Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt and wife Dr Daw Khin Win Shwe enjoy Traditional Maha Thingyan Festival of PBANRDA Ministry

YANGON, 15 April—Chairman of the Work Committee for Development of Border Areas and National Races Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt and wife Dr Daw Khin Win Shwe arrived at Myanmar Traditional Maha Thingyan Pandal of the Ministry for Progress of Border Areas and National Races and Development Affairs in Union National Races Village near Thanyin Bridge in Thakayta Township at 12.30 pm today.

The Prime Minister and wife were welcomed there by Minister for PBANRDA Col Thein Nyunt and wife, Deputy Minister Brig-Gen Than Tun and Col Tin Ngwe, departmental heads, staff families, and cultural troupe members of border areas — Jiangphaw national races of Sumprabum region of Kanpetlet State, Rawam national races of Ngahekkan region of Kachin State, Rangauk national races of Sagaing Division and Naga national races of Naga region of Sagaing Division and Wa national races of Wainggau region of Sagaing Division.

Also present on the occasion were Minister for PBANRDA Col Thein Nyunt and wife, the deputy ministers, departmental heads, staff families and the cultural troupes.

Damsels of the yein troupe of the Ministry for PBANRDA, Kayin national races of Hlaingbwe region presented cash prizes to them.

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Afterwards, the Prime Minister presented gifts to the dance troupes. Similarly, respective national race groups presented cash prizes to them.

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Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt and wife Dr Daw Khin Win Shwe enjoy Traditional Maha Thingyan Festival of PBANRDA Ministry

Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt and wife Dr Daw Khin Win Shwe and guests enjoy dances of the national races from border areas at PBANRDA Pandal.

Emergence of the State Constitution is the duty of all citizens of Myanmar Naing-Ngan.
THE NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR  Friday, 16 April, 2004

PERSPECTIVES
Friday, 16 April, 2004

For successful realization of the projects implemented by the State

Chairman of the State Peace and Development Council Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Than Shwe, on 7 April, inspected Yeywa Hydel Power Project being implemented near Mandalay and construction of Dokhtawady Bridge (Nawnghkio) on Yaksaw-Nawngkio motor road and left guidance to the officials.

With four generators that will generate 780 megawatt, Yeywa Hydel Power Project is being implemented on Dokhtawady River or Myitnge River and it is the biggest of its kind in Myanmar.

At the construction site of Dokhtawady Bridge (Nawnghkio), the Head of State gave guidance to the officials saying that Yaksaw-Nawngkio motor road is an important one for Shan State (South) and Shan State (North) and for that reason, strenuous efforts are to be made for renovation of the road and timely completion of the bridge meeting the set standard.

On 8 April morning, Chairman of the State Peace and Development Council Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Than Shwe and party inspected upgrading of Anisakhan Airfield in PyinUoLwin Township and gave guidance to the officials.

Head of State Senior General Than Shwe also inspected new PyinUoLwin Pharmaceutical Factory of Myanma Pharmaceutical Industries under the Ministry of Industry.

As regards the new factory, Head of State Senior General Than Shwe gave guidance saying that integrated and well-coordinated efforts are to be made for production of potent and widely used medicines; lesser-known medicines should not be produced any longer; and efforts are to be made to run the factory on self-reliant basis; that it is required to conduct research to be able to produce raw materials.

With the emergence of PyinUoLwin Pharmaceutical Factory medicines and medical equipment will be distributed to central and upper Myanmar more rapidly and easily and import of medicines could be reduced.

We would like to urge officials concerned in respective fields to make earnest efforts for realization of the projects upholding the guidance given by the Head of State.

Say No to drugs

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

Minister for Information Brig.-Gen Kyaw Hsan receives China Central Television-CCTV Producer Ms Wang Xian and party. — MNA

Minister for Information Brig.-Gen Kyaw Hsan receives China Central Television-CCTV Producer Ms Wang Xian and party. — MNA

Chinese cultural troupe enjoys Thingyan festival

YANGON, 15 April — The visiting 34-member Chinese cultural troupe led by Mr. Yang Jianmin comprising Xipaungpna vocalists and dancers of Yunnan Province of the People’s Republic of China enjoyed themselves in the Thingyan festival at Raekine Thingyan pandal in Mingala Taungnyunt Township here this morning. They were welcomed there by Deputy Minister for Information Brig.-Gen Aung Thein, Director of the Department of Cultural Institute of the Ministry of Culture Daw Nu Maa Zan and departmental officials. The visiting Chinese cultural troupe was entertained with Raekine traditional dances and the accompaniment of songs. The Chinese cultural troupe also presented entertainment with their traditional ‘peaceock dance’. They also took part in the festival happily.

At 12 noon, the Chinese cultural troupe arrived at Yangon Mayor’s Pandal, where they enjoyed the lunch hosted by Mayor Brig.-Gen Aung Thein Lin. At the pandal, Myanmar damsels entertained the Chinese guests with Thingyan mass dances. The Chinese cultural troupe also entertained with their traditional ‘peaceock dance’. On the occasion, the mayor presented K 100,000 to the Chinese cultural troupe and then joyfully took part in the festival together with them to mark the relations between the two countries. — MNA

Tourists, revellers take part in water festival in Mandalay

YANGON, 15 April — For ensuring promotion of the tourism industry in Myanmar, the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism opened its pandal of Myanmar Traditional Maha Thingyan Festival in front of Irawa Hotel, the opposite to the moat of Mandalay. On 14 April and Akyat Day, tourists who stay in Mandalay and Thingyan revellers joyfully participated in the Maha Thingyan festival.

Damsels of Myanmar Hoteliers Association (Mandalay) together with film stars and vocalists performed entertainment to the accompaniment of 747 modern music band at the pandal. — MNA

A pandal being crowded with revellers in glee on Saya San Road, Yangon, on 15-4-2004 — MNA

A documentary film on the Myanmar Water Festival. Also present at the call were Deputy Minister Brig.-Gen Aung Thein, directors-general and managing directors of the departments and enterprises under the ministry, the head of office, and officials from the Chinese Embassy to Myanmar. — MNA

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A documentary film on the Myanmar Water Festival. Also present at the call were Deputy Minister Brig.-Gen Aung Thein, directors-general and managing directors of the departments and enterprises under the ministry, the head of office, and officials from the Chinese Embassy to Myanmar. — MNA
Philippines may withdraw troops from Iraq

MANILA, 15 April — President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo said Wednesday that mounting violence in Iraq had prompted her government to study whether to withdraw its 100 troops from the Mideast nation.

The decision on whether or not to withdraw our peacekeeping forces will depend on the security situation in Iraq in the days to come,” said Arroyo, a staunch supporter of the war on terror.

“The Philippine contingent of military and civilian personnel in central Iraq has suffered no fatalities. Military spokesman Col. Daniel Lucero said the deployment has been open-ended with no date set for withdrawal.

We stand shoulder to shoulder with the international community in this commitment and that is why we are not making any rush decisions,” Arroyo said in a statement.

She said while the government remains committed to helping rebuild Iraq, “the safety of our peacekeeping forces in Iraq is still our utmost concern.”

Filipino peacekeepers are serving under Polish command — Internet

US military deaths rise to 686

BAGHDAD, 15 April— As of Wednesday, April 14, 2004, 686 US service members have died in Iraq since the beginning of military operations in Iraq last year, according to the Department of Defense. Of those, 492 died as a result of hostile action and 194 died of non-hostile causes.

The British military has reported 58 deaths; Italy, 17; Spain, eight; Bulgaria, five; Ukraine, four; Thailand, two; and Estonia and Poland have reported one each.

Since May 1, when President Bush declared that major combat operations in Iraq had ended, 548 US soldiers have died — 383 as a result of hostile action and 165 of non-hostile causes, according to the military — Internet

About 10 Bulgarian soldiers ask to leave Iraq

SOFIA, 15 April — About 10 Bulgarian soldiers based in the Flashpoint city of Kerbala have asked to be redeployed to other areas. About 10 Bulgarian soldiers have asked to leave Iraq because of the heightened tension in that country, Bulgarian Foreign Minister Stoyanov Strugarov said.

“Around 10 servicemen of the Bulgarian contingent in Kerbala have asked to be redeployed to other areas,” Defence Ministry spokesman Strugarov said.

The conditions facing the new NATO member’s troops in Iraq have become a sensitive issue in this Balkan country since last week’s attacks, but had already caused concern previously.

More than 600 soldiers quit the battalion before being sent home for Iraq to replace the original peacekeeping unit, although the government had increased the troops’ Iraq pay by about one-third because of the risks of serving there — MNA/Reuters

Russia to evacuate 800 from Iraq

MOSCOW, 15 April — Moscow said Wednesday it would airlift over 800 Russians and citizens of ex-Soviet states out of Iraq this week despite the safe release of Russian and Ukrainian hostages in Baghdad.

