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

Four economic objectives
- Development of agriculture as the base and all-round development of other sectors of the economy as well
- Proper evolution of the market-oriented economic system
- Development of the economy inviting participation in terms of technical knowledge 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

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YANGON, 17 Jan — Member of the State Peace and Development Council Lt-Gen Ye Myint of the Ministry of Defence left here by air for Sagaing Division on 14 January.

Lt-Gen Ye Myint was accompanied by Minister for Hotels and Tourism Brig-Gen Thein Zaw, Minister for Sports Brig-Gen Thura Aye Myint, Deputy Minister for Progress of Border Areas and National Races and Development Affairs Brig-Gen Than Tun, Deputy Minister for Transport Col Nyan Tun Aung, Deputy Minister for Education Brig-Gen Aung Myo Min, Deputy Minister for Health Dr Mya Tun, Deputy Minister for Religious Affairs Brig-Gen Thura Aung Ko, Deputy Minister of the SPDC Office, and departmental heads.

On arrival at Hkamti Airport at 10.45 am, Lt-Gen Ye Myint and party were welcomed by local Tactical Operation Commander Col Min Swe, local authorities, members of social organizations, and leaders of national races.

At the briefing hall of the airport runway extension project, Lt-Gen Ye Myint heard reports on progress of the runway extension, future tasks, and supply and use of fuel oil and machinery. Col Min Swe and Col Nyan Tun Aung presented additional reports. After hearing the reports, Lt-Gen Ye Myint gave instructions on timely completion of the earth work before monsoon sets in, construction of gravel roads, supervision of officials concerned for efficient use of fuel oil, and the erecting of barbed wire fences around the airport compound. Next, Lt-Gen Ye Myint and party inspected the runway extension project and left there.

Li-Gen Ye Myint and party arrived at Lahe, Hkamti District, at 1 pm. On arrival, they were welcomed by Sagaing Division PDC Chairman and North-West Command Commander Maj-Gen Tha Aye, local Station Commander Lt-Col Rusan Kyoo, division, district and township-level departmental officials, and members of social organizations and Naga cultural troupe.

At 1.45 pm, Lt-Gen Ye Myint attended a ceremony to unveil the ‘Myanmar Education Goal’ stone plaque and opened the e-Learning Centre at the basic education school of Lahe. On the occasion, Lt-Gen Ye Myint donated exercise books and teaching-aids. Outstanding students unveiled the stone plaque to the accompaniment of a song named ‘Pyi-myamma’ sung by students.

Next, Commander Maj-Gen Tha Aye, member of the school board of trustees U Samu and headmaster U Zaw Lwin formally opened the e-Learning Centre. Lt-Gen Ye Myint unveiled the signboard of the centre and donated exercise books and teaching-aids to the school. The headmaster accepted the donations. Lt-Gen Ye Myint also provided Nanyun BEHS with exercise books and teaching-aids through U Zin Wan, secretary of Nanyun Union Solidarity and Development Association.

(See page 8)

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The success made at restoring stability and national consolidation has now given rise to development of infrastructures like roads and bridges, dams and reservoirs, hydel power plants and river water-pumping projects let alone a large number of modern universities and schools in the education sector and that of hospitals and dispensaries in the health sector.”

Page 7

HEIN MYINT

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Emergence of the State Constitution is the duty of all citizens of Myanmar Naing-Ngan.
**PERSPECTIVES**

* Do not be frightened whenever intimidated
* Do not be bostered whenever flattered
* Do not be softened whenever appeased

**Tuesday, 18 January, 2005**

**Strive for regional development and further strengthen national unity**

The Union of Myanmar, made up of states and divisions that can be called small unions, is home to more than 100 national races. All these national races have been living together in the Union in unity and amity from time immemorial and this is because of the Union spirit deep-rooted in their hearts.

The Government is taking all the necessary measures for parallel development of all the regions across the Union and the Naga region in Sagaing Division is no exception. The Naga Traditional New Year Festival for the year 2005 was held at the sports grounds in Lahe in Hkamti District, Sagaing Division, on 15 January and Member of the State Peace and Development Council Lt-Gen Ye Myint of the Ministry of Defence attended the ceremony and presented gifts to the Naga elders.

Naga traditional New Year festivals are held with the purpose of cementing the national unity and preserving customs, traditions and cultural heritage of the national races. Cultural work is being carried out in accordance with one of the social objectives, viz, uplift of national prestige and integrity and preservation and safeguarding of cultural heritage and national character. The Naga traditional New Year festival is the success of our efforts for stronger national unity.

We would like to call on the entire national brethren to preserve their cultural heritage, to strive for the development of their respective regions and to further strengthen their national unity so that they can live together in peace and amity in the Union for ever.

**Vice-Mayor inspects tax-free market**

**Yangon**, 17 Jan — Yangon City Development Committee Vice-Chairman Vice-Mayor Col Maung Pa this morning inspected the tax-free market on Kyaikkahsan road in Tamway Township.

Officials reported to the vice-mayor on sale of consumer goods such as fish, meat, greens, rice and edible oil by local battalions and regiments of Yangon Division, departments, Yangon Rice Merchants Association, Myanmar Edible Oil Merchants Association and private producers at the market.

Later, the vice mayor left necessary instructions there.

**F&R Ministry holds meeting**

**Yangon**, 17 Jan — The Ministry of Finance and Revenue held a meeting at its conference hall in Yankin here today.

Minister for Finance and Revenue Maj-Gen Hla Tun said that officials should discuss the weak points and advantages they had found in implementing the work programmes of fiscal 2004-2005, and present the future work programmes. They should strive to exceed the targets, and for development of the financial sector and tax-collection sector, he stated. It is important for them to have the sense of responsibility as their work concerns the national development.

Heads of Central Bank of Myanmar, Myanmar Economic Bank, Myanmar Foreign Trade Bank, Myanmar Investment and Commercial Bank, Myanmar Small Loan Enterprise, Myanmar Insurance, Budget Department, Customs Department, Internal Revenue Department, Pension Department, and Revenue Appellate Tribunal and state/division IRD officers took part in the discussions.

The meeting continues on 18 January. Also present were Deputy Minister Col Hla Thein Swe, Governor of CBM U Kyaw Kyaw Maung and officials.

**Minister tours Hinthada, Zalun**

**Yangon**, 17 Jan — Ayeeyawady Division Hinthada Industrial Zone in charge Minister for Electric Power Maj-Gen Tin Hlut, accompanied by officials of Electric Power Department and Myanmar Electric Power Enterprise, met members of the industrial zone supervisory committee and industrialists at Myanma Hall in Hinthada Township on 15 January morning.

Hinthada District Industrial Zone Supervisory Committee Chairman District Peace and Development Council Chairman Lt-Col Maung Pyone inspected constructions of buildings, power supply assistance to be given by the department, extensive production of farm machinery and equipment at reasonable prices and seeking ways and means to produce more new items. Union Solidarity and Development Association Secretariat member Maj-Gen Tin Hlut visited Hinthada District USDA office where he met with USDA members from the district and townships, and urged them to actively participate with the people in implementing rural development tasks. Afterwards, together with the chairman of Zalun Township PDC, the township USDA secretary and officials, Maj-Gen Tin Hlut inspected construction of the 4.8 miles long earth road linking Theikkyan village and Danabay village, cordially met the villagers and gave necessary instructions to officials.

