Senior General Than Shwe sends message of felicitations to Syrian Arab Republic

YANGON, 17 April — Senior General Than Shwe, Chairman of the State Peace and Development Council of the Union of Myanmar, has sent a message of felicitations to His Excellency Mr Bashar Al-Assad, President of the Syrian Arab Republic, on the occasion of the National Day of the Syrian Arab Republic which falls on 17 April 2005.— MNA

With proper natural resources and population ratio, Rakhine State is blessed with promising opportunities for development

Senior General Than Shwe meets military officers, other ranks, their families of Sittway Station

YANGON, 16 April — Chairman of the State Peace and Development Council Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Than Shwe met military officers and other ranks and their families at Bandoola Hall of Sittway Station in Rakhine State yesterday morning and gave guidance.

Also present on the occasion were member of the State Peace and Development Council General Thura Shwe Mann, SPDC members Lt-Gen Khin Maung Than and Quartermaster-General Lt-Gen Thaha Thura Tin Aung Myint Oo, Commander-in-Chief (Navy) Vice-Admiral Soe Thein, Commander-in-Chief (Air) Lt-Gen Myat Hein, Rakhine State PDC Chairman Western Command Commander Brig-Gen Min Aung Hlaing, ministers, deputy ministers, Rakhine State PDC Vice-Chairman Brig-Gen Than Tun Aung, Director General of the SPDC Office Lt-Col Pe Nyein and departmental heads.

Before the arrival of the Senior General there, General Thura Shwe Mann delivered a speech, saying the Tatmadaw has placed emphasis on the transformation of the nation into a peaceful, modern and developed discipline-flourishing democratic one. At the same time, he said, efforts are being made to...

(See page 8)

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

Today, Myanmar New Year 1367 ME begins after four days of joyous Thingyan revelry. Myanmar New Year adds a sombre note to the preceding merrymaking with both the young and old making their way to pagodas and monasteries where they offer soon, flowers, water, and incense to gain merit.

On this auspicious day, the young pay respects to elderly. They also shampoo and manicure the aged. Religious associations of some townships set free fish and other animals such as cows, goats and birds. Most people take Sabaths. In general, New Year Day as a whole is marked with deeds of merit with expectations for a better future for all.

There are fine traditions which we in Myanmar have observed since time immemorial. In Myanmar, there reigns goodwill towards another. Overwhelmed by this positive attitude, we have been able to surmount hardships and difficulties.

Upholding these values, we in Myanmar encompassing the public, the government and the Tatmadaw are building today a new modern and developed nation while implementing the four political, the four economic and the four social objectives in all seriousness.

Determined and dedicated efforts of the trio have already produced tangible results in numerous sectors. The rule of law, smooth and secure transport, national reconsolidation and better living conditions have already been in place.

Much headway has been made by the National Convention to formulate fundamental principles to serve as the base in drafting the State Constitution, and prospective contents of some chapters have already been agreed on.

Common weal and lasting peace and progress are on the chosen path which will not be strewn with roses. There still exist elements with hostile intent. Be that as it may, all are to march on with due vigilance against overt and covert attempts of destructive elements.

Time and again, the government, the people and the Tatmadaw have proved to be a strong and united force to tackle all kinds of problems effectively. Given the vigour, dedication and cooperation, all brethren of the Union can look forward to a brighter future for the citizen and the State in the Myanmar New Year which begins today, and in the years ahead.

With unity of purpose and unity of action, all are bound to have a more peaceful and prosperous New Year.

People’s Desire

* Oppose those relying on external elements, acting as stooges, holding negative views
* Oppose those trying to jeopardize stability of the State and progress of the nation
* Oppose foreign nations interfering in internal affairs of the State
* Crush all internal and external destructive elements as the common enemy

Maj-Gen Tha Aye inspect development tasks in Mindat, Matupi

YANGON, 16 April — Chairman of Sagaing Division Peace and Development Council Command North West Command Maj-Gen Tha Aye together with departmental personnel inspected crops plantations in Bawche farm in Mindat Township, Chin State on 10 April morning.

They next inspected extension of Mindat-Matupi road and bridges along the road. On 11 April morning, the commander met with local authorities in Mindat Township and heard reports on development tasks in District and Township. The commander attended to their needs and presented the officials stationery, sports gear and clothes.

They inspected development tasks in Matupi Township and tea plantation implemented by Myanmar Agriculture Service. After hearing the report, they fulfilled requirements.—MNA

Maj-Gen Myint Hlaing participates in Maha Thingyan Festival

YANGON, 16 April — The opening ceremony of 1366 Myanmar Traditional Maha Thingyan Festival was held in front of the city hall of Lashio Township in Shan State (North) on 13 April morning.

It was attended by Chairman of Shan State (North) Peace and Development Council Commander of North East Command Maj-Gen Myint Hlaing and wife Daw Khin Thant Zin, the deputy commander and senior military officers and local people.

First, Chairman of Lashio District PDC Lt- Col Than Htun formally opened the ceremony. Next, the commander, his wife and the audience meritoriously douse the scented water on each other and they brought the celebration to a close.

Int’l singing festival to be held in June on Yellow River

TAIYUAN, 16 April — The first international singing festival on Yellow River will be held at the Yellow River’s Hukou Waterfalls in north China’s Shaanxi Province from June 10 to 12, the festival’s organizing committee announced here on Thursday.

The festival is designed to mark the 60th anniversary of the victory of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1937-1945) and the centennial birth anniversaries of Xian Xinghai, a great Chinese musician. The organizing committee has sent letters of invitation to professional and amateur choruses in more than 10 countries, including Singapore and New Zealand.

The festival will be organized jointly by the Shaanxi Provincial Tourism Bureau and the People’s Government of Linfen City, where the Hukou Waterfalls are situated. The festival intends to bring together Chinese singers from home and abroad to sing songs in praise of the mighty Yellow River, the “mother river of the Chinese nation”, according to a brief release dispatched by the organizing committee.

Foreign Affairs Minister sends felicitations to Syrian counterpart

YANGON, 17 April — On the occasion of the National Day of the Syrian Arab Republic which falls on 17 April 2005, U Nyan Win, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Union of Myanmar, has sent a message of felicitations to Mr Farouk Al Sharaa, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Syrian Arab Republic.—MNA

Minister for Sports Brig-Gen Thura Aye Myint presents a certificate to a newly-completed trainee at the conclusion of Kokkang Swimming Club’s summer swimming course (2004-2005) on 11-4-2005. — NLM
Chinese Premier’s South Asia trip produces very positive results

DHAKA, 15 April — Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao’s 10-day swing through four South Asian countries ended on 12 April produced very positive results, a weekly newspaper said on Thursday.

While the Chinese Premier’s visits to Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka also produced very positive results, the visit to India has been quite appropriately called “historic” for its long-term political implications, not only in India but also in the whole region, the ‘Holiday’ said in its commentary.

The two Asian giants have agreed to develop “a strategic and cooperative partnership for peace and prosperity”, which will obviously have significant impact on other smaller countries in the region, the commentary said.

China has lately been taking a lot of initiatives in South Asia as the country’s two top leaders, President and Premier, have visited the region twice in the last three years, it noted, adding the Chinese leaders are making similar advances in other regions as well, apparently to consolidate their remarkable gains in economic development and also to smoother and stabilize any possible political hiccups.

Of the 11 odd agreements that China and India signed during the tour, the one on border dispute is of special significance as it has charted a road-map to resolve it, the commentary stressed, adding that both have agreed to sort out the unsettled border disputes amicably through negotiations.

Both the countries have agreed to take their relations “to a new level”, and adopt measures to boost their current two-way trade of 13.6 billion US dollars to 20 billion US dollars in 2008 and further to 30 billion US dollars in 2010, it said.

The goal may be ambitious, but given the two countries’ recent development and track record, it is not impossible, the commentary observed.

As regards the visit to Bangladesh, the commentary said the Chinese Premier’s description of the nine agreements signed during his short visit to Dhaka as “a landmark” in the two countries’ relations is quite significant for more reasons than one.

166,000 Nepali kids go to school under enrollment drive

KATHMANDU, 15 April — A two-week long school enrollment campaign beginning from Friday aims to enroll 166,000 among 486,896 Nepali children aged between five and nine, who are still away from school, a government official said on Thursday.

“If the targeted numbers of students are admitted, the net enrollment rate will reach 86 per cent as per the government’s Education for All goals to enroll 100 per cent by 2015,” Mahashram Sharma, deputy director of the Education Department, told reporters.

Currently, the net enrollment rate in Grade One is 84.2 per cent, with 3.08 million children between five and nine years studying in primary schools across the country.

The campaign will be mainly aimed at bringing those children from the hardcore groups, who were deprived from access to schools, Sharma said.

