Ramayana Drama Contest continues

YANGON, 19 Oct—
The Ramayana Drama Contest of the 12th Myanmar Traditional Cultural Performing Arts Competitions continued for the fifth day at the National Theatre on Myoma Kyaung Street in Dagon Township here this evening. Ramayana Drama Troupe representing Sagaing Division participated in the contest. Present at the contest were members of the Panel of Patrons for organizing the performing arts competitions Minister for Culture Maj-Gen Kyi Aung, Vice-Chairman of the Leading Committee for organizing the contest. The Drama Troupe members of the work committee and subcommittees, artists and the public. Leader of the Panel of Judges U Chit Myo Min met with teachers and school heads were also present at the meeting.

Deputy Minister meets education staff

YANGON, 19 Oct—
Deputy Minister for Education Brig-Gen Aung Myo Min met with teachers of basic education schools in southern Shan State at the town hall in Taunggyi on 16 October.

Paper reading session on iron and steel held in MICT Park

YANGON, 19 Oct—
A paper reading session sponsored by iron and steel group of Myanmar Industrial Producers Association was held in MICT Park in Hlin Township on 16 October.

Min Win and officials.

Chairman U Htain Win spoke on the occasion. Next, resource persons submitted papers. They replied to queries raised by those present at the session.

The paper reading session was organized by Met, Mami, Emm and SOS Companies.—MNA

The amateur level Saing contest continued at the Padonma Theatre this morning.

The music contest continued at the State School of Drama this morning.

The amateur level Saing contest continued at the Padonma Theatre this morning.

The basic education level (aged 10-15) boys’ Saing contest continued at 1 pm and Maung Aung San Min and group of Yangon Division, Maung Bo Bo and group of Ayeyawady Division, Maung Nai Myo Lwin and group of Mandalay Division and Maung Chan Tha and group of Mandalay Division and Maung Htet Akhar and group of Yangon Division took part in it.

The amateur level (women’s) Saing contest (individual), professional level (women’s) Saing contest (individual) and the basic education level (aged 10-15) boys’ Saing contest will continue at the Padonma Theatre tomorrow.

The xyllophone contest continued at the Kanbawza Theatre this morning.

Four contestants from Yangon Division, Sagaing Division and Rakhine State participated in the higher education level xyllophone (women’s) contest while 13 contestants took part in the basic education level (aged 10-15) boys’ xyllophone contest.

The amateur level xyllophone contest and the basic education level (aged 15-20) (women’s) xyllophone contest continues tomorrow.

Maung Aung Ko Ko of Chin State competes in xylophone contest.—NLM

Maung Shine Bo Oo and group of Yangon Division, Maung Wai Yan Maung Maung Division took part in the basic education level (aged 5-10) boys’ Saing contest.

Maung Aung Ko Ko of Chin State competes in xylophone contest.—NLM

The practising of song composing contest will be held at the National Theatre tomorrow.

Wellwishers presented K 120,000 for construction of Theravada Buddha Sasana Myanmar Missionary Monastery in Paris, France, through an official on 19 October. — MNA
**Chinese President meets Tonga King**

**BEIJING, 19 Oct —** The Chinese Government is willing to work with the Tonga Government to expand cooperation and push forward long-term and stable ties, on the base of Five Principles of Co-existence.

Chinese President Hu Jintao made the remark in his meeting with Taufa’ahau Tupou IV, King of Tonga, here Monday.

Hu said ties between China and Tonga have developed rapidly. Exchange of visits at different levels were strengthened, economic and trading cooperation was enhanced, and the bilateral trade volume consistently increased.

The two sides communicated and cooperated in international and regional affairs, Hu said, with positive results in fields of culture, sanitation, and tourism.

Hu stressed China spoke highly of Tupou IV who made important contribution to normalization of China-Tonga relations, and appreciated Tonga’s sticking to the one-China stand on issues of Taiwan.

China and Tonga, both located in Asia-Pacific Region, are developing countries longing for peace and development, Hu noted. The two countries are complementary in development and cooperation between the two countries will bring development and prosperity to the two peoples.

Tupou IV said China appreciated the support and help offered by the Chinese Government and people for its economic and social construction since the normalization of the bilateral ties. He also said Tonga will continue to adhere to one-China policy. Tonga attaches importance to its relations with China, he added.

Tupou IV and his delegation arrived here on Monday morning for a two-day visit to China.

MNA/Xinhua

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**Hun Sen urges more aid to Cambodia from South Korea**

**PHNOM PENH, 19 Oct —** Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen has asked the visiting speaker of South Korea’s parliament delegation to grant more aids to his country, Hun Sen’s spokesman said Monday.

