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Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt receives Kayan Pyithit Party Vice-Chairman U Than Soe Naing and party at Zeyathiri Beikman.— MNA

Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt receives national race leaders

YANGON, 25 Dec—Border Areas and National Races Development Work Committee Chairman Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt received Kayan Pyithit Party Vice-Chairman U Than Soe Naing and members at Zeyathiri Beikman Hall on Konmyinthar, here, at 4 pm today.

Present at the call were Minister for Mines Brig-Gen Ohn Myint, Minister for Progress of Border Areas and National Races and Development Affairs Col Thein Nyunt, Minister for Forestry Brig-Gen Thein Aung, Director-

General of the State Peace and Development Council Office Lt-Col Pe Nyein and officials.

At the call, national race leaders expressed their support for the seven-point future programme of the State and pledged to attend the National Convention without fail. Afterwards, they discussed matters relating to health, education, road and bridges and economic sectors for regional development.

MNA

Prime Minister inspects progress in implementing Union National Races Village Project

YANGON, 25 Dec—Chairman of Work Committee for Development of Border Areas and National Races Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt, accompanied by the Chairman of Yangon Division Peace and Development Council Commander of Yangon Command and the Mayor of Yangon City, arrived at Union National Races Village of the Ministry for Progress of Border Areas

and National Races and Development Affairs near Yangon-Thanyin Bridge in Thakayta Township at 2 pm today.

The Prime Minister and party were welcomed there by ministers, deputy ministers and officials.

At the briefing hall, Minister for Progress of Border Areas and National Races and Development Affairs Col Thein Nyunt reported in detail on

progress in construction of Nanmyint Tower, the archway of the main gate and recreation halls, paving of roads in the village, building of Zwagabin Hill, extension of food stalls of national races, decoration of traditional buildings, nurturing of plantations, conservation of mangrove forest, cage plantation and arrangements for holding the traditional festivals with the use of slides.

Next, Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt gave instructions on enabling visitors to the Union National Races Village study and view more about traditional characteristics of the Union and growing of ornamental groves of trees on a manageable scale for enjoying natural beauty.

The General inspected completion of Nanmyint Tower in the village.

(See page 8)



Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt inspects progress of Union National Races Village in Thakayta Township from Nanmyint Tower.— MNA

Create secure future for posterity

Today's implementation of projects creates better foundations for posterity. Better agricultural, industrial and economic foundations are being built for creating job opportunities and uplift of living standard for generations to come. At the same time, arrangements are being made to build better foundations for education and health sectors.

All are to avoid undertaking tasks only when asked to do so and discharging the duty perfunctorily. Secure future for posterity is to be created with firm conviction and resolve.

Senior General Than Shwe,
State Peace and Development Council
Chairman,
Defence Services Commander-in-Chief
(From guidance given to officials during
his tour of Mandalay Division on
23-1-2003.)

Independence Day commemorative
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Circulation

23,639

Traditional Medicine & Medical Equipment Exhibition continues

YANGON, 25 Dec—The Traditional Medicine and Medical Equipment Exhibition organized by the Traditional Medicine Department under the Ministry of Health continued for the

ninth day at Tatmadaw Conventional Hall on U Wisara Road here today.

The exhibition was teeming with the visitors. It goes on tomorrow from 9 am to 6 pm. — MNA

PERSPECTIVES

Friday, 26 December, 2003

MWAF to promote Myanmar women sector

Myanmar women constitute over half of the population of the country. The functions of the women sector are becoming wider and greater. International activities for the care and development of the women sector are growing. Relations with UN agencies and international organizations are expanding.

Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt met officials of women's affairs sector at the National Theatre on Myoma Kyaung Street on 20 December afternoon and gave instructions on formation of Myanmar Women's Affairs Federation. On the occasion the Prime Minister said that Head of State Senior General Than Shwe had given guidance on formation of a wider organization from a committee in order to promote the Myanmar women's sector.

As a committee for women's affairs, Myanmar National Committee for Women's Affairs comprising the government service personnel in the majority had limits to undertake matters of the entire Myanmar women widely and effectively.

Therefore, MWAF is to be formed to be able to take measures for promotion of Myanmar women's sector effectively, to ensure wider participation of Myanmar women and to enable the federation to stand as an organization responsible for women's sector. Myanmar Women's Affairs Federation will be established with the following lofty aims—

- to promote the role of women in building a peaceful modern developed nation;
- to safeguard women's rights;
- to develop economic, health and education sectors of women and to safeguard their social security;
- to nurture women to cherish and value the traditional culture and customs of the national races;
- to systematically implement the tasks, as a national duty, for prevention of violence against women and rehabilitation;
- to launch campaign on eradication of trafficking in women and children as a national duty; and
- to cooperate with international, regional, internal and external organizations in promoting women's rights in accord with the traditional culture and customs of the national races.

Myanmar women have fully enjoyed the equal rights as men from the earliest times and their performance in economic, education and health sectors has been most outstanding. Myanmar women are to safeguard and defend the Union that exists in the form of a family with family spirit, the spirit of national unity and Union Spirit for its perpetuity. Members of MWAF are to lend themselves to the tasks of implementing the lofty aims of the federation.

The 57th Anniversary Union Day objectives

- for all national races to safeguard the national policy— non-disintegration of the Union, non-disintegration of national solidarity and perpetuation of sovereignty
- to keep the Union spirit ever alive and dynamic among the national people
- for all national people to defend and safeguard the Union for its perpetual existence
- to prevent, through national solidarity, the danger of internal and external destructive elements undermining peace and stability of the State and national development, and
- for all national races to make concerted efforts for successful implementation of the seven-point future policy programme.

