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

Today is New Year Day of Myanmar for 1368 Myanmar Era. New Year Day is also a day for rejoicing, though in a different way, because we lavish in meritorious deeds by offering food to monks, nuns and the laity as well as offering water, flowers and joss sticks to the Buddha images.

Thingyan, perhaps, is the merriest of all such occasions, three or four days of water-fest preceding New Year Day when revelry draws to a close and the more solemn and religious side of seeking merit becomes very much evident.

On such an auspicious day, the entire people of Myanmar do wholesome deeds through their physical, verbal and mental actions. It is also customary for Buddhist devotees to visit the pagodas, pay obeisance and bathe the Buddha statues—acts of merits which have been perpetuated down through generations.

Myanmar New Year Day begins with the dawn feasting of monks, or a few hours later, followed by the freeing of fish and other life, the shampooing and bathing of the old, offering of natural fragrant bark scents and mani-curing.

Community welfare works such as dredging of wells and lakes, renovating of roads and bridges and sanitation tasks are also carried out along with the recitation of Parittas by members of the Sangha for the people to be free from all forms of dangers.

Such good deeds are a centuries-old heritage which we will have to continue to perpetuate, for, in the land of Theravada Buddhism, religion and good deeds go side by side, enriching the lives of the new generation with the embellishments provided by the old. It is also Myanmar tradition to share the merits following such meritorious deeds as offering food to the monks or donating cash and kind for the benefit of the infirm and the needy.

On the New Year Day today, let us all renew our resolve to redouble our efforts for peace, progress and prosperity not only of our Union, but also the region and the world.

Happy New Year.
More tourists expected during Khmer New Year

PHNOM PENH, 15 April — Tourism officials predict that most if not all of Cambodia’s 17,000 hotel rooms and 3,000 guest house rooms are booked this weekend for the Khmer New Year, local media reported on Saturday.

Tourism Ministry Secretary of State Thong Khon was quoted by The Cambodia Daily as saying that a 25-per-cent increase in foreign tourist arrivals has also been accompanied by a 20-per-cent increase this year in Cambodians travelling outside the country for recreation.

“I am sure that domestic travellers have caused all the hotels to be booked,” he said. “People have money, and there are good road links to resorts that are fully secured,” he added.

In the first three months of 2006, 460,000 tourists arrived in Cambodia, up 25 per cent from last year, Thong Khon said.

Ho Vandy, president of the Cambodian Association of Travel Agents (CATA), said that Sihamoukville Municipality and Siem Reap, Ratanakiri and Mondolkiri provinces were flooded for the Khmer New Year. Provincial authorities also put more travel police on alert during the holiday. A manager at Sihamoukville’s Golden Sand Hotel said all 112 rooms at the hotel were booked from 13 April to 16 April.

Bulgaria declares state of emergency in areas endangered by floods

SOFIA, 15 April — The Bulgarian Government had declared a state of emergency in some areas alongside the Danube, warning that the river could swell to record levels over the next few days, reported the Bulgarian Telegraph Agency on Thursday.

Twenty-two cities in seven states — Vidin, Montana, Vratza, Pleven, Veliko Tarnovo, Ruse and Silistra — are on high alert.

The situation in these areas was very serious, and some parts of Vidin had already been submerged by 20 to 80 centimetres of water, Bulgaria’s Maintenance and Research Agency of Danube was quoted as saying. Local authorities were ready to evacuate people in case of floods, the report added.

Owing to the floods from upper Hungary and Serbia and Montenegro, a surge is bearing down on the Bulgarian territory.

Malaysia mulling more serious warnings against smoking

KUALA LUMPUR, 15 April — Malaysia considers requiring cigarette manufacturers to print pictures showing serious negative influence of smoking, an official said on Friday.

Under the new regulations being drafted, it might be compulsory for cigarette companies to print new labels with clearer warnings before the year 2010, Health Ministry Parliamentary Secretary Lee Kah Choon said.

The new pictures or graphics could enhance public awareness on the health risks associated with smoking and persuade smokers to give up the habit, Lee told reporters in Penang state. — MNA/Xinhua

British soldier killed in Iraq

LONDON, 15 April — A British soldier was killed in a bomb blast in southern Iraq on Saturday, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) said.

The soldier died of injuries sustained in an attack involving an improvised explosive device. Three other soldiers were slightly injured.

Armed Forces Minister Adam Ingram said: “I was deeply saddened to hear of this incident; my thoughts and sympathies are with the families of all those concerned at this difficult time.” His next of kin have been informed but requested that his name be withheld until the wider family had been consulted.

“We regret to confirm a soldier from the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards died,” the MoD said. The death takes the number of British troops killed in Iraq since the March 2003 US-led invasion to 104. Of those, 79 were killed in action. No further details of the attack were being released. — Internet

In this photo released by China’s Xinhua News Agency, workers excavate the old tomb in Jiangning District in Nanjing, capital of east China’s Jiangsu Province, on 14 April, 2006. A 1,700-year old tomb belonging to the Six Dynasties (222-589) has been unearthed in Nanjing. — Internet

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— MNA/Xinhua
Chinese Defence Minister visits
Singapore’s Naval Base

SINGAPORE, 15 April — Visiting Chinese Defence Minister Cao Gangchuan visited Singapore’s Changi Naval Base on the east coast of the city state on Friday.

Cao, who is also vice-chairman of the Central Military Commission of China and a State Councillor, toured the Navy’s tactical training centre, which is a key part of the Naval Training Command, and was briefed on how the Navy operates.

He also boarded the RSS Endurance, a self-designed and built landing ship tank equipped with state-of-the-art technologies. It is the Republic of Singapore Navy’s largest class of ship.

Cao arrived here on Thursday for a three-day official goodwill visit to the city state at the invitation of his Singaporean counterpart Teo Chee Hean. He met with Singapore’s Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew and had a talk with Teo on Thursday.

MNA/Xinhua

Hospital performs first face transplant in China

XI’AN, 15 April — Doctors in northwest China have performed the country’s first face transplant, and the second such operation in the world.

President of the Xijing Hospital, in Xi’an, capital of Shaanxi Province, Zhang Yingzhi announced news of the transplant here on Friday.

“The surgery is even more complex than the first face transplant in France in November last year,” said Han Yan, deputy director with the hospital’s plastic surgery department.

The patient, Li Guoxing, 30, had two thirds of his face — mostly on the right side — replaced in an operation that lasted 14 hours and ended on Friday morning.

Surgeons in France carried out the world’s first such operation on a 38-year-old Isabelle Dinoire whose lips and nose were ripped off by a dog.

Li Guoxing was given a new cheek, upper lip, nose, and an eyebrow from a single donor.

Li’s face, nevertheless, had been marred when he was assaulted by a bear in 2004. He has since lived as a recluse because of his horrific disfigurement.

The hospital performed the surgery free of charge after learning of his plight and his poverty.

Li was recovering satisfactorily, said Guo Shuzhong, director of the plastic-surgery department, who performed the transplant.

However, it would take six months for feeling to be established in his new face, Guo said. He also needed to overcome psychological and ethical problems. “His wife may take a long time to adjust to his new face,” he said.

Guo said that the donor was male and had been declared brain-dead before the operation, but his next of kin had requested that no further information be published.

The Xijing Hospital successfully performed a facial skin transplant operation on a rabbit in December, transplanting half the skin tissue from a New Zealand rabbit on to a local animal.

A fortnight later, the rabbit was in good condition with the eye on the transplanted side blinking naturally, the hospital said.

About one million people in China suffer from severe facial disfigurements each year with at least 5 per cent suffering from inoperable conditions.

