Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt receives officials of Unocal Myanmar Offshore

YANGON, 18 June – Prime Minister of the Union of Myanmar General Khin Nyunt received Senior Vice-President, Global Marketing, Unocal Corporation, Mr Randy Howard of Unocal Myanmar Offshore Co Ltd and party at Zeyathiri Beikman at 8.30 am today.

Also present at the call were Minister for Foreign Affairs U Win Aung, Minister for Energy Brig-Gen Lun Thi, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs U Khin Maung Win, Director-General of Government Office U Soe Tint and Director-General of Protocol Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Thura U Aung Htet.

The Senior Vice-President of Unocal Myanmar Offshore Co Ltd was accompanied by Chairman of IEO, South East Asia, (Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam) Mr Steve Green and Unocal (Myanmar) President Mr David C Peters.

Four political objectives
* Stability of the State, community peace and tranquillity, prevalence of law and order
* National reconsolidation
* Emergence of a new enduring State Constitution
* Building of a new modern developed nation in accord with the new State Constitution

Four economic objectives
* Development of agriculture as the base and all-round development of other sectors of the economy as well
* Proper evolution of the market-oriented economic system
* Development of the economy inviting participation in terms of technical know-how and investments from sources inside the country and abroad
* The initiative to shape the national economy must be kept in the hands of the State and the national peoples

Four social objectives
* Uplift of the morale and morality of the entire nation
* Uplift of national prestige and integrity and preservation and safeguarding of cultural heritage and national character
* Uplift of dynamism of patriotic spirit
* Uplift of health, fitness and education standards of the entire nation

Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt receives Mr Randy Howard of Unocal Myanmar Offshore Co Ltd and party. — MNA

Commander attends Blood Donor Day

YANGON, 18 June – A ceremony to observe World Blood Donor Day was held for the first time in Shan State (East) on 14 June. The ceremony took place at the Development Committee Hall in Kengtung and it was attended by Shan State (East) Peace and Development Council Chairman Triangle Region Command Commander Maj-Gen Khin Zaw and wife, State, District and Township level officials, members of social organizations, doctors and nurses of Kengtung Hospital, blood donors and invited guests. The commander delivered a speech. Next, the Medical Superintendent of Kengtung Hospital explained matters related to donation of blood. The commander presented gifts to those who have donated blood 10 times and above. Afterwards, the Medical Superintendents accepted blood transfusion apparatuses worth FEC 200,000 were donated by Myanmar Red Cross Society (Kengtung Health Project) and medicines worth K 60,000 for blood donors by Shan State (East) AIDS STD Unit. — MNA

Container yards, loading of export items inspected

YANGON, 18 June – Minister at the Prime Minister’s Office Maj-Gen Thein Swe inspected No 2 Forest Products Container Yard this afternoon. Managing Director U Thein Htay of Myanmar Port Authority and party supervised inspection of export and import containers by officials from the Customs Department and Forest Department.

The minister and party went to Bo Aung Kyaw Container Inspection Camp and supervised inspection of containers. The minister inspected loading of export timbers and beans onto vessels at Sule Jetty and instructed officials to take measures for work site safety and minimize loss and wastage. — MNA

The National Convention is the concern of all our national races.
Towards development in education sector

In its drive for the nation to become peaceful, modern and developed, the State Peace and Development Council is trying its best for human resource development because only the highly qualified human resource can build a modern nation.

The National Education Promotion Special Four-Year Plan designed to produce highly qualified human resource, launched in 2000-2001 had been implemented successfully in accord with the guidance of the Head of State.

The 30-year plan is being implemented phase by phase after adopting long-term goals for promotion of the national education standard. Chairman of the Myanmar Education Committee Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt addressed Meeting No 2/2004 of Myanmar Education Committee held at the Universities Central Council in Kamayut Township on 17 June. In his address, the Prime Minister said that at the basic and higher education levels, seminars are held nearly prior to the opening of the schools, that scholars of the Ministry of Education discuss promotion of education, and that the seminars have laid down future education plans, resulting in effective implementation of tasks.

Thanks to successful implementation of the National Education Promotion Four-Year Plan, border areas and national races development project, project for 24 Special Development Regions and the five rural development tasks, the educational level between urban and rural regions and between border areas and remote regions can be narrowed down remarkably.

During the inspection tours of the Head of State and the dignitaries of the State, educational requirements have been fulfilled many times. Moreover, they also attended to the needs regarding the reports on education presented by local people. That is why fruitful results can be seen in the education sector in a short period.

The active participation of people and policymakers are among the key factors for achieving success in the education sector.

At the time when success has been achieved in the education sector, we would like to urge all those concerned to make concerted efforts for maintaining the already-achieved momentum.

Development work inspected

Yangon, 18 June — Director-General of the Development Affairs Department under the Ministry for Progress of Border Areas and National Races and Development Affairs Col Myo Myint together with Director of Shan State Development Affairs Department U Thant Sein and officials, inspected development works and tasks for keeping towns and cities green and pleasant in various townships in southern Shan State recently. They first arrived Taunggyi and nurturing of flower gardens and gardening works are being carried out at the towns. They next inspected Myanma water supply pond and turning of Zawtika 3rd lane in the town. Later, the Director-General and party arrived Hopong and inspected Tharapy and MyoU Kyang roads. Tharapy road is 595 feet long and 12 feet wide and the MyoU Kyang road is 636 feet long and 12 feet wide. The Tharapy road was built at a cost of K 636,000 and MyoU road at K 522,000. — MNA

NC delegates entertained

Yangon, 18 June — The Entertainment and Welfare Sub-committee of the National Convention Convening Management Committee is organizing entertainment programmes for delegates to the National Convention daily at the gymnasium of Nyayanghin Camp. Yesterday evening, the delegates were entertained with a film entitled “Yinkwin Nandaw” (Bosom Palace) directed by Malikha Soe Htaik Aung and starring Nyunt Win, Dway, Nanda Hlaing and Tun Eindra Bo. — MNA

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

“Soon” offered to State Pariyatti Sasana University (Yangon)

Yangon, 18 June — Saydaws and members of the Sangha of the State Pariyatti Sasana University were offered “soon” this morning at Mogok Refectory on Kaba-Aye Hill here.

Minister for Transport Maj-Gen Hla Myint Swe and wife, Deputy Minister U Pe Thain, Deputy Minister Col Nyan Tun Aung and wife, heads of department and others were present on the occasion.

The minister and party presented offerings to Saydaws. Next, the minister handed over K 285,000 donated by the Department of Civil Aviation of Myanmar Maritime University for offering “soon” to Saydaws and members of the Sangha at the State Pariyatti Sasana University (Yangon) to Director of Department for Promotion and Propagation of the Sasana U Khairung Aung. — MVA

Nursery Market Festival continues

Yangon, 18 June — The Nursery Market Festival continued at Myay Padetha Park in Bahan Township here today with the aim of providing necessary assistance to growers and attracting the public to be interested in agriculture, horticulture, livestock breeding and vegetable farming.

Kitchen crops, fruits and saplings of herbal plants are being shown at the festival. Modern and scientific poultry farming as well as fish and prawn breeding are also exhibited at the event.

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

Water purifiers, mosquito nets presented to MCWA branches of Yangon Command

Yangon, 18 June — Patrons of Yangon Division Supervisory Committee for Maternal and Child Welfare Association Daw Khin Thet Htay went to Pre-Primary Schools opened by MCWA branches at local townships in Mingaladon and Hmawby Townships and presented water purifiers and mosquito nets to the chairpersons of the respective branches. Daw Khin Thet Htay and party enjoyed skill performance of the children and gave them snacks. She fulfilled the requirements of MCWA members who are developing businesses using capital provided by the association. Daw Khin Thet Htay and party proceeded to Hmawby Township MCWA and observed schoolchildren at Pre-Primary School. Daw Khin Thet Htay inspected the delivery room of the Township MCWA. Next, she met the chairperson and members of the Township MCWA and explained functions laid down by Myanmar Maternal and Child Welfare Association (Central). Secretary Dr Daw Nwe Ni Ohn also explained future tasks of the association and progress. Daw Khin Thet Htay fulfilled the requirements. Today, Daw Khin Thet Htay and party went to Pre-primary schools of local townships in South Okkalapa Township and presented water purifiers and mosquito nets donated by Yangon Division MCWA to officials. Then, they watched skill performance of the children at the schools and gave them snacks. They inspected herbal plantations of respective MCWA branches at the townships.

Afterwards, they inspected the multiplier tailoring course at the local battalion and attended to the needs. — MNA
Iraq car bombs kill 41, wound nearly 150

Baghdad, 17 June — Car bombers targeted Iraq’s security services Thursday, blasting Iraqis hoping to join the military in Baghdad and a civil defence post north of the capital, killing 41 people and wounding nearly 150.

