Prime Minister offers water to cleanse face of Lawka Chantha Abhaya Labha Muni Buddha Image

YANGON, 17 April — Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt offered water to Lawka Chantha Abhaya Labha Muni Buddha Image on Mindhamma Hill in Insein Township here at 6.30 am today, the Myanmar New Year Day.

Present on the occasion were Yangon Division Peace and Development Council Chairman Yangon Command Commander Maj-Gen Myint Swe, the ministers, the deputy ministers, officials of the State Peace and Development Council Office, departmental heads, members of the pagoda board of trustees and pilgrims.

First, the Prime Minister offered ‘soon’, flowers and water to the Buddha Image. Next, the ceremony was opened with the three-time recitation of Namo Taissa, and Chairman of the board of trustees U Shein Aung Bo recited the Gatha ‘Sabha Jeya Mangala’.

To offer water for the cleansing of the face of the Image, the Prime Minister and party went round the Image clockwise and took their positions at the designated places.

At the auspicious time, the Prime Minister offered water to the Image and shared the merits gained. Then, the ceremony ended with three-time recitation of Buddha Sasanan Crem Tithatu.

After the ceremony, Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt inspected all-round construction tasks on Mindhamma Hill. — MNA

Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt cleanses the face of Lawka Chantha Abhaya Labha Muni Buddha Image. — MNA

Nayikan Bridge on Yangon-Sittway Road inaugurated in Sittway Township

YANGON, 17 April — Nayikan Bridge was inaugurated near Nayikan Village in Sittway Township this morning.

The bridge is on Yangon-Sittway Road and it was built by construction group-10 of Public Works.

The opening ceremony was attended by member of the State Peace and Development Council Lt-Gen Khin Maung Than of the Ministry of Defence, Chairman of Rakhine State Peace and Development Council Commander of Western Command Maj-Gen Maung Oo, Minister for Construction Maj-Gen Saw Tun, Col Than Tun Aung of Sittway Station, Secretary of Rakhine State Peace and Development Council Lt-Col Khin Maung Than, local authorities, members of Rakhine State Organization for Women’s Affairs, Material and Child Welfare Association, the Union Solidarity and Development Association, War Veterans Organization, Red Cross and Fire Brigades and local people totalling about 10,000.

Lt-Gen Khin Maung Than delivered an address. He said the government laid down plans and built a lot of infrastructures in economic, transport, education, health and social sectors with greater momentum for equitable development of the regions in states and divisions including Rakhine State and socio-economic life of the national people.

He said transport is the most important and basic requirement for development of a region. With the progress of transport, production, trade and economic, education, health and social conditions of the region will improve in harmony, he said. He said relationship among the national races will become closer and they can exchange views. The closer relationship will strengthen goodwill, understanding, solidarity and Union Spirit. This is why the government is laying emphasis on better transport in all regions of the states and divisions, he added. (See page 10)

Emergence of the State Constitution is the duty of all citizens of Myanmar Naing-Ngan.
People’s Desire

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

Paritta water poured on Yangon City

YANGON, 17 April — State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee member, Yankin Township Maha Bawdi Monastery Presiding Nayaka Sayadaw Agga Maha Ganthavacañca Pandita Bhaddanta Bhivamsa and members of the Sangha flew over Yangon City by helicopter reciting Parittas for perpetual prevalence of peace among Myanmar citizens as well as global people on New Year Day morning, 1366 ME. The Sayadaws then poured Paritta water on the city.

Minister for Information Brig-Gen Kyaw Hsan, wife Daw Kyi Kyi Win and party pay homage to Sayadaws.

Parittas recited at Information Minister’s Office on New Year Day

YANGON, 17 April — The ceremony to recite Parittas to be free from danger was held at the Ministry of Information on Theinbyu Street on 17 April. Present were Minister for Information Brig-Gen Kyaw Hsan and wife Daw Kyi Kyi Win. Also present were Nayaka Sayadaw of Dagon Parittas Monastery Agga Maha Pandita Bhaddanta Gunananda and members of the Sangha, Deputy Minister Brig-Gen Aung Thein, directors-general and managing directors of departments and enterprises under the ministry and officials.

First, Sayadaw Bhaddanta Gunananda and members of the Sangha consecrated Buddha images. Next, the minister and wife and party received the Five Precepts from the Sayadaw. The minister and wife donated provisions to members of the Sangha.

Afterwards, the Sayadaws recited Mangala Sutta and the Parittas and the minister and wife and party shared merits gained.

Similarly, the ceremony to recite Parittas was held at the head office of News and Periodicals Enterprise on Theinbyu Street this morning. Present were Managing Director Col Soe Win of NPE and wife Daw Than Than Aye, Adviser U Tin Kha, directors, chief editors and officials.

Chairman of Pazundaw Township Sangha Nayaka Committee Agga Maha Pandita Agga Maha Ganthavacañca Pandita Myatheindan Monastery Sayadaw Bhaddanta Kesara administered the Nine Precepts. Next, members of the Sangha recited Parittas.

The managing director and wife offered ‘soon’ and provisions to the Sayadaws.

At the Sub-printing House of Myanmar Alin and Kyemon Dailies in Mandalay, Editor Captain Nyunt Zaw and staff received the Five Precepts from members of the Sangha. Next, members of the Sangha recited Parittas. Later, Captain Nyunt Zaw and officials offered donations to the Sayadaws and shared merits gained.

ANGON, 17 April — With a view to enabling the city dwellers to be free from all dangers, the ceremony to recite Parittas and Pour Paritta water into reservoirs was held at Phuogyi Reservoir in Hmawbyu Township at 9.30 am today (the new year day).

The ceremony was graced by the presence of 27 members of Sangha led by Joint Secretary of State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee Agga Maha Pandita Agga Maha Suddhamajjota Dhaja Bhaddanta Tejaniya. Present on the occasion were Chairman of Yangon City Development Committee Mayor Brig-Gen Aung Thein Lin and wife Dr Daw Khin Hnin Nwe, Vice-Mayor Col Maung Pa and wife, the Secretary, the Joint-Secretary, the committee members, heads of departments and their wives, guests and others.

The ceremony was opened with the three-time recitation of Buddha Sasanan Ciram Titthatu. After the ceremony, the congregation led by members of the Sangha poured Paritta water into Phuogyi Reservoir.

Next, ‘soon’ was offered to members of the Sangha. Accompanied by officials, Mayor Brig-Gen Aung Thein Lin inspected Hlawga Reservoir in Mingaladon Township, renovation of embankment along Pyay Road, Kaba Aye Pagoda and laying of embankment near Inya Lake and gave instructions to officials.

Ceremony to recite parittas and pour paritta water into reservoirs held

ANGON, 17 April — Staff families of the State Peace and Development Council Office and Central Offices donated dawn ‘soon’ to members of the Sangha led by Pre- sidesng Nayaka Sayadaw of Aletawya Sanpya Monastery in Bahan Township Agga Maha Pandita Agga Maha Ganthavacañca Pandita Gandhamalabhivamsa on the first floor of Pyithu Hluttaw Building on Pyay Road. Here, morning Director-General Lt-Col Pe Nyine of the State Peace and Development Council Office and directors-general of central offices and staff attended the ceremony. Nayaka Bhaddanta Gandhamalabhivamsa administered the Five Precepts and members of the Sangha recited Parittas. Next, Lt-Col Pe Nyine and officials donated provisions to the Sayadaws. Afterwards, they went to Hlawga Reservoir and released Paritta water being poured into Phuogyi Reservoir. — NFA

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Staff of SPDC Office, Central Offices perform meritorious deeds

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Paritta water poured on Phuogyi Reservoir.
US soldier captured in Iraq, four foreigners freed

Baghdad, 17 April—Three Czechs and a Canadian taken hostage in Iraq were freed Friday, but in a fresh show of defiance guerrillas paraded a captive US soldier on a video tape and offered to exchange him for Iraqis held.

On the same day President Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair vowed they would not retreat from Iraq, Al Jazeera broadcast a tape that showed US Private Keith Matthew Maupin held by masked and heavily armed guerrillas.

“One group of mujahideen (holy fighters) has succeeded in taking an American soldier prisoner...and he will be treated in the Islamic tradition of treating prisoners and he is in good health,” one guerrilla read from a statement.

The poor-quality tape screened by the Arabic television station showed Maupin dressed in military fatigues sitting on the floor with the Maupin guerrilla with the statement said.

A spokesman for Maupin’s parents in the United States said the soldier on the tape was their son, known as Matt, and they were praying for his safe return.

“Our only hope is that our son is alive and living and happy in Iraq. We have not had word from him. We have not seen him. We have not heard from him. We have not heard his voice in a long time,” Carl Cottrell told reporters outside the Maupin home in Willowtree, Ohio.

The latest civilians on the hostage list were a Danish businessman, said to have been seized north of Baghdad, and a Jordanian-born businessman on a United Arab Emirates passport abducted in the southern city of Basra.

More than 40 foreigners have been taken hostage in Iraq. Most have been released, but earlier this week an Italian was killed by captors who threatened to kidnap another three Italians they were holding if Italy did not withdraw troops from Iraq.