MNA/Xinhua

Cat in Germany saves baby’s life

BERLIN, 15 April — A cat saved the life of a newborn baby abandoned on the doorstep of a Cologne house in the middle of the night by meowing loudly until someone woke up, a police spokesman said on Saturday.

“The cat is a hero,” Cologne police spokesman Uwe Beier said. “Its loud meowing got the attention of the homeowner and saved the baby from suffering life-threatening hypothermia. The homeowner opened door to see why the cat was making so much noise and discovered the newborn.”

Beier said the boy was taken to hospital at 5 am on Thursday, when overnight temperatures fell towards zero, and had suffered only mild hypothermia. He said there was no indication of what happened to the boy’s mother.

MNA/Xinhua

Indian actress honoured at Milan Festival

MUMBAI (India), 15 April — It took months of learning the language but Indian movie star Sonali Kulkarni was able to slip into a role in an Italian movie.

Kulkarni won the best actress award at the recent Milan Film Festival for the Italian-language movie “Fuoco DSu Me” or “Fire On Me.” It took eight weeks of coaching for Kulkarni to learn enough Italian, since she didn’t want to merely mouth the dialogue in producer Sergio Scapagnini’s love story.

Kulkarni was spotted by Scapagnini more than 10 years ago when her first film, “Cheluvu” or “Flowering Tree,” was shown at the Cannes Film Festival. She then acted in his film “Vrindavan” before being called on for his new project.

She is known in Bollywood, India’s prolific movie industry, for wide-ranging roles in some 26 movies since her 1992 debut. Kulkarni has three more Indian movies in the cards and is in discussion with international filmmakers for European projects.

“I’ll never subtract my Indianess but I can look Spanish or French and it’s a challenge to play a variety of characters,” she said.

MNA/Xinhua

Bollywood actress Sonali Kulkarni in this undated file photo. It took months of work, learning Italian, studying Italian manners, but versatile Indian movie star Kulkarni was able to slip into her film role of a romantic, poetic Italian coral picker, she said on Thursday.

MNA/Xinhua
Report says Rumsfeld allowed Guantanamo abuse

WASHINGTON, 15 April — US Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld allowed an “abusive and degrading” interrogation of an al-Qaeda detainee in 2002, the online magazine Salon reported on Friday, citing an Army document.

In a report a Pentagon spokesman denounced as “fiction”, Salon quoted a December 2005 Army inspector-general’s report in which officers told of degrading and abusive treatment of detainees in Iraq.

Rumsfeld spoke regularly to Army Major-General Geoffrey Miller, a key figure in the treatment of detainees in Iraq and Guantanamo, during the interrogation of Mohammed al-Kahtani, a Saudi suspected to have been an intended on 11 September hijacker, the Salon report said.

Kahtani received “degrading and abusive” treatment by soldiers who were following the interrogation plan Rumsfeld had approved, Salon said, quoting the 391-page report, obtained through the Freedom of Information Act.

Over 54 days in late 2002, soldiers forced Kahtani to stand naked in front of a female interrogator, accused him of being a homosexual, forced him to wear women’s underwear and made him perform “dog tricks” on a leash, the Salon report said.

Salon cited Lieutenant-General Randall Schmidt, an Army investigator, as saying in a sworn statement to the inspector-general that “the secretary of defence is personally involved in the interrogation of one person”.

Schmidt is quoted as saying under oath that he concluded Rumsfeld did not specifically order the interrogation methods used on Kahtani, but that his approval of broad policies permitted abuses to take place.

Jeffrey Gordon, a Pentagon spokesman, dismissed the report’s allegation that Rumsfeld or the defence department condoned abuse.

“We’ve gone over this countless times and yet some still choose to print fiction versus facts,” Gordon said by telephone.

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Pakistan considering new bus service with India

ISLAMABAD, 15 April — Pakistan was holding talks with India to launch a new bus service to facilitate followers of the Sikh religion, a Cabinet minister said on Friday.

The bus service was to run between Hassanabad, a town some 40 kilometres northwest of Islamabad, and Amritsar, the capital of Indian Punjab, would allow Sikhs to directly travel to their religious site in Pakistan, Minister for Religious and Minority Affairs, Muhammad Ejaz-ul-Haq said.

The minister was addressing Sikhs at Hassanabad on the last day of the Sikh Religious Festival.

Ejaz said that the government was trying to issue multiple visas to Sikhs.

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Actor bipolar

BERLIN, 15 April — US actor John Travolta has been diagnosed with bipolar disorder as he was in filming the movie “Unknown Soldier” in Afghanistan, the German newspaper Bild said on Friday.

Travolta, who plays a soldier in the movie, which is due for release in the US this summer, is said to be under treatment for the condition.

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British troops hurt in Afghan suicide blast

KANDAHAR (Afghanistan), 15 April — Two British soldiers were wounded in a suicide car-bomb blast in Afghanistan on Friday, the latest in a string of attacks on foreign troops trying to bring peace to the country.

The attack happened near the entrance of a base used by foreign forces in Lashkar Gah, capital of the southern province of Helmand, a provincial official said.

“It was a suicide car attack and two foreign soldiers have been wounded,” said senior provincial official Mahmuuddin, who uses one name. The bomber was killed, he said.

A spokesman for Britain’s Defence Ministry said three people had suffered non-life-threatening wounds in the blast. Two of them were British soldiers, she said.

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Romania orders controlled flooding as Danube swells

FETESTI (Romania), 15 April — Romania will submerge thousands of hectares of farmland on the banks of the Danube to prevent the swollen river from flooding villages, Prime Minister Calin Tariceanu said on Friday.

Rising water levels have caused flooding or the threat of flooding in Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary and Serbia.

“We decided to pursue controlled flooding of farmland along the Danube to protect villagers who might be hit by rising waters,” Tariceanu told reporters after a Cabinet meeting.

He said the Danube could hit flow levels in the coming days not seen since 1895. The operation to submerge the farmland should begin within days, said a water department official.

About 90,000 hectares (222,400 acres) of fertile soil on a 400-kilometre (250-mile) stretch of the river will be flooded. Wheat and maize are cultivated on the river’s northern bank.

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Nigeria arrests man with 144 kilos of Indian hemp

LAGOS, 15 April — Nigeria’s anti-drug-trafficking unit in the northern state of Katsina has arrested a man seizing from him 144 kilos of Indian hemp, an official of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) said on Friday.

Alluji Ibrahim Sani, head of the NDLEA Katsina State Command, said the suspect was arrested by the combined team of NDLEA and police that raided the home of the peddler.

According to Sani, the suspect who would be prosecuted soon confessed that he was a salesman for a “notorious peddler” now at large.

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Employees of Serbian Rail on their way to work use a locomotive to pass through a flooded part of Belgrade’s main cargo train station on 14 April, 2006. Several towns in Serbia called for emergency measures to deal with floods while Dunav, Sava and Tisa rivers reached their peak levels. —INTERNET

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According to Sani, the suspect who would be prosecuted soon confessed that he was a salesman for a “notorious peddler” now at large.
Former officials warn against US attack on Iran

NEW YORK, 16 April — A US conflict with Iran could be even more damaging to America’s interests than the war with Iraq, former White House counterterrorism chief Richard Clarke wrote in Sunday’s New York Times.

In an op-ed article co-authored with Steven Simon, a former State Department official who also worked for the National Security Council, Clarke wrote reports that the Bush Administration is contemplating bombing nuclear sites in Iran raised concerns that “would simply begin a multi-move, escalatory process.”