Hospital equipment donated to Zalun station hospital

YANGON, 25 Dec— The suction machine donated by Minister for Progress of Border Areas and National Races and Development Affairs Col Thein Nyunt and the oxygen cylinder by Deputy Minister for Information U Thein Sein were presented to Yayle Sayadaw U Kalyana who is the patron of the self-reliant station hospital in Yayle Village, today.

These hospital equipment will be used at the hospital in Yayle Village, Zalun Township. — MNA



UMFCCI COURSES: Applied Accounting and Management (UMFCCI levels I, II and III) Courses, sponsored by the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce & Industry concluded with ceremony at Kandawgyi Palace Hotel in Yangon on 24 December. Education Work Committee Chairman U Sein Win Hlaing presents certificate to a trainee. — UMFCCI

MRA English courses conducted

YANGON, 25 Dec— Intermediate level English grammar, speaking, writing and reading proficiency courses are being conducted at the Myanmar Royal Academy (MRA) at No 57, ground floor, 9th Street, Lanmadaw Township, here. There are also general English courses, GCE English courses and Medical English courses. One-month, three-month and six-month special English courses are also conducted. At the end of this month, English in business studies (accounting, finance, marketing, management and writing for business) course, TOEFL special English courses and Chinese language courses will be conducted.

MNA

105 tourists arrive

YANGON, 25 Dec— Chartered flight Lauda Air Italy carrying 105 tourists, under the arrangement of Myanmar Kipling Tours Ltd with the assistance provided by the Ministry of Transport and under the supervision of the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, arrived here today. The tourists were welcomed at Yangon International Airport by officials of the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism and Myanmar Kipling Tours Ltd and traditional dance troupes. — MNA

Bangladeshi delegation leaves

YANGON, 25 Dec— Bangladesh Rifles Director-General Maj-Gen Md Jahangir Alam Choudhury and party this morning left here by air after attending the Director-General Level Border Coordination Conference at Grand Plaza Park Royal Hotel on Signal Pagoda Road, here, on 22 December. They were seen off at the airport by Director-General U Muang Htay of Immigration and National Registration Department, officials and the Charge d'Affaires of the Bangladeshi Embassy. — 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

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 20-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 Ayeyawady River

All this needs to be known

- * Do not be frightened whenever intimidated
- * Do not be bolstered whenever flattered
- * Do not be softened whenever appeased

နိုင်ငံတော်အစိုးရဌာနပိုင် မော်တော်ယာဉ်များမသုံးစွဲရနေ့.

လစဉ်လ၏ ဒုတိယပတ်တန်နွေနေ့နှင့်နောက်ဆုံးပတ်တန်နွေနေ့တို့သည်ရုံးလုပ်ငန်းအတွက် မဖြစ်မနေသွားလာရန်လိုအပ်သည့် ကိစ္စရပ်များမှအပ မော်တော်ယာဉ်များ မသုံးစွဲရနေ့ဖြစ်သည်။

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School Family Day

(27 December 2003 to 3 January 2004)

The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago.
The second best time is now.

464 US service members killed since beginning of military operations in Iraq

BAGHDAD, 25 Dec—464 US service members have died since the beginning of military operations in Iraq, according to the Department of Defence. Of those, 317 died as a result of hostile action and 147 died of non-hostile causes, the department said.

The British military has reported 52 deaths; Italy, 17; Spain, eight; Denmark, Ukraine and Poland have reported one each.

On or since May 1, when President Bush declared that major combat operations in Iraq had ended, 326 US soldiers have died 202 as a result of hostile action and 124 of non-hostile causes, according to the Defence Department's figures.

Since the start of military operations, 2,326 US service members have been injured as a result of hostile action, according to the Defence Department's figures. Non-hostile injured numbered 370.

The latest deaths reported by the military:

Three Task Force Ironhorse soldiers were killed when their vehicle was struck by a roadside bomb on 24 December

near Samarra.

The latest identifications reported by the military:

Army Spc Todd M Bates, 20, Bellaire, Ohio; was on a river patrol on the Tigris River on 10 December south of Baghdad when his squad leader fell overboard. Spc Bates dived into the water and did not surface. Bates' body was recovered and his status changed to deceased on 23 December, assigned to the 135th Military Police Company, Army National Guard, Brookpark, Ohio.

Army Reserve 1st Lt Edward M Saltz, 27, Bigfork, Mont., and Army Reserve Pfc Stuart W Moore, 21, Livingston, Texas; killed when an explosive struck their convoy on 22 December in Baghdad; both assigned to 2nd Battalion, 3rd Field Artillery Regiment, 1st Armoured Division, US Army Reserve, Giessen, Germany. —Internet

ထိုက်ထိုက်နှစ်ဆ ခိုးမြဲမြဲ

Tokyo hesitant to grant Iraq debt relief

TOKYO, 25 Dec—Tokyo was a strong backer of the U.S.-led invasion, is a top contributor to reconstruction and just approved a plan to send troops to the region. But when it comes to the recent US campaign for debt relief for Iraq, top creditor Japan is so far keeping its hands on its wallet.

While war-critics France, Germany and Russia have voiced support for reducing Iraq's crushing debt burden during recent visits by US envoy James A Baker III, Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's administration has been quiet on whether it's willing to join the effort.

Japan estimates its Iraqi credit at \$4.54 billion, saying the figure rises to \$7.76 billion when penalty fees are included. That puts it in competition with Russia—owed an estimated \$8 billion — as the top holder of Iraq debt in the 19-nation Paris Club.

"Japan has not made any decisions concerning that matter," said Yu Kameoka, a spokesman for Koizumi.

The former American secretary of state has already visited Paris, Rome, Berlin, London and Moscow to call for help in reducing Iraq's crushing debt. —Internet

Malaysian Prime Minister to visit Singapore

SINGAPORE, 25 Dec—Prime Minister of Malaysia Abdullah Ahmad Badawi is scheduled to visit Singapore on 12 January, 2004, the local Press reported on Tuesday, citing visiting Malaysian Culture, Arts and Tourism Minister Kadir Sheikh Fadzir.

