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

NCCC Chairman Secretary-1 Li-Gen Thein Sein bids farewell to NC delegates on their departure for home

YANGON, 1 April — Chairman of the National Convention Convening Commission Secretary-1 of the State Peace and Development Council Lt-Gen Thein Sein, together with Vice-Chairman of the Commission Minister for Electric Power Maj-Gen Tin Htut, Secretary Minister for Information Brig-Gen Kyaw Hsan and commission members, Chairman of the National Convention Convening Work Committee Chief Justice U Aung Toe, Vice-Chairman Attorney-General U Aye Maung and committee members, Chairman of the National Convention Convening Management Committee Auditor-General Maj-Gen Lun Maung and management committee members, cordially greeted delegates of the National Convention on their departure for home after the National Convention had been adjourned — MNA

At 6.30 am, Li-Gen Thein Sein cordially met with the second group of delegates who would be leaving for home, in front of the office of the reception sub-committee. Before their departure, he wished the delegates’ health and happiness — MNA

NCCC Chairman Secretary-1 Li-Gen Thein Sein waves to delegates of National Convention on their departure for home

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First, the NCCC Chairman Secretary-1 arrived at the office of reception sub-committee at Nyaunghnapin Camp where he asked about transport and basic needs of the delegates and cordially greeted them.

At 6.30 am, Li-Gen Thein Sein cordially met with the second group of delegates who would be leaving for home, in front of the office of the reception sub-committee. Before their departure, he wished the delegates’ health and happiness — MNA

INSIDE

The Shan nationals insurgents’ political slogans depicted the echoing of the Shan sawbwas “the framing of Constitution based on federal system, and establishment of a Shan republic. Yet, the Tatmadaw had already realized the incidents from the very beginning to the very end, and so it had to take over the State power from the Pa-Hta-Sa Government so as to avoid disintegration of the Union.

(Page 7) AUNG THEIN (DAWEI)
PERSPECTIVES

Saturday, 2 April, 2005

Strive for success of National Convention with nationalistic spirit and Union Spirit

Nowadays, efforts are being made for the emergence of a peaceful, modern, developed, and discipline-flourishing democratic nation.

In so doing, the eight categories of delegates representing over 54 million of Myanmar people were able to make discussions, suggestions, and proposals in giving priority to the interests of the State and the people rather than single group, party and race.

The National Convention is being convened with added momentum in accordance with the seven-Step Road Map for emergence of a peaceful, modern, developed and discipline-flourishing democratic nation. With the active participation of delegates of the respective groups, the convention has been able to lay down the detailed basic principles for sharing of legislative power in the drawing of the State Constitution.

Moreover, with far-sightedness of the NC delegates based on nationalism and Union Spirit, the plenary meetings of the convention were able to put forward the detailed basic principles of sharing of legislative power in the drawing of the State Constitution and present the suggestions for sharing of executive and judicial powers.

The National Convention which resumed on 17 February 2005 lasted about two months. Thanks to the high sense of responsibility and harmonious efforts of a large number of delegates, greater success has been achieved than expected. The plenary meeting of the National Convention was adjourned on 31 March and it will resume before the end of this year when the agricultural tasks have been completed.

When the National Convention is achieving greater success phase by phase, a discipline-flourishing democratic nation that the entire national people long for is getting nearer and nearer.

Efforts exerted for successful realization of the seven-step Road Map are the constructive endeavours which will go down in the annals of history.

But there are internal and external saboteurs with selfishness who are attempting to jeopardise the National Convention, instead of taking part in the nation-building endeavours, and the 54 million people of Myanmar are to crush them.

We believe that the National Convention will make progress until its success with the enthusiastic participation of the entire national people including the delegates by doing their bit with nationalistic spirit and Union Spirit.

Exhibitions to mark Armed Forces Day staged

YANGON, 1 April — The 60th Anniversary Armed Forces Day Commemorative Exhibition continued at the Defence Services Museum on Shwedagon Pagoda Road today.

At the booths on nation-building endeavours, a computer quiz is being held from noon to 2 pm daily and prizes are presented to winners during the period of the exhibition.

Over 1,000 people including foreigners visited the exhibition today. The exhibition will be kept open to 4 April. Similarly, Literary & Arts Competitions and Exhibition honouring the 60th Anniversary Armed Forces Day continued for the seventh day at Tatmadaw Convention Hall on U Wizara Road from 9 am to 5 pm today. In the exhibition, the quiz is being held and cash prizes are awarded to the winners. The competitions continue up to 4 April. — MNA

Myanmar delegation arrives back from Singapore

YANGON, 1 April — A Myanmar delegation led by Minister for Home Affairs Maj-Gen Maung Oo arrived back here today after attending the Global Asia Security-2005 Exhibition and Conference in Singapore.

The exhibition and conference were held from 29 to 31 March. The delegation was welcomed back at Yangon International Airport by Minister for Industry-2 Maj-Gen Saw Lwin, Minister at the Prime Minister’s Office Brig-Gen Pyi Sone, Deputy Minister for Home Affairs Brig-Gen Phone Swe, First Secretary of the Singapore Embassy Mr Low Mun Hong, heads of department and families. The members of the delegation Deputy Director-General of Myanmar Police Force Col Zaw Win and other officials also arrived back here on the same flight. — MNA

Free Phuket trip for Tiger open winners

YANGON, 1 April — Handsome prizes will be presented to the winners of the Tiger championship open to all amateur golfers. The golf tournament will be held on 5 April at Punhiang Golf Course in Yangon under the sponsorship of Myanmar Brewery Ltd.

The prize for the winner of the tournament will be a free ticket each for Tiger Skin open to be held at the Blue Canyon Golf Course in Phuket, Thailand, on 16 and 17 April, and the permission to participate in the open as guest players during the free-of-charge three-night-stay visit.

US Open champions, Retief Goosen, Colin Montgomerie and Thomas Bjorn and women’s champion Miss Se Pi Pak of Republic of Korea will take part in the Tiger Skin open. Amateur golfers may buy entry forms at Han Golf Masters Pro-Shops. For more information, contact Han Event Management or dial 529895 or 09-99-72554. — MNA

On-job training course of Social Welfare Department concludes

YANGON, 1 April — The on-job training course for staff officers of the Social Welfare Department concluded this morning at the Social Welfare Institute of the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlements in Mayangon Township.

The conclusion ceremony was attended by Minister Maj-Gen Sein Htwa, Deputy Minister Brig-Gen Kyaw Myint, Officer on Special Duty Brig-Gen Thura Sein Thaung, Free Services Department Director-General U Myint Tun, directors of the Social Welfare Department and the principal of the institute.

The minister spoke on the occasion and presented completion certificates to the trainees. — MNA

UDEN intensive courses for 2004-2005 starts April 21

YANGON, 1 April — Intensive courses for the 2004-2005 academic year for fourth year students majoring in law of Yangon University of Distance Education will be conducted from 21 to 30 April at Dagon University, Yangon East University, Mawlamyine University, Pathein University, Sittway University, Pyay University, Toungoo University and Dawei University. Final examinations will be held at the universities from 4 to 10 May 2005. Those students who registered at Dagon Branch of the YUDE are to attend the course and sit for their exam at the Dagon University. Those registered at the East Branch of the YUDE are to attend the course and sit for their exam at the Yangon East University. Students who registered at the town branches of the YUDE are to attend the course and sit for their exam at the respective universities. Further detailed notices will be announced at the branches of the YUDE, it is learnt. — MNA

All this needs to be known

* Do not be frightened whenever intimidated
* Do not be bolstered whenever flattered
* Do not be softened whenever appeased
Indian PM leaves for Mauritius to widen ties

NEW DELHI, 31 March — Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh left for Mauritius on Wednesday for a four-day visit, emphasizing that India would seek to deepen and widen relations with Mauritius.

Describing Mauritius as a friendly gateway to African continent, Singh told reporters before his departure that his visit is aimed at further strengthening the vast framework of the bilateral interactions.

During his stay, the Prime Minister will hold wide-ranging talks on bi-lateral, regional and international issues with Mauritian Prime Minister Paul Raymond Berenger, call on President Aneerood Jugnauth and meet opposition leader Navinjandra Ramgoolam. He will also address the Mauritian National Assembly.

“I hope to discuss with Mauritian leadership ways of further deepening the economic content of our relations through early conclusion of negotiations on a comprehensive economic cooperation and partnership agreement,” Singh said.