"Besides the National Road No 3 being assisted by South Korea, Mr. Kim Won Ki has pledged that he will convey to his leaders the request from Prime Minister Hun Sen on further assistance to Cambodia," said Eang Sophalette, after an hour meeting between Hun Sen and Kim Won Ki, chairman of the South Korea’s Parliament.

South Korea is considered one of the key investors to Cambodia today.

While staying in Cambodia, Kim Won Ki also met with Chea Sim, acting Head of State, and his parliamentary counterpart Prince Norodom Ranariddh, president of the National Assembly.

Kim Won Ki has also led a business delegation that represents large business companies in South Korea.

MNA/Xinhua

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**Use Natural Gas Vehicles and save fuel oil**

- In automobiles, natural gas can be used in place of petrol and diesel.
- The use of natural gas can not only save fuel oil but also extend engine life.
- Natural gas exploited at home can be used effectively and safely.
- Natural gas burns cents per cent and is environment-friendly.
- Adequate supply of natural gas helps facilitate passenger and cargo transport.

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**Mideast duty-free sales reached $890m in 2003**

**AEY DHAI, 19 Oct —** Duty-free sales in the Middle East reached $890 million US dollars in 2003 with airports in the region emerging as shopping destinations of duty-free goods, the Khaleej Times reported on Monday.

According to a recent annual survey by Swedish research house, Generation, the region saw a 16.2-per-cent annual growth of duty-free sales from July 2003 to July 2004, compared to the world average of 10.2 per cent.

Meanwhile, the Mideast travel market, in particular, is vibrant, thanks to the global average growth in international passenger traffic numbers.

The region’s duty-free market share according to category was 44.9 per cent for luxury goods, 22.2 per cent for perfumes and cosmetics, 12.6 per cent for wines and spirits, 11 per cent for tobacco goods and 9.2 per cent for confectionery and gourmet food, according to the survey.

Sustained growth of duty-free sales is forecast as countries in the region look to develop their indigenous tourism industries.

In the first half of 2004, Dubai Duty Free posted an increase of 43 per cent in sales over the same period in 2003, with 29 per cent up in Kuwait and a massive 77 per cent in Jordan, and also reported significant sales increases in Bahrain and Oman.

Global duty-free outlets sales reached 20.5 billion dollars in 2003 with air travel returning to pre-Sp. September 11, 2001, levels and tourism booming worldwide, analysts predict that the 2003-sales figures will be exceeded this year.

MNA/Xinhua

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**India to manufacture more mobile handsets**

**NEW DELHI, 19 Oct —** With India adding one million mobile phones to its telecom network every month, the country may now become a manufacturing base for cell phone handsets, the Indo-Asian News Service (IANS) reported on Monday.

“India will start manufacturing cell phones to check imports in large numbers,” IANS quoted Minister of State for Communications and Information Technology Shri Ahmed as saying in Patna in Bihar State in east India.

The government has initiated talks in this regard with the Telephone Equipment Manufacturers Association. “We are seriously keen to manufacture cell phones instead of depending on importing it,” Ahmed said.

He said that two million mobile handsets worth around 130 million US dollars were being imported in India each year.

If cell phone manufacturing units are set up in the country, it could save it over around 21.8 million US dollars.

Besides, the manufacture of mobile phones would also give a boost to the country’s high-tech industry because the volume of business would increase manifold, he added. Ahmed also said that at least one such manufacturing unit would come up in his home state of Bihar.

The demand for mobile phones was increasing with each passing day in both urban centres and rural areas.

Studies, he added, would project the demand for cell phones to double within the next five years in the country.

Mobile telephone that has been rising steadily in the last few years has touched a new high with nearly four out of 100 Indians carrying a handset.

MNA/Xinhua

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**Flutes for sale : An Indian hawker carrying a variety of flutes, demonstrating the quality by playing, as he walks through the streets of Mumbai selling his wares. — INTERNET**
S Korea to pick first 2 astronauts for space trip by 2007

SEOUL, 19 Oct — South Korea will pick its first two astronauts next year for a space trip by 2007, the Science Ministry said on Sunday, after Russia agreed to help the country’s space programme.

The two would be trained in Russia for 18 months and sent to the International Space Station for 10 days to carry out various experiments, the Ministry of Science and Technology said in a statement.

South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun met Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow in October and signed a joint declaration that included cooperation on space.

Under the pact, Russia will also help South Korea’s space programme, which is aimed primarily at launching satellites.

Putting two people into space will cost South Korea about 26 billion won (22.73 million US dollars), the ministry said in the statement. But a ministry official said it had not yet decided how much South Korea would pay Russia.

