Senior General Than Shwe sends felicitations to Japan

YANGON, 23 Dec — On the occasion of the birthday of His Majesty Akihito, Emperor of Japan, which falls on 23 December 2004, Senior General Than Shwe, Chairman of the State Peace and Development Council of the Union of Myanmar, has sent a message of felicitations to His Majesty Akihito, Emperor of Japan.—MNA

Government will provide necessary assistance for development of industrial zone continuously

Senior General Than Shwe inspects Yenangyoung Industrial Zone

YANGON, 22 Dec—Chairman of the State Peace and Development Council Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Than Shwe, accompanied by member of the State Peace and Development Council General Thura Shwe Mann, Secretary-1 of the State Peace and Development Council Lt-Gen Thein Sein, members of the State Peace and Development Council Lt-Gen Ye Myint, Lt-Gen Thih Thura Tin Aung Myint Oo and Lt-Gen Tin Aye, Commander-in-Chief (Navy) Rear-Admiral Soe Thein, Commander-in-Chief (Air) Lt-Gen Myat Hein, Chairman of Mandalay Division Peace and Development Council Commander of Central Command Maj-Gen Ye Myint, the ministers, senior military officers of the Ministry of Defence, the Chairman of Magway Division Peace and Development Council, officials of the State Peace and Development Council Office and heads of departments, arrived in Yenangyoung by helicopter on 20 December.

The industrial zones were established for development of import substitute industries in the country, production of quality products with the use of modern equipment, creation of jobs and use of local-made products easily at reasonable price. In the initial period, the industrial zones were only blacksmith’s forges.

Emergence of the State Constitution is the duty of all citizens of Myanmar Naing-Ngan.
Strive for speedy completion of multipurpose dams

The government is building transport, education, health and agriculture infrastructures for all-round development of the regions across the Union. State-level officials, including the Head of State himself, often visit states and divisions to make a first-hand study of the implementation of development tasks and fulfill the requirements sector-wise.

Accompanied by high-ranking military and civil officials, Chairman of the State Peace and Development Council Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Than Shwe, on 19 December inspected the project sites of the Manipura multipurpose dam to be built in Falam Township, Chin State, and the Myittha dam to be constructed in Gangaw Township, Magway Division, and gave necessary guidance.

In his meeting with responsible personnel of the projects, Head of State Senior General Than Shwe said that the Irrigation Department should implement the Manipura and Myittha dams as speedily as possible and respective departments make necessary arrangements and coordination to be able to fulfill all the requirements, including fuel oil, in parallel with the time.

The Manipura multipurpose dam being constructed across the Manipura river is to be about 3,300 feet long and 525 feet high. On completion, it will be capable of irrigating 12,000 acres of farmland. Moreover, it will be able to prevent floods in the lower part of Kalay and generate some 540 megawatts of electricity.

The Myittha Dam project to be built in Gangaw Township will involve the construction of the main dam 2,300 feet long and the Konkekaw dam 27,450 feet long. On completion, it will be capable of irrigating 12,000 acres of farmland and generating around 40 megawatts of electricity.

In its bid for development of each and every region, the government has also given special emphasis to smooth and easy transport. Railroads and motor roads linking Magway Division and Chin State have contributed a great deal to education, health, economic and social development of the local people. The government has been fulfilling all the requirements for the development of regions throughout the Union.

Therefore, we would like to call on all those responsible to strive for the speedy completion of the Manipura and Myittha dams that will benefit the local people in many ways.
Asia’s first multivisceral transplant successful in Shanghai

SHANGHAI, 21 Dec—Surgeons from Shanghai’s Ruijin Hospital said Monday an operation to transplant seven organs from a single donor to a 38-year-old woman on 14 December was a success.

“The 14-hour multivisceral transplant surgery went smoothly and successfully, and the patient is recovering well one week after receiving the new liver, pancreas, spleen, stomach, small bowel, duodenum and colon from one donor,” said Li Hongwei, chief surgeon and president of Ruijin Hospital at a Press conference. The operation is the first of its kind in Asia, according to doctors from Ruijin Hospital.

The local woman was diagnosed with a rare disease called familial adenomatous polyposis striking one in every 7,000 to 24,000 people.

Adenomatous polypous calic gene mutation had caused numerous polyps of different sizes to form in her digestive system. Polyps had also developed cancer cells in her stomach, duodenum and had spread to other organs.

Overseas practice shows the only treatment for the disease is to replace the diseased organs. The first such operation was conducted at the Transplant Centre in Pittsburgh in the United States in 1989, according to Tuesday’s China Daily.

“But this case was really challenging and risky because the patient needed to have seven organs and tissues removed and replaced,” said another chief surgeon, Yin Lu, of the operation.

The multivisceral transplant surgery was formally started at 5 pm on 14 December. Five hours later, the donor’s organs were ready to be put into the recipient’s empty abdominal cavity. The most demanding task then began connecting the patient’s arteries and veins to the donor’s liver.

“We carefully opened the vessels to let the blood circulate. Otherwise, the sudden blood flow would cause liver failure or other complications,” said Yin. Surgeons then connected the donated stomach with the patient’s gallet and the donated colon with the patient’s intestine. By 5.15 am on 15 December, the surgery was completed. The patient remained under hospitalization condition during the whole process, but was able to breathe the first day after the operation.

She is now able to drink water and communicate with doctors and will remain under close observation for at least a month, the doctors said, describing her recovery as “excellent”.

Lee Kuan Yew says East Asian economic bloc is a distant goal

SINGAPORE, 21 Dec—East Asia is so diverse that it would take a long time for the region to craft an economic community similar to that of the European Union, Singapore’s founding father said.

“If we want an economic community, I think it is possible. But it will take many years.” Lee Kuan Yew said Monday at a dinner hosted by the Foreign Correspondents Association in Singapore. “Asia is so different, so diverse. We don’t have a homogeneous, Christian civilization dating back to Roman times,” he said.

Instead, Lee said, Northeast Asia has been heavily influenced by Confucianism and Chinese script while Islam has made big inroads in Southeast Asia. Lee said the 10-member Association of South-East Asian Nations, or ASEAN, represented a tiny economic bloc compared to the giant Indian and Chinese markets.

“What will pull them together in ASEAN is the need to be sufficiently competitive,” said 81-year-old Lee, who holds the title “minister mentor” and remains active in the Cabinet headed by his son, Lee Hsien Loong. “It is to the advantage of ASEAN countries that any such East Asian community should include India,” Lee Kuan Yew said. ASEAN comprises Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, Brunei, Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar.

Syria’s Assad to visit Jordan

AMMAN, 21 Dec—Jordanian Government spokesman Asma Khader said here on Monday that Syrian President Bashar al-Assad will visit Jordan later this month.

Khader said at a Press conference that Assad and Jordan’s King Abdullah II will hold a summit on the border issue, Iraq, Palestinian and the Golan Heights.

Five thousand Cubans rally outside US dip mission

Havana, 21 Dec—Five thousand Cubans rallied outside the US diplomatic mission in Havana on Monday, denouncing US policy toward their country, Iraq and elsewhere.

Communist youth, university, and high school leaders blasted “US imperialism” at the evening rally between anti-war and nationalist songs, as two powerful members of the Communist Party Political Bureau, Vice-President Carlos Lage Davila and National Assembly President Ricardo Alarcon, looked on.

“The new fascism of the United States continues harassing our revolution. ... As long as the provocations continue, we will do what is needed to fight them,” said the leader of Havana University students, Carlos Lage.

The event was held in front of the US mission, on Havana’s busy sea-side drive.

Vietnam to ban smoking in public means of transport

HANOI, 21 Dec—Vietnam plans to forbid smoking in public means of transport from late this month, according to local newspaper Young People on Tuesday.

Smoking will also be not allowed in railways, bus stops, airports and wharves. However, smoking areas will be built at the places.