This will be Abdullah's first visit to Singapore as Prime Minister of Malaysia.

MNA/Xinhua

Three US soldiers killed in Iraqi blasts

BAGHDAD, 25 Dec—Eight people, including three US soldiers, were killed in Iraq on Wednesday, in three separate incidents.

A roadside bomb ripped through a US military convoy north of Baghdad, killing three soldiers.

A military vehicle was destroyed in the blast that occurred at around 9 am (06:00 GMT) near the town of Samarra, 100 km north of Baghdad, a US military statement said. In the northern city of Arbil, four people were killed and 20 others injured in a car bomb explosion, our correspondent reported.

The explosion took place at the entrance of the Interior Ministry headquarters at 08:50 GMT, setting the building ablaze and killing the security guards.

The blast also shattered the windows of nearby residential buildings. The cause of the explosion was not immediately known. The police cordoned off the area.

In the third incident, one person was killed and four, including a child, were injured when a landmine exploded underneath a car, near al-Shurta flyover in Baghdad, the correspondent reported.

Baghdad bombing

Meanwhile, US aircraft and artillery units blasted suspected rebel hideouts in Baghdad overnight. Dozens of explosions were heard across the city in one of Baghdad's heaviest bombardments since the end of the US-led war. Captain Jason Beck, spokesman for the First Armoured Division that controls Baghdad, said Operation Iron Force was aimed at rebels who might use the holiday season to step up attacks. "The purpose of the operation is to attack, kill or capture individuals (launching attacks) against coalition activities," Beck said. —Internet



A US Military Police soldier, of 1st Battalion, 22nd Regiment, (1-22) of the 4th Infantry Division, stands outside his barracks as the sun goes down in Tikrit's military base, Iraq, on 24 December, 2003. — INTERNET

Explosion rocks Sheraton Hotel in Baghdad

BAGHDAD, 25 Dec — A huge explosion rocked a luxurious hotel, which houses western journalists and merchants, in Iraq's capital city of Baghdad late Wednesday, witnesses said.

The witnesses said they saw a projectile hit the Sheraton Hotel in central Baghdad around 8:30 pm (1730 GMT).

There was no report of casualties or source of the bombing. "We have nothing about the explosion.

All we know is that it is in central Baghdad," said a US spokeswoman.

The same hotel was hit by at least one rocket fired from an automatic launcher carried by a donkey cart last month.

Heavily fortified by concrete walls and US tanks, the hotel is one of several hotels favoured by most foreign reporters and contractors.

The suspected guerillas attack highlighted the fresh wave of violence on eve of the first Christmas in post-Saddam Iraq.

Three US soldiers died when guerillas detonated a roadside bomb near their convoy near Samarra early Wednesday.

A suicide bomber exploded outside an Iraqi government building in the northern city of Arbil midday, killing at least four people and injuring 20 others.

Meanwhile a roadside bomb detonated in a busy area in western Baghdad around noon resulted in one Iraqi dead and at least two others wounded. —Internet



Four dead in suicide blast in northern Iraq as bomb kills three US soldiers on 24 December, 2003. —INTERNET

China enforces intellectual property protection

BEIJING, 25 Dec — China's State Intellectual Property Office (SIPO) organized Tuesday an inter-agency consultation for strengthening administrative enforcement, together with law enforcement, to effectively protect intellectual property.

Since China gained access to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001, more intellectual property disputes have occurred. Against this backdrop, the SIPO decided to coordinate with other agencies to further enhance intellectual property protection. Wang Jingchuan, commissioner of the SIPO, said that the Chinese still lack awareness of intellectual

property protection. Disorder in markets and protectionism impedes healthy mechanisms for safeguarding intellectual property.

Wang said that all these existing deficiencies endanger the innovative ability of inventors and affect foreign investment into industries rich in intellectual property rights.

The Chinese Government has already listed intellectual

property protection as a key area for regulating the market economy. In an order issued to local intellectual property watchdogs, the SIPO urged a focus on restricting intellectual property violations in large-scale commodity fairs, technological and investment exhibitions and in industries that make medicines, food, and construction materials.

MNA/Xinhua

Indian Govt to divest 10% equity each in ONGC and GAIL

NEW DELHI, 25 Dec — Indian Government on Tuesday night decided to divest 10 per cent equity each in oil Public Sector Undertakings ONGC and GAIL, valued at 125 billion rupees at current market prices, during the current fiscal, a move that would help meet the disinvestment target set for 2003-04.

Announcing the decision taken at the meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Disinvestment (CCD), Disinvestment Minister Arun Shourie told reporters that "market is buoyant and the Prime Minister and the Finance Minister wanted retail investors to share the buoyancy in the market."

The equity sale in the domestic market would be completed during the current financial year and an inter-ministerial Committee comprising Ministers of Finance, Law, Petroleum and Disinvestment would take day-to-day decisions including procedural issues and quantum of equity to be

earmarked for retail investors, Shourie said.

Asked about the value of the equity to be sold in the market, Shourie said at current prices, the equity to be offloaded is valued at 107 billion rupees and 18 billion rupees (totalling Rs 125 billion).

On whether government could consider divestment through overseas ADR issue, he said the Committee of Ministers would have to approach the CCD with such a proposal in case it does not find depth in the market (domestic).

The CCD meeting was chaired by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee. —MNA/PTI

Polish President describes situation in Iraq as unstable

WARSAW, 25 Dec — Polish President Aleksander Kwasniewski said on Tuesday that the situation in Iraq is extremely unstable.

