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

The New Year 1366 Myanmar Era has arrived. There is suggestion for a New Year Resolution. Thingyan, with all its din and clatter on the urban scene and peace and quiet on the rural, ushered out 1365. There is a long-established tradition, whatever your calendar, of setting down resolutions for the incoming year. A few of those who make them keep them, while the majority break them as easily as they made them. Some think it is fun to make New Year resolutions even though they could be taken more seriously.

People throughout Myanmar, specially white collar workers, had an unusually long Thingyan holiday, with one extra Akat Nay, or the second day that sets Thingyan in, with the same weekends hemming the Thingyan days in – which makes a nine-day stretch of a holiday. For many, that must have been quite a boon, but for those with a backlog of paperwork that had been piling up, the resolution should be to catch up with time lost. This may not sound too good a proposition for some, but when it comes to facing the facts, there is no alternative. But what of other resolutions? On the lighter side, some might adopt one which says he or she would be a vegetarian on his or her birthday. Which is not too hard to see materialization. Then, there are those who vow, at least for the year, not to eat beef or the meat of four-legged animals. Which should not be too difficult to keep.

Or would it be quite Good Samaritan-like to do a good deed a day, which, when totted up, would mean 365 good deeds in the duration of a year, with one more added if you go by the Gregorian calendar. Or there may be other serious or not-so-serious propositions. We are in the midst of building a peaceful, prosperous, discipline-flourishing democratic new nation. New, indispensable infrastructures have been built and more are coming up to expedite movement of passengers and freight, goods and agricultural produce from one part of the country to another, which go a long way toward ensuring progress and prosperity. If we make resolutions, then we must get rid of tardiness and move on the fast track, with all kinds of resolutions which we can keep, we should be able to get on the same level of development as those who are today ahead of us.

Maybe, your decision for the resolution is as good as that of others or even better. But the main thing is to really keep live up to it. Whatever your resolution, there is no harm in getting tired. There is no harm in getting ahead of others even if you took days if not weeks laying down a resolution, specially if it is good and worthwhile others. Happy New Year!

POEM:

* Like the ‘payit’ buds waiting to burst into bloom
  * The ‘atar’ water festival
  * The dirt of the old year is cleansed
  * Because of the ‘atar’ water
  * Everything’s glittering
  * Out in the New Year.
  * In this New Year,
  * The ‘payit’ buds have burst into full bloom
  * The forests to be ever pretty
  * For the emerald takes strength
  * From the trunk green to overwhelm
  * As if it is taking stride
  * One can imagine
  * And get together to decide
  * Throughout the Myanmar nation
  * In history it will be ever fresh
  * Peace and prosperity to dawn
  * The democracy human abode
  * To be created, carried forward
  * Brethren all making one big effort
  * The Great National Convention
  * Will surely get ahead.

Po Wa (Trs)

YANGONITES SHOW CORE OF THINGYAN WITH PEACEFUL AND HAPPY CELEBRATION

YANGON, 16 April — Revellers including tourists took part in Thingyan festival at the pavilion of the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism in front of the Inwa Hotel in the opposite of Mandalay most yesterday.

Chairman of Mandalay Division Peace and Development Council and Commander of Central Command Maj-Gen Ye Myint and Mandalay Mayor Brig-Gen Yan Thein arrived at the pavilion in the morning. They were welcomed there by departmental officials and personnel of Myanmar Hoteliers Association and Myanmar Hotel and Tourism Entrepreneurs Association. The commander, the mayor and party enjoyed the mass dance entertainment presented by damuls from Hoteliers Association (Mandalay) and songs by vocalists and film stars. They also happily participated in the festival by throwing water at one another.

— MNA

YANGON

YANGON, 16 April — The year 1365 Myanmar Era is to usher out at 12.17 am tonight as today is the Atet day of the Maha Thingyan. The transitional period between the old year and the new year is regarded as Thingyan time. During that time, Myanmar people do such meritorious deeds as cleansing Buddha images with water, offering ‘soon’ to members of the Sangha, hair-shampooing the elderly persons and manicuring them, and serving the people from all walks of life with traditional food free of charge. It is the cultural tradition of Myanmar people to throw water at one another with well intention during that time in the belief that by doing so previous misdeeds can be washed off.

It being the Atet day of the Maha Thingyan, revellers celebrated the festival peacefully and happily all day to their heart’s content to an extent that they forgot to grow tired. The most crowded places here were Inya Road, University Avenue and Pyay Road in Kamayut Township; and U Chit Maung Street, Saya San Road and University Avenue, in Bahan Township. Those places were packed with a stream of cars loaded with revellers as well as those who went round on foot.

The same thing can be said of Yankin, Tamwae, Pazundaung, Thingangan and Mingala Taungnyunt townships.

Revellers could enjoy themselves in the festival as the authorities concerned and members of social organizations closely monitored the festival.

Throughout all the days of the Maha Thingyan, revellers took part in the festival, keeping harmony with the traffic rules as well as with cultural traditions.

At pavilions, vocalists and film stars entertained the audience with songs and dances. With refreshed minds, all the people discarded the past impurities by throwing cool and clean water on each other and ushered in the arrival of the new year 1366 ME by doing meritorious deeds.

— MNA

The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second best time is now.
Japanese hostages released

BAGHDAD, 16 April—Three Japanese citizens being held hostage in Iraq have been freed, the Arabic television station Al-Jazeera reported today.

Mr Koizumi refused to succumb, but the kidnappers' Sunday deadline for withdrawal passed with no news of the hostages' fate leading to fresh fears over their lives.

Today Al-Jazeera reported that the three hostages were in Baghdad and free as 'the guests of Muslim scholars'. Several news organisations said today they were considering pulling their staff out of Iraq as the security situation continues to deteriorate.

And it emerged today that two more Japanese journalists, Junpei Yasuda and Nobutaka Watanahe, have since been taken hostage by an armed group on the outskirts of Baghdad.

The two are understood to have been travelling by taxi to take pictures of a downed US helicopter.

Al-Jazeera has not received any communication about the hostages or indications of ransom demands.

Nahoko Takato (L) and Noriaki Imai, two of three Japanese civilians taken captive in Iraq, are shown on Al Jazeera TV at an unknown location after being freed on 15 April, 2004. — Reuters

Spain's Zapatero vows no quarter against terrorism

MADRID, 16 April.—Spain's incoming Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero vowed a hard line on international terrorism on Thursday while upholding a pledge to withdraw troops from Iraq unless the UN takes charge there by June 30.

The Socialist leader outlined a government that in most respects would be the polar opposite of that led by departing Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar. He spoke in Parliament to start the debate on whether to confirm him in office.

He also proposed a constitutional change to end male royals taking precedence over women in succession to the throne, although this would not affect the current Crown Prince Felipe. In the face of questions from in Spain and abroad on his firmness in the face of international security threats, Zapatero sounded every bit as resolute as his conservative critic.

"The government I lead will have as its first objective the fight without quarter against terrorism, against any terrorism, against all terrorism," said Zapatero, who defeated Aznar's hand-picked candidate Mariano Rajoy by 43 per cent to 38 per cent.

Zapatero passed with no news of the hostages' Sunday deadline for withdrawal passed with no news of the hostages' fate leading to fresh fears over their lives.

Today Al-Jazeera reported that the three hostages were in Baghdad and free as 'the guests of Muslim scholars'. Several news organisations said today they were considering pulling their staff out of Iraq as the security situation continues to deteriorate.

Russia launches Iraq evacuation

MOSCOW, 16 April.—A Russian plane has left for Iraq to begin the evacuation of hundreds of Russian workers in Iraq after a spate of kidnappings.

An Il-62 passenger jet from the Russian Emergency Situations Ministry took off from a base near Moscow early Thursday to start the two-day evacuation.

The minister said its plan includes the evacuation of 553 Russian citizens and 263 citizens from countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States who are working on Russian projects.

However, it is unclear how many of the workers will take part in the voluntary evacuation. Seven flights were initially planned but on Thursday Moscow said only four planes would be involved in the airlift.

Some Russian companies are split about the plan, indicating they were uncertain over whether to withdraw altogether and put at risk contracts estimated at about $1 billion.

CNN's Ryan Chilcot said Wednesday that just over half the Russian and CIS contingent working on commercial contracts in Iraq were expected to leave — the rest staying put for now.

The airlift comes as the Italian government worked to secure the release of three Italians held hostage in Iraq after another Italian man was executed by captors on Wednesday. — Internet

Rocket attack kills mother and two sons in Iraq

BAGHDAD (Iraq), 16 April.—A rocket attack killed a mother and her two teenage sons north of Baghdad on Thursday and badly wounded her two daughters, neighbours and hospital officials said.

A woman and her two teenage sons were killed and were found dead in their house.

Two rockets slammed into houses in a residential neighbourhood of Balad, 40 miles north of the capital, at around 5 a.m. (0100 GMT). Walls crumbled, debris was strewn through the homes and a car was destroyed.

At Balad Hospital, the family's two daughters lay in ward, one semi-conscious and both badly wounded. Outside, three coffins were readied to bury the dead.

Residents blamed the attack on the US occupying forces. The US Army said it had no immediate information. Local police said they were still trying to find out what happened.

"The first hit was just before 5 a.m.," Mehdi Saleh said.

"The victims were our neighbours, they lost people. Why? It was an innocent house, innocent. The Americans want to harm Iraqis? Why?" — MNA/Reuters

Syria says US seeks its help to pacify Iraq

DAMASCUS, 16 April.—US Secretary of State Colin Powell has written to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad asking for Damascus's help to bring peace to Iraq, the official SANA news agency reported.

Powell asked Syria to do everything in its power to assist with the "pacification of the situation in Iraq" while preserving the unity of the war-ravaged country, the news agency reported.

It said the letter was delivered by US Ambassador Margaret Scobey to Syrian Foreign Minister Faruq al-Shara.

The US move comes after three Russians and five Ukrainians were abducted in Iraq on Monday and released the following day.

The minister said its plan includes the evacuation of 553 Russian citizens and 263 citizens from countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States who are working on Russian projects.