Vietnam will ban the sales of cigarettes to juveniles, the implementation of cigarette promotion programmes, and tobacco makers, sponsoring socio-economic activities from March 2005, when the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control initiated by the World Health Organization comes into force. It has already prohibited tobacco advertisements.

The moves aim at reducing the number of local smokers which increases by 700,000–800,000 each year. Statistics from the Vietnamese Ministry of Health show that over 50 per cent of local men and around 3 per cent of local women smoke cigarettes, and that smoking has caused 30,000–40,000 deaths annually.

Badawi suggests FTA to boost Indo-Malaysian trade ties

NEW DELHI, 21 Dec—Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi on Monday underlined the need for strengthening the Indo-Malaysian trade ties through a free trade agreement and asked Indian businessmen to suggest a framework to maximize the gains from such an agreement.

Addressing a gathering of Indian and Malaysian businessmen at a meeting organized by the FICCI and CII here Badawi said he was keen to know the expectations of the two sides so that mutual aspirations could be reflected in the FTA to make it viable.

He assured Indian business community that all roadblocks in the way of efficient functioning of free trade would be removed.

**Thailand moves to protect fragrant rice varieties**

**BANGKOK, 22 Dec—** Authorities in Thailand want to patent a range of local fragrant rice varieties in a bid to ensure quality and to protect growers’ intellectual property rights, a government agricultural researcher said.

The move was a joint initiative by the Departments of Agriculture and Intellectual Property.

The researcher, Dr Laddawan Kananuch, was quoted by the Thai News Agency as saying Monday that the attempt was unprecedented, and would begin with at least two types of fragrant rice — Jasmine rice from the country’s northeastern Surin Province, and from nearby Thung Kula.

Thailand expects to achieve the aim within the next year. Later, Thailand also likes to include in the scheme some famous Thai fragrant rice varieties from other provinces, she said.

**Toyota to raise production by eight per cent in 2005**

**TOKYO, 22 Dec—** Toyota Motor Corp will increase its group’s global vehicle production to 8.12 million units next year, up 8 per cent from 2004, Toyota President Fujio Cho said in a news conference on Tuesday.

The projection includes output by Daihatsu Motor Co and Hino Motors Ltd, and marks the first time for Toyota to eye output above the 8 million line.

Under the projection, Toyota aims to increase its production by 8 per cent to 7.28 million vehicles, while Daihatsu Motor will target an increase by 2 per cent to 750,000 units and Hino Motors by 5 per cent to 100,000 units.

**Crude oil prices to go up in 2005**

**MEXICO CITY, 22 Dec—** Prices of crude oil on the world market will go up next year, said a Mexican analyst on Monday.

Market demand is expected to increase to 83.96 million barrels per day in 2005, but the Organization of the Petroleum-Exporting Countries (OPEC) has trimmed its daily output, and therefore world oil prices will unavoidably go up, said Ignacio Cedillo, an analyst of Mexico’s Bursametrica Energy Consultant Company.

Terrorists’ threat to attack the petroleum production equipment in Iraq and Saudi Arabia and the uncertainty on auction process of Russia’s oil company Yukos will also boost the prices, he said.

**Vietnamese Govt approves initial plan on third oil refinery**

**HANOI, 22 Dec —** The Vietnamese Government has just approved an initial plan on constructing an oil refinery in central Phu Yen Province, the third of this kind in the country.

Capitalized at more than 500 million US dollars, the refinery near the Vung Ro port has an annual capacity of processing 3 million tons of crude oil, or nearly half that of Vietnam’s first oil refinery, according to local newspaper Youth on Tuesday.

This will be a wholly foreign-owned refinery, its investor is Russia’s Technor Star Company.

The government has instructed Phu Yen’s authority and relevant ministries and sectors to complete and then appraise the plan carefully, regarding import of equipment for construction and prices of finished products.

Vietnam is building its first oil refinery named Dung Quang in central Quang Ngai Province at an estimated cost of 1.3 billion dollars. The refinery, expected to become operational in 2007, will process 6.5 million tons of crude oil annually.

The country has planned to start construction of the Nghi Son Oil Refinery, the second and biggest of its kind, in northern Thanh Hoa Province in 2006. It will have a total investment of nearly 3 billion dollars and an annual processing capacity of 7 million tons of crude oil.

The two first refineries are expected to turn out 13 million tons of petroleum products in 2010, meeting roughly 76.5 per cent of the country’s demand, said the Vietnam Oil and Gas Corporation.

Vietnam is expected to export nearly 20 million tons of crude oil and import 11.2 million tons of petroleum products this year, posting respective rises of 16.3 per cent and 13.8 per cent against last year.

**49 killed as bus plunges into river in Peru**

**LIMA (Peru), 21 Dec—** Forty-nine people, including four children, died when a bus plunged off a bridge into a river in Peru’s northern jungle, police and bus company officials said on Monday.

The bodies have been removed, there are four children. The rescue operation was difficult because it was raining really hard, it was difficult to get them out of river and from among the many tangled metal bars,” said a police official, who declined to be named, in Aguaytia, where the accident happened.

**Americans say Iraq war not worth fighting**

**WAS S H IN G T ON, 22 Dec—** A majority of Americans now say the war in Iraq was not worth fighting, a view that has driven down the ratings of President George W Bush and Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, according to an ABC News/Washington Post poll released on Monday.

Fifty-six per cent of those questioned, a new high, said that the cost of the war outweighs the benefits and is not worth it. It marked a gain of seven percentage points from a poll conducted in July.

Fifty-seven per cent said they disapprove of the way Bush is handling the situation in Iraq, and 53 per cent disapprove of the way Rumsfeld is handling his job, according to the survey.

However, 60 per cent said the Iraqi elections scheduled for 30 January should go forward regardless of the security situation.

The poll also found that most Americans — 58 per cent — still say US forces should remain in Iraq until order is restored.

Several Republican lawmakers have expressed doubts about Rumsfeld’s performance and some Democrats want him fired over his handling of the war. More than half of the poll respondents, 52 per cent, said Rumsfeld should be replaced.

Separately, a new USA TODAY/CNN/Gallup Poll also found growing pessimism over Iraq.
APR nations pledge dialogue for peace, sustainable development

HANOI, 22 Dec— Representatives from more than 30 countries in the Asia-Pacific Region have shown their determination to make dialogue on cultures and civilizations a central feature of interaction in all walks of life, to help boost peace and sustainable development.

At the two-day conference entitled “Dialogue Among Cultures and Civilizations for Peace and Sustainable Development” that ended here on Tuesday, the representatives adopted the Hanoi Declaration, under which, they committed to practice a culture of dialogue among nations and peoples, promote intercultural understanding through both formal and nonformal education and via other means, and enhance human security in the region by tackling such challenges as poverty, environmental degradation, gender equality and economic development.

The delegates recognized that, especially in the context of globalization, dialogue has the potential to become an engine for bolstering peace and security, reconciling conflicts, reinforcing cultural diversity and advancing sustainable development.

They emphasized that a commitment to dialogue among cultures and civilizations is also a commitment to combat terrorism, as terror rests always and everywhere upon prejudices, intolerance, exclusion and on the rejection of any dialogue.

The representatives also underlined the important role policymakers, governments, parliamentarians, actors of civil society, the academic and scientific community, the private sector and professional associations, the media, religious and faith-based communities can play in initiating and conducting effective dialogue both within each country and within the Asia-Pacific Region.

They, therefore, called for more concrete actions at a national, local and level to intensify people-to-people cultural and scientific exchanges and partnerships in the region, involving scholars, teachers, students and media practitioners.

The conference, jointly organized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and Vietnam, mainly aimed at raising awareness among broader sections of society of the importance of dialogue among cultures and civilizations, preparing preliminary input for a future collection of regional and inter-regional good practices of the dialogue, and identifying areas for education and culture. The conference was attended by some 200 representatives of governments, scholars, experts and cultural practitioners from the region.