Portugal may withdraw troops in Iraq if situation worsens

Lisbon, 17 April—Portugal may withdraw its national guard contingent from Iraq if the security situation in the country continues to deteriorate, Interior Minister Antonio Figueredo Lopes said.

“If the conflict were to deteriorate and the GNR (national guard) did not have what it required to carry out its mission, the only solution would be to withdraw,” he told Antena 1 public radio.

Portugal’s centre-right Prime Minister Jose Manuel Durao Barroso in November dispatched 128 national guards to southern Iraq to back the US-led coalition in the war-torn country, where they operate under British command.

Figueredo Lopes had said on Wednesday that Lisbon would stand by its pledge to keep its contingent in Iraq despite growing unrest in the country and calls to bring them home.

“We will not abandon this nation which has so martyred,” he had told parliament.

He had also repeated Lisbon’s willingness to extend its presence in Iraq even after June 30, when Washington is to hand over sovereignty of the country if asked to do so by the Iraqi governing authority which will take over.

Left-wing parties argue the nature of their mission has changed to one of engagement in warfare because of the mounting attacks on foreign forces in Iraq and are demanding the national guards be recalled.

Nearly three in four Portuguese, or 71 percent, want the national guards to be withdrawn, a poll published last month found. — Internet

Poles urge US against Najaf assault

Warsaw, 17 April—Polish military officials responsible for security in part of southern Iraq are arguing hard against taking Shiite leader Moqtada al-Sadr by force in Najaf, a leading Polish newspaper said late on Thursday.

US troops are now poised around Najaf, where Sadr’s militia started an uprising earlier this month against the US-led occupying forces, but America’s top general said talks were under way to avoid a bloodbath in the city.

“Going into Najaf will be a disaster, it will make the main Shiite leaders turn away from us,” Poland’s Gazeta Wyborcza newspaper quoted a senior diplomatic source as saying. “If Sadr gives up on violence, we should be talking with him. We want to talk with anyone in Iraq who doesn’t shoot at us.”

Poland has 2,400 troops in Iraq and leads a multinational force based in Kerbala in the Shiite-dominated south-central zone of the country. On Thursday Polish forces in Iraq said they were blinded by the violence with Sadr’s followers because US officials did not warn them of actions that triggered the bloodshed.

Lieutenant-Colonel Robert Strzelecki, a spokesman for the Polish, said the US-led Coalition Provisional Authority did not inform the multinational division in advance of shutting down a newspaper associated with Sadr or about the apprehension of a key lieutenant to the Sadr cleric.

Those two actions led to violence by Sadr’s militia that rocked the relatively calm Shiite parts of Iraq and opened a second front in the challenge to the US-led occupation. The attack fol- lowers seized control of several towns.

A US defence official said Myers, the top US general, did not inform the Polish-led division’s relationship with the CPA, but did not offer details.

Strzelecki said the Polish-led division, responsible for the Shiite holy city of Najaf where al-Sadr is based and other key Shiite cities, was “very surprised” by this month’s violence and had no chance to learn of the consequences of the newspaper closure and the arrest. Strzelecki said he contacted CPA officials for an explana- tion, but was not given one. — MNA/Reuters

Azerbaijan stresses upper Karabakh part of its territory

Ankara, 17 April—Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev stressed here Thursday that Upper Karabakh is part of its territory.

“Upper Karabakh is a land of Azerbaijan. All lands under our control, including Upper Karabakh, is an indis- pensable part of Azerbaijan,” said Aliyev who was paying three-day official visit to Turkey.

“But the Upper Karabakh dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan is a threat for the region. Unfavourable to be given independence or separate state or united with Armenia, which Azerbaijani rejects, he said. — MNA/Xinhua

A video image shows what appears to be a uniformed American soldier being held captive by guerrillas in Iraq on 16 April, 2004. The Al Jazeera network broadcast the tape, which showed a white man dressed in military fatigues sitting on the floor surrounded by masked gunmen. — Reuters

Iraqi group denies existence of foreign fighters in Fallujah

Baghdad, 17 April—The Muslim clerics body in Iraq denied on Thursday that there were foreign fighters in Fallujah, 50 kilometres west of Baghdad.

“We made some contacts with the residents of Fallujah, and we asked them about the news that there were foreign fighters fighting alongside the residents against the occupying forces,” said Muhammed Fadhy, the official spokesman of the group.

“The residents emphasized that there are only some Egyptians and Sudanese workers who have been working in the industrial area since the 1980s,” the spokesman said.

Yet General Mark Kemeniti, deputy general commander of the American forces in Baghdad, said 25 per cent of those who fight the American forces in Fallujah are foreign fighters. — MNA/Xinhua

Polish forces criticize use of Iraqi Sadr violence

Hilla (Iraq), 17 April—Polish forces in Iraq said on Thursday they were blinded by the violence caused by cleric Moqtada al-Sadr’s followers because US officials did not warn them of actions that triggered the bloodshed.

US Air Force General Richard Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, visited Hilla, 62 miles south of Baghdad, on the second day of his visit to Iraq to confer with Major-General Miroczyslaw Biniak, who heads a multinational division operating in key Shia Muslim areas of south-central Iraq.

Lieutenant-General Robert Strzelecki, a spokesman for the Polish, said the US-led Coalition Provisional Authority did not inform the multinational division in advance of shutting down a newspaper associated with Sadr or about the apprehension of a key lieutenant to the Sadr cleric.

Members of the Mehdi Army militia of Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr occupy a building site in the town of Kufa on 16 April, 2004. Sadr’s core supporters vowed there would be all-out war if US forces stormed Najaf, saying Iraq’s Shiites would not let another of their leaders be killed with impunity. — Internet

The latest civilians on the hostage list were a Danish businessman, said to have been seized north of Baghdad, and a Jordanian-born businessman on a United Arab Emirates passport abducted in the southern city of Basra.

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Washington, 17 April — US forces in Iraq are now confronted by multiple and still largely unknown enemies who are becoming more and more coordinated in their attacks.

The main source of concern for the United States is the Sunni Triangle north-west of Baghdad, a stronghold of the minority Sunni Muslim community that held power under former president Saddam Hussein.

More than 80 US soldiers and some 700 Iraqis, according to the US military, have been killed in fighting in Iraq over the past 12 days, much of it around Fallujah, west of Baghdad. US-led coalition forces have also faced fierce fighting from some Shiite Muslims in the south, where the situation has stabilized in recent days, according to US military officials.

The Mehdi Army militia of radical Shiite cleric Moqtada Sadr, who was in self-imposed exile, has been branded an outlaw by the coalition, is now only a limited threat, military officials said.

The coalition wants to disband his militia of 3,000-6,000 poorly equipped and trained fighters. Washington wants to isolate Sadr within the majority Shiite population, that hopes to benefit from the handover of power to Iraqis on 30 June.

"Sadr continues to marginalize himself from the rest of the Shias," General John Sattler, Commander of operations, told reporters in Washington from the command's regional headquarters in Doha.

"I think we can say he has had his day in the sun," Sattler said. Sattler acknowledged more coordination has been seen among the fighters, with the Marines reporting an increasingly sophisticated resistance in Fallujah.

"I can't identify their numbers or who they are, but the enemy we are fighting is tough," he said. "We have noticed a little more coordination than in the past, but that's to be expected over time."

General Richard Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, warned that future military operations will have to take place in Fallujah and its surrounding area, where foreign fighters have mixed with members of Saddam's deposed regime.

Clashes near Kufa, Iraqi cleric defiant

KUFA, 17 April—Blasts shook Iraq's holy Shiite town of Kufa on Friday after militants loyal to anti-US cleric Moqtada al-Sadr said they ambushed a convoy of vehicles from an American force that is building up nearby.

"I saw at least two Humvees on fire and we also attacked armored personnel carriers," said one fighter in the town adjacent to Najaf, home to the holiest Shiite shrines and where Sadr has been hiding from US forces ordered to kill or capture him.

"We attacked them again, but then they started mortaring our positions so we had to retreat," he said. "The black uniform of Sadr's Mehdi Army militia, as columns of smoke rose above the town and militants tried to evacuate at least two wounded colleagues across a bridge."

Defiant at Friday prayers in Kufa, Sadr said he would not disband his militia under any circumstances "because I did not create it on my own but with the cooperation of the Iraqis." Hospital sources said at least five people were killed and 20 wounded, most of them seriously, in the fighting.

There was no immediate comment from US forces which have reinforced Spanish and Polish soldiers in the area around Najaf, prepared to root out Sadr and his militia, which took control of the city center earlier this month, if peace talks fail.

Sadr's militia launched an uprising against occupying troops this month and has fought skirmishes in several cities. US troops also fought Sunni insurgents in Fallujah over-night and a hospital official in the city west of Baghdad said 15 people were killed and 20 wounded, just hours after America's stop general said true talks could not go on for ever and more military action might be necessary.

Rumsfeld says US deaths in Iraq higher than expected

WASHINGTON, 17 April — Midway through a bloody April for US forces in Iraq, Defence Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld said he did not expect so many recent American casualties.