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On the day of the 4th birthday party of the youngest boy, a group of 10 heavily armed men arrived at the house, which is located near the airport. The group threatened to burn the three hostages alive if the Japanese government did not withdraw its troops from Iraq by the weekend.

The kidnappings caused a national outcry in Japan, where some 150,000 people signed a petition urging Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi to bow to the kidnappers' demands.

The kidnappers' Sunday deadline for withdrawal passed with no news of the hostages' fate leading to fresh fears over their lives.

Today Al-Jazeera reported that the three hostages were in Baghdad and free as 'the guests of Muslim scholars'. Several news organisations said today they were considering pulling their staff out of Iraq as the security situation continues to deteriorate.

And it emerged today that two more Japanese journalists, Junpei Yasuda and Nobutaka Watanahe, have since been taken hostage by an armed group on the outskirts of Baghdad.

The two are understood to have been travelling by taxi to take pictures of a downed US helicopter.

Al-Jazeera has not received any communication about the hostages or indications of ransom demands.

Nahoko Takato (L) and Noriaki Imai, two of three Japanese civilians taken captive in Iraq, are shown on Al Jazeera TV at an unknown location after being freed on 15 April, 2004. — Reuters

The move comes after the British military had announced that 17, Spain, eight, Bulgaria, five; Ukraine, four; Thailand, two; Denmark, El Salvador, Estonia and Poland had reported one each.

Since May 1, when President Bush declared that major combat operations in Iraq had ended, 547 US soldiers have died — 382 as a result of hostile action and 165 of non-hostile causes, according to the military.

The latest deaths reported by the military:

— A Task Force Olympia soldier died Wednesday in Mosul, Iraq from an acute heart attack: — A Task Force Danger soldier was killed Wednesday by an explosive near Samarra, Iraq.

The latest identifications reported by the military:

— Army Sgt William C. Eckhart, 25, Rocksprings, Texas; died Saturday from an explosion in Baqubah, Iraq, assigned to the 4th Cavalry, 1st Infantry Division, Schweinfurt, Germany.

— Army Staff Sgt Victor A. Rosaleslomei, 29, Westminster, Calif.; died Tuesday from an explosive near his vehicle in Iraq; assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 2nd Infantry Regiment, 1st Infantry Division, Viseck, Germany.

— Army Spc Richard K Trevithick, 20, of Gaines, Mich.; died Wednesday from an explosive near his vehicle in Balad, Iraq; assigned to the 9th Engineer Battalion, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Schweinfurt, Germany. — Internet

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The Socialist leader outlined a government that in most respects would be the polar opposite of that led by departing Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar. He spoke in Parliament to start the debate on whether to confirm him in office.

Elected three days after the train bombings in Madrid that killed 191 people, Zapatero repeated campaign pledges for a liberal and conciliatory domestic agenda — including support for gay marriage — and a pro-European foreign policy.

He also proposed a constitutional change to end male royals taking precedence over women in succession to the throne, although this would not affect the current Crown Prince Felipe. In the face of questions from in Spain and abroad on his firmness in the face of international security threats, Zapatero sounded every bit as resolute as his conservative critic.

"The government I lead will have as its first objective the fight without quarter against terrorism, against any terrorism, against all terrorism," said Zapatero, who defeated Aznar's hand-picked candidate Mariano Rajoy by 43 per cent to 38 per cent.

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Iran diplomat assassinated as team seeks peace in Iraq

Baghdad, 16 April—A senior Iranian diplomat was gunned down in Iraq on a day after Tehran sent a peace mission to help end a standoff between US forces and militant Shiite cleric Moqtada Sadr.

A high-ranking foreign ministry official who is heading the delegation said the assassination was “most certainly” linked to his visit. He sought to play down his role in efforts to avert a major battle between the US military and Sadr’s Mehdi Army militia, although it was unclear if the apparent change of position was a result of the killing.

An AFP correspondent saw the body of first secretary Khalil Naimi lying in his bullet-riddled car on a Baghdad street after his murder.

Two bullets had pierced the windshield and eight bullet holes were visible on the driver’s door.

Iranian foreign ministry official Hossein Sadeghi, responsible for Gulf affairs, described the murder as “savage” and said there was a clear link between the assassination and his delegation’s visit.

“We wish moves are condemned and deposed by the Islamic Republic of Iran,” he said. “It was not immediately clear whether the assassination had had any direct impact on the face-off or any confrontation. The purpose of it is assessing the general situation in Iraq,” he said.

“The whole objective is to hear everyone’s views at this stage.” — Internet

US warned to stay out of Najaf

Baghdad, 16 April—Iraq’s leading Shiite Muslim cleric, Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, has warned the United States against entering the holy city of Najaf in pursuit of Moqtada al-Sadr, Shiite religious and political source said on Thursday.

“The Ayatollah has told the Shiite Iraqi Governing Council members to inform the Americans that Najaf is a red line,” a senior source told Reuters.

Sistani, a political rival of rebel cleric Sadr, has issued statements in the past urging respect for law and order and the sanctity of Iraq’s holy places, but he has refrained from commenting directly on the Shiite uprising by Sadr’s militiamen.

Another senior source in Najaf said Sistani did not want to compromise his religious authority by appearing to engage in temporal details, such as to do with Sadr, but that he had privately made clear his strong opposition to US troops in Najaf.

“The Najaf religious establishment is adamant against any US military action in the city,” the source said.

A 2,500-strong US force is currently near Najaf after soldiers were sent south from bases north of Baghdad.

Italy tries to get hostages freed through dialogue with Iran

Rosarn, 16 April—Italy will resort to dialogue with Iran and other Islamic countries in its efforts to free the four Italians taken hostage in Iraq, Italian Foreign Minister Franco Frattini said Wednesday.

“We’ll do everything to try to free the four Italian hostages, knowing that giving in would be like playing a ‘yes’ game, but maintaining the dialogue we have had for a while with many Islamic countries, with Iran in particular, a dialogue that I myself have consolidated in these days,” Frattini said when interviewed by an Italian state radio.

The four Italians were abducted in Iraq on Monday.

Italy, with some 3,000 soldiers and paramilitary police in Iraq, is the third largest coalition partner among the occupying forces.—MNA/Xinhua

Two US soldiers die in northern Iraq

Baghdad, 16 April—A US soldier was killed in a roadside bomb attack in the northern Iraqi city of Samarra in the past 24 hours, a US Army spokesman said on Thursday.

Another US soldier died in Mosul of a “severe car- road side bomb attack” in the city, the source said.

It was not clear whether the latest combat death had already been included in the Pentagon’s toll, which rose by eight on Wednesday. According to that data, at least 93 US soldiers had been killed in action in Iraq so far in April.—MNA/Reuters

Russia airlifts first group of people back from Iraq

Moscow, 16 April—Three Russian flights landed in Moscow on Thursday evening, bringing home from Iraq the first group of some 370 Russian citizens and Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) nationals, the Emergency Situations Ministry said.

Four more Russian flights are expected to bring back over 400 Russian and CIS employees working under contracts at Russian companies in Iraq.—MNA/Xinhua

Blair urged to pressure US for tacit change in Iraq

London, 16 April—British Prime Minister Tony Blair should use his forthcoming talks with US President George W. Bush this week to tell the United States to change its plans to use “decisive force” to keep order in Iraq, the British second largest opposition party urged on Wednesday.

The US plans that would allow US commanders in Iraq to do what it takes to stop the constant violence undermine efforts to rebuild the country, Menzies Campbell, foreign affairs spokesman for the Liberal Democratic Party, said in an interview with the BBC.

“If flying gunships above residential areas of Iraq would not help win the battle for hearts and minds,” Campbell said, “the use of decisive force may well have the consequence of undermining the long-term political objective.” — Internet

Ex-Fed chief Volcker considered for UN Iraq probe

United Nations, 16 April—Paul Volcker, the former chairman of the US Federal Reserve Board, is the leading candidate to head a UN probe into a now-defunct Iraq oil-for-food programme, UN diplomats said on Wednesday.

Volcker was the first choice of UN officials but has not yet given his final acceptance. Another candidate for the panel is Judge Richard Goldstone, who served as the first prosecutor on the UN Balkan war crimes tribunal and is now a judge on South Africa’s Constitutional Court.

Volcker, who was not available for comment, has been a major architect of US financial and economic policy, serving five presidents from John F. Kennedy to Ronald Reagan.

The oil-for-food programme was a compromise among Security Council members and let Iraq choose its buyers and suppliers.

While most of Iraq’s oil went through the programme, a considerable amount was smuggled.—MNA/Reuters

Brazil lawyer assassinated as mission visits Fallujah

Iraq, 16 April—A senior Brazilian lawyer was shot while visiting Fallujah, west of Baghdad, after US forces forced her to leave her house in the restive town, local newspaper Al-Azzaman reported Wednesday.

The deteriorating condition in Fallujah, 50 kilometres west of Baghdad, and the intensity of the bombings forced the Italian woman’s family to leave their house, the report said. She started showing delivery signs near Khan Dhary Village and her husband rushed to seek help of other women in the area.—MNA/Xinhua

N’YT’ portrays Americans killed in Iraq

New York, 16 April—The New York Times took extra measures today in covering the deadliest week for US military personnel in Iraq since the beginning of the conflict, with a full-page spread of photos depicting all but two of the 64 Americans killed during the seven days that ended last Saturday. But don’t look for it again any time soon.

“We thought it was a striking way to demonstrate the news importance and poignancy of an extraordinary week in the continuing story,” said Times spokes- woman Kathy Park, who added that the photos would not become a regular feature.

The black-and-white gallery of the dead — which brought back memories of the Times’ award-winning “Portraits of Grief” briefs that followed the Sept. 11 tragedy — ran with a lengthy story about the funerals of many of the dead, which began on Page One and continued inside.

A US convoy passes by a burning US truck that came under attack on the airport road in Baghdad, Iraq on 15 April, 2004. — Internet

Russia lawyer assassinated as team seeks peace in Iraq

Baghdad, 16 April—A senior Russian lawyer was shot dead on a day after Baghdad sent a peace mission to help end a standoff between US forces and Iraqi guerrillas led by the radical cleric Moqtada al-Sadr.