Aspects related to strengthening bilateral cooperation in defence and security areas, including counter-terrorism, human resources development, air links and cultural contacts are also expected to figure in the discussions, he said. MNA/Xinhua

Nepal, S Korea sign cultural exchange agreement

KATHMANDU, 31 March — The governments of Nepal and South Korea here on Wednesday signed an agreement on cultural exchange, making South Korea the ninth country to reach such an agreement with Nepal.

The agreement will come into effect a month after it was signed and will be renewed every five years, said a statement released by the Nepali Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation.

Under the agreement, bilateral cooperation on culture, art, education, youth, sports and tourism as well as exchange of radio and television programmes, and visual will be promoted between the two countries.

The two countries will prepare a separate action plan on the subjects of the agreement, which is expected to boost the development of culture, art, sports and tourism sector both at the government and non-government level, the statement noted.— MNA/Xinhua

Nepal-Pakistan economic talks conclude

KATHMANDU, 31 March — The fifth session of the Nepal-Pakistan Joint Economic Commission which started on Tuesday concluded here Wednesday afternoon, the Nepali Finance Ministry said. According to the minutes of talks signed by both sides after the meeting, Pakistan offered five-million-US-dollar credit facility to Nepal and asked Nepal to utilize the amount for the furtherance of bilateral economic relations.

Nepali Finance Minister Madhukar Shumshere Rana and Pakistani Minister of State for Economic Affairs Hina Rabbani Khar, leaders of the two delegations, discussed broadening and diversifying bilateral economic relations during the meeting, the ministry said in a Press statement. MNA/Xinhua

Italian PM announces plan to withdraw troops from Iraq

ROME, 31 March — Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi announced on Thursday that Italy plans to withdraw the first 300 soldiers out of its 3,000 troops from Iraq in September.

"There is already a plan for the withdrawal of 300 of our soldiers without weakening our presence (in Iraq) at the end of September," he said in an interview with the state television RAI.

However, he added that he still needed approval of both the US-led coalition forces in Iraq and the Iraqi government to carry out the plan.

The Prime Minister said that Italy mapped out the plan because Iraqi security forces will finish training by the end of August and therefore be capable of maintaining the country's stability and security.

As a result, it will be redundant then to have foreign troops in Iraq, said. Berlusconi's announcement is widely seen as an apparent gesture aimed at wooing voters in the regional elections scheduled for 3-4 April.

Most Italians are opposed to the deployment in Iraq and the domestic call for withdrawal is on the increase since an intelligence officer was killed by US forces while escorting a released hostage to an Iraqi airport.— Internet

Singapore PM sends condolences to Indonesian President

SINGAPORE, 31 March — Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong sent a letter of condolences to Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono over a massive earthquake that hit the country on Monday, according to a statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Wednesday.

In the letter, Lee expressed his condolences and sympathies to the families of the victims of the disaster and offered Singapore's assistance with the relief and rescue efforts, the statement said.

An 8.7-magnitude earthquake hit the northern part of Indonesia's Sumatra Island on Monday, causing great loss of lives and mass destruction. Singapore's Defence Ministry said that three C-130 transport planes deployed by the ministry arrived in Indonesia's Medan on Wednesday afternoon, with additional personnel and medical supplies onboard.

Meanwhile, another 15-member medical team also arrived in Pulau Nias to help the Indonesian authorities set up medical facilities, according to the ministry.

On Tuesday, Singapore sent three Chinook helicopters with medical and rescue teams to the disaster-affected area, and a total of 77 personnel from Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) are working in Pulau Nias and Medan at present. MNA/Xinhua

Asian, African diplomats convene in Jakarta for summit preparation

JAKARTA, 31 March — Senior officials from Asian and African countries here Wednesday began the two-day preparatory meeting for the upcoming Asian-African Summit with delegates joining a one-minute silence in honour of those who died in the Monday's earthquake off Sumatra Island.

Organizers said the senior officials’ meeting was attended by 173 delegates from 59 countries and chaired by Indonesian Foreign Affairs Ministry's Secretary-General Sudjadlan Paramadiningrat.

Indonesia will host the Asian-African Summit on April 22-23 to commemorate the golden jubilee of historic gathering of Asian-African leaders in the West Java town of Bandung in 1955, that gave a birth to the Non-Aligned Movement and the anti-colonialism and anti-racial segregation principles. The forthcoming summit will bring the theme of “Reinvigorating the Bandung Spirit: Working toward a New Asian-African Strategic Partnership”.

“The task at hand is to give concrete form to that partnership by translating the broad vision of the first generation of Asian and African leaders into pragmatic and realistic measures,” Foreign Minister Hassan Wirajuda said in a statement reaching here Wednesday.

“In doing so, we will have to explore and arrive at innovative ways and modalities for the launching and strengthening of our cooperation in the political-security, economic and socio-cultural fields, which will form the three pillars of our overall cooperation,” he added.

Australian soldiers guard the perimeter of the Australian Embassy in Baghdad on 31 March, 2005. — Internet
Wen Jiabao underscores need for control of overheating economy

BEIJING, 31 March — Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao underscores the necessity of strict control of China’s overheating economy at an executive meeting of the State Council, or the central government, he presided over here Wednesday.

The meeting cited the in-depth development of economic structural reform as a “major task” of his government to fulfil this year.

By analysing the present supply and demand situation and prices in the steel industry, the meeting underlined both the urgency and importance of macroscopic control of the industry and taking direct tough measures to cope with the hiking price of iron ore on the international market.

China is required to sternly control the export of steel products and strenthen control the export of steel products and sternly control the export of steel products and sternly control the export of steel products and strengthen management of iron ore imports, the meeting found.

Meanwhile, the meeting called for the rigid control of overheating investments in fixed assets, especially in the real estate and urban development sectors, so as to cool down the excessive demand for production materials such as steel, a substantial step crucial to maintaining stable economic growth.

The meeting prompted the government to put due effort into implementing the tasks included in the work report delivered at the Third Session of the Tenth National People’s Congress (NPC) on 5 March.

Unstable and unhealthy factors should be eliminated from the country’s national economy and the foundation for macro-control has yet to be consolidated during the current period of reform, noted the meeting, and they constitute essential steps to build a harmonious country with each element of society well developed.

To coordinate the work between agriculture and industry, rural and urban areas, economic and social development, domestic development and opening-up to the outside world are also of great importance, the meeting said.

Residents in S Thailand evacuated after Indonesian earthquake

BANGKOK, 31 March — Residents living in Thailand’s southern coastal areas are being evacuated early Tuesday morning, a precaution against possible tsunami attacks following a strong earthquake in Indonesia. The evacuation is being carried out in the coastal areas and low lands in the kingdom’s six southern provinces hit by tsunami on 26 December last year, reported the local ITV.

An earthquake measuring 8.2 on the Richter Scale occurred in Indonesia’s Sumatra Island at 23:09 pm Monday night. The strong seism was felt in southern Thailand, where several tourist hot sites are located.

The wave of earthquake was also felt in the capital Bangkok, which lies more than 1,000 kilometres away from the centre of the earthquake. People living in Bangkok’s high-rises reported sway of building lasting for some five minutes.—MNA/Xinhua

Thaksin satisfied with quick reaction to tremor

BANGKOK, 31 March — Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra has praised officials for their quick reaction to the tsunami threat after a violent earthquake hit Indonesia on Monday night.

“We can now tell the world we have learned from past experience, and the country has done much better as far as tsunami alert is concerned,” Thaksin was quoted by Bangkok Post newspaper as saying Wednesday.

The tsunami warning was issued to six coastal provinces in southern Thailand about half an hour after the 8.7 magnitude quake struck the Sumatra Island of Indonesia, said Chalermsinchai Ekkarntrong, the acting chief of the Meteorological Department.

Locals and tourists in the affected region were bombarded with tsunami alert by television and radio broadcast along with the wailing of evacuation sirens.

People were evacuated to higher ground and the warning was dropped three hours later as no tsunami was reported. No casualties from the quake have been reported in Thailand but some buildings in the South have small damages.

Thailand will press ahead with building its own early warning system which, in the future, would be linked with the international network, said the Prime Minister. However, Smith Dharma Sarojana, assistant to the Prime Minister’s Office Minister, said there were still flaws to the country’s warning system as people should not have been evacuated to only one location while many fishermen could not be convinced to take their boats to safety areas off shore.