Iran’s likely response would be to “use its terrorist network to strike American targets around the world, including inside the United States,” Clarke and Simon warned.

“Iran has forces as its command far superior to anything al-Qaeda was ever able to field,” they said, citing Iran’s links with the militant group al-Qaeda.

Iran could also make things much worse in Iraq, they wrote, adding “there is every reason to believe that Iran has such a retaliatory shock wave planned and ready.”

President George W. Bush might then sanction more bombing, Clarke and Simon said, hoping Iranians would overthrow the Teheran government. But “more likely, the American war against Iran would guarantee the regime decades more of control”.

The authors concluded by warning that “the parallels to the run-up to the war with Iraq are all too striking: remember that in May 2002 President Bush declared that there was ‘No war plan on my desk’ despite having actually spent months working on detailed plans for the Iraq invasion.”

Global temperatures may increase 3°C by 2100

LONDON, 16 April — Global temperatures are likely to rise by at least 3 degrees Celsius (5.4 degrees Fahrenheit) by the end of the century, said Britain’s chief scientific adviser, BBC radio reported on Friday.

Due to an atmospheric carbon dioxide level of 550 parts per million, “the temperature rise could well be in excess of 3 degrees Centigrade,” Sir David King in comments broadcast by BBC radio.

And 550 parts per million in the atmosphere is probably “the best” can be achieved, King added. A British Government report said a 3-degree increase would sharply increase drought and water shortages.

King also called for major global efforts to adapt to the effects of climate change.

Train, car collision kills six migrant workers in US

WASHINGTON, 16 April — A freight train collided with a sport utility vehicle in central United States, killing six migrant workers, authorities said.

The incident occurred on Thursday at a crossing of rail tracks and a county road near the town of Granada, Colorado.

Five of the six migrant workers, who were all from southern Texas and had been looking for work in Colorado for a week, died at the scene and another died in a Denver Hospital. The driver of the vehicle, a 15-year-old boy, was injured seriously. Railway spokesman Lena Kent said the crossing is marked by signs but no lights or gates.

Thailand’s rice exports to reach 7.5m tons this year

BANGKOK, 16 April — Thailand’s rice exports are likely to reach 7.5 million tons this year, earning the country around 2.3 billion US dollars, according to the Commerce Ministry.

Ruchane Potjanasuntorn, Director-General of the Ministry of Commerce’s Department of Foreign Trade, was quoted by the web edition of local newspaper Bangkok Post on Saturday as saying that the country’s targeted rice exports this year would be around 200,000 tons higher than the kingdom’s total rice exports last year.

He said Thailand had exported 1.87 million tons of rice from 1 January-3 April, 2006, worth around 595 million US dollars.

The average price of exported Thai rice is anticipated about 318 US dollars per ton, Rachane said.

Vietnam, Thailand’s main rival as a rice exporter, has set to export about 5 million tons of rice this year.

China starts to issue $3.87b book-entry T-bonds

BEIJING, 16 April — China on Friday began issuing 30.96 billion yuan (3.87 billion US dollars) worth of book-entry treasury bonds with terms of maturity of three years.

The T-bonds, the fourth batch of its kind issued this year, carry an annual interest rate of 2.12 per cent, the Ministry of Finance said in a statement. The interest of the T-bonds will be calculated from 17 April, the starting day of the retail sales of the bonds, and the issue will be completed by 20 April, said the ministry.

The ministry noted that the T-bonds are available to investors with accounts for investment in fund, share and bonds investment at China Securities Depository and Clearing Co or China Treasury Bonds Depository and Clearing Co.

13 dead, 39 missing in Colombian mudslide

BOGOTA, 16 April — A Colombia Government rescue team confirmed on Friday that 13 bodies had been recovered from under a large mudslide on the Cali-Buenaventura Road in the Valle del Cauca region, but added that 39 people were still missing.

Among the missing were eight soldiers who had been guarding the road and a local TV station journalist who had gone to cover the disaster.

Rescue workers, policemen and soldiers are continuing the search.

Around 1,000 affected people had been evacuated to the nearby port of Buenaventura.

President Alvaro Uribe visited the scene of the disaster on Friday.

China’s rice exports could increase 3.5 million tons this year

BEIJING, 16 April — China’s rice exports could increase 3.5 million tons this year, the rice department of the Ministry of Commerce said on Friday.

The department said that Chinese rice exports were likely to reach 7 million tons this year, earning the country around 2.3 billion US dollars.

The rice department estimated that China would export 3.5 million tons of rice this year, compared to 1.87 million tons in the first three months of this year.

A car drives through a flooded street in Belgrade, on 15 April, 2006. — INTERNET
YANGON, 13 April — Member of the State Peace and Development Council Lt-Gen Ye Myint of the Ministry of Defence, accompanied by Chairman of Mandalay Division Peace and Development Council Commander of Central Command Maj-Gen Khin Zaw and officials of SPDC Office and departmental officials, met officers, other ranks and family members of the local station in Sagaing on 10 April morning.

He instructed them to take part in the carrying out of five rural development tasks, growing of physic nut plants, and agriculture and livestock breeding tasks to be undertaken for welfare of the family members. Lt-Gen Ye Myint attended a ceremony to grow 100,000 physic nut saplings in the local station. He inspected the physic nut nursery of the local station. He inspected construction of the approach road to Ayeyawady Bridge (Yadanabon) in Ohbo Ward of Sagaing. Next, he viewed progress in building Ayeyawady Bridge (Yadanabon).

At the briefing hall on Mandalay bank, Deputy Superintending Engineers U Hsan Win and U Htay Myint reported on construction of the bridge. Lt-Gen Ye Myint gave instructions on timely completion of the bridge and worksite safety. The lower structure of the whole bridge was completed, and installation of iron frames at the upper structure is in progress. The iron frames were installed from RP8 to RP4 on Sagaing bank, and those from RP1 to RP5 on Mandalay bank. A total of 1,086 metres of the bridge out of 1,126 metres have been fixed with iron frames. Efforts are being made for the completion of installing iron frames at the whole bridge.

Li-Gen Ye Myint left Nnamyo in Mandalay in the afternoon and arrived back Nay Pyi Taw in the evening.

State Peace and Development Council Member Li-Gen Ye Myint of Ministry of Defence inspects construction of approach road to Ayeyawady Bridge (Yadanabon). MNA

**THINGYAN, transition to new year**

U Kyaw Sein (Mandalay)

Tagu, the first of the Myanmar year, is a month that lies in a hot and dry period. It is also a month that ushers the old to the new year. That is to say the old year comes to an end and the new year commences, and Thingyan falls in this period according to the Pali word “Sankanta” which means transition. The term “Thingyan” derives from the Pali word “Sankanta” and it means transition from the old to the new year.

As a gesture of welcoming the new year, Myanmar people douse water to one another wishing those poured with water to be free from all dirt and dangers and to be cool like water. In such a transitional period, Myanmars do meritorious deeds such as paying respects to parents, teachers and elderly persons, carrying out sanitation work inside and outside the house, shampooing, taking precepts and doing charity at pagodas and monasteries and cleansing pagodas and Buddha images.

According to the religious treatises, in the month Tagu, kings of Sakja dynastic clan in Kapilavat country enjoyed themselves by celebrating water-throwing festival in royal camps near the serene Lake “Deva Daha”. In the Mahā chronicle of Myanmar kings, it said that water-splashing festival was celebrated in a month of the hot season when King Nara Thiha Pate was on the throne in Bagan. In the lyric poem about Myanmar twelve months featuring facts about Innwa royal city, it said that Myanmars drenched one another with scented water in the New Year Day Festival in the month Tagu.