A high-ranking foreign ministry official who is heading the delegation said the assassination was “most certainly” linked to his visit. He sought to play down his role in efforts to avert a major battle between the US military and Sadr’s Mehdi Army militia, although it was unclear if the apparent change of position was a result of the killing.

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“The whole objective is to hear everyone’s views at this stage.” — Internet
Bush makes three mistakes while trying to cite one

WASHINGTON, 15 April— While struggling unsuccessfully this week to think of single mistake he has made since the September 11, 2001, attacks, US President George W Bush committed three factual errors about weapons finds in Iraq, the White House said on Wednesday.

Bush, long known for his grammatical conundrums and confusing phrasology, told reporters twice during Tuesday’s prime-time news conference that 50 tons of mustard gas were discovered at a turkey farm in Libya. On the second occasion, he was responding to a reporter who asked him to identify the biggest mistake he had made since the 2001 attacks on New York and Washington that killed nearly 3,000 people and prompted the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan.

He could not. But as he searched for an answer, the Republican President reaffirmed his decision to invade Iraq and said weapons of mass destruction may still lie hidden there.

“They could still be there. They could be hidden, like

Germany orders inquiry into deaths of security personnel in Iraq

BRUSSELS, 15 April — Germany has ordered an inquiry into the apparent deaths of two German security officials in Iraq, the Interior Ministry said on Wednesday.

The policemen, who were ambushed last Wednesday on their way from Jordanian capital of Amman to Baghdad to guard the German Embassy, are still listed as missing. The Foreign Ministry has said they are “most likely dead.”

Interior Minister Otto Schily had asked for an inquiry into the circumstances, a spokesman of the ministry said. The results would then be presented to Parliament, he added.

He said that gathering information on the ambush was difficult due to the shaky security situation in Iraq and that many witnesses were still in a state of shock.

Germany was a strong opponent to the US-led war on Iraq and has sent no troops.

Leader of the security agency, the Foreign Ministry has advised Germans to leave Iraq.

Iraqi guerilla cleric proposes deal to US

BAGHDAD, 15 April— An Iraqi envoy appointed by Moqtada al-Sadr said on Wednesday the Shiite cleric had asked him to convey a set of peace proposals to US officials.

Sadr’s supporters have been rising up against the US-led occupying forces in south and central Iraq.

The United States has said it will kill or capture Sadr and destroy his militia, and has brought extra troops to the outskirts of Najaf, where the radical cleric is thought to be.

“Sayed Moqtada made positive proposals to end the crisis, I cannot disclose the details. He realizes that an armed confrontation is not in anybody’s interest,” Abdelkarim al-Anzi told Reuters in Baghdad.

Anzi, who met Sadr in the holy city of Najaf on Tuesday, said he was due to meet Iraqi Governing Council members later on Wednesday to discuss the proposals before seeing US officials.— MNA/Reuters

Arab fund institutions to discuss
loans for Iraq rebuilding

ABU DHABI, 16 April — Main Arab fund institutions are set to hold a two-day meeting in Kuwait from Wednesday, discussing loans for rebuilding projects in Iraq, the English daily Gulf News reported.

The Abu Dhabi-based Arab Monetary Fund (AMF), the Kuwait-based Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (AFESD) and three other main Arab monetary institutions will also discuss loans for other Arab nations as well as their performance in 2003 and projects for Year 2004, the paper said. Those institutions, along with development funds in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and two other Gulf countries, have sufficient funds to play a key role in Iraq’s reconstruction.

The paper quoted Arab economists as saying:

“The meeting of those institutions is extremely important as it coincides with dramatic regional and international developments and an accelerating trend in the region to liberalize local economies within overall reforms,” said Dr. Mohammed Khalifan bin Khurbash, Minister of State for Financial and Industrial Affairs, who is going to represent the UAE in the meeting. — MNA/Xinhua

No decision made on sending troops to Iraq

ISLAMABAD, 16 April — No decision has so far been made on whether Pakistan will send troops to Iraq, a Foreign Office spokesman said on Wednesday.

Masood Khan, the spokesman, told a weekly news briefing here that Pakistan has received a request from the United Nations for sending troops to Iraq and the request is being considered.

The US recently requested nations including Pakistan, India and Bangladesh to send military forces to the restive Iraq to protect the United Nation’s mission in Baghdad, which is expected to be set up in the near future, he said.

Masood Khan said the US was waiting for Pakistan’s assessment about the security environment in Iraq and the Pakistan Government will give a response to the UN after the Pakistan formally.

Pakistan official says

US troops fire on Iraqi people, several casualties

BAGHDAD, 15 April — US soldiers opened fire on footers raising a crippled military truck on Wednesday, killing and wounding several, Reuters witnesses said.

They said the truck had earlier been attacked on the airport road, and a crowd of Iraqis had gathered around it when more soldiers arrived and opened fire.

A Reuters photographer said he saw at least six Iraqis lying motionless and bleeding on the ground.

Bush orders inquiry into deaths of security personnel in Iraq

WASHINGTON, 15 April — The military leader of Honduran troops deployed in Iraq, told the Press in Tegucigalpa, the capital of Honduras, that in the past several days, the military base in Najaf sustained six attacks by 60 millimeter mortar grenades.

He said the latest attack was staged on Wednesday but no one was killed.

The only casualty in the troops was a lieutenant wounded in an attack against a mobile patrol heading for Najaf on April 4.

The commander denied any member of his forces being kidnapped in Iraq.

Honduran troops are stationed in Najaf, south of Baghdad, as part of the Spanish-led Plus Ultra Brigade.

Abdul Ghani, an Iraqi envoy, told reporters twice on Wednesday that the Tecugnalpa Military Base in Najaf came under six mortar attacks, reports reaching here said.

In a phone conversation, Colonel Wilfredo Calderon, commander of the Honduran troops deployed in Iraq, told the Press in Tegucigalpa, the capital of Honduras, that in the past several days, the military base in Najaf sustained six attacks by 60 millimeter mortar grenades.

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A Reuters photographer said he saw at least six Iraqis lying motionless and bleeding on the ground.

MNA/Reuters

Honduras confirms attacks on its military base in Iraq

MANAGUA, 15 April — The military leader of Honduran troops deployed in Iraq, told the Press in Tegucigalpa, the capital of Honduras, that in the past several days, the military base in Najaf sustained six attacks by 60 millimeter mortar grenades.

He said the latest attack was staged on Wednesday but no one was killed.

The only casualty in the troops was a lieutenant wounded in an attack against a mobile patrol heading for Najaf on April 4.

The commander denied any member of his forces being kidnapped in Iraq.

Honduran troops are stationed in Najaf, south of Baghdad, as part of the Spanish-led Plus Ultra Brigade.

Abdul Ghani, an Iraqi envoy, told reporters twice on Wednesday that the Tecugnalpa Military Base in Najaf came under six mortar attacks, reports reaching here said.

In a phone conversation, Colonel Wilfredo Calderon, commander of the Honduran troops deployed in Iraq, told the Press in Tegucigalpa, the capital of Honduras, that in the past several days, the military base in Najaf sustained six attacks by 60 millimeter mortar grenades.

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Honduran troops are stationed in Najaf, south of Baghdad, as part of the Spanish-led Plus Ultra Brigade.
Iraq devoid of sovereignty under foreign occupation
Images to be viewed from true perspective

US Marines from the 1st Battalion 5th Marine Regiment knock in a door while conducting a house to house search for weapons and guerrillas in Fallujah, Iraq on 12 April, 2004.

Bakre Kamal, 7, is treated on 14 April, 2004, in Samarra, 56 miles north of Baghdad, Iraq in a general hospital after being wounded when mortar fell on the house he was in.

An Iraqi woman, right, cries next to the bed of her 3-year-old son Ali Majeed, left, at the al-Kindy hospital in Baghdad Iraq on 5 April, 2004. The boy was shot in the shoulder during an exchange of fire between US soldiers and armed militiamen while playing in his house in Sadr City, the largest Shiite neighborhood in Baghdad.

Doctors tend to a man with gunshot wounds in Baghdad’s Yarmouk hospital on 15 March, 2004.

Iraqis look over a pair of flattened cars crushed by armored vehicles after fighting between guerrillas and US forces erupted in the north Baghdad suburb of Adhamiya on 6 April, 2004.

Wounded nine-year-old Iraqi girl Ahlam Sa’ad, who was shot in the neck, is carried by medical staff at a small clinic in the embattled town of Falluja, on 8 April, 2004.
Water festival held on grand scale in peaceful & prospering Myanmar
Drug: a boon or a curse

Professor Dr Paing Soe

(CoContinued from yesterday)

Current Problems relating to Drug Use

The following are the examples of problems encountered with drug use. An example is DHEA, which is a hormone that has been popularly used by many people for its claim of anti-aging effect. However, prolonged use has been reported to cause oedema, hypertension, coronary artery disease, precocious pubarche, and even death due to cardiac arrest.

Slimming pills, popularly used by both young and old, that contain caffeine in fatigue and possible side effects arising from diabetes mellitus and hypoglycaemia. Modern herbal slimming pills contain ephedra, which is also known as Ma huang, an ingredient in traditional Chinese medicine. Since the 1990s, ephedra has been sold over-the-counter, and it has been widely used by athletes, body builders, and weight-conscious people. However, ephedra has been reported to cause hypertension, headaches, psychiatric disturbances, and even death when used improperly.

Another problem is the over-the-counter and irrational use of antibiotics for minor ailments like common cold with the resultant development of antibiotic resistant and loss of valuable drugs. Misuse of rifampicin in venereal diseases has created problems of multi-drug resistance in tuberculosis therapy. Therefore, antibiotics should only be prescribed by competent physicians and should not be available over-the-counter.

Long-term use of hormone-containing drugs as hormone replacement therapy, has been shown to cause hypertension, cancer of the breast and endometrium, and ischemic heart disease, and should thus, be taken only under supervision of a doctor. Certain hormone-containing drugs should not be administered to children, pregnant women, and heart disease patients.

