Myanmar youths win ASEAN Under-18 football championship trophy
Secretary-1 presents championship trophy to Myanmar team

YANGON, 18 June—Chairman of Myanmar National Olympic Council Chairman of National Health Committee Secretary-1 of the State Peace and Development Council General Khin Nyunt watched the final match of the first U-18 ASEAN Youth Football Tourney at the Youth Training Centre in Thuwunna this evening and presented the championship trophy and cash award to victorious Myanmar youth football team.

Among the spectators were Chairman of Yangon Division Peace and Development Council Commander of Yangon Command Maj-Gen Myint Swe, Chairman of Myanmar Olympic Committee Minister for Sports Brig-Gen Thura Aye Myint, officials of the ministry, members of leading patrons of Myanmar Women Sports Federation and guests.

Singapore and Vietnam played for the third place. The two tied 1-1 draw during the 90-minute play. Singapore beat Vietnam 6-5 after penalty shoot-out.

In the final match, Myanmar beat Malaysia 4-0 and won the championship trophy.

Before the match, the two teams took positions in front of the grand stand. Then national anthems of both countries were played and players greeted each other.

Head of delegation and council member of ASEAN Football Federation Mr Rene Adad presented Milo cleanest award to Vietnam youth team and prizes to four referees.

Next, Secretary of MOC Director-General of Sports and Physical Education Department U Thaung Htaik presented medals to players of Singapore and Malaysia youth teams.

Minister Brig-Gen Thura Aye Myint presented medals to players of victorious Myanmar team. Next, the Secretary-1 presented championship trophy and US $31,500 awarded by the State Peace and Development Council to Myanmar team. The Union of Myanmar Economic Holdings Ltd and entrepreneurs presented K 5 million, Myan Gon Myint K 2.5 million, Sky Link Communication Co Ltd K 12 million, Chairman of Kanbawza Co Ltd U Aung Ko Win and Shwe Thanlwin Co Ltd K 10 million each, Myanmar May Flower Bank Ltd K 6.6 million, Naing Group Construction Co and Cherry Oo Watch Showroom 21 watches worth K 2 million and K 1.5 million, Ministry of Communications, Posts and Telegraphs K 1.5 million, Vice-Chairman of CB Bank Ltd U Khin Zaw Aye and Chit Kyi Yay Construction K 1 million each and Chairman of Jade Dragon and Ruby Dragon K 5 million to Myanmar team. — MNA

Minister Brig-Gen Thura Aye Myint poses for a documentary photo together with victorious Myanmar U-18 football team. — SLM

Chairman of Myanmar National Olympic Council Chairman of National Health Committee Secretary-1 General Khin Nyunt presents the trophy to Myanmar U-18 football team. — MNA

Emergence of the State Constitution is the duty of all citizens of Myanmar Naing-Ngan.
Successful cultivation of seasonal crops

As Myanmar is an agricultural country and agriculture is the main pillar of its national economy, rural people, the majority of the population, are mainly engaged in agriculture.

Development of agriculture will not only strengthen the national economy but also raise the living standards of the people. Therefore, the Government has been taking steps to ensure sufficient water supply for cultivation and up to now 146 dams have been built all over the nation.

As the government is trying to seek ways and means to exploit water resources in the regions where water is scarce, the farmers in the region have a lot of water resources are required to cultivate all kinds of crops on every plot of arable land.

Head of State Senior General Than Shwe on one occasion gave guidance on the cultivation of paddy and other crops within a 30-mile radius around the city of Yangon all the year round.

To translate the guidance of the Head of State in action, a coordination meeting was held on 17 June and Secretary-1 of the State Peace and Development Council General Kyi Nyunt attended the meeting and gave necessary instructions. General Kyi Nyunt urged all the responsible personnel to organize the farmers into growing all kinds of crops, especially paddy, beans, pulses and sunflower and to render necessary assistance to them.

Measures must be taken to grow seasonal crops on the land suitable for cultivation and forests and perennial on the land not suitable for cultivation and to raise fish and prawn in the wet land.

Now as the Ngamoeyeik Dam, the Kalittaht Dam and the Alain Dam have been built in Yangon Division, measures are being taken to grow monsoon paddy, summer paddy and other crops on 600,000 acres of arable land around Yangon throughout the year and to green its environs.

We believe that all those responsible will render all the necessary assistance to farmers so that the latter will be able to grow paddy and other crops all the year round. And we also believe that the farmers, on their part, will try their utmost to ensure that there is enough food supply and the city of Yangon and its surrounding areas are always lush and green in accordance with the guidance of the Head of State.

Wellwishers invited for sinking tube-wells

YANGON, 18 June — The Development Affairs Committee of the Ministry for Progress of Border Areas and National Races and Development Affairs are making concerted efforts to sink tube-wells in order to get sufficient fresh water in rural areas in States and Divisions where water is scarce.

One 200 feet deep two-inch diameter tube-well costs K 250,000; one 400 feet deep two-inch diameter tube-well costs K 500,000; and one 200 feet deep four-inch diameter tube-well costs K 500,000.

Those wishing to donate cash for the tube-well sinking projects for rural areas may contact the Director-General (Tel: 01-245430 & 253088), the Deputy Director-General (Tel: 01-240118), the Director (Engineering) (Tel: 01-291967), the Directors (Sagang Division Development Affairs Committee) (Tel: 071-21012), the Director (Magway Division Development Affairs Committee) (Tel: 063-23164) and the Director (Mandalay Division Development Affairs Committee) (Tel: 02-54657).

Deputy Minister for Culture receives Korean guest

YANGON, 18 June — Deputy Minister for Culture of the Union of Myanmar U Soe Nyunt received President of IIT Co Ltd Mr Toh Jin-Gyu at the Office of the Minister for Culture on Kaba Aye pagoda Road in Bahan Township here at 1 pm today. Also present on the occasion together with the deputy minister were Director-General of the Department of Cultural Institute U Myint Thein Swe, Director-General of Archaeology Department U Nyunt Han, Director-General of Fine Arts Department U Kyaw Win, Director of Department of Cultural Institute Daw Nanda Hmnn and officials.

MNA

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MNA
Antiquities still being looted in Iraq

Baghdad, 16 June—A quick new survey of ancient sites in Iraq shows that American bombs in the April war did little damage, but recent looting and long-term neglect have had serious impact, the National Geographic Society announced last week.

Two-dozen important archaeological sites—some thought to hold artifacts from the very beginnings of civilization—were hurriedly inspected in May by a National Geographic expedition headed by Henry Wright of the University of Michigan. Anthropologist Elizabeth Stone of Stony Brook University was a member of the team. Results of the first survey of antiquities beyond Baghdad were described as mixed: some disappointment, plus much relief. “Somebody in the US government deserves positive credit for sparing the archaeological sites from bombing,” Wright said. Such restraint was difficult, because Iraqi forces often used mounds and the ruins of ancient cities as fortified observation points. Archaeologists know that in the so-called ancient Fertile Crescent, which includes modern Iraq, every crumbling mound is a potentially important site.

However, Wright noted, “Several important sites have been badly looted and remained unguarded while we were there.” Indeed, according to archaeologist McGuire Gibson of the University of Chicago, a helicopter tour south from Baghdad showed major, ongoing damage occurring at some sites, but nothing happening at others. “One site looks like a waffle; it’s so completely destroyed that the looters have stopped working,” Gibson recalled. Another, called Umm al Hafiriyat, “is one of the great sites that people have wanted to go back to. But now it’s like Swiss cheese; I could see more than 200 men working on the site,” presumably looters.