Among the festivals in the twelve months of Myanmar calendar, Thingyan Festival (Water Festival) is the national festival held on a grander scale than any other ones. Myanmars believe that in the period of the Thingyan, Thagyamin (king of celestial beings) comes on a sojourn to the human abode. One should study the old treatises on astrology such as Thuriya Theiddanta treatise and Thandeit-hta treatise if one wants to know when the sojourn of the Thingyan begins and ends. According to the treatises on Thingyan, the interval between two Thingyan Festivals lasts a year. And it takes a year in which the Earth, one of the planets in the Universe, goes round the Sun once. To be exact, it lasts 365 days, six hours, 12 minutes and 37 seconds. In the process, the time is divided into 12 periods or zodiacs. At the beginning of the first zodiac, Thingyan falls and ends according to the movement of specific planets.

In the world of nature, all objects such as water, lands, forests, mountains and trees always change — some come into being while some come to an end. As the current of a stream always flows, the first water goes away while second water comes. Lands, forests, mountains and trees also are in the process of constant change in the same way.

Similarly, mind changes in accordance with the process of coming into existence and cessation without a break. According to “Sankanta”, the process of coming into existence and cessation of mind and body can be called Loka Thingyan (transition of secular world).

Throughout the life, man is continuously in the process of growing old or in the process of coming into existence and death. According to “Sankanta”, the process of coming into existence and cessation in the life of a human being can be called Bhava Thingyan (transition of a life).

The first day of a year is called New Year’s Day Myanmar observes as auspicious day of a new year. On the New Year’s Day, the Buddhists living in the Union of Myanmar perform meritorious deeds such as cleansing pagodas and Buddha images, offering alms at pagodas and monasteries, paying respects to the aged, carrying out sundry tasks, releasing animals, and holding ceremonies to listen to parittas in respective villages, wards and townships.

So, Myanmar is free from dire natural disasters and three catastrophes namely famine, war and epidemic diseases.

So, on this New Year’s Day, I wish for all the world people to gain auspiciousness without sufferings, to be free from all forms of harms and dangers, to get rid of evil spirits and able to cultivate good habits, and to follow the ways worthy of rewards and benefits and enjoy them.

Translation: MS

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Senior General
Than Shwe, wife
Daw Kyaing Kyaing pay homage…

(from page 1)

the Senior General and wife arrived at Maha Muni Buddha Image in Kyauktaw at 11 am. They were welcomed by departmental officials of Kyauktaw Township, members of the pagoda board of trustees and local people.

Next, Senior General Than Shwe and wife Daw Kyaing Kyaing paid homage to the Buddha Image. They offered gold foils to the Buddha Image.

The Senior General and party inspected all-round renovation tasks at the Gandakuti Building of the Buddha Image.

Later, they freed fish into Utawhsay Lake.

Mandalay dwellers enjoy Maha Thingyan Festival

YANGON, 16 April — Myanmar traditional Thingyan festival continued in Mandalay on Akyat Day, 15 April.

Thingyan revellers thronged pandals on the circular road of the moat in Mandalay.

Chairman of Mandalay Division Peace and Development Council Commander of Central Command Maj-Gen Khin Zaw and wife Daw Khin Pyone Win, Mayor Brig-Gen Phone Zaw Han and wife, Deputy Commander Brig-Gen Nay Win and wife, local authorities, visited the Mayor’s Pandal and other pandals.

They joyfully participated in the water-throwing festival. At the Mayor’s Pandal, artistes performed variety of dances and songs to those present.

Pandals in Mandalay were packed with Thingyan revellers and merry-makers and decorated vehicles. Devotees and pilgrims visited pagodas and religious buildings in Mandalay, Amarapura and Sagaing Hill, and merry-makers and holiday-makers took rest at Taungthaman Lake, U Pein Bridge, and other recreation centres. — MNA
Earlier completion of bridges urged to save costs and serve people sooner with better transport

YANGON, 16 April — Chairman of the Central Committee for Ensuring Secure and Smooth Transport Lt-Gen Thein Sein, accompanied by Lt-Gen Myint Swe of the Ministry of Defence and officials of the State Peace and Development Council Commander of South-West Command Maj-Gen Thura Myint Aung and officials.

On arrival at Dedaye by car, the Secretary-1 and party were welcomed by Ayeyawady Division Peace and Development Council Commander of Special Bridge Construction Group 7 U Khin Maung Hse of Special Bridge Construction Group 7 and officials.

Accompanied by the commander, Secretary-1 Lt-Gen Thein Sein and party met departmental personnel at the office of Dedaye Township PDC.

They inspected Dedaye-Pyapon Road by car and arrived at the briefing hall of Pyapon Bridge Construction Project.

Deputy Superintendent Engineer U Khin Maung Hse of Special Bridge Construction Group 7 briefed the Secretary-1 on matters related to the bridge and progress of construction tasks, and availability of construction materials.

On hearing the report, the Secretary-1 said that Ayeyawady Division is rich in natural resources. Better transport will contribute toward development of the region. Hence, the Government spends a large amount of money on construction of roads and bridges.

As there are many rivers, creeks and lakes in Ayeyawady Division, small and big bridges are being built there. In

They viewed Twantay-Kawhmu-Kungyangon-Dedaye Motor Road by car. On arrival at Dedaye Bridge in Dedaye, the Secretary-1 and party were welcomed by Chairman of Ayeyawady Division Peace and Development Council Commander of South-West Command Maj-Gen Thura Myint Aung and officials.

Accompanied by the commander, Secretary-1 Lt-Gen Thein Sein and party met departmental personnel at the office of Dedaye Township PDC.

They inspected Dedaye-Pyapon Road by car and arrived at the briefing hall of Pyapon Bridge Construction Project.

Deputy Superintendent Engineer U Khin Maung Hse of Special Bridge Construction Group 7 briefed the Secretary-1 on matters related to the bridge and progress of construction tasks, and availability of construction materials.

After hearing the reports, the Secretary-1 said that Ayeyawady Division is rich in natural resources. Better transport will contribute toward development of the region. Hence, the Government spends a large amount of money on construction of roads and bridges.

As there are many rivers, creeks and lakes in Ayeyawady Division, small and big bridges are being built there. In

Secretary-1 Lt-Gen Thein Sein inspected progress in construction of Twantay Bridge. — MNA

Building the bridges, efforts are to be made for completion of construction tasks earlier than schedule so as to save the cost and to serve the people sooner with better transport.

Pyapon District Senior Engineer U Soe Myint reported on maintenance of Dedaye-Pyapon Road. The Secretary-1 gave instructions on repairing of the road to the bridge on Pyapon side. Pyapon Bridge is of reinforced concrete type with steel frame. It is 3,932 feet long including the approach roads and 40 feet wide. Its clearance is 265 feet wide and 36 feet high. The bridge can withstand 60 tons of loads. The 75% of bridge construction has completed. After viewing the developing Pyapon, the Secretary-1 and party proceeded to Golden Jubilee (Pyidaungsu) Guest House in Kyakkaik and gave instructions to officials on tarring of Pyapon-Kyaikkaik Road.

In the afternoon, they inspected Maubin Road by car and arrived at Maubin. In meeting with departmental officials at Maubin District Hall, the Secretary-1 said for the health and education of the people in Maubin District, the State has built more hospitals, schools and universities. So, those in the fields of education and health are to work hard in the interest of the region and its people. Maubin District will develop speedily if the people work hard by making most of their talents and technologies plus the district’s rich natural resources. The education sector is imperative in generating human resources. In building a discipline-flourishing democratic nation, the people need to be equipped with a good education and the State needs to be economically strong. The State’s being able to increase the salaries of service personnel is due to the increased GDP and per capita incomes of the nation. The service personnel on their part are urged to grow kitchen crops in the compounds of their homes.