Each student from such families will be given 500 Nepali rupees (7.15 US dollars), and 85 per cent of text books to be distributed free have reached the regional and district depots, he noted.

To provide educational materials to the students, the Education Ministry will give 3,000 rupees (42.86 dollars) to each school and 100 rupees (1.43 dollars) to each student.

“While we will also focus on retaining the students from dropout in lower secondary and secondary levels,” he said, adding, “Friendly environment is a must to discourage the dropout, which is being tried to create in schools.”

There are about 6 million students in more than 26,000 government schools in the kingdom. The literacy is only about 58 per cent among the total population of 24.8 million.

Bombs kill 4 policemen as Iraq violence surges

BAGHDAD, 15 April — A suicide bomber steered his car into an Iraqi police patrol south of Baghdad late Thursday night, killing four officers, and three bomb attacks in the capital wounded at least nine people on Friday, Iraqi officials said.

The attacks followed two deadly car bombings in the capital on Thursday morning, and extended the recent surge of violence that ended two months of relative calm after the January elections.

The American military on Friday announced the deaths of two American marines. One was killed on Wednesday by enemy mortar fire at an American base near Hit, near the Syrian border, military officials said. The other was killed on Thursday by small arms fire in Ramadi, west of the capital.

The suicide attack on the police patrol took place Thursday night near Hillah, in the Mahaweel district. Three police officers and five civilians were also wounded in the attack, witnesses said. Mahaweel is about 40 miles south of Baghdad, just south of a Sunni Arab area where attacks on American and Iraqi patrols have been common.
China to host 22nd World Law Congress in September

BEIJING, 15 April — The 22nd Congress on International Law will be held in Beijing and Shanghai from 4 to 10 September, Vice-President of China’s Supreme People’s Court Wan E’xiang announced here on Thursday.

This will be the second time China hosts the Congress, following its successful hosting of the 14th congress in Beijing in 1990.

The theme of this Congress will be “The Rule of Law and Harmony in International Society”, focusing on the profound connotation of the rule of law as well as its roles and challenges in establishing harmonious society, according to Wan.

Under the theme, 22 topics in six categories will be discussed during the Congress, involving the legal system of each country and international judicial cooperation, the issues deserving international concerns, issues emerging in the development of the world economy and trade and issues related to social life and environmental protection.

The Congress will also include a mock trial, during which a hypothetical case with realistic significance in the international community will be argued by lawyers from various countries before a collegial panel composed of chief justices from different countries and justices from the International Court of Justice.

A total of 1,500 delegates to attend the Congress, including more than 500 foreign judges, attorneys, senior legal practitioners and high-ranking officials of judicial departments, Wan said.

He said the Declaration Declaratory would be published during the closing ceremony to reflect the common understanding reached by the world legal profession and the latest research achievements.

The Congress on International Law is an important non-governmental international Congress initiated by the World Jurist Association (WJA). The WJA, found in 1963, aims to help create “a new world of law, where the weak are secure, peace is preserved forever”.

China to export $100b of textiles in 2005

GUANGZHOU, 16 April — China will export 100 billion US dollars of textiles in 2005, five billion dollars more than in 2004, said a document issued by the Ministry of Commerce here on Friday.

The white paper that the ministry released today analyses the domestic and overseas trade environment of China’s textiles.

According to the white paper, China’s textile industry will face the following problems in 2005: The restriction China’s exports, malignant competition tends to spread in domestic market and China still suffers from shortages of power and energy supply.

However, it says, though difficulties remain, as the international market still needs China’s textile and clothing, exports will grow steadily.

Lu Jianhua, director of the MOC’s foreign trade sector, said the ministry is researching on setting more regulations to prevent the orderless competition among textile producers.

Cao Xinyu, vice-chairman of China Textile Import and Export Chamber, said that according to the survey that the chamber made, most companies hopes the government issues such regulations for a better market order.

China sets rigid rules on MBO in SOEs

BEIJING, 15 April — China’s Ministry of Finance and the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission (SACAC) jointly issued a draft regulations here on Thursday prohibiting management buyouts (MBO) of large state-owned or state-controlled enterprises.

In small- and medium-sized state enterprises, however, MBO reform is allowed but strictly regulated by the draft regulation on Management Buyouts of State Owned Enterprises (SOEs).

Anonymous sources from SACAC told Xinhua that the decision was made to secure an ordered transfer of state properties and to facilitate the SOE reform.

While MBO has been increasingly used to make state-owned companies into private ones in recent years, managers were often found cheating or engaged in malpractice damaging the interests of employees, investors and financial institutions but bringing themselves private gains.

To remedy the situation, this regulation stipulates that MBO reform in small- and medium-sized companies must be strictly supervised by ownership holders. Management is not allowed to interfere with the establishment of transfer plans, liquidation, financial auditing, assets evaluation and the choice of intermediary agencies. The regulation requires all MBO operations to be conducted through ownership exchange agencies designated by the ownership holders.

Meanwhile, all transfer information must be made public. No exclusive clauses favourable to a special management level will be allowed.

The regulation also forbids indirect ownership transfer through the third party because of the difficulty of finding out the identity and financial status of the real transferees.

Besides, management that auditing authority finds responsible for their companies’ economic losses or involved in deliberate transfer of companies’ net assets and other malpractice jeopardizing the security of state properties will have their qualifications revoked. The regulation does not apply to the ownership transfer of SOEs in financial sectors and the state equities transfer of listed SOEs.

Annun says US, UK to blame for Iraq scam

UNITED NATIONS, 16 April — In a statement that could lead to fresh confrontation with Washington and London, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan said US and Britain bore the part of the blame for Iraq earnings billions of dollars in illicit money.

The US could have stopped the smuggling as they had interdiction forces, but they decided to close their eyes to oil smuggling to Turkey and Jordan in mid-1990s because they were allies, Annan told a reunion of past and present spokespersons of the UN.

14th congress in Beijing in 1990.

The theme of this Congress will be “The Rule of Law and Harmony in International Society”, focusing on the profound connotation of the rule of law as well as its roles and challenges in establishing harmonious society, according to Wan.

Under the theme, 22 topics in six categories will be discussed during the Congress, involving the legal system of each country and international judicial cooperation, the issues deserving international concerns, issues emerging in the development of the world economy and trade and issues related to social life and environmental protection.

The Congress will also include a mock trial, during which a hypothetical case with realistic significance in the international community will be argued by lawyers from various countries before a collegial panel composed of chief justices from different countries and justices from the International Court of Justice.

A total of 1,500 delegates to attend the Congress, including more than 500 foreign judges, attorneys, senior legal practitioners and high-ranking officials of judicial departments, Wan said.

He said the Declaration Declaratory would be published during the closing ceremony to reflect the common understanding reached by the world legal profession and the latest research achievements.

The Congress on International Law is an important non-governmental international Congress initiated by the World Jurist Association (WJA). The WJA, found in 1963, aims to help create “a new world of law, where the weak are secure, peace is preserved forever”.

81 countries confirmed participation in Asian-African Summit

JAKARTA, 15 April — The Indonesian Government said on Thursday 81 countries have confirmed their participation in the Asian-African Summit scheduled for 22-24 April here and in the West Java capital of Bandung.

As an addition, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and representatives from six major international organizations also will attend the meeting, which will mark the golden jubilee of the 1955 Asian-African Conference, Foreign Minister Hassan Wirajuda told reporters at the State Palace.

Hassan said the summit will be co-chaired by President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and his South African counterpart Tabo Mbeki.

He claimed that 52 Heads of State have confirmed their participation in the summit.

Annun says US, UK to blame for Iraq scam

UNITED NATIONS, 16 April — In a statement that could lead to fresh confrontation with Washington and London, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan said US and Britain bore the part of the blame for Iraq earnings billions of dollars in illicit money.

The US could have stopped the smuggling as they had interdiction forces, but they decided to close their eyes to oil smuggling to Turkey and Jordan in mid-1990s because they were allies, Annan told a reunion of past and present spokespersons of the UN.
China owns most franchise stores in the world

BEIJING, 16 April — With more than 2,000 franchise stores and over 120,000 outlets, China has seen its franchises growing into the world's largest in the past decade.

Statistics from the China Chain Stores and Franchise Association (CCSFA) show the franchise business model is prospering in nearly 50 sectors including convenience stores, automobile maintenance, home decoration, education and training, laundry, attire, books and audio-visual products and the catering business.

Approximately 1.8 million people are working in franchises now. Last year alone, more than 60,000 job opportunities were created. Guo Geping, chairman of CCSFA, told the Economic Daily on Tuesday that the aggregate turnover of China's franchises grew by 41.5 per cent last year while the growth rate of outlets slowed down by 38 per cent.