Thaksin said the preliminary warning system, which could send alerts to mobile phone message and television, radio stations, will be completed next month in the six provinces hit by the 26 December tsunami.—MNA/Xinhua

Surging oil prices in India may pull down GDP growth

SINGAPORE, 31 March — Indian Finance Minister P Chidambaram Tuesday feared that surging global oil prices may pull down India’s economic growth by 0.5 per cent but expected stable interest rates to spur investment.

“We will be hurt in terms of growth. We think it (oil price rise) hurts growth by about 0.5 per cent a year,” Chidambaram, currently on a visit to Singapore, told reporters here.

As per CSO estimates, India’s GDP is slated to grow by 6.9 per cent this fiscal against the 8.5 per cent in 2003-04. Ahead of Reserve Bank’s slack season credit policy in April end, Chidambaram said he expects interest rates to remain stable over the medium term despite the pressure on prices and bond yields on account of global crude price rise.

“Indian banks are flush with money. There is huge liquidity in the system. In the medium term, I think interest rates will remain stable,” he said.

Reserve Bank kept the benchmark Bank Rate at 6 per cent despite the surge in inflation last year. Following fiscal and monetary measures, inflation has subsided and so has yields on government bonds.—MNA/PTI

1,532 US troops killed since beginning of Iraq war

WASHINGTON, 31 March—As of Thursday, 31 March, 2005, at least 1,532 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 1,161 died as a result of hostile action, according to the Defence Department. The figures include four military civilians.

The AP count is three higher than the Defence Department’s tally, last updated at 10 am EST Thurs- day.

The British military has reported 86 deaths; Italy, 21; Ukraine, 18; Poland, 17; Spain, 11; Bulgaria, eight; Slovakia, three; Estonia, Thailand and the Netherlands, two each; and Denmark, El Salvador, Hungary, Kazakhstan and Latvia one death each.

Since 1 May, 2003, when President Bush declared that major combat operations in Iraq had ended, 1,394 US military members have died, ac- cording to AP’s count. That includes at least 1,052 deaths resulting from hostile action, according to the military’s numbers. —Internet

Children dressed in costumes take part in a procession during the bun festival on Cheung Chau island, Hong Kong recently.—Internet

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Children dressed in costumes take part in a procession during the bun festival on Cheung Chau island, Hong Kong recently.—Internet
Focus ASEAN+2 to strengthen trade, political ties

NEW DELHI, 31 March — Federal Government on Tuesday said the Focus ASEAN+2 programme would not only help in supplementing effort of exporting communities and boosting India’s exports but also strengthen bilateral economic and political ties with countries in ASEAN region and Australia and New Zealand.

“The Focus ASEAN+2 programme launched by our government will not only smoothen the trade flow but also play an important role in strengthening our relations, both economic and political in the region,” Minister of State for Commerce & Industry EVKS Elangovan said at a seminar on Focus ASEAN+2.

It would help in supplementing the effort of exporting communities and boost India’s exports. The programme will also help in strengthening bilateral economic relationship with countries in ASEAN region and Australia and New Zealand, he said.

The growing trade with ASEAN reflected the importance of the region for India in general and exports in particular, he said adding India’s exports to the region grew by 25.54 per cent during 2003-04 amounting to 5.798 million US dollars.

“The economies of countries in Southeast Asia are sound providing ample scope for further growth of our exports in the region,” he said.— MNA/PTI

WB approves $100m to improve education in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD, 31 March — The World Bank Board of Directors has approved a 100-million-US-dollar credit for Pakistan’s Punjab Province to improve quality and access to education achieved under a similar credit last year, said a Press release issued by the Bank Wednesday.

Although Punjab has slightly better education indicators than other provinces, it still trails behind in comparison to low-income areas in the region. The rate of participation in the education sector is very low, with 47 per cent male and 43 per cent female primary net enrollment rates, said the Press release.

Pakistan launches nat’l campaign against high child mortality

ISLAMABAD, March 31 — Pakistan’s National Commission for Human Development on Wednesday launched a national Oral Rehydration Solution (ORS) campaign to lower the number of children deaths from diarrhoea in the country, where more than one million children die of diarrhoea every year.

Addressing a meeting held here, Pakistan’s First Lady Begum Sehba Musharraf said high infant and child mortality posed a serious challenge in the country and the government was fully committed to lowering the infant and maternal mortality rate through all possible intervention.

Diarrhoea is the leading child killer in developing countries like Pakistan where it causes 30 per cent of deaths each year, Begum said, adding the ORS campaign would not only assist poor families in administering ORS which helped save their medical ex-

UAE passes zero-deficit 2005 budget

ABU DHABI, 31 March — The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has ratified its 2005 budget, the official WAM news agency reported on Wednesday.

The budget, ratified in a federal law issued by UAE President Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed al-Nahayan, is the first to have a zero deficit in the country’s 24 years.

According to the federal law, both federal revenues and expenditure are projected at 6.20 billion US dollars. General education is earmarked 1.06 billion US dollars, or about 17 percent of the total federal budget. Power generation and distribution get 459 million US dollars, while medical services had 288.5 million US dollars.

The social welfare programme is allocated 214.5 million US dollars, and foreign affairs activities 170 million dollars, WAM said, quoting the law.

LAO NAI, 31 March — Laos and Singapore will make greater efforts in beefing up bilateral cooperation on many fields, including investment, tourism and trade, according to sources from Laos on Wednesday.

Lao Prime Minister Bounnhang Vorachit and his Singaporean counterpart Lee Hsien Loong made the statement on 29 March in Laos’ Vientiane capital.

During their talks, they also highly valued the relations and cooperation between the two countries, which are developing soundly in many fields, particularly exchanges of high-ranking and technical delegations.

India goes for defence purchase, upgradation worth 38.2b rupees

NEW DELHI, 31 March — Within days of US making offer to sell warplanes, India Tuesday announced a number of defence acquisitions and upgradations worth 38.2 billion rupees and decided to hold negotiations for purchase of 12 French-made Mirage 2005 fighters from Qatar.

The Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS), chaired by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, also cleared induction of nine off-shore patrol vessels for the Navy, purchase of one C-303 submarine-fired torpedo decoy system from Italy and upgradation of 14 aircraft carrier-based British-made Sea Harrier planes.

US captain guilty of Iraq killing

BAGHDAD, 31 March—A military court has found a US army captain guilty of killing a wounded Iraqi man in central Iraq last year.

Capt Rogelio Maymulet, 30, said he shot the man, who had been wounded in a clash with US soldiers, in order to end his suffering.

The court based in Wiesbaden, Germany, found Maymulet guilty of assault with intent to commit manslaughter.

The panel will later discuss a sentence for the charge, which carries a maximum of 10 years in prison.

The prosecution had pressed for a conviction on the more serious charge of assault with intent to commit murder, which carries a 20-year jail sentence.— Internet

US Marine killed in western Iraq

BAGHDAD, 31 March — A US Marine was killed on Wednesday when a roadside mine struck a US patrol on a road in Iraq’s western Anbar Province, the US military said in a statement.

A Marine assigned to 2nd Force Service Support Group was killed in action today while conducting a combat logistics patrol enroute to Al Qaim,” the Qatar-based el-Jazeera TV channel quoted the statement as saying.

The US patrol was on its way to Al-Qaem area close to the Syrian border, which is an area with a heavy insurgency presence, added the el-Jazeera.

A US military Bradley armoured vehicle, viewed through a shattered windshield of a car, arrives at the scene of a car bomb explosion in Abu Ghraib, west of Baghdad on 30 March, 2005.— Internet

Toyota Motor’s assembly line in Toyota city, central Japan, on 1 April, 2005.— Internet

A US military Bradley armoured vehicle, viewed through a shattered windshield of a car, arrives at the scene of a car bomb explosion in Abu Ghraib, west of Baghdad on 30 March, 2005.— Internet

A US military Bradley armoured vehicle, viewed through a shattered windshield of a car, arrives at the scene of a car bomb explosion in Abu Ghraib, west of Baghdad on 30 March, 2005.— Internet
Iranian President inspects key N-facilities

Tehrān, 31 March—Iranian President Mohammad Khatami on Wednesday inspected two important nuclear facilities in central Iran to show the country’s determination and ability to press ahead with efforts to acquire nuclear technology, according to the official IRNA news agency.

“...implemented to provide nuclear fuel needed for both the nuclear reactors which will come on stream in the future and the Bushehr power plant,” Saedi said. But he stressed Iran had frozen all uranium enrichment in the Natanz facility since last November.