**Want all concerned to know**

* Close relatives, leave us
And take refuge, in foreign land
So in doing, they have to live by
The traits of such land
Promote good dealings, and living thus
If their present wellbeing is served
We feel not as if we’ve dealt a blow
But take solace in his wellbeing and goodwill enjoyed.
And we are thus happy.
* If while living abroad, their traits
He lives by, but
Moreover, a wedge is driven while trying to return
Such should not be attempted
For then, it would be untoward.
* No matter how you engage in such tactics
Our kin do not feel perturbed
Even if you divide our kin, and fling invectives
Only you will be at fault.

Byan Hlwar (Trs)
Mainland, Taiwan agree on non-stop charter flights during Spring Festival

MACAO, 17 Jan— Chinese Mainland and Taiwan civil aviation circles reached consensus here Saturday on launching non-stop charter flights for Taiwan businessmen during the Spring Festival, Chinese Lunar New Year.

Pu Zhaozhou, vice-president of the Cross-Strats Aviation Transport Exchange Council, exchanged views with Le Daxin, chairman of the Taibe Aviation Transport Commerce Trade Council, on technical and operation issues on the charter flights.

According to the consensus, non-stop flights between Mainland’s cities of Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Taiwan’s Taibe and Kaohsiung will be in operation from 29 January to 20 February for Taiwanese businessmen working on the Mainland and their relatives to go home for the Lunar New Year holidays that begins on 9 February, a traditional festival for family reunion.

Each side will have six airlines to operate 24 non-stop round-trip flights via Hong Kong. The two sides also reached consensus on issues concerning crew members.—MNA/Xinhua

US should eliminate tariffs on clothings from three Asian countries

WASHINGTON, 16 Jan— The United States should immediately eliminate tariffs on clothing and textile imports from Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Maldives to help them recover from the tsunami, a leading development group said on Friday.

“Trade has a crucial part to play in the recovery and reconstruction of the region and has the potential to help millions of people affected by this tragedy,” Oxford America’s Professor Raymond Offenheiser said in a letter to US Trade Representative Robert Zoellick.

Copies were sent to leading US lawmakers.

World Trade Organization Director-General Supachai Panitchpakdi has also urged trade-related measures to help Asian states recover from the tsunami disaster. A spokesman for Zoellick did not respond directly to Oxfam’s request, but said the Bush Administration was already discussing trade-related measures to help the region.

“We have been in active consultations with the trade ministries from tsunami-affected countries, as well as our domestic stakeholders, discussing possible ways to help facilitate reconstruction efforts,” USTR spokesman Richard Mills said.

The United States also has pledged 350 million US dollars in aid to help the region.

Eliminating tariffs on clothing and textile from Indonesia, Sri Lanka and the Maldives would give a boost to a key sector of those countries’ economies, Offenheiser said. But the idea could meet resistance in Congress. US textile producers, who already fear massive job losses because of growing imports for China, opposed similar assistance for Haiti last year after it was hit by a devastating hurricane.—MNA/Reuters

Sri Lanka discovers human smuggling racket

COLOMBO, 16 Jan — The Sri Lankan authorities have discovered a human smuggling operation of sending Iranian nationals to Britain via Sri Lanka, officials said on Saturday.

Sri Lankan Police have arrested six Iranian males and an Uzbekistani woman at a house in the Colombo suburb of Mount Lavinia.

The police have seized two forged British passports in the possession of the Iranians and said that each Iranian had paid 18,000 US dollars to the racketeers.

The police is now on the trail of Sri Lankan collaborators of the crime, having found details of the mainmind who is an Iranian based in Bangkok, Thailand.—MNA/Xinhua

Nepal maintains 4.5% economic growth

KATHMANDU, 17 Jan— The overall economic growth rate of Nepal is estimated to reach 4.5 per cent in the current fiscal year due to the growth in the agriculture and the non-agriculture sector, the Nepali Finance Ministry said on Saturday.

The country’s gross domestic product (GDP) is estimated to remain only at 4.1 per cent due to the 3.7 per cent decrease in paddy production during the first half of fiscal year 2004/2005 beginning on July 16, 2004.

The growth in the agriculture sector in the review period is projected to remain 3.2 per cent and that of the non-agriculture sector at 4.6 per cent, the ministry said in a Press release.

In foreign trade, total imports have decreased by 3.5 per cent, while exports have increased by 15.1 per cent during the reviewed half year. — MNA/Xinhua

1,363 US troops killed since beginning of Iraq war

WASHINGTON, 16 Jan— As of Sunday, 16 January, 2005, at least 1,363 members of the US military have died since the beginning of the Iraq war in March 2003, according to an Associated Press count. At least 1,071 died as a result of hostile action, the Defense Department said.

The figures include three military civilians. The AP count is five less than the Defense Department’s tally, last updated at 10 am Friday.

The British military has reported 76 deaths; Italy, 19; Poland, 16; Ukraine, 16; Spain, 11; Bulgaria, seven; Slovenia, three; Estonia, Thailand and the Netherlands, two each; and Denmark, El Salvador, Hungary, Latvia and Kazakhstan one death each.

Since 1 May, 2003, when President Bush declared that major combat operations in Iraq had ended, 1,225 US military members have died, according to AP’s count.

That includes at least 962 deaths resulting from hostile action, according to the military’s numbers. The latest deaths reported by the military:

- A US soldier was killed Sunday when an armored vehicle flipped and plunged into a canal in western Baghdad.

Iraq is George Bush’s Vietnam

WASHINGTON, 16 Jan— America’s ongoing military entanglement in Iraq has become President George Bush’s Vietnam, US Senator Edward Kennedy, a leading member of the opposition Democratic party, said.

The harsh words refer to the US role and ultimate defeat in the 1964-1975 Vietnam war. “Iraq is clearly in George Bush’s Vietnam,” said Kennedy, speaking on CBS’s “Face The Nation” program. Kennedy then blasted Bush’s claim in an interview in Sunday’s Washington Post that his Iraq policy was endorsed by the US public because of his November 2004 re-election victory. “I think that’s ridiculous,” said Kennedy. He quickly referred to the 1964 elections, when Democrat Lyndon Johnson, who had increased US military involvement in Vietnam, defeated Republican Barry Goldwater by an overwhelming majority.

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A Chinese couple and their child look at a red lantern in Sanzhao Village of Xi’an, Northwest China’s Shaanxi province, on 16 Jan, 2005. Sanzhao Village has a tradition of producing lanterns for festival celebrations across China. It is estimated that the village will provide more than one million lanterns this year for the upcoming Spring Festival. —INTERNET
Training on mentally-handicapped people given priority in Shanghai

SHANGHAI, 16 Jan — The municipal government of Shanghai has listed training of mentally-handicapped residents one of its top ten projects for 2005, the first local government programme to care for this group of people, an official said on Saturday.

According to the plan, 10,000 people, aged between 18 and 35, will be chosen from the 70,000 mentally-handicapped people in Shanghai.

Those chosen will attend training in rehabilitation and labour skills, which are designed to improve their living skills and capability to adapt to the social environment.

It has become a common practice of local governments in China to promise to do “something for the people” at the beginning of each year.

Previously, the promises mainly covered housing, communications, raising farmers’ income and rebuilding infrastructure. In recent years the commitments have expanded to such fields as environmental protection, employment and education.

Apart from training on mentally-handicapped people, the Shanghai municipal government has also promised to create 500,000 jobs, improve and provide easy access to medical services for 1.4 million seniors aged 74 and older, construct housing for people evacuated for major urban projects and provide professional training for 50,000 farmers, among others.

Sociologist Cao Jijun said that placing equal importance on serving the mentally-handicapped group as other projects fully reflects the government’s concept of “putting people first”.