"This means having as many outlets as possible is not as paramount as it used to be. Most Chinese franchise store owners have turned to seek a more solid and sustained development, such as defending the value of their brand names, optimizing internal management and improving the efficiency of distribution," Guo said.

"Although China has made phenomenal achievements in developing franchise businesses since the late 1990s, there are still some problems waiting to be tackled, especially in the rectification of market order." Since all previous restrictions on franchise businesses in China were eliminated in 2004 as required by the World Trade Organization, industrial analysts hold that China's franchise industry has entered its best ever period in history. MNA/Xinhua

China, India launch financial dialogue mechanism

BEIJING, 16 April — The Chinese Ministry of Finance has said it has set up a financial dialogue mechanism with its India counterpart in a bid to boost their exchanges and cooperation in major international financial issues.

The mechanism will help promote the global economy in a balanced and orderly manner, according to a statement posted on its web site by the Chinese ministry.

The move also indicates that China has made new progress in cementing financial exchanges and cooperation with other developing countries. The Chinese and Indian Government officials signed a memorandum of understanding on financial dialogue during the just-concluded visit to India by Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao.

The Chinese ministry said the dialogue between the two countries will be held every 12 to 18 months at a deputy ministerial level or other levels the two sides agreed upon.

Their dialogue will cover the economic situation of the two countries, their financial policies, financial reform and exchanges on matters related to international economic forums and institutions, according to the statement. China has set up financial dialogue mechanism with the United States, Britain and the European Union, Britain, France on a regular basis at ministerial levels. MNA/Xinhua

Two giant pandas sent to Sichuan Province for exchange programme

FUZHOU, 16 April — Two under-age male giant pandas have been sent by plane from Wolong in southwestern Sichuan Province, the ancestral home of the rare species, to this capital city of east China's Fujian Province.

The move is part of China's panda exchange programme, which aims to maintain the biodiversity of the country's giant panda population, said Dong Li, director of animal keeping department of the Wolong Panda Research Centre in southwest China's Sichuan Province, on Wednesday.

The two, named Linyang and Fufu, were born in 2001 and weighed 81 kilograms and 109 kilograms. Their arrival brought Fuzhou's total number of giant pandas in captivity to five.

Dong Li said the exchange will help avoid inbreeding and improve the reproduction capacity of giant pandas in captivity.

"Inbreeding among giant pandas in the same region easily leads to the species' degeneration," Dong Li acknowledged.

The Wolong centre has dispatched a team of zoo keepers to the Fuzhou Giant Panda Research Centre.

And the Fuzhou centre will work together with the special team to keep a close watch of Linyang and Fufu, said Chen Yucun, head of the Fuzhou centre.

According to Wei Rongping, a senior researcher with the Wolong centre, China launched a giant panda and habitat protection programme in 1993. Under the programme, giant pandas living in wild have since been effectively protected and their population is on the rise. MNA/Xinhua

Suicide bomber attacks US intelligence base in Iraq

TIKRIT (Iraq), 15 April— A suicide bomber driving a hooby-trapped fuel tanker attacked Thursday what believed to be a US intelligence base in Tikrit, north of Baghdad, causing many casualties, police said. The hit building used to be a house of Kharlah Teflaa, uncle of Saddam Hussein, and was believed to have been taken by a special US investigating unit, a police source speaking on condition of anonymity told Xinhua. —Xinhua

Ukraine starts second wave of troops withdrawal from Iraq

KIEV, 15 April — Ukraine withdrew 69 soldiers from Iraq on Friday in the second pullout wave after the first batch oftroops returned home in mid-March, said the Ukrainian Defense Ministry.

An additional 67 soldiers will follow suit on Saturday, the ministry said, noting that their pullout had also been scheduled for Friday but was postponed due to the technical problem of one plane.

Ukraine began its troops withdrawal from Iraq on March 15, and Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko signed a decree ordering that the pullout shall be completed by the year's end, his office announced on Wednesday.

Ukraine sent about 1,650 soldiers to Iraq under the Polish command in August 2003 and 18 of them were killed and dozens injured. —Internet
Vehicle arrivals down drastically in Tianjin

TIANJIN, 16 April — Tianjin, a major automobile port near Beijing, witnessed a dramatic decline in its vehicle arrivals for the first quarter of this year, despite China’s discontinuation of its import quota system and an import-duty reduction for the automotive industry.

Local Customs sources said that Tianjin imported 10,699 motor vehicles from January to March, down 50 per cent from the level one year earlier.

In the first three months, Tianjin imported 4,065 motor vehicles from Japan, down 44 per cent year-on-year; 2,134 vehicles from South Korea, down 76 per cent; and 2,249 units from Germany, down 31 per cent.

Industry analysts owed the import decline largely to a robust vehicle production and a shift in industrial policy.

Malaysia’s natural rubber production declines in February

KUALA LUMPUR, 16 April — Malaysia’s natural rubber production in February this year decreased by 21 per cent to 92,876 tons compared to the previous month, the Statistics Department said on Friday.

The production dropped by 12.4 per cent when compared with the same period last year, the department said in a Press release issued here.

The department said the smallholding sector contributed 94.4 per cent to the production while the remaining 5.6 per cent came from the estate sector.

It added that exports of natural rubber in February 2005 totalled 82,658 tons, a decline of 11.5 per cent compared to the previous month and 9.6 per cent lower compared to the same month last year.

Scientists keep eye on five raging volcanoes in Indonesia

JAKARTA, 16 April — Scientists anxiously watched five volcanoes nationwide on Thursday, as fears over more natural disasters escalated with five mountains rumbling into life over the past three days, the Jakarta Post reported on Friday.

Volcanologists were paying the closest attention to five among the 11 mountains in the country on “watch status” — Mt Tangkuban Perahu in West Java Province; Mt Anak Krakatau in Lampung Province; Mt Talang in West Sumatra Province; Mt Semeru in East Java Province; and Mt Merapi in Yogyakarta Province, the paper said.

“They seem to be Krakatau Perahu and Anak Krakatau are more unstable than those that have been inactive for thousands of years,” said Syamsul Rizal, the chief of a volcanology team stationed at an observation post near Mt Talang and Mt Tangkuban Perahu.

The eruption of Mt Talang and the increased activities of Mt Tangkuban Perahu and Mt Anak Krakatau were triggered by the giant earthquakes on the Nias Island and in the Aceh Province recently, he said.

Mt Anak Krakatau, which blew itself apart in 1883 in one of the country’s worst-ever natural disasters, was put on alert status late Wednesday amid warnings of poisonous gas emissions. No one lives on Krakatau but the peak is a popular tourist spot.

While petty traders on the sides of Mt Tangkuban Perahu have been evacuated, hundreds of thousands of people living nearby the slopes of the volcano stayed put in their houses, warily watching the smoking giant.

There have been 21 minor eruptions on the mountain since 1986.

Mt Tangkuban Perahu is located near densely populated Bandung, the capital city of West Java Province and only a few hundred kilometers east of Jakarta.

Next week, Bandung will host more than 50 heads of state at the Asian-African Summit.

While activity on the mountain decreased Thursday compared to the day earlier, biggest crater on the volcano spewed hot ash into the air 21 times.

The 11 volcanoes under the watch of volcanologists are among at least 129 active volcanoes in the country that are part of the Pacific “Ring of Fire” — a series of volcanoes and fault lines encircling the Pacific Ocean and the United States, Japan, some other Southeast Asian countries and New Zealand.

Large quantity of drug tablets seized in Australia

CANBERRA, 16 April — More than one ton of MDMA tablets with an approximate street value of more than 195 million US dollars has been seized in Australia, representing the largest drug seizure in the country.

The seizure is also one of the world’s biggest ever single detections of the street-ready drug.

Four men have also been arrested following a joint operation by the Australia Federal Police (AFP) and Customs in Melbourne, capital of the State of Victoria.

A joint statement by AFP and Customs released on Friday said the investigation began in January this year and intelligence led Customs to identify and examine a shipping container of ceramic tiles which arrived in Melbourne from Italy earlier this week.

X-ray examination revealed anomalies inside eight pallets which were stacked with the tiles.

Further inspection revealed that dozens of packets of five million MDMA tablets were concealed inside a cavity surrounded by the boxes of tiles.

Two men, who attempted to access the consignment after it was sent to a factory, were arrested and were charged with aid and abetting a commercial quantity of MDMA and attempt to possess prohibited import.

Police executed 12 search warrants at homes and businesses across Melbourne on Thursday night and Friday morning, arresting the other two men. They were charged with aid and abetting a prohibited import.

S’pore emphasizes community preparedness for emergencies

SINGAPORE, 16 April — Singapore’s Minister for Home Affairs Wong Kan Seng on Friday urged individuals and communities in the country to get prepared for emergencies such as natural disasters and terrorist threats.