The Secretary-1 said the purpose of his tour was to inspect the development of the transport sector in Ayeyawady Division. Officials concerned in the district are urged to work hard in the interest of the State and the people.

Later, Secretary-1 Lt-Gen Thein Sein inspected the Maubin-Nyaungdon-Yangon Road by car and arrived back here in the evening. — MNA

The Secretary-1 inspected the bridge and gave instructions to officials concerned. The Secretary-1 inspected the construction of lower structure of Pyapon Bridge by boat and gave necessary instructions to officials concerned. The Secretary-1 inspected the construction of bole pile (C-14) of the approach 16-mile road between Dedaye and Pyapon.

Next, Secretary-1 Lt-Gen Thein Sein and party inspected the construction of the lower structure of Pyapon Bridge by boat and gave necessary instructions to officials concerned. The Secretary-1 inspected the construction of bole pile (C-14) of the approach 16-mile road between Dedaye and Pyapon.

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The photo shows Pyapon Bridge under construction. — MNA

The Secretary-1 inspected the bridge and gave instructions to officials concerned. The Secretary-1 inspected the construction of lower structure of Pyapon Bridge by boat and gave necessary instructions to officials concerned. The Secretary-1 inspected the construction of bole pile (C-14) of the approach 16-mile road between Dedaye and Pyapon.
Yangon revellers enjoy Maha Thingyan Festival on Atet Day

YANGON, 16 April — There were echoes of Thingyan songs downtown Yangon and suburban areas, and Thingyan dances were staged here and there on Atet Day today.

From morning to evening, Yangonite merrymakers and revellers including tourists enjoyed Maha Thingyan Festival 1367 ME at the water-throwing pandals in townships of Yangon Division.

During the period of Maha Thingyan Festival, young men and women served older persons with shampooing, manicuring, and refreshments.

Local authorities together with members of social organization supervised joyful participation of revellers in the water-throwing festival.

People visited famous pagodas and religious buildings. — MNA

Crowded revellers seen in Anawrahta Street in Latha Township on Thingyan Atet Day. — NLM

Revellers take part in Thingyan festival in Yangon, Mandalay

YANGON, 16 April — The water-throwing pandals and entertainment pandals were crowded with revellers during the Myanmar traditional Maha Thingyan Festival.

On 14 April, Akya day, a water-throwing pandal named Melody on Inya Road in Kamayut Township collapsed because of its flagging base. Some revellers were injured but no one was killed.

Yangon Thingyan festival came alive with revellers the whole day. In Mandalay, the revellers participated in the festival peacefully. — MNA

The closing ceremony of Yangon Mayor’s Maha Thingyan Pandal in progress. — MNA

Valiant Pandal attracts Thingyan revellers

YANGON, 16 April — The Valiant pandal in No 4 Ward in Latha Township was crowded with revellers during Thingyan Festival which lasts four days.

At the pandal, which was sponsored by Myanmar Towards Co Ltd, residents on 19th Street in Latha Township sprayed water on revellers during the festival, and revellers were entertained with songs.

No 4 Military Region Commander Lt-Col Khin Maung Tun, Chairman of Latha Township Peace and Development Council U Thein Tun and officials also enjoyed the water festival.

At the pandal, those present were served with refreshments. — MNA

Yangon Mayor’s Maha Thingyan Pandal closes

YANGON, 16 April — A ceremony to close the Yangon Mayor’s Maha Thingyan Pandal was held at the venue in front of the City Hall, here, at 5 pm today.

Chairman of the Working Committee for Organizing the Yangon Mayor’s Maha Thingyan Festival 1367 ME Joint-Secretary of Yangon City Development Committee U Aung Than Win announced the conclusion of the water-throwing festival. Those present sang the song entitled ‘Mann Taung Yeik Kho’.

Mayor Brig-Gen Aung Thein Lin and wife Dr Daw Khin Hsan Nwe, Vice-Mayor Col Maung Pa and wife and officials presented prizes to winners in the dance contests.

From morning to evening, traditional dance troupes, Yein troupes and artistes presented variety dances and songs to the people.

Merrymakers and revellers joyfully participated in the water-throwing festival at the Mayor’s Pandal. — MNA

WTO Customs Valuation Agreement Workshop concludes

YANGON, 16 April — Batch No 6 of the WTO Customs Valuation Agreement Workshop (Private Sector) jointly organized by Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry and the Customs Department concluded at the training centre of UMFCCI on Bo Sun Pet Street on 12 April.

Chairman of the Education Work Committee of UMFCCI U Sein Win Hlaing and Deputy Director-General Tha Thura U Thein Tun Tin of the Customs Department spoke on the occasion. Altogether 47 trainees attended the 10-day course. — MNA

MTEA office at new address

YANGON, 16 April — Office of Myanmar Timber Entrepreneurs Association has been opened at the building of the division manager’s office of Myanmar Agricultural Produce Trading at No 61, first floor, Maha Bandoola Park Road in Kyauktada Township.

Those who wishing to conduct business with MTEA may contact telephone number 241910 at the new address. — MNA

New Year Wish

Sitra constellation
And Meiktha coincide
From the old year to the new
The month Tagu makes transition
In the sacred month, blooms
The golden padauk, to beautify
Wears them, and does merit
Calculates merit, for human world
Keeps Sabbath, longlasting
Based on, strength of mind
Awake, thinking, forever
With no avarice, and anger
No match of anger, seeking love
Halt the bad, enhance the good
See what’s wrong and right of it
Thoughtful, decisive, with human stance
Let it be, a virtuous world
Let the New Year be pleasant.

Cheint Naing (Trs)

Foreign Minister felicitates Syrian counterpart

YANGON, 17 April — On the occasion of the National Day of the Syrian Arab Republic, which falls on 17 April, 2006, U Nyan Win, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Union of Myanmar, has sent a message of felicitations to His Excellency Mr Farouk Al Shaara, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Syrian Arab Republic. — MNA

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Cheint Naing (Trs)
Myanmar has put avian influenza under control in bird flu-infected townships in Mandalay and Sagaing Divisions. Continued observation on disease control and detection is being conducted in the rest of poultry farms. The LBVD also issued a reminder regarding regular flow of fowls and ducks and their eggs and quail eggs and safe consumption.

From the first week of March 2006 the bird flu occurred in Myanmar and it spread to 13 townships in Mandalay and Sagaing Divisions. The bird flu is now under control in those townships. Duration of the outbreak of the disease is between seven days and 20 days.

In bird flu-free townships, measures on transport of fowls and their eggs are to be taken with the support of the township livestock breeding and veterinary department and Bird Flu control Committee comprising LBVD, Health Department, Development Affairs Committee and Myanmar Livestock Breeding Federation.

In disease control townships arrangements are being made for transport, sale of chickens, ducks and quails with the permission of local authorities and safe consumption.

Regarding the rehabilitation, arrangements are to be made for raising of new fowls, training and holding talks on disease control.

The reminder also includes detailed instructions for breeders and producers, transport, buying and selling of fowls and fowl eggs and safe consumption.