Poland will face a difficult task to stabilize Iraq in 2004, the President told a Press conference here after a surprise pre-Christmas visit to Polish peacekeepers in Iraq on Monday. He added that the number of multinational peacekeeping troops in Iraq is expected to be reduced in 2005 if everything goes well.

Kwasniewski said there are 2,400 trained Iraqi soldiers to assist the peacekeepers in the Poland-run stability zone in Iraq and 3,700 Iraqi police officers will also be trained for work in the zone. — MNA/Xinhua

Italy cancels Zambia's debt

LUSAKA, 25 Dec — The Italian Government has cancelled Zambia's external debt amounting to 28 million US dollars.

An agreement to the effect was signed Monday between Zambian Finance Minister Ng'andu Magande and Italian Ambassador to Zambia Tullio Guma, in the Zambian capital Lusaka.

The Paris Club agreement gives Zambia a 100-per-cent write-off of all debts due during the period between January 2001 and March 2003.

Magande said this means that Zambia did not make any debt service payments to Italy during this period.

MNA/Xinhua

Dozen explosions rock southern Baghdad

BAGHDAD, 25 Dec — Explosions and machinegun fire rocked a neighbourhood in south Baghdad on Tuesday where US forces involved in Operation Iron Justice encountered gunmen, witnesses said.

Helicopters and explosions could be heard from the south of the city several kilometres away in central Baghdad. "We don't see any flashes of impact, we're just hearing sounds," a Reuters witness said from the centre of the city.

The blasts were the most sustained in some time in the Iraqi capital.

Residents near the explosions said US forces were engaged in a heavy firefight with gunmen in a neighbour-

hood called the mechanic district because there are many mechanic shops located there.

Residents reported some bombing from US aircraft.

A US military spokeswoman in Baghdad said: "We cannot comment on ongoing military operations, however this is linked to Operation Iron Justice that involves explosions and aerial activity."

MNA/Reuters

Blix optimistic about restricting spread of banned weapons

LONDON, 25 Dec — Former chief of the United Nations weapons inspector Hans Blix still remains optimistic about preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the British *Financial Times* newspaper reported on Tuesday.

Events in Iraq would not in any way subvert the value and credibility of future weapons inspections around the world, Blix said in an interview with the paper.

Iraq did not dare to restart its weapons programmes in 1998, when UN inspectors were thrown out of the country, for fear that they would be detected, said Blix, whose team were not allowed to finish their job and provide a definitive answer as to whether or

not Iraq had banned weapons and intended to use them.

Blix said terrorists have so far failed to launch any devastating attacks with them.

In the interview, Blix also claimed that "everybody is becoming convinced that there are not any weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and in all likelihood have not been for a long time."

MNA/Xinhua



A US soldier sits on his tank at a checkpoint at sunset on Christmas Eve in a military camp outside the town of Baquba in central Iraq on 24 Dec, 2003.

INTERNET

ဝက်သ္မန်းအား ခေတ်ကျော်လွှား

US mum on talks to explore UN role in Iraq

UNITED NATIONS, 25 Dec — UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan will meet with Iraqi officials next month to explore a UN role in guiding Baghdad's return to self-government, but the United States is keeping silent on whether it will attend the talks, a UN spokesman said on Wednesday.

While President Bush told Annan by telephone that he thought a three-way meeting was "a good idea," the US-led Coalition Provisional Authority administering Iraq has not responded to a UN invitation for the meeting, set for Jan 19 in New York, said chief UN spokesman Fred Eckhard.

Iraq's Governing Council has accepted the invitation and will be represented by Massoud Barzani, Abdul Aziz al-Hakim and Adnan Pachachi, the United Nations said.

Told by a reporter that coalition officials were insisting they had not been contacted about the meeting, Eckhard said Annan had personally extended the invitation to Bush.

"I don't think the secretary-general feels that he needs to extend an invitation directly to the CPA when he has already done so to President Bush," Eckhard said.

In Washington, State Department spokeswoman Brenda Greenberg said the United States knew about the meeting and understood the coalition had been invited. "We have not formally accepted the invitation to attend the meeting," she told Reuters.

Eckhard said Annan would prefer a single meeting with representatives of both the coalition and the Iraqi Governing Council but would meet separately with the two groups if a coalition representative could not make it on 19 January.

Annan suggested the meeting after Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zebari appealed to the United Nations on 16 December to immediately return to Iraq and assume a leading role in guiding the country's reconstruction.

Internet

China supports Afghanistan reconstruction

BEIJING, 25 Dec — China will try its best to support Afghanistan's reconstruction, said Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesman Liu Jianchao here Tuesday.

According to Liu Jianchao, Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Lu Xinhua started his visit to Afghanistan on 20 December and held meetings with Vice-President of Afghanistan's interim government Nimatullah Shaharani and Afghan Foreign Minister Abdullah Abdullah. Shaharani said Afghanistan valued its relations with China and thanked China for its assistance ever since, hoping China would continue to help boost economic development.

MNA/Xinhua

Arab League's chief calls for Arab involvement in Iraq

BAGHDAD, 25 Dec — Arab League chief Amr Mussa called on Arab nations to back efforts to rebuild war-torn Iraq after talking with members of the Governing Council, amid ongoing US efforts against anti-coalition guerillas in Operation Iron Grip.

The US-led coalition that administers Iraq also warned its members to be on heightened alert against attacks over the holiday season, as Christians in Baghdad celebrated Christmas Eve mass amid security fears.

"Coalition members are cautioned to be especially alert over the next 10 days and to take appropriate steps to increase their security awareness," said a notice from the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) Regional Security Co-ordinator.

"We are seeing continuing indications following the capture of Saddam Hussein that elements are planning actions against CPA and Iraqi interests in order to demonstrate that they are still a significant force," the notice said.