Half the team headed north to visit Mosul, and ancient cities such as Nineveh and Nimrud. The others went south into the areas where irrigation was invented, the site of cities such as Babylon. Stone, on the team that hurried south, said they found the ancient Babylon ruins “heavily guarded by Marines who were encamped in a Saddam palace overlooking the site.” Only the gift shop and guardhouse from Hussein’s era had been looted. But a day later, she said, “we saw looting at a desert site,” an area important as “one of the first places where there was the development of temples, in the sixth millennium.”

But at another location, she said, “looters had excavated an old dig, and maybe they got some old sardine cans, and little else.” At still another site, which had not been explored by archaeologists, heavy looting was actually under way. “If that continues,” Stone warned, “there’s a whole city we may never know anything about unless the looting is stopped.” The fundamental problem, Stone added, is that “this looting of sites and museums is governed by the desire of people in the West to collect these objects. It’s similar to the drug trade, with some of the wealthiest people in the United States, Europe and especially Japan driving this type of destruction.”

Thai Deputy PM arrives in Beijing

Beijing, 16 June—Thai Deputy Prime Minister Somkid Jatusripitak arrived here Tuesday noon, continuing his China visit.

During his stay in Beijing, Somkid will meet with the Chinese leaders, attend seminars on tourism, agriculture and quarantine, and sign some agreements.

Somkid arrived in Kunming, capital of the southwest China province of Yunnan, Sunday afternoon as the guest of Chinese Vice-Premier Wu Yi.

In his meetings with Bai Enpei, secretary of the Yunnan Provincial Committee of the Communist Party of China, and Yunnan Provincial Governor Xu Rongkai, Somkid expressed his country’s wish to enhance economic cooperation between Thailand and Yunnan, saying “it’s time to lay down a strategy of cooperative development between the two sides.” He also invited Chinese enterprises to invest in northern Thailand.

Fallujah, 16 June—Army Spc John K Kline smith, 25, of Stockbridge, Ga, died last week after he was seen wading in a lake in a palace compound in Fallujah, Iraq, the Defense Department said.

Klinesmith, assigned to the 14th Infantry Regiment of the 10th Mountain Division at Fort Drum, NY, was found by searchers at the lake after he disappeared Thursday, officials said. His death was being investigated. Fort Drum spokesman RD Murphy said Klinesmith is the first casualty suffered by the 10th Mountain Division since the start of America’s war on terrorism. The division has been the military’s most deployed unit over the past decade.

“It’s unfortunate. It appears he was just enjoying a swim. That’s not supposed to be a dangerous activity,” Murphy said. A memorial service for Klinesmith will be held Friday or Saturday in Iraq, Murphy said.

Fallujah, 18 June—The row over Iraq’s missing weapons intensified in Washington yesterday as a leading Senate Democrat accused the CIA of deliberately misleading United Nations inspectors to help clear the decks for an invasion of Iraq.

The charge by Carl Levin of Michigan, the senior Democrat on the powerful Senate Armed Services Committee, comes as Congress gears up for its own hearings into whether the Bush administration misinterpreted or manipulated pre-war intelligence on the scale of the threat posed by Saddam Hussein.

Mr Levin is not the first Democrat to question the CIA’s role. But his allegations are the most precise yet, and seem bound to increase pressure for a fuller, more public investigation than the Republican majority on Capitol Hill has been willing to concede thus far.

Mr Levin says that when the UN team under Hans Blix returned to Iraq last autumn, the CIA—contrary to what it claimed at the time—did not pass on its full list of 150 high or medium priority suspected weapons sites. This, in turn, enabled the US government to shut down the inspections quickly, opening the path for military action.
Iraqi resistance gets reinforcements

BAGHDAD, 18 June—Islamic militants and foreign fighters, including suicide bombers, are streaming into Iraq to bolster the resistance to the US-led occupation and to threaten Iraqis who cooperate with US troops, US intelligence officials told NBC News.

Although Baghdad fell to US-led coalition forces two months ago, Iraq remains essentially a war zone as former members of the Iraqi intelligence service and militiamen of the Saddam’s Fedayeen paramilitary organize deadly hit-and-run attacks on US service members.

Forty-one Americans have been killed since the fighting officially stopped, the latest an Army soldier felled by a sniper Monday night. The attacks have become a “daily occurrence,” an Army spokesman said.

“There is an element of society here that doesn’t want change, and they see the coalition forces as bringing change in the form of freedom and democracy,” said Army Col David Perkins, commander of the 3rd Infantry Division’s 2nd Brigade.

Senior military officials and analysts told NBC News that the Pentagon seriously underestimated the threat of a potential guerrilla war in Iraq. They suggested that Central Command may not have the right mix of troops on the ground to fight it.

“In the Sunni areas north and west of Baghdad, where there wasn’t much fighting during the war and where radical Baathist elements didn’t see the might of the US Army, we have faced a lot more problems than we expected,” said Patrick Clawson of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

“We need to have units that can go after those who might be thinking about guerrilla activities in this so-called ‘Sunni triangle’ north and west of Baghdad,” Clawson said.

There are currently 145,000 US personnel in Iraq, but senior Army officials said on condition of anonymity that there was too much heavy armor and not enough light infantry or military police to combat the emerging threat.

Instead, the forces are concentrating on rounding up Baath Party loyalists and suspected insurgents. In the past three days, they have detained more than 400 suspects.

But many members of the resistance are former government officials still loyal to deposed President Saddam Hussein who have continually entered the country through Syria and Jordan, US intelligence sources said, and they are undetectable until they attack.

Moreover, watt the US raids has grown among the population, creating a groundswell of sympathy for forces resist the US-led occupation.

“We are a proud people, and we will not accept this humiliation,” a senior tribal leader in Ramadi, Abu Adel, told the Associated Press. “The Americans should be wary of the Iraqi people.”

“For every action, they should expect a reaction,” said Sheikh Saad Nayel al-Hardan, chief of Iraq’s largest Arab tribe, the Dulaim. “Those attacks are a sign that the tolerance to the humiliation is running out.”

I. Paul Bremer, the US envoy in charge of administering postwar Iraq, told NBC News in an interview: “When we have these military operations, we try very quickly to show that we are not at war with the Iraqi people.”

Army criticized on Iraq oil contract

WASHINGTON, 18 June — The Army would ignore the veto of 99 senators if it were to renege on plans to open competition for companies to restore Iraq’s oil production, the Senate sponsor of competitive bidding legislation said Tuesday.

The job currently is being done by a subsidiary of Halliburton, the company formerly led by Vice President Dick Cheney.

Senator Barbara Boxer, D-Calif, said the Army Corps of Engineers would contradict its own timetable if it should fail to end the lucrative monopoly given to Halliburton.

Cheney’s office has said repeatedly that the vice president has severed ties with the company and had no role in awarding the contract to Halliburton’s KBR subsidiary.

Boxer was reacting to an Associated Press story last week that said Halliburton’s work was likely to last longer than estimated as costs to the government escalated. The government had approved $213.7 million in payments to KBR as of last week, up from $184.7 million the first week in June.

Boxer said a delay would be “a direct rebuke of the will of the United States Senate,” which voted 99-0 on May 22 to force the Army to award a competitive replacement contract by 31 August or explain the delay.

The amendment was added to the Senate version of the defence authorization bill, which is headed to a House-Senate conference. The Senate Armed Services chairman, John Warner, R-Va, co-sponsored the amendment.

Lt Col Eugene Pavlik, a spokesman for the Corps of Engineers, said, “We generally don’t reply directly to statements from any of our elected representatives. We certainly try to comply with directions we receive from Congress. If we have a requirement to report back to Congress on the contracting, and provide background on why the process has gone the way it has, we certainly will do so.”