Most of the victims were poor Iraqis desperate to take dangerous jobs in the Iraqi security forces because of a lack of alternatives in a country with up to 45 percent unemployment. They took their chances at the recruitment center in Baghdad even though a car bombing killed 47 people there in February.

“I have been coming for three weeks and they decided to interview us today,” Abdul Wahid Shadhan, 32, said as he lay in a hospital bed coughing up blood. “I heard a big explosion, I lost sight of everything and then I found myself in the hospital. Shadhan said he had been out of work since the Americans disbanded the Iraqi army last year. “I was obliged to work as a porter to feed my seven children,” he told The Associated Press.

Thursday’s attack near the recruitment centre—the deadliest single blast since a car bombing at the same base in February—came amid a surge of violence targeting American troops and their Iraqi allies ahead of the transfer of sovereignty to Iraqis on June 30.

The attacks are apparently designed to shake confidence in Iraqi security forces, seen by some in the region as beholden to the Americans. At least 35 people died and 145 were wounded, and the toll was likely to increase, health ministry official Saad al-Amil said.

Another car bomb exploded late yesterday afternoon at a village near Balad, 50 miles north of Baghdad, killing six Iraqi Civil Defence Corps members and wounding four others, the US 1st Infantry Division said. The defence corps is the main internal security force, created by US administrators to battle insur- gents. The bombings have alarmed the people of Baghdad. Most are convinced that the attacks are carried out by outsiders—by Americans who say they hope to weaken Islam and find a pretext to stay in this oil-rich country.—Internet

Britain plays hardball over EU Constitution

London, 17 June — Britain will hold out for every last detail of its demands before signing up to an EU Constitution, ministers and officials said on Wednesday.

Prime Minister Tony Blair has stalled out “red lines” to keep national control of areas like tax, defence and foreign policy and says he will only agree to the Constitution if they are met.

Diplomats say most of them already have, or will. Britain confirmed a further objection on Wednesday, refusing to back Belgian Premier Guy Verhofstadt to succeed José Manuel Barroso as president of the European Commission later this year.

“Britain does not support Mr Verhofstadt for the presidency,” a senior British official told reporters in Brussels.

“Britain cannot be asked to agree to a constitution that in respect of vital national interests the veto will be maintained,” Blair’s spokesman, Alistair Campbell, said on British radio.

The latest draft from the Irish presidency made clear that unanimity would be needed to take decisions related to taxation. But British officials say it does not go far enough.

And to the anger of European partners, Britain has belatedly decided that a Charter of Fundamental Rights, to be incorporated into the Constitution, also needs tidying up.

“We have highlighted it as an issue we want to resolve,” Blair’s spokesman said. “It is a clarification we are seeking.”

Relaxed Labour laws and tax sovereignty cut to the heart of the government’s plans. But Blair has said Britain’s light-touch labour laws which have weakened Islam and found a pretext to stay in this oil-rich country.—Internet

Annan says Iraq too dangerous for UN return

United Nations, 17 June—UN Secretary General Kofi Annan said that Iraq was still too dangerous for the United Nations to return to the country.

“On the security situation on the ground in Iraq, obviously I am extremely worried,” Annan told reporters at the UN headquarters in New York. A new car bomb attack in Baghdad on Thursday left at least 41 dead and Iraqi and US officials have warned that more deaths are likely ahead of the June 30 handover of power by the US-led coalition.

“I am grateful to the Security Council that they inserted the phrase that we could go in ‘as circumstances permit’. As of today circumstances do not permit and we are monitoring the situation extremely carefully,” Annan added.

The United Nations withdrew international staff following two bomb attacks on or near the UN offices in Baghdad in August and October. A UN Security Council motion left it up to Annan to decide when Iraq was safe enough for a UN return. Annan also said he hoped to soon announce who would be the next UN representative to Iraq. “I haven’t quite decided. I have a list which I am looking at. I would hope to be able to designate someone one within the next week or so. It’s a tough choice,” he said. “In some situations, the candidates have been willing, excited when we have described the assignment to them, but a week or two later they come and tell you: ‘We would love to do it but our wives and families don’t want us to do it’.”

Lakhdar Brahimi has been the Annan’s special envoy in Iraq and played a key role putting together the interim government.—Internet

First Hungarian soldier killed in Iraq

BUDAPEST, 17 June — A suspected roadside bomb killed a Hungarian soldier in Iraq and wounded a civilian driver on Thursday, Hungary’s first military fatality since it joined the US-led coalition.

Hungarian Defence Minister Ferenc Juhasz said the casualties were probably caused by a bomb which hit a military convoy some 70 km (45 miles) southeast of Baghdad.

“The explosion ripped through an armoured personnel carrier, and fatally injured a 27-year-old non-commissioned officer,” Juhasz told a press conference.

The civilian driver was hit by shards of flying glass, Juhasz said.

He said Hungary’s 300-strong transport battalion would remain in Iraq.

“The Hungarian military will continue its duty in Iraq unless parliament decides otherwise,” said Juhasz.

Prime Minister Peter Medgyessy and his government strongly supported the US-led invasion of Iraq and sent troops after the war to help with security and reconstruction.

But the Hungarian people are now mostly against their country’s involvement in Iraq.

Before last year’s invasion which toppled Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein, the United States used Hungary as a base to train Iraqi exiles to work with US-led forces.

A Hungarian civilian was shot dead by US troops in Iraq in November after he failed to slow at a military checkpoint.—Internet

ADF increases support to Africa’s SMEs

Tunis, 17 June — The African Development Fund (ADF) under the African Development Bank has strengthened its support to small and medium enterprises (SMEs) development on the continent, through a new grant to the African Management Services Company (AMSCo).

This grant, amounting to 2.35 million US dollars, was approved Wednesday by the Board of Directors of the ADF, which will help strengthen the African Training and Management Services (ATMS) Project and improve the quality of its service delivery.

It is intended to assist African businesses to become more competitive by seconding experienced managers and supporting training to upgrade management skills, considered to be one of the main causes of the weak performance of enterprises on the continent, in particular the SMEs.

MNA/Xinhua

US Army troops arrive on the scene after a car bomb exploded outside a recruiting centre in the capital Baghdad on 17 June, 2004. There is still too much violence in Iraq for UN senior staff to reestablish a permanent presence to help with the political process and reconstruction, Secretary-General Kofi Annan said on Thursday.

INTERNET

INTERNET

INTERNET
New York Times calls on Bush to apologize for waging war on Iraq

WASHINGTON, 17 June—The New York Times called on President George W Bush to apologize to the American people for going to war on Iraq after an official probe into the September 11 attacks found no evidence linking Iraq and al-Qaeda.

The Times editorial said:

‘Of all the ways Mr Bush persuaded Americans to back the invasion of Iraq last year, the most plainly dishonest was his effort to link his war of choice with the battle against terrorists worldwide.

A panel investigating the 11 September, 2001 attacks said Wednesday there was no ‘credible evidence’ Iraq had helped Osama bin Laden’s extremist al-Qaeda network to attack the United States and no sign of any ‘collaborative relationship’.

Ancient Babylon closed to visitors by US-led coalition in Iraq

BAGHDAD, 17 June—The US-led coalition in Iraq has closed the ancient site of Babylon over worries about the ‘safety and care’ of the archaeological treasure, a government official said.

The closure follows archaeologists’ warnings that military activities were damaging the historically unique site.

Last week, Iraq’s US Governor Paul Bremer and the top US military commander Lieutenant-General Ricardo Sanchez launched a probe into whether coalition activity has damaged the ancient city south of Baghdad, ordering a halt to any projects that might harm historic artifacts or sites.

‘As a result of the concern that we have about the safety and care of the ancient and historically valuable site at Babylon, we decided to initiate a comprehensive study to determine how to best preserve the site between now and the time the division headquarters depart,’ the coalition statement said.

‘The site will be closed to all visitors, other than archaeologists, until completion of the study.’

The study will look into moving heavy equipment and living quarters at the Camp Alpha military base and investigate any damage done by parking, storage and traffic. The ancient Mesopotamian city is just one example of Iraq’s cultural heritage, which is one of the richest in the world.

International cultural organizations had urged that the heritage of Iraq, which boasts more than 10,000 archeological sites, be spared ahead of the US-led war launched March 20 last year.

Australian Government announces energy plan

CANBERRA, 17 June—The Australian Government announced an energy plan on Tuesday to encourage environment-friendly technologies for the next eight years.

The plan highlights a $500 million-dollar (341.2 million US dollars) fund for research to put carbon dioxide emissions underground. The fund will be boosted by a further $1 billion dollars (0.68 billion US dollars) from private investment. The federal government will inject $75 million dollars (51.18 million US dollars) into a project on solar energy for households, according to the plan, entitled Securing Australia’s Energy Future.