The Arab League meanwhile was expected to play a key role in rebuilding war-

torn Iraq Wednesday, by Governing Council member Iyad Alawi.

In response, Mussa, speaking at the opening of the 20th session of the Arab council of ministers urged "attending ministers, Arab companies, state and private, to join in force in the international competition for Iraq's reconstruction".

"The door is open to Arab companies to enter the Iraqi market," said Mussa, adding that "there is no reason to fear the competition of conglomerates, because they could not drive the reconstruction alone."

Earlier in the day, Mussa had warned that foreign troops in Iraq would come under attack for as long as they remain in the country despite Saddam's capture.

"As long as there are foreign troops (in Iraq), there will be resistance," he told the BBC. — Internet



An Iraqi woman stands in front of a US Army tank outside Baghdad City Council, on Thursday, 25 Dec, 2003. The Council building was hit by one rocket early Thursday morning. — INTERNET

Thai Cabinet approves \$3.43b budget

BANGKOK, 25 Dec—The Thai Cabinet Tuesday approved a budget of 135.5 billion baht (3.430 billion US dollars) aimed at stimulating the economy and providing compensation for civil servants taking early retirement.

Announcing the budget after Tuesday morning's Cabinet meeting, Deputy Prime Minister Somkid Jatusripitak said that the budget had been divided into five parts.

The first part of 33.04 billion baht (0.836 billion US dollars) has been earmarked for civil service pensions, while the second part of 14.59 billion baht (0.365 billion US dollars) has been earmarked for early retirement programmes. The third part of 16.57 billion baht (0.419 billion US dollars) will be given over as compensation to state officials, the fourth part of 59 billion baht (1.493 billion US dollars) will be used to boost national competitiveness, and the final part of 12.3 billion baht (0.311 billion US dollars) will be given to local administrative organizations.

MNA/Xinhua

US invaded Iraq for oil, says Castro

CARACAS, 25 Dec—The US-led invasion of Iraq was aimed at taking control of the country's oil, Cuban President Fidel Castro told Venezuelan state television in an interview shown on Tuesday.

"There is no moral argument, no possible justification to invade a country," said the veteran communist leader.

"The United Nations did not agree on it; rather the most powerful nation agreed to invade (Iraq): the main objective, let us be totally honest, was to win an essential raw material which is called petroleum," said Castro, who made a quick trip to Venezuela's La Orchila island in the Caribbean on Tuesday, invited by his closest regional ally, President Hugo Chavez.

"The arguments they have used to justify the invasion are not valid," Castro argued.

"They accused them of having weapons of mass destruction and they are the ones who have a monopoly on weapons of mass destruction."

"Yes, everybody has weapons of mass destruction, but there is a club that has nuclear weapons and there

are no restrictions on its holding of weapons of mass destruction," he said. "No weapons of mass destruction even have been found," Castro said. "Saddam (Hussein) might have had some and destroyed them," Castro added.

Castro also noted that the deposed Iraqi president "made mistakes," including the war against Iran in the 1980s and the 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

Internet

Four men survive plane crash in South Africa

JOHANNESBURG, 25 Dec — Four men escaped death when a plane in which they were flying crashed and burnt out shortly after taking off on Tuesday at the Kroonstad Airfield, about 200 kilometres southwest of Johannesburg.

Northern Free State police spokeswoman Captain Rosa Benade said on Wednesday that police suspect the plane had a mechanical fault and fire had broke out on the plane.

One of the men was admitted to a hospital with neck, back and arm injuries. The three others were slightly injured and their identity was not known, Benade said.

She said the plane was completely burnt out and only the tail was left.—MNA/Xinhua

Heeding court order, Pentagon halts anthrax shots

WASHINGTON, 25 Dec — The Pentagon defended the safety, effectiveness and necessity of the anthrax vaccine it has made mandatory for US troops on Tuesday, but stopped administering it one day after a judge ordered an end to the inoculations without the consent of service members.

In a statement issued late on Tuesday, the Department of Defence said, "The Department will stop giving anthrax vaccinations until the legal situation is clarified."

On Monday, US District Judge Emmet Sullivan is-

sued an order prohibiting mandatory anthrax inoculations until a trial can be held on a lawsuit filed by six unnamed troops and Pentagon civilian workers who challenged the policy. A senior defence official earlier on Tuesday had said the department was proceeding with the vaccinations but on a voluntary basis and said that perhaps hundreds of troops had received the shots on Tuesday. The Pentagon said it gives the shots to protect troops against the use of anthrax bacterial spores as a biological weapon.—MNA/Reuters



An Iraqi youth looks at an apartment near the German Embassy in Baghdad, which was destroyed in a rocket attack, on 25 December, 2003. About a dozen rockets and mortar rounds slammed into central Baghdad on Thursday in fresh guerilla attacks, as the US military said an American soldier was killed by a roadside bomb. Two hotels used by Westerners and an apartment block were struck, as well as the area where the headquarters of the US-led administration is situated. —INTERNET

UN approves two-year budget topping \$3b

UNITED NATIONS, 25 Dec — The General Assembly has approved a two-year UN budget topping three billion US dollars, but inflation and currency market volatility are expected to eat up all the increased funding, UN officials said on Wednesday.

The budget, adopted by the 191-nation Assembly by consensus late on Tuesday, would authorize the world body to spend 3.16 billion US dollars in 2004 and 2005, or 1.58 billion US dollars annually.

The two-year budget has grown by about 15 per cent over the past 10 years and was nearly flat between 1994 and 2001, but most of the decade's increases reflect adjustments for inflation, the officials said.

The new budget compares to 2.97 billion US dollars for 2002-2003.

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan requested 3.01 billion US dollars for 2004-2005, but the extra funding approved by the Assembly was again limited to adjustments required to keep up with inflation and the cost of the falling US dollar, said Warren Sach, the UN programme planning and budget director.