At least 88 US soldiers, several more civilians and hundreds of Iraqis have died this month, as insurgent fighters battled the American-led occupation. Most casualties have come since April 4.

"I certainly would not have estimated that we would have had the number of individuals lost that we have had in last week," Rumsfeld said in answer to questions at the Pentagon on Thursday.

Rumsfeld announced that about 20,000 troops will stay in Iraq longer than they had been told to help quell the violence.

An upsurging by followers of militant Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr in southern Iraq, coupled with heavy fighting between American and Sunni fighters in the restive Fallujah region west of Baghdad, has led to concerns of wider resistance to the US occupation in advance of the scheduled June 30 transfer of power to an Iraqi government."

"It’s a tough road. And it’s a bumpy road. And I’ll be honest, it’s an uncertain road," Rumsfeld told reporters.

Chirac ends visit to Algeria

ALGERS, 17 April — French President Jacques Chirac ended his one-day visit to Algeria on Friday and left for Paris.

He came to Algiers to congratulate his Algerian counterpart Abdelaziz Bouteflika on his reelection just a week ago. The two presidents discussed bilateral and international issues of common concern over a working lunch at a state residence about 30-kilometre west of Algiers.

Chirac’s congratulation message was the first among world leaders to reach the reelected president. His prompt visit came as a surprise among the Algerian media, which questioned his motives. Algeria had been a French colony for 132 years before its independence in 1962 after a guerrilla war that lasted nearly eight years and claimed over 100,000 French and one million Algerian lives.

The two countries now maintain close ties. About five million among the Muslim population of France come from Algeria.

Chirac’s spokeswoman Catherine Colouna said Wednesday "This is a new path of Franco-Algerian relations since 2003, relations that both countries want to be close, trusting and smooth." Chirac last visited Algeria in March 2003.

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The coalition wants to disband his militia of 3,000-6,000 poorly equipped and trained fighters. Washington wants to isolate Sadr within the majority Shiite population, that hopes to benefit from the handover of power to Iraqis on 30 June.

"Sadr continues to marginalize himself from the rest of the Shias," General John Sattler, Commander of operations, told reporters in Washington from the command’s regional headquarters in Doha.

"I think we can say he has had his day in the sun," Sattler said. Sattler acknowledged more coordination has been seen among the fighters, with the Marines reporting an increasingly sophisticated resistance in Fallujah.

"I can’t identify their numbers or who they are, but the enemy we are fighting is tough," he said. "We have noticed a little more coordination than in the past, but that’s to be expected over time."

General Richard Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, warned that future military operations will have to take place in Fallujah and its surrounding area, where foreign fighters have mixed with members of Saddam’s deposed regime.

Clashes near Kufa, Iraqi cleric defiant

KUFA, 17 April—Blasts shook Iraq’s holy Shiite town of Kufa on Friday after militants loyal to anti-US cleric Moqtada al-Sadr said they ambushed a convoy of vehicles from an American force that is building up nearby.

"I saw at least two Humvees on fire and we also attacked armored personnel carriers," said one fighter in the town adjacent to Najaf, home to the holiest Shiite shrines and where Sadr has been hiding from US forces ordered to kill or capture him.

"We attacked them again, but then they started mortaring our positions so we had to retreat," he said. "The black uniform of Sadr’s Mehdi Army militia, as columns of smoke rose above the town and militants tried to evacuate at least two wounded colleagues across a bridge."

Defiant at Friday prayers in Kufa, Sadr said he would not disband his militia under any circumstances “because I did not create it on my own but with the cooperation of the Iraqis.” Hospital sources said at least five people were killed and 20 wounded, most of them seriously, in the fighting.

There was no immediate comment from US forces which have reinforced Spanish and Polish soldiers in the area around Najaf, prepared to root out Sadr and his militia, which took control of the city center earlier this month, if peace talks fail.

Sadr’s militia launched an uprising against occupying troops this month and has fought skirmishes in several cities. US troops also fought Sunni insurgents in Fallujah overnight and a hospital official in the city west of Baghdad said 15 people were killed and 20 wounded, just hours after America’s stop general said true talks could not go on for ever and more military action might be necessary.

Rumsfeld says US deaths in Iraq higher than expected

WASHINGTON, 17 April — Midway through a bloody April for US forces in Iraq, Defence Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld said he did not expect so many recent American casualties.

At least 88 US soldiers, several more civilians and hundreds of Iraqis have died this month, as insurgent fighters battled the American-led occupation. Most casualties have come since April 4.

"I certainly would not have estimated that we would have had the number of individuals lost that we have had in last week," Rumsfeld said in answer to questions at the Pentagon on Thursday.

Rumsfeld announced that about 20,000 troops will stay in Iraq longer than they had been told to help quell the violence.

An upsurging by followers of militant Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr in southern Iraq, coupled with heavy fighting between Americans and Sunni fighters in the restive Fallujah region west of Baghdad, has led to concerns of wider resistance to the US occupation in advance of the scheduled June 30 transfer of power to an Iraqi government.

"It’s a tough road. And it’s a bumpy road. And I’ll be honest, it’s an uncertain road," Rumsfeld told reporters.

Chirac ends visit to Algeria

ALGERS, 17 April — French President Jacques Chirac ended his one-day visit to Algeria on Friday and left for Paris.

He came to Algiers to congratulate his Algerian counterpart Abdelaziz Bouteflika on his reelection just a week ago. The two presidents discussed bilateral and international issues of common concern over a working lunch at a state residence about 30-kilometre west of Algiers.

Chirac’s congratulation message was the first among world leaders to reach the reelected president. His prompt visit came as a surprise among the Algerian media, which questioned his motives. Algeria had been a French colony for 132 years before its independence in 1962 after a guerrilla war that lasted nearly eight years and claimed over 100,000 French and one million Algerian lives.

The two countries now maintain close ties. About five million among the Muslim population of France come from Algeria.

Chirac’s spokeswoman Catherine Colouna said Wednesday "This is a new path of Franco-Algerian relations since 2003, relations that both countries want to be close, trusting and smooth." Chirac last visited Algeria in March 2003.
**Falluja clashes, Najaf standoff fuel Iraq tension**

**FALLUJA, 17 April — US troops fought Sunni guerrillas in Falluja on Friday and stood ready to strike at the cleric in Najaf, one of Iraq's holiest Shiite cities.**

A hospital official said an assault on the holy city by 15 people were killed and 20 wounded in overnight clashes that erupted in Falluja just hours after America's top general said truce talks could not go on for ever and more military action might be necessary.

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Richard Myers said US's administration was using "multiple channels" to talk in Paris and Falluja and avoid fighting in Najaf, where militias loyal to US's Shiite Moqtada al-Sadr control the city centre.

Polish officers commanding international troops in the Najaf region were unhappy at the prospect of an "expected economic upturn."

Around 80,000 visitors are expected to attend the fair to view products ranging from luxury watches such as Patek Philippe, which cost hundreds of US dollars apiece, to the more modest offerings from Hong Kong producers whose digital watches sell for just one dollar apiece.

**Imperial Chinese porcelain show to be held in Paris**

**PARIS, 17 April — The exhibition “Magnificence of Fire” of masterpieces of imperial Chinese porcelain will be held from May 11 to July 31, 2004 in the Cultural Institute of China in Paris (CICP), the CICP announced on Thursday.**

The three-month exhibition of Jingdezhen Town’s imperial porcelain will present for the first time in a Western country some 60 precious pieces from six centuries (the 12th to 18th centuries) through three golden ages of the imperial Chinese porcelain of the Yuan, the Ming and the Qing dynasties.

Some of these pieces have no equivalent in the great European or North American collections of Chinese ceramic and were never shown before in a Western country.

The porcelain is the most emblematic material of Chinese art and civilization for the Western people. Its first massive distribution outside China dates back to the 14th Century, under the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368).

Jingdezhen (in Jiangxi Province in south China), formerly spelt Ching Teh Chen and known as the “Ceramics Metropolis” of China, is a synonym for Chinese porcelain.

As part of the Chinese Year cultural exchange programme in France, and in celebration of the 40th anniversary of the restoration of diplomatic relations between China and France and the Millennium of the Foundation of Jingdezhen, the exhibition will show how Jingdezhen develops bit-by-bit its superiority on all the other manufacturers of China and became the world leading capital of porcelain.

**Russian Ministry backs Kyoto Protocol as Duma says no**

**MOSCOW, 17 April — Russia’s Government and Parliament looked to be headed for a collision on Thursday, with key Duma committees rejecting the Kyoto Protocol while a major ministry spoke out in favour of the environmental treaty.**

Although the State Duma Lower House most formally ratify the pact, any decision on the protocol cutting greenhouse gas emissions clearly rests with President Vladimir Putin. In October, he ordered state bodies to report on Kyoto before the Kremlin rules on the issue by May 20.

Some economic ministries have already backed the pact and the addition on Thursday of the influential Ministry of Industry and Energy to their number appeared to be a move towards forming a single government position.

The fate of the treaty has rested with Moscow since top polluter Washington pulled out in 2001, meaning its terms cannot be fulfilled without approval by Russia — the second biggest polluter among industrialized nations.