MNA/Xinhua

US warplanes kill four people, injure seven in western Iraq

Hrt (Iraq), 22 Dec— US warplanes launched airstrikes on the town of Hit, in Iraq’s Sunni Muslim western region, killing four people and wounding seven, hospital officials said on Tuesday.

A US Marines spokesman in the region confirmed the attack: “At approximately 2 am this morning (2300 GMT Monday), a US Air Force aircraft, in support of troops on contact, engaged an enemy fighting position with precision weapons,” he said.

No further details were given by the unnamed spokesman in a reply to a question sent by e-mail.

Hospital staff said a woman and child were among those wounded in the strikes on the Jamayia and Sinai districts, on the eastern edges of the town, which lies about 170 km (100 miles) west of Baghdad.

Local tribal leader Sheikh Laith al-Hitti told Al Jazeera television by telephone that six people had been killed and nine wounded in the attack. He denied there were fighters in the area that was targeted.

MNA/Reuters

China striving to restore ecosystem at Yangtze River estuary

SHANGHAI, 22 Dec— In a bid to repair the severely damaged ecosystem in Yangtze River, 25,000 Chinese mitten crabs (Eriocheir Sinensis) were released on Monday into the estuary waters.

The release was organized by East China Sea Aquatic Products Institute with China Academy of Aquatic Product Sciences, Yangtze River Estuary Navigable Route Construction Co, Ltd and Shanghai Municipal Administration for Fishery Supervision.

It is part of the country’s four-year-old campaign to restore ecosystem at the Yangtze River Estuary.

Chinese sturgeon, oyster and other river bedborne life forms have also been released into the estuary waters on three previous occasions.

According to Professor Chen Yugu with East China Sea Aquatic Products Institute, the Yangtze River Estuary is a prime propagating ground for Chinese mitten crabs, where the adult crabs mate between autumn and winter and the hatched fries will follow the tide upstream in the Yangtze between May and June. The crabs eventually settle down in fresh-water lakes and creeks connected to the Yangtze.

However, the crab fry resources grown in the wild have been on decline in the estuary area as a result of factors such as construction of large water conservancy projects, especially building of embankments, as well as pollution and overfishing.

The crabs released on Monday are bred via artificial means with stock obtained from Yangcheng Lake in southeastern Jiangsu Province, which is best known for production of quality Chinese mitten crabs. “Under normal natural conditions, the crabs released this time will help raise the crab output in the estuary area by 10 to 20 per cent a year,” said Chen.

MNA/Xinhua

Singapore, Australia to discuss open skies pact

SINGAPORE, 22 Dec— Singapore and Australia will hold talks soon for open skies agreement.

According to local Press reports on Tuesday, Singapore’s Minister for Transport Yeo Cheow Tong said on Tuesday that he will meet his Australian counterpart John Anderson in the coming months for such talks.

Currently, Singapore is pushing hard for access to flight routes between Australia and the United States, but Qantas Airways has been lobbying against a full open skies agreement between Singapore and Australia as this will allow Singapore’s national carrier Singapore Airlines (SIA) to compete with the Australian airline on direct flights from Australia to the United States and Europe.

MNA/Xinhua

ASEAN takes measures to control bird flu

SINGAPORE, 22 Dec— Members of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) on Tuesday agreed to focus on eight activities to prevent and control the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI).

The measures, which were adopted at the first meeting of the ASEAN HPAI taskforce, will be coordinated by five members of the organization including Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines.

Singapore will be responsible for the information sharing for regional epidemiologic study, and Thailand will focus on the disease surveillance and alert systems and the diagnostic capabilities.

Malaysia will deal with the establishment of disease free zones, effective containment measures and the emergency preparedness plans.

Each coordinating country will prepare detailed workplans for consideration at the follow up meeting to be held in Thailand in May of next year.

Malaysia and Indonesia were elected as the Chair and Vice-Chair for the ASEAN HPAI taskforce at its first meeting, which was held on 20 and 21 December in Singapore. Representatives from ASEAN countries, the World Organization on Animal Health (OIE), World Health Organization (WHO), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) as well as experts from countries including China and South Korea attended the two-day meeting.

MNA/Xinhua

Displaced children: Two girls from the city of Fallujah, wait with a family member outside the Iraqi Red Crescent Society headquarters in Baghdad, after being displaced by the violence on 21 Dec, 2004.
Malaysian, Thai police to jointly fight drug trafficking

KUALA LUMPUR, 22 Dec— The Malaysia police are forging close collaboration with their Thai counterparts to effectively curb transborder drug trafficking, a police chief has said.

The two sides would work together in sharing intelligence and enforcement to fight drug smuggling into Malaysia through the neighbouring country, Inspector-General of Malaysia police Mohamed Baki Omar told reporters on Tuesday after closing the inaugural 10-day narcotics course for 26 police officers.

He said the course would provide understanding to the Thai police of Malaysian laws in dealing with drug trafficking, including how to overcome the differences in legislation between the two countries.

“We have built up an excellent level of cooperation in various fields. I feel there is still much to be done, especially at the local and lower levels, to ensure that the existing collaboration is carried through,” he said.

He said Malaysia did not produce drugs like heroin, amphetamine and cannabises. Instead these drugs were smuggled in from Thailand and other neighbouring countries. Therefore, the Malaysia police and the National Anti-Drug Agency had outlined four strategies to fight drugs in Malaysia — to reduce the demand and storage of drugs, to rehabili- tate drug addicts, to step up enforcement and to forge close cooperation among Southeast Asian countries to fight drug trafficking.

“This is part of our commitment and effort to make ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) free from drugs in 2015,” he said.

The drug trafficking along the border with Thailand is rampant. There are several methods used by smugglers to bring in these drugs including modifying vehicles to store drugs and hiring individuals to swallow the drugs before smuggling them in. — MNA/Xinhua

Sri Lanka’s mystery illness identified as Influenza B

COLOMBO, 22 Dec— The mystery illness in the southern parts of Sri Lanka which has killed eight people was a type of influenza and had no links with bird flu or SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome), the official Daily News said on Tuesday.

“This has been identified as an influenza B type disease. It is not related to bird flu or SARS. We have taken all precautionary measures,” the newspaper quoted Healthcare and Nutrition Minister Nimal Siripala de Silva as saying.

De Silva said Monday that two high level teams, one from the Medical Research Institute (MRI) and another from the Public Health Department, had conducted extensive investigations to identify the mystery illness spreading in Matara, Padanagala and Embilipitiya.

So far, eight deaths have been reported by the disease. Fifteen suspected cases have been recorded. “There is no need to be afraid. A similar outbreak occurred in Colombo and its environs in 1998,” senior epidemiologist Dr N Abyesinghe said adding that they have implemented several universally adopted precautionary measures to control respiratory diseases. — MNA/Xinhua

Prices up greatly as holiday season approaches in Italy

ROMA, 21 Dec— Prices went up significantly in Italy as the Christmas-New Year holiday season approaches, local media reported Monday.

Air ticket prices rose 13 per cent year-on-year in November, Italian national statistics bureau ISTAT. Package holiday prices went up by 5.2 per cent and entrance fees to amusement parks by 9.68 per cent. Meanwhile, hotel prices registered a rise of 1.5 per cent, and restaurant and bar prices of 3.4 per cent and 2.3 per cent respectively.

Food prices also rose. Wines and chocolate prices increased by 2.4 per cent and 2.16 per cent respectively, while the prices of dried fruits went up by 1.96 per cent. Flower and plant prices rose by 4 per cent, and the prices of jewellery and cosmetics products increased by 3.9 per cent and 2.4 per cent respectively. — MNA/Xinhua

HK, Guangdong to promote intellectual property rights protection

HONG KONG, 22 Dec— Hong Kong and Guangdong have agreed to enhance and promote the “No Fakes Pledge” campaign, following a meeting here on Tuesday of the joint expert group on the protection of intellectual property rights.