“If Iran was not going through the voluntary enrichment suspension period, the Natanz Project would have been inaugurated last year,” said Saedi, adding that all parts of the centrifuges used in the Natanz complex were manufactured by Iran.

Iran, accused by the United States of developing nuclear weapons secretly, is under mounting international pressure to give up uranium enrichment programme.

The Islamic Republic denied the US charge, saying its nuclear activities were for fully peaceful purposes and it would never abandon its legitimate rights. However, Iran has suspended activities related to uranium enrichment as confidence-building gesture to pave the way for negotiations with the European Union.

SAIF Zone beckons investments from India

Chennaï, 31 March—Sharjah Airport International Free Zone (SAIF), the first airport free zone in the United Arab Emirates, is on an aggressive marketing campaign to lure Indian companies to set up operations there.

Sager Al Qassemi, its Deputy Director General, in a presentation to corporates here, claimed SAIF Zone was an ideal hub for all type of businesses, which required fast, efficient and trouble-free working environment.

He said Indian companies constitute 48 per cent of the 1,612 companies in the zone. Leading firms like Godrey, Zee, Ashok Leyland, Infosys, Mahindra and ICICI Infotech have established their businesses in the zone, which has an area of 15 million square metres.

“About 55 per cent of the space is occupied,” Qassemi told reporters, adding that SAIF Zone was keen to have more investments from India.

Top officials of the zone, including Qassemi and Humaid Abdullah Al-Khati, senior marketing & sales officer, have also made presentations to companies in Bhubaneswar and Kolkata during this trip.

They would also travel to Bangalore and Mumbai to invite Indian companies to invest in the SAIF Zone, he said. — MNA/PTI

SFZI seeks to protect local region with Kuwaiti Govt loan

Urūmqi, 31 March—Northwest China’s Xinjiang Uygar Autonomous Region has received a 34-million-U.S.-dollar loan from the Kuwait Government for a huge ecological project designed to protect Bosten Lake, the largest freshwater lake in the region.

The project, aiming to preserve the lake’s ecosystem, will cost 603 million yuan (72 million U.S. dollars), including 284 million yuan (34 million U.S. dollars) in loans from the Kuwaiti Government and 319 million yuan (38 million U.S. dollars) of domestic funds, a spokesperson with the regional government said Tuesday.

The ecological scheme of a series of engineering projects to preserve wetlands around Bosten Lake will save water, plant forests and monitor pollution more closely, the official said without giving his name.

He said the project will help economize on water and consequently improve the environment around the Bosten Lake, boost the sustainable social and economic development in the region and provide adequate water supply to the Tarim River.

Located in the heart of the Tianshan Mountains, Bosten Lake covers an area of 972 square kilometres. It is the biggest lake in the region and one of the biggest freshwater lakes in China.

China’s banks issue hefty loans for south-to-north water diversion

Beijing, 31 March—A group of seven Chinese banks agreed here on Tuesday to grant a combined 48.8 billion yuan (5.9 billion U.S. dollars) in loans to finance the eastern and central sections of the country’s ambitious south-to-north water diversion project.

According to an agreement signed jointly by the banks, China Development Bank will be the key provider, targeting an issuance of 21.3 billion yuan (2.6 billion dollars) in loans.


This will be the largest sum of money to be raised from banks for any project in the country.

The massive water project to relieve the country’s drought-ridden north by diverting water from the Yangtze River, is larger even than the Three Gorges hydro-power and conservancy project. Up to 44.8 billion cubic metres of water will be diverted through three canals to the north, about the annual volume of the Yellow River in anormal year.

Signing of Bangladesh-Pakistan FTA urged

Dhaka, 31 March—A delegation of the Karachi chamber on Tuesday urged the governments of Bangladesh and Pakistan to sign bilateral free trade agreement (FTA) to intensify bilateral trade and investment.

The visiting delegation of the Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry said here Tuesday that the FTA will help Pakistanis to grab a significant market share in Bangladesh with a special focus on textile raw material export, The New Age reported Wednesday.

Khalid Firoz, president of the chamber, urged the governments of both countries “to sign FTA without further delay.”

Khalid said Bangladesh businessmen should also take an aggressive strategy to explore and expand in Pakistan.

The president of the chamber, the largest business association in Pakistan, said during their eight-day visit that they would study industrial sectors where joint ventures could be set-up. Export-oriented ready made garment sector in Bangladesh is a market with very much potential for Pakistani textile raw material producers, said a member of the delegation.

SAIF Zone beckons investments from India

Chennaï, 31 March—Sharjah Airport International Free Zone (SAIF), the first airport free zone in the United Arab Emirates, is on an aggressive marketing campaign to lure Indian companies to set up operations there.

Sager Al Qassemi, its Deputy Director General, in a presentation to corporates here, claimed SAIF Zone was an ideal hub for all type of businesses, which required fast, efficient and trouble-free working environment.

He said Indian companies constitute 48 per cent of the 1,612 companies in the zone. Leading firms like Godrey, Zee, Ashok Leyland, Infosys, Mahindra and ICICI Infotech have established their businesses in the zone, which has an area of 15 million square metres.

“About 55 per cent of the space is occupied,” Qassemi told reporters, adding that SAIF Zone was keen to have more investments from India.

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The remaining loans will come from the China Construction Bank, Bank of China, Agricultural
Blood is thicker than water

Aung Thein (Dawei)

The Shan nationals' insurgers' political slogans depicted the echoing of the Shan sawbwas “the framing of Constitution based on federal system, and establishment of a Shan republic.”

Yet, the Tatmadaw had already realized the incidents from the very beginning to the very end, and so it had to take over the State power from the Pa-Hta-Sa Government so as to avoid disintegration of the Union.

China launches “green storm” against forest destruction

BEIJING, 1 April — The State Forestry Administration (SFA) released a blacklist of 10 major cases of forest destruction since 2003 on Wednesday, vowing a national campaign to crack down on deforestation.

The 75-day-long campaign, which is organized jointly by the SFA and the Ministry of Public Security, is designed to “clean up” all the major cases of deforestation, said Lei Jiafu, SFA’s deputy director-general.

The 10 violators are accused of stealing forestland to build railways, highways, reservoirs and mines or poaching endangered wildlife. The SFA has set up special work teams to promote and supervise the investigation and handling of the cases, said Lei.

“The results will be released in June,” he said, adding that governmental efforts to curb illegal logging have shifted from individual violators to violations by businesses and the government.

During the period from 1999 to 2003, more than 10 million hectares of forestland were misused and the annual illegally-logged timber volume exceeded 75 million cubic metres, SFA statistics show.

Local governments’ greed and ineffective supervision of the forestry department were blamed as the major reasons for increasing deforestation violations in recent years.

US accusation of China’s human rights denounced

BEIJING, 1 April — “The United States should stop using human rights as an excuse to interfere into other countries’ internal affairs and pay more attention to its own human rights problems,” Foreign Ministry Spokesman Liu Jianchao said here Wednesday.

Liu said the American side should change its human rights denounced manner to practice human rights as it advocates. He said the Chinese government would like to make contributions to global human rights.

Phyo: Openly, it was just an attempt to secede from the Union with reference to Section 202 of the 1947 Constitution of the Union of Myanmar, which said that 10 years after the nation had regained independence, a state could secede from the Union if it wanted to. Shan State proposed the federal principle with the aim of safeguarding itself from the Union.

Phyo: What happened next?

Phyo: In 1959, the ruling government compensated the sawbwas for their relinquishing of power. However, they weren’t satisfied with the government at all. The Nyaungshwe Sawbwa, the very first president of Myanmar, was absent from the ceremony to relinquish power and privileges and he even accused the other sawbwas of selling out the Shan State. Prior to the ceremony, they secretly recruited local people and stockpiled arms and ammunition to put into motion the resolution of Mongyai conference. There broke out the armed revolt of Shan nationals against the government, following the ceremony to relinquish power and privileges in November in 1959.

Phyo: What makes you say so, and do you have any evidences?

Phyo: Certainly! If in doubt, you can study the book “Myanmar Politics volume IV (1958-62) published by the Novels and Periodicals Enterprise. The conference of the Shan sawbwas held at Mongyai in 1956 passed a resolution to establish a Shan republic after seceding from the Union. They again held the conference in Lashio in 1957 and reaffirmed the agreement and also passed a resolution that they would resort to the armed revolt if the case did not make any progress. At the meeting of Shan State Council in Taunggyi on 18 May 1958, the chairman of Shan State, also the former foreign affairs minister, said that the
**Advanced and Basic Tailoring Courses conclude in States and Divisions**

**YANGON**, 1 April — The Advanced Tailoring Course No 10 and the Basic Tailoring Course No 38 concluded at the hall of Women’s Vocational Training School in Lashio this morning.