But the Duma committees said ratifying was pointless, since there would no longer be a US market for pollution quotas that Russia, much of its Soviet-era industry stopped, is now entitled to sell. And the treaty’s impact would be limited because non-industrialized countries do not have to cut gas emissions.

"Ratification is ineffective given the US pullout and the non-participation of many countries with high levels of man-made impact on climate processes,” the committees for ecology, the economy and international affairs said in a joint announcement.

Kremlin aide Andrei Ishutin, one of Russia’s most respected liberal economists and a prominent player on Kyoto, said the pact risked strangling the recovering economy. But the Ministry of Industry and Energy has prepared a report for Putin backing the treaty.

“Kyoto Protocol poses no threat to the Russian economy,” Oleg Pluzhnikov, deputy head of the ministry’s sociology department, quoted the report as saying.

He said the report was compiled by the two top economic ministries in conjunction with noted scientists and energy specialists.
Iraq devoid of sovereignty under foreign occupation
Images to be viewed from true perspective

An Iraqi couple looks at the damage caused by US shelling on their house and car, on the outskirts of Baquba, 60 kms northeast of Baghdad on 15 April, 2004. Three Iraqis were killed and two others wounded in a US bombardment near Baquba, hospital sources said.

Iraqis are lined up and checked at a traffic checkpoint on the outskirts of Najaf, Iraq, Friday, on 16 April, 2004.

US soldiers from the 2nd Battalion, 2nd Regiment of the First Infantry Division search a house near Kufa, Iraq, on 16 April, 2004.

Iraqi youths look at the damage to a house caused by a helicopter gunship strike on the restive town of Falluja April 6, 2004. Heavy fighting was reported in the towns of Falluja and Ramadi, west of Baghdad, as US Marines mounted a major operation to root out guerrillas.

A wounded man is carried after crowds of protesters marched on a Spanish garrison near Kufa April 4, 2004.
May Myanmar be peaceful in the New Year  
May all the citizens be able to partake of merits.
Mr Maurice Collis, a worldwide famous writer as well as a former deputy commissioner of Myanmar, wrote a book entitled "The Journey Outward" over 80 years ago, which features the conditions of PyinOoLwin being upgraded to a hill station at that time. His presentation was very interesting. In the book, he said that he was very busy with future plans for upgrading Maymyo. And he was also trying to introduce a by-law with regard to allotting plots in the whole Maymyo, he said. Only then, could Maymyo be turned into a grand city consisting of magnificent private residences with large compounds, he expressed his idea.

Now, his dream has come true. The PyinOoLwin Biological Gardens established in 1917 had been upgraded and it was opened on 8 April 2001 under the name of the National Kandawgyi Gardens.

The opening ceremony of the National Kandawgyi Gardens was held at the gardens in PyinOoLwin, Mandalay Division, on 8 April 2001. Chairman of the State Peace and Development Council Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Than Shwe graced the ceremony and by attending it formally unveiled the stone inscriptions of the gardens.

The PyinOoLwin Biological Gardens formerly known as the Government Biological Gardens came into existence in 1917 and so it is over 80 years old. In accordance with the guidance of Head of State Senior General Than Shwe, there has been nurtured a wide range of botanical diversity including rare species of local and foreign trees, bamboo, orchid and codiaeum variegatum in the upgraded gardens. Also in existence in the gardens are rare species of animals such as takin, golden deer, star tortoise, green peacock and white peacock. Measures have been taken for greening the gardens and its environs.

The magnificent Nanmyint Tower has been constructed recently and thus visitors can enjoy natural beauties from the tower.

The Head of State inspected the Nanmyint Tower in the gardens on the morning of 18 December 2003 and gave guidance to the officials. In response to the reports of officials concerned, the Senior General gave guidance, saying that various kinds of local trees and bamboo and flowery plants are to be collected and shown at the National Kandawgyi Gardens to enable the enthusiasts to study them at a single place, adding that replicas of natural landmarks in the states and divisions are to be shown there. He urged officials concerned to make earnest efforts to gradually turn the gardens into a famous Landmark Gardens of Myanmar.

Accompanied by member of the State Peace and Development Council General Thura Shwe Mann, Secretary-1 of the State Peace and Development Council Lt-Gen Soe Win, members of the State Peace and Development Council Li-Gen Ye Myint, Li-Gen Thiba Thura Tin Aung Myint Oo, Li-Gen Kyaw Win and Li-Gen Tin Aye, Commander-in-Chief (Navy) Rear-Admiral Soe Thein, Commander-in-Chief (Air) Lt-Gen Myat Hein, Chairman of Mandalay Division Peace and Development Council Commander of Central Command Maj-Gen Ye Myint, ministers, senior military officers of the Ministry of Defence and officials of the State Peace and Development Council Office, the Senior General again made an inspection tour of the National Kandawgyi Gardens in PyinOoLwin on 13 April 2004 morning.

At the briefing hall, Minister for Forestry Brig-Gen Thein Aung reported to the Senior General and party on upgrading the gardens in accord with the guidance, collection and planting of various kinds of wood, bamboo, orchids and other flowers in the gardens, arrangements for establishment of the National Landmark Gardens that depict significant landmarks of the states and divisions, arrival of visitors to the Nanmyint Tower, arrivals of tourists and local visitors to the garden and increase of income.

Regarding the report, the Senior General said that the garden was upgraded to the National Kandawgyi Gardens with added momentum. He spoke of the need to renovate the garden to be beautiful and pleasant forever. He said that his guidance given during his inspection tour was to be implemented fully. He said arrangements are to be made to publicize the pleasant, recreational and informative nature of the garden among the people. He said income will increase through the visits by local people and tourists year after year.

Implementation of the tasks for upgrading of the National Kandawgyi Gardens has gained greater momentum year by year. So far, a total of 482 species of hard wood, 67 species of foreign wood, a couple of Zarmani bird and 16 species of foreign birds are kept in the gardens. Now, the four takins have fully grown.

Therefore, the dream of world famous writer Mr Maurice Collis has come into reality. All in all, I think the State’s National Kandawgyi Gardens will become one of the famous landmark gardens of a biological diversity in the world soon.

(Translation: MS)
At the Dhammayaza of the pagoda, the Prime Minister met with local authorities, officials of departments concerned and social organizations. First, Chairman of Kyaiktiyo Township Peace and Development Council U Hla Win reported on matters related to the township. Lt-Gen Maung Bo and Commander Maj-Gen Thura Myint Aung gave supplementary reports. In response to the reports, the General fulfilled the requirements, saying that responsible officials are to be equipped with goodwill and diligence in carrying out tasks for development of the regions where they are assigned duties. And they are also to distribute high-yield strains of crops, disseminate agricultural methods and render assistance to local farmers for ensuring local food security and boosting per acre yield, he said.

Necessary assistance is to be provided to the private sector in a bid to turn Mon State into the one which produces rubber most in the nation. Emphasis is to be placed on accomplishment of the five rural development tasks especially on upgrading of rural roads, he said.

Those in charge of respective townships are to make field trips down to the grassroots level for attending to the needs of local people, and only then, will they win the trust of local residents and will their living standard rise, he said. All township level departmental officials are to strive for development of respective regions in all sectors through cooperation and coordination, he said. Only when measures are taken to make the administrative machinery more effective and combined efforts are made unitarily, will significant success be achieved, he said.

He said in implementation of the tasks electric power, fuel and money are income and uplift of living standard. Departmental officials are also to organize and lead the people and fulfill the requirements, he urged.

For successful implementation of the objectives of the State, departmental officials are to make endeavours for greater progress of the region and the township in combination with diligence and goodwill whatever role they are in.

Next, the Prime Minister cordially greeted those present. He inspected renovation of religious structures on the pagoda platform and greening of the Kyaiktiyo hill and its environs. The Prime Minister paid homage to the pagoda and had a chat with pilgrims.

The Prime Minister and party arrived back here in the evening. — MNA
**Lt-Gen Khin Maung Than pays homage to Lawka Nanda Pagoda and Pyilonchanta Pagoda in Sittway**

YANGON, 17 April — Member of the State Peace and Development Council Lt-Gen Khin Maung Than of the Ministry of Defence yesterday arrived at Lawka Nanda Pagoda where he was welcomed by Chairman of Rakhine State Peace and Development Council Commander of Western Command Maj-Gen Maung Oo, departmental heads and Chairman of the pagoda board of trustees U Nyo Thu Tun and members.

Lt-Gen Khin Maung Than paid homage and offered flowers, lights and incense sticks to Kasapa and Bumphaya Buddha images. Next, Lt-Gen Khin Maung Than and party visited Ahtula Marazein Pyilonchanta Pagoda. Chairman of the pagoda board of trustees U San Aung and officials welcomed them, saying that the government has been striving for ensuring secure and smooth transport which plays an important role in building a peaceful, modern and developed nation. In the process, the government places emphasis on equitable development of all parts of the nation, he said.

So, the 24 special development regions project and the five rural development tasks are being implemented in accordance with the guidance of the Head of State, he said.