The Corps last week said that given requirements necessary to rebuild Iraq’s oil industry, it could not have a proposal ready for contractor bidding by the original August timetable. Further, Corps officials said there would be no second contract if the oil restoration mission were to be completed before another company could take over or if the Iraqis make arrangements for additional help.

Vietnam takes measures to accelerate SOE reform process

HANOI, 18 June — The Vietnamese government last week decided to assign the Ministry of Finance to preside over the sale and purchase of companies with bad debts, in a move to further clean up the financial state of state-owned enterprises (SOEs), Vietnam Investment Review reported Monday.

Under the decision, the sale and purchase of companies will settle the outstanding debts of enterprises through direct negotiations, bidding and auctioning and could use the purchased debts to re-invest.

Quach Duc Phap, head of the Financial Policy Department of the Ministry of Finance (MoF), said the decision will provide momentum for the reform and restructuring of SOEs. The current number of SOEs was about 5,200.

In recent years, the process of SOE reform has been slowed due to difficulties in settling outstanding debts. It is estimated the outstanding SOE debts total around 15 trillion Vietnamese dong (VND) (nearly one billion US dollars).

The government also assigned the MoF to implement, on a trial basis, settlement for debts of the first 20 SOEs with debts of more than five billion VND (330,000 US dollars).

The government aims by 2005 to equitize, assign, sell, contract and lease 2,000 of the current 2,000 SOEs. A further 2,000 of the SOEs will be shifted into one-member liability companies, while the remainder will retain their current status.

Dean urges probe into Bush’s statements on Iraq

IOWA, 19 June — Democratic presidential candidate Howard Dean on Tuesday called for an independent investigation of President Bush and his justification for the US-led war against Iraq, arguing that the commander in chief misled the country.

“I think the president owes this country an explanation because what the president said was not entirely true, and he needs to explain why that was,” Dean said in an interview with The Associated Press.

Dean cited a number of statements made by Bush and other senior administration officials about the existence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and the dangers that the regime posed to the United States. The candidate said the claims were made even though officials knew they weren’t true. “We need a thorough look at what really happened going into Iraq,” Dean said.

“It appears to me that what the president did was make a decision to go into Iraq sometime in early 2002, or maybe even late 2001, and then try to get the justification afterward.”

Earlier Tuesday, Bush fired back at his critics who have suggested that the administration inflated prewar intelligence data on Iraq’s weapons program as a justification for war. He said the most overlooked fact is that “the people of Iraq are free.”

US soldiers stand guard on an armoured vehicle outside Baghdad’s Um al-Qura mosque. — Internet

A US soldier moves through an alley during a raid for illegal weapons in Baghdad, Iraq on 17 June, 2003. Three days after the deadline for weapons amnesty lapsed, US forces stepped up their search for weapons which flooded Baghdad following the fall of Saddam Hussein’s regime. — Internet
Deminers warn it will take years to clear bitter legacy of Iraq wars

Baghdad, 18 June—Deminers say it will take years to clear the hundreds of tons of unexploded ordnance, from cluster bombs to anti-air missiles, that litter residential areas across Iraq. “What we find here is more dangerous than landmines which can kill one or two people each. Missiles can kill loads,” said Roger Hess from the Swiss Foundation for Mine Action, an organization contracted by the United Nations to help clear Iraq of unexploded ordnance (UXO) and mines.

Hess, who works with international and local Kurdish staff, estimated it would take “between 18 and 24 months to ensure civilians will no longer be in contact with UXOs.

“But it will take between six and seven years to destroy them all,” Hess and other deminers said the latest war did not see a proliferation of landmines, unlike the 1991 Gulf War and the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq War.

He said boys, typically aged nine to 13, are among those most likely to get hurt by UXOs as they often mistake them for toys. “The real challenge is for the authorities’ because there is no mine awareness programme here,” he said.

But NGOs such as Handicap International are trying to fill the gap with UXO and mine awareness programmes alongside their demining activities.

“We distribute leaflets and posters in schools, mosques and hospitals,” said the head of operations in Iraq, Damien Vallette D’Osia. “The suffering of victims of war is only beginning. We’re looking to provide medical and psychological assistance,” he said, pointing to a programme to fit up to 300 people with artificial limbs and offer local medic training in psychology.

The US-led occupation administration has also set up its own demining programme, relying on a Mozambican team working for the US-based private company Ronco, which is used by the State Department worldwide.

A spokesman said US and British troops were also disposing of UXOs but only those they found in their path or as part of their weapon confiscation programme. “Humanitarian demining is not done for any tactical military purposes, it is done for civilians,” said Pearse Marschner, describing Ronco’s job.

“Sixteen years of civil war in Mozambique gave us a lot of experience in demining, although what we found here are mostly UXOs,” said Elton Pinheiro, one of the deminers working in the Baghdad area.

He said Ronco’s other team was based in Hilla, south of Baghdad, and exclusively dealing with landmines.

“Our working hours are shortened by the heat here,” said Fernando Junior, another deminer, expressing concern that Iraq’s blistering summer heat, only a month away, “would destabilize some UXOs and may set them off.”

“You came last week and you said the missile would go. Look, it’s still here and we’re scared!” said Abdullah Hattab, 68, pointing at a Russian-made ground-to-air SA-2 missile on a launcher, right by his house in the Al-Baladat neighbourhood in southwest Baghdad. The US army says at least 131 such missiles still dot the capital.

“It will be cleared out within a week. I didn’t have the equipment nor the personnel but they’ve arrived now,” explained Hess as the old man calmed down and flashed a big smile.

Other residents expressed fears that the missile would go off under Iraq’s blazing sun.

“It could cook off and blow up or its liquid fuel could leak,” said Hess.

“This fuel, inhibited red fuming nitric acid, is deadly if people breathe it. It can also lead to deep burns if they touch it.”

Indonesia presses for ASEAN “security community”

Phnom Penh, 18 June—ASEAN, Southeast Asia’s loose economic and political group, must do more in the field of security and anti-terror cooperation if its dream of a peaceful, stable region is ever to be realized, Indonesia said on Tuesday.

As the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) moves towards a planned Economic Community in 2020, it must not lose sight of its own internal security needs, especially after the September 11 attacks on the United States, and the October 2002 bombings on the Indonesian resort island of Bali.

As such, it should also strive to become a “Security Community” by 2020, Indonesia said in a proposal document obtained by Reuters at an ASEAN foreign ministers meeting in the Cambodian capital.

“These two noble ideas could be ‘mutually reinforcing’, towards achieving peace, stability and prosperity in the region,” Indonesia said.

The document said it was “ironic” that while economic cooperation had continued apace, “areas of cooperation in political and security fields have not been increased”.

MNA/Reuters

PM faces grilling over reshuffle

London, 18 June—Tony Blair is facing a torrid time before MPs after being summoned to explain his “shambolic” ministerial reshuffle.

The Prime Minister has been forced to make a Commons statement on changes which include the abolition of the historic post of Lord Chancellor.

Mr Blair caused confusion by incorporating the Welsh and Scottish affairs roles into the replacement Constitutional Affairs department.

Anger was intensified by the lack of consultation about the moves. He is due to answer critics after Prime Minister’s questions — which could bring renewed attacks over the war in Iraq. On Tuesday Robin Cook and Clare Short, who quit the Cabinet over the conflict, cast renewed doubt on Government intelligence briefings used to justify the invasion.

The pair said MI6 told them Saddam Hussein’s weapons of mass destruction did not pose any immediate threat during the build-up.