Speaking at a Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF) seminar, Wong stressed that a community’s survival ultimately hinges on its resilience and SCDF must maximize its finite resources to meet the public needs.

“Reaching out to the public effectively and getting them on board to take personal responsibility for being ready and prepared for emergencies will be a key challenge for the SCDF in the years ahead,” he noted.
Scientist find bird-like eggs in China’s dinosaur fossil

**Los Angeles, 16 April —** The discovery of a pair of shell eggs inside a female dinosaur found in China sheds new light on dinosaur reproductive biology, an international group of scientists said on Thursday.

The rare finding is also consistent with the assumption that modern birds have dinosaur ancestors, though it does not answer the ultimate question of whether birds descended from dinosauiurs, scientists wrote in their paper in the latest on-line version of the journal Science.

The specimen found near Ganzhou, in China’s southern Jiangxi Province, is comprised of a three-dimensional pelvis that contains a single pair of shell eggs within the dinosaur’s body cavity.

The researchers identified the creature as an oviraptorosaur, which is a subgroup of the theropods, the dinosaurs that are thought to be ancestors of modern birds.

Like birds, the dinosaur probably would not have been able to lay its entire clutch at once, but like a crocodile, she had two ovaries to make eggs, according to Tamaki Sato, lead investigator at the Canadian Museum of Nature in Ottawa, Canada.

The fossil will help answer questions about how birds, reptiles and dinosaurs are related, scientists said.

The festival of Myanmar people is called Thingyan, which comes from the Pali term Sankata, which means transition from the old to the new year. As a gesture of welcoming the New Year, Myanmar douse water on each other with the aim of enabling those poured water to be free from dangers, harm and misdeeds. As the water is cool and clean as water, Myanmar nationals pay respects to the aged, parents and teachers, doing cleaning work inside and outside the residences, shampooing, keeping Sabbath and making charity at pagodas and monasteries, and cleaning pagodas and Buddha images.

Out of the festivals in the 12 months of Myanmar calendar, Thingyan Festival is one held on first half of April. It is a grander scale than any other festivals. There is a belief of Myanmar people that the Thagyamin (King of the Celestial Abode) comes on a sojourn to the human abode when the Water Festival is in progress in Myanmar. One should study the old treatises on astrology such as Thiuriya Theidandta treatise and Thandite-hta treatise if one wants to know when the period the Thingyan begins and ends. Since the times of Myanmar kings, national astrologers and Brahmins compiled Thangyansars (bulletin predicting the time of transition into the new year and climatic conditions) to be expected in that year) referring to the astrological treatises.

According to the treatises on Thingyan, the transition would fall in the first half of April, while the others in January. The systems by which they welcome and observe the New Year Day are based on respect for the customs and traditions. At times, the New Year, some douse water on one another, some light suits, some perform dances, some say prayers at churches, and some display firecrackers. But, their purposes are the same to clean the misdeeds in the past, to mark the New Year wholeheartedly, to pay respects to the elderly persons, parents and grandparents, and to cultivate good morality and perform meritorious deeds.

The day which enters the New Year is called the New Year Day. Some call the New Year Day the transition day. Regarding the New Year Day as an auspicious day, all nations observe the day with respect to their respective customs and traditions. Since the New Year Day is observed on the first day of the first month, and the New Year Day falls on 16 or 17 April. The National Calendar Advisory Board has to fix the period in which the transition would fall.

Scientist find bird-like eggs in China’s dinosaur fossil

**Los Angeles, 16 April —** The discovery of a pair of shell eggs inside a female dinosaur found in China sheds new light on dinosaur reproductive biology, an international group of scientists said on Thursday.

The dinosaur retained two ovaries and oviducts, a primitive condition seen in crocodiles and other reptiles. In contrast, modern birds only have one set.

These dinosaurs were known to have made nests with more than a dozen eggs inside. The discovery of two mature eggs inside suggests this species made two eggs at one time, laid them, and then repeated the process until her nest was full. Birds lay one egg at a time, but reptiles such as crocodiles lay a full clutch at once. The crocodiles’ eggs have leathery shells, while the shells of these dinosaur eggs were hard, more like birds’ egg shell.

And the shape of the eggs, pointed at one end like pineapple-sized potatoes, suggested that the females came to the centres of the nests to lay neat, multilayered, ring-shaped clutches. Scientists suggested that aspects of this dinosaur’s reproductive system share similarities with both reptiles and modern birds.

The site of the fossil dates to the Upper Cretaceous period, which lasted from 98 million to 65 million years ago, when many different dinosaurs arose.

Singapore, India at “last half-mile mark” of CECA

**Singapore, 16 April—** Singapore and India are at the “last half-mile mark” of concluding a Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA), Singapore’s Ministry of Trade and Industry said on Friday.

Teams from the two countries are engaging in the renegotiation of an Avoidance of Double Taxation Agreement signed in 1994, as well as in resolving issues concerning financial and telecommunications services.

Singapore has put forward proposals addressing India’s concerns after their last round of talks in March, and is waiting for the official response from the Indian side, according to the ministry.

It said it hoped that the two countries will reach a swift and mutually beneficial resolution, which will lead to the conclusion of a substantive CECA.

So far, teams from the two sides have finished 12 rounds of negotiations and legal experts have met twice for legal scrubbing of the agreement since talks began in April 2003.

India-based Jet Airways’ maiden flight to Singapore arrives

**Singapore, 16 April—** The maiden flight of the Mumbai-Singapore route operated by India’s private carrier Jet Airways landed in the city state on Friday.

A statement by the Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore (CAAS) said that the inaugural flight is Jet Airways’ first destination in Southeast Asia and third in Asia as a whole, only after Sri Lanka’s Colombo and Nepal’s Kathmandu.

With the added 14 Mumbai-Singapore flights operated by Jet Airways, the total number of weekly passenger flights between Singapore and 11 Indian cities will reach 216.

“We are looking forward to be part of a new growing business opportunity between the two countries in promoting each other’s business and tourist offers,” said Peter Luethi, Jet Airways’ chief operating officer, at the welcome ceremony at Singapore’s Changi Airport.

CAAS hoped that the entry of Jet Airways will contribute to the further growth of the Singapore-India market and make air travel between the two countries more convenient.

The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago.
Second best time is now.
With proper natural resources and population... (from page 1)

enable the Tatmadaw to become the efficient, capable and strong one. Peace and stability and development of the State, and the strong and efficient Tatmadaw are interrelated. Only when the Tatmadaw is strong and efficient, can the independence and sovereignty of the State be safeguarded, the General added. He next urged those present to participate in the nation-building tasks as well as in the effort for

With the implementation of the five rural development tasks and 24 special development regions projects. There must be three main forces — the State, the people and the Tatmadaw — if the country is to develop. Only when these forces are to unitedly and actively work hard, will any difficulties be overcome and the nation develop.

In striving for the development of the State, the Senior General said, we have taken responsibility to run the country at central level and military commanders have been assigned duties to implement the development work at regional level. So, under the leadership of the commander, military officers and other ranks are to strive for the defence of the nation and development of the State, and to safeguard the independence and sovereignty. He said a Tatmadaw member has to be dutiful not only as a Tatmadawman but also as a good citizen of the State.
With proper natural...

In reviewing the reports, General Thura Shwe Mann delivered an address, saying that Rakhine State is making progress with concerted efforts to take measures for ensuring peace and stability and development like other states and divisions. Head of State Senator General Than Shwe has given guidance that efforts are to be made for gaining more progress in the state.

Rakhine State’s food sufficiency performance exceeds 140 per cent. The Head of State has given guidance that Rakhine State is to boost production of rice and paddy. Concerning cultivation crops, Rakhine State has performed 140 per cent while performance of the entire nation stood at 154 per cent. Therefore, Rakhine State needs to increase its cultivation capability. He said he would compare development of the economic sector of the whole country with that of Rakhine State. As the Government has laid down short- and long-term economic plans systematically, it gains economic progress gradually. In the third five-year plan period, the economic sector increased 11.3 per cent in 2001-2002, 12.0 per cent in 2002-2003, 13.8 per cent in 2003-2004 and 12.6 per cent in 2004-2005. In 2004-2005 fiscal year, per capita income stood K 165,729. The national economy has increased 1.4 times in 2003-2004 fiscal year which is the third year of the third five-year plan if compared to the basic year.

The data and accounts firmly indicate development of the State. These are tangible results of economic development and improvement of infrastructures of the State. At the time of the Tatmadaw Government, 172 damb have been built to benefit 2,294,569 acres of farmlands. And, 35 dams are under construction. Likewise, 271 river water pumping projects have been implemented and 34 projects are being implemented.