Russia has been keen to agree space deals with individuals and organizations to help supplement its tight budget.

Scientists to create probe to look for malignancy in humans

KOLKATA, 19 Oct — In a discovery that could cut down costs of detecting a relapse of cancer and avoid bone marrow transplant in patients who do not need them, scientists here have used an agricultural pest — the giant African snail — to create a ‘probe’ that looks for infections and malignancy in the human body.

A team led by immunologist Chitra Mandal of country’s premier lab Indian Institute of Chemical Biology (IICB) has found that the blue-coloured blood of the snail has a unique protein called ‘lectin’ that reacts strongly with a sugar molecule of biological importance in humans.

“We use this protein as a probe to look for sugar molecules on the surface of blood cells from patients with infections and cancers,” Mandal said.

The team, which collaborated with a British group, found a closely-related protein-sugar complex on the surface of white blood cells (WBC) of children suffering from acute lymphoblastic leukaemia (ALL).

This was unique to leukaemic cells and not present in normal blood cells, Mandal reported in the International Journal of Cancer.

“This protein-sugar complex, which indicates the presence of cancer cells, could alert doctors to an impending relapse of the disease or detect residual malignancy,” she said.

Once the protein-sugar complex was detected by the probe, medics could pin-point the area at risk of a cancerous growth.

The find was also significant since the probe could be used to create a tailor-made therapy and avoid bone marrow transplant in patients who do not require it.” — MNA/PTI

China to boost developing domestic online games

SHANGHAI, 19 Oct — China will invest one to two billion yuan (about 120.5 to 241 million US dollars) in a programme to develop some 100 high quality Chinese-developed online games from 2004 to 2008, according to sources with the Press and Publication Administration of China.

The investment is an attempt to combat the dominance of imported online games, for Chinese games account for only 10 per cent of the online computer games in the country.

Yu Yongzhan, deputy director of the administration, said that nearly 50 businesses are involved in the programme, and projects listed in the programme will be given preferential policies in terms of taxation and financing.

China’s online game publications took in 1.32 billion yuan (159 million US dollars) in 2003, up nearly 50 per cent from a year earlier, as online games emerged as a kind of mainstream gaming product, according to Yu.

Chen Tianqiao, president of the Shanda Interactive Entertainment Ltd., China’s largest online game company, said that “holding the intellectual property rights of relevant game software is the core for vying for the future gaming market.”

By the end of this year, 30 online games are expected to hit the market. They include several games adapted from classical Chinese literary works, such as Pilgrim’s Progress, to the West, Canonization of the Gods, and Romance of the Three Kingdoms. — MNA/Reuters

Film industry shrinks to half in Bangladesh

DHAKA, 19 Oct — The film industry of Bangladesh has shrunk to half in terms of investment and revenue in the last three years, reported the daily New Age on Sunday.

The latest official statistics show that government revenue earnings from cinemas have fallen by about 50 per cent, signified by some 1.47 million US dollars in fiscal 2003-2004 against 2.82 million US dollars in fiscal 2001-2002.

About 300 cinemas have closed down across the country in this period, while at least 500 out of the remaining 800 have been facing problems consequent upon a sharp decline in the number of viewers and investments, according to the Bangladesh Motion Pictures Exhibitors Association (BMPEA).

“The desert locust infestation that descended on West and Central Africa this year is likely to return in 2005 and officials will have to be better prepared to avoid major damage to crops,” experts said on October 18, 2004. — Internet

HK Electronic Fair draws record high buyers

HONG KONG, 19 Oct — This year’s Hong Kong Electronics Fair drew a record number of buyers and brought about at least 500 million HK dollars (64 million US dollars) tourism income, Hong Kong Trade Development Council said Sunday.

This year, more than 2,020 exhibitors from 23 countries and regions showcased their products at the fair, up 4 per cent from last year.

According to the council, more than half of the 53,000 buyers came from cities other than Hong Kong to source the latest products, and their average expenditure during their stay is 15,870 HK dollars (2,034 US dollars), higher than other travellers.

The council believed that excluding the value of the contracts signed, Hong Kong has at least garnered 500 million HK dollars tourism income from the fair.

Organized by the council, the Electronics Fair, the largest of its kind in Asia, was staged from October 13 to 16 at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre. — MNA/Xinhua

HK sets new record for air cargo throughput in September

HONG KONG, 19 Oct — A new record for Hong Kong’s air cargo throughput was set in September, with 280,000 tons of cargo passing through Hong Kong International Airport.

According to a Press release of the Hong Kong International Airport, the robust growth was driven by strong demands from North American, European and the Chinese Mainland markets. The previous record of 269,800 tons was achieved in March this year.