Livestock Breeding and Veterinary Department Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries

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Russia to double spacecraft production by 2009

MOSCOW, 16 April — Russia will double spacecraft production by 2009 in response to a decision to increase crew members of the International Space Station (ISS) from two to six by then, Russia’s leading space company said on Friday. The Experimental Machine Building Plant in Korolyov, outside Moscow, is to double production of the Soyuz and Progress spacecraft by 2009, the Interfax news agency quoted Alexander Strekalov, the plant’s director and first vice-president of the state-controlled Energia-spacecraft building corporation, as saying. “Our partners in the ISS programme have agreed to enlarge the station’s crew from two to six people by 2009.” — MNA/Xinhua

Official says Turkey determined to build nuclear power plant

ANKARA, 16 April — Turkish Energy and Natural Resources Minister Hilmi Guler announced on Friday that Turkey decided to build a nuclear power plant in the Black Sea city of Sinop, semi-official Anatolia news agency reported.

Guler noted that nuclear energy is a must rather than a preference to Turkey. The official made the remarks at a meeting in Ankara with 150 scientists from Turkish Atomic Energy Agency (TAEK) on nuclear energy.

Guler told reporters afterwards that researches of TAEK and related departments in the universities on nuclear energy have been going on for 56 years. — MNA/Xinhua
Health alert in India after malaria claims 35 lives

New Delhi, 15 April — Authorities in Assam State in east India sounded a health alert on Thursday following an outbreak of malaria that has claimed at least 35 lives and affected about 20,000 people.

“A maximum alert has been sounded across Assam and medical teams are working on a war footing to check the spread of malaria,” Indo Asian News Service quoted Assam Health Minister Bhumidhar Barman as saying.

Most of the casualties were reported from the eastern Assam state’s districts of Golaghat and Lakhimpur, besides from areas bordering Bhutan.

Some 35 people have died of malaria in the past few days and an estimated 20,000 people are hit by the disease, the minister said.

Unofficial reports put the death toll in the malaria epidemic at around 80.

Experts say early monsoons had led to the outbreak of the mosquito-borne disease on up to 95 per cent when the bed nets were included.

The researchers, who reported the findings in The Lancet medical journal, believe the impact of the anti-AIDS drugs was due to its effect in strengthening the immune system rather than any direct effect of the drugs on the malaria parasite.

“Although these interventions work separately, the prime message is that together they are associated with 95 per-cent-reduction in malaria,” said Mermin.

“Malaria then becomes a rare event among this population whereas before the interventions it was quite common,” he added.

Malaria and HIV are leading infections in sub-Saharan Africa. In adults and children with HIV, malaria is more common and can be more severe.

“Our study was able to show that with the implementation of a few interventions, the incidence of malaria can be dropped considerably,” Dr. Jonathan Mermin, of the Uganda Virus Research Institute in Entebbe, Uganda, said in an interview.

The researchers found that antiretroviral drugs, the antibiotic cotrimoxazole and bed nets are each effective in combating malaria in HIV patients but when combined their impact is cumulative.

Malaria, a parasitic disease transmitted by mosquitoes, kills more than a million people a year, mostly young children in Africa.

HIV weakens the patient’s immune system making it more vulnerable to opportunistic infections such as malaria and AIDS.

Mermin and his team studied the impact of individual and combined treatments for malaria in about 1,000 HIV-positive people in Uganda.

Cotrimoxazole, which is a standard treatment worldwide for patients infected with HIV, reduced the incidence of malaria in the patients by 76 per cent.

When combined with anti-AIDS drugs it hit 92 per cent and cut cases by

Study says melting sea ice a danger to walruses

WASHINGTON, 15 April — Arctic researchers who discovered a surprising number of abandoned baby walruses saying melting sea ice may be the culprit, according to a study in the April issue of Aquatic Mammals.

During an icebreaker cruise in the Canada Basin two years ago, researchers measured an unusually warm mass of water — as high as 44 degrees F (7C) — moving into the area from the Bering Sea to the south. This warm water may have rapidly melted seasonal sea ice over the shallow continental shelf north of Alaska, the study said.

They also found nine lone and possibly abandoned walrus calves in the area, an unprecedented number for walruses since mothers tend to stay with their calves for two years.

“We were on a station for 24 hours, and the calves would be swimming around us, crying. We couldn’t rescue them,” said team member Carin Ashjian, a biologist at Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution.

Sea ice offers foraging walruses a place to rest. Mothers leave their calves on the ice while they dive to feed on animals on the sea floor such as crabs and clams. But rising ocean temperatures may be forcing the walrus mothers to abandon their young as they follow the rapidly retreating ice edge north to colder waters, the study said.

Without their mothers, the calves likely drown or starve, according to the research team.

“The young can’t forage for themselves,” Ashjian said in a statement. “They don’t know how to eat.”

At least 20 killed in two boat accidents in Uganda

KAMPALA, 15 April — A boat carrying 50 fishermen capsized on the Lake Victoria in Uganda on Friday morning, leaving 20 passengers drowned, while another boat accident killed at least one in the west.

The accident occurred near Entebbe, 40 kilometres south of Kampala, in the morning and killed 20 on board, according to different reports from local radio stations.

The Capital Radio, a private radio station, said the boat capsized on the Lake Victoria, the second largest fresh water lake in the world, en route from Damba Island to Kasese in Entebbe.

Another private radio station Dembe FM said the strong wind which blew the boat to a rock in the lake caused the tragedy.

Katenda Lututu, the resident district commissioner in Kalangala District in the Lake Victoria area, told Xinhua that “we are aware of it, but we are trying to find more details about it”.

Meanwhile, Patrick Onyango, the country’s police spokesman, confirmed another accident on Lake Albert, west of Uganda, which borders the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It also clarifies the earlier confusion about the location of the accident.
China concerned by Iran’s claim on enrichment

UNITED NATIONS, 14 April — China expressed concern on Wednesday over Iran’s declaration that it had enriched uranium but said it was not convinced the UN Security Council needed to take a tougher line on the issue.

“China is concerned about the events and the way that things are developing,” China’s UN Ambassador Wang Guangya told reporters. “It is not in line with what is required of them by the international community,” including resolutions of the Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency and a statement issued last month by the Security Council, he said.

But he said the IAEA should remain for now in charge of the crisis over Iran’s nuclear ambitions rather than the Security Council, which has the power to impose sanctions.

“In spite of this, I believe diplomatic efforts are still under way,” Wang said when asked whether China felt it might now be time for the Council to take a tougher line.

He also said the five permanent members of the Security Council — the United States, Britain, France, Russia and China — plus Germany planned to meet again “in a few days to discuss and take note of the situation”.

Senior officials from these six nations have met periodically in recent months in search of a coordinated strategy on Iran.

Iran refuses to suspend enrichment

TEHRAN, 14 April — Iran’s chief nuclear negotiator Ali Larijani said on Thursday that Iran would not re-suspend uranium enrichment activities.

Larijani told reporters after talks with UN nuclear chief Mohamed ElBaradei that a UN Security Council statement demanding Iran to freeze the enrichment-related activities was “not so important.”

“Every action must be reasonable and logical,” he said. “We are cooperating in a constructive manner with the International Atomic Energy Agency, and Mr ElBaradei is here and the inspectors and cameras are here, so such a proposal is not very important to solve the problem,” Larijani said.

On his part, ElBaradei termed his talks with Larijani as “constructive”.

Chinese telecom operators invest heavily to prepare for upcoming 3G

BEIJING, 14 April — Chinese telecom companies have begun to invest heavily in their mobile phone networks in preparation for the launch of third generation mobile communication (3G).

Statistics with the Ministry of Information Industry (MII) show China’s telecom industry reported a growth rate as high as nearly 40 per cent in the first two months of this year.