Traditional herbal food supplements like Linzhu and Nini has been claimed to cure all forms of disease and this has resulted in extensive use by the community ranging from cold and fever to cancer and AIDS. Some unintended effects have been reported. The acidic pH of Nini has been reported to cause peptic ulcer perforation, while Linzhu contains compounds that cause oedema or bleeding and perforation of peptic ulcer with prolonged use. If traditional medicines are purely traditional, and consumed in their traditional way like powder-form raw materials, then side effects are unlikely. This is because, being raw, less amount of medicine will be absorbed into the bloodstream, with resultant effects as well as side effects. However, Western medicines, on the other hand, are usually active chemical constituents and are, therefore, comparatively more potent and more toxic than traditional medicines since the latter are absorbed and extensively distributed throughout the body. Similarly, if the active principal from the traditional medicine is extracted and isolated, as with the western medicines, and made into tablets or capsules, then there will be an increase in potency, efficacy and naturally, with side effects as well. One must bear in mind that side effects are the unavoidable component of every potent drug. This can be seen from administration of a more potent and more toxic drug, digoxin, when compared with chewing of the original plant, Digitalis purpurea.

Some of the traditional medicines, especially those produced by the Ayurveda method, contain toxic heavy metals like arsenic, mercury, lead, and gold, which invariably accumulate in the body when consumed regularly for prolonged periods, and this can result in chronic toxicity, poisoning, and death. Thus, they can be considered as producing more harm than good, even though they do not cause acute toxicity at the time of consumption. On the other hand, these toxic metals have been used in western medicine, like mercury being used as a potent drug for syphilis long before the antibiotic era, and gold salts have been used for arthritis even at the present time. Furthermore, traditional medicines, when used in a comparative way, are extracted and isolated, as with the western medicines, and made into tablets or capsules, then there will be an increase in potency, efficacy and naturally, with side effects as well. One must bear in mind that side effects are the unavoidable component of every potent drug. This can be seen from administration of a...
PM attends merit-sharing …

(from page 1)

Afterswards, the Kyauktan Minkyaung Sayadaw delivered a sermon, and the Prime Minister and wife and party shared merits gained.

The Ayeyarwady Maha Mingala Ordination Hall was built at a cost of K.8.5 million by Daw Aye Myint, U Tun Ohn-Daw Tin Myint, U Sein Tun Aung-Daw Htoo Nyunt, Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt-Daw Daw Khin Win Siwe and families under the auspices of parents U Ba Nyunt-Daw Sein Shin and other wellwishers. — MNA

Roads in Mandalay crowded with Thingyan revellers on 2nd Akyat Day

Yangon, 16 April — The 1365 ME Maha Thingyan Festival continued for the second Akyat Day yesterday in Mandalay. The roads around the moat of Nnanyo were crowded with more Thingyan lovers than the first Akyat Day. Chairman of Mandalay Division Peace and Development Council Commander of Central Command Maj-Gen Ye Myint and wife, Mayor Brig-Gen Yan Thein and wife, Deputy Minister for Home Affairs Brig-Gen Phone Swe, Deputy Commander Brig-Gen Nay Win and wife, staff officers, authorities and artists joyfully participated in the water festival at the pandal of the Mandalay City Development Committee, pandals of departments and private entrepreneurs.

Dance troupes on the stages of the pandal to the accompaniment of the modern music bands performed entertainment to the audience. In the evening, dhammas or MCDC and popular film artists and vocalists to the accompaniment of the Man Sihin Music Band presented Thingyan songs at the Mayor’s Pandal where Commander Maj-Gen Ye Myint and wife, Mayor Brig-Gen Yan Thein and wife, Deputy Commander Brig-Gen Nay Win and wife and guests enjoyed their entertainment. — MNA

CPT Minister receives CCTV crew

Yangon, 16 April — Minister for Communications, Posts and Telegraphs and for Hotels and Tourism Brig-Gen Thein Zaw received the visiting three-member crew led by Producer Minhang Xuan of the China Central Television (CCTV) at his office on Pyay Road here this afternoon. On the occasion, they discussed matters on shooting documentary films on prospects of Myanmar’s tourism industry and broadcasting the films all over the world, including the tourism industry of Myanmar, conditions on sources of tourism industry and tourist attractions, advances and changes that attract tourists. Also present at the call were Deputy Minister for Hotels and Tourism Brig-Gen Aye Myint Kyu and officials and the cultural attaché and staff of the Embassy of the People’s Republic of China to Myanmar. — MNA

Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt attends cornerstone …

(from page 1)

After the ceremony, Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt performed rituals of silver and golden showers to mark the success of the ceremony.

Afterwards, at the briefing hall, Managing Director of ACE Construction U Tin Hsang reported on arrangements being made for construction of a gymnasion with 120 feet in length, 90 feet in width and 36 feet in height under the supervision of the Ministry of Sports and the Department for Human Settlement and Housing Development.

Minister for Sports Brig-Gen Thura Aye Myint gave a supplementary report.

In response to the reports, the Prime Minister gave instructions on building the sports facility with modern design and timely completion of the project.

After the ceremony, Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt and party proceeded to Kyahkmawun Yayle Pagoda in Kyauktan where they were welcomed by the Chairman of the Pagoda Board of Trustees and members and pilgrims.

First, the Prime Minister and party offered flowers and lights to Htaungpya Ngasat Buddha Image at the pagoda.

Later, members of the Pagoda Board of Trustees reported on all-round renovation of the pagoda to the Prime Minister, who fulfilled the requirements.

After that, Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt presented cash for the pagoda to the Pagoda Board of Trustees.

Next, Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt paid homage to Shin Upagutta at the pagoda and inspected work being carried out for all-round renovation of the pagoda.

Next, the Prime Minister and party arrived at e-Library in Kyauktan where they were welcomed by Minister for Information Brig-Gen Kyaw Hsan and officials. First, the Prime Minister and party heard a report presented by Managing Director U Tin Hsang of ACE Construction on matters related to construction of the e-Library.

Progress will be made in the townships if the respective committees formed in such education, health, social and economic sectors of the townships make efforts with might and main. Enlisting the strength of the people including members of social organizations, the departmental officials are to make earnest and well-coordinated efforts for development of education, agriculture, livestock breeding, economic, social, education, health matters in Kyauktan Township and requirements for development of education, health, social and economic sectors of the townships where they are assigned duties. He added that they are to make earnest and well-coordinated efforts with goodwill for successful realization of the five rural development tasks by making field trips right down to grassroots level.

Minister for Information Brig-Gen Kyaw Hsan gave a supplementary report.

After giving necessary instructions, Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt inspected the e-Library.

Afterwards, Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt met with township level departmental officials and members of social organizations at the office of Kyauktan Township Peace and Development Council and asked matters related to development of Kyauktan region.

First, Chairman of Kyauktan Township Peace and Development Council U Khin Zaw reported to the Prime Minister on agriculture, livestock breeding, economic, social, education, health matters in Kyauktan Township and requirements for development in the townships.

In response to the report, the Prime Minister attended to the needs and made a speech. He said that the township level departmental officials are to make integrated and well-coordinated efforts for development of education, health, social and economic sectors of the townships where they are assigned duties. He added that they are to make earnest and well-coordinated efforts with goodwill for successful realization of the five rural development tasks by making field trips right down to grassroots level.

Progress will be made in the townships if the respective committees formed in such education, health, livestock breeding, economic, social, education, health matters in Kyauktan Township and requirements for development of education, agriculture, livestock, economic sectors of the townships make efforts with might and main. Enlisting the strength of the people including members of social organizations, the departmental officials are to make efforts for regional development.

Ministry of Home Affairs held closing ceremony of pandal of the Mandalay City Development Committee

Yangon, 16 April — The Pandal of the Ministry of Home Affairs continued the Maha Thingyan Festival this morning and it closed at 11.10 am.

Present were Minister for Home Affairs Col Tin Hlaing and wife, Minister for Transport Maj-Gen Hla Myint and wife, Yangon Mayor Brig-Gen Aung Thein Lin and wife, member of Civil Service Selection and Training Board U Nyunt Swe and wife, Director-General of Myanmar Police Force Brig-Gen Khin Yi and wife, departmental heads under the ministry and guests. When Xi Shuang Ban Na cultural troupe of Yunnan Province of the People’s Republic of China arrived at the pandal at 9.20 am, they were welcomed by families of the Ministry of Home Affairs.

First, the entertainment of the pandal commenced with the song sung by dhammas of the ministry, followed by dances and songs presented by families of the ministry.

Minister Col Tin Hlaing extended greetings. Next, Minister Col Tin Hlaing and wife Daw Khin Hla Hla Hla and the Mayor and wife sang together with dance troupes.

Similarly, the Xi Shuang Ban Na cultural troupe performed entertainment to the audience. Minister Maj-Gen Hla Myint Swe presented gifts to the Xi Shuang Ban Na cultural troupe.

Minister Maj-Gen Hla Myint Swe and CSSSTB member U Nyunt Swe gave away prizes to the other dance troupes. Next, Minister Col Tin Hlaing and officials presented prizes to the yein troupes. Later, the pandal was closed with the song Mantaung Yeikkho.

Minister for Information Brig-Gen Kyaw Hsan of ACE Construction on matters related to construction of the e-Library.

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In response to the report, the Prime Minister attended to the needs and made a speech. He said that the township level departmental officials are to make integrated and well-coordinated efforts for development of education, health, social and economic sectors of the townships where they are assigned duties. He added that they are to make earnest and well-coordinated efforts with goodwill for successful realization of the five rural development tasks by making field trips right down to grassroots level.

Progress will be made in the townships if the respective committees formed in such education, health, livestock breeding, economic sectors of the townships make efforts with might and main. Enlisting the strength of the people including members of social organizations, the departmental officials are to make efforts for regional development.

Next, Chairman of Myanmar Education Commission and Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt and party left there by car and inspected construction of Lethet-Sang Village Basic Education Primary School in Thanlyin Township and gave instructions to officials concerned.

The Prime Minister and party arrived back here in the afternoon. — MNA
China to host 3rd International Silk Road Conference

BEIJING, 16 April — China will host the 3rd International Silk Road Conference in October this year to strengthen exchanges with countries along the Silk Road.

The conference, co-sponsored by the Chinese Ministry of Communications, the International Road Federation (IRF) and the government of Shaanxi province, is scheduled to be held in Xi’an, capital of Shaanxi from October 26 to 28 this year.