DNA tests to stop quarrelling over Sri Lankan child

COLOMBO, 16 Jan — Authorities in a hospital in Sri Lanka’s eastern province is to resort to DNA tests to determine the parents of a four-month-old child left destitute by the tsunami last month, the state radio said here Saturday.

The radio said some three mothers had claimed the ownership of the toddler who had been admitted to the Kalumunai Hospital a few hours after the tsunami attack which devastated the eastern coast.

Police was called to the hospital to stop the fighting women over the ownership of the child, the radio said.

UNICEF said that in Sri Lanka nearly 1,000 children have lost both parents while over 3,000 have lost one parent due to the tsunami attack.

There have been persistent stories of children disappearing from relief camps.

The government task force to rebuild and rehabilitate has begun a mechanism to register the unaccompanied children.

A special committee was set up by the government recently to address issues relating to child victims of the disaster.

US, India reach air travel pact

WASHINGTON, 17 Jan — The United States and India have reached an air travel pact that will result in more direct commercial airline flights, lower fares and stronger economic ties, US officials said on Saturday.

Under the new “open skies” agreement, airlines from both countries will be allowed to select routes and destinations based on consumer demand, said the Department of Transportation in a statement.

“The deal provides for open routes, capacity, frequencies, designations, and pricing, as well as opportunities for cooperative marketing arrangements, including bilateral code-sharing with domestic Indian carriers,” it said.

It also allows cargo carriers to operate in either country without directly connecting to their homeland.

Talks between the nations began on Thursday. The new pact replaces an agreement signed in 1956 that restricted the number of airlines that could fly between the countries, cities served, frequency of service and pricing, the department said.

Pakistani troops arrest suspects linked to al-Qaeda

MIRANSHPAR (Pakistani), 16 Jan — Pakistani troops arrested 17 men suspected of links with al-Qaeda and its Taliban allies on Saturday after a raid in a lawless tribal region near the Afghan border, intelligence officials said.

Army commandos, backed by helicopters, raided the house of a tribesman in Lawara in the North Waziristan tribal region, some 185 miles southwest of the capital Islamabad. Lawara lies opposite Afghanistan’s eastern province of Khost.

Two people, one of them an Afghan, were wounded in a shootout during the raid, according to an intelligence official who asked not to be named.

Another intelligence official said the suspects were flown to Bannu Town, adjoining North Waziristan, for interrogation.

The raid came as military officials said al-Qaeda-linked militants were seeking hideouts in North Waziristan after being driven out of South Waziristan.

Officials say about 100 foreign militants, mainly from Central Asia, are still hiding in the rugged region, while hundreds of others have been killed or have fled to Afghanistan.

US Marine killed in action south of Baghdad

LONDON, 17 Jan — A US Marine was killed in action south of Baghdad on Saturday and an Iraqi driver for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) was found dead a day earlier, officials said.

The US military’s Central Command said in a statement that the Marine was killed in Babylon Province, which some have dubbed the “triangle of death” for its frequent attacks on US and Iraqi forces. It gave no further details.

The ICRC said its 40-year-old driver had disappeared while on duty on January 13 and his body was found on Friday. He had started work for the organization in July 2003.

The ICRC condemns this killing in the strongest terms,” the group said in a statement. The driver, who was unnamed, left a wife and four children.

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RAF pilots in Iraq fear new threat: errors of exhausted ground crew

LONDON, 16 Jan — Britain’s prolonged military deployment in Iraq is dangerously overstretched the Royal Air Force and the Territorial Army, officers fear.

Nearly two years after the war in Iraq began, Britain still has 9,000 military personnel in the country. With the armed forces already facing cuts in their numbers, the lengthy deployment is putting a strain on key parts of Britain’s defence establishment.

RAF pilots have warned that the safety of British aircraft operating in Iraq is being put at risk by manpower shortages that mean scarce specialist technicians are doubling up as regular infantry.

And senior army officers fear the high number of TA soldiers being called up for lengthy deployments in Iraq will ultimately undermine the part-time reservists.

According to worried RAF officers in Iraq, aircraft technicians are routinely being ordered to carry out guard duties at the British-controlled Basra airport on top of their normal duties maintaining and repairing planes and helicopters.

The extra strain guard duties are placing on the mechanics has caused some pilots to warn that the technicians are being left tired and unable to do their main jobs properly.

Tokyo shoppers on 17 Jan, 2005.—INTERNET
Beijing to unveil 2008 Olympic budget this year

**Beijing, 16 Jan—** Beijing will unveil its modified budget for the 2008 Olympic Games in 2005, said a top official here on Friday.

Wang Qishan, executive President of the Beijing Organizing Committee for the 2008 Olympic Games (BOCOG), made the remarks at the second plenum of the organizing committee.

As circumstances have changed over the past several years since Beijing won the Olympic bid, we have adjusted the budget accordingly for the 2008 Games,” said Wang.

“The new budget will be submitted to the International Olympic Committee for approval in May,” added the Beijing mayor.

Operational cost of the 2008 Games had originally been budgeted at 1.609 billion US dollars, while Beijing’s total input on infrastructure and other Olympic-related fields could reach 37 billion US dollars. — MNA/Xinhua

Over 100 injured in subway train collision in Bangkok

**BANGKOK, 17 Jan—** More than 100 people were injured in a rush-hour crash on Bangkok’s new underground train system on Monday, Transport Minister Suriya Jungtrungreangkit said. The crash, the first on the single-route subway that opened in August, 2004, occurred when an empty train collided with a crowded train parked at the Thai Cultural Centre station in the heart of the capital. About 700 passengers were on board the crowded train, Suriya said.

“The service is suspended indefinitely until we can pinpoint the cause. We don’t know how an empty train could have entered a track in service,” Suriya told reporters.

“It happened because a train accidentally slid out of a maintenance section of the station and ran into another train that was waiting for passengers to board,” one subway official told Reuters. — MNA/Reuters

Japanese FM pledges more support to PNA

**RAMALLAH, 17 Jan—** Visiting Japanese Foreign Minister Nobutaka Machimura told reporters on Sunday that Japan would continue its financial support to the Palestinian National Authority (PNA)

Machimura told reporters in the West Bank city of Ramallah after talks with newly-elected Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas that Japan has approved an extra 60 million US dollars of aid to the Palestinians, on top of 30 million dollars previously promised by the country.

“The Japanese Government will exert efforts to support the PNA in humanitarian and financial issues,” said the top Japanese diplomat.

Palestinian official sources said Abbas briefed Machimura on the latest developments in the region and the ongoing Israeli military actions in the Palestinian territories.

The sources said Machimura has invited Abbas to visit Japan and that Abbas accepted the invitation, saying he would visit the East Asian country at a proper time.

Earlier when Machimura arrived at the PNA’s Headquarters in Ramallah, he placed a wreath of flowers on the grave of the late Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat who died on 11 November, 2004. — MNA/Xinhua

US soldier sentenced to 10 years in prison for Abu Ghraib abuse

**FORT HOOD (Texas), 16 Jan—** The trial of Abu Ghraib abuse ringleader Specialist Charles Graner has revealed a paradoxical man, one who put a “What Would Jesus Do?” sticker on his truck yet boasted that beating Iraqi prisoners was a “good upper-body workout.”

A military jury on Saturday sentenced Graner to 10 years in prison after finding him guilty a day earlier of abuses that shocked the world, including stacking naked prisoners into a pyramid and posing for photographs.

“He was kind of like an overpowering personality,” testified Sergeant Joseph Darby, a whistle-blower who took photos during the trial despite the severity of the charges he faced.