Sales revenue of the industry reached 94.91 billion yuan (about 11.9 billion US dollars) during the period with a year-on-year rise of 38.2 per cent. Profits rose 59 per cent to 5.9 billion yuan.

China is expected to issue its first 3G licence this year, which will introduce a new mobile phone technology that will provide better reception and many new services.

Handset manufacturers also reported a rapid growth in the first two months of the year as newcomers have joined in since China relaxed rules governing phone-making licences last year.

Statistics with MII show that China produced 62.83 million handsets in the first two months with a year-on-year rise of 55 per cent. The export of mobile phones rose 69.5 per cent year-on-year to 3.98 billion US dollars during the period.

China’s integrated circuit industry also witnessed rapid growth in the first two months of the year as multinationals increased their investment in China.

Statistics with MII show that sales revenue from the industry in China reached 34.3 billion yuan (some 4.3 billion US dollars) in the January and February with a year-on-year rise of 45 per cent.

Japan publishes report to boost ‘peaceful’ image

Tokyo, 14 April — Japan, seeking to improve its image among Asian neighbours who hold bitter memories of the wartime past, stressed the country’s six decades of contributions to world peace in a diplomatic report issued on Friday.

Japan’s relations with China and South Korea have turned cold over a number of issues, many relating to Japan’s invasion and occupation of much of East Asia in the first half of the 20th century.

Japan has had various complaints from surrounding countries, a Foreign Ministry official said. “We hope that by reading this report, people will get a better idea of what Japan has been doing for the past 60 years.”

Beijing and Seoul have been angered by Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi’s annual visits to Tokyo’s Yasukuni Shrine, which honours convicted war criminals together with 2.5 million war dead.

The “blue paper” details Japan’s efforts since World War II to build a peaceful and stable world order, touching on development aid, the pacifist Constitution and contributions to international peacekeeping operations. But the report — the bulk of which deals with Tokyo’s diplomatic activities in 2005 and its view of the global and regional situation — also reiterates Japan’s call for greater clarity in China’s military spending.
**SPORTS**

**Champions close on title**

LONDON, 16 April — Chelsea moved within touching distance of a second successive Premier League title with an untroubled 2-0 victory at Bolton Wanderers on Saturday.

Goals by England’s John Terry and Frank Lampard took Chelsea nine points clear of Manchester United, who were surprisingly held to a goalless home draw by Sunderland on Friday.

Chelsea could secure the title at Stamford Bridge on Monday by beating Everton if United fail to win at Tottenham Hotspur earlier in the day. Chelsea have 85 points, United 76 and Liverpool, who visit Blackburn Rovers on Sunday, are third on 70. Tottenham have 61 with Arsenal on 57 after their 3-1 win at home against West Bromwich Albion. Blackburn have 54.

The day’s action began with a lunchtime kickoff at the Reebok Stadium where Chelsea secured the title a year ago.

Bolton’s Ricardo Vaz Te hit a post midway through the first half in what turned out to be the only worthwhile goal attempt by a team who have now lost five in a row.

Chelsea went ahead in the 44th minute when Lampard swung in a free kick and Didier Drogba and John Terry rose unmarked together to meet it, the English defender claiming the final touch.

**Answers to yesterday’s Crossword Puzzle**

**Benfica beat Boavista 2-0 to narrow gap on Sporting**

LISBON, 16 April — Benfica closed the gap on second-placed Sporting to two points with a 2-0 win at Boavista in the Portuguese Premier League on Saturday.

Last year’s champions opened the scoring after 53 minutes when Boavista midfielder Tiago Pereira turned the ball into his own net following a free kick by Simao Sabrosa.

Benfica’s Angola striker Pedro Mantorras scored with six minutes left after being found unmarked in the box by Sabrosa to secure the visitors’ first victory at Boavista in 10 years.

Leaders Porto moved to within one win of taking Benfica’s crown with a 1-0 victory over Uniao Leiria on Friday and have 72 points from 31 games with three matches left.

Sporting, held to a goalless draw at Estele Amadora on Saturday, have 65 points with Benfica third on 63.

**Lille beat Bordeaux to hand title to Lyon**

PARIS, 16 April — A Peter Odemwingie double earned Lille a 3-2 victory over Girondins Bordeaux on Saturday and handed the Ligue 1 title to Olympique Lyon.

Lyon secured a record fifth consecutive title without playing and can now celebrate at Paris St. Germain on Sunday.

Gerard Houllier’s side top the standings with 75 points from 33 matches with Bordeaux second on 61 points after 34 games. With only four matches left the Girondins cannot now catch Lyon.

Lille, who have played 35 matches, are just three points behind the Aquitaine side in third place.

Stade Rennes, who visit mid-table Nice on Sunday, can reclaim third place by a point from the northeners if they win their next competitive league game.

Lille scored twice in the first six minutes against Bordeaux at Villeneuve d’Ascq’s Stadium Nord, where they play their domestic games.

Midfielder Mathieu Bodmer poked home from Mathieu Chalmé’s free kick after two minutes and Nigerian striker Odemwingie made it 2-0 four minutes later with a volley just inside the box.

**Almagro upsets Safin to reach Valencia final**

VALENCIA (Spain), 16 April — Spanish qualifier Nicolas Almagro reached the Valencia Open final when he upset wildcard Marat Safin 6-2, 2-6, 6-4 on Saturday.

Almagro, who beat Juan Carlos Ferrero in the first round, fought back from a break down in the third set to earn a showdown with Frenchman Gilles Simon, who will also be playing in his first ATP final.

The 20-year-old Almagro manufactured two break points in the eighth game and took full advantage after Safin twisted his ankle to break back and level the set at four games each.

With the Russian former world number one unable to move freely, Almagro held his serve and then broke the Russian’s to secure his place in the final.—MNA/Reuters

**Gonzalez goal lifts Sociiedad out of drop zone**

MADRID, 16 April — A spectacular late strike from on-loan midfielder Mark Gonzalez gave Real Sociedad a 1-0 home win over Racing Santander which lifted the Basque side out of the relegation zone on Saturday.

Gonzalez, who joined from Liverpool in January, cracked in a superb left-foot volley from 20 metres with 15 minutes to go.

The victory pushed Sociedad up to 14th with 35 points from 33 games, one ahead of Racing, Espanyol and Real Mallorca and two clear of the drop zone.

The goal was the only bright moment in a dour encounter in which nerves got the better of two struggling sides.

**England’s David Lynn hits a ball from a bunker during the 3rd round of the China Open at Beijing Honghua International Golf Club course in Beijing, China, on 15 April, 2006. Lynn was the overnight leader on nine under par.**—INTERNET

**Last-gasp Cannavaro rescues point for Juventus**

MILAN, 16 April — A header from Fabio Cannavaro five minutes into injury time earned Juventus a draw at Boavista in the Portuguese Premier League on Saturday and handed the Ligue 1 title to Olympique Lyon.

For a long time that looked like being enough to cut the gap to five points clear of AC Milan with four games remaining.

Second-placed Milan beat city rivals Inter 1-0 in Friday’s derby to close the gap on leaders Juve, who have four games left.

Hamburg, doing their best to keep the Bundesliga title alive, enjoyed a 2-0 win at MSV Duisburg with both goals coming in the first half.

For a long time that looked like being enough to cut the lead in the bay in half but Boavista drilled in with 21 minutes to go and substitute Mehmet Scholl wrapped up the points with another long-range strike five minutes later.

With 30 games played, Bayern lead with 69 points and remain on course for a 20th German title.