“It is of great significance for China to promote the construction of the ‘New Silk Road’ and to strengthen the transport cooperation with these countries along the Silk Road,” said Peng Zhenglin, Vice Minister of Communications, here Thursday.

Wim Westerhuis, secretary general of the International Road Federation, said that there would be no success in re-habitating the Silk Road with the support of China. He expressed his belief that holding the Silk Road Conference in China would achieve more fruitful results.

The theme of the conference is “Silk Road Rehabilitation and Road Infrastructure Construction”. The conference will consist of the Opening Ceremony, Ministerial Session, Plenary Session, Parallel Session, Closing Ceremony and Technical Tour. A large exhibition will also be staged during the conference.

Zimbabwe seizes equipment on white farms

Harare, 16 April — Zimbabwe has confiscated agricultural equipment and machinery left behind and idle on commercial farms compulsorily acquired from Whites, the official Herald newspaper reported on Wednesday.

It quoted John Nkomo, chairman of a land commit- tee appointed by President Robert Mugabe, as saying the equipment — including tractors, harvesters, trailers and irrigation pipes — was being allocated to deserving resettled wheat farmers.

“this equipment is owned by former commercial farmers who are largely hostile and unsupportive to the land reform programme,” Nkomo said in a statement. Mugabe’s government introduced new regulations in December allowing it to seize such equipment and redistribute it.

It has been an international criticism when he embarked on a drive to seize large tracts of White-owned farms for Blacks he says were dispossessed of the land when Britain colonized the country over a century ago.

Mugabe’s government blames the food shortages on drought, and says opponents of its land seizes have sabotaged Zimbabwe’s economy, leading to acute short- ages of food, fuel and foreign currency, as well as record inflation and unemployment.

German police searching for little old lady

Berlin, 16 April — German police are searching for a little old lady whose only success in an attempted bank robbery was a clean get-away.

Berlin police said a woman, who appeared to be in her 70s, shuffled nervously into a Berlin bank on Wednesday morning and told tellers that crooks had foisted a bomb on her and threatened to blow her up if she did not rob the bank.

“She was a bit confused and told a cashier three men had handed her a bag contain- ing a bomb and forced her to get the money or it would explode,” said a police spokesman.

It is estimated that the number of the participants from both at home and abroad will be over 600, including Transport Min- osters or high-ranking officials from the countries along the Silk Road, the neighbor- s by countries and other relevant coun- tries, representatives from international or- ganizations like the United Nations Eco- nomics and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), the United Na- tions Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the Shanghai Cooperation Or- ganization (SCO) and the Silk Road Trans- port Union (IRU), and high-level representatives from the international financial institutions, such as the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, and from foreign enterprises.

During the conference, a ministerial section will be held, during which the par- ticipating ministers will express their views on “how a rehabilitated Silk Road will con- tribute to the economic and social develop- ment of each country.”

Based on their in-depth discussion, a Joint Ministerial Statement will be released after the session. According to IRF, the first and second International Silk Road Con- ference were held in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan respectively in 1998 and 1999.

MNA/Xinhua

Report says CSSC completed 19 vessels in 1st quarter

Beijing, 16 April — China’s shipbuilding giant, the China State Shipbuilding Corporation (CSSC), finished a total of 19 vessels in the first quarter of 2004, registering a year-on-year growth of 262 per cent, according to a CSSC report released here Wednesday.

The CSSC released its first quarter report on shipbuilding, which said the corporation has realized a 30-per-cent increase in its turnover.

It also obtained a new contract value of over six billion yuan (about $725 million), with its accumulated con- tract value hitting 47.1 bil- lion yuan, 14 billion yuan more than that of the same pe- riod of last year.

During the first three months of this year, the CSSC also clinched 19 new ship orders, amounting to tonnage of more than one million, and 99.5 per cent of these new orders are for overseas clients.

According to the re- port, most shipbuilding branches of the CSSC also registered record production in the first quarter, with their shipbuilding schemes finally arranged through the Year 2007.

Boatyard and non-ship- building business of the CSSC also increased fast in the first three months.

The CSSC plans to finish ships totaling three million tonnage of new order, and begin building another three million tonnage of ships.

If this year’s goal can be smoothly realized, the corporation will enter the world’s top five in shipbuilding one year ahead of its original plan.

MNA/Xinhua

Legislator says China must follow scientific concept of development

BEIJING, 16 April — China’s top legislator said recently that China must follow the scientific concept of development, which has been elaborated by the cen- tral authorities as the new guideline for the country’s social and economic develop- ment.

“It is important to ear- nestly implement the scien- tific concept of develop- ment,” Wu Bangguo, chair- man of the Standing Com- mittee of the National Peo- ple’s Congress, said during an inspection tour in the Three Gorges Reservoir area on April 8-13.

The concept calls for setting all-round human de- velopment as China’s target in economic and social de- velopment, and to strive to safeguard the economic, political and cultural rights and interests of the general public, said Wu.

According to Wu, in the past two decades, China has made great achievements in reform and opening-up and modernization construc- tion, which greatly boosts the country’s confidence of and determination to build an all-round well-off society. “We should also clearly realize that we are now in the primary stage of socialism and there will be many hard problems for us to solve,” he said.

Elton Li said he would be in- tensified to improve the quality and efficiency of economic growth, he said.

MNA/Xinhua

MNA/Reuters

MNA/Reuters

MNA/Reuters
Pentagon inspector faults Boeing NATO AWACS deal

WASHINGTON, 14 April — The US Air Force improperly awarded a $3.2-billion-US-dollar NATO surveillance-plane upgrade contract to Boeing Co that was negotiated by an official who later joined the company, the Pentagon’s chief auditor said on Thursday.

The deal was negotiated by Darleen Druyun, the Air Force’s former No 2 procurement official, who was appointed one month after being a Boeing, said Inspector General Joseph Schmitz, an internal watchdog.

Druyun is scheduled to plead guilty on Tuesday to a felony count of conspiracy in another Boeing-related matter. She has agreed to cooperate with prosecutors investigating a possibly tainted $2.5-billion-US-dollar Air Force plan to lease and buy Boeing 767s as refuelling planes.

Air Force contracting officials awarded the NATO Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) contract in December 2002 “without knowing whether the $3.2-billion-US-dollar cost was fair and reasonable”, Schmitz wrote.

The price for the upgrades was determined without completing an independent and unbiased integrated product team analysis, a technical evaluation of hours and labour mixes, audit assistance or “weighted guidelines” to establish a “reasonable Boeing profit”, the study found.

The Air Force should withhold options under the contract until a final negotiated price is determined to be “fair and reasonable”, it recommended.

Chicago-based Boeing, the Pentagon’s No 2 supplier, said it had volunteered to renegotiate the contract even though, it said, Schmitz did not “point out or suggest any wrongdoing” by Boeing.

MNA/Reuters

WHO reviewing IHR to enable countries fight SARS-like epidemic

NEW DELHI, 16 April — Health officials from 192 countries and the World Health Organization are working on improving national and sub-regional surveillance system considering the threat to human health as “new microbes have appeared and old diseases have re-emerged”.

With inputs from health officials, WHO is reviewing the International Health Regulations (IHR) with focus on early detection of public health emergencies of international concern such as SARS. It killed many people and hampered trade relations between the countries, Dr Max Hardiman, group leader of WHO’s IHR revision project, told reporters here.

IHR is a code of practices and procedures to prevent the spread of diseases. It is a legally binding international document that prescribes measures to states for preventing the transboundary spread of infectious diseases, he said.

“The code of procedures and practices include routine measures at airports and seaports,” he said.

The document has three diseases such as cholera, plague and yellow fever in the category of notifiable diseases. Any outbreak of these diseases can be reported to the WHO as it could affect neighbouring countries, as well, he said.

“Apart from these diseases any other disease which is serious for public health, unusual, resulting in deaths and affects international trade also has to be reported to WHO as per the conditions of the document,” he said.

The WHO is working on developing a country specific surveillance system of each nation which would help early detection of any possible outbreak, he said. — MNA/PTI

Indonesia to issue APEC Business Travel Card

JAKARTA, 16 April — The Indonesian Government will issue the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Business Travel Card for participating state officials at the ministerial level and first-echelon government officials as well as civil servants beginning May 1, an official said Thursday.

The card will be given to people whose jobs concern APEC affairs and who will travel to APEC members, which have issued the same card.

Dahanl was quoted by state news agency Antara as saying.

The APEC countries and regions which have already issued the card are Australia, Brunei Darussalam, China, Chile, Hong Kong, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Peru, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand and the Philippines.

The card, valid for three years, will be issued by Indonesia’s immigration director-general, he said, adding that those who will be given the card must receive pre-clearance from APEC member countries.

Singapore establishes high-level security committee

SINGAPORE, 16 April — The Singapore Government has set up a high-level committee to review security arrangements in the island state’s public transport system, Minister of Transport Yeo Cheow Tong announced on Thursday.

“To further enhance the security of our public transport system and support government’s coordination amongst agencies, I am pleased to announce that the government has set up a high-level Committee on Public Transport Security,” the minister said while visiting the Singapore Mass Rail Transport (MRT) Operation Control Centre and City Hall Station. The committee, which will consist of members from the Ministry of Transport, Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Defence and the public transport operators, will undertake a comprehensive review of the security arrangements in public transport and recommend and oversee improvements to the security of the public transport system, including infrastructure such as the bus interchanges, terminals, MRT stations and depots.

The committee will also work out its security standards and develop a public education and communi-cations strategy. — MNA/Minhabu

Nursery Market Festival continues

YANGON, 16 April — The Nursery Market Festival continues at Myay Paderba 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. Modern and scientific poultry farming as well as fish and prawn breeding are also exhibited at the Nursery Market Festival.

Pamphlets and booklets on scientific cultivation of crops, mechanized farming, utilization of natural and chemical fertilizers are also available there.

The Nursery Market Festival is drawing more and more visitors and attracting people to get interested in agriculture and livestock breeding works.

MNA
Abdullah discusses regional issues with US congress delegation

ASSNAN, 16 April—Jordan’s King Abdullah II discussed with a visiting US Congress delegation from Virginia State the latest developments in the Middle East region, the official Petra news agency reported.