The threat had been “exaggerated”, they told the opening session of the Commons Foreign Affairs Committee inquiry into the use of intelligence in the Iraq conflict.

Ms Short repeated her accusation that Mr Blair had “pre-committed” Britain to war, even though he had claimed to be working for a resolution to the crisis through the United Nations. The issue could bring more brickbats for the Prime Minister as he takes questions from MPs.

Iraq seen missing 1.5 million BPD end-June oil target

Baghdad, 18 June—Looting and technical snags have kept Iraqi oil output near 750,000 barrels per day (BPD) since last month, and the war-torn country is expected to pump only 1-1.2 million bpd by mid-July, below its official target, an Iraqi oil official said on Tuesday.

“Iraq had hoped its vast oilfields would be cranking out 1.5 million bpd by the end of June. But with virtually no increase in pumping rates over the past month, some officials now say Baghdad will fail to reach its goal.”

“We are producing between 700,000 to 750,000 bpd,” a senior Iraqi oil official told Reuters.

There have been problems with the pipeline in the north and ‘looting’, he said, adding that four de-gassing stations have to be reinstalled and water intake facilities need to be rehabilitated.

This combination of lawlessness and technical problems in the oilfields means Iraq might only reach production of 1-1.2 million bpd by the middle of July, he said.

The country’s northern oilfields are now pumping about 550,000 bpd, with southern output at 200,000 bpd, another Iraqi oil official said. Before the US-led war, Iraq — home to the world’s second largest oil reserves — was producing about 2.5 million bpd and exporting two million.

MNA/Reuters

Canberra opposition to call for Iraq probe

Canberra, 18 June—Australia’s opposition Labour party is today expected formally to call for a parliamentary inquiry into the evidence on which the government based its support for the war in Iraq, asking the Senate, which it controls, to back the probe.

Like Britain, where an inquiry is already under way, John Howard’s government has come under increasing pressure to show why it believed Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction (WMD).

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MNA/Reuters

A father carries his daughter out, waking her from sleep, to let in US soldiers during a search operation in Baghdad, Iraq, on 17 June, 2003. Three days after the deadline for weapons amnesty elapsed, US forces stepped up their search for weapons which flooded Baghdad following the fall of Saddam Hussein’s regime. — Internet

Rounded up Iraqis sit blindfolded and handcuffed following a raid conducted by US Army troopers from the 1st Armoured Division 1st Brigade in a Baghdad neighbourhoo. — Internet

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MNA/Reuters
Short says war decision reflected顶层设计 of cabinet by clique

London, 18 June—Britain went to war in Iraq without any considered cabinet discussion or serious examination of the military options, Clare Short and Robin Cook revealed yesterday to the Commons foreign affairs select committee.

Speaking in public before MPs, the two former ministers opened the committee’s high-profile inquiry into the events that led Britain to war.

Ms Short complained that Iraq had symbolised a wider collapse of the collective decision-making process, in which a small, unselected entourage of Mr Blair’s personal staff dominated decisions.

She named Jonathan Powell, his chief of staff, Alastair Campbell, the director of communications, Lady Morgan, political secretary, and Sir David Manning, foreign policy adviser, as the group around the prime minister. In a withering attack she said the Foreign Office and the foreign secretary, Jack Straw, were subversive to this clique, adding that many diplomats had opposed the war.

“I think that the decision-making was sucked out of the Foreign Office, which I think is a great pity,” Ms Short said. “There is enormous expertise in the Foreign Office, including what was necessary to get a second UN resolution.”

On the foreign secretary’s role, she said: “I am suggesting that he was extremely loyal to the prime minister and his decisions.” Ms Short claimed the lack of systematic discussion represented a collapse of British government traditions and had contributed to the lack of planning for a postwar Iraq.

Ms Short acknowledged that cabinet discussions on Iraq had been held regularly from October, but she said they were little more than updates.

“It was not what I considered a thorough decision-making discussion and there was no collective decision-making,” she said. “It is not just on Iraq, it is more generally on foundation hospitals and top-up fees.”

She said that the lack of a coherent decision-making structure contributed to the failure of the Americans to prepare for ensuring order after Saddam Hussein’s fall.

Mr Cook recommended that the UN inspectors be allowed back into Iraq, adding that if the US were opposed to such a move the UN should at least be allowed into British occupied Southern Iraq.

Both Mr Cook and Ms Short laid into the so-called “dodgy dossier” published in February by Downing Street without any involvement from the Foreign Office or the intelligence services.

“To think that in the run-up to a declaration of war, where people’s lives are at stake, to lift a prior PhD thesis and distort it… I think it is shocking,” Ms Short said.

“I am shocked that our system can come to this. I do not think we should permit this.”

INTERNET

ACU can become forum to discuss eco cooperation

New Delhi, 18 June— Reserve Bank of India Governor Bimal Jalan Monday said that the Asian Clearing Union (ACU) could become a strong and non-political forum of central banks in the region to discuss issues relating to economic co-operation among member countries and foreign exchange and reserves management.

Addressing the 32nd annual meeting of the ACU in Bangalore, Jalan said that the ACU could be used as a forum for the exchange of views among members.

Maintaining that “administrative bottlenecks” were hamstringing the use of the ACU members to tap into a $2.5 trillion foreign exchange reserve of the region, Jalan called for removal of these bottlenecks to make use of ACU mechanism popular.

The ACU has eight members — Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Iran, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

Its objectives are multi-lateral settlement of current account payments, promotion of monetary cooperation among central banks, increasing relationships among the banks of member countries and providing currency swap arrangements.

Stating that the ACU mechanism needs to demonstrate the benefits it could provide to its members, Jalan said, if has to attract new members, “it is necessary to make the ACU mechanism more efficient in facilitating foreign exchange transactions and the volume of trade routed through the arrangement.

There was a strong need to expand ACU membership, Jalan said, adding that MDAs, the possibilities of bringing in Thailand, China, Malaysia and countries like Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and others should also be considered.

INTERNET

US troops ‘used excessive force’ at Fallujah protest

Fallujah, 18 June—The United States should hold a “full, independent and impartial” inquiry into the “apparent use of excessive force” by American troops who allegedly opened fire on a crowd of demonstrators in the Iraqi town of Fallujah, according to a report issued yesterday by Human Rights Watch.

As debate grows over the increasingly emphasised “casualties” they have handled 69 raids and detained more than 400 people during a three-day operation in Baghdad and northern Iraq.

The bloodbath in Fallujah on 28 April, a large Sunni Muslim town 35 miles west of Baghdad which has become one of the centres of opposition to the US-British occupation, has been the subject of intense dispute.

Witnesses and hospital officials say 17 people were killed and up to 70 injured when US troops from the 82nd Airborne Division fired without provocation on an unarmed crowd of protesters outside a local school, which the army had taken over as a base.

The US military claims its soldiers were fired on by gunmen among the demonstrators, and from rooftops.

INTERNET

US official sees chance of Iraqi buying wheat in fall

Washington, 18 June — Iraq’s supplies of grain could begin dwindling this fall, sparking US wheat producers to start competing for commercial sales after a decade of disrupted trade, a Bush Administration agriculture official said Monday.

“The best information I have… is that Iraq’s needs are covered in basic commodities until September, October,” said Dan Amstutz, the US adviser charged with rebuilding Iraq’s agriculture sector.

He said a “quite good” Iraqi wheat crop this year could delay commercial wheat sales beyond September or October, Amstutz added as he spoke to reporters a day before departing for Baghdad on his first trip to post-war Iraq since being named US adviser on Iraqi agriculture in April.