The two sides also agreed to organize a new seminar on intellectual property and the development of small and medium enterprises in Guangdong Province, and to enrich the content of the intellectual property database for Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao web site.

Hong Kong’s Deputy Director of Intellectual Property Peter Cheung said that since its inception in 2003, the meeting had built up a close partnership between the intellectual property related departments in the two places.

With the increasing economic co-operation between Guangdong and Hong Kong, we have to maximize this co-operation platform to combat intellectual property infringements and promote the use of intellectual property assets,” Cheung said.

The Guangdong delegation leader, Guangdong Provincial Intellectual Property Office Director General Li Zhongduo, said “We have agreed to start on a number of initiatives, including a training and information sharing programme to be held in Guangdong for Hong Kong enterprises, lawyers and trademark or patent agents. “

A new TV announcement of public interest, “No Fakes Pledge” will start broadcasting in Guangdong and Hong Kong on Tuesday night.

The expert group, set up after the Sixth Plenary of the Guangdong/Hong Kong Co-operation Joint Conference in August last year, aims to enhance exchange and co-operation on intellectual property, including promotion and education, training, enforcement and information dissemination. The group will meet for the fourth time in Guangdong in June. — MNA/Xinhua

US Govt loses bid to block ACLU from getting CIA record

NEW YORK, 21 Dec— The US Govenment lost a bid on Monday to block civil rights groups from obtaining CIA records of its internal investigation into abuse of detainees held by US forces in Iraq and Afghanistan.

In a ruling from the bench, US District Judge Alvin Hellerstein denied a government motion aimed at stopping an earlier order to turn over documents.

The decision was made in a lawsuit brought against the government by the American Civil Liberties Union and other groups for what they said was the illegal withholding of records about US military abuse of prisoners held in Iraq, the Guantanamo Bay Naval Base in Cuba and other locations.

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“The suit, filed in Manhattan federal court, charged that the CIA and other federal agencies failed to comply with a Freedom of Information Act, or FOIA, request filed by the groups in October 2003 and May 2004. The FOIA allows citizens access to public federal documents. This (ruling) is extremely important,” said attorney Lawrence Lustberg, who is assisting the civil rights groups.

“Knowing the CIA’s own internal investigation,” Government lawyers argued that the documents should not be turned over until the CIA completes its internal probe.

“What if it is never closed?” asked Hellerstein.

The ACLU said it has obtained about 9,000 records from other agencies. “To date, however, the CIA has not provided a meaningful response to the ACLU’s document request and has refused to confirm or deny the existence of specific documents concerning abuses,” the ACLU said.

MNA/Reuters
Myanmar in transition to democracy in accord with her social conditions

Aung Moe San

No nation in this world has the right to practise double-standard policies to control a developing nation that is in its transition to democracy. Because a developing nation can build and practise democracy in accordance with her existing social condition. Social science experts said that nothing should be viewed regardless of social conditions. In this regard, it is the right of every country to freely introduce a system that is in conformity with its own social conditions.

The world at present sees the People’s Republic of China developing rapidly with the policies which suits her social communities, and enjoying sustainable progress both in the economic and social sectors. In addition, China has acknowledged, supported and encouraged others’ right for self-determination.

If the US and its western allies see a developing nation going against their way in its march towards adopting the market economy, they cut off all forms of aids to and impose economic sanctions on her. It is a policy which is in total contrast to China’s stance, and a violation of the law of social science, which says, “The development of the productive forces is the highest criterion of the social progress.” The policy brings only the sufferings to the people of that particular nation.

As the US and its allies have been imposing economic sanctions on Myanmar, which is in the process of building a democratic state, for over a decade, it is necessary to make an assessment of the real impact of the sanctions with the following questions and answers:

Do the sanctions help speed up Myanmar’s transition to multi-party democracy?

No. They are just hindering the transition.

Do they benefit Myanmar’s national re-consolidation drive?

They are hindering the drive, and heightening political tensions in the nation.

Do they serve as instruments to develop the nation’s economy?

No, they are just like the brakes to slow down the already developing and advancing national economy.

Do they work as tools to improve the social standard of Myanmar?

No, they are just the weapons to hit the people hard.

Do the neighbouring countries, ASEAN nations and other Asian nations accept the lopsided sanctions on Myanmar?

They all are against the sanctions that will destroy the interest of Myanmar, regarding them as interferences in other’s domestic affairs. They are helping Myanmar through cooperation.

Do the sanctions serve as a bridge to get Myanmar and the US and its allies closer?

No they cause the people of Myanmar to hate the US and its allies even more, and the Myanmar people see the US and the West bloc as the neo-colonialists.

Thus, the US and western allies should take the lessons of their failed and useless economic sanctions on Myanmar that have lasted for over a decade.

It’s time for them to see the objective conditions of Myanmar, a nation building a democratic state in accord with her social conditions, and to realize the truth.

(Translation: TMT)


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 cent per cent and is environment-friendly.
- Adequate supply of natural gas helps facilitate passenger and cargo transport.
Senior General Than Shwe visits Lawkananda Swedawshin, Hsinmyashin and Shwezigon Pagodas

YANGON, 22 Dec—Chairman of the State Peace and Development Council Command Maj-Gen Ye Myint, Chairman of Sagaing Division Peace and Development Council Commander of North-West Command Maj-Gen Tha Aye, ministers, senior military officers of the Ministry of Defence, Chairman of Magway Division Peace and Development Council Col Phone Maw Shwe, officials of the State Peace and Development Council Office and heads of departments, went to Lawkananda Swedawshin Pagoda in Bagan-NyaungU and offered ‘soon’, fruits, flowers and water at the pagoda on 20 December.

Senior General Than Shwe and party paid obeisance to Lawkananda Swedawshin Pagoda. Next Senior General Than Shwe and party paid obeisance to Hsinmyashin pagoda and donated cash to the pagoda board of trustees.

Senior General Than Shwe and party then visited the Shwezigon Pagoda.

Government will provide necessary assistance...

(see page 10)

Two-wheel and three-wheel motorcycles produced at Yenangyoung Industrial Zone. — MNA

MNA
Senior General Than Shwe inspects...

(from page 16)

Maj-Gen Ye Myint, Sagaing Division PDC Chairman North-West Command Commander Maj-Gen Tha Aye, ministers, senior military officers, Magway Division PDC Chairman Col Maj-Gen Ye Myint, Senior General and party then enjoyed the beautiful scenery of Bagan from the tower. They also inspected progress of construction of the Nanmyint Tower Hotel and layout of the building. — MNA

Phone Maw Shwe, officials of the SPDC Office and departmental heads, the Senior General inspected the project for construction of the Nanmyint Tower Hotel in Bagan. The Senior General left necessary instructions and viewed the Nanmyint Tower Project site. The Senior General and party then enjoyed the beautiful scenery of Bagan from the tower. They also inspected progress of construction of the Nanmyint Tower Hotel and layout of the building. — MNA

The number of the visitors to Bagan is growing annually and up to this November, the region received a total of 36,678 foreign visitors and 25,307 local visitors, he said.

18-4-2003. The company has been building a 198-foot-high and 54-foot-wide tower that can withstand strong wind and earthquake. So far, 80 per cent of the 13-storey building has been completed. The company is also building the Nanmyint Tower Hotel and efforts are being exerted for completion of the project by February 2005, he said. The Senior General called for timely completion of the project and inspected the scale models of the buildings.

Chairman of the Eden Group Co Ltd reported on the project for building of a 150-room hotel in Bagan. The Senior General left necessary instructions and viewed the Nanmyint Tower Project site. The Senior General and party then enjoyed the beautiful scenery of Bagan from the tower. They also inspected progress of construction of the Nanmyint Tower Hotel and layout of the building. — MNA
Government will provide…

(from page 8)

Senior General Than Shwe and party proceeded to Shwenaga Industry and they were conducted round the industry by proprietor Daw Win Maw Tun.