Launching the plan here, Prime Minister John Howard attached importance to fossil energy sources, rather than renewable sources.

‘Renewable energy sources such as wind and solar power will play a part in meeting growing energy demands... But for the foreseeable future, coal, oil and gas will meet the bulk of Australia’s energy needs,’ he said.

CPC senior official meets Lee Kuan Yew

BEIJING, 17 June—Li Changchun, member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, met here Wednesday with visiting Singaporean Senior Minister of the Prime Minister’s Office Lee Kuan Yew.

Li praised Lee for his contribution to the Sino-Singaporean friendship. Since they established diplomatic ties, Li said, China and Singapore have developed their relationship soundly and rapidly.

In the many past years, Singapore remained one of China’s most important trade partners in Southeast Asia, Li said. Meanwhile, the two countries cooperated with each other in culture, education, science and technology, he said.

Sino-Singaporean cooperation has markedly sped up in recent years and entered into an all-round, multifaceted development era. The two sides has timely designated major cooperation areas according to changing situations, and thus breathe new vitality into the existing relationship, Li said.

Lee positively commented on the latest development of the Singaporean-Chinese relationship.

Faced with changing situations, Lee said, both Singapore and China seized the opportunity and cooperatively operated with each other.

Lee said Singapore is willing to more actively engage in the process of China’s economic development.

CPC senior official meets Lee Kuan Yew

Bangkok, 17 June—Thailand’s economy could grow annually by more than 6 per cent over the next two years with the oil prices as a key factor, the Business Day website on Wednesday quoted an International Monetary Fund (IMF) official as saying.

Although oil prices are already well below the little bleep in the first quarter, ‘the IMF division chief for Asia and the Pacific Alessandro Zanello was quoted by Business Day website as saying. Alessandro Zanello said that the improving domestic and external demand should sustain the kingdom’s GDP growth at a robust level of 6.5 per cent for this year and a 7 per cent for the year 2005.

The IMF official said this was a lowered forecast for Thailand’s economic growth for the concern that rising oil prices would hurt the economy.

The Thai economy expanded 5 per cent in the first quarter of this year, a slowdown compared with the 7.63 per cent growth in the previous quarter.

While attributing rising oil prices and bird flu to the slowdown in the first three months this year, the Thai Government declared to cut down its projection for this year’s economic growth by one percentage point to 6.7 per cent.

Australian Government announces energy plan

The IMF official said this was also a lower forecast for Thailand economic growth for the concern that rising oil prices would hurt the economy.

The Thai economy expanded 5 per cent in the first quarter of this year, a slowdown compared with the 6.7 per cent.
Overseas Filipino worker’s remittances down in April

MANILA, 17 June — Remittances from overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) in April 2004 reached 660 million US dollars, 5.6 per cent lower than the 699 million dollars recorded in the same period last year, the central bank said Wednesday. The central bank said in a statement that the decline resulted in the slowdown in the growth of the four-month cumulative OFW remittances to 1.6 per cent or 2.6 billion dollars from 4.4 per cent recorded during the same three months of the year. The central bank attributed the contraction in remittance flows in April partly to more rigid implementation of the Anti-Money Laundering Law by Saudi Arabia, which homes about one-fifth of Filipino workers overseas. MNA/Xinhua

APEC to heighten level of WTO talks

MANILA, 17 June — Philippine Trade and Industry Secretary Cesar Purisima said members of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum are ready to push negotiations at the World Trade Organization to a higher level, a local newspaper reported Wednesday. Purisima told Philippine Daily Inquirer that when attending earlier this month a meeting of the APEC Ministers Responsible for Trade in Punon, Chile, all delegates agreed to forge a consensus on key trade issues by next month. “We emphasize the continued importance of the mandate agreed by the ministers at the Doha Development Agenda, and the need for high levels of ambition and respect for flexibility,” Purisima said. In a November 2001 ministerial conference held in Doha, Qatar, delegates agreed on an agenda covering a wide range of subjects, including agriculture and services. — MNA/Xinhua

Chittagong Port introduces security code

DHAKA, 17 June — Chittagong Port, the largest seaport in Bangladesh, Wednesday formally introduced the International Security and Port Facility Security (ISPS) Code, reported the official Bangladesh News Agency. At the function organized for awarding the ISPS Code compliance certificate to the stakeholders, Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) President said Bangladesh is now capable of detecting and defeating any security threat on maritime sectors. The ISPS Code is a globally applicable unified safety and security code for port and shipping sectors. The code was set as an obligation by British-based maritime watchdog International Maritime Organization (IMO). MNA/Xinhua

US-led forces to hand Baghdad airport to Iraqis

BAGHDAD, 17 June — US-led forces will begin handing over control of Baghdad’s international airport to Iraqi authorities after the formal end of occupation at the end of June, aviation officials said on Wednesday. The US military hopes to stop using the heavily guarded airport by mid-August, leaving it in the hands of the Iraqi Transport Ministry, which will bring in a private contractor and a new airport police force to handle operations. “Incrementally, (the Transport Ministry) will take over all of the security for the airport,” a foreign aid official told Reuters. “There’s going to be a combination of private contractors working in conjunction with the Iraqi Airport Police and the Iraqi military.” Baghdad Airport has been the US military base in Iraq since last year’s invasion that toppled Saddam Hussein. The US military will continue to use Camp Victory, a fortified base it has built on the edge of the 35 square mile airport, officials said. Military aircraft will continue to use the airport but only to support the future US Embassy, not to support troops, a senior coalition military operations official said. Currently, about 90 per cent of the 500 daily flights to Baghdad Airport are military but US forces will step up use of other Iraqi airfields and land routes instead. The company that will take over airport security from existing contractor Custer Battles, will be announced in the next day or two. That security contractor, which was chosen through open bid and will be accountable to the Transport Ministry, will also train Iraqis eventually to take over, he said. No scheduled passenger flights currently operate out of Baghdad, due to threats from the area around the heavily-guarded airport. Attacks on vehicles, particularly military convoys, travelling from the airport into the capital are common. MNA/Reuters

US soldier charged in fatal shooting of wounded Iraqi

WASHINGTON, 18 June — The US Army is bringing murder charges against a soldier who fatally shot at close range an Iraqi man who already was badly wounded in a vehicle after a high-speed chase in Iraq, officials said on Wednesday. Charges have been preferred, said Lieutenant Colonel Pamela Hart, an Army spokeswoman at the Pentagon, but she did not specify the charges or name the 1st Armoured Division soldier. Another Army official said the soldier in being charged with murder after the Army Criminal Investigation Division looked into the May 21 incident. “In accordance with the rules of engagement,” Hart said, “incrementally, (the Transport Ministry) will take over all of the security for the airport.” Baghdad Airport has been the US military base in Iraq since last year’s invasion that toppled Saddam Hussein. The US military will continue to use Camp Victory, a fortified base it has built on the edge of the 35 square mile airport, officials said. Military aircraft will continue to use the airport but only to support the future US Embassy, not to support troops, a senior coalition military operations official said. Currently, about 90 per cent of the 500 daily flights to Baghdad Airport are military but US forces will step up use of other Iraqi airfields and land routes instead. The company that will take over airport security from existing contractor Custer Battles, will be announced in the next day or two. That security contractor, which was chosen through open bid and will be accountable to the Transport Ministry, will also train Iraqis eventually to take over, he said. No scheduled passenger flights currently operate out of Baghdad, due to threats from the area around the heavily-guarded airport. Attacks on vehicles, particularly military convoys, travelling from the airport into the capital are common. MNA/Reuters

Portuguese forces to stay in Iraq till November

LISBON, 18 June — Portuguese Foreign Minister Teresa Gouveia announced Wednesday that the government intends to maintain the contingent of the National Republican Guard (GNR) in Iraq till November. Gouveia said “in the face of the resolution that was unanimously approved by the United Nations (UN),” the presence of the multinational troops in Iraq will be decided by the Iraqi Government. The UN Security Council last week approved a resolution endorsing the transfer of sovereignty to Iraq’s new government by the end of June and authorized deployment of a multinational security force in that country. Portugal’s opposition parties said at the National Assembly on Wednesday the contingent should be withdrawn from Iraq. Results of the European elections held on June 10 to 13 gave 60 per cent of the votes to the whole of the left parties, that are against the involvement of the Portuguese Government in the case of Iraq. MNA/Xinhua

A US soldier drives away the media from the site of an explosion in Baghdad, Iraq, on 17 June, 2004. A sport utility vehicle packed with artillery shells slammed into a crowd of people waiting to volunteer for the Iraqi military, on Thursday killing dozens of people, authorities said. — Internet