Amstutz, 71, said he plans to spend about two weeks in Iraq assessing what the country needs to ensure adequate food supplies in coming months and to boost long-term grain production.

Even before the Iraq war began in late March, US producers of commodities, especially wheat and rice, have been looking for ways to enter that market. Relatively small amounts of American grain have been donated recently, but much larger commercial sales are being eyed, creating friction with Australia, which dominates Iraq’s grain import market.

Iraq can absorb about three million tons of foreign wheat a year, a significant portion of the 16 million tons Australia exported worldwide in 2001 and the 26 million tons the United States sold abroad that year.

The US industry fears it could lose out to Australia, which has been selling about two million tons of wheat in each year through a United Nations oil-for-food programme.

The United States was a large supplier of wheat, rice, barley, poultry and other farm goods to Iraq before the 1991 Gulf War. By the late 1990s, purchases from the US had been banned by President Saddam Hussein. US Agriculture Undersecretary JB Penn said the United States will be “prepared to compete along-side everyone else” for the Iraqi market.

Amstutz has predicted that with the proper way to help Iraq, farmers will be able to double their grain production within two or three years. Even so, he said, “Iraq will still be a net importer of wheat and rice perhaps, as its animal industry kicks into higher gear, some feed ingredients.”

MENA/Reuters

The best time to plant a tree was twenty years ago.

The second best time is now.

MENA/Reuters
**ASEAN affirms support for UN's central, vital role in Iraq**

Pnom Penh, 18 June— The Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) reaffirmed its support for “a central and vital role for the United Nations in the reconstruction and development of Iraq.”

In the Joint Communi-
que issued at the end of 36th Ministerial Meeting here Tuesday, the regional group- ing also said reconstruction and development in Iraq must be achieved in accord-
ance with the aspirations of the Iraqi people.

It stressed that all meas-
tures relating to the future of Iraq “must be undertaken on the basis of respect for the sovereignty, territorial integ-
rity, political independence and security of Iraq.”

Urging the international community to extend assist-
ance to the Iraqi people, the document said assistance to the Iraqi people should be ade-
quate to meet their basic needs.

Also, it said, measures must be taken to “en-
sure in the Joint Communi-
que order is restored and

**Iraqi museum to repair broken 5,000-year-old vase**

Baghdad, 18 June— A priceless vase returned to the Iraqi National Museum is damaged but can be repaired, the museum’s director said Tuesday.

The three-foot-tall, Warka Vase is in pieces after being stolen during looting.

The 5,000-year-old artifact known as the Warka Vase is considered one of the world’s first sculptures. It disappeared with hundreds of other treasures from the museum during the chaotic days after Saddam Hussein’s regime was toppled.

Last week, unknown people handed the vase to government authorities.

Foreign ministers from the 10 members countries, its secretary-general, For-
eign Minister of Papua New Guinea (special observer) and Foreign Minister of East Timor (chairman’s guest)

attended the meeting.

Cambodian Prime Min-
ister Hun Sen delivered a keynote speech titled “Camb-
odia: Fully Engaged in the ASEAN Community” at the

meeting.

ASEAN groups Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippi-

pines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. MNA/Xinhua

**Cook attacks ‘striking absence of evidence’**

Baghdad, 18 June — Robin Cook took apart the Government’s justification for war in Iraq in just over an hour of testimony yesterday.

The former foreign secretary and leader of the Commons used the quiet forensic skills which made his name in opposition to pick away at the evidence used to argue that Saddam Hussein was a clear and immediate threat to his neighbours, and the international community.

Mr Cook used his knowledge of intelligence reports on Iraq from 1997 to 2001, and a face-to-face briefing from the chairman of the Government’s joint intelligence committee, to insist that MI6 had not regarded Iraq’s chemical or biological arsenal as a high risk to the world.

Mr Cook told members of the all-party Commons For-
eign Affairs Committee that secret briefings he received immediately before the outbreak of war differed sharply from Downing Street’s rhetoric.

He declared that the briefings reflected “word for word” the warning in his resignation speech that “Iraq probably has no weapons of mass destruction in the commonly under-
stood sense of the term; namely a credible device capable of being delivered against a strategic city target”.

He also revealed that concerns about Saddam’s arsenal had eased to the extent that Britain had considered “closing the files” on Iraq’s nuclear and long-range missile program.

Mr Cook said: “We have to accept that Iraq’s arsenals were not as large as we once believed, and it was accepted that it was not a credible device capable of being delivered against a strategic city target.”

**India to consult Iraq’s neighbours on troop deployment**

New Delhi, 18 June — India Tuesday said it will hold “political consultations” with countries neighbour-
ing Iraq on the issue of troops deployment.

In a clarifying statement adding “we are not a mem-
ber of the UN Security Coun-
cil,” Ahead of the Pentagon-
Government talks, US Ambas-
dor Robert Blackwill said at the weekend that In-
dian troops in Iraq could op-
erate under their own flag and be used for non-combat operation.

Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee discussed the matter with leader of the opposition and Congress President Sonia Gandhi Sun-
day. Later, the government said it would take a decision on the issue after evolving a political consensus keeping “best national interest in view” and consulting coun-
tries in that region.

“These discussions were part of process of wide-rang-
ing consultations that the Government proposes to hold to have a better appre-
ciation of the situation and take appropriate decisions as necessary,” the spokesman said. — MNA/Xinhua

**Platinum production up in Zimbabwe**

Harare, 18 June— Zimbabwe produced 40,320 ounces of platinum worth $27 million US dollars in the first four months of this year, al-
most trebling the figure pro-
duced in the same period of last year, according to the Herald newspaper on Tues-
day. The rise follows Zimplats Mwiko Platinum Mine in Nigeria entering full production with expanding production at the Zimbabwe Mining and Smelting Company’s Mimosa Mine.

Anglo American Corpo-
ration is undertaking the ini-
tial phase of its Unki Pla-
utium mine in Shurugwi.

The mine will be ex-
pected to produce at least 58,000 ounces of platinum per annum when it becomes fully operational in 2007. MNA/Xinhua

**A riot police officer escorts a veiled handcuffed woman on 17 June, 2003 after a raid in Saint-Ouen-l’Aumone, about 35 kilometers northwest of Paris. French police raided the offices earlier Tuesday of Iranian opposition group the People’s Mujahedeen accused of links to terrorism, rounding up 165 members and seizing US$1.3 million in American currency, the government said. The interior minister said the raids were motivated by evidence that France was becoming a major operations center for the group, whose Iraq-based military wing was disarmed by US forces. — Internet**
Yangon, 18 June — Member of the State Peace and Development Council Lt-Gen Ye Myint, together with Kachin State Peace and Development Council Chairman Northern Command Maj-Gen Maung Maung Swe and departmental officials, went to Hopin from Myitkyina by car to inspect roads and bridges on 16 June.

Lt-Gen Ye Myint gave instructions to the responsible officials on maintenance and construction of roads and bridges on Myitkyina-Hopin section of Myitkyina-Myitkyina road.

Minister for Construction Maj-Gen Saw Tun, Deputy Minister Brig-Gen Myint Thein, Adviser U Thant Zin and Sagaing Division Superintending Engineer U Kyaw Tint reported on conditions of Shwebo-Myitkyina road section to Lt-Gen Ye Myint at the guest house of the Public Works. Lt-Gen Ye Myint called on the Ministry of Construction and the Northern Command for priority works to be carried out in time and to meet the set standards.

He said local people have now enjoyed benefits of regional development due to peace and tranquillity in the region. He spoke of the need to promote agriculture and livestock breeding activities, which are basic economic enterprises.