Senior General Than Shwe and party inspected assembling of two-wheel motorcycles and quality control test and Star brand motorcycles.

Senior General Than Shwe had a chat with officials and signed the visitors’ book of Shwenaga Industry. Senior General Than Shwe and party left Yenangyoung for Magway by helicopter. They arrived in Magway in the evening. They were welcomed by Commander of No 88 LID Brig-Gen Aung Than Htut, Brig-Gen Htay Aung of Magway Station and officials.

MNA

Foreign Affairs Minister U Nyan Win sends felicitations to Japan

YANGON, 23 Dec — On the occasion of the birthday of His Majesty Akhito, Emperor of Japan, which falls on 23 December 2004, U Nyan Win, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Union of Myanmar, has sent a message of felicitations to His Excellency Mr Nobutaka Machimura, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Japan.— MNA

Agricultural tasks inspected in Thanlyin, Thongwa

YANGON, 22 Dec — Chairman of Yangon Division Peace and Development Council Commander of Yangon Command Maj-Gen Myint Swe made an inspection tour of agriculture and regional development in Thanlyin and Thongwa Townships this morning.

At Phayagon Village-tract of Thanlyin Township, the commander inspected storage of water at Zamani Dam for irrigating summer paddy and supply of water from Alwansu Creek and Thilawa Dam to farmlands.

On arrival at Thaitugan Village in Thongwa Township, Maj-Gen Myint Swe viewed thriving Peti Shwewa bean plantations on 1,000 acres of land.

The commander gave instructions on assistance technology how to grow Peti Shwewa bean to be provided to the farmers for meeting the target of cultivation and pest control.

MNA

Objectives of 57th Anniversary Independence Day

— All the national people to collectively safeguard the national independence and sovereignty of the State and ensure non-disintegration of the Union and national unity
— All the national people to unittedly strive with might and main for emergence of an enduring State Constitution and for building a new modern and developed nation
— All the national people to work in concert for success of the seven-point Road Map of the State with Union Spirit and nationalist spirit
— All the national people to make concerted efforts for building of a new discipline-flourishing democratic nation

Excursion tour of UDNR trainees coordinated

YANGON, 22 Dec — A coordination meeting of Administration Work Group for excursion tour of the trainees who attended the 36th batch of BEd four-year course at University for Development of National Races was held at the meeting hall of Pyithu Hluttaw Building on Pyay Road this morning, attended by Yangon Division Peace and Development Council Chairman Yangon Command Commander Maj-Gen Myint Swe.

Present on the occasion were members of the Administration Work Group of the excursion tour, officials, departmental heads and officials.

MNA

Traditional medicine exhibition continues

YANGON, 22 Dec — The fifth Traditional Medicine and Medical Equipment Exhibition continued for the seventh day at the Tatmadaw Convention Hall on U Wisara Road here today.

U Thaung Lwin visited the exhibition, where a total of 134 booths of ministries and private traditional medical enterprises are being staged.

Anyone may visit the free exhibition, which opens daily till 25 December. — MNA

Commander inspects cultivation tasks in Lashio

YANGON, 22 Dec — Chairman of Shan State (North) Peace and Development Council Commander of North-East Command Maj-Gen Myint Hlaiung 19 December inspected summer paddy cultivation of Myanmar Police Force near Yepusan Village in Lashio Township and attended to the needs.

Afterwards, the commander and party went to the 200-acre model highland cultivation project in Tapon region in Lashio and inspected construction of ponds to store water from Namkhom Creek and gave instructions.

In the afternoon, the commander arrived at the 10-acre research paddy cultivation in seed production zone of highland cultivation zone-1 in Lashio and viewed around the thriving crops.

After hearing reports, the commander attended to the needs. In the zone, 6,546 macadamia, 4,400 honey orange trees and crops are being cultivated.
State Peace and Development Council General Thura Shwe Mann, Daw Than Thaw Nwe, wife of Prime Minister Lt-Gen Soe Win, Daw Khin Khin Win, wife of Secretary-I of the State Peace and Development Council Li-Gen Thein Sein, Daw Than Thaw Nwe, wife of Prime Minister Lt-Gen Soe Win and Daw Khin Khin Win, wife of Secretary-I Li-Gen Thein Sein at the competition of contestants in Miss ASEAN Culture Myanmar 2004. — NLM

Daw Khin Than Nwe, wife of Lt-Gen Tin Oo, Daw Khin Lay Thet, wife of General Thura Shwe Mann, Daw Than Thaw Nwe, wife of Prime Minister Lt-Gen Soe Win and Daw Khin Khin Win, wife of Secretary-I Li-Gen Thein Sein at the competition of contestants in Miss ASEAN Culture Myanmar 2004. — NLM

Library science multiplier course opens in Hsenwi

HSENWI, 2 Dec — The library science multiplier course for self-reliant libraries organized by Hsenwi Township Information and Public Relations Department was opened at TV hall of the department on 23 November morning.

Chairman of the Township Peace and Development Council U Ye Kyaw Khang, Township PDC member U Aung Hmi and Head of Township IPRD Daw Yi Yi Mon explained the purpose of opening the course.

MYANMA ALIN

Magit-1 cotton strain yields 1,073 viss per acre in Monywa

MONYWA, 9 Dec — The harvesting of high yield cotton strain was held at the cotton plantation of cotton grower U Thaung Shwe in Zalok Village, Monywa Township, on 3 December morning.

Before the harvesting ceremony, Chairman of Monywa District Peace and Development Council Lt-Col Kyi Sein heard reports on cultivation of cotton presented by officials of Myanmar Cotton and Sericulture Enterprise and local growers.

After the harvesting, Hsurabi long cotton strain yielded 459 viss per acre, Superia strain 677 viss per acre and Magit-1 strain 1,073 viss per acre. In 2004-2005, MCSE and local growers extended to put the land under 11,101 acres of cotton in Sagaing Division.

MYANMA ALIN

December mass walking race held in Taunggyi

TANGGYI, 8 Dec — The mass walking race for first week of December was held on Bogyoke Aung San Road in front of Myoma Market in Taunggyi on 4 December morning.

Secretary of Shan State Peace and Development Council Lt-Col Ye Tun Sein and members, Assistant Director U Soe Naing of Sports and Physical Education Department, Chairman of Township PDC U Soe Naing, departmental personnel, local people and students totalling over 6,000 participated in the mass walking race.

The mass walking race will be held four times in four weeks of December on every Saturday.

MYANMA ALIN

Self-reliant libraries surge nationwide

NYAUNGLEGIN, 16 Dec — With the assistance of the State, contributions of wellwishers and local people, self-reliant libraries have been mushrooming in rural areas.

Official statistics show that the number of libraries has increased to 10,791 nationwide up to 14 December.

On 12 December, Nyaunglegin Township Information and Public Relations Department opened a self-reliant library in Kya-InKyuin Village in Nyaunglegin Township.

At the opening ceremony, wellwishers also provided books on general knowledge including magazines and journals.

Similarly, with the assistance of township IPRD and together with the efforts of locals, a self-reliant library was established in Hsaungpho Village in Kyauktalonyi, Shan State (South) and inaugurated on 5 December.

MYANMA ALIN

Miss ASEAN Culture Myanmar Award winner Ma Ei Yupa Win — NLM

Commander oversees summer paddy plantation

YANGON, 22 Dec — Chairman of Shan State (East) Peace and Development Council Commander of Triangle Region Command Maj-Gen Khin Zaw together with officials concerned inspected measures being taken for cultivation summer paddy in the command on 18 December and instructed officials to cultivate summer paddy systematically. Two acres of Shweyin Aye paddy strain and paddy strain No 406 will be cultivated in the command area. Next, the commander inspected measures being taken for the multipurpose agricultural farm. Afterwards, he inspected plantations of lemon, mango, guava and castor oil plant. — MNA

Commander oversees regional development tasks in Myeik

YANGON, 22 Dec — Chairman of Taninthayi Division Peace and Development Council Commander of Coastal Region Command Maj-Gen Ohin Myint together with officials concerned inspected Zawe-Tagu-Tharawin road in section in Myeik on 20th December.