After 1988, the Ministry of Construction has built tarred roads, gravel roads, macadam roads and earth roads in Rakhine State stretching 449 miles. And from 1988 to now, Rakhine State has been facilitated with 29 bridges which are with 180 feet or above in length. Moreover, five more bridges are being constructed and two to be constructed in the state.

When the Yangon-Sittway Highway was put into service, this bridge was the one with one-way-traffic system, but owing to growing number of vehicles passing through the bridge, it had to be upgraded to a reinforced concrete bridge with two-way-traffic system, he said.

In conclusion, the minister expressed his thanks to those who contributed towards the construction of the bridge and called for durability of the facility.

Next, Commander Maj-Gen Maung Oo delivered a speech. A local also spoke words of thanks for the construction of the facility. Lt-Gen Khin Maung Than, the commander and the minister formally opened the bridge. They posed for a documentary photo together with those present.

In the future, Lt-Gen Khin Maung Than pressed the button to unveil the stone inscription of the bridge and sprinkled scented water on it. Lt-Gen Khin Maung Than, the commander, the minister and departmental officials together with local people took a walk along the bridge.

**Nayikan Bridge inaugurated near...**

(From page 1)

In the past, Rakhine State relied only on air and waterway. The government spent a large sum of money on construction of roads and bridges in the state, he said.

Though there are three gateways to Rakhine State from other states and divisions — An-Minbu Road, Taungup-Padaung Road and Gwa-Ngahtainchaung Road, there is no motor roads in Rakhine State. As a result, people in the region faced transport difficulty, he said. Firstly, Yangon-Sittway Union Highway was built in 2000, he added.

Now, national people in Rakhine State can go to any part of the country through Sittway-MraukU-An Road, which are with 180 feet or above in length. Moreover, five more bridges are being constructed and two to be constructed in the state.

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**Animals released and respects paid to the aged on New Year Day**

YANGON, 17 April — The Ministry of Religious Affairs held the 11th ceremony to release animals and pay respects to the aged for the 1366 Myanma Era, at Wizaya Mingala Dhamma Thabin in Kaba Aye Hill, here, this morning, attended by Minister for Religious Affairs Brig-Gen Thura Myint Maung.

Also present on the occasion were Vice-Chairman of the State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee President Nayaka Sayadaw of Yankin Kyaiki Monastery Agga Maha Pandita Agga Maha Saddhamma Jotika Sayadaw of Dhamma Thabin, staff and members of the Sangha.

Prior to the ceremony, Minister Brig-Gen Thura Myint Maung, departmental heads and staff released 108 birds to mark the New Year Day.

Next, the minister and officials set 500 fish free at the lake near Maha Ordination Hall. In the compound of the Dhamma Thabin, staff hair-shampooed and manicured the aged. At the ceremony to pay respects to the older persons, Vice-Chairman Sayadaw Bhaddanta Gunesana administered the Nine Precepts. Members of the Sangha recited Parittas.

The minister and officials donated provisions to the Sayadaws. Joint-Secretary Sayadaw Agga Maha Pandita Agga Maha Saddhamma Jotika Sayadaw of Sayadaw Bhaddanta Viçarindabhivamsa delivered a sermon, followed by sharing of merits. Afterwards, the minister, the adviser and officials paid respects to 94 older persons.
UN forecasts 3.7% growth of world economy in 2004

United Nations, 17 April — The global economy will grow 3.7 per cent in 2004 on the basis of its strong recovery in the second half of last year, but the pace of expansion could slow during the second half of this year, a United Nations report said on Thursday.

The report, issued by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, said conditions favourable to good growth — low interest rates, low inflation, rising stock markets, expanding trade and cross-border investment — “are almost ubiquitous”.

The report, prepared by 100 economists from 60 countries, said that while the risk of global inflation is rising, it is not seen as “a major threat in the baseline forecast”.

The US economy is predicted to grow 4.7 per cent this year, much higher than last year’s rate of 3.1 per cent.

But the report warned that the US economy might not maintain growth momentum due to its surging budget deficits and swelling trade imbalance.

Continued US expansion is “crucially dependent on the willingness of the rest of the world to continue to lend to the United States by accumulating US assets, mostly United States Treasury Bonds”, it said.

“Such a cycle of interdependence between the United States and the rest of the world is unlikely to prove sustainable,” it added.

The report predicted that Japan’s economy will expand 3.1 per cent in 2004 and slow to 2 per cent next year.

European economies are seen to grow 1.9 per cent this year.

Developing economies are expected to obtain a 5.1-per-cent growth this year, while transitional economies will expand a hefty 6 per cent.

The forecast said Chinese economic growth will hit 8.5 per cent this year before dipping to 8.2 per cent next year.

— MNA/Xinhua

UNSG urges systematic approach dealing with business, conflicts

United Nations, 17 April — UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan called on Thursday for a “more systematic approach” across the United Nations to ensure that businesses can conduct their operations in countries either facing or emerging from conflicts but at the same time do not behave in a way that exploits or exacerbates the strife.

In remarks to a Security Council debate about the role of business in conflict prevention, peacekeeping and post-conflict peacemaking, Annan announced he has set up an inter-agency group within the United Nations to study the political economy of armed conflict and recommend ways in which the UN system and member states can respond effectively.

Annan said that while there have been many attempts to tackle the issues surrounding business and countries in or emerging from conflict, they have generally been ad hoc and lacking coordination.

He said “a more systematic approach” is necessary.

“It would give us the tools with which to better understand, anticipate, defend, the economy, incentives and disincentives that drive the dynamics of armed conflict”, he said.

Transparency is essential, Annan said, noting he has recently established an independent team to probe into allegations of fraud, corruption and mismanagement with the UN-run Iraqi oil-for-food programme.

Pointing out that the private sector can be both a good and a bad influence on areas of armed conflict, he added that by investing or operating in those areas, many companies have the potential to help a community “turn its back on conflict, or exacerbate the tensions that fuelled conflict in the first place”.

He called on the Security Council and all UN member states to do more to make sure that the private sector acts responsibly in countries beset by conflict.

— MNA/Xinhua

Indonesia to build power interconnection line to Malaysia

Jakarta, 17 April — Indonesia’s state-owned electricity company PLN will build some 60 kilometres of interconnection electricity line to Malaysia in 2009, a top official of the company said here on Thursday.

With a capacity of 300 to 400 megawatt, the line would pass through the sea from Riau Province, in western Indonesia, to Malaysian Peninsula, said the president director of the PLN Ede Wijanarko.

According to the ASEAN Interconnection Master Plan (AIMS), which was agreed at the ASEAN Energy Ministerial Forum in Malaysia last year, the power interconnection project will benefit Indonesia by providing energy to Sumatra, Java and Bali islands, and the energy can also be exported to Malaysia through the interconnection line.

The director said the project will be run by both the PLN and the Malaysian Tenaga National Berhad.

— MNA/Xinhua

Thailand to cut down road accidents

Bangkok, 17 April — Traffic check points around Thailand would be set up to cut down road accidents at the weekend when revelers celebrating the Thai New Year would start heading back home, the Thai authorities on Friday quoted by local Press as saying.

Check points nationwide would be manned with some 100,000 people to improve crackdown on drunk driving and speeding motorists, the Deputy Prime Minister Chaturon Chaisaeng was quoted by Bangkok Post as saying.

“The more check points that are in place, the less road accidents there will be,” said Chaturon, who is also the director of the road safety centre established to cut down road accidents during the week-long Thai New Year, or Songkran, Festival.

Road safety has become the authorities’ top concern during festival seasons, with some 569 people killed and 40,000 wounded in last year’s 5-day long Songkran revelly and 857 killed and 42,179 injured in last year’s 8-day New Year holiday by road accidents.

— MNA/Xinhua

Nursery Market Festival continues

YANGON, 17 April — The Nursery Market Festival continued at Mya Paderbha 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
Philippines striving to be “good No 2” in call centre business

MANILA, 17 April — The Philippines is striving to build itself a “good No 2” in the call centre business, which is expected to sharply grow this year, next to global leader India, a local newspaper reported Thursday. Trade and Industry Secretary Cesar Purisima was quoted by Philippine Daily Inquirer as saying that an additional revenue of about 600 million US dollars is expected this year from new investments in call centres.

Purisima said that about 40,000 new call centre seats are expected to start operating this year, double the number of existing ones, and more foreign companies had inlined measures against cross-boundary smuggling activities, Hong Kong and Shenzhen agreed to conduct more joint operations to clamp down on cross-border smuggling activities.

Each seat employs 1.4 people generating 15,000 US dollars in average revenue, so this means 600 million US dollars in new receipts for the Philippines this year,” he said. He said the country had a strategy to develop more contact centres and business process outsourcing (BPO) sector so as to develop more contact centres and business process outsourcing (BPO) sector so as to build itself a “good No 2” in the business

next to global leader India. He was referring India’s Bangalore City in the Karnataka state, which is known as the “Silicon Valley” of Asia. Adjacent cities, like Mysore, are also being groomed as satellite IT programming and backroom service centres for the global market.

