar coastal waters. Forecast for subsequent two days: Likelihood of isolated rain or thunderstorms is above normal in upper Myanmar areas. Forecast for Yangon and neighbouring area for 11-4-2004: Light rain or thunderstorms. Degree of certainty is (40%). Forecast for Mandalay and neighbouring area for 11-4-2004: Scattered rain or thunderstorms. Degree of certainty is (40%).
Silver Sea Fisheries Industrial Zone opened in Hlinethaya Township

YANGON, 7 April — The Silver Sea Fisheries Industrial Zone was opened at the archway of the zone near Shwepyitha Bridge in Hlinethaya Township this morning, attended by Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt.

Also present on the occasion were members of the State Peace and Development Council Lt-Gen Tin Aye, Chairman of Yangon Division Peace and Development Council Com- mander of Yangon Command Maj-Gen Myint Swe, the ministers, the Yangon mayor, the deputy ministers and officials of social orga- nizations.

First, member of the State Peace and Development Council Lt-Gen Tin Aye, Chairman of Yangon Division Peace and Development Council Commander of Yangon Command Maj-Gen Myint Swe and Minister for Livestock Breeding and Fisheries Brig-Gen Maung Maung Thein formally unveiled the archway of the zone.

Next, Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt formally unveiled the stoned inscription and sprinkled scented water on it. Lt-Gen Tin Aye, Commander Maj-Gen Myint Swe and Minis- ter Brig-Gen Maung Maung Thein also sprinkled scented water on it.

Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt performed rituals of golden and silver showers to mark the open- ing of the zone.

Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt went to the briefing hall of the zone. Lt-Gen Tin Aye reported on work of the Silver Sea In- dustrial Zone Project.

In his address, Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt said in the world in- dustrial zones are being set up for development of in- dustries. Industrial Zones have been established in the country for development of industrial sector and assist- ance is also being provided to private industrialists. In the zone basic requirements were fulfilled. The zone will contribute towards the pro- duction and utilization of marine resources in Myanmar.

He called for establish- ing of modern industrial zone in accord with the project.

Lt-Gen Tin Aye pre- sented a commemorative gift to Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt. Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt inspected the Fishmeat Plant and gave instructions.

The 213.43 acres Silver Sea Fisheries Industrial Zone is situated on the bank of Hline River. The plots ranging from 2.5 acres to 3.5 acres were reclaimed in the zone.

The one-stop service zone is the first of its kind in Myanmar. It includes fishmeat plant, diesel pump, water pump, workshop, cold storage, food processing zone and value-added processing zone and banking services. Ships can berth and dock at the zone and marine products can be sold.

Minister inspects No 2 Farm Machinery Factory (Malun)

YANGON, 7 April — Minister for Industry-2 Maj-Gen Saw Lwin, accompanied by officials, inspected produc- tion process at No 2 Farm Machinery Factory (Malun) in Minhla Township, Magway Division, on 5 April morn- ing.

Managing Director of the Myanmar Agricultural Ma- chinery Industries Col Myo Tint and General Manager of the factory U Thein Aung reported on facts about the factory. In response to the reports, the minister gave in- structions on meeting the targets and standards set and staff welfare services.

Pilot production of mini rice mills, parts inspected

YANGON, 7 April — Minister for Commerce Brig-Gen Pyi Zone inspected the Production Department under the Myanmar Agricultural Produce Trading Service on Upper Paraung Road in Mingala Taungnyunt Township here this afternoon. Managing Director U Min Hla Aung of MAPT and officials conducted the minister round the rice mills.

The minister looked into production process at the mills and stressed the importance of innovative measures for extended production of parts of rice mill for develop- ment of rice milling industry and substitution of import items.

Management Staff Grade-II Course concludes

YANGON, 7 April — The Management Staff Grade-II Course No 1/2004 of General Administration Department concluded at the Management Development Training School of the department this afternoon, with an address by Minister for Home Affairs Col Tin Eliang.

Also present were Deputy Minister for Home Affairs Brig-Gen Phone Swe, the director-general of Myanmar Police Force and directors-general, officials and divisional commissioners.

Speaking on the occasion, the minister said that the training course was opened for ensuring uplift of capa- bility of staff of GAD in accord with the guidance of Head of State Senior General Than Shwe. Thus, it is of important course for staff individually as well as both the ministry and the State. The trainees should try to achieve success in their tasks based on experience in the training. Upholding Our Three Main National Causes, the staff are to implement programmes of the develop- ment of the State, revitalization of Union Spirit and perpetual existence of the State. In implementing the seven-step future policy of the State step by step, as the trainees will discharge important duties, they should train themselves to become highly-qualified management staff as well as leaders.

Altogether 70 trainees attended the 10-week course.

Upgrading of Ye-Mawlamyine railroad section inspected

YANGON, 7 April — Minister for Rail Transportation Maj-Gen Aung Min, accompanied by Deputy Minister U Pe Than and officials, inspected upgrading tasks being carried out along Ye-Mawlamyine railroad on 4 April.

Minister for Rail Transportation Maj-Gen Aung Min inspected the fitness of 550-foot long Thangangyun bridge at mile-post No 260, the replacement of old sleepers with new ones at mile-post Nos 245 and 234, and measures for keeping the railway stations clean and pleasant.

In the afternoon, Minister for Rail Transportation Maj-Gen Aung Min arrived at the briefing hall of Thanlwin bridge (Mawlamyine) railway construction project, where he heard reports on progress of construction works and future tasks. The deputy minister presented a supplemen- tary report on the occasion.

After hearing the reports, Minister for Rail Transpor- tation Maj-Gen Aung Min gave instructions on taking systematic steps for timely completion of the Thanlwin bridge (Mawlamyine) railway construction project.

Yesterday, Minister for Rail Transportation Maj-Gen Aung Min also oversaw progress of construction of earth retaining wall near the approaching road to Sittaueng bridge, the painting of the bridge, the laying of sleepers, and the durability of the bridge. He later gave instructions and attended to the requirements.