Abdullah outlined Jordan’s efforts to reinvigorate the peace process in the region and initiatives aimed to end the conflict between the Palestinians and Israelis through implementing the internationally-backed roadmap peace plan.

He said his planned talks this month with US President George W Bush will focus on means of relaunching the peace process and the current situations in Iraq, as well as on ways to boost bilateral relations, particularly in investment and economic spheres and the US aid to Jordan.

The Jordanian King also met on Tuesday with Virginia Council delegation for Information Technology.

The King expressed his thanks and appreciation for the delegation for their initiatives to invest in Jordan and to establish partnerships with the private sectors, particularly in educational and IT fields.

The delegation, who met with Jordanian officials in public and private sectors, will sign several agreements with Jordanian companies in information technology field.

Abdullah, meanwhile, noted the steps that the Jordanian Government has been taking to improve the investment environment in Jordan, despite the unforeseeable circumstances in the region.

“We are determined to take the initiative in reform and development processes in a way that meets our people’s hopes and ambitions,” King Abdullah said.

Latam needs more political will to enhance integration

SANTAGO, 16 April— Former French Prime Minister Lionel Jospin said Tuesday that the governments in Latin America have to show stronger will to increase regional integration.

Should Latin America achieve a level of integration similar to that of the European Union (EU), the countries in the region have to first show a real political will to advance in that direction, said the socialist French leader during the seminar New Ways of Progressive Cooperation here.

“It is true that this aim requires common bases like democracy, rule of law and free exchange, all elements that exist in the zone. But, most important, it needs the will of the governments to delegate sovereignty in the whole,” he said.

Jospin believed that relations between the EU and Latin America were going through a very good moment but had to be deepened on the basis of equality and permanent dialogue at all levels.

Latin America has to work out all its “answers to the particular reality of this region”, just as every other region does during the process towards integration, he said.

He said it was necessary to strengthen multilateralism, which he termed as a “basic tool” for regional and supra-regional integration.

Negotiations had been underway among the members of the Latin American Integration Association in a bid to make the region better positioned in negotiations on the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTA A).

The group, headquartered in Montevideo, comprises Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela.

Trade among members of the group totalled 43 billion US dollars in 2003, an 11-per-cent increase over 2002.

Changi Airport to use new biometric security checks

SINGAPORE, 16 April— Singapore’s Changi Airport will introduce new biometric security checks to prevent terrorists from sneaking into the island state early next year.

This was announced on the sidelines of a seminar on global aviation security here on Wednesday.

The new security system will identify staff through unique features like fingerprints or even retina scans. Meanwhile, a new X-ray system, which can scan the luggage from various angles, will be used at the airport by the end of this year.

The Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore (CAAS) plans to introduce 35 sets of advanced X-ray scanners to speed up the process of luggage inspection.

New Zealand to host Pacific counter-terrorism meeting

WELLINGTON, 16 April— New Zealand will host a counter-terrorism meeting for Pacific Islands Forum members next month, Prime Minister Helen Clark announced Wednesday.

The Pacific Roundtable on Counter-Terrorism is an opportunity for all forum states to discuss the implications of the upsurge in terrorism from 11 September, 2001, many difficulties faced in meeting our counter-terrorism obligations, and the assistance available to small states from international sources.

Clark said that states need to comply with rules aimed at cutting off the flow of funds to terrorists and that they need to ratify the 12 United Nations anti-terrorism conventions.

The new obligations include International Maritime Organization regulations on shipping to be implemented by mid-year, and International Civil Aviation Organization cargo screening rules which need to be put in place by the beginning of 2006, Clark said, adding that all countries would face economic risks if they fail to comply with these measures.

Cambodian PM to visit China

Ponpey Press, 16 April— Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen will lead a delegation to pay an official visit to China from 19 April to 25 April at the invitation of his Chinese counterpart Wen Jiabao.

During the visit, Hun Sen will hold official talks with Premier Wen Jiabao followed by the signing of a number of agreements and memorandum of understandings between the two countries, said a Press release from the Foreign Ministry.

Hun Sen and his delegation will visit Shanghai, Chongqing and Hainan Province, and call on top Chinese leaders, it said.

Hun Sen will also participate in Boao Forum for Asia scheduled on 24-25 April in Boao, south China’s Hainan Province.

Vanuatu’s fifth president sworn in

CANBERRA, 16 April— Alfred Maseng, a former Parliament speaker, has been sworn in as the fifth president of the South Pacific Island country of Vanuatu.

Maseng, who replaces John Bani, was supported by more than two thirds of the electoral college in the fourth round of voting Tuesday, Australian Broadcasting Corporation radio reported Wednesday.

Last week’s rounds of voting have been proved inconclusive because none of the candidates won the necessary support of two-thirds majority of the electoral college.

Maseng’s election over the government-backed candidate ended a standoff between the government and the opposition, which threatened to turn the election into a constitutional crisis.

The election was contested by 32 candidates, the highest number of candidates since the country’s independence in 1980. — MNA/Xinhua

S’pore calls for more efforts to fight terrorism

SINGAPORE, 16 April— Singapore on Wednesday called for more efforts to fight terrorism in a bid to ensure global aviation security, which is now facing growing challenges from terrorism.

Addressing a seminar on aviation security here on Wednesday, Singapore Minister of State for Health and Transport Balaji Sadasivan said that terrorism remains a global problem, and nowhere in the world is safe from terrorist attacks.

In particular, transportation systems are attractive and vulnerable targets.

He stressed the need for all players in the global aviation industry to continue keeping vigilant against terrorism threats.

To make an effective global response to new and emerging threats from terrorism, the minister called for enhancing global aviation security standards, stronger cooperation between governments, stronger public-private sector partnerships and leveraging on technology.

A customer tries out an iPod mini at an Apple Computer store in Palo Alto, Calif, on 14 April, 2004. Huge demand for iPod portable digital music players helped Apple Computer Inc triple its second-quarter earnings. — Reuters
**NASA starts 3-year programme to change culture**

**WASHINGTON, 16 April —** NASA began a three-year tune-up programme on Tuesday prompted by a new survey that found the space agency still sometimes fails to follow through on safety concerns, more than a year after the **Columbia accident.**

The new programme is aimed at changing NASA’s organizational culture, a key recommendation from investigators who probed the fatal mid-air breakup of the **Columbia** that killed all seven astronauts on 1 February, 2003. The **Columbia** investigators criticized NASA last year for failing to change a culture “which they found was as much to blame for the accident as any technical failure. The agency’s new “plan for organizational culture change,” discussed at a briefing at NASA Headquarters, stressed this concern.

“Safety is something to which NASA personnel are strongly committed in concept, but NASA has not yet created a culture that is fully supportive of safety,” the 145-page survey said. “Open communication is not yet the norm, and people do not feel fully comfortable raising safety concerns to management.”

NASA Administrator Sean O’Keefe said he would follow the recommendations of this plan, starting with a series of meetings and management coaching over the next five months. That would be followed by a long-term “roadmap” for culture change, according to the report and survey, which was conducted by BST Inc, a California-based behavioral science company.

“We need to create a climate...in which open communication is not only permissible, it’s actively encouraged,” O’Keefe said. “The leadership’s got to take it on, starting with me.”

Veteran shuttle astronaut Jim Weatherby said NASA’s own can-do culture needs to change, especially when it comes to encouraging those with safety concerns to speak up.

The reluctance to raise these concerns “stems from the can-do spirit,” Weatherby told reporters.

“Our pervasive culture for the last 45 years has been one of mission accomplishment — man, we really get things done,” he said. “If you’re someone who is slowing down the process, it isn’t only the managers that are putting pressure to not speak up, sometimes it’s even the peers.”

The immediate cause of **Columbia**’s fatal disintegration on re-entry was a piece of insulating foam that fell from the shuttle’s external tank on lift-off and struck the space shuttle’s left wing, damaging it — NASA/Reuters.

**Norway’s king back after cancer surgery**

**OSLO, 16 April —** Norway’s King Harald returned to work on Tuesday after nearly five months recovering from cancer surgery, the palace said.

Crown Prince Haakon, 30, had acted as regent since late November after his 71-year-old father, a great-grandson of Britain’s Queen Victoria, went on sick leave and underwent an operation to remove a cancerous bladder. Norwegian media say Harald looks healthier than in a long time. During his convalescence, he published a book about his experiences looking vigorous on holiday in Italy and sailing in Florida. It was his longest absence since he was born in 1991. The king’s role as head of state is largely ceremonial. — MNA/Reuters

**Police probe new Michael Jackson molestation case**

**LOS ANGELES, 16 April —** Police are investigating claims by an unidentified man that pop star Michael Jackson molested him in Los Angeles in the late 1980s, authorities said on Tuesday.

The probe comes as Jackson battles child molestation charges in a criminal case stemming from accusations made by a young boy who was seen with him in a controversial British television documentary filmed partly at his Santa Barbara county ranch.

Attorney James Jackson, 45, could not immediately be reached for comment on Tuesday. “They do have an investigation, that’s correct,” Sandi Gibbons, a spokeswoman for the Los Angeles County District Attorney’s Office, told Reuters.

She declined to comment further on specifics of the case, saying that nothing was still in the hands of Los Angeles police detectives. An LAPD spokesman said in a written statement that the investigation stemmed from a tip by the Los Angeles County District Attorney’s Office. “The victim alleges the acts took place in the City of Los Angeles in the late 1980s,” LAPD spokesman Jason Lee said. “The Department of Juvenile Divisions, Child Protection Section, is currently investigating the allegations.”

“It was not immediately clear if accusations dating to the 1980s could result in a criminal prosecution in 2004, Gibbons said.”

The statute of limitations on most child molestation cases was eight years, though it could be extended under certain circumstances.

Stan Goldman, a professor of criminal law Loyola Marymount Law School in Los Angeles, said that if the Los Angeles case were too late to prosecute, the accuser could possibly be called to testify against Jackson in the Santa Barbara case.

Jackson is charged in Santa Barbara with seven counts of lewd acts on a child under the age of 14 in a drug case that he could possibly be called to testify against Jackson in the Santa Barbara case.