“I’m smiling now and that’s a nervous smile,” he told the court on Saturday, in his first extensive remarks since the investigation into the scandal began a year ago. “Smiling over the past two years, especially with what we had gone through kept us somewhat sane.”

He repeatedly beat prisoners and boasted about it in e-mails home.

“Good upper body work out, hard on hands,” he wrote in an e-mail with a photo from a now notorious night when he stacked seven prisoners into a naked pyramid.

Graner said he was acting on behalf of military intelligence to soften up detainees to help obtain information in the Bush Administration’s declared “war on terrorism.”

The 10-man military jury rejected his defence. — MNA/Reuters

US soldier imprisoned for killing wounded Iraqi teenager

**BAGHDAD, 16 Jan—** An American soldier was sentenced on Friday to a year in jail for the murder of a severely wounded Iraqi teenager in a Baghdad slum district during a Shiite uprising last year, the US military said.

Staff Sergeant Johnny Horne was sentenced last month to a year in jail, reduction in rank and dishonourable discharge from the military after pleading guilty to charges of murder and conspiracy to commit murder.

Another US military officer, 2nd Lieutenant Erick Anderson, has also been charged with premeditated murder and conspiracy.

The cases stem from an incident on 18 August when Alban, Horne and Anderson were part of a US Army patrol in the Shiite Muslim Sadr City district during a period of intense clashes with fighters loyal to Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr.

US soldiers saw a group of Iraqi men in a garbage truck who they suspected were placing bombs along a road, and opened fire on them. Several Iraqis were killed.

Alban and Horne were accused of fatally shooting an Iraqi man who suffered severe abdominal wounds and burns after the initial barrage of gunfire.

US military officials have described the incident as a “mercy killing.”

— MNA/Reuters

Japanese electronics giant Sharp employee

Noriro Ohashi displays the new electric superheated steam oven ‘Heatsio’ which enables low-calorie roasting foods using steamed water at a temperature approximately 100 degrees Celsius in Tokyo on 16 Jan, 2005. — Press Trust of India
Zambian economy grows by 4.6% in 2004

Luasa, 16 Jan—Preliminary data shows that Zambia’s economic growth exceeded the government’s target of 3.5 per cent to reach 4.6 per cent, President Levy Mwanawasa said on Friday.

“As a result of our efforts in prudent economic management, we have now had six years of positive economic growth,” he said at the opening session of the National Assembly.

The southern African country posted an economic growth of 4 per cent in 2003, and 3.3 per cent in 2002.

The President attributed the growth to good performance in the mining, agriculture, tourism and other key sectors.

Zambia recorded yet another bumper harvest in the 2003/2004 season, producing 1.3 million tons of maize, the staple food in Zambia, against a national requirement of 1.02 million tons.

Thanks to government’s diversification drive, the country’s exports of cotton, tobacco, coffee, fresh vegetables and flowers have also grown since 2002.

According to the President, these exports now stand at 65 per cent of the exports of copper, the country’s biggest foreign exchange earner. The figure was only 15 per cent a decade ago.

Zambia’s exports of metal and non-metal products surged by 50 per cent in 2004, driven by soaring copper price in the international market and increased production.

According to the President, Zambia’s copper production reached 400,000 tons in 2004, the highest for many years. The production in 2003 was 349,814 tons.

Ugandan President meets World Bank official

Kampala, 17 Jan—Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni has held talks with Peter L. Woicke, executive vice-president of the International Finance Corporation (IFC) on ways of strengthening cooperation between the East African country and the IFC, the private sector arm of the World Bank Group.

According to a Press release issued here on Saturday by the Ugandan State House, the talks was held on Friday at Museveni’s hometown of Rawakitura in the southern district of Mbarara.

“President Museveni and his guest discussed a number of issues especially ways of strengthening cooperation between Uganda and the IFC. They also delved extensively in a number of projects and programmes that are already being handled and those yet to be handled by the IFC, in partnership with the government of Uganda, particularly those related to infrastructure development,” the Press release said.

Woicke arrived here on Thursday for a three-day visit to Uganda. His visit focused on the IFC’s advisory services and consulting with the Ugandan Government, private sector representatives and non-profit groups.

Search teams fail to find skiers believed trapped under 30-ft of snow

Salt Lake City, 17 Jan—Search teams failed on Saturday to find as many as five off-trail skiers believed trapped under 30 feet of snow by a massive avalanche near Park City, Utah.

Summit County Sheriff Dave Edmunds said the teams used probing poles and dogs to look for clothes, skis and ski poles and planned to resume their recovery mission on Sunday.

“We’re being very meticulous and methodical about the way we’re searching,” he said.

Officials do not know how many skiers were trapped in Friday’s avalanche and have based any figure on witness accounts.

The sheriff said he could confirm one person was missing.

Search operations were suspended after sunrise because conditions were too dangerous and there was little hope the skiers could have survived after so many hours trapped under the snow.

Pearl necklaces are displayed in Thailand recently.—INTERNET

Italian cities ban cars

Rome, 17 Jan—People in Rome, Milan and other Italian cities yesterday got around on public transport, bicycles, on foot and even on horseback as cars were banned to reduce air pollution. But in Rome and Milan, football fans were exempted, provided they had a ticket to a game.

In Rome, the ban started at 10 am but was cut from eight hours to five. In Milan, the ban went from 9 am to midday and from 3 pm to 6 pm. Smaller cities such as Brescia, Bergamo and Como also adopted bans.

Italian cities are trying to find ways of curbing pollution by restricting private vehicles.

Rome and Milan are testing a ban on cars with even or odd-numbered licence plates on alternate Thursdays.—INTERNET

British passenger plane makes emergency landing in London

London, 17 Jan—A British passenger plane made an emergency landing in London Saturday after losing its front wheel, an airport spokeswoman said.

The plane, with 177 passengers aboard, landed safely at the Gatwick Airport in south London, but it was not clear whether there had been any casualties, the airport’s spokeswoman said.

The plane reported that it lost the front wheel from its undercarriage shortly after taking off from the Gatwick Airport for the Bulgarian capital Sofia at 1435 GMT. The aircraft then flew back to Gatwick and made an emergency landing on the airport, the spokeswoman said. —MNA/Xinhua

Death toll of Argentina’s nightclub fire rises to 190

Buenos Aires, 17 Jan—The death toll of last month’s nightclub fire in this Argentine capital rose to 190 as a hospitalized man died late Friday night, said the Medical Emergency Service.

A fire broke out in a nightclub called Republica de Cromagnon in downtown Buenos Aires on December 30, 2004, leaving 175 dead immediately and at least 700 injured. More than 91 people now remain hospitalized with 40 of them under intensive care in clinics of Buenos Aires and its outskirts.—MNA/Xinhua

Algeria to keep oil output stable

Algiers, 17 Jan Algerian Minister of Energy and Mines Chakib Khelil has said his country will keep its daily crude oil output stable at 1.34 million barrels, the national radio reported Saturday.

Khelil predicted that international crude oil prices in the first quarter of this year will be stable at the current level, and will stay above 30 dollars per barrel even though they might drop slightly in the second quarter.

The minister said international crude oil demand in 2005 will decrease due to the slowdown of the world economy. But he did not rule out the possibility that international oil market may be turbulent again because of geo-political instability.—MNA/Xinhua
Survey says British companies hit by profit squeeze up in 2004

London, 17 Jan — The number of British companies issuing profit warnings rose by 40 per cent in 2004 as a result of declining consumer confidence, said a survey by Ernst & Young last Sunday. Nearly 300 British firms issued profit warnings last year, about 90 more than the previous year, said the survey.