“The decision is based on the assessment of the risks of serving by our troops in Iraq,” the Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman said, but gave no further details.

Russia is also planning to evacuate more than 60 soldiers who quit the battalion before it left for Iraq, according to the Interior Ministry.

During the hostage crisis President Vladimir Putin (news - web sites)’s advisory body, the Security Council, urged Russians to leave Iraq, but Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov later said it was up to companies to decide whether to remove their staff.

Several Russian companies have announced plans to evacuate their employees, including the biggest, Tekhmoronprom, with 370 staff in Iraq.

More Japanese citizens sue to evacuate from Iraq

Tokyo, 15 April — A group of 1,101 citizens Wednesday joined another 272 who sued the Japanese government earlier this year against Japan’s dispatch of Self-Defense Forces (SDF) troops to Iraq, Kyodo News reported.

The number of plaintiffs in the suit thus swelled to 2,363 people, each demanding 10,000 yen (95 US dollars) in consolation money from the government over what they say is an unconstitutional act. According to Kyodo, the first group of 1,262 citizens filed the suit in February. Another group is planning to join the suit in June.

Representing the plaintiffs, Yoshinori Iizumi, who leads a non-governmental organization, was quoted by Kyodo as saying that the suit is significant as more than 2,300 Japanese citizens have complained about the SDF dispatch.

Ukrainian FM urges citizens to evacuate from Iraq

KIEV, 15 April — Ukrainian citizens should evacuate from Iraq because of the heightened tension in that country, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Kostyantyn Gryshchenko said on Tuesday shortly after the release of five Ukrainians and three Russians kidnapped in Baghdad.

Gryshchenko made the remarks at a press conference after meeting his visiting Russian counterpart, Sergey Lavrov, according to the Interfax-Ukraine news agency.

Considering the evacuation “reasonable”, Gryshchenko shared the view with Lavrov that the issue would be decided by the related companies and employees.

Lavrov said that Russia “will help experts from Interenergoservis. They were seized Monday evening working in Baghdad. They were freed on Tuesday.

The five Ukrainians and three Russians who were seized Monday evening work for the Russian company Interenergoservis. They were abducted from the company’s compound in Baghdad and were freed on Tuesday.

The Ukrainian Foreign Ministry has advised its citizens to avoid travelling to Iraq where, according to the US-led coalition’s announcement on Tuesday, guerrillas have kidnapped an estimated 40 people from the United States and 11 from other countries in Europe and Asia.

An unidentified injured US soldier is carried on a stretcher into an ambulance on the US Airbase of Ramstein, southern Germany, on 14, April, 2004 — Internet

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SOFIA, 15 April — About 10 Bulgarian soldiers based in the Flashpoint city of Kerbala have asked to leave Iraq because of the heightened tension in that country, Defence Ministry spokesman Strugarov said.

“The decision is based on the assessment of the risks of serving by our troops in Iraq,” the Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman said, but gave no further details.

Russia is also planning to evacuate more than 60 soldiers who quit the battalion before it left for Iraq, according to the Interior Ministry.

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**Iraq more damaging to Bush future than 9/11 memo**

WASHINGTON, 15 April — The deteriorating situation in Iraq poses much more of a threat for President George W Bush’s re-election hopes than the tempest caused by release of an August 2001 briefing paper on the al-Qaeda threat, political consultants and analysts said on Monday.

The briefings paper was released on the presidential briefing paper as evidence that the Bush Administration failed to react with sufficient urgency to non-specific information about the possibility of an al-Qaeda attack on the United States.

Republicans said the document would not change any minds. However several expressed concern that events in Iraq, with rebellions in several towns and some of the bloodiest fighting since the fall of Saddam Hussein, posed a far graver threat to Bush.

“If you are, as I am, pro-Bush, I don’t see anything in there that was actionable. If you are a Bush-hater, it mentions hijackings and explosives and it’s a great rhetorical tool to score points,” said Gary Bauer, a former Republican presidential candidate who now strongly supports Bush.

“Events on the Iraqi battlefield are much more likely to have an effect. To the extent that it looks as if we are bogged down and unable to deal with what’s happening, that will hurt the president,” Bauer said.

The intelligence document of August 6, 2001, said al-Qaeda members were in the United States and the FBI had detected suspicious activity “consistent with preparations for hijackings or other types of attacks”.

Bush himself said it was too vague for him to take action that might have headed off the September 11 attacks. “It said Osama bin Laden had designs on America. Well, I knew that,” Bush told reporters Sunday.

KB Forbes, a Republican operative who has worked on the presidential campaigns of Pat Buchanan and Steve Forbes, said most undecided voters would make up their minds on the election in September and October, by which time the memo would be a footnote.

“I don’t think it’s politically damaging. What is hurting Bush much more than this is the quagmire in Iraq,” he said.

**One Iraqi killed in Baghdad mortar attack**

BAGHDAD, 15 April — A mortar bomb landed in a busy Baghdad street on Tuesday, killing one Iraqi driver and gouging a deep crater in the middle of the road, witnesses said. “I was driving my car and suddenly there was a big explosion behind me and shrapnel fell on my car,” Mohammed al-Nimi told reporters.

The driver of the car behind him was hit by shrapnel, lost control of the vehicle and smashed into a lamp-post. Police—men at the scene said he was dead.

Several ambulances raced to treat passersby injured by shrapnel and flying debris. It was not immediately clear if the mortar had been aimed at the area or had missed its intended target. The offices of two political parties are not far from where the mortar round struck.

Earlier blasts echoed across Baghdad and sirens sounded in the headquarters of the US Administration, but there were no reports of any injuries or damage in the heavily defended area, known as the “Green Zone”.

The street where the Iraqi was killed was about 2/3 miles or more away from the Green Zone. — MNA/Reuters

**Probe needed into US action in Fallujah**

SYDNEY, 15 April— Australian war veterans called on Tuesday for the country’s conservative government to make public its exit strategy for Australian troops in Iraq, the Iraqi Army and Navy.

The presidential election later this year has focused public interest on the sitting government’s policy on the Iraq conflict.

Eleven Russian civilians were the latest foreigners reported kidnapped in Iraq and three Japanese were still missing on Tuesday.

Australia under pressure to explain Iraq exit plan

Labour leads Howard’s coalition in opinion polls.

“We need an exit strategy because what has happened is similar to the situation in the Vietnam War where the military occupation becomes more of a problem than the solution,” Labour leader Mark Latham told local radio on Tuesday.

“You need a strategy to return Iraq to the Iraqi people,” Howard said.

“Is it an impossible question to answer. You can’t say exactly when you may be in a position to say the job has been completed,” Howard said on Tuesday.

Australia’s opposition Labour Party is committed to bringing troops home by Christmas if it wins an

**UNSC calls for release of kidnapped civilians in Iraq**

UNITED NATIONS, 15 April— United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan on Tuesday called for release of all kidnapped civilians in Iraq, saying that kidnapping is unacceptable.

“Unacceptable,” Annan said, speaking to reporters.

“I think it’s unacceptable that these civilians should be mistreated in the way that they are now,” he said. “I would want to see all of them released and allowed to go, return to their countries or go about their business.”

The US-led coalition announced on Tuesday that an estimated 40 people from the United States and 11 other countries in Europe and Asia are believed to have been kidnapped by guerrillas in Iraq.
**Arroyo says safety of peacekeeping force in Iraq utmost concern**

**MANILA, 15 April—**Philippine President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo said Wednesday the safety of Philippine peacekeeping forces in Iraq is still the government’s utmost concern amid calls for the withdrawal of the contingent.

“A government without security is a government without legitimacy,” Arroyo said in a statement.

**Annan cautious about sending UN back to Iraq**

**UNITED NATIONS, 15 April—**UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan was cautious on Tuesday about a return of the United Nations to Iraq, saying violence in the country was a major constraint in the foreseeable future.

Annan told reporters at UN Headquarters that even the small team now in the country, led by top adviser Lakhdar Brahimi, has been hampered in helping form an interim government and eventual elections.

“Of course given the deteriorating situation and the violence on the ground, even that task has been rather difficult,” Annan said.

“Free from foreseeable future, insecurity is going to be a major constraint for us. And so I cannot say right now that I am thinking about sending a large UN team,” Annan said.

**France tells its citizens to leave Iraq**

**PARIS, 15 April—**France is strongly advising its citizens to leave Iraq and warning people not to travel there, its Foreign Ministry spokesman said on Tuesday following a spate of kidnappings in the country.

“I draw your attention to the fact that, since the end of last week, we are strongly advising all French in Iraq to leave and all those who want to go there, to postpone their trip,” Herve Ladous said in a new briefing.

“It is clear that the situation is worrying,” he said, adding just under 100 French people were in Iraq at the moment.

Dozens of foreigners have been kidnapped in Iraq in recent days. Five Ukrainians and three Russians were freed on Tuesday, a day after they were seized.