Jackson is charged in Santa Barbara with seven counts of lewd acts on a child under the age of 14 and two counts of plying the boy with alcohol in order to seduce him. He has pleaded no contest and called the charges a “big lie.” Meanwhile a grand jury has been meeting in Santa Barbara to consider an indictment on similar charges against the self-proclaimed “King of Pop.”

A Santa Barbara County judge has said that he expects a trial in that matter to begin in December. — MNA/Reuters

**Macao to launch campaign bidding for WHO Healthy City**

**MACAO, 16 April —** Macao will on 13 June launch its serial campaign bidding for WTO “Healthy City,” a senior health official announced here Tuesday.

Ching Kiang Sin, director of the Health Service and head of a five-member preparatory committee for the “Healthy City” bidding, told the Macao Special Administrative Region (SAR) government hoped to finish the bidding within two years. Over 20 governmental departments will coordinate in the bidding.

On 13 March, more than 10,000 Macao residents and government officials including Macao’s Chief Executive Edmund Ho Hau Wah, expected are to participate in the launching ceremony.

Macao’s application for the “Healthy City” bidding was made at the suggestion of Shigeru Omi, WHO Western Pacific Regional Direc-

**Twin golden monkeys born in Beijing Safari Park**

**BEIJING, 16 April —** Dabao, an 11-year-old female golden monkey in Beijing Safari Park, gave birth to twin cubs Monday, a source with the safari park said.

A noted wildlife expert with the park said the possibility of the birth of twin golden monkeys was average one per 10,000, and it was the first ever pair of twin golden monkeys born in China.

The twin golden monkeys weigh some 0.5 kilos each, and are 20 centimeters tall, said keepers in the park who said they were breast-fed by their mother Dabao.

In order to help Dabao produce more milk, park keepers have prepared nutritious food, such as Chinese dates, powder milk, walnut and peanut, for the same monkey.

A rare animal species in the world, the golden monkeys, which have been listed under priority state protection in China, are inhabited mainly in mountainous areas in Sichuan, Gansu, Shaanxi and Hubei provinces. There are currently about 5,000 golden monkeys worldwide. — MNA/China

**Study says kidneys from older donors work as well**

**CHICAGO, 16 April —** Transplanted kidneys from older donors often work just as well as organs from younger donors, a study said on Monday.

In the study of 324 kidney transplant patients, 13 per cent of organs from donors aged 55 or older failed, compared to a 15 per cent failure rate for kidneys obtained from younger ones. Kidneys from younger donors generally functioned better than older kidneys, but all the successfully transplanted kidneys functioned acceptably, the study said. Transplant patients’ survival rates after one, two and three years were also comparable.

“After proper evaluation, kidneys from older deceased or living donors are appropriate for selected candidates, including older patients awaiting transplantation and those with limited life expectancy based on their severity of illness,” Dr. Paul Morrissey of Brown Medical School, Providence, Rhode Island, wrote in the journal Archives of Surgery. More important than the age of the donor, especially for an older patient waiting for a new kidney, is to obtain a healthy organ, whether the donor is living or deceased, the report said. — MNA/Reuters

**Police kill Rio slum kingpin amid cocaine war**

**RIO DE JANEIRO (Brazil), 16 April —** Police on Wednesday shot to death the chief drug lord of a Rio de Janeiro slum as they tried to stamp out a war between cocaine traffickers that has gripped Brazil’s second-biggest city.

Luciano Barbosa da Silva, nicknamed Lulu, and another unidentified gangster were killed in a shootout with a police special forces unit, police Colonel Jorge Braga said.

The killing brought the death toll to 12 since the war began in January.

The fighting in Rocinha, which spills down a hillside between chic, wealthy neighbourhoods, erupted when a drug lord named Eduino Eustacio, or Duddo, invaded with his gunmen to try to oust Lulu, who had run the slum since 1995. — MNA/Reuters
S P O R T S

Valencia beat Bordeaux, set up all-Spanish semifinal

VALENCIA (Spain), 15 April—Valencia eased their way into the last four of the UEFA Cup after second-half goals from Mauricio Pellegrino and Francisco Rufete secured a 2-1 win at home to Girondins Bordeaux on Wednesday.

The comfortable 4-2 aggregate victory means that the Primera Liga leaders will now meet regional rivals Villarreal in an all-Spanish semifinal.

Villarreal, who claimed a 3-1 aggregate victory over last season's finalists Celtic earlier in the evening, are based just 70 kilometres further north of Valencia along the Mediterranean coast.

The victory completed a perfect week for Rafa Benitez' side, who knocked Real Madrid off the top of the Primera Liga and achieved a third placed Deportivo Coruna, who have kept them on course for a.

Bordeaux, who had been somewhat unlucky to slip to a 2-1 defeat in the first leg, made a lively start at the Mestalla as they took the game to the Spanish side in the opening minutes and went in search of an early goal.

It was the home side, though, who created the first real danger of the game when Xisco found space down the right in the 15th minute.

The speedy forward checked past a defender and clipped in a neat cross towards the far post, but Bordeaux forward Pascal Feindouno cleared the danger before the advancing Fabian Cabrini could take up his shot.

Bordeaux continued to have the better of the possession, but it was Valencia who looked more likely to open the scoring as midfielder Miguel Angel Angulo and striker Xisco both spurned good chances to give their side the lead.

Valencia stepped up a gear after the break and Argentine defender Pellegrino broke the deadlock when he crashed in a powerful header after a Rufete corner on 52 minutes.

Bordeaux had little time to work their way back into the match before Rufete made it 2-0 when he slotted the ball past goalkeeper Ulrich Rame after midfielder Miguel Angel Angulo raced down the left and curled a perfect pass to his feet.

The visitors pulled one back 12 minutes later, midfielder Eduard Costa getting in amongst the Valencia defence to poke home a free kick, but it came too late to endanger the prospect of an all-Spanish semifinal.

Villarreal stun Celtic to reach UEFA semifinals

LORCAZAR DEL RIO (Spain), 15 April—European debutants Villarreal set up an all-Spanish UEFA Cup semifinal with regional rivals Valencia after ending Celtic's bid to reach successive finals on Wednesday.

Goals from Sonny Anderson and Roger gave Villarreal, who qualified for the competition via the Intertoto Cup last July, a 2-0 aggregate victory to give them a second leg to play in the Scottish side at El Madrigal to secure a 3-1 aggregate success.

Former European champions Olympique Marseille will play England's Newcastle United in the other semifinal.

A second-half goal from Camel Meriem handed Ligue 1 Marseille a 1-0 victory over three-timers winners Inter at the San Siro to seal a 2-0 passage.

It was Inter's first defeat against French opposition in 10 European ties and leaves them without a representative in the semifinals of either of the two European club competitions. — MNA/Reuters

Nine-man Barcelona earn 1-1 draw at Real Betis

MADRID, 15 April—Nine-man Barcelona earned a 1-1 draw at mid-table Real Betis as they extended their unbeaten run to 14 games on Wednesday but the result dealt a blow to their outside chance of clinching the Primera Liga title.

Barca, who stay in fourth place with 60 points and trail leaders Valencia by nine with six games remaining, took a fifth minute lead after Betis defender Daniel Lembio pulled down Argentine striker Javier Saviola in the penalty area.

Saviola drove his spot kick at goalkeeper Janos Meriek of Hungarian side Espanyol, but neither team could break the deadlock.

Marseille's 2-0 aggregate victory, after they had won the first leg of the quarterfinal tie 1-0, leaves Italy without a team in the last four of the two European club competitions.

Argentine Julio Ricardo Cruz had Inter's two chances early in the second half before the Italians, who had created most of the pressure, were caught on the break.

Meriek burst from inside his own half down the left wing and cut inside before firing a low shot past Francesco Toldo that secured the French club a place in the last four.

Inter could have few complaints after struggling to turn their midfield possession into clear cut chances against a rock solid Marseille defence.

The pattern for the game was set early on with Marseille content to defend and close down quickly in midfield and Inter looking to push forward at every opportunity but without the guile needed to break down the French defences.

Speed winner puts Newcastle in UEFA Cup semis

NEWCASTLE (England), 15 April—Gary Speed secured Newcastle United a place in the UEFA Cup semifinals with a second-half winner to beat PSV Eindhoven 2-1 at St James' Park on Wednesday.

The Wales captain headed in a 66th minute goal from a Laurent Robert corner to give Newcastle a 3-2 aggregate victory in the quarterfinal tie following a 1-1 draw in the first leg in Eindhoven last weekend.

PSV had equalized from the penalty spot taken by Mareja Kezman after Alan Shearer had put the perfect start for an early goal, also from a Robert corner.

The Newcastle captain beat his marker and goalkeeper Ronald Waterreus to the ball at the near post for his sixth UEFA Cup goal of the season.

Newcastle dominated the first half but failed to create any further notable chances while in defence Jonathan Woodgate was excellent and hardly allowed Serbia and Montenegro striker Kezman any significant possession.

PSV coach Guus Hiddink withdrew Danish winger Dennis Rommedahl at halftime and introduced striker Jan Vennegoor of Hesselink in his place to partner the previously lone figure of Kezman.

Hiddink's more adventurous tactics were rewarded almost immediately because Newcastle conceded a penalty that Kezman converted in the 52nd minute.

Midfielder Darren Ambrose failed to clear his lines and when the ball was crossed into the box, left back Olivier Bernard brought down Lee Young-pyo.

Kezman, who scored PSV's goal in the 1-1 first leg draw at the Philips Stadion last Thursday, confidently beat Shay Given from the spot.

Newcastle hit back in the 66th when Waterreus' weakness at set pieces was exploited again by French winger Robert Laurent's far-post corner was met perfectly by Speed who rose above the goalkeeper and his defenders to score from close range.

The Dutch side almost grabbed a late equalizer that would have been enough to secure a semifinal berth but Given pulled off a superb diving save to keep out Wilfried Bouma's 25-metre free kick.

Now Newcastle can look forward to entertaining 1999 finalists Olympique Marseille in the first leg of their semifinal next Thursday. The second leg is scheduled for May 6.