The total cargo tonnage for September represented an increase of 19.2 per cent over the same period last year. Exports (loaded cargo) achieved a 22.3 per cent increase over last year to 178,000 tons.

It was another strong month for passenger throughput with 3.04 million people travelling through the airport, a rise of 15 per cent compared with the same period last year.

Aircraft movements for the month continued to surge, adding almost 18 per cent to 19,995, mainly boosted by the rapid growth in cargo throughput.

Cargo, passenger and aircraft movements all experienced healthy increases over a rolling 12-month period from October 2003 to September 2004. The total cargo tonnage for the last 12 months rose to three million, up 16.3 per cent compared with the corresponding period in the previous year. — MNA/Xinhua
Fire in Yosemite burns 1,500 acres

YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK (California) 18 Oct — A fire at Yosemite National Park's Hetch Hetchy basin grew to 1,500 acres, and park officials were searching for a man suspected of setting the blaze.

The fire was burning Saturday in rugged wilderness in the northwest portion of the park, National Park Service ranger Scott Gediman said. The area is remote, and no structures were threatened, he said.

The fire was first spotted Friday. Firefighters evacuated two hikers who said they had seen a man lighting fire along the trail.

“At this time, it's difficult to actively fight the fire because there is a suspected arsonist out there,” Gediman said. “There is potential danger from this person, from the fire and the flames, and the rugged terrain.”

Firecrews were building a line around the blaze to contain it, he said. The fire is near the Hetch Hetchy Reservoir, which provides water to more than 2.4 million San Francisco-area residents.

MIN KYAW MIN’S SPOKEN ENGLISH CLASS

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MONTEVIDEO, 18 Oct — As a sign of full recovery after a five-year stagnancy, Latin America’s economy is expected to grow 4.6 per cent in 2004, a sharp increase from 1.5 per cent in 2003, said a report.

Sustained growth signalled that Latin American countries have stepped out of the financial crisis, and are gearing a new tide of economic development, said the report of the Association of Latin American Integration.

Venezuela’s performance becomes the most noticeable in the region with a growth rate of 29.8 per cent in the first half of 2004.

The growth rates of Uruguay, Argentina and Ecuador also ranged from 8 per cent to 13 per cent.

Strong growth in imports and exports indicates the full economic recovery in Latin America, said the report, adding overall exports rose 20.7 per cent in the first six months in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru and Uruguay, totalling 182.95 billion US dollars.

Meanwhile, Latin American economies have increased cooperation and become more integrated, it said. In the first six months, imports and exports within Latin America rose 30 per cent and 36.2 per cent respectively, totally 23.22 billion dollars and 22.12 billion dollars.

As two major regional economies, Brazil and Mexico achieved the highest export growth of 57.6 per cent in the same period. Latin America’s economy shrank 0.4 per cent in 2002 because of a financial crisis, social turbulence and civil conflicts.

Fire guts Venezuelan skyscraper

CARACAS, 18 Oct — A blaze engulfed the upper half of the 56-storey East Tower of the Parque Central complex housing ministries and state agencies in Caracas before dawn on Sunday.

More than 100 firefighters supported by 200 soldiers battled the fire. Two military helicopters also joined the fight by ferrying water to the building. The flame was put out after 20 hours.

“We have total material losses from the 34th floor to the roof of the building,” Jesse Chacon, Interior and Justice Minister told reporters.

The offices of the Ministry of Infrastructure in the complex were seriously damaged, he said.

Fearing that the building would collapse, all nearby residents were ordered evacuated and more than 600 soldiers and national guards were manoeuvred to protect the area, Chacon said.

However there were no casualties, he added. The cause of the fire is still under investigation.

“Shark Tale” rules N America box office for third weekend

LOS ANGELES, 18 Oct — For the third straight week, DreamWorks’ animation hit “Shark Tale” was the biggest fish at North America box office, according to preliminary weekend studio estimates released Sunday.

The animated flick is expected to gross another 22.1 million US dollars over the three-day weekend, boosting its domestic gross in three weeks in release 118.8 million dollars, according to box office tracker Exhibitor Relations.

High-school football feature “Friday Night Lights” remained in second place, grossing about 11.9 million dollars.

The political puppet film “Team America: World Police” took in 12.3 million dollars to take the third place, and “Shall We Dance” followed with a take of 11.6 million dollars.

Rounding up the Top Five was firefighting thriller “Ladder 49,” which dropped from third place last weekend to fifth place, with an expected take of 8.6 million dollars.

The final studio figures are to be released on Monday.