Australian argument for war in Iraq “blown apart” by US report

SYDNEY, 17 June — Australia’s case for joining the invasion of Iraq has been “blown apart” by an official US investigation that found no link between Al-Qaeda and the regime of Saddam Hussein, the opposition Labour Party said Wednesday. The official report released overnight in Washington on the September 11, 2001, terror assault on the US said there was no “credible evidence” Iraq had helped Al-Qaeda to carry out the attack and no sign of any “collaborative relationship” between Baghdad and the group. The conservative government of Prime Minister John Howard repeatedly cited alleged ties between Al-Qaeda and other international terrorists to Iraq, along with weapons of mass destruction that have not been found, to justify joining the US-led invasion of Iraq in March 2003. Howard’s policy on Iraq, where Australia still has troops deployed, has become increasingly unpopular in Australia and has emerged as a key issue ahead of national elections expected later this year. The main opposition Labour Party — which has called for the withdrawal of Australian troops from Iraq since the start of the war — said in a statement that the US findings destroy the credibility of Howard’s case for going to war. It’s quite plain from what’s been produced in the United States that the core argument advanced by John Howard, that attacking Iraq was part of the war on terrorism, has been blown apart by this report,” Labour foreign affairs spokesman Kevin Rudd said Wednesday. The report by a commission of inquiry set up to investigate the September 11 airliner attacks on New York’s World Trade Centre and the Pentagon in Washington found that Al-Qaeda chief Osama bin Laden explored possible cooperation with Iraq while he was based in Sudan in the early 1990s. It said there were also reports of contacts with Baghdad after bin Laden returned to Afghanistan “but they do not appear to have resulted in a collaborative relationship.” Internet

Iraqi oil workers make repairs on pipelines near Faw, Iraq, on 17 June, 2004, after saboteurs blasted the oil lines on Tuesday and Wednesday halting Iraq’s oil exports. MNA/Xinhua

The UN Security Council last week approved a resolution endorsing the transfer of sovereignty to Iraq’s new government by the end of June and authorized deployment of a multinational security force in that country. Portugal’s opposition parties said at the National Assembly on Wednesday the contingent should be withdrawn from Iraq. Results of the European elections held on June 10 to 13 gave 60 per cent of the votes to the whole of the left parties, that are against the involvement of the Portuguese Government in the case of Iraq. MNA/Xinhua

THE NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR Saturday, 19 June, 2004
Retired US diplomats say Bush policies a failure

WASHINGTON, 17 June — US President George W Bush led the United States into an ill-planned Iraqi war that weakened US security, retired diplomats and military officers said on Wednesday in a challenge to one of Bush’s main arguments for re-election.

We all believe that current Administration policies have failed in the primary responsibilities of preserving national security and providing world leadership,” said a statement signed by the 27 retired officials. “We need a change.”

The rare criticism by career senior US officials came from a group that included members of both major political parties, two former ambassadors to the Soviet Union and a retired chairman of the military Joint Chiefs of Staff.

In attacking Bush’s national security record, they challenged a key Bush argument for his re-election against Democrat Senator John Kerry, that the Iraq war has made America safer.

“Our security has been weakened,” the group said.

The former officials, some of whom said they had voted for Bush, said the Republican President manipulated intelligence on Iraq to lead the United States into an “ill-planned and costly war from which exit is uncertain”.

Bush has maintained an “overbearing” approach to foreign policy that relied excessively on military power, spurned the concerns of US traditional allies and disdained the United Nations, the group said.

100 more safe blood transfusions centres

DHAKA, 17 June — Some 100 more safe blood transfusion centres will be set up in the country soon, aiming to check various blood-borne contagious diseases, particularly HIV/AIDS.

Health and Family Welfare Minister Dr Khondaker Mosharraf Hoossain said this in a meeting of national steering committee on implementation of the three-year Health, Nutrition and Population Sector Programme (HNPSP) Wednesday, reported the United News of Bangladesh, a private news agency in the country.

In the meeting, 20 operational plans of HNPSP were approved involving an estimated cost of 17.525 billion dollars. Earlier, 11 operational plans were approved on June 2.

The Health Ministry told the meeting that awareness programmes were not enough to prevent fatal diseases like HIV/AIDS. “We need to take preventive measures too,” he said.

He directed the authorities concerned to give emphasis on the frontier areas of the country for establishing the new safe blood transfusion centres.

Bangladesh to set up 100 more safe transfusion centres
New and fast developments throughout Myanmar

People living in Thityakauk village in Magway Township, are now possessing new houses built under rural housing project. — PBANRDA

For the development of national races youths living in border area, Youth Centre was built in Kengtung, Shan State (East). — HTAY AUNG (KYSEMON)

Village-to-village roads and town-to-village roads are being built for better transportation in rural areas. Photo shows road construction site between Hsayhtoe and Thayagon villages in Natogyi Township, Mandalay Division. — PBANRDA

The Government is paying serious attention to border area development. Photo shows the development of Panwa in Kachin State. — PBANRDA

Under the Arid Zones Greening Plan, a dam was built in Kanhnahsint village in Aunglan Township, Magway Division. — Min Ko (Forestry)

Border and rural area developments

Kawthoung Airport in Taninthayi Division. — MNA
Burundian Vice-President visits Anhui Province

**Hotel, 18 June—** Burundian Vice-President Alphonse-Marie Kadege visited East China’s Anhui Province on Wednesday.

As the newly-appointed Chinese Vice-President Zeng Qinghong, Kadege and his party arrived at Anhui, they were warmly welcomed by Anhui Governor Wang Jirong, vice-Governor Zhang Lijun, and their colleagues.

In a cordial meeting, Wang said that the economic cooperation between Anhui and Burundi held great promise.

Kadege, who is also the President of the National Assembly of Burundi, expressed his desire to deepen the friendship and understanding between Anhui and Burundi, and the bilateral exchanges and cooperation will also be boosted.

“Burundi has a great potential to develop economically,” Kadege said, adding that the country’s government is in the process of implementing various development projects.

Wang mentioned that in recent years, the economic cooperation between Anhui and Burundi has been increasingly diversified, with a series of exchange events and cooperation projects being held.

He also expressed his desire to intensify cooperation in various fields, such as education, culture, and tourism.

Kadege said that the Burundian side was ready to learn from the rich economic and cultural experience of Anhui Province.

Food poisoning sicknesses at least 70 in south China

**Guangzhou, 18 June—** At least 70 people were sickeened by a mass food poisoning in Meizhou City of southern Guangdong Province, local health officials and doctors said Wednesday.

An estimated 40 to 50 people fell ill with vomiting, diarrhoea, fever, dehydration and headache, said doctors.

Doctors said they had taken emergency measures and the patients were in stable condition.

An investigation is being conducted to determine the cause of the food poisoning.

Vietnam boosts seafood exports to EU, APR

**Hanoi, 18 June—** Vietnam is boosting its seafood exports to the European Union (EU) and the Asia-Pacific Region (APR), local officials said Wednesday.

Local shrimp exporters are being encouraged by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development to take advantage of the market opportunities provided by both regions.

Vietnamese shrimp exports to the EU and the APR recorded a year-on-year growth of 80 per cent in the first five months of this year, according to the ministry.

Meanwhile, the Asia-Pacific Region is a major importer of Vietnamese seafood, along with the United States and the EU.

Vietnam’s seafood exports to the EU and the APR recorded a year-on-year growth of 80 per cent in the first five months of this year, according to the ministry.

Vietnam, which exported seafood worth $325 million US dollars in the first five months of this year, is expected to obtain seafood export turnovers of $1.5 billion in the rest of the year, according to the ministry.

Poor nations launch talks to lower trade barriers

**Sao Paulo (Brazil), 18 June—** Poor nations on Wednesday launched talks to lower their trade barriers in a move to fight poverty and win access to rich countries’ markets.

Argentina and Brazilian ministers launched negotiations to expand the Global System of Trade Preferences—an agreement on tariff reduction and trade liberalization among 44 developing countries—to at least 40 more nations.

Many developing nations see trade with poor neighbours as second best to that with rich countries. But most see no alternative to so-called South-South trade while tariff barriers and subsidies block their farm exports from reaching Europe and the United States.

Countries like the United States and France want to improve access to poor nations’ economies before they open up their lucrative farm sectors to developing countries’ exports.

Argentina Economy Minister Roberto Lavagna told delegates at a meeting of the UN Conference on Trade and Development in Brazil that the new round of negotiations could lift millions out of poverty and push along a struggling world trade deal.