Hamburg are second on 65 after an own goal from Uwe Moehle and a neat finish from Alton made short work of Duisburg.—MNA/Reuters

**Ballack keeps Bayern on track for German title**

FRANKFURT, 16 April — Michael Ballack struck his 13th goal of the season to lead Bayern Munich to a 2-0 win over Arminia Bielefeld on Saturday, keeping the champions four points clear of Hamburg SV with four games left.

Hamburg, doing their best to keep the Bundesliga title race alive, enjoyed a 2-0 win at MSV Duisburg with both goals coming in the first half.

For a long time that looked like being enough to cut the lead in the bay in half but Boavista drilled in with 21 minutes to go and substitute Mehmet Scholl wrapped up the points with another long-range strike five minutes later.

With 30 games played, Bayern lead with 69 points and remain on course for a 20th German title.

Hamburg are second on 65 after an own goal from Uwe Moehle and a neat finish from Alton made short work of Duisburg.—MNA/Reuters

**Golf Club course in Beijing, China, on 15 April, 2006. Lynn was the overnight leader on nine under par.**—INTERNET

**Benfica’s James Rodriguez (R) turns the ball into his own net following a free kick by Simao Sabrosa.**—MNA/Reuters

**Answers to yesterday’s Crossword Puzzle**

CAPITAL  LISZT
A A A AE AO
TULIP THRIVED G
HIBERNATE RUN IEL E G
M ALADY REMISS G
MAN ABUNDANCE I
OPULENT RANGE
T A N A L I G
HALMA ROYALTY

**C L E O P A T R A**
China’s oldest zoo celebrates 100th birthday

BEIJING, 16 April — China’s oldest zoo marked its centenary on Saturday with a day like any other — thronging with visitors.

Six million people pass through the gates of the Beijing Zoo every year, making it a national institution that has survived wars and upheavals and, more recently, proposals to move it to the city’s outskirts.

“I first visited it 40 years ago and it’s a surprise to me that the zoo is still here,” said a visitor named Li on Saturday.

“As a child I was so happy to see it as zoos were a novelty in China,” recalled Wang, from East China’s Anhui Province.

The Beijing Zoo was opened by the government of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) on 15 April, 1906 as part of an agricultural research complex. It was the first public zoo in China. Over the years, it has become the largest urban zoo in China, covering more than 90 hectares with 4,641 animals, said Yang Xiaoyan, of the zoo management office.

The zoo was entertaining children as usual on its 100th birthday. “Can I take a penguin home? I want one as a friend,” said a five-year-old Dong Tianzhe asked his mother.

“It is a wonder the zoo has remained in downtown Beijing through so much intensive construction and city maps changing several times in a year,” said Jiang Qian, a college student.

In early 2004, when Guo Rongdong, a deputy to the Beijing Municipal People’s Congress, and Chen Ruijun, a member of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, Beijing Municipal Committee, proposed relocating the zoo to the suburbs, citing public health and traffic reasons.

However, a public outcry stopped the plan from proceeding, with people from all walks of life proclaiming the zoo an inseparable part of the city.

“I have formed the habit of taking a walk in the zoo everyday, and I want to stay,” said a woman named Wang.

Authorities began a renovation programme in 2003 to create an environmentally-friendly zoo by 2008 when Beijing holds the Olympic Games.

Weather

Sundat, 16 April, 2006

Summary of observations recorded at 09:30 hours MST: During the past 24 hours, rain or thundershowers have been widespread in Taninthayi Division, scattered in Shan State and Mandalay Division, normal in Kachin and Kayin States, Sagaing and Magway Divisions and weather has been partly cloudy in the remaining States and Divisions. Day temperatures were (3°C) to (4°C) above normal in Shan State, Bago and Taninthayi Divisions, (5°C) to (6°C) above normal in Kachin and Chin States, lower Sagaing, Mandalay, Magway and Ayeyawady Divisions, (7°C) above normal in upper Sagaing Division and above normal in the remaining States and Divisions. The significant day temperatures were Monywa (44°C), Mandalay, NyaungU, Mrauk and Magway (43°C) each. The noteworthy amounts of rainfall recorded were Mandalay (0.87) inch, Taunggyi (0.71) inch, Thapaw, Kungtung (0.48) inch and Magway (0.23) inch. Maximum temperature on 15-4-2006 was 100°F. Minimum temperature on 16-4-2006 was 72°F. Relative humidity at 09:30 hrs MST on 16-4-2006 was (78%). Total sunshine hours on 15-4-2006 was (8.5) hours approx.

Rainfalls on 16-4-2006 were nil at Mingaladon, Kaba-Aye and central Yangon. Total rainfalls since 1-1-2006 were (Tr) at Mingaladon, Kaba-Aye and (0.04) inch at central Yangon. Maximum wind speed at Yangon (Kaba-Aye) was (12) mph from South-west at (01:05) hours MST on 16-4-2006.

Bay inference: Weather is partly cloudy in the Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal.

Forecast valid until evening of 17-4-2006: Weather will be partly cloudy in Rakhine State, Bago, Ayeyawady and Yangon Divisions and isolated rain or thundershowers are likely in the remaining States and Divisions. Degree of certainty is (60%).

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

Outlook for subsequent two days: Continued of isolated rain or thunderstorms are likely in the Central and Eastern Myanmar areas.

Forecast for Nay Pyi Taw City and neighbouring areas for 17-4-2006: Possibility of isolated rain or thunderstorms. Degree of certainty is (40%).

Forecast for Yangon and neighbouring areas for 17-4-2006: Partly cloudy.

Forecast for Mandalay and neighbouring areas for 17-4-2006: Possibility of isolated rain or thunderstorms. Degree of certainty is (40%)
New Year Day of 1368 ME
Monday, 17 April, 2006

On this New Year’s Day, I wish for all the world people to gain auspiciousness without sufferings, to be free from all forms of harms and dangers, to get rid of evil spirits and able to cultivate good habits, and to follow the ways worthy of rewards and benefits and enjoy them.

YANGON, 16 April — Chairman of the State Peace and Development Council Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Than Shwe, accompanied by Member of the State Peace and Development Council General Thura Shwe Mann and party, flew from Sittway to Kyauktaw on 14 April morning.

The Senior General and party were welcomed there by Col Ya Pyae of Kyauktaw Station, military officers and departmental officials.

At Nawarat Hall of the local regiment, the Senior General and party met officers and other ranks and families of regiments and units of Kyauktaw Station.

At the meeting, General Thura Shwe Mann explained the purpose of the inspection tour of Senior General Than Shwe and party in Rakhine State, building a new peaceful, modern and developed nation in line with the 12 State objectives upholding national policies, development of the nation in all aspects thanks to systematic implementation of the development plans, and concerted efforts of the State, the people and the Tatmadaw to be made for meeting the target.

Next, Senior General Than Shwe stressed the importance of the Tatmadawmen to try their best to become good ones. He cordially greeted officers, other ranks and family members.

Afterwards, Senior General Than Shwe and party proceeded to An by helicopter. They were welcomed there by Deputy Commander of Western Command Brig-Gen Tin Hlaing and senior military officers, departmental personnel and officials.

On 15 April, Senior General Than Shwe met with officers, the rank and file and families of regiments and units of An Station at Antaung Hall of Western Command Headquarters. General Thura Shwe Mann explained matters on the buildup of the Tatmadaw.

Senior General Than Shwe gave guidance on organizational tasks inside and outside the units, and greeted the Tatmadawmen and family members. After the meeting, they viewed development of An in a motorcade.

They left An for Thandwe by air. Command Staff Colonel Col Myint Swe of Western Command, senior military officers, and departmental officials welcomed the Senior General and party at the airport.

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