“France unconditionally renews its condemnation of the taking hostage of foreign civilians in Iraq, which is totally unacceptable and which should be stopped immediately and without condition,” Ladous said.

**Iraqis show Italian hostages, want Italy out**

**DUbai, 15 April—**Al Jazeera television showed a tape on Tuesday of four men described by the station as Italian hostages being held by an Iraqi Islamist group which demanded that Italy withdraw its forces from Iraq.

The four men in civilian clothes were shown seated on the ground and holding up their passports, surrounded by gunmen whose faces were covered by traditional Arab headscarves.

“The Italian Government should vow and give guarantees to withdraw its forces from Iraq and give a time schedule and to free Muslim clerics in Iraq,” a voice on the film said, adding the men were captured in the Sunni Muslim city of Fallujah.

“If the Italian Government agrees to these demands, we will inform them which party to go to and to get in touch with for their release,” the man said, adding that the abductors were a unit of a group the station said was calling itself the Mujahedin Brigades.

The name appeared to be new.

**US army builds up force round Najaf**

**BAGHDAD, 15 April—**The US military has moved “significant” forces to the holy Iraqi city of Najaf in preparation for a possible offensive to retake the city from Shiite militants and capture or kill their leader.

Brigadier-General Mark Kimmitt, deputy director of operations for the US military in Iraq, said the force was being built up for operations that could range from combat to humanitarian assistance.

“It is clear that we are repositioning forces in this country where they are needed,” Kimmitt told a news conference when asked about a build-up of troops around Najaf, where radical cleric Moqtada al-Sadr is believed to be holed up.

“Currently we see a significant threat in the vicinity of Najaf by the name of Moqtada al-Sadr and his militia.

“We will get the forces to the place, at the time when it is necessary, to go after him and his militia to end this violence...it’s that simple,” Kimmitt said.

Asked how big the force was, Kimmitt said it was significant and was still being bolstered.

“...The force being built up in that region is powerful...it will be decisive and it will be capable of conducting the full spectrum of military operations, which could range from full combat operations...to humanitarian activities,” he said.

Sadr, a young radical Shiite cleric with a strong following among the urban poor, launched an uprising earlier this month in the city of Najaf, known as the Mehdi Army, estimated at 5,000 men.

In a broad insurgence, the militia seized government buildings and police stations in Shiite neighborhoods of Baghdad and in several towns and cities throughout Shi’ite-dominated southern Iraq.

Though driven out of some towns, the militia is still holding out in Najaf and Kerbala, two holy cities south of Baghdad, and has skirmished with US-led coalition forces in the cities of Kut and Amara.— MNA/Reuters

**Iraq security eating chunks of contractors’ costs**

**LONDON, 15 April—**Spiralling violence in Iraq has driven costs sky high for foreign firms working on the billions of dollars in reconstruction contracts, with the price of insuring some workers doubling in the past week.

Contractors in Iraq are spending more than half their total operating costs insuring and protecting staff who have become targets of guerrilla and prey to kidnappers, according to insurance giant Aon Corp.

“High risk work in Iraq has seen insurance rates nearly double towards the end of last week,” Claire Heneghan of London-based insurance broker Heath Lambert said.

For example, the annual premium to insure around 100 staff doubled to 16,000 dollars per worker last week for an individual policy worth 200,000 dollars, Heneghan said.

Insuring fewer workers is much more expensive, Heneghan added.

Foreign firms employ tens of thousands of staff in Iraq working on reconstruction, funded mostly by 18.6 billion US dollars in contracts being overseen by the Coalition Provisional Authority.

Texas firm Halliburton, the US military’s biggest contractor in Iraq, says about 30 of its staff and sub-contractors for subsidiary Kellogg Brown and Root have been killed in Iraq and seven workers are missing.— MNA/Reuters

**Russia’s top Iraq contractor to pull out**

**MOSCOW, 15 April—**Russia’s top contractor in Iraq, Tekhpromexport, is to pull its 370 staff out of Iraq because of rising violence, the company said on Tuesday.

The state-owned company, which employed more than 500 of the 500 Russian nationals working to rebuild the country, was building a power station about 40 miles outside Baghdad.

“The decision about the evacuation of Tekhpromexport’s workers was taken yesterday morning,” a statement quoted company head Sergei Molozhavy as saying.

“The question of the security of our personnel is the prime duty of Tekhpromexport’s management. Even before our specialists were sent there, they studied the political situation in the country. On the basis of this information they drew up an (evacuation) plan.”

Earlier, eight workers of a Russian engineering firm were reported released after being kidnapped on Monday in Baghdad. The Foreign Ministry earlier said it had prepared plans for the evacuation of all Russians, where the US-led occupying forces are coming under continuous attacks from guerrillas.— MNA/Reuters

**Iraqi boys chant near a burning US Army truck, after it came under attack on Baghdad’s airport highway,** on 14 April, 2004. — Reuters

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“It is clear that we are repositioning forces in this country where they are needed.” Kimmitt told a news conference when asked about a build-up of troops around Najaf, where radical cleric Moqtada al-Sadr is believed to be holed up.

“Currently we see a significant threat in the vicinity of Najaf by the name of Moqtada al-Sadr and his militia.

“We will get the forces to the place, at the time when it is necessary, to go after him and his militia to end this violence...it’s that simple,” Kimmitt said.

Asked how big the force was, Kimmitt said it was significant and was still being bolstered.

“...The force being built up in that region is powerful...it will be decisive and it will be capable of conducting the full spectrum of military operations, which could range from full combat operations...to humanitarian activities,” he said.

Sadr, a young radical Shiite cleric with a strong following among the urban poor, launched an uprising earlier this month in the city of Najaf, known as the Mehdi Army, estimated at 5,000 men.

In a broad insurgence, the militia seized government buildings and police stations in Shiite neighborhoods of Baghdad and in several towns and cities throughout Shi’ite-dominated southern Iraq.

Though driven out of some towns, the militia is still holding out in Najaf and Kerbala, two holy cities south of Baghdad, and has skirmished with US-led coalition forces in the cities of Kut and Amara.— MNA/Reuters

**Iraq security eating chunks of contractors’ costs**

**LONDON, 15 April—**Spiralling violence in Iraq has driven costs sky high for foreign firms working on the billions of dollars in reconstruction contracts, with the price of insuring some workers doubling in the past week.

Contractors in Iraq are spending more than half their total operating costs insuring and protecting staff who have become targets of guerrilla and prey to kidnappers, according to insurance giant Aon Corp.

“High risk work in Iraq has seen insurance rates nearly double towards the end of last week,” Claire Heneghan of London-based insurance broker Heath Lambert said.

For example, the annual premium to insure around 100 staff doubled to 16,000 dollars per worker last week for an individual policy worth 200,000 dollars, Heneghan said.

Insuring fewer workers is much more expensive, Heneghan added.

Foreign firms employ tens of thousands of staff in Iraq working on reconstruction, funded mostly by 18.6 billion US dollars in contracts being overseen by the Coalition Provisional Authority.

Texas firm Halliburton, the US military’s biggest contractor in Iraq, says about 30 of its staff and sub-contractors for subsidiary Kellogg Brown and Root have been killed in Iraq and seven workers are missing.— MNA/Reuters

**Russia’s top Iraq contractor to pull out**

**MOSCOW, 15 April—**Russia’s top contractor in Iraq, Tekhpromexport, is to pull its 370 staff out of Iraq because of rising violence, the company said on Tuesday.

The state-owned company, which employed more than 500 of the 500 Russian nationals working to rebuild the country, was building a power station about 40 miles outside Baghdad.

“The decision about the evacuation of Tekhpromexport’s workers was taken yesterday morning,” a statement quoted company head Sergei Molozhavy as saying.

“The question of the security of our personnel is the prime duty of Tekhpromexport’s management. Even before our specialists were sent there, they studied the political situation in the country. On the basis of this information they drew up an (evacuation) plan.”

Earlier, eight workers of a Russian engineering firm were reported released after being kidnapped on Monday in Baghdad. The Foreign Ministry earlier said it had prepared plans for the evacuation of all Russians, where the US-led occupying forces are coming under continuous attacks from guerrillas.— MNA/Reuters

**Iraqi boys chant near a burning US Army truck, after it came under attack on Baghdad’s airport highway,** on 14 April, 2004. — Reuters
Iraq devoid of sovereignty under foreign occupation
Images which help you discern the hard facts

An Iraqi man was detained, then taken in for questioning after Marines found a high powered sniper rifle behind a seat in his car in northwest Fallujah, Iraq on 14 April, 2004.

Wounded one and a half year old Iraqi baby Qusay Issam, who was shot in the arm in the besieged town of Fallujah, is treated in Baghdad's al-Nouman hospital, on 13 April, 2004.

An Iraqi man who was injured in clashes between US Marines and Iraqi guerrillas is treated in the besieged town of Fallujah, on 13 April, 2004.