On arrival at Tharawin village, the commander met with departmental officials and members of social organizations and locals and gave instructions on making efforts on realization of five rural development tasks.

The commander also viewed around the students learning at Tharawin Village Basic Education Middle School and presented K 1 million, cement and zinc sheets for building the school. — MNA
MINISTRY OF RAIL TRANSPORTATION
ROAD TRANSPORT
INVITATION FOR TENDER
NO. 004/RT/ 2004-2005

Sealed Tenders from eligible Suppliers are Invited for the supply of 1650 Tyre Sets with Tube and Flap Size 900 x 20 x 14PR Rating - Lug Type, prices to be quoted in Myanmar kyats Yangon.

(a) Tender Documents are available at the office of Procurement & Stores Department, Head Office, Road Transport, No. 375, Bogyoke Aung San Street, Yangon, Myanmar, commencing on the 23rd December 2004.

(b) Tender will be closed on 7th, January 2005 at 16:00 hours.

(c) The Road Transport reserves the right to reject any or all Tenders.

(d) Detailed information will be available at the office of the Procurement & Stores Department, Phone Nos. (01-252574) or (01-376549).

Road Transport

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE
M.V. YANGON STAR VOY NO (368)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV YANGON STAR Voy No (368) are hereby notified that the vessel arrives on 23.12.04 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.T where it will lie at the consignee's find expenses and subject to the bylaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

Damaged cargo will be surveyed daily from 8 am to 11:20 am and 12 noon to 4 pm up to Claims Day now declared as the third day after final discharge of cargo from the vessel.

No claims against this vessel will be admitted after the Claims Day.

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: MS EAGLE CORPORATION

UAE Etihad Airways buys five Boeing aircraft
ABU DHABI, 21 Dec — The United Arab Emirates (UAE)’s Etihad Airways has ordered five Boeing 777-200ER airplanes valued at 1.09 billion US dollars, local Khaleej Times daily reported Monday.

The airplanes, the first Boeing purchase for Etihad, will be delivered in 2005, with the first three in October and the other two at the end of 2005. Established in November 2003, Etihad Airways is positioned as the 21st Century airline, with a long-term goal to expand its fleet to 50 by 2009. After the purchase, the airline will be able to operate new routes in Asia, Africa, Europe and North America, reported the daily. — MNA/Xinhua

Jordan, Oman to enhance bilateral economic ties
AMMAN, 21 Dec — Meetings of Jordanian-Omani Joint Committee were on Monday, in a bid to enhance economic and trade ties between the two countries, the official Petra news agency reported.

The meetings were co-chaired by Acting Secretary General of the Ministry of Industry and Trade Hani Dabbas and Deputy Secretary of the Omani Ministry of National Economy Abdul Malik Al Hana, the report said.

During the meetings, they reviewed a proposal to sign a free trade agreement on increasing the volume of trade exchange between Jordan and Oman.

Other topics for discussion included the establishment of joint economic projects, seeking investment opportunities, enhancing bilateral ties in transport, agriculture, education, culture and health fields, according to the report.

Jordan’s exports to Oman in the first seven months of this year reached 8.9 million dollars, while its imports from Oman stood at 5.6 million dollars. — MNA/Xinhua

EU agrees to clamp down on using cadmium in batteries
BRUSSELS, 21 Dec — Environment ministers agreed on Monday to clamp down on using cadmium in batteries in a bid to stop the toxic heavy metal from seeping into water supplies and polluting the atmosphere.

Cadmium in consumer batteries will be banned, but cordless power tools, medical equipment, emergency lighting and air systems will be exempt.

Exposure to cadmium, most often found as nickel-cadmium in rechargeable batteries, has been linked with kidney and liver diseases. EU battery laws have been under review since 1997.

Batteries contain heavy metals such as lead, which can be harmful if they leak into water supplies or eventually produce noxious gases which enter the atmosphere.

Such pollution can occur when used batteries are dumped in landfills or incinerated. — MNA/Reuters

Czech approves first national sustainable development strategy
PRAGUE, 21 Dec — The Czech Government approved the first draft of the national strategy for sustainable development, local media reported Sunday.

Boosting the country’s economic competitiveness will be one of the primary targets of the strategy.

The draft sets aside a cross-sectoral development plan to safeguard natural resources and the environment by reducing the contradiction between economic development and environmental protection.

It also emphasized social harmony and stability by developing human resources, achieving lower unemployment rate and optimizing the age structure of population. — MNA/Xinhua

Drive with care

MINISTRY OF RAIL TRANSPORTATION
MYANNA RAILWAYS
INVITATION TO SEALED TENDER

1. Sealed Tender is invited by Myanma Railways, for supply of the following Stores which will be purchased in Myanmar Kyats:-

Sr. No. Tender No. Description Quantity
---
1. 13(T)/MR(E) Spare Parts for Dozer 1 Lot
2004-2005 and Excavator
Closing Date: -20.1.2005 (Thursday) (12:00) Hours.
2. Tender documents are available at the office of the Deputy General Manager (Supply), Myanma Railways, Corner of 51st Street and Merchant Street, Botataung, Yangon starting from 21.12.2004 during the office hours.
3. For further details please call: 291982, 201555 Ext-602, 605, 612

Deputy General Manager
Supply Department, Myanma Railways, Botataung Yangon

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UNION OF MYANMAR
MINISTRY OF RAIL TRANSPORTATION
MYANNA RAILWAYS

THE NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR   Thursday, 23 December, 2004

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Drive with care
Gasoline prices likely to rise this week in Thailand

BANGKOK, 22 Dec — Local gasoline prices are likely to edge up by 0.30 baht (0.07 US cents) per litre this week since crude oil prices have risen for many days upon a renewed concern over terrorist attacks on oil fields, an informed source at PTT Public Company Limited (PTT) said.

The source was quoted by the Thai News Agency as saying that crude prices in the New York market surged to 46.28 US dollars per barrel and Brent crude prices in Britain closed at 43.39 US dollars per barrel Monday following a threat by the United States’ most wanted criminal Osama Bin Laden to attack crude oil fields.

Market margins of local gasoline prices now have dropped to around 1.40-1.50 baht (0.35-0.40 US cents) per litre from 3.07-3.17 baht (0.77-0.83 US cents) per litre.

To offset the short-fall, he said, oil traders need to raise the gasoline prices by around 0.30 baht (0.07 US cents) per litre. However, since the general election is nearing, PTT, which is a state-owned oil company, might be under the political pressure of not raising retail gasoline prices for a while.

MINAXinhua

Chinese acupuncture relieves pain, improves knee function

LOS ANGELES, 22 Dec — Chinese traditional acupuncture provides pain relief and improves function for people with arthritis of the knee and serves as an effective complement to standard care, the research report said.

The landmark findings were published in the Annals of Internal Medicine to be released on Wednesday. The research, the longest and largest clinical trial of acupuncture ever conducted, was funded by the National Centre for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) and the National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases (NIAMS). Both are components of the NIH.

"For the first time, a clinical trial with sufficient rigor, size, and duration has shown that acupuncture reduces the pain and functional impairment of arthritis of the knee," NCCAM Director Stephen E. Straus said in a NIH Press release on Tuesday.

"These results also indicate that acupuncture can serve as an effective addition to a standard regimen of care and improve quality of life for knee arthritis sufferers," he said.

Acupuncture is the practice of inserting thin needles into specific body points to improve health and well-being, a traditional method originated in China more than 2,000 years ago.

In a survey conducted in 2002 by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the practice had been used by 2.1 million American adults.