Each call centre seat, as Purisima estimated, would bring in about 3,000 to 6,000 US dollars in fresh investments to the Philippines. He said the entry of more foreign companies into the call centre and BPO sector “not only highlights the quality of our local human resources, but demonstrates the continued viability of the Philippines as a place for doing business.

However, the secretary noted the business requires not only training human resources but also investments in infrastructure. — MNA/Xinhua

Nepal’s Nat’l Airlines announces flight cuts, reschedules

KATHMANDU, 17 April — The Royal Nepal Airlines Corporation has announced flight cuts and readjusted its schedules for a week after it failed to bring in a replacement craft for one of its Boeings, which is leaving for a check on Thursday.

As a result, the national flag carrier has decided to cut one flight each from four international sectors, The Kathmandu Post newspaper on Thursday quoted Raju KC, the marketing director of the corporation, as saying. “We have to reschedule the entire international flights and cut one each flight to Osaka, New Delhi, Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur for a week,” KC said.

The corporation, which operates two Boeing 757s, currently flies to 10 destinations in seven countries. Despite two and a half month long effort, the corporation failed to finalize a deal to acquire a replacement plane for its Boeing 757-NACR, which is leaving for a C-check and will be out of service for at least two months.

China and Romania established diplomatic relations 55 years ago. Chinese President Hu Jintao and his Romanian counterpart Ion Iliescu signed a joint statement last year, agreeing to further improve exchanges and cooperation in politics, economy, trade, culture, education, tourism and science and technology.

During the President’s visit last year, Chinese telecom equipment manufacturer China ZTE Corporation signed a 94-million-US-dollar contract with Romania’s PDS Telem, to help Romania build a nationwide telecom network.

The Romanian senator praised China for its “huge progress” in politics, economy, science and technology and social matters over the past decades.

The Romanian senate delegation arrived in China Tuesday, and it is the first Romanian delegation to visit China after it joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) early this month.

Also a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, Jia Qilin said China attaches great importance to its relations with Romania and hopes to cultivate the friendly relationship.

On the same day, Gu Xiaolian, vice-chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress, met with the Romanian delegation. Gu visited Romania last month. — MNA/Xinhua

Chinese, Norwegian defence ministers hold talks

BEIJING, 17 April — Chinese Minister of National Defence Cao Gangchuan held talks here Wednesday with Minister of Defence of Norway Kristin Krohn Devold.

Cao, also vice-chairman of the Central Military Commission and a state councilor, said the Armed Forces of China values the relationship with their Norwegian counterpart. He said, friendly exchanges between the Armed Forces of the two sides are frequent in recent years, hoping they can learn from each other for further development of their friendly relations.

Devold is the first minister of defence of Norway to visit China and her visit to China is bound to promote friendly exchanges between the two countries and Armed Forces, Cao said. He also briefed Devold on China’s stance on the Taiwan issue. Devold said Norway appreciated China’s rapid economic development and its active role in international affairs. — MNA/Xinhua

Ground sinks in S China village

ZHUBAI, 17 April — The sinking of ground Tuesday morning in Nanning Town of Zhuhai City, south China’s Guangdong Province, caused five four-storey buildings to plunge one to two metres into the ground.

The sinking occurred along Qianshan River in Guangchang Village, leaving the five buildings damaged and distorted to various extents. The area was blocked off by police and residents inside were transferred to safe places with no casualties reported.

An owner of a shop in one sink building said she was woken from a deep sleep by the violent trembling of her bed and the sounds made by goods falling from the shop shelves.

“l got up and tried to open the door, but failed. I yelled for help and my neighbours came and helped me out,” said the woman, who declined to give her name. About ten people were inside the buildings when the accident occurred at 1:00 a.m. Tuesday. One building is still under construction and the others are hired out, said Yao Xinmin, an official of Nanning Town. The buildings are all illegally built without standard foundations, which might have caused the sink- ing. Yao said.

India busts antique smuggling gang

NEW DELHI, 17 April — Delhi police claimed on Wednesday to have busted a gang involved in smuggling antique items, gold coins and stolen idols.

The police recovered valuables worth over 666,000 US dollars and arrested four persons, three of them apprehended on Tuesday near Shahjahan Road in New Delhi area, where they had gathered to sell antique items. The Press Trust of India quoted local police as saying.

Two 500-year-old idols weighing over 12 kilos, a Tibetan figurine weighing 210 grammes, 17 brass-coloured coins of Kushan era, 10 brass-coloured coins of Gujarat sultan era, 31 coins from the time of Ferozeshah Tughlaq and 50 coins of Mughal period were recovered from them.

Romanian Senate delegation pledges one-China policy

BEIJING, 17 April — Romania will continue to firmly support the stance of China on the issues of Taiwan and Tibet, a senior member of the Romanian Senate said here Wednesday.

Ghiorghi Prisacaru, chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Romanian Senate, made the remarks during a meeting with Jia Qilin, chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), a top advisory body of China.

The One-China policy is a “principle” of Romania, and all political parties in Romania have a consensus to develop relations with China as a “strategic choice”, Prisacaru said.

China and Romania established diplomatic relations 55 years ago. Chinese President Hu Jintao and his Romanian counterpart Ion Iliescu signed a joint statement last year, agreeing to further improve exchanges and cooperation in politics, economy, trade, culture, education, tourism and science and technology.

During the President’s visit last year, Chinese telecom equipment manufacturer China ZTE Corporation signed a 94-million-US-dollar contract with Romania’s PDS Telem, to help Romania build a nationwide telecom network.

The Romanian senator praised China for its “huge progress” in politics, economy, science and technology and social matters over the past decades.

The Romanian senate delegation arrived in China Tuesday, and it is the first Romanian delegation to visit China after it joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) early this month.

Also a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, Jia Qilin said China attaches great importance to its relations with Romania and hopes to cultivate the friendly relationship.

On the same day, Gu Xiaolian, vice-chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress, met with the Romanian delegation. Gu visited Romania last month. — MNA/Xinhua

HK, Vietnam customs to step up anti-smuggling efforts

HONG KONG, 17 April — The Customs authorities of Hong Kong and Vietnam on Wednesday agreed to continue strengthening their exchanges of intelligence, and conduct more joint operation to clamp down on cross-border smuggling activities.

In a reception to welcome Shenzhen Customs officials, who are here for a meeting to explore ways reinforcing the importance for both sides to maintain a close relationship. Passenger and cargo traffic between the two cities is voluminous. There is an average of some 160,000 passengers per day coming to Hong Kong through various check points at Shenzhen, and an average of 56,400 metric tons of incoming cargo from Shenzhen every day.

Tong said Hong Kong Customs “accords paramount priority” to law enforcement as well as trade facilitation. Citing the Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA) as an example, Tong said the implementation of the pact has been smooth thanks to the close cooperation between the two Customs administrations. — MNA/Xinhua

A dog sniffs its food in a restaurant called ‘Tampopo’ in the center of Kiev, on 15 April, 2004. Tampopo is the first restaurant for visitors with their pets in the capital of the Ukraine. — Interfax

Thousands of books are waiting to give you knowledge free of charge
UN presses for global action on road safety

UNITED NATIONS, 17 April — World governments struggling to alleviate poverty and bring peace to the Middle East and Africa turned on Wednesday to a less contentious topic — a global campaign to improve road safety.

A two-day UN meeting that began on Wednesday is expected to culminate in a resolution urging the world body’s 191 nations to cooperate more closely on road safety and naming the World Health Organization to coordinate the campaign. Nearly 1.2 million people die and another 20 million are injured every year in road crashes, and 518 billion US dollars is spent annually to care for the injured, the WHO reported in a study issued earlier this month.

The developing world’s share of the cost of caring for the injured is about 105 billion US dollars — a sum that far exceeds the amount spent worldwide on development aid, the UN health agency said.

“People hold a fatalistic view of road crashes, often encouraged by the word ‘accident’ instead of ‘crash’ or ‘collision’.” Yet many of the risks involved are entirely within our control,” UN Deputy Secretary-General Louise Frechette told the meeting’s opening session.

“Many crashes can be prevented, while the effects of many others can be reduced. We have a lot to do to raise awareness. We must ensure that hard-earned gains in public health and development are not undermined by these preventable deaths and injuries,” she said.

Concerted global action could help change the de-semination of safety devices, better-designed roads and vehicles and firmer action against people who drive too fast or under the influence of drugs or alcohol, she said.

Omran played a central role in organizing the conference. — MNA/Reuters

China to show “art of urban life” in World Expo 2005

BEIJING, 17 April — A dozen Chinese cities including Beijing and Shanghai will host a pavilion showing “art of urban life” at the World Expo to be held in Aichi, Japan, said Gao Yan, chairwoman of the Organizing Committee of China Pavilion, here Thursday.

At present, offices have been set up in the cities of Beijing, Shanghai, Xi`an, Dalian, Qingdao and Hangzhou, as well as in Hunan and Hainan provinces and the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region to make preparations for related activities.

The World Expo 2005 will be held from 25 March to 25 September, 2005 in Aichi, Japan.