A young girl lies in a hospital after she was injured in clashes in Fallujah, on 10 April, 2004.

A resident inspects a badly damaged house following clashes between militia men of radical Shiite cleric Moqtada Al-Sadr and Ukrainian coalition soldiers recently in Kut, Iraq, 112 miles south of Baghdad.

An Iraqi man gestures at the ruins of home after it was hit by a US missile overnight, in the central Iraqi city of Kut on 9 April 2004.
The people joyfully take part in Myanmar Traditional Thingyan Festival in peaceful and pleasant Myanmar

Thingyan revellers participate in water festival on Anawrahta Street on second Akyat day. — NLM

West Race Course in Bahan Township being crowded with people enjoying Maha Thingyan Festival on Akyat day. — MNA

A Thingyan pandal on Pyay Road packed with vehicles with revellers on board on Akyat day. — NLM

Pre-Primary schoolchildren of Dagon Myothit (North) Township present dances to audience at Yangon City Mayor’s Pandal on second Akyat day. — NLM

A decorated float of silver swan which represents Myma Music Troupe seen in Mandalay on 13 April. — MNA

Damsels perform a dance at the Thingyan pandal on second Akyat day. — MNA

Revellers seeking shelter under the shower of water hoses in Latha Township on second Akyat day. — NLM
Drug — a boon or a curse

Professor Dr Paing Soe

Introduction

Now-a-days a large segment of the population consumes drugs for health purposes even though majority of the people did not have adequate knowledge on the drugs or their therapeutic usefulness in controlling or curing of diseases. Drugs that they take. The present article was aimed to overcome the problem of irrational drug use out of ignorance or lack of adequate knowledge. Pharmacology is a subject that deals with drugs. Knowledge on drugs is largely based on empirical, historical evidence and therapeutic usefulness in controlling or curing of disease. Drugs are usually administered orally or by injection, but sometimes by topical application or inhalation. In fact, drugs do not literally cure the disease, but causes beneficial effects through reversing or controlling the factors that cause the disease process. For example, drugs do not directly affect the infected wound to heal, but rather through killing off the organisms that cause the infection, and thus helping the natural healing process of the body to do its job.

A Boon - Beneficial effects of drugs on disease

In a disease, drugs can affect the body in three main ways:
1. Curative effect — where the ultimate outcome is freedom from disease (e.g. antimalarial drugs, by killing the malaria parasite, can result in cure from fever and chills due to malaria).
2. Preventive effect — where ultimate outcome is freedom from the symptoms of a disease even though it may not result in cure from disease (e.g. relieving headache or tummy ache, temporarily).
3. Psychological effect — making the patient feel better psychologically.

Over the years of drug-use by men, medicine has developed gradually and at the same time improving the health status and the quality of life and prolonging the life span of the people. Since benefits and risks go hand in hand, it is important to be made aware and well informed about the potential problems of drug use. For this reason the Food and Drug Authority (FDA) has urged that the prescription leaflets or package inserts should contain all the unbiased and uncontroversial information about the drug and should be made available to all consumers before they actually take the medicine. Such information should include:
1. Chemical constituents, their origin (e.g. plants, synthetic or semisynthetic) and chemical structure.
2. Pharmacological action on what the drug does to the body, or changes it’s function to affect a cure.
3. Pharmacokinetics on what the body does to the drug, affecting its absorption, distribution within the tissues, metabolism, and finally, elimination from the body. As the liver is an important organ for converting a drug into a harmless non-toxic substance, and kidney being important for elimination to outside of the body, adverse effects of drugs are more prone to occur in patients with liver and kidney diseases. For this reason people with disease may not take drugs strictly under supervision of a doctor. Additional information should be elaborated for such high risk groups and also for use in neonates and children, pregnant mothers or infants.
4. Indication, dose and regime, on how to take, or not take, the drug.
5. Potential side effects that can occur when taking the drug, either in therapeutic doses, or higher doses.
6. Contraindications and cautions to be taken in the high risk groups mentioned above.
7. Drug interactions that can occur when drugs are taken together, and some drugs can interact with many drugs when given together, which may result in adverse consequences.
8. Lack of knowledge of drugs based solely on the prescription leaflets cannot be considered sufficient, since it may contain misleading and controversial promotion information claimed by the manufacturers. Evidence on drugs must be supported by well conducted research from research, and currently, pharmacopoeias (USP, BP, IP, Martindale, etc.) or National Formularies (British National Formulary, Myanmar National Formulary, etc.) and Materia Medica (for traditional medicines) are the only internationally accepted source of drug information that is considered reliable by scientists, WHO and FDA. For example, even though metronidazole was found to be effective for amoebiasis, the drug was not included in western pharmacopoeias for many years until sufficient information was made available. In some cases research which was enough to overrule the benefit-risk of it’s teratogenic potential. It has been mentioned that: "All substances are poison; there is none which is not a poison. The right dose differentiates a poison and a remedy."

Paracelsus (1493-1541)

Thus, consumers should have sufficient knowledge to avoid the adverse effects of drugs. To produce a therapeutic effect, it is necessary that sufficient amount of drug is administered and reach the site of action. Thus, the following should be taken into consideration:

1. (Dose) — should be optimal to produce maximum effect with minimal toxicity. If the dose is low (subtherapeutic dose), subjective side effects may occur. On the other hand, if the dose is high, adverse effects (toxic dose) or death (lethal dose) can occur.

2. Regimen — a drug must also complete its course to affect a cure, which includes the number of times taken per day for an optimal duration of treatment.
3. Mode of administration — when and how to take, morning (e.g. diuretics), night (e.g. sedatives), with food (e.g. analgesics) or without food (e.g. antibiotics).

4. Co-administration with other drugs — on whether interactions can occur with other drugs.

For this reason sufficient research and information should be available before a drug can be considered safe for consumption/administration and released into the market. Currently, in Myanmar, many of the drugs and traditional medicines produced, imported and sold by the private sector do not contain sufficient information mentioned above, nor they are included in the accepted literature like pharmacopoeias and formularies. Most are based on empirical, folk and historical evidence and sufficient research has never been scientifically conducted. Information leaflets either do not contain sufficient information, or may contain biased and controversial information claimed and promoted by the manufacturer.

A Curse - Potential adverse effects of drugs

The disadvantages of drug use rest mainly on three pillars:
1. Adverse effects which are unavoidable, and seen at therapeutic dose. For example, feeling of drowsiness after taking anti-allergic drugs. However, most side effects are mild and well tolerated by majority of the people.
2. Toxic effects — which are avoidable, and can occur if the drug is not taken as directed. Bad effects of drugs frequently result from the following:
   a. Wrong ingredients — often seen in substandard and counterfeit drugs produced by local, cottage industries or imported by substandard companies.
   b. Wrong medicine — given for a particular ailment or disease. One should neither use a drug based solely on information or claims in the package inserts, nor they be used if their pharmacological action or benefit is questionable.
   c. Wrong mode of administration — when dosage and regime is not fully understood for optimal efficacy. This needs a sound knowledge on drug pharmacokinetics.
   d. Lack of knowledge on adverse drug reactions and toxicity limits — may result in overdose, underuse and misuse. All drugs should be tested for acute, subacute and chronic toxicity on animal models and through post-marketing surveillance. Before being approved for human use, many drugs are tested on animals and chlorpromazine is used for schizophrenia in humans.

Lack of knowledge on contraindications and cautions to be taken in high-risk groups.

Lack of knowledge of likely interactions — between drug-drug and drug-food interactions.

3. Allergy and Idiosyncrasy — which are unpredictable and abnormal effect of drugs, which are not dose related and may vary extensively in different individuals, and which may even result in drastic consequences like penicillin hypersensitivity.

(To be continued)

Prof Dr Paing Soe is the Director-General of the Department of Medical Research (Lower Myanmar)
Minister inspects maintenance of press

YANGON, 15 April—Minister for Information Brig-Gen Kyaw Hwan went to Myanmar Alin Daily this afternoon and inspected maintenance of the press being carried out by workers on the holidays during the period of Maha Thingyan Festival.

The minister gave necessary instructions to officials and met with the staff. Accompanied by Deputy Minister Brig-Gen Aung Thein and directors-general and managers of departments and enterprises under the ministry, the minister arrived at Myanmar Alin Daily on Natmauk Lane-1, Bahan Township, at 3:30 pm.

The minister and party were welcomed there by Managing Director Col Soe Win of News and Periodicals Enterprise, Director (Admin) U Soe Win, Chief Editor U Ye Myint Pe, Manager U Zaw Win and officials. At the press room of the daily, the minister saw over cleaning of inking rollers, substitution and adjustment of ball bearings at ink form roller and water form roller, adjustment and cleaning of blankets and plate cylinders. Managing Director Col Soe Win and Chief Editor U Ye Myint Pe conducted the minister round the press. Next, the minister gave instructions on systematic repair of machines, keeping of spare machinery parts for emergency cases, construction of water tank for use in outbreak of fire, safety of electric wire installation and sanitation works and left there in the evening.