In the study, researchers enrolled 570 patients aged 50 or older with arthritis of the knee. Participants had significant pain in their knee a month before joining the study, but had never experienced acupuncture, knee surgery, or steroid injections thereafter.

The participants were randomly assigned to receive one of three treatments: acupuncture, sham acupuncture, or participation in a control group that followed the Arthritis Foundation’s self-help course for managing their condition.

MINAXinhua

Accidents doubled during Water Festival in Cambodia

PENPEN, 22 Dec — Traffic accidents nearly doubled during the Water Festival last month, with 40 casualties reported per day, local media reported on Tuesday. The number is issued by the November Cambodia Road Traffic Accident and Victim Information System report. The normal daily average was 21 casualties.

Surveyed hospitals, clinics and police stations reported 628 casualties for the month, an overall increase of 3 per cent from October. In Cambodia, there were 25 deaths, and more than one third of casualties were severe, requiring surgery or intensive care unit treatment. Almost half of the victims were 18 to 25 years old; most were driving or riding motorbikes.

Cambodia has witnessed more traffic accidents and more people killed and injured in recent years since the roads become being improved and the transportation is on the increase.

MINAXinhua

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MINAXinhua

UAE’s archaeologists find remains of 7,500-year-old man

ABU DHABI, 21 Dec — Archaeologists in the United Arab Emirates have found the remains of a 7,500-year-old man, the oldest skeleton found in the country, the official WAM news agency reported on Monday.

The skeleton was found buried on Marawah Island, some 100 miles off the coast of the capital Abu Dhabi. The man was aged between 20 and 40 years.

It was buried facing east, indicating a sophisticated community lived on Marawah, WAM quoted Peter Hellyer, executive director of the Abu Dhabi Islands Archaeological Survey, as saying.

Excavations at the island, which have lasted several years, have also unearthed remains of buildings and utensils. The UAE is located on the tip of the Arabian Peninsula.

MINAXinhua

Sperm whale washes up dead in Cyprus

NICOSIA, 22 Dec — A sperm whale has washed up dead on Cyprus, far from its normal food-rich habitat of the western Mediterranean, marine biologists said on Monday. The 7.8-metre mammal, a protected species, landed on the remote north western Akamas Peninsula and bad weather made it impossible for authorities to reach it. The cause of death of the creature, whose size suggested it was a calf, was not known. Fin and sperm whales live in the western Mediterranean, but are a rarer sight further east because of a shortage of food. Larger marine species in the immediate vicinity of Cyprus are dolphins and tuna, with the occasional sighting of a shark.

MINAXinhua
Greece: Kenteris and Thanou leave for Athens 

The International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) spokesman Nick Davies said a hearing would be held later in the day to determine any action. No public announcement is expected until Wednesday.

The pair were charged this month with missing tests just before the Athens Games in August. Both have sent explanations to the IAAF.

"I'm not expecting a public announcement until Wednesday. Both athletes and their lawyers have to be contacted (over the result) and one is in the United States," Davies said.

Kenteris, the 2000 Olympic 200 metres champion, and Thanou, the women's 100m silver medallist from the Sydney Games, also face a criminal hearing in Greece over the missed tests.

They failed to appear to give samples in Chicago and Tel Aviv shortly before the 2004 Games and again in Athens on 12 August, the eve of the opening ceremony.

Greek prosecutors have also charged the two with faking a midnight bicycle crash which led to them spending four days in hospital as the IAAF sought to question them. Some medical staff have been charged with producing false medical reports.

Mexican female soccer player to take part in friendly with men's team

MEXICO CITY, 22 Dec— As a way to make up for the negative of the International Soccer Federation (FIFA) to play in Mexico's second division professional soccer, female player Maribel Dominguez will take part in a friendly match with a men's team.

The Vice President of Celaya, the Mexican team that was her club, Mauricio Ruiz, said Dominguez will take part in a friendly on Sunday against Atlante.

Dominguez, a striker and member of the Mexican women's national soccer team, will participate in the match that will be played in the Miguel Aleman Stadium of Celaya, in Guanajuato state, in central Mexico.

This match, a tribute for Maribel, according to Ruiz, is aimed at people who believed in her to see her playing.

Last week she was introduced as player of Celaya, but FIFA and the Mexican Soccer Federation denied the permission to let her play, on the grounds that this sport is divided into men's and women's categories. She claimed to be at peace despite the refusal. —MNA/Xinhua

Britain’s century: Benitez confirmed as Boca coach

BUENOS AIRES, 22 Dec— Three days after winning the South American Cup, Jorge Benitez was confirmed as coach of Boca Juniors in a meeting with the Argentine club who expressed their unanimous support.

Benitez, 54, who as a player was a symbol of Boca in the 1970s and 1980s, became coach in November to replace Miguel Brindisi who resigned amidst a serious crisis of results in the Buenos Aires club.

Friday Benitez was also supported by the players and fans, including his former teammate in the Boca 1981 championship, Diego Maradona, who was at the final versus Bolivian club Bolivar.

Meanwhile, Boca Juniors' President Mauricio Macri assured the coach will sign a one-year contract.

As a player, Benitez was an important midfielder, who debuted in 1969 with Racing Club and in 1973 was transferred to Boca, where he remained for 10 years (305 games and 40 goals) and won six titles: three locals, two Libertadores Cups and the 1977 Inter-Continental Championship. —MNA/Xinhua

Real's president intervenes in Butragueno-Roberto Carlos dispute

MADRID, 22 Dec— Real Madrid President Florentino Perez on Tuesday appeared to squabble between defender Roberto Carlos and vice president Emilio Butragueno.

Perez intervened after a conversation held between Butragueno and Roberto Carlos was made public, hinting a conflict as the reason why the Brazilian international who was left out of action last Saturday in the match versus Santander, with a 2-3 victory by Real.

"Roberto Carlos has a contract. We have renewed it and we are happy with him. He is one of the best players in the world and we are firm in having him here," Perez said.

It had been originally said the Brazilian international did not take part in the match because of muscle problems, but latter rumours hinted at other reasons.

The version of Roberto Carlos did not coincide with what was said by Butragueno, who appeared upset because the Brazilian defender made reference to a conversation they held after the Saturday match.

"It is true I talked with him after the match, but because of our codes in the club, we were not supposed to disclose such conversation. He was unhappy for not playing and that is normal," Perez said.

A former Brazilian international who was not playing and that is normal. —MNA/Xinhua

Germany crushes Thailand 5-1

BANGKOK, 22 Dec— Germany crushed Thailand 5-1 on Tuesday to end their three-game tour of Asia on a high note after their weekend defeat by South Korea.

Kevin Kuranyi and Lukas Podolski both scored twice for Germany, who coped well with the sweltering heat in Bangkok following matches in bitterly cold Yokohama and Pusan.

Striker Gerald Asamoah was also on target for the 2002 World Cup runners-up, who led 2-0 at halftime after Kuranyi strikes in the 33rd and 38th minutes.

Sarayut Chakamdee scored in the 58th minute to give brief hope to Thailand, whose defence of the regional Tiger Cup came to a halt last week when they were knocked out of the competition.

"This victory is a bit of a Christmas present for the team," Germany coach Juergen Klinsmann told reporters.

"We controlled the match and should have scored more goals but the pleasing thing has been the chemistry among the squad, which has been fantastic." —MNA/Reuters

Samuel Eto'o grabs two goals in victory over Levante

MAJORCA, 22 Dec— Barcelona ended the year on a high as striker Samuel Eto'o grabbed a late winner to give his side a 2-1 victory over Levante on Tuesday that ensured them of the symbolic title of winter champions.

The Cameroon international turned past two defenders and fired a shot high into the net after receiving the ball on the edge of the area from recently crowned World Player of the Year Ronaldinho just three minutes from time.

The result left Barca 12 points clear ofellow Catalans Espanyol at the top of the table, although all their immediate rivals are in action on Wednesday.