Efficient use of electricity

- Use daylight as the main source of light
- Use the least possible amount of electricity only if there is not enough natural light
- Use the least possible amount of electricity required in production and service enterprises
- Preventing waste of electricity benefits the user and others

There are about 500,000 households using electricity in Yangon. Thus, saving a four-foot fluorescent lamp everyday by each household amounts to saving power that is equal to the capacity a 20-megawatt power station can supply.
Minister inspects roads in Chin State, Magway Division

YANGON, 18 June — Minister for Construction Maj-Gen Saw Tun accompanied by departmental officials inspected maintenance of Kalay-Falam-Haka road on 14 June morning. The minister looked into Falam-Haka road section between mile posts 82/0 and 82/1 and fulfilled requirements. On 15 June morning, the minister saw over completion of upgrading task of Mandalay-Sagang-Monywa-Sagaing road (Gangaw-Monywa section). — MNA

Home Affairs Minister inspects Drug Museum

YANGON, 18 June — Chairman of the Central Committee for Drug Abuse Control Minister for Home Affairs Col Tun Hlaing arrived at the Drug Museum this afternoon. The minister was welcomed there by CCDAC member Police Brig-Gen Win Myaing, CCDAC Commissioner Secretary Minister for Information Brig-Gen Kyaw Hsan and officials. On 16 June morning, the minister inspected completion and maintenance of upgrading Gangaw-Pale-Monywa-Sagaing road (Gangaw-Monywa section). — MNA

Courses of Communication, Postal Training Centre end

YANGON, 18 June — The concluding ceremony of Database Management Course, Introduction to Outside Plant Course, Fujitsu SDH Digital Microwave Equipment Handling Course and Subscriber Line Construction Course for Rural Telecommunication conducted by the Communication and Postal Training Centre was held at the training centre this morning. It was attended by Minister for Communications, Posts and Telecommunications Brig-Gen Thein Zaw, officials of Myanmar Posts and Telecommunications and Directorate of Telecommunications, course instructors and 58 trainees. The minister addressed the ceremony and presented course completion certificates to the trainees and awards to the outstanding. — MNA

Renovation of Kyaukseindwin Dhammayon, Myanmar Shopping Mall inspected

YANGON, 18 June — Minister for Communications, Posts and Telecommunications Brig-Gen Thein Zaw this afternoon inspected renovation of Kyaukseindwin Dhammayon carried out by Mstyikyina Association (Maung Hlaing) near the southern stairway of the Shwedagon Pagoda and left necessary instructions. In the evening, the minister went to Myanmar Shopping Mall on Sule Pagoda Road where he inspected the stalls of consumers’ goods, electronic items, foodstuff and jewellery and the Internet Cafe. Managing Director U Te Za conducted the minister round the shopping and he left necessary instructions. — MNA

Airports

Bawlakhe, Pruhso in Kayah State

YANGON, 18 June — Chairman of Shan State Peace and Development Council Commander of Eastern Command Maj-Gen Kin Maung Myint, accompanied by Chairman of Kayah State Peace and Development Council Col Myint Oo and officials, met departmental officials, social organization members and local people at Bayinnaung Hall in Bawlakhe Township on 13 June evening.

Commander of Bawlakhe District Peace and Development Council Lt-Col Kan Tun reported on land utilization, food sufficiency and agriculture and livestock breeding. The commander gave necessary instructions. The commander donated K 100,000 for Bawlakhe Township Hospital to Head of the Township Health Department Dr Yan Naing.

On 14 June, the commander inspected maintenance of Pun Creek Bridge in Bawlakhe. The bridge is 340 feet long and 12 feet wide and it is of bailey type. The bridge links Bawlakhe and Ywathit townships.

On 15 June, the commander, accompanied by Chairman of Kayah State Col Myint Oo and Col Aye Lwin of Bawlakhe Station, met officers, other ranks and families of the station at the hall in Pruhso and presented cash assistance to Maternal and Child Welfare Association of the station.

Next, the commander met departmental officials, social organization members and local people at the hall in Pruhso Township Peace and Development Council. Chairman of Loikaw District Lt-Col Win Maung reported on land utilization in Loikaw District, local food sufficiency, agriculture, livestock breeding, water supply, education and health.

Officials also submitted reports on their respective sectors. The commander attended to the needs. He presented K 100,000 for Pruhso Township Health Department and K 100,000 for purchasing school stationery to officials. In the evening, the commander met Tamadawmen and families at the station hall of Phelkon Station. — MNA

Meeting of the Delegate Group of Other Invited Persons in progress. — MNA

Panel of Chairmen of Delegates Group of Other Invited Persons meet

YANGON, 18 June — The Panel of Chairmen of the Delegates Group of Other Invited Persons held the coordination meeting at the hall No 8 of Nyaungshin Camp in Hmawby Township on 9 am today.

Present on the occasion were Vice-Chairman U Sai Aung Tun of Myanmar History Commission, U Aung Hkam Hti of Shan State (South) Special Region-6, Dr Manan Tu Jia of Kachin State Special Region-2, Secretary of Myanmar History Commission U Tin Aung Chein, U Paw Luik Hkhung of Shan State (North) Special Region-2, Deputy Director U Aung Kyi and Assistant Director U Win Myint of the working Group-10 of the National Convention Convening Work Committee.

They discussed matters related to proposals concerning detailed basic principles to be laid down for sharing of power in legislative, executive and judicial sectors to be included in writing the State Constitution clarified by the National Convention Convening Work Committee. — MNA

Minister inspects roads in Chin State, Magway Division

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Commander inspects Pathein Airport runway, building of hovercrafts

YANGON, 18 June — Chairman of Ayeyawady Division Peace and Development Council Commander of South-West Command Maj-Gen Soe Naing arrived Pathein Airport on 17 June. Pathein Airport Construction Project In-charge Li-Col Kyaw Myint of Myanmar Ar Construction Co Ltd reported on building of concrete runway.

Officials of Department of Civil Aviation reported on keeping the airport clean and pleasant. The commander instructed them to ensure proper drainage at the airport area, build a small park and keep the airport clean and pleasant.

Beginning 1 November 2003, a 22-inch high concrete runway was built by Myanmar Ar Co Ltd. For the first phase, the runway, 8,500 feet long and 100 feet wide was opened on 14 March 2004. The runway was extended to the 9,500 feet by 200 feet and it was completed on 15 May. At the private workshop on Strand Road in Pathein, the commander inspected finishing touches to hovercrafts.

Technician U Aung Myint briefed the commander on building of the hovercraft. The hovercrafts, 130 feet long, 18 feet wide and with a draught of 4 feet, are being built at the private workshop. Each hovercraft can carry 230 passengers and it can be driven at 25 nautical miles per hour. So far, six hovercrafts have been built and are running on Hainggyi-Pyinkhayaing-Pathein and Thongwa-Ngaputaw-Pathein routes. — MNA

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Commander tours Bawlakhe, Pruhso in Kayah State

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The commander and party inspected irrigation from Dawtacha Dam to farmlands. The dam is 1,640 feet long and 27 feet high and it has 55 square miles of catchment area. Next, the commander donated cash for the funds of Maha Kantaya Teinna Pagoda in Bawlakhe and offered provisions to Sayadaw U Vijaya at Maha Kantaya Teinna Monastery.

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Magco Co Ltd Managing Director U Aung San Myat conducted the minister round the booths. The minister next viewed the extension of booths. Later, the minister inspected preparations for the 18th destruction ceremony of seized narcotic drugs to mark the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking to be held on 16 June. — MNA

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Donate blood
Malaysia, Singapore to enhance transport sector ties

KUALA LUMPUR, 18 June — Malaysia and Singapore Thursday decided to enhance cooperation in the transport sector, including looking into the possibility of increasing flights between the two countries.

The decision was the outcome of talks between Transport Minister Chan Kong Choy and his Singaporean counterpart Yeo Cheow Tong, who is in Malaysia for a two-day visit.

"The two airlines (Malaysia Airlines and Singapore Airlines) will meet immediately to find ways and means to enhance the present arrangement in the aviation sector," Chan said at a joint news conference after the one-hour meeting at his ministry in Putrajaya, the Federal Administrative Centre.

On the air links, Yeo said, "The more we can strengthen air links between Singapore and Malaysia, the more we can facilitate tourism and investment flows."

Tourists from Singapore accounted for 56 per cent of total foreign tourists arriving in Malaysia last year.

Their discussion also touched on the International Shipping and Port Security (ISPS) code which comes into effect on July 1.

Chan said both sides could learn from each other on the approaches being taken for the ISPS code implementation so that it would not hinder the flow of trade between Malaysia and Singapore in particular, and within the Southeast Asian region in general.

20th Meeting of ASEAN National Tourism Organizations
5th Meeting of ASEAN, China, Japan and Korea National Tourism Organizations
3rd ASEAN-India Tourism Consultations

Taunggyi, Union of Myanmar
30 June — 1 July, 2004

Chinese, British navies to hold maritime exercises

QINGDAO, 18 June — The guided missile destroyer HMS Exeter and replenishment ship RFA Grey of the British Royal Navy arrived in Qingdao Thursday morning for a four-day visit to this port city and a joint military exercise with the North Sea Fleet of the People’s Liberation Army Navy (PLAN).