During the period of Maha Thingyan Festival, the Myanmar Alin, the Kyemon and the New Light of Myanmar dailies are being published alternatively. Workers of the New Light of Myanmar and the Kyemon dailies performed maintenance tasks of the machines on 12, 13 and 14 April, the holidays of the dailies. Similarly, seven sub-printing houses in States and Divisions took holidays in turn and servicing and repair works were carried out there. On 15, 16 and 17 April, delivery of the Myanmar Alin Daily will be stopped temporarily for undertaking maintenance tasks of its press.

YANGONITES joyfully celebrate Water Festival on 2nd Akyat Day

YANGON, 15 April—With the adequate water supply of the Yangon City Development Committee, close supervision of the Maha Thingyan Discipline Enforcement Committee and necessary assistance of the Yangon Division Peace and Development Council and organizations at different levels, Yangonites could enjoy revelry wholeheartedly and peacefully from Maha Thingyan Akyat (second) Day until today, Maha Thingyan Akyat (second) Day.

Today, the townships of Yangon West District were teeming with crowds of motorized revellers and Thingyan pandals under the close supervision of district and respective township Peace and Development Councils.

In Yangon West District, there are 129 large Thingyan pandals, 74 medium pandals and 301 small pandals and the number was 76 more than that of last year. There are 95 Thingyan pandals in Kamayut Township, 84 in Bahan Township, 27 in Hlme Township, 22 in Mayangon Township, 14 in Lammadaw Township, 15 in Sanyangyi Township, five in Latha Township, six in Kyauktada Township, seven in Ablom Township, six in Kyimyindine Township, nine in Dagon Township, two in Ssekkkan Township and nine in Pabedan Township. Chairman of Yangon West District Peace and Development Council Lt-Col Kyaw Tint and members, and members of District Maha Thingyan Discipline Enforcement Committee gave close supervision on the pandals.

Along the Inya Road in Kamayut Township made up of 39 large Thingyan pandals; University Avenue in Bahan Township, 22 large pandals; Pyay Road, 16 pandals; U Chit Maung Street, 23 pandals; Tekkatho Yeiktha Lanthit Street, 10 large pandals and Bayintnaung Street in Hlme Township, several large pandals were crowded with motorized revellers, merry-makers, fun-seekers and Thingyan lovers.

Similarly, the dwellers of 10 townships in Yangon South District especially Thanyin and Kyauktan townships, and eight townships in Yangon North District especially Insein, Hlaingthaya and Shwepyitha townships joyfully took part in the Water Festival in accordance with the traditions of the Thingyan Festival.

In the afternoon, the revellers took a rest and relaxation at the parks of the YCDCP Parks and Playgrounds Department. And in the late afternoon, they continued to enjoy the Water Festival.

It is learnt that the Thingyan lovers are making arrangements to enjoy themselves in the festival with might and main on Maha Thingyan Akyat Day, the last day of the Water Festival.

POEM:

New Year Greetings

Khin Nyunt presents gift to national race cultural troupe at the pandal of Ministry for PBA/RDM

Prime Minister Minister MNA

With the adequate water supply of the Yangon City Development Committee, close supervision of the Maha Thingyan Discipline Enforcement Committee and necessary assistance of the Yangon Division Peace and Development Council and organizations at different levels, Yangonites could enjoy revelry wholeheartedly and peacefully from Maha Thingyan Akyat (second) Day.

Today, Maha Thingyan Akyat (second) Day.

A crowd of Thingyan revellers seen on Saya San Road on second Akyat Day.—MNA

Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt presents gift to national race cultural troupe at the pandal of Ministry for PBA/RDM. (News on page 1) — MNA
Indonesia vows to implement Chemical Weapons Convention

JAKARTA, 15 April — Indonesia is committed to fully implementing the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), said a senior official at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

‘‘Indonesia, which is in the process of full democratization, will be in a better position to fully implement the Chemical Weapons Convention,’’ Makmur Wudodo, Director-General for multilateral political, social and security affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was quoted Wednesday by The Jakarta Post as saying.

Makmur said Indonesia, which signed the CWC on January 13, 1993 and ratified it on September 30, 1998 and enacted it into the Law No 6/1998, is committed to fully implementing the CWC.

‘‘As a party to the CWC, Indonesia is legally bound by the provisions of the convention. Indeed, Indonesia is now in the process of doing just that,’’ Makmur said.

The CWC, which came into force on April 29, 1997, is an international treaty that bans the use of chemical weapons and aims to eliminate chemical weapons everywhere in the world forever.

Even after more than five years since the ratification of the CWC, Indonesia is still trying to implement it fully.

The problems, according to Makmur, are mainly two: the establishment of a permanent national authority and passing of ‘‘a unified robust national legislation’’ to cover and govern all aspects of the use of chemical substances.

Indonesia currently has a temporary national authority under the coordination of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Coordinating for National Security.

Malaysia calls for cooperation with Philippines to stop kidnapping

KUALA LUMPUR, 15 April — Foreign Minister Syed Hamid Albar said here that cooperation with Manila must be enhanced to stop kidnapping incidents.

‘‘It is our sincere hope that we can get total cooperation from the Filipinos to ensure that this type of activity can be totally eradicated,’’ he told reporters in Putrajaya, the Federal Administrative Centre near here.

A group of some 10 gunmen reportedly stormed a tugboat towing a barge in the South China Sea on Sunday night before fleeing with three of the 10 crew members to one of the numer

Spanish police arrest two more suspects in train bombing

MADRID, 15 April — Spanish police have arrested at least two more Moroccans in connection with the March 11 train bombings that killed 191 people, a court official said on Tuesday.

It raises to 23 the number of people detained over the attack, believed to have been the first carried out by al-Qaeda in the West since the September 11, 2001 strikes on New York and Washington. Of the total, 19 are of Moroccan origin.

One was arrested on Monday and the other on Tuesday after police searched one of their homes, the court official said. The arrests were made in or near the city of Malaga on Spain’s southern coast. — MNA/Reuters

Bomb explodes near US-Afghan base, police wounded

KANDAHAR (Afghanistan), 15 April — A bomb exploded near a US military base in Afghanistan’s turbulent southern Kandahar Province on Wednesday, wounding a senior Afghan police official and two of his bodyguards, witnesses said.

The explosion ripped through a car carrying General Salim Khan on a road in front of a base of the US military’s Provincial Reconstruction Team in Kandahar City, they said. Khan blamed the attack on remnants of the Taliban militia that were ousted by US-led forces in late 2001. ‘‘The Taliban did it,’’ he told Reuters from a hospital where he was treated for face and hand injuries.

China to recruit 6,000 volunteer graduates to western regions

BEIJING, 15 April — China will recruit a second group of 6,000 volunteer graduates to help improve impoverished western regions in 2004, the Central Committee of the Communist Youth League of China (CYLC) and the Ministry of Education jointly announced Tuesday.

With 4,000 still working in the western regions, the total number of volunteer graduates will reach 10,000 in 2004, said Zhao Yong, a member of the Secretariat of the CYLC Central Committee.

The Chinese Government launched the ‘‘Go West’’ programme last year, which calls for college graduates to provide volunteer service in the western regions, where they are most needed. Under the programme, volunteer graduates are annually recruited and selected to work in the western regions, mainly in the fields of education, health, agricultural sciences, poverty reduction, and youth work management, for periods of two years after passing the required exams. In addition to extra allowances for living expenses and other preferential employment policies, the volunteer graduates can enjoy new special policies during civil service recruitment, said Zhao Yong, also director of the office in charge of the programme. The people and government of the western regions highly praised the work of the volunteer graduates. Those graduates who major in agriculture, forestry, hydraulics engineering, law, medical science and software, those from western regions and others who prefer to work for two years. Though rich in natural resources, China’s western regions are badly in need of human resources, as professionals there account for only 15.5 per cent of the national total, while the population accounts for 28.8 per cent of China’s population. — MNA/Reuters
NGOs to play important role in China’s “AIDS” prevention

BELING, 15 April — China is now forming a new AIDS prevention and control mechanism, in which non-governmental organizations (NGOs) will play an important role, Han Yang, an official with the Disease Control Department under the Health Ministry, said.

Speaking at the launch meeting of the Global AIDS Program, Han said that the new mechanism is under the leadership of the government, with the cooperation of all departments and the active participation of society as a whole.

According to statistics from the Health Ministry, China currently has around 840,000 HIV carriers. However, experts estimate that the number will grow to 10 million by 2010 unless effective measures are taken.

The Chinese Government will strengthen communication and cooperation with NGOs, making their participation an important role in China’s AIDS prevention and control, said the official.