He said the government has given top priority to the development of agriculture and livestock breeding in building a peaceful, modern and developed nation. At the same time it is establishing industries. He said the government is making arrangements for progress of border areas after formation of the Ministry for Progress of Border Areas and National Races and Development Affairs.

Moreover, he said, the government designated some important areas as major development regions. There are now 24 development regions in the Union and it is also implementing five rural development tasks, he said.

He spoke of the need for the people to participate in nation-building tasks willingly and to discharge regional development tasks. Service Personnel are to undertake the tasks with sense of duty.

He called for cooperation in national and regional development. After the ceremony, Lt-Gen Ye Myint cordially greeted departmental officials, members of social organizations and townswomen.

In the afternoon, Lt-Gen Ye Myint and party inspected agricultural and livestock breeding integrated farm on manageable scale of Hopin Station.

Lt-Gen Ye Myint inspected integrated farms and plantations of Warrant Officer Than Win and Sergeants Aung Shein and Thein Cho.

Lt-Gen Ye Myint met Tatmadaw members and families at the hall of local battalion. He called for cooperation in community welfare and national development tasks.

Construction minister instructs construction of roads and bridges

Yangon, 18 June — Minister for Construction Maj-Gen Saw Tun, accompanied by Deputy Minister for Construction Brig-Gen Myint Thein and officials concerned, on 14 June inspected Sagaing-Shwebo-Myitkyina motor road by car.

Sagaing Division Superintending Engineer U Kyaw Tint of Public Works and Shwebo District Senior Engineer U Kyaw Kyaw reported on roadworks carried out during the open season and the future tasks. Next, Minister Maj-Gen Saw Tun gave instructions on priority works to be carried out in the rainy season. The minister and party went to Meza Bridge on 15 June where he called on officials to maintain the bridge.

They proceeded to Mohin Bridge construction site after inspecting Shwebo-Myitkyina road. Senior Engineer U Chit presented a report on progress of work in constructing the bridge and tasks to be implemented. The minister instructed to complete the construction of the bridge in time and to meet the set standards.

Yesterday, the minister and party saw over Lorton Road and the 90-foot-long Meza Bridge in Nannon Village. Then, the minister and party inspected Hopin-Myitkyina road section and Nanyin Creek Bridge on Shwebo-Myitkyina Road. Later, on arrival at Nankaung Bridge (Mogoung Bridge), officials reported to the minister on progress in building the bridge.

The minister then gave necessary instructions and inspected round the construction tasks.

Lt-Gen Ye Myint inspects regional development ...

(from page 16)

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Prawn breeding tasks inspected in Kyauktan

Yangon, 18 June — Minister for Livestock and Fisheries Brig-Gen Maung Maung Thein inspected prawn breeding industry in Kyauktan Township, Yangon South District, yesterday.

Together with Deputy Director-General of the Fisheries Department U Hla Win, the minister met entrepreneurs from the sea prawn breeding zones in the township at the department. At the meeting, the minister called on the entrepreneurs to expand the scope of sea prawn breeding industry in suitable regions. He said that only if the prawn breeding industry realizes US$ 400 to 500 million yearly, the fish and meat sector would fully contribute towards the national economy.

Then, Chairman of Myanmar Fisheries Federation U Hla Myint reported on methods and feedstuff to be provided by MFF in prawn breeding industry, and Head of Yangon Division Fisheries Department U Khin Maung Win, on tasks for extended digging of fish and prawn breeding ponds. The minister and officials inspected the growth rate of the 100-day-old prawns and sea prawn breeding ponds.

A total of 65 entrepreneurs are running prawn breeding industry on the land of 5,876.99 acres in three sea prawn breeding zones in the township. Then, the minister called for speeding up the already developed momentum in prawn breeding industry.

MNA
Lt-Gen Aung Htwe attends the harvesting of the 500-acre model Hsinshwe paddies plot in Hsawyaung Village, Namkham Township. — MNA

220 acres of land and arrangements for extended cultivation of crops.

Lt-Gen Aung Htwe gave necessary instructions and viewed packaging of lychees for marketing in Yangon, Amyekaung farm and nursery of U Aung Myint in Nampan Village, Muse Township in Muse District, on June morning. Farm Manager U Soe Myint Thein reported on crops grown on 220 acres of land and arrangements for extended cultivation of crops.

The new road linking with the Union Highway was built at a cost of K 42.266 million. It is 12,600 feet long and 18 feet wide. Afterwards, Lt-Gen Aung Htwe and party looked at the height of Muse High-class Playground Construction Project where Muse District Peace and Development Council Chairman Lt-Col Soe Win and Assistant Director of the township DAD U Kyaw Oo formally opened the road.

Then, Lt-Gen Aung Htwe and party walked along the road and cordially greeted local people. The deputy minister explained arrangements for providing technological supports. The commander then explained that arrival of twice-per-year opening of departmental offices, and arrangements for distribution of Hsinshwe paddies quality paddies and other crops to local people and assistance to be rendered for regional development tasks.

Regarding the development of Shan State, strenuous efforts must be made for boosting per acre yield of paddy to 100 baskets, long staple cotton to 400 viss, sugarcane to 6,200 WY Brand stimulant tablets seized, long staple cotton to 400 viss, sugarcane to 6,200 WY Brand stimulant tablets seized, long staple cotton to 400 viss, sugarcane to 6,200 WY Brand stimulant tablets seized, long staple cotton to 400 viss, sugarcane to 6,200 WY Brand stimulant tablets seized, long staple cotton to 400 viss, sugarcane to 6,200 WY Brand stimulant tablets seized, long staple cotton to 400 viss, sugarcane to 6,200 WY Brand stimulant tablets seized, long staple cotton to 400 viss, sugarcane to 6,200 WY Brand stimulant tablets seized.
Fourteen years of development and peace

Myint Soe (Na-Ta-La)

(Continued from yesterday)

The development tasks of border areas have gained momentum since 1989 on a national scale. With the establishment of the central committee and the working committee, primary schools were opened in Laukkai, Hecaw, Hsiaw, Kyoung, Tashoweith, and Namthaw of Kokoan region, Wansalang and Kaunglon of Mawpha region, and Mongyu, Mongma, Mongla, Hsantal, Hsulu, and Monghe of eastern Kengtung region.

The construction of roads and bridges also included in the development tasks that started in 1989. Roads were constructed in Nahan-Chinsweh road, Chinsweh-Laukkai road, Laukkai-Kongyan road, Laukkai-Yanlonkeng road, Hpopan-Chinsweh road, Hpopan-Mongla road, Hpopan-Nantiy road, Mongyu-Hsiulu road, Mongyo-Mongyu road, KyetUtaung-Mongpaung road, Wantapin-Pamongon road, Pamongon-Mongyu road, Mongyu-Wanphyat road, Wanphyat-Monghe road, and Wangma-Kyaingkang road. Bridges were built: the bridge across Nantein creek and the Wantapin Bailey bridge.

Electricity was generated in Chinswehnew new town with the use of two 4KV generators as of 17-7-1989. The power plants were also constructed in Laukkai and Mongyu, Hsiul, Mongkhat, Mongla, Mongsb, Mongyan, Wyang, and Mabin were also supplied with electricity during 1989. Pakyathay hydel power plant was also constructed in Kokoan region.

The Chinswehnew-Takass area communication sector was in 1989 was the radio telephone communication linking Lashio to Kunlon on 30-7-1989. A post office and radio telegraphic office were also constructed in Mongkhat. In the agricultural sector, tractor stations were opened in Lashio and Kunlon; Nal and Shiphon Dams built; fertilizer, pesticide, coffee strains, and maize distributed to Mongyu and Mongwa regions.