The result left Barcelona level with PSV on 29 points, but with nine games remaining, they have a 12-point lead over Villarreal and increased their lead over third placed Deportivo Coruna, who have

Pereira of Venezuelan soccer team Caracas FC (R) fights for the ball with Brazilian player Malisono of Cruzeiro, during their Libertadores Cup match in Caracas, on 14 April, 2004. Cruzeiro won the game 3-2.

INTERNET
15.45 National News
15.50 Hninuzone, Home for the Aged
16.00 National News
16.05 Four Greatest Places of Lord Buddha
16.10 Song "Peace be with You"
16.15 National News
16.20 Myanmar Traditional Tayaw Kinbun Sham- poo
16.25 Song of Myanmar Beauty & Scenic Sights “Mingalabar”
16.30 National News
16.35 Fabulous Shwe Gyi Dage Daw Giy
16.40 Arts of Myanmar Traditional Ta- ditional Tapestry
16.45 National News
16.50 glimpses At Myanmar Movies “Amya chaya (Part-II)”
17.00 Weekly News High- lights
17.05 Fossilized Wood Gar- den
17.10 Song “Rice Flower Like a Canal”
17.15 Weekly News High- lights
17.20 glimpses At Myanmar Movies “Amya chaya (Part-II)”
17.25 Song of Myanmar Beauty & Scenic Sights “Come and See Myanmar”
17.30 Signature Tune Greeting
17.35 Song of Myanmar Beauty & Scenic Sights “Mama Pano- rama & Myanmar Sen- timent”
17.40 National News
17.42 Happy and Gay the Thingyan Season wel- comes all with Dan- ces and Songs
17.45 National News
17.50 Travel & Description (Mandalay to Lasigho)
17.55 Happy and Gay the Thingyan Season wel- comes all with Dan- ces and Songs
18.00 National News
18.05 Thabokeet Village on Seaside
18.10 Song “Emerald Lake (Taking Retreat at Mandaw Kyit)”
18.15 National News
18.20 Significant Month of Dagu (Part-II)
18.25 Song of Myanmar Beauty & Scenic Sights “Come and See Myanmar”
18.30 National News
18.35 Myanmar Traditional Hardwork of Casting
18.40 National News
18.45 Myanmar Movies Im- pact
18.50 National News
18.55 Song of Myanmar Beauty & Scenic Sights “Come and See Myanmar”
19.00 National News
19.05 The Art of Making Pennant
19.10 Myanmar Modern Song “Blessed Myan- mar”
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WEATHER
Friday, 16 April, 2004

Summary of observations recorded at 09:00 hours
MST: During the past 24 hours, rain or thundershowers have been scattered in Shan State, widespread in Kayin State and upper Sagain Division and weather has been partly cloudy in the remaining areas. Day temperatures were (3°C) to (4°C) above normal in Eastern Shan State, Yangon, Mandalay and Magway Divisions (3°C below normal in Chin State and upper Sagain Division, 16°C below normal in Kayin State and about normal in the remaining areas. Significant day temperatures were (42°C) each in Minbu, Magway and Ayeyawady. The noteworthy amount of rainfall recorded were (2.68 inches), Homalin (2.13 inches).

Maximum temperature on 15-4-2004 was 37.8°C (100°F). Minimum temperature on 16-4-2004 was 22.5°C (73°F). Relative humidity at 9:30 hrs MST on 16-4-2004 was 68%. Total sunshine hours on 15-4-2004 was (10.7) hours. Rainfall on 16-4-200 was nil at Yangon Airport, Kaba-Aye and central Yangon. Total rainfall since 1-1-2004 was 5 mm (0.20 inch) at Yangon Airport and 12 mm (0.47 inch) at Kaba-Aye and 3 mm (0.12 inch) at central Yangon. Maximum wind speed at Yangon (Kaba-Aye) was 12 mph from Southwest at (15:30) hours on 15-4-2004.

Bay inference: Weather is partly cloudy in the South- east and fair elsewhere in the Bay of Bengal. Forecast valid until evening of 17-4-2004: Isolated rain or thundershowers are likely in Kayin and Northern Shan States, Upper Sagain and Mandalay Division and weather will be partly cloudy in the remaining areas. Degree of certainty is (60%).

State of the sea: Seas will be slight in Myanmar waters.

Outlook for subsequent two days: Continuation of isolated rain or thundershowers are likely in Kayin State. Forecast for Yangon and neighbouring area for 17-4-2004: Partly cloudy.

Weather Outlook for Mandalay and neighbouring area for 17-4-2004: Possibility of isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of confidence (40%).

Weather Outlook for 16th week of April: Weather will be partly cloudy in Yangon Division. Significant day temperatures were (42°C) each in Kaba-Aye, Magway and Ayeyawady. The noteworthy amount of rainfall recorded were (2.68 inches), Homalin (2.13 inches).

New Rainfall Record
(issued at 9:30 hrs MST on 16th April, 2004)

The amount of rainfall was 54 mm (2.13 inches) observed at 09:00 hrs MST today at Homalin is the new maxi- mum (24)hours rainfall record for the station for the Month of April during the 1999-2000 season.

Earthquake Report
An earthquake of slight intensity (4.9) Richter Scale with its epicentre outside of Myanmar about (227) miles North of Kaba Aye seismological observatory was re- corded at (14 hrs) (14 min) (22 sec) see MST on 16 April 2004.

Earthquake Report
An earthquake of strong intensity (6.2) Richter Scale with its epicentre outside of Myanmar about (1652) miles South of Kaba Aye seismological observatory was re- corded at (08 hrs) (38 min) (66 sec) see MST on 16 April 2004.
Lt-Gen Khin Maung Than tours Rakhine State

YANGON, 16 April — Provisions were offered to the monasteries in Thandwe Township, Rakhine State, at a ceremony held at Myoma Wailuwun Pirayeti Monastery in Thandwe yesterday morning, attended by Member of the State Peace and Development Council Lt-Gen Khin Maung Than of the Ministry of Defence and party.

The ceremony was graced by Chairman of Township Sangha Nayaka Committee Nandaw Monastery Sayadaw Bhaddanta Nanda Manju and Sayadaws of nine monasteries in Thandwe. Also present were National Pyithu Hluttaw Members and local authorities, local people, artists and township sangha nayaka.

Sayadaw Bhaddanta Nanda Manju administered the Five Precepts to the congregation. Lt-Gen Khin Maung Than presented rice, edible oil, medicines and offerings to the Sayadaw. Maj-Gen Maung Oo and party also presented provisions to the Sayadaws.

Sayadaw Bhaddanta Nanda Manju delivered a sermon, followed by sharing of merits gained. The donations amounted to 100 bags of rice, 50 viss of edible oil, nine sets of robes, and different kinds of medicines valued at K 100,000. Lt-Gen Khin Maung Than and party held a meeting with departmental officials, members of social organizations, townUILDers and local people. It was also attended by Maj-Gen Maung Oo, Col Than Tun Aung of Sittway Station and senior military officers. Speaking on the occasion, Lt-Gen Khin Maung Than said that stability of the State, community peace and tranquillity, prevalence of law and order and economic development of the nation play a key role in transforming the nation to a modern developed one. In this regard, tasks on industry, production, agriculture and livestock breeding are to be carried out speedily to enable the nation to be economically strong, he said. So, plans have been laid down at the State, state and divisional, district and township levels. Efforts are to be made for extended reclamation of land and sown acreage of summer paddy year by year in Rakhine State, he urged. He gave instructions on cultivation of black pulse, pigeon pea and green gram as main crops laid down by the State and extended cultivation of all suitable crops and boosting the per acre yield in the region. He stressed the importance of extended coastal and deep sea fisheries and livestock breeding.

In conclusion, Lt-Gen Khin Maung Than called on the officials at all levels to strive for enabling Rakhine State to stand as a state with strong economy that can contribute towards the State’s economy. After the meeting, Lt-Gen Khin Maung Than cordially greeted those present. Next, Lt-Gen Khin Maung Than and party inspected progress of Sittway and celebrating of Water Festival by car.

Dr Daw Khin Win Shwe attends concerts of Xi Shuang Ban Na cultural troupe, Myanmar artists

YANGON, 16 April— A ceremony to mark the Myanmar New Year, the Xi Shuang Ban Na cultural troupe of the People’s Republic of China and Myanmar artists presented the entertainment at the Sedona Hotel, here, at 6.30 pm today.

Present on the occasion were Dr Daw Khin Win Shwe, wife of Prime Minister Khin Nyunt, Daw Khin Lay Thet, wife of Member of the State Peace and Development Council General Thura Shwe Mann, Secretary-1 of the State Peace and Development Council Li-Gen Soe Win and wife Daw Than Thaw Nwe, Daw Khin Khin Win, wife of Secretary-2 Li-Gen Thein Sein, wives of the members of the State Peace and Development Council, miisters and their wives, deputy ministers, departmental heads, Ambassador of PRC to Myanmar Mr Li Jinjun and embassy staff, ambassadors and charge d’affaires of foreign missions, artists and guests.

Next, the guests enjoyed the dances and songs of the Xi Shuang Ban Na cultural troupe and Myanmar artists. — MNA

Dr Daw Khin Win Shwe and party watch dances of Xi Shuang Ban Na cultural troupe. — MNA

Yangon Mayor’s Pandal comes to a close in evening of Maha Thingyan A tet Day

YANGON, 16 April — The closing ceremony of the Yangon Mayor’s Pandal Maha Thingyan Festival was held at the pandal in front of the City Hall at 4.55 pm today. Members of the Leading Committee for Organizing the Yangon Mayor’s Pandal Maha Thingyan Festival for 1365 Myanmar Era, working committees and sub-committees, artists and dance troupes took the designated places. Chairman of the work committee Joint-Secretary of Yangon City Development Committee U Kyi Win declared successful conclusion of the festival and closed the pandal.

All the artists, families of YCDC and Thingyan lovers sang the Mantaung Yeikko song in chorus.

At 7 pm, Chairman of YCDC Mayor Brig-Gen Aung Thein Lin and wife Dr Daw Khin Hsun Nwe, Vice-Mayor Col Maung Pa and wife, the secretary, the joint-secretary, committee members and their wives presented prizes to winners in the music and dance contests. Later, the prize winning troupes entertained the audience.