It is significant for the two sides to hold the first joint maritime exercise, which is bound to promote friendly exchanges between the navies of China and Britain, he added.

During their visit in Qingdao, the British Navy officers are expected to meet with Zhang Zhannan, Commander of the North Sea Fleet of PLAN and other officials of Qingdao. In addition, the two sides will visit the warships of the other and held football matches.

The British fleet, which is on an eight-month trip to the Far East, has enjoyed trips to Madras of India, Singapore, Ho Chi Minh City of Vietnam, Hong Kong and Shanghai. — MNA/Xinhua

Singapore’s non-oil exports sharply rise in May

SINGAPORE, 18 June — Singapore’s non-oil domestic exports (NODX) increased 27.7 per cent to 11.7 billion Singapore dollars (about 6.8 billion US dollars) in May over last year, according to a statement by the Singapore Enterprise of Singapore (IE Singapore) on Thursday.

IE Singapore attributed the robust rise in NODX mainly to strong demand from Europe for electronics and pharmaceutical goods.

Exports of electronics and non-electronics products in May grew 26.2 per cent and 29.2 per cent respectively, IE Singapore said.

As for the markets, IE Singapore said that except the United States, NODX to all the top ten markets registered positive growth in May this year.

23rd Meeting of the Task Force on ASEAN Tourism Marketing
11th Meeting of the Task Force on Tourism Investment
11th Meeting of the Task Force on Tourism Manpower Development

Taunggyi, Union of Myanmar
28 — 29 June, 2004

US ministers to visit China

BEIJING, 18 June — Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Zhang Qsyue said here Thursday that US Secretary of Commerce Donald Louis Evans and US Secretary of Labour Elaine Lan Chao will visit China soon.

At the invitation of China’s Ministry of Commerce, Evans will visit China from June 19 to 24. At the invitation of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security of China, Chao will visit China from June 21 to 24.

At the regular Press conference, Zhang said economic and trade relations between China and the United States developed closely at the moment, although there are some difficulties and disputes in the course of development, adding that it is not strange.

She said the visit of the ministers level and between the leaders of China and United States showed that both sides expected the economic and trade relations to develop smoothly, which is important not only to the two nations but also to the world economic growth. — MNA/Xinhua

S Korea to spend $57b on industrial clusters

SEOUL, 18 June — South Korea will spend a total of 66.5 trillion won (57.4 billion US dollars) on building infrastructure for industrial clusters over the next four years, reported the South Korean news agency Yonhap on Thursday.

Four strategic industries for each province will be chosen to narrow the gap between the greater Seoul area and the provinces as well as to pursue balanced national development, according to the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Energy.

In a report to President Roh Moo-hyun, the ministry and a presidential panel on balanced national development outlined the first five-year plan.

Under the blueprint, South Korea hopes to develop at least two world-class industrial clusters similar to the United States’ Silicon Valley within 15 years. It plans to complete the necessary infrastructure by 2008.

"To enhance the project, we will seek to attract private capital as well as tap into public funds," Commerce Minister Lee Hae-chan was quoted as saying.

The ministry plans to hold a hearing later this month to gauge opinion before it presents the five-year plan for the Cabinet and presidential approval next month. — MNA/Xinhua
UNSG urges tougher action against desertification

UNITED NATIONS, 18 June — An estimated 135 million people are at risk of being driven from their land because of continuing desertification and the world must focus more on reversing this trend, United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan said on Wednesday.

In a message to mark the World Day to Combat Desertification, which falls on Thursday, Annan said governments should cooperate with civil society, business and international organizations to promote more sustainable development so that land remains arable and does not become desert. This year’s Anti-desertification World Day coincides with the 10th anniversary of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), which now has 191 signatories.

Citing a UNCCD estimate that more than one billion people and one-third of the Earth’s surface are threatened by desertification, Annan warned that the rural poor are particularly vulnerable, especially in the developing world.

He said desertification can reduce productivity in some regions by as much as half.

“It contributes to food insecurity, famine and poverty, and can give rise to social, economic and political tensions that can cause conflicts, further poverty and land degradation.” — MNA/Xinhua

Russia to boost 2005 military spending

MOSCOW, 18 June — Russia will boost domestic arms spending by a third to 6 billion US dollars in 2005, industry sources and media said on Thursday, but a top defence official called for more cash to help the sector recover from a post-Soviet crisis.

The arms industry — the core of the Russian economy during the Cold War — shrank in the 1990s. Production picked up under President Vladimir Putin, who still remains below Soviet levels. Frequent military accidents such as the sinking of the Kursk submarine in 2000, as well as the Army’s inability to end a military conflict in Chechnya, have underscored the need for urgent reform of Russia’sanche string military machine.

Defence spending, including security and emergencies, will rise 146 billion rubles to 941 billion rubles (30.8 billion US dollars) in 2005 — or about five per cent of the economy, according to a draft 2005 budget obtained by Reuters.

Industry players also confirmed a newspaper report the budget was likely to allocate more than 6 billion US dollars to state purchases of hardware — about 30 per cent more than in 2004.

The rise is in line with Putin’s plan to bolster military capability by reforming the ill-equipped Army, reorganizing the nuclear sector and boosting defence exports to Asia to offset lower sales in Eastern Europe.

But key defence players were still disappointed with the revision, which was dismissed by ministers on Thursday and is subject to revision. “I call on you to clarify the 2005 budget from the point of view of national security and defence,” the chief of Russia’s military staff, Anatoly Kasyanov, said at a Cabinet meeting. “The draft budget does not give grounds to suppose it would be possible to boost national security and lead the Armed Forces out of crisis.”

Hardware producers were also sceptical as they said the state seemed divided over which defence sectors to favour.

“The good thing is that for the first time in many years, state spending has reached the level of annual arms exports: about 5-6 billion US dollars,” said a high-ranking official in a big state-owned defence company.

“But there is a long way to go because in the West this number is many times higher.”

Defence officials have hinted the government wants to concentrate on researching next-generation technology, especially for the strategic rocket forces, rather than purchasing modified versions of existing stocks. — MNA/Reuters

Russia, China, Central Asian states talk security

TASHKENT, 18 June — China, Russia and four ex-Soviet Central Asian states will coordinate their attempts to curb extremism and drug trafficking, creating an anti-terrorism centre in Uzbekistan on Thursday, officials said.

The centre, officially known as RATS for Regional Antiterrorist Structure, is one of the few concrete steps to have been taken by the group of six countries, known as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

The group also includes Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. China is fighting separatists and Muslims in its northwestern Xinjiang region, populated by ethnic Uighurs. Uzbekistan says it is threatened by Muslim extremists it blames for blasts and shoot-outs with police earlier this year that killed 47 people.

Tajik President Imomali Rakhmonov said a major challenge facing the grouping was drug trafficking. Afghan narcotics production, much of it destined for Western Europe, has nearly tripled since the fall of the Taliban.

“This is not just Afghanistan’s problem, or Tajikistan’s problem,” he told a news conference after a meeting of the six leaders of the SCO which was attended by Afghan President Hamid Karzai. “It is a global problem and the world community should pay attention.”

Tajikistan agreed earlier this month to extend the stay of Russian troops guarding the Tajik-Afghan border and to give a Russian military airbase permanent legal status, in return for debt write-downs by Moscow. Chinese President Hu Jintao said his country would provide 900 million US dollars in loans and trade credits to the member states of the group, but gave no further details. Uzbek police, keen to ward off any security threats during such a high profile event, blocked roads and stopped traffic in the capital Tashkent. Despite official portrayals of the attacks in March and April as the work of al-Qaeda trained terrorists, much of the population has remained indifferent to the alleged threat against them, some even professing support for attacks that were largely aimed against a corrupt police force. — MNA/Reuters

Wellwishers invited for sinking tube-wells

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Drive safely

Sinking tube-wells projects for rural areas may contact the Director-General (Tel: 01-245420 & 253088), the Deputy Director-General (Tel: 01-240118), the Director (Engineering) (Tel: 01-291967), the Directors (Sanagin Development Affairs Committee) (Tel: 063-23164) and the Director (Mandaly Division Development Affairs Committee) (Tel: 02-54657).

MNA
German joyriders cause havoc with 8-tonne trucks

Bruxis, 17 June 17 — Joyriders wreaked havoc in Germany with three eight-tonne trucks and a bulldozer, damaging buildings, knocking over masts and cutting a trail through a forest in a night-time ride, police said on Wednesday.