Chairman of Shan State (North) Peace and Development Council Commander of North-East Command Maj-Gen Myint Hlaing spoke on the occasion. A total of six trainees attended the advanced course and 49 at the basic course. Similarly, the ceremony to conclude the Advanced Tailoring Course No 10 and the Basic Tailoring Course No 38 was held at the Women’s Vocational Training School in Kengtong, with an address by Chairman of Shan State (East) Peace and Development Council Commander of Triangle Command Maj-Gen Khin Zaw.

Altogether 14 trainees attended the advanced course and 21 at the basic course.

Chairman of Trainer’s Division Peace and Development Council Commander of Coastal Region Command Maj-Gen Ohn Myint delivered an address at the concluding ceremony of the Advanced Tailoring Course No 9 and the Basic Tailoring Course No 38 at the Women’s Vocational Training School in Myeik. Seven trainees attended the advanced course and 34, the basic one.

Likewise, Advanced Tailoring Courses and the Basic Tailoring Courses concluded at the Women’s Vocational Training Schools in Muse, Mongbsat, Taichilek, Loksaw, Hpa-an, Myawady, Yezawthong and Taungtaw. — MNA

**Regional development course concludes**

**YANGON**, 1 April — Special course No 4 on regional development concluded at Central Institute of Civil Service (Phaunggyi) in Hlegu Township, Yangon Division, today, with an address by Deputy Minister for Home Affairs Brig-Gen Phone Swe. The deputy minister also presented certificates to the trainees. Deputy ministers, the deputy attorney-general, members of Civil Service Selection and Training Board, the CICS rector and officials were also present.

The trainees also presented cash donations for the Lawa Chantha Abaya Labha Muni Pagoda and Koeinwin Pagoda. — MNA

**Thitseint oil produced, Thitseint saplings planted**

**YANGON**, 1 April — Under the supervision of the Chairman of Shan State (South) Peace and Development Council Commander of Eastern Command, the production of Thitseint oil was held in conjunction with the ceremony to plant Thitseint saplings (Beleric myrobalan) at the local battalion in Mongnai on 24 March. Brig-Gen Thaung Aye of Mongnag station spoke on the occasion. Next, Brig-Gen Thaung Aye and wife presented seeds of Thitseint to regional departments and units, departments concerned and social organizations.

These present viewed milling of Thitseint seeds to produce Thitseint oil. Later, Brig-Gen Thaung Aye and wife together with local people planted Thitseint saplings. — MNA

**Meeting to host Workshop and Exhibitions on Traditional Handicraft of ASEAN and ROK held**

**YANGON**, 1 April — A coordination meeting to host Workshop and Exhibitions on Traditional handicraft of ASEAN and Republic of Korea will be hosted in Myanmar in 2005. It is necessary to organize sub-committees and prepare for displaying Myamna handicraft.

Participants at the meeting took part in the discussions. Also present at the meeting were Deputy Minister for Culture Maj-Gen Kyi Aung, delivering an address, saying that the Workshop and Exhibitions on Traditional handicraft of ASEAN and Republic of Korea will be hosted in Myanmar in 2005. It is necessary to organize sub-committees and prepare for displaying Myamna handicraft. — MNA
Htidaw hoisted atop
Mapontthaung Botahtaung
Pagoda in Pyay

YANGON, 1 April — A ceremony to hoist Htidaw atop Mapontthaung Botahtaung Pagoda in Pokhlaung Ward of Pyay was held at the pagoda on 24 March.

Chairman of Bago Division (West) Sangha Nayaka Committee Sayadaw Bhaddanta Vepulla administered the Five Precepts.

Chairman of Bago Division (West) Peace and Development Council Brig-Gen Hla Min and wife, officials and wellwishers conveyed Seinbudaw, Hngetmyatnadaw and Htidaw round the pagoda. Next, they conveyed them atop the pagoda. — MNA

Licences of Myanmar May Flower Bank, Asia Wealth Bank withdrawn
Refunding of deposits will be commenced beginning 4 April
State-owned banks, other private banks conduct banking business as usual

YANGON, 1 April — The Ministry of Finance and Revenue issued an announcement on 1 April 2005. The full text of the announcement is as follows.

In accordance with the 1990 Financial Institutions of Myanmar Law, Myanmar May Flower Bank and Asia Wealth Bank had been granted licence to operate banking business in 1994 and 1995 respectively.

After due investigation, these two banks are found not complying with the Financial Institutions of Myanmar Law and Rules, as such licence to operate banking business, issued to them have been withdrawn with effect from 31 March, 2005.

After withdrawing the banking licence, the Central Bank of Myanmar appoints the administrators to these two banks and their branches to undertake the refunding of deposits. In order to refund the deposits smoothly and without delay, the depositors will be refunded at the banks and branches, where they have initially deposited. In refunding the deposits, the customers’ account numbers and the date to withdraw from their accounts will be posted on the notice boards at the respective banks and branches. Refunding of deposits will be commenced from Monday, 4 April 2005.

Persons who are liable to Myanmar May Flower Bank and Asia Wealth Bank concerning loans and overdraft, credit card and other outstanding liabilities are required to contact the respective banks and their branches and to settle their liabilities immediately. Failure to do so, they will be taken action under the existing laws.

As mentioned above, action is taken against only Myanmar May Flower Bank and Asia Wealth Bank in accordance with the Financial Institutions of Myanmar Law and it does not concern with other private banks.

State-owned banks and other private banks will conduct banking business as usual. — MNA

Yangan airport being extended

YANGON, 1 April — Minister for Transport Maj-Gen Thein Swe and Minister for Finance and Revenue Maj-Gen Hla Tun and Minister for Transport Maj-Gen Thein Swe inspect functions of X ray machine at Yangon International Airport. — MNA

Bayintnaung Food Centre (Restaurant & Hot Pot) opened

YANGON, 1 April — Bayintnaung Food Centre (Restaurant & Hot Pot) was opened at the restaurant on Parami Road in Hline Township yesterday evening.

Minister for Finance and Revenue Maj-Gen Hla Tun and Minister for Transport Maj-Gen Thein Swe inspect functions of X ray machine at Yangon International Airport. — MNA

Yunnan barbecue, hot pot and various kinds of juice are available at the restaurant from 9 am to 11 pm daily. — MNA
Earthquake occurs in Manado of Indonesia

JAKARTA, 1 April — An earthquake measuring 5.3 on the Richter Scale rocked Indonesia’s eastern city of Manado late Wednesday, Meteorology and Geophysics Office spokesman Rahmat said here on Thursday.

Rahmat said the epicenter of the earthquake was in the Banda Sea, some 188 kilometres southeast of Manado in North Sulawesi Province, at a depth of 100 kilometres. It was believed the tremor was not related to Monday’s disastrous earthquake which rocked the western coast of Sumatra Island.

Wednesday’s tremor also caused widespread panic among the local residents, many of them were seen to scramble out of their homes for safe places, according to the official news agency Antara. However, there has been no reports of damage or casualty.

More than 400 people have been killed and hundreds others remained missing after a powerful earthquake with a magnitude of 8.7 rocked the Indonesian Islands of Nias and Simeulue late Monday.

Meanwhile, an earthquake with a magnitude of 5.5 rocked the city of Malang in East Java Province at the night of March 15.

There have been a series of earthquakes in the country in the past months including the powerful one that jolted Aceh on 26 December, last year which caused tsunami waves killing some 230,000 people in Aceh and North Sumatra provinces.

China-ASEAN Expo to open in Oct in S-W China

NANNING, 1 April — The second China-ASEAN Expo will be held in October in Nanning, capital of southwest China’s Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, the Expo secretariat said Wednesday.

After consulting with each of the ten ASEAN members, the Chinese Ministries of Commerce decided to advance the date to 19-22 October to avoid overlapping with the Festival of Fast-Breaking, which falls on 3 November this year. The first China-ASEAN Expo was jointly hosted by the two sides on 3-5 November last year, also in Nanning.

According to the secretariat, the second Expo will have about 3,500 international stands, 1,000 more stalls than the first. It will be held in the Nanning International Exhibition Centre, scheduled to be completed in June.