Successful interest rate rises, the escalating cost of oil and the weak US dollar all impacted on company profits, said the survey, adding that this trend might continue in 2005 if confidence erodes further. The last quarter of 2004 saw the highest number of profit warnings as trading conditions deteriorated over the period with manufacturing output plunging in November and retail sales falling in December.

Among the companies finding profits squeeze in 2004, services sector was the most affected, producing 32 profit warnings during the year while computer services firms and general retailers also being forced to issue 31 and 25 warnings respectively.

Many High Street retailers including Marks & Spencer, Woolworth’s, and Next have reported disappointing sales over the Christmas period. Prospects for 2005 hinged on whether consumer confidence would erode further and whether oil costs would hit companies’ supply chain operations, said Andrew Wollaston, Ernst & Young’s corporate restructuring partner.

China’s industry watchers take class on fighting graft

Beijing, 17 Jan — Officials from the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), China’s top economic planning body, have started a training programme to learn how to detect and combat corruption.

The 110-plus officials, who are NDRC’s special inspectors to major projects across the country, will learn from Hong Kong consultants. They will watch over the construction of major business projects, such as real estate development, during the eight-day training programme that started Tuesday, the Beijing Legal Evening News reported.

“Most of the lecturers are senior anti-corruption officials from Hong Kong’s Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC), the region’s No. 1 graft fighter, and the Department of Justice as well as professors from the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK),” Kwok Man-wai, ex-deputy commissioner of ICAC and one of the teachers, was quoted as saying.

Ren Jianming, an expert on clean governance with Beijing-based Tsinghua University, also lectured for the class. He outlined types and reasons of corruption in the Chinese Mainland.

The training is the first of its kind sponsored by CUHK and NDRC.
Extension of Hkamti Airport runway...

(from page 1)

Later, Lt-Gen Ye Myint, Commander Maj-Gen Tha Aye, officials, and guests toured the e-Learning Centre, the multi-media classrooms, and cottage industry classroom, where they watched students weaving and knitting Naga traditional shawls and matting baskets, and encouraged them.

Lt-Gen Ye Myint, Commander Maj-Gen Tha Aye and party also attended the opening of a tar road constructed by Lahe township development affiliates committee. The ceremony took place at the top of Htauai Street in the township at 2.30 pm.

On the occasion, an official reported on the purpose of construction of the road. Next, Commander Maj-Gen Tha Aye and Deputy Minister Brig-Gen Than Tun cut the ribbon to open the road. Lt-Gen Ye Myint, Commander Maj-Gen Tha Aye and party inspected the road.

Lt-Gen Ye Myint and party proceeded to Lahe Township People’s Hospital (16-bed), where they were welcomed by Medical Superintendent Dr Aung Myo Win and health staff.

Lt-Gen Ye Myint and party inspected the hospital and gave necessary instructions on the upkeep of the hospital.

On the occasion, Lt-Gen Ye Myint set up an education fund of Ky 100,000 and donated 50 dozen exercise books and 100 pairs of trousers. Principal U Myint Tha accepted the donations.

Next, Minister Brig-Gen Thet Tin, Managing Director U Thein Than of Diamond Palace Travels & Tours Co Ltd, and Deputy Minister Brig-Gen Than Tun donated K 100,000 each to the education fund of the school. U Thein Than also donated K 500,000 worth of 55 blankets, 35 mosquito nets, 55 pillows and one 21-inch television. The principal accepted the donations.

Afterwards, Lt-Gen Ye Myint, Commander Maj-Gen Tha Aye and party visited Myintou Pagoda, a replica of Shwedagon Pagoda, built on Gandamala Hill in Lahe Township. They donated some cash at the pagoda. They stopped over in Lahe.

ASEAN+3 agri statistics meeting 24-28 Jan

YANGON, 17 Jan — The Meeting of Directors-General of Agricultural Statistics and Information in ASEAN+3 countries and the Third Focal Point Meeting of AFSIS Project will be held at Kandawgyi Palace Hotel here from 24 to 28 January 2005. Settlements and Land Records Department of the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation will sponsor the meeting. — MNA

Arrangements to visit places of interest in Myanmar

YANGON, 17 Jan — Myanmar Travels and Tour has made arrangements for local travellers.


There is car rental service at Myanmar Travels and Tour. For more information, contact Myanmar Travels and Tour, No 77-91, Sule Pagoda Road, dialing 252859 or 664472.—MNA

National Convention Convening Management Committee meets

YANGON, 17 Jan — A coordination meeting of National Convention Convening Management Committee took place at Nyaungmyapin Camp in Hmawby Township this afternoon, attended by Committee Chairmen Auditor General Maj-Gen Lun Maung, Vice Chairman Deputy Minister for Hotels and Tourism Brig-Gen Aye Myint Kyu, committee members, chairmen and secretaries of subcommittees and officials.

Maj-Gen Lun Maung addressed coordination meeting of NCC Management Committee. — MNA

Ministers inspect earthquake and tidal wave-hit regions in Kawthoung

YANGON, 17 Jan — Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettle-ment Maj-Gen Sein Htwa, Minister for Health Dr Kyaw Myint, WHO Resi-dent Representative Dr Agostino Borra, UNICEF Resident Representative Ms Carol C Long and UNDP Deputy Resident Representative Ms Akiko Suzuki arrived in Kawthoung on 14 Janu-

At the hall of Kawthoung Station Minister Dr Kyaw Myint explained about emergency response and management of tsunami (Myanmar) regarding earthquake and tidal waves occurred on 26 December. He said the day on which earthquake occurred was 26 December, a fullmoon day of Nadaw. Being a religious day, no one went out fishing on that day. It was the cause of less damage and casualties. He told the officials about emergency rescue operations and health care services for those in tidal wave-hit areas with the use of charts.

Next, Minister Maj-Gen Sein Htwa explained measures being taken for relief and resettlement and Head of Taninthayi Division Health Department Dr Swe Win presented a report on loss and damage and health care services. The ministers replied to queries raised by officials of UN agencies. Next, the minister inspected damage of Paloon Tone Tone Bridge and reconstruction of the bridge. They also met the victims at the primary school in Aw-gyi Village in Kawthoung Township. The ministers explained to them the government’s goodwill, measures taken by the ministries and long-term assistance to them.

WHO Resident Represent-ative and UNICEF Resident Representative said they were glad to wit-ness true situation and the government’s emergency rescue operations for the victims.

The ministers met of-

icials and villagers of Aw-gyi village and ful-

filled the required. The also inspected dam-

age caused by tidal wave.

The Minister for Health and party in-

spected Kawthoung Dis-

trict People’s Hospital and the newly-built 100-bed People’s Hospital. — MNA

The 58th Anniversary Union Day objectives

— For all national races to safeguard the national policy— non-disinte-
gregation of the Union, non-disintegration of national solidarity and perpetuation of sovereignty
— To keep the Union spirit ever alive and dynamic among the national people
— For all national people to defend and safeguard the Union for its perpetual existence
— To prevent, through national solidarity, the danger of internal and external destructive elements undermining peace and stability of the State and national development, and
— For all national races to make concerted efforts for successful imple-
mentation of the seven-point future policy programme
Government providing machinery for main industrial zones

YANGON, 17 Jan — Minister for Industry-2 Maj-Gen Saw Lwin visited machinery, tools factories and a steel plant of Myanmar Automobile and Diesel Engine Industries (MADEI) in Mandalay Industrial Zone 2 on 15 January. He also inspected the imported machinery for the factories.