The theme of this World Expo is “wisdom of nature.” With the theme of “nature, city and harmony the art of life,” the China Pavilion will endeavour to demonstrate the Chinese people’s understanding of harmonious development of nature and city, and their new lifestyle built up since China’s reforms and opening-up in 1978.

The blueprint of the China Pavilion was selected from some 17 submitted from both at home and abroad, said Gao, also commissioner-general of China to the World Expo 2005 and vice-chairman of the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT).

The CCPIT, on behalf of the Chinese Government, will organize the China Pavilion.

Gao said this is the first time for China to organizing its major cities as a whole to attract global attention and said it will be helpful for these cities’ development.

The China Pavilion, according to Gao, mixed Chinese traditions with advanced technologies and tries to show the peaceful co-existence and harmonious integrity of nature and city.

The China Pavilion, with an area of 1,620 square metres, is one of the largest pavilions among Asian pavilions.

With 125 countries and eight international organizations as official participants, the World Expo 2005 is expected to receive 15 million visitors.

During the World Expo 2005, CCPIT will organize activities such as the China Pavilion Day, which is on 19 May, the City Promotion Day, the city PromotionWeek, the 21st Century City Development Forum, and hold Chinese local theatrical performances.

CCPIT, MNA/Reuters

Tanzania applies for UNSC seat

DAR ES SALAAM, 17 April — The Tanzanian Government has submitted an application for a non-permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council, local newspaper Daily News reported Thursday.

Minister for Foreign Af- fairs and International Co-operation, Mr. Salim Ahmed Salim, in an interview reported Thursday, said the seat to be left by An- gelina Jolie was formerly held by British and French governments, and Tanzania was the only country among the African countries that could not afford to remain a member of the UN Security Council.

Jolie, who is a well-known actress in Hollywood, applied for the seat in 2000, one year after returning from her trips to the Palestinian territories, the United States and France.

The seat will be available for a year.

Tanzania enjoys a long tradition of being a peacekeeper; it has contributed 240 peacekeepers to the UN mission in Kosovo, 481 to the UN Peacekeeping Mission in Sierra Leone, 301 to the UN Mission in Liberia, and 262 to the peacekeepers in UNMISS in South Sudan.

Tanzania’s Mission in New York is currently headed by Makui Neema, a diplomat who has served as a UN envoy in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The seat will be available for a year.

Tanzania enjoyed a non- permanent seat on the Counci- l during the 1975-1976 re- tation and played a key role in the African liberation struggle.

— MNA/Reuters

French retirement homes not equipped for heatwave

PAMI, 17 April — Most retirement homes in France have failed to carry out pledges to install air-condi- tioning units that could help save lives if another heatwave occurs this year, a government official said here.

Hubert Falco, junior Min- ister for Pensions, urged retirement homes to respect promises made after last year’s heatwave that killed 15,000 mainly elderly people, when temperatures passed 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit).

“The target is far from being met but it can be met,” he told Europe 1 radio in an interview. “There is no guar- antee that the summer of 2004 will be any cooler than the summer of 2003.”

MNA/Reuters

Russia supports Israel’s Gaza Strip pull-out plan

MOSCOW, 17 April — Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on Thursday conditionally welcomed Israel’s initia- tive to withdraw Jewish settlements from the Gaza Strip, but made no mention of a controversial plan to keep them in the West Bank.

US President George W Bush’s support for the initiative outlined by Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon fuelled outrage among Palestinian leaders, who accused Washing- ton of giving legitimacy to the Israeli occupation.

Lavrov told reporters an Israeli pullout from the Gaza Strip was generally in line with the “roadmap” plan for a Middle East settlement — supported by the “Quartet” of the United States, United Nations, European Union and Russia.

In that sense, such a step may be supported if it does not remain isolated and leads to other actions to implement existing UN Security Council resolutions,” Lavrov said when asked about Sharon’s initiative. He did not elaborate.

MNA/Reuters

Zanzibar President thanks Cuba for health help

DAR ES SALAAM, 17 April — Zanzibar President Amadi Abdur Karume on Thursday expressed his gratitude to the Cuban Government for sending a team of doctors to the islands.

Karume said the coming of the Cuban doctors was an example of the two sides’ cooperation in health field while meeting with Cuban Ambassador to Tanzania Felip Ruiz O’Farrill.

He asked the Cuban doctors to make Zanzibar their own home as they provide medical services to local people. The doctors, who deal with surgery, pediatrics, orthopedics, gynecology, will work in Unguja and Pemba, two sister islands of Zanzibar.

One of their major tasks is to help fight malaria. For his part, O’Farrill said that the Cuban Government will continue increasing its help to Tanzania in health area.

— MNA/Xinhua

Madagascar rescues 11 babies from traffickers

ANTANANARIVO, 17 April — Police in the Indian Ocean island of Madagascar have rescued 11 babies from traffickers who were trying to sell them for adoption in for- eign countries.

A senior police official said late on Wednesday that police found the infants, all aged below one year, when they raided a house in the outskirts of the island’s capi- tal.

Eight suspected traffick- ers were arrested and charged with abduction and illegal confinement of the children.

“After receiving informa- tion from trusted informers, the police burst into a house in the periphery of the city to find 11 babies already pre- pared for adoption overseas,” Albert Rakotondravo, direc- tor of the judicial police, told a news gathering.

Rakotondravo said the in- vestigation into the missing children began on 6 April after parents started report- ing the disappearance of their infants.

— MNA/Reuters

This image, courtesy of the journal ‘Science’, shows perforated tick shell beads (Niasius kruassianus). A collar made of shell beads estimated to be 75,000 years old and found in a cave in South Africa is believed to be the oldest known jewellery, appearing 30,000 years before what had previously been considered the first signs of civilization, researchers said. — INTERNET
Leeds aim to ease relegation fears at Arsenal again

Leeds (England) 16 April—Leeds manager Eddie Gray said his side can beat Arsenal at Highbury, and ease his club’s relegation fears, for the second season running on Friday.

Leeds were the last team to defeat Arsenal in the league when they ended their title bid last season with a 3-2 win on May 4.

This season, Arsene Wenger’s side have gone on a record 32 match undefeated league run and lead the English Premier League by seven points.

Just like last season, Leeds need maximum points to help them avoid relegation and can move to 15th place if they win though Saturday’s fixtures may change that situation.

“We won’t be going there frightened, we will just go there with a lot of respect,” Gray told reporters on Thursday.

“They will look at how we are playing and show us respect as well. They will look at this fixture and probably think it is the toughest game they have left.”

Gray said there was a new-found confidence amongst the squad that survival was achievable after collecting seven points from their last three games.

“We are in with a chance of staying up. We are still in a difficult position, but we are in with a chance,” he added.

“The lads believe they can do it and while it will be hard, we will try and pick the three points up.”

Gray will field on-loan winger Jermaine Pennant against Arsenal — the team who loaned him to Leeds.

“It will be great for him to go back to his club. He is still their player although it would be nice for him to put one over on his team.”

MNA/Reuters

Liverpool’s Kirkland out for rest of season

London, 16 April—Liverpool goalkeeper Chris Kirkland has been ruled out for the rest of the season due to his broken wrist and will almost certainly miss Euro 2004.

Liverpool manager Gerard Houllier said on Thursday: “Kirkland broke his left wrist in training on March 13 and had originally hoped to recover in six weeks.

However, Liverpool manager Gerard Houllier said on his club’s official web site: “Chris won’t play again this season. He won’t be ready in time.

“I don’t think he will be fit for the European Championship. He is very unlucky because I am sure he would have gone with the England squad.”

The 22-year-old, whose career has been blighted by injury, was a strong contender for a place in England’s squad for Euro 2004 which starts in Portugal on June 12.

Kirkland was called up by coach Sven-Goran Eriksson for the February friendly against Portugal.

In his absence Pole Jerzy Dudek has been keeping goal for Liverpool who are trying to secure fourth place and qualification for the Champions League next season with five games of the season to go.

MNA/Reuters

Evans holds out hope of first win after 13 years

SEVILLE (Spain), 16 April—Britain’s Gary Evans finished only two strokes off the inaugural Seville Open first round lead and once more showed his worth of walking up to his first European Tour title after 13 years of failure.

Evans, once touted as Britain’s next Nick Faldo, admitted to being an under-achiever and said he had taken on a special fitness coach for a month to try to end his invidious record.

After shooting a four-under-par 68 to lie two strokes behind early front-runner Claudio San Menotti of France, Evans said: “After 13 years plodding along it gets a bit boring trying your guts out but getting nowhere and the silver lining around the cloud is not quite as bright as it used to be.

“I’m giving it four weeks of running and working out before I play and we’ll see what it brings.”

Despite a glittering amateur career, 35-year-old Evans has always flattered to deceive and still has only one second-place, in the 1992 Tusescana Masters, to his credit on tour.

A debilitating wrist injury early in his career did not help and recently he has suffered such wear and tear on his shoulder he has needed cortisone injections to be able to play.

Evans is determined not to lose his career — he never thought it was over, just that he was not as competitive as before.

The 38-year-old, 1994 World Cup winner, was held out hope of chalking up another European Tour title.

“If I could only approach the smaller tournaments the way I do the bigger ones, then maybe I would do much better,” he said.