The flexibility of NGOs will make it easier for them to carry out AIDS-related activities like voluntary publicity, free education and condom distribution, Han said. The central government will provide more financial support for China’s NGOs, he said, and will invite public funding for certain projects, encouraging more NGOs to participate in AIDS prevention and control work.

Henk Bekedam, the World Health Organization’s (WHO) representative in China, said NGOs in China should learn from Western counterparts to make every effort for AIDS-related publicity under the strong support of the government, earning fame for themselves while winning the recognition and respect of society. The WHO always supports China’s AIDS prevention and control work, Bekedam said. “And we shall also pay close attention to NGOs working in this field and give our help as much as possible.” The WHO will help establish a complete, safe registration system of China’s HIV carriers, said Bekedam, not only including all the information about them, but also strong support for the government’s AIDS prevention and control work.

HSBC group to set up call centre in Philippines

MANILA, 15 April — British financial giant HSBC (Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation) is to establish its Philippine call centre for global operations to handle processing and customer service.

The call centre will be set up at the Northgate Cyberzone on Boni Avenue, Mandaluyong, with the project involving the investment of “several million” US dollars, the ABS-CBN on-line news Wednesday quoted bank officials as saying. “Our decision to open a group service centre in Manila reflects our long standing commitment to the country and our confidence in its prospects,” HSBC Philippines chief executive officer Warner Manning said.

“High quality telecommunications infrastructure and excellent English-language skills are the building blocks of this business, and both are freely available in the Philippines,” he added. HSBC will initially hire 500 people for the Philippine operation, the report said.

Philippine Central Bank governor Rafael Buenaventura welcomed HSBC’s move, saying “We were somewhat delayed by the political uncertainties, but, as we get comfortable, we should see unlimited potential in financial services.” HSBC already has group service centres in India, Malaysia, and China. — MNA/Xinhua

China, Vietnam sign MoU on combating border crimes

HANOI, 15 April — The ministries of public securities of China and Vietnam signed here Wednesday a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on dealing with crimes and ensuring security in the two countries’ border areas.

The MoU was inked at the first meeting on the issues, which concluded on Wednesday afternoon with the participation of the Chinese delegation led by Zhao Yongji, Deputy Minister of Public Security of China, and Vietnamese delegation led by Nguyen Khanh Toan, Deputy Minister of Public Security of Vietnam.

Under the MoU, the two public security departments to the one-day meeting agreed to take practical measures to prevent trafficking of women, children, drugs and counterfeit money, and crimes relating to weapons and explosives via the borders.

The two sides also reached consensus on tightening management over the activities to prevent illegal immigration, and holding meetings on a regular basis at both central and local levels.

They agreed that the two ministries will take turns to hold a meeting on fighting crimes and ensuring security and social order on a biannual basis.

Besides, police of bordering provinces and autonomous regions of China and Vietnam are to meet annually, and police of bordering districts and towns are to gather regularly and irregularly according to their work.

Specifically, the two ministries agreed that the next meeting will be held in China’s Beijing in 2006. — MNA/Xinhua

Vietnam encourages investment in hi-tech zones

HANOI, 15 April — The Vietnamese Government has decided to offer incentives to both local and foreign investors in hi-tech zones, Vietnam News Agency reported Wednesday.

Accordingly, investors in hi-tech zones have to pay a corporate income tax of 10 per cent, instead of the common rate of 28 per cent. They are exempt from the tax for four years of making profits, and enjoy a 50 per cent reduction in the tax over nine following years.

They are also eligible for medium- or long-term preferential loans, and borrowing money from credit institutions and permitted to mortgage their land-use rights and assets on the land to access loans of credit organizations.

A one-tier pricing policy is applied to those who lease land directly from hi-tech zone management boards. Those who carry out projects on developing or training hi-tech workers are exempted from land rentals.

Foreigners and overseas Vietnamese who work in high-tech zones as well as their families are granted multi-entry visas, and enabled to rent or purchase houses at zones where they are working.

Besides, Vietnamese and individuals and overseas Vietnamese who work in hi-tech zones are to pay the same reduced personal income taxes as applied to foreigners. — MNA/Xinhua

Nursery Market Festival continues

YANGON, 15 April — The Nursery Market Festival continued at Myay Paderha 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
**NEWS OF THE WORLD**

**Mubarak presses Bush for free trade pact**

WASHINGTON, 15 April — Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak pressed President George W Bush on Monday for a free trade pact between the two countries.

“I briefed the president on our economic reform programme, and stated the importance of free trade with the United States in attaining our economic objectives,” Mubarak said in a televised news conference with Bush in Crawford, Texas, after the two leaders met at Bush’s ranch.

**UAE population surged by 7.6% in 2003 to 4 million**

ABU DHABI, 15 April — The population of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) surged by 7.6 per cent in 2003 to top four million, maintaining its position as having one of the world’s highest population growth rates, the Gulf News daily reported.

Figures released by the Ministry of Planning showed the country’s total population stood at 4.041 million at the end of 2002, the second largest population among the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries after Saudi Arabia. Males were more than double the females, standing at 2.745 million against a female population of 1.296 million.

The overall growth rate in 2003 was equivalent to 7.6 per cent, the ministry reported.

**Uruguayan President highlights eco cooperation with China**

MONTevideo, 15 April — Uruguayan President Jorge Batlle Ibanez on Monday expressed his hope for further development of trade and economic ties with China.

Meeting with Zhao Boya, chief executive of the China National Textiles Import & Export Corp., who was invited by the President during his trip to China in 2002, Jorge said he wishes more Chinese enterprises could invest in his country.

The President told Zhao that he was pleased to witness the fast development of the Chinese economy and the smooth cooperation between the two countries.

**IMF says Portuguese companies most indebted in Euro Zone**

LISBON, 15 April — Portuguese companies are the most heavily indebted in the Euro Zone and must therefore develop more businesses to alleviate the burden, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) said Monday.

A survey by the IMF revealed that Portuguese companies hold debts accounting for up to 105 per cent of their assets, while the average stands at 80 per cent in Finland, Belgium, Italy, France, Spain and Germany.

The debt buildup began in 1999 after successive slumps in the interest rates and on the eve of the launching of the euro.

**IMF pendish ads in Tiananmen Square**

**Beijing bans ads in Tiananmen Square**

Beijing will invest more in road transportation while boosting the railway system, according to the plan. At the same time, the controlling system for traffic lights will be improved.

Beijing will also adjust the city layout, accelerating the development of the eastern part. The government has been taking measures to expedite the construction of the Light Rail Transit (LRT) system, which will be completed by 2006, to accelerate the development of the eastern part of the city.

The official said that communication planning in Beijing did not coordinate with the city layout and was not suitable for fast pace of development, which gave rise to the traffic congestion in Beijing.

According to the programme, Beijing will build a new communication system with advanced management by 2010. The new system would comprehensively enhance the city’s traffic capacity, alleviating the traffic congestion to a large extent, the official said.

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Beijing will also adjust the city layout, accelerating the development of the eastern part.

**12 Chinese crew rescued, 5 missing after ship sinks off West Bengal**

New Delhi, 15 April — Twelve Chinese crew members have been rescued but five are still missing after a Malaysian cargo ship sank in the Bay of Bengal Tuesday afternoon.

A Chinese Embassy official said here Wednesday morning.

The embassy’s Press Office said here on Tuesday that four crew members have been rescued but ten are still missing after a Malaysian cargo ship sank in the Bay of Bengal Tuesday afternoon.

**Beijing completes capital communication development programme**

BEIJING, 15 April — The Beijing Communications Committee has completed the capital communication development programme, which will be implemented this year.

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According to the programme, Beijing will build a new communication system with advanced management by 2010. The new system would comprehensively enhance the city’s traffic capacity, alleviating the traffic congestion to a large extent, the official said.

Beijing will invest more in road transportation while boosting the railway system, according to the plan. At the same time, the controlling system for traffic lights will be improved.

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Cheney took in $178,437 from Halliburton in 2003

WASHINGTON, 14 April — Vice-President Dick Cheney received $178,437 US dollars in deferred pay last year from Halliburton, the Texas oil-field services company he once headed that has received billion-dollar government contracts in Iraq.

The White House on Tuesday released the 2003 income tax returns for both Cheney and his wife, Lynne, and President George W Bush and his wife, Laura.

Cheney’s office said the income from Halliburton — which was close to his salary as vice-president — was in no way linked to the financial health of the company. A Halliburton subsidiary is under investigation for possibly overcharging the US military for fuel supplies in Iraq.

The Bushes’ taxable income was virtually unchanged from 2002. It was reported at 727,083 US dollars, after deducting of 95,043 US dollars. Their income earned as President — 397,264 US dollars — and investment income from theBushes’ trusts in which their assets are held.

The Bushes reported paying a total of 227,490 US dollars in federal income taxes. They contributed 68,360 US dollars to churches and charitable organizations.