During his meeting with officials at the zone, the minister said that the Government has been building steel plants at the three main industrial zones — Mandalay, Taunggyi and Monywa industrial zones. When the zones started manufacturing standard parts and products, they should become as the zones that help develop the nation’s industrial sector. As the machines have already arrived at the zones, officials concerned are required to erect the factories and conduct test run in time. The ministry has already trained a number of workers at Myanmar Agricultural Machinery Industry in Hsinten, and they will help install the machines and test-run the factories.

The head of MADEI explained the plan to provide machinery to the zones, and the arrangements to upgrade the level of industrial zones in Mandalay, the arrival of imported machinery and work to be carried out.

The minister gave necessary instructions. MNA

Construction of wharf inspected in Tharkayta Township

YANGON, 17 Jan — Minister for Transport Maj-Gen Thein Swe and Minister for Livestock and Fisheries Brig-Gen Maung Maung Thein arrived at quality control office of Fisheries Department in Tharkayta yesterday. Managing Director of Myanmar Port Authority U Thein Htay reported on construction of wharf by Yuzana Co Ltd at the site of MPA near the wharf of Myanmar Five Star Line.

Managing Director U Htay Myint of Yuzana Co Ltd reported on construction of 300-ton purified oil plant and construction of the wharf.

The ministers inspected the site. Minister Maj-Gen Thein Swe went to Tharkayta Wharf where Managing Director of MFSL U Khin Maung Kyi reported on organizational set-up, numbers of on-going and coastal-going ships and their operation, transport of passengers and cargo and containers and yearly income. The minister inspected the lounge for passengers, training halls for seafarers, equipments and checking counters.

The minister also boarded the mv Myitkyina and inspected modern equipment on board. — MNA

Ministry of Rail Transportation holds third four-monthly coord meeting

YANGON, 17 Jan — The Ministry of Rail Transportation held its third four-monthly coordination meeting at the meeting hall of the ministry this morning.

Present on the occasion were Minister for Rail Transportation Maj-Gen Aung Min, Deputy Ministers Thura U Thaung Lwin and U Pe Than, directors-general, managing directors, principals and advisers of the departments and enterprises under the ministry, heads of departments and officials from states and divisions.

First, the minister delivered an address on the occasion. In his speech he set forth on the coordination measures to be taken for realization of the tasks as laid down at the previous meetings after reviewing the strong and weak points of various departments. In carrying out the tasks of the departments, officials concerned are to use finance and materials systematically. Especially, they are to pay serious attention to efficient use of fuel. They are to exert strong efforts to increase GDP, he added.

Next, the deputy ministers delivered addresses on the occasion. Afterwards, the directors-general, the managing directors and the principals presented reports to the minister.

Later, the minister made concluding remarks. MNA

Ministry of Construction holds coord meeting

YANGON, 17 Jan — A coordination meeting of the Ministry of Construction was held at Public Works (Head Office) today.

Minister for Construction Maj-Gen Saw Tun delivered an opening speech.

Superintending engineers of states and divisions reported on work done, financial matters, supply of machinery and construction materials and tasks to be undertaken.

Also present on the occasion were Deputy Ministers U Tint Swe and Brig-Gen Myint Thein, managing directors and directors-general of the ministry, heads of departments, superintending engineers of construction sites and officials. — MNA

Books donated by renowned professor’s daughter

YANGON, 17 Jan — Daw Tin Tin Myaing, a daughter of late U Pe Maung Tin, a famous professor of Yangon University, donated books on various fields to Myanmar Language Department here today.

She handed over the books on education, law, references, general knowledge, library science, politics, art, children’s knowledge, English, history and other fields to Minister for Education U Than Aung.

Daw Tin Tin Myaing also explained the purpose of donating the books which she brought from England.

Deputy Ministers U Myo Nyunt and Brig-Gen Aung Myo Min and officials were also present. MNA

Closing date for entries of military song contest extended to Jan 28

YANGON, 17 Jan — It has been announced that the 60th Anniversary Armed Forces Day Commemorative military song contest for the year 2005 will be held. The closing date for entries has now been extended to 28-1-2005 from 31-12-2004. Entries are to be sent to the secretary of the military song competition subcommittee at Myanmar Radio and Television, Pyay Road. MNA
Minister inspects irrigation of Kantin Bilin Dam...

Minister stresses work facilitation

Kyaukse University conducting 12 courses

Minister U Aung Thaung inspects autos manufactured from Pyigyitagon industrial zone, Mandalay Division. (News reported)—MNA

Myanmar Health Research Congress continues

Sports instructors course opens
**S Africa criticizes int’l trade policies as benefitting rich nations**

JOHANNESBURG, 17 Jan — South Africa’s Finance Minister Trevor Manuel criticized international trade policies as benefitting wealthy nations and warned that “obscene inequalities” between the rich and the poor were widening.

Manuel made the comments in the Sunday Times newspaper as his British counterpart Gordon Brown arrived in the country ahead of a meeting of Britain’s Commission for Africa, which aims to boost prosperity on the world’s poorest continent.

“The problem is not that international trade is inherently opposed to the needs and interests of the poor, but that the rules that govern it are rigged in favour of the rich,” Manuel wrote in an article about the meeting’s agenda.

“Already, obscene inequalities between rich and poor are widening.”

Brown said on Saturday he would announce plans to boost trade in poor countries during the Commission’s talk in Cape Town on Monday and Tuesday, which will also be attended by 18 other African finance ministers.

He gave no details.

Africa accounted for 6 per cent of world trade in the 1980s, but this has dwindled to 2 per cent.

Manuel said if Africa increased its share of world exports by 1 per cent it would generate 70 billion US dollars, about five times what it receives in aid.

Manuel said the Commission would release a report in mid-March which would recommend steps to strengthen Africa’s development efforts ahead of a summit in Scotland of the G-8—which includes the seven main industrial nations and Russia.

Sub-Saharan Africa had made great headway on economic stability and growth, citing figures that show the region will expand by an average 5.4 per cent in 2005, while budget deficits stand at 0.9 per cent of gross domestic product, he noted.

But that progress had to be backed by steps from developed partners as gains to economic governance would be weakened by large-scale financial assistance with tight conditions, he said.

“For that and other reasons, conditions attached to financial aid need to be redesigned in conjunction with Africa’s development partners and the Bretton Woods Institutions,” he said, referring to the World Bank and IMF.

**Researchers identify genetic pattern**

WASHINGTON, 17 Jan — Researchers working in Iceland said on Sunday they identified a genetic pattern that makes some Europeans more fertile.

The genetic pattern, known as an inversion, is a stretch of the DNA code that runs backwards in people who carry it.

Usually, such re-arrangements of a chromosome are harmful to carriers. But this one causes carriers to have more children each generation—giving them what is known as a selective advantage, the researchers reported.

The finding, published in Monday’s issue of the journal Nature Genetics, opens some interesting questions about human evolution, the team at Iceland’s DeCODE Genetics said.

“We found that almost 20 per cent of people in Iceland have at least one copy of this inversion,” DeCODE spokesman Edward Farmer said in a statement.

“We then turned to British parents smacking children hard face up to 5 years in jail

LONDON, 17 Jan — Parents in England and Wales who smack children so hard that it leaves a mark now face up to five years in jail under new laws that came into force on Saturday.

Mild smacking is allowed but any punish-
Famous auction houses, museums acquire artefacts illegally

ROME, 16 Jan — An Italian antiquities trafficker was arrested last week out of Switzerland duped some of the world’s most famous auction houses and museums with illegally acquired artefacts, authorities said on Friday.