The centre is designed to hold 15 inside showrooms, covering an area of 50,000 square metres.

China and the ASEAN are preparing to forge free trade area (FTA) in 2010, which will be the world’s third-largest FTA, following the European Union and the North American Free Trade Agreement. It will cover 1.7 billion people and have a two-trillion-US-dollar gross domestic product and a 1.2-trillion-US-dollar trade volume.

Vote on UNSC expansion proposed

NEW YORK, 1 April— Germany, Japan, India and Brazil, the four main competitors for new permanent seats on an expanded Security Council, proposed on Thursday putting the issue of enlarging the powerful UN organ to a vote in the 191-nation General Assembly.

The four countries put forward the proposal in a joint statement, which was read out by German Ambassador to the UN Gunter Pleuger at a rally at the Millennium Hotel across the UN Headquarters in New York.

Citing UN Secretary-General Koofi Annan’s report on UN reforms, the statement said a failure to reach consensus should not become an excuse for postponing Security Council reforms.

“It should also be recalled that the decision to expand the non-permanent category (of seats on the Security Council) in 1963 was made by a vote,” the statement added.

It reiterated that Germany, Japan, India and Brazil viewed themselves as “legitimate candidates” for permanent membership in an expanded Security Council.

The four countries, which formed an alliance in September 2004 to back each other’s bid for a new Council permanent seat, also proposed a three-step procedure for completing the Council’s enlargement.

Under the proposal, the General Assembly would adopt a framework resolution by summer and then select new permanent members before passing another resolution to amend the United Nations Charter.

A draft framework resolution attached to the statement called for increasing six new permanent Security Council members and three or four new non-permanent members.

In a sign of a softening stance on the veto issue, the four countries said in the draft that the question of the veto “should not be a hindrance to achieving Security Council reform”.

The Security Council, the only UN organ whose decisions are legally binding on world governments, is currently composed of five veto-holding permanent members — China, Russia, Britain, the United States and France — and 10 elected two-year-term members.

Pakistan, Italy and other countries, which are strongly opposed to the increase of permanent seats on the Council, have already submitted a rival to the 12 April.

Susilo calls for greater relief efforts after Indonesian quake

NIAS ISLAND (Indonesia), 1 April — Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono visited earthquake-hit Nias Island Thursday, calling for all the concerned parties to participate in the emergency relief effort.

“Let us jointly conduct humanitarian activities for the people,” Susilo told a Press briefing after viewing damage caused to Nias in pouring rain.

Hundreds of people were killed on Nias and surrounding islands when an 8.7-magnitude earthquake struck on Monday. Bodies were still being dug from the ruins three days after the disaster.

Indonesia’s Government had sent logistics and equipment for the victims of the March 28 quake but damage to the airport and roads has made distribution of aid difficult.

Susilo said that despite a string of natural disasters under his brief tenure, including the devastating Indian Ocean tsunami which left 220,000 Indonesians dead or missing, he was steadfast in his resolve.

“I will be responsible. I will persevere and continue to do my job which has been mandated by the people. Regardless of what has taken place, I must be responsible in solving this. We can settle them if we face it together,” he said.

Indonesian Social Services Minister Bachtari Chamsjah told the Press briefing that 279 people have been confirmed dead on Nias so far and the figure could reach 500.

Indonesian officials said that 109 local residents have been hospitalized in nearby cities and the authorities will evacuate the victims over the next two weeks.

ASEAN Parliamentarians in Manila to fight against corruption

MANILA, 1 April — Parliamentarians from across the ASEAN countries gathered here Thursday here for a two-day conference aimed at setting up a legislative body for combating corruption in the region.

The conference, formally named Southeast Asian Parliamentarians Against Corruption (SEAPAC), will discuss the United Nations convention against corruption.

Philippine Senator Edgardo J Angara, who is the head of the conference, told the local media that it is an opportunity for South East Asian Nations and Pacific parliaments to adopt the UN convention and there is a consensus among ASEAN parliamentarians to forge broad cooperative agreements to combat corruption.

China-ASEAN Exports in the early stage.

The State Food and Control, released the information during an interview with journalists.

If the volunteers regarded abnormal physical condition, emergency treatment will likely be conducted to ensure their safety, said Chen.

In all, 49 volunteers aged from 18 to 50 will participate in the tests, the first of their kind in China. Phase One will last 14 months. Phase Two will focus on tests on immune nature and safety of the vaccine.

The State Food and Drug Administration (SFDA) approved a two-day conference aimed at setting up a legislative body for combating corruption in the region.

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China is Nepal’s reliable friend

KATHMANDU, 1 April — Nepali King Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev said on Thursday that China is a reliable friend of Nepal.

“Our two countries need to strengthen the exchange and cooperation in various fields in order to push the Nepal-China friendship to a new height,” King Gyanendra told visiting Chinese Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxiong, who arrived here Thursday on a two-day official visit to Nepal.

“Nepal firmly supports the one-China policy of your government and will never allow any anti-China activities in Nepal’s territory,” the King said while receiving Li in audience at the Narayanhiti Royal Palace.

Nepal appreciates and supports the important role that China has been playing in the international affairs, Gyanendra added.

Li Zhaoxiong said, through his visit, the Nepali friends will certainly realize how the Chinese Government and people attach importance to the Sino-Nepal friendship and cooperation.

He expressed appreciation for Nepal’s longstanding support on the issues of Taiwan and Tibet.

Earlier the day, Li held official talks with his Nepali counterpart Foreign Minister Ramesh Nath Pandey on bilateral matters, including economic cooperation, trade and tourism, and matters of mutual interest.

The nine-member Chinese delegation led by Li signed an agreement with the Nepali side on dispatching a Chinese team to study yuan/about construction of the Conservation Research Centre under the King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation.

Li will pay courtesy calls Friday morning on Tulsir Giri and Kirti Nidhi Bista, vice-chairmen of the Council of Ministers, or Cabinet.

The Chinese Foreign Minister’s visit is on the eve of the golden jubilee of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Nepal on 1 August.

N-E China province to build new industrial corridor

BEIJING, 1 April — Northeast China’s Heilongjiang Province will build an industrial corridor along its southwestern cities of Harbin, Daqing and Qiqihar to boost the local economy and attract more foreign investment, said Governor Zhang Zaoji.

Speaking here Thursday morning at the Press conference of the 16th China Harbin Fair for Trade and Economic Cooperation, the official said the provincial government’s decision to build the industrial corridor was made following the central government’s long-term strategy of revitalizing the old northeastern industrial base.

The Harbin-Daqing-Qiqihar Industrial Corridor will cover 800 square kilometres and will be completed by 2020.

It will be a comprehensive industrial park with industries of petro-chemistry, energy, automobile, electronics, telecommunication, and medicine and food.

The official said the new industrial corridor will serve as a good platform to develop Heilongjiang’s foreign trade, especially with Russia, and the processing business.

Centred around the three cities, the industrial belt will be built after the transformation and development of the area’s saline-alkali land, swamps and some unexploited land, rather than taking up the farmland, Zhang said.

He said the area measures 120,000 square kilometres and has about 20 million population.

The three cities have 40 universities and colleges, 72 per cent of the province’s total.

The official said the abundant human resources of science and technology, in addition to the huge labour force, will be greatly helpful to build the industrial corridor.

According to the provincial statistical bureau, the gross domestic product of Heilongjiang was about Rmb30.3 billion yuan (5.6 billion US dollars) last year, rising 11.7 per cent year-on-year.

The 16th China Harbin Fair for Trade and Economic Cooperation is scheduled to be held from 15 to 19 June in the provincial capital city of Harbin.

N-E China province to build new industrial corridor

Bangladesh to double tea production with high yielding variety

DHAKA, 1 April — Bangladesh experts have developed a high yielding variety of tea, and expected to double the country’s tea production in a decade.

An official from the Bangladesh Tea Research Institute (BTRI) Thursday told Xinhua their scientists have successfully crossed a local low growing tea with a high yielding variety of tea plant brought from India.

It took eight years for the agri-experts to accomplish the task, said the BTRI official, adding the newly evolved “BT-16” species is much improved and some 3,000 to 4,000 kilograms of tea can be produced in each hectare of land from the cloned tea trees, making two and a half time of the present production rate.

He said the cloned variety would almost double the tea production of Bangladesh to 120 million kilos from the current 54 million kilos, as most of the 64 tea garden owners of Bangladesh will plant this variety.