The Cheneys reported tax-deductible income of $81,226 US dollars in 2003. They paid 258,779 US dollars in taxes in withholding and estimated tax payments, but only owed 253,067 US dollars and thus were eligible for a 5,712 US-dollar refund but decided to apply that to their 2004

Cheney reported 198,600 US dollars in vice-presidential salary for the year.

In addition, his tax return reported the payment of 178,437 US dollars in deferred compensation from Halliburton Co.

This deferred pay is based on a 1998 agreement in which Cheney elected to defer compensation earned in 1999 for his services as chief executive officer of Halliburton.

This amount is to be paid in annual installments, in interest, over the five years after Cheney’s retirement from Halliburton.

New Zealand ready to help storm-ravaged Fiji

WELLINGTON, 15 April — The New Zealand Government has indicated it is ready to help storm-ravaged Fiji once a specific request for aid is made.

Earlier Tuesday, a spokesman for Fiji’s National Disaster Management Council said the New Zealand High Commissioner to Fiji had telephoned with an offer of help, which would be considered.

New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade spokesman Jonathan Schwass confirmed to reporters Tuesday that New Zealand’s High Commissioner in Fiji had indicated New Zealand’s willingness to help the relief effort, made in a telephone call at the weekend.

What was said to the Fijians over the weekend was that we, New Zealand, stands by and is ready to help if needed,” he said.

New Zealand would consider its formal response once a specific request for help had been made, he said.

Fiji’s National Disaster Management Council (NDMC) made up of government and agency officials, met in Suva Tuesday morning to assess the damage wreaked by a vicious storm that killed hundreds of people homeless and devastated crops and villages, according to New Zealand’s National Radio.

Sili Lomalagi, head of the NDMC, was quoted as saying that 10 people had been killed by flooding and nine were still missing, including five fishermen lost on the Yasawa Islands, west of Fiji’s main island of Viti Levu...

Power lost briefly at Los Angeles Int’l Airport

Los Angeles, 15 April — Power was briefly cut across Los Angeles International Airport on Monday, including its control tower, causing flight delays, a spokesman said.

The cause of the 10-second power outage, which darkened several buildings at the sprawling airport complex, was not immediately clear, a spokeswoman for the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) said. “It’s a line that serves approximately 26 industrial customer sites that included the LAX administration building and control tower and a number of other industrial sites,” LADWP spokeswoman Carol Tucker said.

An FBI spokesman said there was no indication of foul play.

Power was cut to the air traffic control tower at the airport, LAX spokesman Harold Johnson said, which meant that controllers were briefly unable to communicate with aircraft.

Japanese bird flu outbreak officially over

Tokyo, 15 April — A local government in western Japan declared an end on Tuesday to the country’s two most recent bird flu cases, marking the official conclusion of the outbreak of the disease in Japan three months after it was first reported.

Last week a panel of experts concluded that a ban restricting movement of poultry and eggs from an area where Japan’s third and fourth bird flu cases were discovered could be lifted. Kyoto Prefecture Governor Keiji Yamada lifted all restrictions on the area on Tuesday, as scheduled.

US man pleads guilty to Oscar screener tapes piracy

Los Angeles, 15 April — A US man pleaded guilty Monday to pirating throwaway Oscar screening tapes belonging to a member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

Russell William Sprague, 51, entered his plea to one count of criminal copyright infringement before US District Judge George King.

Sprague admitted in his plea agreement that he copied screener tapes sent to veteran character actor and 22-year Academy member Carmine Caridi, and that he was also

sent screeners by another Academy member, the late John Ireland.

Sprague became involved with Caridi in about 2001 — several years after Blair died — when Caridi contacted him to request that he duplicate screeners to the actor received, the agreement states.

He acknowledged that he had seen about 200 movies, including last year’s hits such as “Kill Bill”, “Seabiscuit”, “Master and Commander” and “Mystic River”...

EAC to invest $600m in Lake Victoria Basin

KAMPALA, 15 April — The East African Community (EAC) will invest 600 million dollars in Lake Victoria Basin to help improve its fishing, develop its tourism and transport, local newspaper The New Vision reported Monday.

It quoted Permanent Secretary of Uganda Water, Lands and Environment Ministry Besalel Kabanda as saying that the basin has been declared an economic zone and a potential for bringing in about 400 million dollars to the region, which could be doubled if the economic activities are promoted.

Thai first subway system opens test runs

Bangkok, 15 April — Thailand’s first subway system started Tuesday for a week-long test runs.

More than 100,000 people will travel underground for the first time for 20 kilometres from Bang Sue to Lamphong railway station to Bang Sue in Bangkok.

The free rides are part of a plan to let users get familiar with the new system and for operators to test its readiness before the official opening, expected in July or August to celebrate the 72nd birthday of the Queen.

US dad faced years in jail for child’s death

The man who pleaded guilty during his murder trial to blinding his infant son with a screwdriver will spend the next 15 years in prison.

Wayne Spargo, 33, was found guilty of murder on 2 December last year...

Bangladesh to prevent the deadly disease that has still a low awareness is displayed in the community, the study said. — MNA/Xinhua

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Beckhams call in lawyers over infidelity claims

LONDON, 15 April — David and Victoria Beckham said on Monday they had called in lawyers over tabloid newspaper allegations that the England soccer captain had been unfaithful to his pop star wife. In a brief statement, the celebrity couple dismissed what they called "abuse and unsubstantiated claims".

On Sunday, a newspaper printed allegations from a second woman who claimed to have had an affair with Beckham.

Beckham had already dismissed as "indulgent" claims from his former personal secretary Rebecca Loos that she had had sex with the 28-year-old midfielder in Madrid.

A spokeswoman for the Beckhams said: "This weekend a series of even more absurd and unsubstantiated claims have been published about David and Victoria Beckham."

In the statement released through Britain's Press Association news agency, she added: "The couple continue to dismiss these stories and they will not be commenting upon them further at this time." — MNA/Reuters

Robson’s Newcastle rely on Euro experience

NEWCASTLE, England, 15 April — Newcastle manager Bobby Robson says his players were "in a very fortunate situation now" after they won the UEFA Cup.

Robson insists Newcastle would not sit back and hope to get through on their away goal.

"We were almost faultless against Arse- nal when we drew 0-0 on Sunday and one of the reasons we did not score against us," Robson added.

"But at 0-0 in the last five minutes you could go out of this competition. It would be like being a cat on a hot tin roof. The first goal will be very important." — MNA/Reuters

Gencerleirli’s Yanal appointed Turkey coach

ISTANBUL, 15 April — Ersun Yanal, coach of Turkish club Gencerleirli, has been appointed to lead the national team in a four-year deal agreed with the Turkish Football Federation on Tuesday.

Yanal will have the task of reviving Tur- key’s fortunes after it rose to prominence by coming third in the 2002 World Cup only to fall rapidly from grace by failing to qualify for Euro 2004.

Federation chairman Haluk Ulusoy an- nounced the deal after two days of talks with Yanal, who steered his unfancied Ankara side to the fourth round of the UEFA Cup last month where they lost to Valencia.

Yanal’s first priority will be to make sure Turkey qualifies for the next World Cup in Germany. “The 2006 World Cup in particular is important for us. We will put the national side where it belongs on the global stage,” Yanal said in a joint news conference with Ulusoy.

Yanal replaces Senol Gunes, sacked last month in the wake of the team’s shock defeat by Latvia in the playoffs for the European Championship. Turkey had come second in its group behind England.

“I decided that coach Ersun Yanal can do a four-year stint with the national team. We will do our duty together... we agreed with him on every subject,” Ulusoy said.

However, the federation chairman said Yanal still needed to hold talks with Gencerleirli on the deal. Media reports have pointed to a possible dispute over the issue of compensation sought by the club for releasing Yanal from his contract.

“Ersun must speak with his own club... I believe he will agree in every way with his club,” Ulusoy said.

Yanal caught the eye of football authori- ties this season as Gencerleirli advanced in the UEFA Cup, beating Blackburn Rov- ers, Sporting Lisbon and Parma. They also defeated Valencia at home but were knocked out 2-1 on aggregate. The coach was ex- pected to stay with Gencerleirli, currently eighth in the Turkish First Division, until the end of the season. — MNA/Reuters

Bruges battle for draw at lowly Charleroi

BRAESILO, 15 April — Club Bruges left it late to draw 1-1 at lowly Charleroi on Monday and remain 11 points adrift of leaders Anderlecht in the Belgian First Division.

Anderlecht also drew 1-1 on Friday after coming from behind at third-placed Stand- ard Liege, following Emile Mpenza’s early goal for the home side.

Arne Dindane levelled for Anderlecht in the 26th minute when he got on the end of a rebound from Oleg Jachtchouk’s shot.

Anderlecht now have 50 points, Club Bruges are on 59 and Standard Liege on 55, with five games remaining.