NYC auctioneer puts dinosaur remains on the block

Ettinger said in 1997, Sotheby's auctioned the remains of a Tyrannosaurus rex nicknamed Sue for a gargantuan 8.4 million US dollars. But Guernsey's are the first "major, full-blown auction focusing on prehistoric rain and feathered creatures", Ettinger said. Among the featured pieces is a nearly complete, 40-foot skeleton of an anatolian duck-billed dino.

"It is very rare to have a dinosaur skeleton in one piece," Ettinger said. As a result, it is difficult to estimate the selling price, although he said it could go into the high six figures to potentially millions.

WHO experts inspect elephantiasis control in China

Guangzhou, 17 June — A five-member team of specialists from the World Health Organization has been conducting a five-day inspection over controlling lymphatic filariasis, a mosquito-borne disease, in south China's Guangdong Province since Sunday.

Lymphatic filariasis, or LF, can result in the enlargement and disfigurement of the arms, legs and genital organs, a complication known as elephantiasis. The WHO estimates that some one billion people in 40 tropical and subtropical countries are at risk from LF while 12 million people actually carry the infection.

S Africa to publish biodiversity action plan

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S Africa, Botswana act to curb polio virus transmission

JOHANNESBURG, 18 June—Southern African countries including Botswana and South Africa have activated their immunization schemes to prevent the spread of polio virus that has been absent in the region for 13 years.

South Africa will embark on a polio immunization campaign next month after an outbreak of the deadly disease in neighboring Botswana earlier this year, South African newspaper This Day reported Wednesday.

The first 50,000 children younger than five were being targeted with a second dose of the oral polio vaccine in Botswana, the week after the first dose was administered to 222,000 children on May 10-14.

Botswana discovered its first polio case since 1991, becoming the 9th African country where polio had broken out after Eritrea in the past year. Most of other countries are in West and Central Africa.

United Nations health officials fear the human-to-human disease might spread rapidly to the neighboring Botswana early next month after an out-of-control polio immunization campaign.

One polio case means up to 100,000 children being exposed to the crippling disease, said the health official, who recommended the country to launch house-to-house immunization campaign as the quickest and safest method to stop the disease.

Gordon Lewis, UNICEF’s Botswana representative, said the polio re-infection was a real wake-up call for the rest of the world to step up surveillance of suspected cases.

Bangladesh’s import rises sharply in 2004

Dhaka, 18 June—Bangladesh’s import during the first 10 months of the fiscal 2003-2004 beginning on July 1, 2003, rose by 20 per cent over that of the corresponding period of the previous fiscal.

Source from Bangladesh Bank, the central bank of the country, said Thursday the letters of credit opened by the importers with different commercial banks came to $9.83 billion US dollars, up from $8.04 billion dollars in the corresponding months of the previous fiscal 2002-2003.

The source further specified that import of petroleum products rose by 29 per cent, industrial raw materials by 23 per cent and capital machinery by 15 per cent. He attributed the rise in the import cost to the fall in the value of Bangladesh currency.

The country has to maintain a trade balance and other hard currencies, adding this has put the government into trouble to keep balance in payment of foreign debts and Asian Currency Union payments.

Policy makers have been fearing that the trade imbalance would rise further, though the present trend of remittance from the Bangladesh working abroad and export income rise would help maintain a balance of payment of export and import.

New method predicts speed of a woman’s biological clock

London, 17 June—Scientists have developed a method that aims to predict how fast a woman’s biological clock is ticking and when she is likely to go through menopause.

“By measuring the volume of ovaries with ultrasound, researchers in Scotland said on Thursday that they can predict the reproductive age of a woman aged 25 to 51, or how many eggs she may have left, which could dramatically change fertility treatments.”

Dr Thomas Kelsey, a computer expert at the University of St. Andrews, said the benefit of the research will be to improve fertility treatment and planning and to provide doctors with information about the likely success of such treatments.

“The ultrasound measurement is taken to work out the volume of the ovaries. If the ovaries are larger than average for her age then she is likely to have a later menopause and if they are smaller she is likely to have an earlier one. Essentially we try to quantify how much, by how many years,” he said in an interview.

The new method was found to be accurate in 1,000 women between the ages of 20 and 40.

Former NASA astronaut Dr. James W. Reilly, who reported their research in an interview, said on Thursday, “It’s a very simple way of finding out how many eggs a woman has left, which could dramatically change fertility treatment and planning and to provide doctors with information about the likely success of such treatments.”

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“This is one of the first cases of long-distance importations of the disease. Though having a small population of 1.7 million, Botswana has a very mobile population. Crowe was quoted as saying by the newspaper.

She said 40 cases of polio had been reported in the nine countries last year, but the number had risen to 200 in a few months, despite a global effort in past years to eliminate the virus forever.

One of the 11 Children’s Fund (UNICEF) for the southern African region, said the wild polio virus in Botswana was genetically traced to Nigeria.

Nigeria now has 170 polio cases, ranked the top among 11 case-reporting countries around the world, showed statistics from the World Health Organization’s polio web site.

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Owen and conceding a flurry could not afford to lose, England's Steven Gerrard said after Sunday's Group B clash in Coimbra for a second yellow card. "It would be a dream for me to score against England, even though they might stop me at the airport when I go back to my club there," said Haas on Wednesday. His first yellow came in the 49th minute when he crashed into Steven Gerrard and he committed a similar offence on Ashley Cole to leave Russian referee Valentin Ivanov with no choice but to show the red card.

Haas is the second Swiss player to be sent off in the tournament after Johann Vogel's red card in the 0-0 draw against Croatia. He will miss the final game against France, although Vogel will be available.

An own goal by Igor Tudor midway through the first half seemed to have France on course for the quarterfinals but two goals in four minutes early in the second, a Milan Rapaic penalty and a shot by Dudu Peso, suddenly turned things round.

David Trezeguet rescued them in the 68th minute to set up a tense final round of fixtures on June 21. France head the way with four points. England, who beat Switzerland 3-0 earlier on Thursday, have three. Croatia and Switzerland scored to qualify with wins. France started confidently, knocking the ball about crisply, but never really threatened in the opening 20 minutes. The breakthrough came out of the blue when Zinedine Zidane, who struck both goals in France's 2-1 comeback win over England on Sunday, curled a free kick from wide on the left that took a slight deflection off defender Tudor and left goalkeeper Tomislav Butina wrong-footed.

The game then went into a huff with neither side showing particular urgency until an outrageous backheeled flick by Zidane from a corner setup William Gallas on his back, the defender wide of the post. Croatia coach Otto Barić said in the build-up to the game that he would be delighted with a draw and his side were on level terms three minutes into the second half after Mikael Silvestre bundled over Dovani Rossi in the box.

French goalkeeper Fabien Barthez had saved David Beckham's penalty for England on Sunday but had no chance with Rapaic's blasted effort. The massed hordes of red and white checked Croatian fans erupted to acclaim their first goal of the tournament and four minutes later they took the roof off to celebrate the second. Prso, who earned his living in the French league for AS Monaco last season, thought he had lost possession after hooking the ball over the head of Silvestre but a miscued clearance by recalled captain Marcel Desailly returned it to him and he took full advantage by lashing the ball past Barthez.

France, who had scored twice in three minutes to beat England on Sunday, were stumped but quickly collected themselves and drew level with a hotly-disputed goal in the 64th minute. Trezeguet charged down a Butina clearance, the ball hitting his arm, before slotting into the empty net from a tight angle.

The Croatian players complained bitterly to Danish referee Kim Milton Nielsen but they could not manage it.

Ivica Mornar could have won it for Croatia in injury-time when he wove inside the six-yard box but flashed his shot over the bar and their last chance of victory went by.

Croatia, who had lost their three previous meetings, including the 1998 World Cup semi-final also threatened on the break at the but at the final whistle their fans celebrated as if they had already won the title.

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Croatia hold France to surprise 2-2 draw

PORTUGAL's Deco close to Chelsea switch

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Deco says he is almost certain to join Premier League club Chelsea after Euro 2004, TSSF radio reported on Thursday.

"I have things practically resolved with the club," the Porto player said on Wednesday after featuring in Portugal's 2-0 defeat of Euro 2004 Group A rivals Russia.

"I still have to do medical examinations and sign a contract with Chelsea, which should happen after Euro 2004." The 26-year-old Deco, who was born in Brazil and whose decision to play for Portugal sparked a debate over naturalization, is the second player from the Champions League winners set to link up with former Porto coach Jose Mourinho at Stamford Bridge.

Right back Paolo Ferreira is reported to have joined the Premier League club, though Chelsea say a deal has not yet been completed.

Born in Sao Paulo, Deco -- full name Anderson Luis de Souza -- arrived in Portugal in 1997 to play for lowly Alverca. He then moved to Salgueiros and has been at Porto since the 1999/2000 season.