Public relations works could be carried out only in 1994. Beginning 3-1-1994, Panhsan TV relay station of Wa region and the producing MRTV programmes. Mongnaw, Laukkai, Mongyu, Mongkhat, Hsiul, Mongla, Nanphatha, Mongsb, Bokpyin, Kaleinna, Tanai and Papan regions were also facilitated with TV relay stations in 1994 alone.

There have now been 17 armed groups carrying out regional development tasks together with the Government. When compared with the cause of previous history of the country, these are the fruits of peace never achieved in any periods. Peace is essential to development. Everyone who has hungered after peace cherishes it dearly.

Border areas development tasks undertaken as a national cause for promotion of the lives of national brethren turned 14 years in May 2003. The 16-member Central Committee for Progress of Border Areas and National Races and the number Working Committee plus 11 regional Working Committees, 18 subcommittees and the Ministry of Progress of Border Areas and National Races and Development Affairs, are all working in harmony.

A total of 2748 miles and two Burlongs earth road, 1578 miles and two Burlongs gravel road, 297 miles and five Burlongs tarred road, maintenance works on 2743 miles and 7 Burlongs long roads, 42 major bridges, 640 small bridges, 16 suspension bridges, 52 hospitals, 82 dispensaries, 28 rural health care centres, 41 rural health centres, 627 primary schools, 61 middle schools, 62 high schools, 31 offices of Myanma Agriculture Service, 115 Agricultural Camps, 11 tractor stations, 184 towns and villages provided with sufficient electricity, 8 hydel power plants, 97 TV transmission stations, 47 post offices, 80 telephone exchange stations, 35 telegraphic offices, 19 livestock breeding farms and 41 veterinary clinics have been put into service in border areas from 1989 up to date spending K 430,256.63 million.

Besides the upgrading of schools and construction of new school buildings in accord with the border areas education promotion 30-year plan, 3Rs courses were also conducted at the border areas for the elimination of illiteracy. Social infrastructures could be built in border areas. Panhsang, Mongla and Laukkai hospitals have been upgraded into a 50-bed ones. Once hamlets of border areas such as Mongla, Panhsang, Namti, Laukkai, Kongkha, Pansha and Parwa have been upgraded into major towns.

The government has been striving for the harmonious development of border areas by setting up border areas development projects, rural development projects and 24 development zones projects. It is sure that all will be able to present more articles about the development of border areas in the future.

(Concluded)

 Efficient use of electricity

* Use daylight as the main source of light
* Use the least possible amount of electricity only if there is not enough natural light
* Use the least possible amount of electricity required in production and service enterprises
* Preventing waste of electricity benefits the user and others

There are about 500,000 households using electricity in Yangon. Thus, saving a four-foot fluorescent lamp every day by each household amounts to saving power that is equal to the capacity a 28-megawatt power station can supply.

 Efficient use of fuel

Saving one gallon of fuel per car per month will save the nation one US dollar

Thus, a total of 455,822 cars in Myanmar can save US$ 5.5 million in a year

The amount, US $ 5.5 million, can build a major bridge across Ayeyawaddy River

Minister for Transport Maj-Gen Hla Myint Swe drives the stake for construction of the Monywa airport building. — MNA

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
Myanmar youths emerge as champions in ASEAN Under-18 football Tournament

Victorious Myanmar youth footballers show off the ASEAN U-18 championship trophy. — NLM

Secretary-General Khin Nyunt cordially greets the victorious Myanmar youth footballers. — MNA

Victorious Myanmar youth footballers celebrate their victory joyfully after the final match. — NLM

Myanmar Under-18 football team members rejoice over the victory. — NLM

Myanmar football fans enthusiastically encouraging and cheering Myanmar U-18 football team during the final match. — NLM
 Hunan builds first used battery storage centre

Hunan, 18 June — The first storage centre exclusively for the safe conservation of used batteries in China's northernmost Hunan province has commenced operations in the provincial capital of Harbin.

The battery storage centre was built in 2002 at a cost of some 2.02 billion yuan (about 241,000 US dollars), which was raised by the Heilongjiang Provincial Environmental Protection Bureau. It covers an area of 3,200 square metres with a storage capacity of 1,000 tons.

A source with the provincial protection bureau said on Monday that Heilongjiang has turned out a hazardous waste materials disposal plant. Upon completion, the used batteries kept in the storage centre will be shipped there for processing.

The State Visits: the milestones in history

HK, China to sign free trade pact on 30 June

Hong Kong, 18 June — Hong Kong and China will sign a long-awaited trade agreement on 30 June which will scrap import tariffs of up to 35 per cent for many of Hong Kong's exports to the Mainland.

"The market (for Hong Kong's exports) will increase massively, so I'm very sure it will give new impetus to Hong Kong's recovery," Hong Kong Chief Executive Tung Chee-hwa told reporters on Monday.

Tung, whose popularity has sunk to record lows because of his government's inability to revive the economy, said the trade deal will cover three main areas — goods, services and investment — but gave few details.

China currently levies import tariffs of up to 35 per cent on items such as jewellery, one of the few products where Hong Kong still has a competitive export edge.

The government hopes that the Close Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA) will give Hong Kong's stagnant domestic economy a boost by bringing back some of the manufacturers and administrative costs, with some sectors, such as the territory's biggest trading partner. But analysts believe the benefits for Hong Kong will be relatively modest. Some say the deal appears to be more of a confidence building measure.

Hong Kong exported more than 41 billion Hong Kong dollars (5.3 billion US dollars) worth of goods made in the territory to the Mainland last year, making China the territory's biggest trading partner. But analysts believe the benefits for Hong Kong will be relatively modest. Some say the deal appears to be more of a confidence building measure.

Analysts estimate CEPA would result in net savings of up to 2 billion Hong Kong dollars (256 billion US dollars) a year in terms of tariffs and administrative costs, with some sectors, such as the territory's big.

Drive with care
WHO global conference on SARS opens in Malaysia

KLIA LUMPUR, 16 June — The world has moved collectively to combat severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) as health has become central to human and economic development, Malaysian Health Minister Chua Jui Meng said on Tuesday.

Delivering a keynote address at the opening of the World Health Organization (WHO) Global Conference on SARS at Sunway Lagoon, some 30 kilometres west of the capital, Chua said that after the outbreak of SARS, “individually nations have executed action plans and are working out their own response regionally and globally since the outset of the outbreak. “All that has been done across the globe against SARS by humanity collectively must become the model for man’s response to new microbes that will surely threaten humanity in the future,” Chua said.

Citing bold measures taken by Malaysia and other countries in southeast Asia, he said his country had only two probable cases and two deaths to date, but all imported. The last case in the region was registered on May 11 in Singapore and the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) is a SARS-free region, he added. “The price for being SARS-free here in the region and elsewhere in the world is continued vigilance and action,” he said.

The conference comes at a time when the international community’s actions needed to contain the initial outbreak have slowed and the scientists and clinicians have thus been allowed more time to assess efficacy and bridge gaps in the knowledge of the disease.

Canada’s travel industry calls for more governmental aid

OTTAWA, 18 June — Thousands of jobs in the travel and tourism industry are at risk this summer unless the government approves an immediate bailout package, Canadian travel sector groups said Monday.

“Canada’s travel industry is at risk this summer,” said Cliff Mackay, chief executive of the Air Transport Association of Canada, said Monday.

The severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) outbreak, the war in Iraq and terrorist attacks on the United States and its allies abroad, have all buffeted Canada’s travel and tourism industry, the Travel Industry Cost Coalition said.