In the transport sector, the Tatmadaw Government has built 196 bridges that are 180 feet and above long and 41 bridges are under construction. A total of 1,066 miles of railroad have been built in the rail transportation sector. In the education sector, basic education schools, universities and colleges have been opened in the entire nation in accordance with the guidance of the Head of State that the education sector which plays a vital role in development of the State is to be upgraded.

Nowadays, there are 40,521 basic education schools throughout the nation, and the number of universities and colleges increased to 156 from 32. In the health sector, there were 631 hospitals in the past and there are 819 at present. Similarly, there were 1,337 health care centres in the past and the number of health care centres reached 1,450 today.

This indicates tangible results in economic development of the State. The Head of State has given guidance that though Myanmar is an agricultural country, it is necessary to make all-out efforts for upfiling of the industrial sector that plays an important role for emergence of a modern and developed nation.

Rakhine State, on its part, is to strive for improvement of the industrial sector in accord with the aims of the Government. Likewise, boosting production is to be carried out in the meat and fish sector. Rakhine State should make more progress because average per capita income of the division stands ninth among States and Divisions of the country.

Cultivation of paddy is to be extended for ensuring local food sufficiency of the increased population.

In conclusion, the General said that Rakhine State must strive for development of not only itself but also for the entire nation by using development infrastructures. Minister for Agriculture and Irrigation Maj Gen Maung Hmaw Oo reported on the prospects of the region for achieving the targeted output of paddy, and modern agricultural methods and quality species to be provided for growing rubber in the region. Minister for Construction Maj Gen Saw Tun, on the roads and bridges the government has built, and construction projects under way in Rakhine State; Minister for Livestock and Fisheries Brig-Gen Maung Maung Thein, on progress made in the region’s fish and meat sector and in breeding domestic species of chicken, and assistance of the region. The development of a region mainly rests on combined endeavours of departmental personnel and local people. Now, Rakhine State contributes 4.6 per cent to the State economy, and greater efforts are to be exerted to effectively perform higher percentage. In connection with regional development, the region is blessed with promising opportunities for development since it has proper ratio of natural resources and population. The aquatic resources are inexhaustible, and a lot of oil and gas deposits have been discovered in the region which is also a source of fertile soil and a large area of forests.

Rakhine State contributes 4.6 per cent to the State economy, and greater efforts are to be exerted to effectively perform higher percentage. In connection with regional development, the region is blessed with promising opportunities for development since it has proper ratio of rich natural resources and population. The aquatic resources are inexhaustible, and a lot of oil and gas deposits have been discovered in the region which is also a source of fertile soil and a large area of forests.

In conclusion, the Senior General pointed out that with a vast territory, moderate population, rich natural resources, high prestige and integrity and high intellectual power of the national people, the nation will transform itself into a modern and developed one before long if the entire national people do their work with heart and soul.

On arrival at Sittway Airport, the Senior General and party were doused scented water by Vice-Chairman Brig-Gen Than Tun Aung, senior military officers, departmental heads, officials of social organizations, and members of Rakhine national cultural troupes. Next, they arrived at Thandwe. Then, they arrived at Annawa Yeiktha in Thandwe.
After signing the visitors' book, Vice-Senior General Maung Aye inspected macadamia and coffee nursery of Shwe Thanlwin Co Ltd.—MNA

Minister for Information Brig-Gen Kyaw Hsan inspects maintenance of the printing press at Myanma Alin Daily.—MYANMA ALIN

Minister Brig-Gen Kyaw Hsan oversees maintenance of the printing press at Myanma Alin Daily.—MYANMA ALIN

Vice-Senior General Maung Aye inspects macadamia and coffee nursery of Shwe Thanlwin Co Ltd.—MNA

Information Minister inspects maintenance of presses at dailies

Minister for Information Brig-Gen Kyaw Hsan inspects maintenance of the press at Kyemon Daily.—MNA

Minister for Information Brig-Gen Kyaw Hsan inspect maintenance of the press at Kyemon Daily.—MNA

Minister for Information Brig-Gen Kyaw Hsan inspected macadamia and coffee nursery of Shwe Thanlwin Co Ltd.—MNA

Minister Brig-Gen Kyaw Hsan inspects maintenance of the press at Kyemon Daily.—MNA

Minister Brig-Gen Kyaw Hsan arrives at Kyemon Daily at 77, 52nd Street, Pazundaung Township. Managing Director Col Soe Win, Director (Admin) U Soe Win, Chief Editor U Zaw Min Thein and Manager Daw Khin Nyo Win welcomed the minister.

Vice-Senior General Maung Aye overseas maintenance of the press at Myanma Alin Daily.—MNA

YANGON, 16 April—Minister for Information Brig-Gen Kyaw Hsan inspects maintenance of presses at Myanma Alin and Kyemon Dailies and Myanma Alin Press under News and Periodicals Enterprise of the Ministry of Information during the holidays of Maha Thingyan Festival, yesterday and today.

On 15 April morning, Minister Brig-Gen Kyaw Hsan arrived at Myanma Alin Daily on Natnawk Lane in Bahan Township where the minister was welcomed by Deputy Minister for Information Brig-Gen Aung Thein, Managing Director of NPE Col Soe Win, Deputy Director (Admin) U Mya Hlaing, Chief Editor U Ye Myint Pe, Manager U Zaw Win and officials of the daily.

First, the minister went to the press room of the daily and inspected the plan for maintenance of the press and keeping of spare machinery parts for emergency use.

The minister oversaw cleaning of water and ink form rollers at respective units of the press, installment and adjustment, substitute of roller ball bearings at ink and water form rollers, adjustment of blankets and plate cylinders, sanitation and electrical maintenance tasks. Managing Director Col Soe Win, Chief Editor U Ye Myint Pe and officials conducted the minister round the establishment.

Next, the minister cordially conversed with employees.

This evening, the minister arrived at Kyemon Daily at 77, 52nd Street, Pazundaung Township. Managing Director Col Soe Win, Director (Admin) U Soe Win, Chief Editor U Zaw Min Thein and Manager Daw Khin Nyo Win welcomed the minister.

Afterwards, the minister looked into the record on servicing and general maintenance of the press during the Maha Thingyan period and keeping of spare machinery parts for emergency use.

The minister inspected adjustment of machines and electrical maintenance at respective units of the press. The managing director and officials conducted the minister round the press. After leaving necessary instruction, the minister cordially met with staff.

After that, the minister proceeded to Myanma Alin Press at Shwegonding of Bahan Township. He inspected servicing of the machines being carried out by employees who did not take days-off during the Maha Thingyan period, general maintenance and keeping spare machinery parts and electrical renovation. The minister gave necessary instructions.

Next, the minister left there after greeting the staff.

In his inspection of the presses, he gave instructions on keeping of spare parts for emergency use, giving priority to keeping the machines parts which often break down. He said priority is to be given to the use of local products at the press as they can be obtained at the industrial zones in the country. The minister also gave instructions on inviting the technicians of the industrial zones to look into the machines and to get necessary machines for the press. The minister said that seminars and workshops are to be held to manufacture import substitute products. He also gave instructions on continuous maintenance of the machines and keeping a record of the repair of the machines, arrangements to be made for conducting courses and sending trainees abroad for their improvement of technical skills, keeping the machines and the press room neat and tidy, taking fire prevention measures and providing of staff welfare services.

During the period of Maha Thingyan Festival, the Myanma Alin, the Kyemon and the New Light of Myanmar dailies are being published alternatively. Workers of the Kyemon, Myanma Alin, NLM and Myanma Alin Press performed maintenance of the machines during the holidays of the dailies.

MNA
Festivities pick up tempo on last day…

A pandal on Anawrahta Street is swarmed with people on Ajet day of Thingyan. —NLM

(from page 16)

Kandawgyi Park, at the People’s Square and People’s Park and along Inya Lake bank.

Such pagodas as the Shwedagon Pagoda, the Sule Pagoda, the Botahaung Kyaukdayup Pagoda, the Thirimingala Kaba Aye Pagoda, the Tooth Relic Pagoda (Yangon), the Mahawizaya Pagoda, the Lawka Chantha Abhaya Labba Muni Buddha Image, the Kyakkasen Pagoda, the Shwephonwint Pagoda, the Ngahtatgyi Pagoda, the Kohtatgyi Pagoda, the Melamu Pagoda, the Shwepyitha Thadukan Pagoda, the Kyaikkalaw Pagoda, the Thanbyzin

Kayakkhu Pagoda and Kyauk-hmawun Pagoda were packed with devotees paying homage to them and observing Sila (moral precepts) today. There were similar devotees practising meditation at the monasteries and meditation centres.