Espanyol visit last season's champions Valencia on Wednesday, while third-placed Real Madrid, who have an additional game in hand, host Sevilla at the Bernabeu.

Barca took the lead just before the half hour when midfielder Deco scored with a deflected free kick, but they never looked comfortable against their determined rivals who were a constant threat on the break. —MNA/Reuters

Cuba and Martinique to meet in Gold Cup qualifier

Havana, 22 Dec— Cuba was to visit Martinique in the second match of the Caribbean heat for the Gold Cup 2005 and expected to do well, national team coach Armello Luis told the local Press on Tuesday.

Luis told the local Press that he expects his team "will have a good performance" through an offensive lineup after Cuba clinched a 2-0 home victory over Martinique on 12 December at Havana's Pedro Marrero Stadium.

"A draw would take us to the next phase, or even a one-goal difference. If we were to score it would be favourable to us," Luis stressed.

The Cuban team has not played any official match since the 1-1 draw with Costa Rica in San Jose on 20 June. And the Caribbean country has Those of us who have been players want to join the team on the pitch," Butragueno said not secure a berth in the 2006 World Cup in 2006. "I believe the first match was very important after four months without matches against international teams," said Luis, who played in the national team from 1987 to 1997. —MNA/Xinhua
China strengthens quarantine control over imported wastes

BEIJING, 22 Dec — China has set up a mechanism that effectively blocks entry of overseas wastes causing security or health problems, said an official with the state quality watchdog here on Monday.

Li Changjiang, director of the Administration on Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine, made the remarks at the annual work meeting of heads of local inspection and quarantine departments.

China imports wastes from overseas and recycles them for cheap production materials. “The certified overseas wastes will help promote the development of recycle economy,” said Li.

However, wastes often come along with harmful effects on the environment, national security and public safety, Li said. China issued licences to overseas companies qualified for waste export, and designated a batch of quarantine centres to give strict checkup to all the wastes before shipping to China.

China also strengthened the inspection and quarantine work at all the borderers. Producers of goods, which have been found to cause security or health problems, will be put on the blacklist and deprived of the licences.

During the first 11 months of this year, the border inspection and quarantine departments in China uncovered 100 million dollars-worth of imported wastes that failed to meet the required quality standards, according to the administration.

— MNA/Xinhua

Tanzania’s first export-oriented enterprise closes down

DAR-ES-SALAAM, 23 Dec — Tanzania’s first export-oriented enterprise has closed down after a year and half of operation, undergird revivialization-oriented reorganization as its chief put it.

The closure of the country’s first Export-Processing Zones (EPZ), the Nida Textile Mills, made the front page of The Citizen on Tuesday with the local newspaper quoting EPZ General Manager Taher Kureshi as saying that the enterprise had closed temporarily to reorganize its business.

“The factory will resume production when the revitalization work is completed,” said the mills chief who did not specify when his factory would reopen again and only conceded that the business faring was tough indeed. Taher Kureshi told the newspaper that due to the high cost of production inflicted by high power tariffs, the products of his mills were not competitive in the export markets. The mills’ chief also attributed his loss-making to lack of local raw materials, high port and freight charges, inadequate labour skills and inefficient labourers. — MNA/Xinhua

Uganda Export Promotion Board wins “best trader” award

KAMPALA, 23 Dec — The Uganda Export Promotion Board (UEPB) has won the “best trade promotion body in a least developed country” for its work in promoting the country’s exports, local media reported on Tuesday.

The UEPB won the award at the fifth World Conference of Trade Promotion Organizations in Malta, organized recently by the International Trade Centre.

Established by an act of Parliament in 1996, the UEPB assists and advices exporters to identify, develop and diversify their markets through research and development.

The organization operates a trade information centre, with a library stocked with data on international trade, sector reports, business journalists and market information publications in both electronic and hard copy. — MNA/Xinhua

Guangdong scores high eco growth

GUANGZHOU, 23 Dec — Guangdong Province, one of China’s economic powerhouses, scored a 14.5 per-cent rise in its gross domestic product (GDP) from January to October, a record high in ten years, the provincial statistics bureau said on Monday.

It is expected that the province might notch up more than 1.6 trillion yuan (193 billion US dollars) in GDP this year, fulfilling the target for the 10th five-year plan (2001-2005) one year ahead of schedule.

The growth rate for the whole is predicted at 14.2 per cent, the bureau said.

According to information from the bureau, Guangdong accomplished 1.27 trillion yuan (154 billion US dollars) in the first ten months of the year. Based on the current growth momentum, Guangdong is sure to score 2 trillion yuan (241 billion US dollars) in GDP by late 2006, doubling that for 2000. Guangdong, which borders Hong Kong and Macao, has been assigned with the task of piloting the country’s reform and opening-up drive and has become the biggest beneficiary of the efforts. It has grown into one of the world’s major bases of processing trade. — MNA/Xinhua

Tanzanian hotel wins exemplary service award

DAR-ES-SALAAM, 23 Dec — A local hotel in northeastern Tanzania has won an international exemplary service and security award, local Press reported on Tuesday.

Joseph Makundi, one of Kilimanjaro Cranes Hotel directors, was quoted by local newspaper The Guardian as saying that the award known as The Diamond Eye Award for Quality Commitment and Excellence, had been presented to his Moshi-based hotel by the Other Ways International Research and Consultancy in the export markets. The hotel’s chief also attributed his loss-making to lack of local raw materials, high port and freight charges, inadequate labour skills and inefficient labourers. — MNA/Xinhua

Weather

Wednesday, 22 December, 2004

Summary of observations recorded at 09:00 hours MST on 21-12-2004. During the past 24 hours, light rain have been isolated in Kachin State and upper Sagaing Division and weather has been fair in the remaining areas. The noteworthy amount of rainfall recorded was Patuas (0.05) inch. Night temperatures were (3°C) to (4˚C) below normal in Eastern Shan, Chin, Kayin and Mon States, Bago and Taninthayi Divisions, (3°C) to (4˚C) above normal in Kachin State and upper Sagaing Division and about normal in the remaining areas. The significant night temperatures were Haka, Pindong and Heho (3˚C) each. Humidity at 9:30 hrs MST on 22-12-2004 was 82%. Relative humidity at 9:30 hrs MST on 22-12-2004 was 82%. Total sunshine hours on 21-12-2004 was (8.2) hours.

Forecast valid until evening of 23-12-2004: Like-hood of isolated light rain in Kachin State and upper Sagaing Division, weather will be partly cloudy in Rakhine State and Taninthayi Division and fair elsewhere in the remaining areas. Degree of certainty (60%).

State of the sea: Seas will be slight to moderate in Myanmar waters. Outlook for subsequent two days: Fair weather in the whole country. Forecast for Yangon and neighbouring area for 23-12-2004: Fair weather.

Forecast for Mandalay and neighbouring area for 23-12-2004: Fair weather.
Four political objectives
- Stability of the State, community peace and tranquility, prevalence of law and order
- National reconciliation
- 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 Lt-Gen Soe Win sends felicitations to his Japanese counterpart
YANGON, 23 Dec — On the occasion of the birthday of His Majesty Akihito, Emperor of Japan, which falls on 23 December 2004, Lt-Gen Soe Win, Prime Minister of the Union of Myanmar, has sent a message of felicitations to His Excellency Mr Junichiro Koizumi, Prime Minister of Japan.— MNA

Ei Yupa Win secures first in Miss ASEAN Culture Myanmar 2004
YANGON, 22 Dec — The final event of the Miss ASEAN Culture Myanmar 2004, organized by the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry, was held at the National Theatre on Myoma Lake Street in Dagon Township at 6 pm yesterday.
Present were Daw Khin Than Nwe, wife of Lt-Gen Tin Oo, Daw Khin Lay Thet, wife of Member of the PDC Chairman Central Command Commander (See page 11)