He made his international debut in April last year, ironically against the country of his birth, and celebrated by scoring from a free kick in Portugal's 2-1 win.

Portugal and Real Madrid's Luis Figo led the criticism of Deco's selection, saying in a newspaper interview: "You can learn national anthems but not feel them."

Deco said he did not take the criticism personally and that everyone was entitled to their opinion.

Deco began Euro 2004 as deputy for Rui Costa but won a place in the starting lineup for the match against Russia.

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History man Rooney sees nervy England home

England's Steven Gerrard (L) scored past Switzerland's Joerg Stiel during their Group B Euro 2004 soccer match at the Cidade de Coimbra Stadium in Coimbra, on 17 June, 2004. --- MNA/Reuters

Wayne Rooney (left) heads the ball past Switzerland goalkeeper Joerg Stiel to put England ahead in their 3-0 victory at the Cidade de Coimbra Stadium yesterday. --- Internet

England's Steven Gerrard (L) scores past Switzerland's Joerg Stiel during their Group B Euro 2004 soccer match at the Cidade de Coimbra Stadium in Coimbra, on 17 June, 2004. --- MNA/Reuters

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Deco began Euro 2004 as deputy for Rui Costa but won a place in the starting lineup for the match against Russia.
Rainfall on 18-6-2004 was 90mm (3.54 inches) at Yangon Airport, 101mm (3.97 inches) at Kaba-Aye and 41mm (1.61 inches) at central Yangon. Total rainfall since 1-1-2004 was 925mm (36.41 inches) at Yangon Airport and 807mm (31.77 inches) at Kaba-Aye and 936mm (36.85 inches) at central Yangon.

WEATHER

Friday, 18 June, 2004

Summary of observations recorded at 09:30 hours MST: During the past 24 hours, rain have been scattered in Kayah State, lower Sagaing, Mandalay and Magway Divisions and widespread in the remaining areas with locally heavy falls in Rahinle and Mon States, Yangon Division, isolated heavy falls in Kayin State, Bago, upper Sagaing and Ayeyawady Divisions. The noteworthy amounts of rainfall recorded were Thaton (6.54 inches), Thandwe (5.94 inches), Hpa-an (5.87 inches), Gwa (5.83 inches), Thayawady (5.12 inches), Mawlamyine (4.45 inches), Maungdaw (4.13 inches), Katha and Yangon (Kaba-Aye) (3.97 inches) each, Yangon (Mingaladon) (3.54 inches), Pathein (3.27 inches), Kyaukpyu (3.23 inches) and Ann (3.03 inches).

Maximum temperature on 17-6-2004 was 26.0°C (78.8°F). Minimum temperature on 18-6-2004 was 18.5°C (63°F). Relative humidity at 9:30 hrs MST on 18-6-2004 was 92%. Total sunshine hours on 17-6-2004 was nil. Rainfall on 18-6-2004 was 90mm (3.54 inches) at Yangon Airport, 101mm (3.97 inches) at Kaba-Aye and 41mm (1.61 inches) at central Yangon. Total rainfall since 1-1-2004 was 925mm (36.41 inches) at Yangon Airport and 475mm (18.71 inches) at Kaba-Aye and 936mm (36.85 inches) at central Yangon. Maximum wind speed at Yangon (Kaba-Aye) was 18 mph from Southwest at 12:20 hours MST on 17-6-2004.

Bay influence: According to the observations at 09:30 hours MST today, yesterday’s low pressure area over North Bay and adjoining Central Bay still persist.

Forecast valid until evening of the 19-6-2004: Except for the scattered rain in Kayin, Shan and Kayah States, Mandalay, Magway and lower Sagaing Divisions, widespread in the remaining areas with likelihood of locally heavy falls in Coastal areas and isolated heavy falls in Kayin State, upper Sagaing and Bago Divisions. Degree of certainty is (100%).

State of the sea: Occasional squalls with rough seas will be experienced off and along Myanmar Coasts. Surface wind speed in squalls may reach (40) to (45) mph. Outlook for subsequent two days: Strong Monsoon.

Forecast for Yangon and neighbouring area for 19-6-2004: Intermittent rain which may be heavy at times. Degree of certainty is (100%). Forecast for Mandalay and neighbouring area for 19-6-2004: Isolated rain. Degree of certainty is (100%).

Weather outlook for third weekend of June 2004: During the coming weekend, rain will be widespread in Yangon Division and isolated in Mandalay Division.
Delegates show positive attitude in submitting papers and holding discussions

National Convention Convening Commission, Work Committee,
Management Committee meet

YANGON, 18 June— The National Convention Convening Commission, the National Convention Convening Work Committee and the Management Committee held coordination meeting No 12/2004 at Anawrahta Yeiktha of Nyaungshinpin Camp in Hmaubgy Township, at 9.30 am today, with an address by Chairman of the National Convention Convening Commission Secretary-2 of the State Peace and Development Council Lt-Gen Thein Sein.

Also present on the occasion were Secretary of the National Convention Convening Commission Minister for Information Brig-Gen Kyaw Hsan and commission members, Chairman of the National Convention Convening Work Committee Chief Justice U Aung Toe and members, Chairman of the Management Committee Auditor-General Maj-Gen Lun Maung and members.

Joint-Secretary-2 of the NCCC Director-General of Pyituh Hlutaw Office U Myint Thein acted as master of ceremonies.

First, Chairman of the NCCC Secretary-2 Lt-Gen Thein Sein delivered an address. He said that the National Convention has turned five weeks, and discussions are gathering momentum and so it has reached a crucial point. It is heartening to note that delegates openly submitted proposal papers and held cordial discussions individually or in groups with respect to the Work Committee Chairman’s clarifications on the detailed basic principles to be adopted for division of legislative, executive and judicial powers to be included in framing the State Constitution. The National Convention is the first step of the State’s seven-point policy programmes, and it will have to lay down basic principles to write the State Constitution, which plays the most fundamental role in transforming the nation into a democratic one.

The NCCC Chairman expressed his heartfelt pleasure that as delegates are those who are from all strata of life, representing various national races and organizations, they had different intentions, aspirations and desires at the beginning of the National Convention. However, when several weeks have passed, delegates show more positive attitude in submitting papers and holding discussions under the unanimous objective — National Convention must succeed.

The Work Committee had received the proposal papers of the eight delegate groups. The Work Committee is now setting itself enthusiastically into its work in holding discussions with delegate groups in order to lay good foundations for the State through thorough study of all proposals of the eight delegate groups.

In conclusion, he called on those responsible to make efforts for ensuring emergence of a discipline-flourishing democratic nation, putting aside discrimination of race, person, ism, and locality in exchanging views, and to strive for adopting firm and durable basic principles that can shape brighter future of the nation by taking both good and bad lessons from the experiences gained throughout the history of the nation and by forming correct views of prevailing conditions.

Next, Secretary of National Convention Convening Commission Minister for Information Brig-Gen Kyaw Hsan presented a report, saying that the five-member translation team has started its function. Arrangements are being made for cash donation ceremony. In this regard, the donation of the delegates in accordance with their wish to donate cash to storm victims in Rakhine State and the donation of wellwishers hailing the National Convention will be included in the programmes.

Every Thursday and Sunday, the anyeint troupe, Myanmar Thabin Asiayon and vocalists will be performing. And, prizes will be presented to winners in the singing programme. In addition, arrangements are being made for entertainment of Min Okka Elephant Team.

Next, Chairman of the Work Committee Chief Justice U Aung Toe reported on submitting of proposals to panel of chairmen of respective delegate groups and the Work Committee; Chairman of the Management Committee Auditor-General Maj-Gen Lun Maung, on health care for the delegates and excursions.

A general round discussions of the members of the National Convention Convening Commission, the National Convention Convening Work Committee and the Management Committee followed. Afterwards, Chairman of the Commission Secretary-2 Lt-Gen Thein Sein fulfilled the requirements and delivered concluding remarks.

The coordination meeting among the National Convention Convening Commission, the National Convention Convening Work Committee and the Management Committee concluded at 12.25 pm.— MNA

Coordination meeting on international civil aviation security measures held

YANGON, 18 June— A coordination meeting on international civil aviation security measures took place at the Ministry of Transport on Merchant Street here this afternoon.

It was attended by Minister for Transport Maj-Gen Hla Myint Swe, Deputy Minister Col Nyan Tun Aung, Officer on Special Duty Brig-Gen Myo Tin and officials of the Department for Civil Aviation, the Attorney-General’s Office and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The minister delivered an opening speech. The Director-General of the Department for Civil Aviation and directors reported on measures taken by departments concerned regarding the findings in the inspections of the Aviation Security Audit Team. Next, the deputy minister gave a supplementary report. Then, those present took part in the discussions and the minister gave concluding remarks.— MNA