So an aid package, including tax breaks for the travel industry, should be announced at the final Cabinet meeting Tuesday before summer break or it will be too late, the Coalition said.

Cliff Mackay, chief executive of the Air Transport Association of Canada said that if Cabinet leaves for its summer break or it will be too late, the Coalition said.

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“You are asking for something from us,” Mackay was quoted as saying local media as saying.

Earlier this year, the travel sector found the government to cut 800 million Canadian dollars (about 600 million US dollars) cut from the tourism industry in Canada and tourism sectors by reducing airport rents, security and fuel taxes.

The Canadian Government has allocated 17.5 million Canadian dollars (about 12 million US dollars) to promote the world’s SARS-hit tourism, including travel to Canada’s SARS-free regions.

A study conducted by the Hotel Association of Canada estimated the SARS outbreak cost the tourism industry in Toronto alone 190 million Canadian dollars (about 140 million US dollars) in lost business since early March.

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The severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) outbreak, the war in Iraq and terrorist attacks on the United States and its allies abroad, have all buffeted Canada’s travel and tourism industry, the Travel Industry Cost Coalition said.

So an aid package, including tax breaks for the travel industry, should be announced at the final Cabinet meeting Tuesday before summer break or it will be too late, the Coalition said.

Cliff Mackay, chief executive of the Air Transport Association of Canada said that if Cabinet leaves for its summer break or it will be too late, the Coalition said.

“You are asking for something from us,” Mackay was quoted as saying local media as saying.

Earlier this year, the travel sector found the government to cut 800 million Canadian dollars (about 600 million US dollars) cut from the tourism industry in Canada and tourism sectors by reducing airport rents, security and fuel taxes.

The Canadian Government has allocated 17.5 million Canadian dollars (about 12 million US dollars) to promote the world’s SARS-hit tourism, including travel to Canada’s SARS-free regions.

A study conducted by the Hotel Association of Canada estimated the SARS outbreak cost the tourism industry in Toronto alone 190 million Canadian dollars (about 140 million US dollars) in lost business since early March.
Barcelona president admits defeat in Beckham bid

Madrid, 18 June — Barcelona president Joan Laporta admitted defeat in his bid to sign David Beckham on Tuesday.

“Beckham’s representatives presented an unscaleable wall,” Laporta told Antena 3 television. “Manchester United confirmed on Tuesday they had agreed to sell David Beckham to Real Madrid.

United said they had accepted a fee of around 35 million euros (41.31 million US dollars) for the England captain on Tuesday.

Beckham but a week ago United announced they had agreed a conditional deal to sell him to Barcelona.

Beckham’s agents issued a statement saying he was “surprised and disappointed” at United’s announcement and within days Barcelona’s greatest rivals, Real, emerged as favourites for his signature.

In the last three Real years have held a virtual monopoly on buying the world’s best players.

I will always hold precious memories of my time at Manchester United and Old Trafford as well as the players, who I regard as part of my family, and the brilliant fans,” Laporta said.

“Beckham is expected to earn around six million euros a year plus bonuses at the nine-times European club and will undergo a medical in Madrid on July 1.

The midfield, travelling to Japan on Wednesday as part of a promotional tour of Asia for his sponsors, issued a statement through his agents SFX saying he was delighted to move to Spain.

“I know that I will always regret it later in life if I had turned down the chance to play at another great club like Real Madrid,” he said.

I was delighted with the arrival of David Beckham,” Madrid sporting director Jorge Valdano said.

“It is a signing that will help us become more competitive.” Italian clubs Inter and AC Milan showed an initial interest in Beckham but a week ago United announced they had agreed a conditional deal to sell him to Barcelona.

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Lt-Gen Ye Myint inspects regional development in Hopin

YANGON, 18 June — Member of the State Peace and Development Council Lt-Gen Ye Myint, accompanied by Chairmen of Kachin State Peace and Development Council Commanders of Northern Command Maj-Gen Maung Maung Swe, military officials of Northern Command, officials of the State Peace and Development Council Office and departmental officials, inspected 16-bed people’s hospital in Hopin in Kachin State yesterday.

Lt-Gen Ye Myint and party inspected the laboratory, wards, operation theatre and medicine warehouses. They also conducted round by Medical Superintendent Dr Nay Tin Aung and officials. Lt-Gen Ye Myint comforted the patients and gave instructions to officials concerned.

Lt-Gen Ye Myint and party discussed regional development in meeting with departmental officials, social organizations and town elders at the basic education high school in the township.

Present were Brig-Gen Min Thein of Mogau Sta-

YANGON, 18 June — Member of the State Peace and Development Council Lt-Gen Tin Aye met hoteliers at Myanma Posts and Telecommunications (head office) here this afternoon, and discussed matters relating to hotel projects in Ngapali, Chaungtha, Ngwe Hsaung and Bagan.

Lt-Gen Tin Aye said the meeting was held to look into the requirements of investors running businesses in the four hotel zones — Ngapali, Chaungtha, Ngwe Hsaung and Bagan.

Plans under way to build Ngawun River Bridge in Pathein for development of Chaungtha and Ngwe Hsaung beaches

Ngapali, Chaungtha, Ngwe Hsaung beaches are being upgraded. Later, motor roads and railway can be used in a short time, he added.

(See page 8)

Mr. S. M. Ye Myint, accompanied by

Plants under way to build Ngawun River Bridge in Pathein for development of Chaungtha and Ngwe Hsaung beaches

There are changes in the global economy, and the hotel business is earning more foreign exchange and contributing to progress of the nation. As Myanmar possesses natural scenes and cultural heritage, hoteliers will have to make collective efforts for the development of tourism in Myanmar. The government will also render assistance in the required sectors. The hoteliers should appreciate the goodwill of the Head of State towards them, and should make collective efforts to find means for the development of tourism.

Also present were directors-general and managing directors of departments and enterprises under the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, Secretary of Ayeyawady Division Peace and Development Council Lt-Col Sein Maung and others.

MINISTER for Livestock and Fisheries Brig-Gen Maung Maung Thein explained about the government’s arrangements to provide assistance to the hoteliers who would breed sea prawn in Ngwe Hsaung region.

Vice-Quartermaster-General Maj-Gen Kyaw Win explained setting up of business operations on the allotted land and aid programmes.

Hoteliers presented reports on starting of businesses on the allotted land and requirements.

Chairman of Myanmar Hoteliers Association Dr Khin Shwe and Chairman of Myanmar Travels Association U Khin Zaw presented plans to develop the hotels and tourist industry.

In his concluding address, Lt-Gen Tin Aye said the departments will have to render assistance to those who run a hotel business, and to issue licenses in accord with the rules and regulations. Work permits should be issued to those who want to run a business in the remaining four-mile long stretch at Ngwe Hsaung beach. The authorities and entrepreneurs will have to find means for the vacationers to visit the public recreation places at low cost.

Plants are under way to build the Ngawun River Bridge, which will contribute much to development of Chaungtha and Ngwe Hsaung beaches, in Pathein.

Also present were directors-general and managing directors of departments and enterprises under the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, Secretary of Ayeyawady Division Peace and Development Council Lt-Col Sein Maung and others.

MNA

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

SARS prevention

* There is no outbreak of SARS in Myanmar.
* Preventive measures are being taken against the spread of SARS from other countries.
* The people are urged to participate in the project.

Lt-Gen Tin Aye meets hoteliers engaging in hotel projects in Ngapali, Chaungtha and Ngwe Hsaung beaches and Bagan region. — MNA

Lt-Gen Ye Myint meets with departmental officials, members of social organizations and town elders in Hopin. — MNA