MNA

Damsels perform a dance at a pandal on Theinbyu Road in Mingala Taungnyunt Township.—NLM

Mayor Brig-Gen Aung Thein Lin presents prizes to winners who take part in competitions held in Mayor’s Pandal on 16-4-2005.—MNA

Col Tin Soe of YCDC announces the closing of Mayor’s Pandal on 16-4-2005. MNA

Merry makers seen on Ajet Day of Thingyan in Yangon. —MNA

A street of Mandalay is swarmed with Thingyan revellers. —MNA

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 Ye Myint and wife Daw Myat Ngwe, Mandalay Mayor Brig-Gen Phone Zaw Han and wife, Deputy Commander Brig-Gen Nay Win and wife and officials visited Nanmyothu Pandal, Mandalay Mayor’s Pandal and others participated in the water festival.

Revellers from various regions of the country enjoyed the water festival. The merry-makers took rest at Mandalay Hill, Kuthodaw Pagoda, Taungthaman Lake and U Pein Bridge.

MNA

Dance troupe of a neighbouring country entertain the audience with their traditional dance. —MNA

A street of Mandalay is swarmed with Thingyan revellers. —MNA
Religious leaders call for fair global trade system for Africa

Nairobi, 15 April — Religious leaders from Africa on Thursday appealed to religious and secular civil society leaders in developed countries to continue joining Africa in solidarity to campaign against injustice in the current global trading system.

“We are deeply concerned at the lack of transparency and democracy in the World Trade Organization (WTO) system and processes, its rule-making, negotiations, monitoring and dispute settlement,” the prelates said in a statement released here Thursday.

The leaders who comprised Catholic and Anglican Bishops from eastern and southern Africa regions have also called for the suspension of talks between their governments and the European Union, calling the 25-member EU trade negotiation terms as “overly dictatorial.”

Rich nations have been calling for the removal of tariff barriers erected by African nations to allow them free access to African markets.

“Since 15 per cent of annual revenues accrue from import duties in most African nations, further tariff cuts will seriously undermine government’s ability to attain Millennium Development Goals,” said the statement.

They said special and differential treatment is a right established in the global trading system to correct the imbalances of the system which works against poor countries.

A lot of eastern and southern African nations are currently locked in talks with the EU on new market access treaty known as the Economic Partnership Agreements, which will replace the existing Lome Accord.

In Africa, more than 72 per cent of people derive their livelihood from agriculture-related activities yet developed countries have continued to increase domestic support for their farmers, leading to the dumping of cheap agriculture goods on the market.

Kenyan firms make profit from crime prevention service

Nairobi, 15 April — Private security companies earned more than 30 billion shillings (about 395 million US dollars) a year from crime prevention service in Kenya, local media reported on Thursday.

Most of the firms had experienced rapid growth in the past five years as more Kenyans sought protection, local newspaper Daily Nation reported on its web site.

“They are earning over 30 billion shillings each year for protection services, way above the 5 billion shillings (about 66 million dollars) paid to the police force,” Daily Nation quoted a participant of a workshop on small arms as saying.

He said at the workshop on Wednesday the Kenyan Government should act fast and stop the spread and misuse of small arms, which had contributed to the rise in crime.

Agost Muchai, a senior researcher with the Security Research and International Centre, said at the workshop that more effort should be put in training the police to reduce illegal arms.

She said Kenya’s long and porous borders had led to the flow of arms from Ethiopia and Somalia and sparked a booming cross-border trade.

Zimbabwe enjoys good relations with Asian countries

Harare, 15 April — Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe said on Wednesday that his country is enjoying good relations with Asian countries like China, Malaysia and Singapore.

Speaking during the commissioning of six K-8 jet trainer aircraft in Gweru, about 280 kilometres south-west of Harare, Mugabe said Zimbabwe’s Look East Policy has achieved significant growth in joint venture agreements between the countries and several South-east and East Asian countries, expected to contribute significantly to the country’s development.

He added that the Look East Policy resulted in agreements such as the one that was signed between the Air Force of Zimbabwe (AFZ) and a Chinese company.

“The country’s Look East Policy which has seen Zimbabwe enjoy cordial relations with such countries as the People’s Republic of China, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, India and Pakistan has given birth to several successful joint agreements with various countries, one of which culminated in the supply of the K-8 aircraft,” he said.

Mugabe said the K-8 aircraft would go a long way in helping the AFZ defend the country’s airspace and also perfect the skills of the Air Force personnel.

The introduction of the K-8 trainer aircraft into Number 2 Squadron, whose primary function is teaching the pilot to employ the jet aircraft as a fighting platform, has modernized the AFZ.

Ethiopian PM heads for Paris to boost ties

Addis Ababa, 15 April — Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi left here on Wednesday for Paris, leading a high-level delegation to pay a three-day official visit to France.

Meles is scheduled to hold talks with French President Jacques Chirac on issues of common interest, said a Press release from the Foreign Ministry, adding that he is also scheduled to meet leaders of the French Upper and Lower Houses of Parliament.

The Ethiopian delegation will hold talks with French investors and business people on ways of strengthening the trade and investment ties of the two countries, it said.

The visit is expected to bring about increased French support to Ethiopia’s capacity building endeavours by upgrading the relations of the two countries, according to the Press release. The French investors are encouraged to invest in leather and leather products, textiles, agro-processing, horticulture and floriculture fields of investment in Ethiopia.

Discussions will also be held on ways that France can assist in the peace, development and democratization activities in the Horn of Africa region as well as in internalization of NEPAD (New Partnership for Africa’s Development) programmes.

Germany’s industrial turnover increases

Berlin, 15 April — Germany’s industrial turnover increased by 3.7 per cent in the first two months of 2005, the Federal Statistics Office said on Thursday.

The manufacturing and mining sector earned about 220.52 billion euros (about 283.9 billion US dollars) in turnover, the office announced.

In February only, the industrial turnover rose 2.1 per cent to 112.1 billion euros (144.3 billion US dollars).

On Tuesday, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) forecasts that Germany, the biggest economy in Europe, can only see a 0.8 per cent growth in 2005.
Earthquakes jolt western Java

JAKARTA, 16 April — Four earthquakes shook western Java of Indonesia on Friday, with the strongest one measuring at 6.2 on the Richter Scale, according to the Indonesian meteorology and geophysics agency (BMG).

Two earthquakes were felt in the West Java capital of Bandung and two others, centred beneath the Sunda Strait, rocked Jakarta, Banten and the Sumatra province of Lampung.

BMG staff Budi Waluyo said the latest quake at 11:18 local time (04:18 GMT) measured at 6.2 on the Richter Scale and was centred in the Sunda Strait, which separated the main islands of Java and Sumatra.

MNA/Xinhua

Construction of Indian style temple welcomed in Henan

ZHENGZhou, 16 April — Constructing of an Indian style Buddhist temple in Henan Province, agreed to recently by the governments of China and India, has received a warm welcome in this central China province.

Ma Jingyou, director of the Religious Affairs Bureau of Luoyang, said Thursday that China and India share a long history in Buddhist cultural exchanges and construction of the Indian style Buddhist temple is an important symbol of enhanced exchanges of Buddhist culture between the two countries under the new historical period. “We welcome the temple very much,” Ma told Xinhua.

During Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao’s recent visit to India, the two governments signed the memorandum on construction of an Indian style Buddhist temple on the Western Side of the White Horse Temple in Luoyang, Henan Province. The memo was included in the joint statement of the two countries, which were signed by Wen and his counterpart, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

The memo said in a bid to carry forward India-China Buddhist cultural links, the two countries would jointly construct the Indian style Buddhist temple in Luoyang. Ma said, the White Horse Temple, or Baimusi in Chinese pinyin, is an important witness of Sino-Indian friendship and Sino-Indian Buddhist cultural exchanges, which have been further enhanced since the 1990s.

Shi Yizhe, abbot of the White Horse Temple, said the temple is the starting point where Buddhism was introduced into China from India. He called the construction of the Indian style temple an important and happy event as well as a sacrament to both China and India, with the relationship between the two countries entering a new development period.

According to the memo, the Indian side would provide the main architectural design of the temple project, its blue print, materials used for the temple and the landscape planning. Once the temple was completed, India would also provide the Buddha Idol and other accompanying materials.

China will provide 2,667 square metres of land for the temple and offer support and advice on construction.

MNA/Xinhua

Fried food, instant coffee contain chemicals may cause cancer

BEIJING, 16 April — The Chinese Ministry of Health recently said that people should eat less fried and fatty food including French fries, potato chips and instant coffee, warning acrylamide, a chemical these foods contain, may cause cancer.

Cereal-based products including biscuits and bread also have acrylamide, Thursday’s Beijing Daily Messenger quoted a statement posted on the ministry’s website as saying. Studies show that acrylamide is formed when certain foods, particularly plant-based foods that are rich in carbohydrates and low in protein, are cooked at high temperatures, said the statement.

Tests on animals show that acrylamide may cause cancer, but more research is needed to clarify the specific impact of the chemical on human health.