It will help regain the country’s leading tea exporter glory, which has been eroded with low quality and shortfall in production.

During the 1990s Bangladesh was among the world’s top tea exporters with exporting, accounting for 2 per cent of global exports. The exports, however, had started to fall due to rise in the domestic consumption.

Tea consumption in Bangladesh is increasing by 3 per cent per annum, but its production is increasing 1 per cent only.

Experts held that if the tea consumption growth rate continues, in 2020, tea consumption will reach 65 million kilos while its production will reach only to 54.1 million kilos, making Bangladesh become a tea-importing country.

China’s first dictionary on world’s diplomacy published

BEIJING, 1 April — A two-volume Chinese dictionary on world diplomacy was published here Wednesday after 14 years of preparation.

“Compiling a dictionary like this is a tough job that involves arduous academic innovation and steadfast efforts in scholarly research,” wrote renowned Chinese diplomat Qian Qichen, Chief Editor of the dictionary, in the foreword.

The dictionary, with 14,000 entries and approximately eight million words, is considered China’s first and authoritative dictionary on diplomacy.

It covers diplomatic information from general knowledge to world affairs in every historical period, particularly the diplomacy of various countries, multilateral relations, and issues of general interest after World War II. Over 190 countries are included in the dictionary.

Patients treated in hot spring pond in Nepal

KATHMANDU, 1 April — More and more patients, especially tourists, are taking a dip in a pond of natural hot spring in western Nepal with a hope to get treatment for diseases.

The number of people visiting Tatopani has exceeded 10,000 so far this year, Dev Bahadur KC, secretary of the pond management committee, told reporters Wednesday.

Last fiscal year, about 20,000 tourists visited the pond in Tatopani, near Beni Bazaar, the capital town of Myagdi District, some 250 kilometres west of Kathmandu, he said.

The hot water which originates from its source at temperatures from 32 to 58 degrees Celsius is believed to treat many diseases like gastro-enteritis, skin diseases and asthma, he noted.

The pond has a capacity to accommodate 150 people at a time and three groups of women and two groups of men take a dip in a pond at least for two hours every day, he added.

A pond has a capacity to accommodate 150 people at a time and three groups of women and two groups of men take a dip in a pond at least for two hours every day, he added.
Uganda’s literacy rate up to 68%

KAMPALA, 31 March — Ugandan Primary Yoweri Museveni on Wednesday said that the literacy rate in the East African country has risen to 68 per cent from about 50 per cent in 1986.

President Museveni made the remarks when meeting a delegation of 48 principals of Primary Teacher College in Uganda. He said that the recent report showed an upward shift to 68 per cent literacy rate as compared to about 50 per cent in 1986.

He pointed out that his government strongly believes in educational change and that is why it deliberately introduced the Universal Primary Education (UPE) programme to enable the majority of Ugandans to attain basic education that would eventually cause transformation in the society.

MNA/Xinhua

US panel on intelligence to recommend more dissent within agencies

WASHINGTON, 31 March — A US presidential commission on Tuesday issued a report calling for more dissent within the nation’s spy agencies.

The report was presented by President George W. Bush in a report to be made public Thursday, the panel will recommend a series of changes intended to encourage more dissent within the nation’s spy agencies.

In the report, which would be released Friday, the president envisions the centre as a facilitating body and urges the government to keep its specialists dispersed in various intelligence agencies.

The report said that the net result, according to officials, would be to move away from the intelligence community’s tradition of searching for consensus, in favour of opening up internal debate and including a more diverse spectrum of views.

The goal is to provide policymakers a fuller understanding of the state of the government’s knowledge.

The commission report offers a scathing re-evaluation of the CIA, concluding that Saddam Hussein had secret weapons that ultimately were never found, while also taking aim at the FBI, the Defence Intelligence Agency, the National Security Agency and other agencies, according to officials.

Bush was briefed on the report Tuesday by aides who have reviewed it. White House Press Secretary Scott McClellan praised the report as “a very thorough job” and suggested that Bush would adopt many, though not necessarily all, of its ideas.

France reaffirms support for Annan

PARIS, 31 March — French Foreign Ministry reaffirmed Tuesday its “full support and entire confidence” for UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan ahead of the publication of a report on the oil-for-food programme in Iraq.

“As for Kofi Annan’s work in general as Secretary-General of the United Nations, I can tell you that we offer him our full support and confidence,” said French Foreign Ministry’s Spokesman Jean-Baptiste Mattei.

The Wall Street Journal reported Friday that a report, which would be published Tuesday, directly questioned Annan for some mistakes, involving his son Kojo and a company contracted by the United Nations.

MNA/Xinhua
Damage to ecosystems harms human health

GENEVA, 31 March — A new report warns that the erosion of ecosystems could lead to an increase in the incidence of existing diseases, such as malaria and cholera, as well as in the risk of new diseases to emerge, the World Health Organization (WHO) said here Wednesday.

The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA) synthesis report shows that some 60 per cent of the benefits that the global ecosystem provides to support life on the earth are being degraded or used unsustainably, WHO said in a Press release.

In the report, scientists warn that harmful effects of this degradation on human health are already being felt and could grow significantly worse over the next 50 years. “Ecosystems are the planet’s life-support system. They are fundamental to human health and indispensable to the well-being of all people everywhere in the world,” said Kerstin Leitner, WHO assistant director-general for sustainable development and healthy environments, head of the MA Board.

“One of the striking and over-arching conclusions of this assessment lies in the fundamental need to ensure ecological sustainability to safeguard ecosystems and therefore protect human health in the long-term,” said Carlos Corvalan, a WHO scientist who contributed to the MA report.

Poll shows many Americans sleep poorly

WASHINGTON, 31 March — Many Americans do not sleep well, and this affects their work quality and driving safety, showed a poll released on Tuesday.

The survey by the National Sleep Foundation found that American adults get an average of 6.9 hours of sleep a night, short of the 7-9 hours the adults get an average of in Tuesday.

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Boca Juniors wants Maradona to be its “ambassador”

BUENOS AIRES, 31 March — The president of Argentine soccer club Boca Juniors, Mauricio Macri, will meet next week with former soccer star Diego Maradona to offer him the charge of “sports ambassador”, club sources said on Wednesday.

“Diego has the doors of Boca open. This institution wants him not to directly feel the pressure surrounding soccer,” said Wednesday the former boss of Boca, Orlando Salvestrini.

Salvestrini would be in charge of giving a legal form to the future ties with the Maradona — who played for the club in 1981 and in 1995-1997 - also said that the main duty of the soccer legend would be to accompany the club in its tours.

“The importance of Maradona’s image is incalculable. Today he appears in magazine covers, in Venezuela with personalities like Hugo Chavez, Luis (Lula) Silva and Jose(Rodrigo Zapatero), which is a small token of what this personality represents,” added Salvestrini. — MNA/Xinhua

Peruvian media criticizes draw against Ecuador

LIMA, 1 April — Peru’s sports Press criticized the 2-2 draw against Ecuador and lamented that the national team lost three important points to qualify for Germany 2006.

“Father away from Germany, The road for the World Cup has become complicated,” "No comments,” were some of the headlines of local dailies.

Analysts considered that Brazilian coach Autoiri lacked of capacity to change the impolitve game of his players, which played in a disorderly fashion lacking of precision. The Peruvians started with a 1-0 advantage 40 seconds into the game and ended the first half with a 2-1 advantage. Peru lost three key points and its possibilities to qualify have become more difficult, said the analysts. Although the locals controlled the game longer than Ecuador, the Peruvians were not precise and the defence allowed Ecuadorian counterattacks.

Ecuador, who had not gotten any point in their matches as visitors, regained 2-2 in the 25th and closer to qualification to Germany 2006. Although Peru moved from the ninth to seventh with 14 points, needing urgent victories to keep their hopes.

The last occasion when Peru qualified to a World Cup was in Spain 1982.

Sharapova defeats Williams to make final

WASHINGTON, 1 April — Russian Maria Sharapova edged Venus Williams 6-4, 6-3 in the women’s semifinals Thursday to seal the Nadsq-100 Open final at Key Biscayne in Miami. The 17-year-old Sharapova, No. 2-seeded, will on Saturday play the winner of the late match Thursday between unseeded Kim Clijsters and Amelie Mauresmo, who can regain the No. 1 ranking by winning the title.

Sharapova edged out the tightest of first sets when errors began to creep into Williams’ game as she served at 4-5 down.