"In real terms, the budget remains at the same level," Sach told reporters.

To help cope with future

dollar fluctuations, the Assembly authorized Annan to seek dues from some countries in currencies other than US dollars over the next three years. The Assembly also approved 62 of the 117 new posts that Annan requested and gave him new powers to shift staff and funding to deal with changing priorities.

The budget provides more money mainly for development programmes and particularly for the special needs of Africa, hit hard by civil wars, poverty and soaring AIDS caseloads. It also funnels extra money to crime prevention, and humanitarian aid.

The United Nations is funded primarily through dues from member nations and the Assembly extended for three more years an assessment scale adopted in 2000 despite complaints from some developing nations that their dues had jumped under the new scale. Assessments were revised in 2000 at the insistence of the United States, which wanted its dues cut.—MNA/Reuters

Syria on the defensive at summit with Egypt

SHARM EL-SHEIKH (Egypt), 25 Dec — The presidents of Syria and Egypt started a one-day summit in the Egyptian Red Sea resort of Sharm el-Sheikh on Wednesday with Syria on the defensive against Israel and the United States.

The agenda for the meeting between Presidents Bashar al-Assad of Syria and Hosni Mubarak of Egypt included: "Israeli threats to Syria, the Syria Accountability Act and the situation in Iraq", official Egyptian news agency MENA said.

The Accountability Act gives President George W. Bush the power to impose sanctions on Syria as punishment for supporting anti-Israeli groups and maintaining a military presence in its neighbour Lebanon. Bush signed it this month.

Egypt, despite its close friendship with the United States, has sympathized with Syria, saying negotiations rather than sanctions are the best way to settle international disputes.

Egypt and Syria coordinate closely on regional policy despite their different relationships with Israel.

Egypt signed a peace treaty with Israel in 1979, while peace talks between Syria and Israel, which has occupied the Syrian Golan Heights since 1967, broke down more than three years ago.

Analysts said they also expected Assad and Mubarak to discuss Libya's decision to abandon its programmes to develop weapons of mass destruction, which adds to US and European pressure on Syria to follow suit.

On Tuesday Syria, accused by the United States of actively pursuing plans to make chemical weapons, welcomed the Libyan decision and called for pressure on Israel to do likewise. Egypt has taken the same position.

But analysts say that behind the scenes Arab govern-

ments are wary of a unilateral Libyan step taken independently of an Arab campaign for multilateral regional disarmament.

Egyptian state television showed Assad and Mubarak starting talks in Sharm el-Sheikh, a swimming and diving resort at the southern tip of the Sinai Peninsula.

MNA/Reuters

Americans to spend \$31b on pets for Christmas

NEW YORK, 25 Dec — Chad is receiving eight different presents for Christmas this year. "He's our son. We didn't want to give each other Christmas presents, but not give Chad a present," said Sarah Gerber, a technical writer in New York, who spent about 60 US dollars on holiday gifts for Chad this year.

Chad, though, is not Gerber's son—he's her dog.

Americans will spend a whopping 31 billion US dollars in 2003 on their pampered pets, up 5 per cent from a year earlier, according to the American Pet Products Manufacturers Association (APPMMA), a trade group.

MNA/Reuters



The Greek synchronized swimming team perform in a pool in the newly constructed diving training centre at Athens' Helliniko suburb on 22 Dec. 2003. The venue will be used for the training needs of the athletes during the Athens 2004 Olympic Games.—INTERNET

Hailing the 56th Anniversary Independence Day:

Independence was thus safeguarded

While the BCP's headquarters at Bago Yoma was under attack from all sides by the Tatmadaw hand in hand with local national races during the period from 1966 to 1975, the central committee in exile set up Shan State Base at Intawkyauku region as the liberated strategic area. After forming the BCP headquarters (branch) in Shan State, the five-year Moelonein Plan was drawn during 1966 to occupy the whole country through the penetration of the mainland. The five-year Moelonein Plan was designed to bring Shan State under control first and then the mainland. Owing to the offensives launched by the Tatmadaw, Mekauk Hla Maung, secretary of the headquarters (branch), and seven enemies were captured dead in a battle on 27 July 1970. And five enemies including Thakhin Tin Tun, chairman of the headquarters (branch), were also captured dead on 8 September and 38 assorted arms seized.

Later, the northeast military region of the BCP moved from Mongya region to Kokang region in November 1970 and settled there so as to expand the areas on the east of Thanlwin river.

The BCP with the strength of over 3,000 attacked Kunlon for forty days from 19 November to 28 December 1971. When it comes to the effort to ensure the perpetuity of independence and sovereignty of the State, Kunlon battle is of historical importance in that the Tatmadaw, sacrificing their lives, blood and sweat, had to engage pitched battles with the BCP which came to threaten the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the State.

In that battle, the Tatmadaw, with the strength of one mobile tactical operation unit and four regiments, No 77 Light Infantry Division and five regiments, put up strong resistance against the enemies. Members of Kokang defence units, police forces and the entire people of Kunlon assisted the Tatmadaw. It was on 19 November that the BCP entered Kunlon using its massive manpower and weapons at its best. As of 20 November, they started attacking Mankha base. The Tatmadaw resisted them tooth and nail. The fight was so intense that there broke out eight bayonet fights.