The scam was the centerpiece of a yearly presentation by Italy’s art and archaeology police, who displayed dozens of ancient works traced to Giancarlo Medici, an Italian dealer who was sentenced last month by a Rome judge to 10 years in jail. Sometimes working through third parties so he would not appear to be the principal salesman, Medici sold works often dating back to several centuries BC, police said.

According to a Culture Ministry statement, works traced to Medici ended up in New York’s Metropolitan Museum, the JP Getty Museum in Los Angeles, Sotheby’s auction houses, Toyko’s Antike Mittelerekultur Museum, and more.

Some have since been returned to Italy. “He (Medici) had companies in Switzerland (and) Swiss galleries through which he moved pieces taken from Italy illegally and put them on the legal market,” said Lieutenant-Colonel Ferdinando Musella, head of the art police’s operations unit.

Musella said Medici bought many of the pieces through his “contacts with the underworld”.

Anna Maria Moretti, superintendent of archaeology for the Rome region, said one of the most important pieces of stolen art Italy wanted returned was the Euphronius Krater, a 25th century BC Etruscan tomb more than three decades ago.

The Euphronius Krater, a piece of children under the age of one year, ended up in New York’s Metropolitan Museum, where it was kept in jail. Sometimes works were obtained through third parties before acquiring artefacts, authorities added.

Italian antiquities trafficker Anna Maria Moretti said the piece in question ended up with the JP Getty Museum in Los Angeles and Sotheby’s auction houses. She said one of the pieces put on the legal market was delivered to Toyko’s Antike Mittelerekultur Museum.

The scam was uncovered last week in Switzerland, where authorities caught the sack-up artist and put him behind bars. He was sentenced last month by a Rome judge to 10 years in jail.

The fake�s in Switzerland duped some of the world’s most famous auction houses and museums with illegally acquired artefacts, authorities said on Friday.

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Anna Maria Moretti, superintendent of archaeology for the Rome region, said one of the most important pieces of stolen art Italy wanted returned was the Euphronius Krater, a 5th century BC vase now in the Metropolitan Museum in New York. Moretti said the piece was illegally removed from an Etruscan tomb more than three decades ago.

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Airbus unveils mighty “A380” double-decker

LONDON, 17 Jan— Cost overruns and political bickering will be set aside on Tuesday at Airbus as the Toulouse-based planemaker unveils its mighty A380 double-decker, the biggest airliner ever built.

French President Jacques Chirac and British Prime Minister Tony Blair are among more than 5,000 guests invited for a first glimpse of the A380, which some airlines are betting will reshape the industry.

Customers have committed almost 40 billion US dollars to buying the 555-seat plane, expecting a $15 billion profit. However, delays and cost overruns in the development have been setback for Airbus.

The A380 is also causing headaches as it runs 1.45 billion euros (1.9 billion US dollars) over budget and struggles to compete against the Boeing 747, which is cheaper and more profitable.

Virgin Atlantic, which has six A380s on order, is one of the airlines that have reported significant delays and cost overruns. The airline is facing a legal battle with Airbus over the delays, which are expected to cost the company millions of pounds.

The proposed legislation, set out in the Management of Offenders Bill, would allow magistrates to set means-tested fines up to a predetermined limit, said the British Home Office.

Under the draft bill, the maximum fine for an offence like failing to stop after an accident would triple to 15,000 pounds for an adult, from 1,000 pounds to 5,000 pounds for offenders aged 14 to 17 and from 250 pounds to 750 pounds for younger offenders.

British Gov’t to make wealthier offenders pay higher fines

LONDON, 16 Jan— The British Government said Friday it plans to make wealthier offenders of minor crimes, such as driving a car without insurance or riding a bike carelessly, pay higher fines than their poorer counterparts for the same offence.

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German seizes 4 motors suspected to be illegally export to Iran

BERLIN, 16 Jan— German investigators have seized four special motors they suspect were about to be illegally exported to an Iranian nuclear power plant in a raid on a company’s facilities.

Customs officers found the high-voltage engines, each weighing around seven tons and imported from South Korea, when they raided an unnamed trading company in Hanover on Wednesday. The raid followed a tip-off from an employee of the company, who said a previous consignment of engines had been dispatched to Iran in December.

Investigators are trying to intercept this batch before it reaches its expected destination of Bushell, the southern port where Russia is helping Iran to build its first atomic reactor.

The December shipment was worth at least 200,000 euros. Knothe said, and authorities have confiscated this amount from the firm.

Prosecutor Knothe said the export of materials for Iranian power plants needed government approval, which had not been given in this case. The offence carries a jail term of up to five years.

Customs investigators also searched the homes of company officials and confiscated computers and other material. — MNA/Reuters

Wenger says Chelsea deserved to win Premier League title

LONDON, 17 Jan— Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger said Chelsea have as good a chance of winning the Premier League title after extending their lead to 10 points on Saturday.

The Frenchman watched his side lose 1-0 at Bolton Wanderers after Chelsea had earlier won 2-0 at Tottenham Hotspur thanks to two goals from Frank Lampard. British bookmakers made Chelsea almost unbeatable at 1-9 favourites, an unthinkable situation during the first two months of the season when champions Arsenal were scoring goals for fun and avoiding blighting a unbeatable.

“People can think what they like,” Wenger told Sky Sports News. “There is a long way to go but Chelsea are in a fantastic position. They can only lose it now because they have already won it.”

We will keep going and fight until the last minute of the championship, if it finishes in May.

“Nobody knows what’s going to happen, that’s why football is so exciting. We have to keep Chelsea out of our minds and try to win our games.” — MNA/Reuters

Romario apologizes to Pele

RIO DE JANEIRO, 17 Jan— Former World Cup winner Romario apologized to Pele for telling him to put a shoe in his mouth.

“I would like to take this chance to apologize to Pelé for what I said,” he told reporters before taking part in a friendly match in Rio de Janeiro. “I didn’t mean to say what I said. He’s still the King.”

The controversy began earlier this week when Pele was reported as suggesting that Romario, who will be 59 at the end of this month, should retire now to avoid spoiling a career which includes winning the 1994 World Cup.

On Friday, Romario hit out at Pele and said he was 90 per cent certain to sign a deal with Vasco da Gama, the club where he began his career. “When Pele’s quiet, he’s a poet,” Romario told reporters on Copacabana beach after training for a beach soccer match. “But he just talks shit.”

“He was the greatest player in history, he was our king. But he should put a shoe in his mouth.”

Romario has been without a club since he was fired by Fluminense in October, following a season in which he has struggled for match fitness, clashed with his coachs and been involved in controversy about his much-publicized privileges. — MNA/Reuters

Gravesen says decision to leave Everton not easy

MADRID, 17 Jan— Denmark international Thomas Gravesen says his decision to leave Everton midway through the season was not easy but that he could not turn down a “once in a lifetime opportunity” to join Real Madrid.

Gravesen left the English Premier League to join Real on a 3-1/2-year deal for a reported fee of 3.5 million euros (4.6 million US dollars) on Friday. “Of course it’s very difficult when you are as good as I am, when you are playing for a team like the Champions League, the 28-year-old midfielder told a news conference in Madrid on Saturday. Gravesen acknowledged he may not have the reputation of some of the Real’s high-profile “galacticos” but said he could still win a place in the centre of midfield alongside either Gutu or David Beckham.

“I don’t know if it’ll be up against Gutu or Beckham to get a place in the team. I’m here to be part of the team and I’m not here to make war with anyone,” he said. — MNA/Reuters
Madrid, 17 Jan— Champions Valencia missed the chance to keep the pressure on their title rivals at the top of the Primera Liga when they were held to a 0-0 draw at 10-man Osasuna on Sunday.