Odekkann Ohuade gave Charleroi the lead when he tapped in after Gregory Duler’s shot was fumbled by Bruges keeper Tomislav Butina. Bruges left it late before replacing substitute Rune Lange’s shot was deflected into the net by defender Michael Ciani.

The result left Charleroi second from bottom with 26 points, level with third- from-bottom Royal Antwerp, who were 2-1 winners at Cercle Bruges on Sunday.

Manchester United’s Chinese forward Dong Fangzhao, on loan at Antwerp, scored the winning goal.

Both club Heusden-Zolder have 24 points after their 3-1 win at Gentinal Beerschot on Saturday. — MNA/Reuters

Fighting cuts short Polish Cup semifinal

BIALYSTOK, Poland, 15 April — A Polish Cup semifinal between Legia Warsaw and Jagiellonia Bialystok was called off in the second half after fighting broke out between supporters and police on Tuesday.

The Polish soccer association PZPN said the match, to be played over two legs, had been interrupted twice because of crowd trouble. “The match was first halted in the 21st minute. Jagiellonia’s fans rushed on to the pitch and started to throw stones and fireworks at the police,” it said on its website, adding more trouble had flared in the 79th minute.

PZPN will have to decide whether to allow the result to stand — Legia were leading 2-0 against their Second Division opponents — or demand a replay. Marek Saganowski scored the first goal in the ninth minute with Tomasz Sokolowski netting after 39 in front of a 9,000 crowd. Dospel Katowice and Lech Poznan are in the other semifinal. — MNA/Reuters

Brasil's Coritiba Reginaldo Nascimento, left, fights for the ball against Peru's Sporting Cristal Luis Alberto Bonnet during a Libertadores de America Cup soccer game at the Coito Peraeira Stadium in Curitiba, Brazil, on 13 April, 2004. — INTERNET
11. Janaza Namaaz will be performed on 16-4-2004 (Friday) at 4:00 pm in the Islamic Centre near the Mandalay Central Police Station for the soul of U Ba Cho (Daw Nyunt), U Shwe Tha-Daw Amina, Daw Ma Thu Tuco, Daw Ma Thu-Tu and Daw Min Khin Khin. Full information on this event can be accessed at the Islamic Centre website on April 16th, 2004.

**WEATHER**

**Summary of observations recorded on 09:30 hours MST:**

- The amount of rainfall recorded on 14-4-2004 was 0.6 inches (16 mm) in Mandalay and its surroundings, which is below normal. Significant rainfall was observed in the Sagaing Division, with the highest amount of 8.2 inches (207 mm) recorded in Mawlamyine (Moulmein). The temperature in Mandalay was 80°F (27°C) on 15th April.

- The forecast predicts further rainfall in the Sagaing Division and the Tanintharyi Division, with temperatures expected to remain below the normal range.

- The state of the sea shows seas being strong in the Western Bay of Bengal, which may affect the local fishing activities.

- The forecast suggests a gradual improvement in weather conditions from the 16th to the 20th of April, with temperatures expected to rise.

**Outlook for subsequent two days:**

- The forecast indicates a possibility of isolated rain or thunderstorms in the Mandalay Division and the Sagaing Division, with a 60% degree of certainty.

- The expected rainfall ranges from 0.1 to 0.3 inches (0.25 to 0.75 mm) in the Mandalay Division and the Sagaing Division, with a 40% degree of certainty.

- The New Rainfall Record (Issued by 19:00 MST on 15th April 2004): The amount of rainfall recorded on 14-4-2004 was 0.5 inches (13 mm) observed at (09:30) hrs MST today at Homalin is the new maximum (24) hours rainfall record for the month of April during the last 39 years.

**Hazrat Maulana Allama Habibul Bashar Khairi (Karyn Taaw)**

B.A (Yangon), M.M (Dacca)

Muhammadu Mahudz, Muhammedu Kurian
Wa Aye, Sabarally Asif, Asifur Rahman, Asish Rayal
Vaidya Sri Satya, Kadambhi, Majda dayja

Age 71 years

The eldest son of Maulana Habibul Bashar and Daw Kamal Nisa, the beloved husband of Daw Shabirah Khatoon, the elder brother of Daw Rehmat Ali, Daw Abu Ichha, Daw Khwaja Abul Sayed, U Tin Maung (Daw Thaw Naing), father of U Chit Ko Ko Tun-

1. Dew Naung, Daw N.N. Naung, Daw Mya Mya Han, Daw Hla Hla Hla, Daw Khaw Sar, Daw Min Khin.
2. The lead the love of the World (The Corrs)
3. The lead the love of the World (The Corrs)
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19. The lead the love of the World (The Corrs)
20. The lead the love of the World (The Corrs)
Ministry of Home Affairs pandal continues Maha Thingyan Festival

**YANGON**, 15 April — The entertainment programme of the Ministry of Home Affairs continues for the third day at the pandal of the Ministry of Home Affairs at the corner of Saya San Street and Setmu Street-1 this morning.

Present on the occasion were Minister for Home Affairs Col Tin Hlaing and wife Daw Khin Hla Hla, Director-General of Myanmar Police Force Brig-Gen Khin Yi and wife, departmental heads under the Ministry of Home Affairs, resident representatives of UN agencies, international organizations, staff families and yein troupes.

First, Brig-Gen Khin Yi extended greetings. Next, yein troupes of MPF, General Administration Department and children of Pre-Primary Schools presented entertainment to the audience.

The minister also extended greetings. Daw Khin Hla Hla, wife of the minister, and party together with the guests sang the song entitled, ‘Come and see Myanmar.’

Later, the third-day of Maha Thingyan festival programmes ended with the song Mantaung Yeikko.

Minister for Home Affairs Col Tin Hlaing and wife, resident representatives of UN agencies and officials of international organizations enjoy entertainment programmes at the pandal of Ministry of Home Affairs. — MNA

Yangon Mayor’s Thingyan Pandal teeming with Thingyan lovers

**YANGON**, 15 April — Yangon Mayor’s 1365 ME Maha Thingyan Pandal was packed with revellers today, Maha Thingyan Akyat (second) Day.

At the pandal, film stars, artists and families of the Yangon City Development Committee entertained the audience with traditional Thingyan dances and songs from the morning until evening.

Accompanied by officials of the Fine Arts Department, members of the cultural troupes of Xipsaungpana of Yunnan Province of the People’s Republic of China arrived at the pandal at 11.30 am.

Chairman of the YCDC Mayor Brig-Gen Aung Thein Lin hosted a lunch party to the Chinese guests. The mayor also presented gifts to them.

The members of the cultural troupes of Xipsaungpana presented traditional dances and songs at the pandal, and then received the cash awards of the mayor and wife Dr Daw Khin Hsan Nwe.

The mayor and YCDC members and Xipsaungpana cultural troupe members enjoyed themselves joyfully participating in the Water Festival.

In the evening, vocalists entertained the audience with songs to the accompaniment of Empire Music Band.

MNA

Thingyan festival in Mandalay attracts revellers

**YANGON**, 15 April — Thingyan revellers in Mandalay Division joyfully celebrated the Thingyan Festival yesterday, first Akyat day, enjoying themselves by going round towns in cars while pious people performed meritorious deeds at pagodas, monasteries and religious places as it is close to usher in the Myanmar New Year.

Communal ordination and novitiation ceremonies were held and Thingyan sermon centres opened in all of the wards in the division.

Departmental and private water-throwing pavilions were packed with a stream of revellers. The air was filled with Thingyan songs. At some pandals, famous vocalists and artists as well as damsels entertained the public with songs and group dances in a cheerful manner.

Serving all the passers-by with food free of charge at pavilions was a pleasant sight for beholders. In the afternoon, revellers visited U Pein Bridge in Taungthaman Lake to take a rest.

In the evening, Deputy Commander of Central Command Brig-Gen Nay Win, wife Daw Nan Aye Mya and party visited Nanmyothu pandal south of the moat and enjoyed Thingyan mass dances.

Mandalay City Mayor Brig-Gen Yan Thein and wife Daw Yin Yin Shwe, Brig-Gen Nay Win and wife Daw Nan Aye Mya and party also enjoyed the entertainment at Lupyo-doh-wya pandal.

MNA

Water festival held at Family Maha Thingyan Pandal

**YANGON**, 15 April — Family Maha Thingyan Pandal held the water festival Kaba Aye Pagoda Road this morning. Thingyan songs and dances were presented by dance troupes and vocalists at the pandal. Thingyan revellers and members of the pandal enjoyed the Maha Thingyan Festival. — MNA

MNA

Yangon Mayor Brig-Gen Aung Thein Lin and party view dances at Yangon City Mayor’s Pandal on Akyat Day. — MNA

Thingyan revellers on board the vehicles seen at the pandal in Mandalay on first Akyat Day. — MNA