Moreover, the BCP

shelled heavily Lwemankha base on a 4,000-foot-high mountain range on 22, 25 and 26 November and Shaungtilin base on a 6,000-foot-high mountain range on 26 November. And they started attacking well-known Haitkanpa on 30 November. While the BCP regiments were attacking Haitkanpa, the other two regiments were tasked to block the Tatmadaw reinforcements. The BCP launched severe attacks on Haitkanpa base because the base overlooked Kunlon and served as an area of strategic defensive with geo-

graphical advantage for military purpose. From the point of military strategy, the capture of Haitkanpa base would amount to the capture of Kunlon. Haitkanpa battle being the decisive one, the BCP used its strength all out. Therefore, the Tatmadaw had to withdraw temporarily. Officers and other ranks of the Tatmadaw had already realized that there was no other alternative except to fight to the death as Kunlon might be lost if they failed to recapture Haitkanpa base. Therefore, the Tatmadawmen engaged in the fight attacked the BCP enemies most intensely with the support of heavy weapons. At last, the enemies fled in disarray for their lives, leaving the bodies and the wounded of their fellows. The Tatmadaw thus crushed the enemy's offensives and recaptured Haitkanpa base. While the enemies were in disarray, the Tatmadaw went after them launching offensives. At 12.15 pm on 1 December 1971, the main column of the BCP collapsed and fled.

On 18 December, the BCP enemies all withdrew from the whole battle field

of Kunlon. Throughout the Kunlon battle, the Tatmadaw fought with bravery the enemies, although more than ten times stronger in manpower than it was, for forty days with patriotism and love for the country. That was a historical milestone in discharging the national duty. The infantry fought Kunlon battle with the effective support of Myanmar Air Force. In fact, the Kunlon battle turned out to be the historical battle of the Tatmadaw because it could not only break into pieces the military fang of the

During the 12-year period from 1962 to 1973, 9,478 Tatmadaw officers, rankers and privates sacrificed lives for perpetuation of independence and sovereignty of the State in safeguarding the nation. Moreover, 21,640 enemy troops were killed in the battles and altogether 48,039 were captured alive and had surrendered.

Those were the endeavours the Tatmadaw had made to ensure peace and stability in the nation during the period. On 2 March 1974, the Tatmadaw trans-



Military operations in the North-East Command region between 1972 and 1987 were launched with the effective support of Myanmar Air Force.

BCP, but also defeat them to the degree that the BCP no longer attempted to draw their political and military plans to take control of the eastern part of Thanlwin river. That battle took some 1,200 BCP enemies, while altogether 85 Tatmadawmen sacrificed their lives for their country and 274 lost their limbs.

The BCP, defeated in the 40-day Kunlon battle with heavy losses, were not able to wage major military operations during 1972. However, they had launched attacks on Kengtung region since the beginning of 1973, beefing up their troops of the two brigades. A BCP brigade entered Mongpauk region through Mang Mang Hsaing.

After launching attacks on the Tatmadaw camps and taking footholds in Nasi, Maangnaung and Pankaung regions, the BCP intruded into the Mongyan, Mongla and Mongyawn regions at the end of 1973. The battalions and units under the command of No 88 Light Infantry Division in Kengtung region drove back the BCPs who fled to Mongpauk, Hsilu and Mongla regions.

ferred the State power to the Burma Socialist Programme Party through the Pyithu Hluttaw in accord with the 1974 Constitution.

The BCP attacked Chushwe and Pankaung bases of the Tatmadaw powerfully on 3 October 1977. On account of the inequality of strength, the Tatmadaw had to withdraw from the bases temporarily. The motive of the BCP's attacks was to capture the Hopan region including Chushwe and Pankaung. Therefore, the Tatmadaw had to launch counterattacks on them. The military operation lasted 25 days from 3 to 27 October, and there occurred 25 major battles including 10 bayonet fights severely. Over 5,000 men of the BCP were killed and many injured in the fight. On the Tatmadaw side, 13 officers and 113 other ranks sacrificed their lives for the country while 237 were wounded. Besides, one Vampire aircraft of the Defence Services (Air) was lost. The battles that broke out in Chushwe and Pankaung are in fact a historical victory that cost the Tatmadaw dear.

The BCP came to face with the real military

might of the Tatmadaw during the 40-day battle of Kunlon. However, they found it hard to relinquish their military strategy. The BCPs tried to invade the Kunlon region for the second time in 1978. In this regard, the Tatmadaw

with the heavy weapon support attacked the Tatmadaw camps in Sisi Wan Tapan region in Muse Township, North-East Command area, on 16 November 1986. Fierce battles took place, and the Tatmadaw troops had to temporarily leave the

Ketu Nila

launched the Ye Min Aung Military Operation to crush and drive out the insurgents. Major battles broke out during the days from 1 to 10 February 1978. As the Air Force gave air support for the ground forces, 100 members of the BCP's force of 1,300 men were killed and many others wounded in the battles. The insurgents had to flee in disarray. Forty-one Tatmadaw members sacrificed lives for the nation, and 48 were wounded.

Although the BCP insurgents were forced to withdraw with a large number of casualties during the 40-day Kunlon battle and also in their second offensive, they thought Tanyan as a strategically important place. Thus, they launched attacks on Nonghlaing, Paphant and Point 6041 in Lwesant areas in Tanyan region. As the Tatmadaw members gallantly fought back the insurgents there occurred fierce battles in the region. During the battles which continued for 20 days from 6 to 25 March 1978. Over 500 insurgents were killed and many others wounded. Ninety officers, rankers and privates of the Tatmadaw sacrificed lives for the nation, and 176 were wounded. As the Tatmadaw was driving out and crushing the BCP, the latter was seeing a decline on the political and military fronts. In order to save itself from the decline on the two fronts, the BCP attacked Mongyawn region in the Eastern Command area with a large number of men on 19 April 1980 and again in July the same year. In the first battle, the Tatmadaw seized seven weapons and captured 81 insurgents dead. In the second battle 91 insurgents were killed and another 115 were wounded. Sixty-eight officers, rankers and privates of the Tatmadaw sacrificed lives for the nation, and 72 were wounded.