Still, the ministry warns that it is potentially hazardous for people to ingest acrylamide even in very small amounts for a long period of time.

MNA/Xinhua

Rhinoceros horn cups put on show at HKBU

HONG KONG, 16 April — Two intricately carved rhinoceros horn cups, reputed to be Chinese national treasures, are on show in Hong Kong starting from Thursday.

They are being displayed at the Chinese Medicines Centre (CMC) of the Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU) until March 2005.

The two exhibits, the black rhinoceros horn cup carved with a chil-dragon motif and the yellow-beige cup carved with a grape motif, belong to Lee Chun-hung, a Chinese medicine collector.

Speaking at the opening ceremony Thursday afternoon, President and Vice-Chancellor of HKBU Ng Ching-fai said it was the university’s honour to exhibit the rhinoceros horn cups.

According to Lee, rhinoceros horns have been rare ever since ancient times, and used to be carved into objects of artistic value or used in medical treatment.

Lee said the most surviving samples of the craft date from the Ming and Qing dynasties. As for the medical properties of rhinoceros horn, it is beneficial for treatment of high fever and as an antidote for a wide variety of poisons. CMC has a collection of over 6,000 medical herb specimens.

Distinctive exhibits include the world’s tallest herba cistanche with a height of 1.75 metres, which is certified as one of the Guinness World Records and a “man of longevity” made from 2,374 ginseng roots etc.

MNA/Xinhua

Platform software association set up in Beijing

BEIJING, 16 April — A platform software association was set up here Thursday, with tens of billions of yuan expected to come into Beijing’s software industry development.

With the support of the Beijing Government, the Changfeng standardized platform software will focus on software application, platform software technological innovation and electronic administration presentation. Officials with the Beijing Government said that the government will shift more focus from software R&D to application and promotion.

MNA/Xinhua
Zidane stays in retirement

PARIS, 15 April — Three-times World Player of the Year Zinedine Zidane will not come out of retirement to help struggling France qualify for the 2006 World Cup finals.

"I have made a decision and I will not reconsider it, full stop," the Real Madrid playmaker said in a brief statement on his web site.

The 1998 World and Euro 2000 champions, are going through difficult times after drawing four of their opening six qualifiers.

Having won their other two games, France top Group 4 on equal points with Israel, but Switzerland and the Republic of Ireland are a point behind with a game in hand. — MNA/Xinhua

FIRST WORLD Cup goal scorer dies at 97

PARIS, 15 April — Frenchman Lucien Laurent died on Monday aged 97, the first World Cup goal scorer.

The English club, 1-0 up from the first leg, seemed to have one leg in the semifinals when England midfielder Kieron Dyer found the net in the 20th minutes.

Sporting, though, hit back to equalize through striker Marius Nicolae before halftime and turned the tie around after the interval with goals by Sporting's Pinto (71 minutes), Beto (77) and Fabio Rochemback. In stoppage time to seal a 4-2 aggregate win.

In the two-legged semi-finals, the Portuguese side will play AZ Alkmaar who held Villarreal 1-1 to go through 3-2 on aggregate.

The Dutch team, who extended their run of European home games without defeat to 19 matches, looked to have killed off the encounter when Kenneth Perez opened the scoring after eight minutes.

But Luciano Figueria levelled with 18 minutes left for the Spaniards to set up a grandstand finish.

Both teams were reduced to 10 men after 20 minutes of the first half. Italian referee Roberto Rossetti showed AZ central defender Barry Opdam a second yellow card and in the ensuing melee Villarreal's Jose Mari was sent off for pushing over and kicking Barry van Galen.

Struggling Serie A side Parma's home goalless draw with Australia's Vanuahelet the tie balanced 1-1 on aggregate, giving the Serie A side victory on the away goals rule.

It was a doggedly defensive display by the twice former champions who were let off the hook by the visitors' failure to capitalize on a string of chances, particularly during the first half.

Vienna came closest to taking the lead just before the interval, when home keeper Luca Bucci pulled off a superb diving save to push Libor Sionko's free kick onto the post.

Parma had Bucci to thank again in the closing stages, when he pounced on a close-range effort by defender Sasa Papac.

Parma will in the semi-finals meet CSKA Moscow, who moved a step closer to their first European final by sealing a 4-2 aggregate win over AJ Auxerre.

The Russian side, who had crushed the French side 4-0 in the first leg, lost the game 0-2 but never looked like relinquishing their aggregate lead. — MNA/Xinhua

Juventus to play Yokohama, FC Tokyo

TOKYO, 15 April — Italian giant Juventus will play J-League champions Yokohama F Marinos and FC Tokyo in a Japan tour this summer, Kyodo news service reported on Thursday.

The 27-time Serie A champions will take on Yokohama on June 1 at Nissan Stadium while the FC Tokyo match will be held on June 7 at Ajinomoto Stadium.

Both games will kick off at 7 pm.

Yokohama will also play Spanish First Division leaders Barcelona at Nissan Stadium on June 12 before Barcelona take on last year's J-League runners-up Urawa Reds at Saitama Stadium on June 15.

First World Cup goal scorer dies at 97

PARIS, 15 April — Frenchman Lucien Laurent died on Monday aged 97, 75 years after he scored the first goal in World Cup, sports daily L'Equipe reported on Wednesday.

Left winger Laurent scored in the 19th minute in France's 4-1 defeat of Mexico in Montevideo on 13 July, 1930.

"I did not realize it was the first World Cup goal ever scored," he once said in an interview with French soccer magazine France Football.

Laurent was one of the first players to switch clubs, playing for nine teams in a 25-year career. Nicknamed "Little Lulu", he scored twice in 10 appearances for France between 1930 and 1935.

He earned his first monthly salary of 2,200 old francs (about 380 US dollars) when he signed for Peugeot-sponsored Sochaux in 1935 at a time when the carmaker was signing players from all over the country for the team. — MNA/Xinhua

NFL prospect admits use of banned drug before draft

WASHINGTON, 15 April — Northwestern University basketball team player Luis Castillo had admitted he took steroids after failing a dope test before this month's National Football League draft, the Chicago Tribune reported.

The defensive tackle, a first or second round pick hopeful, admitted in a letter to all NFL teams saying that he took steroids after last season to help a nagging elbow injury heal faster.

Castillo failed the drug test portion of a scouting session in February at Indianapolis and said he took androstenedione to help his performance. Andros is considered a steroid under NFL doping policy. — MNA/Xinhua

Athens controversial gymnastic winner takes Sullivan Award

WASHINGTON, 15 April — American gymnast Paul Hamm was named winner of the 75th Sullivan Award in New York on Wednesday as the top American amateur athlete for 2005.

The Athens Olympic Games gold medallist fended off strong challenge from six-gold winner Michael Phelps to win the event.

Hamm became the first American man to capture the Olympics all-around title but his victory was marked with controversy.

South Korea protested the outcome as International Gymnastics Federation (IGF) officials discovered that South Korea's Yang Tae-Young had his parallel bars routine improperly scored and would have won without the error.

Hamm's gold medal margin .012 of a point was the closest in Olympic history.

Yang went to the Court for Arbitration of Sports to force a change in the results and give him the victory and Hamm the silver. CAS rejected the motion, leaving Yang with the bronze medal. — MNA/Xinhua

Sporting, Parma, Alkmaar, CSKA reach UEFA Cup semis

LONDON, 15 April — Sporting Lisbon burst back from a goal down to thrash Newcastle United 4-1 and qualify for the UEFA Cup semifinals on Thursday while Parma, AZ Alkmaar and CSKA Moscow also made the last four.

The English club, 1-0 up from the first leg, seemed to have one leg in the semifinals when England midfielder Kieron Dyer found the net in the 20th minutes.

Sporting, though, hit back to equalize through striker Marius Nicolae before halftime and turned the tie around after the interval with goals by Sporting's Pinto (71 minutes), Beto (77) and Fabio Rochemback. In stoppage time to seal a 4-2 aggregate win.

In the two-legged semi-finals, the Portuguese side will play AZ Alkmaar who held Villarreal 1-1 to go through 3-2 on aggregate.

The Dutch team, who extended their run of European home games without defeat to 19 matches, looked to have killed off the encounter when Kenneth Perez opened the scoring after eight minutes.

But Luciano Figueria levelled with 18 minutes left for the Spaniards to set up a grandstand finish.

Both teams were reduced to 10 men after 20 minutes of the first half. Italian referee Roberto Rossetti showed AZ central defender Barry Opdam a second yellow card and in the ensuing melee Villarreal's Jose Mari was sent off for pushing over and kicking Barry van Galen.

Struggling Serie A side Parma's home goalless draw with Australia's Vanuahelet the tie balanced 1-1 on aggregate, giving the Serie A side victory on the away goals rule.