Raul Gonzalez of Real Madrid scored from a tight angle signalled the start of Roma's late fightback.—I

Barcelona striker Samuel Eto'o atoned for missing an early penalty by grabbing a late winner to give his side an agonizing 1-0 win over 10-man Real Sociedad at the Nou Camp on Sunday.

The visitors were left seething, however, because Figo had appeared to receive the ball in an offside position and they were then denied a penalty after defender Michel Salgado had hauled Vila down in the area.

The ball had gone for the keeper after Zinedine Zidane and Ronaldo had combined to slice open the Zaragoza defence. —Internet

Zaragoza suffered a double setback at the start of the second half, losing centre-back Alvaro after he picked up a needless second booking for a foul on the halfway line and then going 2-1 down when Ronaldo headed in at the far post after a Louis Figo shot fell into his path.

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Kuwait takes security measures to protect all vital establishments

KUWAIT CITY, 17 Jan — Kuwait has taken security measures to protect all vital establishments throughout the country, Kuwaiti Minister of Energy Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahad Al-Sabah said on Sunday.

Kuwait News Agency quoted the minister as saying the measures were being taken to protect vital national facilities and establishments, including those related to the oil industry, from any contemplated attacks by terrorists.

He said his ministry was coordinating these security measures with Kuwaiti Ministry of Interior and the National Guards.

Oil installations, he assured, were being heavily guarded, adding the heads of oil-related companies were sent official notices by the Ministry of Energy urging them to take extra care in dispensing their business at all oil facilities in the country.

Sheikh Ahmad emphasized that terrorists would be dealt with decisively by security forces with the assistance of members of the society who spurn extremism and militarism. One sure way to combat terrorism, he indicated, was to guide the youth in the society to shun acts of terror and to realize that terrorism was not an appropriate option to air one’s grievances.

Syria highlights UN’s role in Iraq

DAMASCUS, 17 Jan — Syria affirmed on Sunday the necessity for the United Nations to assume an active role in Iraq, the official SANA news agency reported.

The UN should help to meet the Iraqi people’s aspirations for independence, freedom and for managing their own affairs, said Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk al-Shara during talks with visiting UN Secretary-General’s Special Representative in Iraq Ashraf Qazi.

Shara expressed the hope that the forthcoming elections, scheduled at the end of this month, would be held with a full Iraqi participation, SANA said.

He stressed Syria’s efforts to make the elections a success, noting its positive stance towards the UN role in the elections.

Wildlife in Sri Lanka’s national park survived by “sixth sense”

COLombo, 17 Jan — Wildlife in Sri Lanka’s biggest national park survived last month’s tsunami, but it was probably keen senses and the lay of the land rather than any mysterious instinct for danger that enabled animals to scampor to safety.

The fact that wardens found no dead animals prompted theories that a “sixth sense” alert elphants, leopards and other to the impending disaster.

As Yala reopened to visitors this week, officials and naturalists said there was evidence that wildlife fled before the giant waves thundered ashore on December 26. But it was acute natural senses such as hearing that helped give animals time to flee, experts say.

The beasts also stood a chance because relatively few of them lived in the arid strip of salt flat and sand dune that forms part of Yala’s southern boundary as it slopes into the sea. The dunes, reefs and mangroves may also have helped blunt the impact.

“I have been cruising around the park for a few days now and I have not even seen one carcass, not even one of a water buffalo,” Daya Kariyawa-sam, director-general of wildlife and conservation, told Reuters on Saturday.

Over 200 tons of drugs seized in Iran since last March

TEHERAN, 17 Jan — Anti-drug police have nabbed over 200 tons of illicit drugs throughout Iran since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2004), the official IRNA news agency reported on Saturday.

IRNA quoted Mohammad Bager Ghafib, Iranian police chief, as saying that more security measures were being enforced by anti-drug police in eastern parts of the country compared to those in previous years.

“Organized crimes committed in Iran are fewer than those in other states, but the latest development should be taken as a warning to all,” Ghafib said.

Drug addiction and transportation has been a serious social problem in Iran, a country sitting in the crossroad linking drug producing Afghanistan and Pakistan and markets in the Gulf states, Central Asia, Western Europe and other regions.

Syria highlights UN’s role in Iraq

Monday, 17 January, 2005

Summary of observations recorded at 09:00 hours MST:

During the past 24 hours, weather has been generally fair in the whole country. Night temperatures were (4˚C) above normal in Mon State, (5˚C) above normal in Taninhatyi Division and (3˚C) below normal in Magway and Yangon Divisions, (5˚C) below normal in Chin State and about normal in the remaining areas. The significant night temperatures were Haka (0˚C), Namsam and Pinglaung (2˚C) each and Heho (3˚C).

Maximum temperature on 16-1-2005 was 91˚F. Minimum temperature on 17-1-2005 was 58˚F. Relative humidity at 9:30 hrs MST on 17-1-2005 was 87%. Total sunshine hours on 16-1-2005 was (7.6) hours approx. Rainfalls on 18-1-2005 were nil at Yangon Airport. Kaba-Aye and central Yangon. Total rainfalls since 1-1-2005 were nil at Yangon Airport, Kaba-Aye and central Yangon. Maximum wind speed at Yangon (Kaba-Aye) was 6 mph from Northeast at (10.25) hrs MST on 16-1-2005.

Bay inference: According to the observations at (09-30) hrs MST today, the depression over the Southeast Bay has practically remained stationary and centred at about (450) miles Southeast of Colombo, Sri Lanka. It is forecast to move West-Southwestwards slowly. Weather is partly cloudy to cloudy in the South Bay and Central Bay and generally fair elsewhere in the Bay of Bengal.

Forecast valid until evening of 18-1-2005: Possibility of isolated rain in Kachin State and weather will be partly cloudy in Ayeyawady, Yangon and Tanintharyi Divisions and generally fair in the remaining states and Divisions. Degree of certainty is (40%). State of the Sea: Seas will be slight to moderate in Myanmar waters.

Outlook for subsequent two days: Slight increase of Night temperatures are likely in Southern Myanmar areas.

Military band contest goes on

YANGON, 17 Jan — The 14th Defence Services (Army, Navy and Air) Military Band Competition in commemoration of the 60th Anniversary Armed Forces Day continued at the People’s Square here this morning. Before the competition, bands of Kyimyinda Township BEHS No 1 and Latha Township BEHS No 2 performed their skill demonstration. The bands representing the combat school (Bahtoo), the Yangon Command, the South-West Command, the No 99 LID, the No 11 LID and the No 33 LID participated in the contest.

After hearing the reports, Lt-Gen Ye Myint attended to the needs. He said that Hkamti-Lahe road is being upgraded and bridges along the road are being built and upgraded with the aim of bringing about better transport in the region. Meanwhile, relentless efforts are to be made for construction of village-to-village roads in Lahe and Nanyun Townships.

Local authorities are to provide necessary assistance for cultivation of high yield paddy and for transforming the slash and burn farming into the highland farming. Efforts are to be made for cultivation of rubber in the areas where it can grow well along with perennial crops. In this process, virgin and fallow lands are to be reclaimed. Thus, emphasis is to be placed on agriculture, he added.

Minister Maj-Gen Htay Oo checks water supply at Kanti Bilin Dam in Minhla Township, Bago (West) Division. — A&I

Lt-Gen Ye Myint meets officials, members of USDA and local people in Lahe, Sagaing Division. — MNA