“I shouldn’t watch the (US), Masters because I find it frustrating watching players I know I can beat, but I can’t get into the Masters.”

Evans lies 122nd on the European money-list, with 24th his best finish this campaign.

MNA/Reuters

Celta’s Vagner fined, given suspended prison sentence

MADRID, 16 April—Celta Vigo midfielder Vagner has been given a seven-month suspended prison sentence by a Spanish court and fined 3,470 euros (4,275 US dollars) for resisting arrest and for an offence against public order.

Sports dailyMarca reported on Thursday that the 31-year-old Brazilian-born player had been convicted over an incident outside the club’s stadium before a match against Valencia in October 2001.

The player, who had not been selected to play in the game, was stopped by two police officers as he drove towards the VIP parking area because he was talking on his mobile phone.

After a heated argument he became involved in a scuffle with one of the officers when he tried to force his way into the stadium. The officer was off work for 46 days as a result of injuries he sustained.

Vagner was cleared by the court in Vigo of a more serious charge of assault.

MNA/Reuters

Fluminense hold despite Romario double

RIO DE JANEIRO, 16 April—Veteran striker Romario scored twice in five minutes but Fluminense were still held to a 2-2 draw at home by Gremio in a Copa Brasil tie.

The 38-year-old 1994 World Cup winner latched onto a pass by Ramon to open the scoring in the 22nd minute of the third round, first-leg match on Wednesday night.

Five minutes later, he ran onto another pass by the same player and scored at the second attempt after his first shot was blocked by Gremio’s Paraguayan goalkeeper Ricardo Tavares.

Gremio hit back in the second half after Fluminense appeared to relax, with defender Claudinio heading home from a corner in the 64th minute before striker Christian equalized with a breakaway goal four minutes later.

The game was marred by a brawl following Gremio’s first goal that appeared to start when Gremio defender Felipe Baloy provoked his opponents during the celebrations.

The burly Panamanian international was sent off along with Ramon.

Five of the other seven ties also ended in draws. Corinthians, who have lurched from crisis to success since coach Carlos Alberto Parreira left at the start of last year to take charge of Brazil, were held to a 0-0 draw at home by Second Division Fortaleza.

MNA/Reuters

Newcastle’s French Olivier Bernard(L) challenges PSV Eindhoven’s Mateja Kezman during UEFA Cup clash in Newcastle — Internet

Crossword Puzzle

1 Go to the bottom 1 Soft sweetmeat
5 Imperfection 2 Yorkshire river
8 Clothe 3 Call in question
9 Wet slightly 4 Distant
10 Worn out 5 Cooked in fat
12 Attack and rob 6 Final terms
13 Long heavy wave 7 After this evening
14 Set of seven 11 Garden flower
15 Purchase 13 Violent personal theft
18 Plan of events 15 Printed error
20 Throb 16 Immediately? No! (3,3)
21 Pamplnet 18 Arrogant
23 Enslaved 19 Praise
24 Buffoon 22 Puss

16 Attack and rob
14 Set of seven
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MNA/Reuters

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MNA/Reuters
9:00 Signature Tune Greeting
9:02 Song of Myanmar Beauty & Scenic Sights “Mingalabar”
9:10 A Journey to Research Tarzon Race
9:10 Headline News
9:12 Lumber Baffles
9:15 National News
9:20 Decoration of Myanmar Lacquerware
9:25 Kayin Dance (We Bu (or) Paddy Winnowing Dance)
9:30 National News
9:35 Hot Springs in Lashio and Nam-Kham
9:40 Song “Summertime”
9:45 National News
9:50 Fantastic Scenic Sunsets of Myanmar
9:55 Song of Myanmar Beauty & Scenic Sights “Come and See Myanmar”

10:00 National News
10:05 Forecasts valid until evening of 06:10 Song “Summertime”
10:10 Song “Rain Falling on My Land”
10:15 Forecasts valid until evening of 06:10 Song “Summertime”
10:25 Song of Myanmar Beauty & Scenic Sights “Mingalabar”
10:30 National News
10:35 The Thrones of Myanmar Sovereigns
10:40 Myanmar Traditional Folk Song
10:45 National News
10:50 Myanmar Seafood
10:55 Pakhanmy Nyo Nyo Shin
11:00 National News
11:05 Golden, Honey, Honey Gold
11:10 Song “To a Silvery Seagull”
11:15 National News
11:20 The Churches of Myanmar Sovereigns
11:25 Song of Myanmar Beauty & Scenic Sights “Come and See Myanmar”
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11:35 Song of Myanmar Beauty & Scenic Sights “Mingalabar”
11:40 Mandalay Harvest (Asparagus Blossoms)
11:45 Headline News
11:50 Meditation Centre
11:55 National News
12:00 Song of Myanmar Beauty & Scenic Sights “Come and See Myanmar”
12:05 Four Great Places Lord Buddha
12:10 Song “Peace Be With You”
12:15 National News
12:20 Myanmar Traditional Taung Kabinb Shyo
12:25 Invitations from Malaw Land
12:30 National News
12:35 Fabulous Shwe Guu Dag Dai Gyi
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12:45 National News
12:50 Glimpses At Myanmar Movies
13:00 National News
13:05 Song of Myanmar Beauty & Scenic Sights “Mingalabar”
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Saturday, April 18

Tune in today:
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Forecast for Mandalay and neighbouring area
for 18-24 April 2004: Possibility of isolated rain or thunderstorms in some low-lying areas is 40%.
YANGON, 17 April— Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt, accompanied by member of the State Peace and Development Council Lt-Gen Maung Bo, ministers, deputy ministers, the Chief of Staff (Navy), officials of the State Peace and Development Council Office and departmental heads, left here by Tatmadaw helicopter this morning and arrived on Moksotaung of Kyaukhtiyoe Pagoda in Kyaikto Township, Mon State at 9 am.

The Prime Minister and party were welcomed there by Chairman of Mon State Peace and Development Council Commander of South-East Command Maj-Gen Thura Myint Aung, senior military officers, local authorities and local people.

At 9.15 am, the Prime Minister hoisted Htidaw atop Moksotaung Pagoda there. Also present on the occasion were State Ovadaçariya Presiding Nayaka of Kyaukhtiyoe Maha Monastery Sayadaw Bhaddanta Jotikalankara and Kyaukhtiyoe Sayadaw Abhidhaja Agga Maha Suddhammajotika Bhaddanta Pahhitadipa and members of the Sangha, the commander, the ministers, the deputy ministers, the chief of staff (Navy), officials of the State Peace and Development Council Office and departmental officials, local authorities, traditional cultural troupes and local people.

Sayadaw Bhaddanta Jotikalankara administered ‘Ovada Katha’ and Administrator Sayadaw of Kyaukhtiyoe Monastery Maha Suddhamma Jotikadhaja Bhaddanta Naginda administered the Nine Precepts. Member of the Sangha recited Parittas.

Next, the Prime Minister offered Seinbudaw and provisions to the Kyaikhtihsaung Sayadaw. Lt-Gen Maung Bo also offered Hngetmyatnadaw and provisions to the Kyaukhtiyoe Sayadaw. Similarly, the commander and butane gases.

Next, the minister presented the fruit basket to the Sayadaws.

Afterwards, the Prime Minister supplicated on religious affairs, saying that as Htidaw, Hngetmyatnadaw and Seinbudaw of Moksotaung Pagoda had fallen into decay with the passage of time, disciples led by the Kyaukhtiyoe Sayadaw together with the government made an arrangement for hoisting new Htidaw, Hngetmyatnadaw and Seinbudaw atop the pagoda.

On the same day, the ceremony to unveil Shwenankyin Beikman and hoist Htidaw atop the archway will be held. There is one concept that if good deeds are performed on Myanmar New Year Day, those who are engaged in the tasks can gain merits. He said that he wished the Union of Myanmar to become a peaceful and developed nation for ever. Next, the Kyaukhtiyoe Sayadaw delivered a sermon, followed by sharing of merits. Afterwards, the Prime Minister hoisted the Htidaw, Hngetmyatnadaw and Seinbudaw atop the pagoda and sprinkled them with scented water.

Next, the ceremony to hoist Seinbudaw and Shwethidaw atop the banner post was held. Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt hoisted them atop the banner post.

On arrival at Kyaukhtiyoe Pagoda, the Prime Minister offered gold foils to the pagoda and cleansed the pagoda with scented water. He also offered flowers and water to Buddha Image at the prayer hall. Afterwards, the Prime Minister and party donated ‘soon’ to members of the Sangha.

Next, Commander Maj-Gen Thura Myint Aung and Deputy Minister for Religious Affairs Brig-Gen Thura Aung Ko formally opened the archways of Shwenankyin Beikman on the platform of the pagoda. The Prime Minister sprinkled scented water on the Htidaw for the Beikman. He formally opened the Shwenankyin Beikman. In the Beikman, the Kyaukhtiyoe Sayadaw and the Prime Minister cleansed three replicas of Kyaukhtiyoe Pagoda with scented water. The Prime Minister unveiled the plaques of the Beikman.

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