Sharapova went from strength to strength in the second, breaking Williams to go 2-0 up and she remained ahead until she served for match at 5-3.

In a long and dramatic ninth game, Sharapova was forced to save her first breakpoints of the match as Williams fought to stay in the tournament, which spent 80 minutes.

Maria Sharapova celebrates after defeating Venus Williams. — Internet

Azerbaijan coach blames Owen as “shoddy midget”

LONDON, 1 April — England striker Michael Owen hit back on Thursday after Azerbaijan coach Carlos Alberto blamed him as “shoddy midget”.

The Brazilian, who led his country to World Cup success in 1970, chided Owen in a bizarre 10-minute post-match rant after his Azerbaijan side lost 2-0 to England in a World Cup qualifier at St James’ Park on Wednesday.

Alerto, claimed by pre-match reports into believing Owen had predicted a five-goal salvo, asked: “Who is this midget anyway, what has he ever won?”

Owen responded with a statement, saying: “If he checks my pre-match quotes he will realize that I never said anything about scoring five goals — I would never be so disrespectful.

“He would, though, be perfectly within his rights to criticize my performance — I’ve certainly had better games in an England shirt.

Fortunately I am a mentally strong person and believe I will learn from the experience and continue to improve as a player and person because of it,” he said.

Roger Federer from Switzerland hits a forehand shot against Tim Henman from England during their quarter finals match at the Nasdaq-100 tennis tournament in Key Biscayne, Florida, on 31 March, 2005. — Internet

BOCOG launches Olympic sponsorship programme

BEIJING, 1 April — The Beijing Organizing Committee for the 2008 Olympic Games (BOCOG) launched on Thursday its campaign to seek sponsors for the games.

“As our work of seeking partners nearly came to a successful close, we are entering the second phase of Olympic marketing programme,” Yuan Bin, director of BOCOG’s marketing department, told a Press conference.

BOCOG’s marketing plan includes partnership, sponsorship and licensing programmes. Partnership and sponsorships grant enterprises four-year exclusive marketing and promotion rights, while the licensing programme authorize companies to produce and sell products with the official Olympic logo only after paying royalties to BOCOG.

To date, BOCOG has signed seven partners for the 2008 Games. They are German automobile giant Volkswagen, Sinopek, Bank of China, China Mobile, China Netcom, sportswear manufacturer Adidas and Air China.

Yuan said that several enterprises are in talks with BOCOG over the possibility of cooperation.

“We are likely to sign one or two partners in the near future,” she said. “But sponsorship programmes is the focus of our work from now on.”

Yuan refused to reveal the amount of money companies should pay if they want to join the Olympic sponsorship programme, only saying it might be less than that for an Olympic partner. Insiders say that an Olympic partner should be worth 50 million US dollars.

White goods, office supply, logistics, tyres, tourism service are listed as the categories in which potential Olympic sponsors come from.

Greece refuses to privatize any Olympic venues

ATHENS, 1 April — Greek Government refused to sell off any of its Olympic venues to offset runaway Olympic costs in a long-awaited plan for the post-Olympic use announced here Wednesday.

Fani Petralia, Greek Deputy Culture Minister responsible for the government’s Olympic prepartations, announced that none of the facilities would be sold, while the world-class facilities would only be leased or opened for commercial use or converted into conference centres, museums and academies.

“Nothing is for sale and nothing will be sold,” she told reporters at a ceremony where she presented the draft legislation to the Olympic Stadium complex.

“Our policy for the utilization of the Olympic properties will be to ensure that the money spent by the tax payer is not lost,” she said.

“Profit must be realized from the stadiums used for the Olympic Games, which bears the price tag of about 10 billion euros, the most expensive in Olympic history.” — MNA/Xinhua
WEATHER

Friday, 1 April, 2005

Summary of observations recorded at 09:30 hours MST: During the past 24 hours, light rain or thundershowers have been isolated in Kachin State and upper Sagaing Division, scattered in Taninthayi Division and weather has been generally fair in the remaining areas. The noteworthy amount of rainfall recorded was Dawei (0.20) inch. Day temperatures were (3°C) below normal in Kachin State, (5°C) below normal in upper Sagaing Division, (3°C) to (4°C) above normal in Shan and Mon States, Bago, Yangon and Ayeyawady Divisions, (5°C) to (6°C) above normal in Kayin State, Mandalay and Magway Divisions and about normal in the remaining areas. The significant day temperatures were Magway (44°C), Hpa-an and Minbu (42°C) each.

Maximum temperature on 31-3-2005 was 102°F. Minimum temperature on 1-4-2005 was 67°F. Relative humidity at 9:30 hrs MST on 1-4-2005 was 73%. Total sunshine hours on 31-3-2005 was (10.1) hours approx. Rainfalls on 1-4-2005 were nil at Yangon Airport, Kaba-Aye and central Yangon. Total rainfalls since 1-1-2005 were (0.59 inch) at Yangon Airport, (1.54 inches) at Kaba-Aye and nil at central Yangon. Maximum wind speed at Yangon (Kaba-Aye) was (10 mph) from West at (15:10) hours MST on 31-3-2005.

Bay influence: Weather is partly cloudy to cloudy in the Andaman Sea and South Bay and generally fair elsewhere in the Bay of Bengal.

Forecast valid until evening of 2-4-2005: Possibility of isolated light rain or thundershowers in Kachin, Mon States, upper Sagaing and Taninthayi Divisions and weather will be partly cloudy in Shan, Kayin States, Ayeyawady, Yangon and Bago Divisions and generally fair in the remaining areas. Degree of certainty is (40%).

State of the sea: Seas will be slight to moderate in Myanmar waters.

Outlook for subsequent two days: Likelihood of isolated rain or thundershowers in Southern Myanmar areas.

Forecast for Yangon and neighbouring area for 2-4-2005: Partly cloudy.

Forecast for Mandalay and neighbouring area for 2-4-2005: Partly cloudy.

Weather outlook for first weekend of April, 2005: During the coming weekend, weather will be partly cloudy in Yangon and Mandalay Divisions.

Strong Wind Warning

(Issued on 1st April, 2005)

As the day temperatures rise markedly all over the country till the end of South-West monsoon, local strong winds are likely in the afternoon/evening over most of the areas. Surface wind speeds may reach (40) to (50) m.p.h accompanied at times by squalls and hail in some places.
YANGON, 1 April — The Yangon Division Supervisory Committee for Ensuring Smooth and Secure Transport held a coordination meeting at Yangon Command this evening.

Chairman of the Committee, Chairman of Yangon Division Peace and Development Council Commander of Yangon Command Maj-Gen Myint Swe delivered an address concerning smooth and secure transport for people and faculty members and students of universities.

Members of the Supervisory Committee took part in the discussions.

Deputy Minister for Industry-2 Lt-Col Khin Maung Kyaw explained process of converting buses to CNG powered vehicles. Later, the commander gave the concluding remarks. — MNA

YANGON, 1 April — A veneer factory of Bamaw Veneer Timber Products Co Ltd was inaugurated at No 3 Shwepyitha Industrial Zone, Shwepyitha Township, Yangon Division, this morning, attended by Minister for Forestry Brig-Gen Thein Aung.

Directors-general U Than Swe and U Tun Tun and Director Dr Tin Aung Latt of the company formally opened the factory. The minister unveiled the signboard.

An official of the company reported to the minister on the establishment of the factory, and plans to export veneer manufactured by the factory.

The minister and party observed the production process of the factory. — MNA

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YANGON, 1 April — Chairman of the Central Committee for Organizing the 42nd Myanma Gems Emporium Deputy Minister for Mines U Myint Thein this afternoon cordially greeted local and foreign gem merchants who were checking jade lots around the ground floor of Myanma Gems Mart.

The deputy minister viewed sales of jade lots through tender system and left the mart in the evening.

A total of 1,220 gem merchants — 792 merchants of 277 companies from 12 countries and 428 merchants of 233 local companies — have arrived at the 42nd Myanma Gems Emporium.

They are 656 gem merchants of 220 companies from China, 15 merchants of seven companies from Singapore, 91 merchants of 33 companies from Thailand, five merchants of two companies from England, four merchants of two companies from the US, four merchants of two companies from Japan, one merchant of one company from Sri Lanka, seven merchants of four companies from Canada, six merchants of three companies from India, one merchant of one company from Korea, one merchant of one company from Australia and one merchant of one company from Belgium.

Jade lots will be sold through tender and auction systems from 2 to 4 April. — MNA