It was a doggedly defensive display by the twice former champions who were let off the hook by the visitors' failure to capitalize on a string of chances, particularly during the first half.

Vienna came closest to taking the lead just before the interval, when home keeper Luca Bucci pulled off a superb diving save to push Libor Sionko's free kick onto the post.

Parma had Bucci to thank again in the closing stages, when he pounced on a close-range effort by defender Sasa Papac.

Parma will in the semi-finals meet CSKA Moscow, who moved a step closer to their first European final by sealing a 4-2 aggregate win over AJ Auxerre.

The Russian side, who had crushed the French side 4-0 in the first leg, lost the game 0-2 but never looked like relinquishing their aggregate lead. — MNA/Xinhua

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACROSS</th>
<th>DOWN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7 Roar</td>
<td>1 Notice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Looks intently</td>
<td>2 Conspicuous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Lured</td>
<td>3 Trainer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Farewell</td>
<td>4 Unusual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Outlet</td>
<td>5 Small particle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Shelf</td>
<td>6 Progyn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 Humped animal</td>
<td>9 Dance here (anag.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Footwear</td>
<td>12 Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 Unlisted</td>
<td>15 Crowds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 Make up</td>
<td>16 Faze</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 Fruit</td>
<td>19 Sorcress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 Mythical monster</td>
<td>20 Cob or colour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 Irate</td>
<td>18 Footwear</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Wolfensohn named US special envoy for Gaza withdrawal

WASHINGTON, 16 April— Retiring World Bank president James Wolfensohn was named on Thursday international “special envoy” to help coordinate Israel’s planned withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and to spearhead reconstruction efforts once the Palestinians take over the area.

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice made the announcement on behalf of the ‘Quarter’ of Middle East Peace Initiators — the United States, the European Union, Russia and the United Nations — to which Wolfensohn would report. Rice said Wolfensohn’s mission would include reviving the Palestinian economy after the withdrawal, as well as helping decide the fate of Israel’s housing blocks and other “assets that will be left behind” when Israel evacuates all 21 settlements in Gaza and four of 120 settlements in the West Bank.

Rice said Wolfensohn would try to rebuild Israeli-Palestinian trust, noting “The parties have shown good faith and political courage in recent months. But the obstacles before them remain substantial.”

Wolfensohn, 71, was born in Australia before becoming a US citizen. He arrived at the World Bank from Wall Street following a high-level career as an investment banker. — MNA/Xinhua

Greek eco sentiment lowest in 20 months

ATHENS, 16 April — Greece’s Economic Sentiment Index fell to the lowest level in 20 months in March, reflecting declines in business expectations in the construction, manufacturing and consumer indexes, the Institute for Economic and Industrial Research (IOBE) said on Thursday.

In the construction sector, the business expectations index eased to 59.6 points in March from 62 points in the previous month, reflecting negative forecasts over activity and employment in the sector. However, IOBE said the economic sentiment index improved in the services and the retail sectors in March.

In the retail sector, the index rose to 107 points, reflecting improved sales despite higher than expected inventories.

In the services sector, the index jumped to 93.8 points in March from 91.9 points in February, the highest level in six months.

Greece’s Economic Sentiment Index rebounded in January after a steady decline in the second half of 2004. — MNA/Xinhua

European Parti to help fight drought, fires in Portugal

LISBON, 16 April — The European Parliament approved on Thursday a resolution to help Portugal cope with the damage caused by drought and fire. Under the resolution, the Portuguese Government will receive money and resources to prevent fires in the summer season, Portugal’s Lusa news agency said.

Portugal, along with other nations, is asking the European Solidarity Fund to be reviewed so the southern European countries suffering from the drought in the previous months can get support. Due to scanty rainfall, drought in Portugal has worsened last month, hitting some 60 per cent of the territory. If the situation does not improve, Portugal could record the most severe drought in 300 years. — MNA/Xinhua

WEATHER

Saturday, 16 April, 2005

Summary of observations recorded at 09:30 hours MST: During the past 24 hours, rain or thunder showers have been scattered in Taninthayi Division, weather has been generally fair in the remaining areas. The noteworthy amount of rainfall recorded was Myeik (0.31) inch. Day temperatures were (3°C) to (4°C) above normal in Kachin, Shan, Chin and Kayin States, lower Sagaing, Mandalay, Magway, Yangon and Taninthayi Divisions, (5°C) above normal in upper Sagaing and Ayeyawady Divisions and about normal in the remaining areas. The significant normal temperatures were in Mibub and Magway (42°C) each.

Maximum temperature on 15-4-2005 was 102.4°F. Minimum temperature on 16-4-2005 was 70.0°F. Relative humidity at 9.30 hrs MST on 16-4-2005 was 71%. Total sunshine hours on 15-4-2005 was (10.6) hours approx. Rainfalls on 16-4-2005 were nil at Yangon Airport, Kaba-Aye and central Yangon. Total rainfalls since 1-1-2005 were (0.63) inch at Yangon Airport, (1.69) inches at Kaba-Aye and (0.32) inch at central Yangon. Maximum wind speed at Yangon (Kaba-Aye) was (12) mph from North at (13:15) hours MST on 15-4-2005.

Bay inference: Weather is partly cloudy in the Andaman Sea, Southeast Bay and generally fair elsewhere in the Bay of Bengal.

Forecast valid until evening of 17-4-2005: Possibility of isolated light rain or thunder showers are in Kachin and Mon States, upper Sagaing and Taninthayi Divisions and weather will be partly cloudy in Chin and Kayin States, Bago Yangon and Ayeyawady 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: Slight increase of isolated light rain or thunder showers in Southern Myanmar areas.

Forecast for Yangon and neighbouring area for 17-4-2005: Partly cloudy.

Forecast for Mandalay and neighbouring area for 17-4-2005: Partly cloudy.
Four political objectives
- Stability of the State, community peace and tranquillity, prevalence of law and order
- National reconsolidation
- Emergence of a new enduring State Constitution
- Building of a new modern developed nation in accord with the new State Constitution

Four economic objectives
- Development of agriculture as the base and all-round development of other sectors of the economy as well
- Proper evolution of the market-oriented economic system
- Development of the economy inviting participation in terms of technical know-how and investments from sources inside the country and abroad
- The initiative to shape the national economy must be kept in the hands of the State and the national peoples

Four social objectives
- Uplift of the morale and morality of the entire nation
- Uplift of national prestige and integrity and preservation and safeguarding of cultural heritage and national character
- Uplift of dynamism of patriotic spirit
- Uplift of health, fitness and education standards of the entire nation

Vice-Senior General Maung Aye
inspects agri projects in Yaksawk

YANGON, 16 April — A ceremony to close the Yangon Mayor’s Maha Thingyan Festival was held at the pandal in front of the City Hall, here, this evening.

Joint-Secretary of Yangon City Development Committee Col Tin Soe announced successful conclusion of the Yangon Mayor’s Maha Thingyan Festival 1366 at 5 pm and closed the pandal. At that time, all the yein troupes and artistes sang the song titled ‘Mantaungyeikkhoo’ and presented dances.

At 7 pm, Mayor Brig-Gen Aung Thein Lin, Vice-Mayor Col Maung Pa, Secretary of Yangon City Development Committee Col Myint Aung and Joint-Secretary Col Tin Soe presented prizes to winners in the Ozi Contest, Dohbat Contest and yein troupes contests.

Later, prize-winning troupes presented dances and songs to the audience.

MNA

Festivities pick up tempo on last day of Maha Thingyan Festival

YANGON, 16 April — Today being 16 April 2005 (8th Waxing of Tagu, 1366 ME), Saturday, is the last day or Aet day of the Maha Thingyan Festival as well as the last day of the old year as the 1367 new year will be ushering in.

The new year festivals are always held in accordance with traditions and customs of national peoples. Myanmar new year festival is held merrily by dousing water.

Anawratha Street, Bogoyoke Aung San Street, Maha Bandoola Street, Merchant Street, Strand Road, Insein Road, Bayintnaung Road, Inya Road, University Avenue, Kaba Aye Pagoda Road, Upper Kymyinnyide Road, Lower Kymyinnyide Road, Bago Road, Theinbyu Street, Kyaukkasan Road, West Race Course, U Chit Maung Road, Saya San Road, Parami Road, Laydauntkan Road, Wayzayanda Road and Thantthuma Road of Yangon City housing Thingyan water throwing pandals were packed with revellers on car and pedestrian revellers from morning to evening today.

Likewise, revellers from Shwepyitha, Hinethaya, Dagon Myothit (South), and Dagon Myothit (North) in Yangon Division also took part in the Maha Thingyan Festival by dousing water on one another.

Similarly, there were entertainment programmes and refreshments at the pandals of companies.

In the afternoon, the revellers took rest at the

(See page 11)