About 8,000 BCPs

camped. The battalions under the command of the North-East Command, No 33 Light Infantry Division and No 99 Light Infantry Division launched a major offensive against the enemy to recapture the camps. The Tatmadaw columns were able to retake all the camps on 3 January 1987. On 6 January the same year, the Tatmadaw seized Myintan village and Kyugok (Pansai). Tatmadaw members totalling 175 sacrificed lives for the nation during the battles. The Tatmadaw captured 591 insurgents dead and 10 alive. Another 109 enemy troops surrendered.

The BCP launched all-out attacks on Mongyawn region for eight days from 23 to 30 September 1988. The BCP's scheme was to grab power by launching attacks on both political and military fronts, while trying to take the military and political advantage. The BCP's plot was that if it won the Mongyawn region, it would continue to seize Muse, Namhkam and Kyugok (Pansai), and after that to slice the whole Shan State from the Union, and to blackmail the Tatmadaw Government.

However, the Tatmadaw daringly and fiercely fought back the BCP insurgents to stop and crush their offensive which began on 23 September 1988. There were 14 major battles and 23 minor ones and 30 bayonet fights. Fifty-one Tatmadaw members including four officers sacrificed lives for the nation and 124 their limbs. The BCP casualty was 202.

Because of the weakness of the BSPP at central in many aspects, its organization activities in lower party ranks and in the public began to decline. And the consequences had led to occurrence of a general discontentment among the public. Moreover, the repercussions from (See page 7)

Hailing the 56th Anniversary Independence Day:

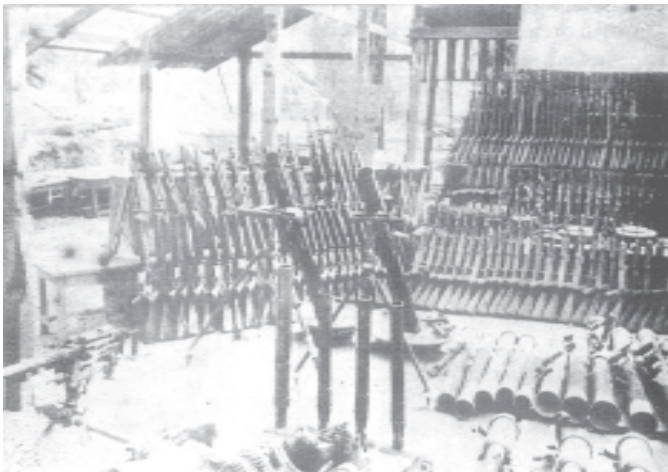
Endeavours to safeguard independence



With the support of artillery, Myanma Tatmadaw crushed the insurgents who transgressed the territorial integrity of the State .



The Tatmadaw fighting the insurgents who threaten the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the nation.



Arms and ammunition seized from insurgents by the Tatmadaw.



An insurgent base in Shan State.

Independence was thus safeguarded

(from page 6)

the changes in the Socialist countries had contributed to the eruption of the 1988 unrest. But the main cause of the unrest came from the instigation of the aboveground and underground leftist and rightist groups from inside and outside the nation who were taking advantage of the political and economic weaknesses and decline of the ruling BSPP.

People of various races, various walks of lives and different ideologies took part in the 1988 unrest. The leftist and rightist politicians and minions of foreign countries also took part in the unrest to grab the State power through shortcut means, using organized

criminal activities as a weapon to blackmail the then government.

The general discontentment rejected the government's decision made at the Hluttaw to hold the parliamentary election soonest. Instead, they demanded the formation of an interim government. As anarchy reigned throughout the nation during the time, the people were living without security, and facing social hardships, and that had no one to rely on. The administrative machinery of the then government came to a stop.

The country was like a nation without a government. An aircraft carrier was intruding into the Myanmar waters, and the Tatmadaw had to make efforts for it leave the territorial waters. During those periods, the Tatmadaw launched military operations to crush the insurgents in its respective

commands.

The danger of the break up of the national solidarity and Union and the loss of independence was looming. As the total situation had come to threaten the national cause, the Tatmadaw, always standing tall as the consolidated national force, has to take over the national duty — non-disintegration of the Union; non-disintegration of the national solidarity; and perpetuation of the sovereignty — on 18 September 1988.

In other words, it is the brilliant endeavour of the Tatmadaw to save the independence and sovereignty of the State for the fourth time.

In this context, it will be found that the national solidarity is the prime mover for the perpetuity of independence and sovereignty when looking back the course of the history of



The Tatmadaw fighting the insurgents threatening the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the nation.

struggles for the restoration of the hard-won independence since the times of kings and for the safeguarding of the independence from losing again in the post-independence period.

In order to build a prosperous nation, we need to draw lessons from incidents

such as 1949-50 incident, the incident of AFPFL in 1958, the incident in the time of the Pa-ha-sa government in 1962, and the incident in the time of the BSPP in 1988 considering that these incidents could lead the nation to a dangerous situation in which independence might

be lost. It is the necessity of all entire national races to uphold Our Three Main National Causes: Non-disintegration of the Union, Non-disintegration of national solidarity and Perpetuity of sovereignty, to prevent destructive elements.

(Translation: KTY+TMT)

Prime Minister inspects progress ...

(from page 1)

Minister Col Thein Nyunt conducted the Prime Minister round there.

Afterwards, the Prime Minister viewed the surrounding areas of the village from the tower and gave necessary instructions to the officials.

Next, the Prime Minister and party saw over the village by car. After giving instructions to the officials, the Prime Minister left there later in the afternoon.

MNA

Indonesia eyes higher investment in oil, gas

JAKARTA, 25 Dec — The Indonesian Government is confident that investment in oil and gas sector will increase next year in line with the climbing crude oil price in international market, an official said here Wednesday.

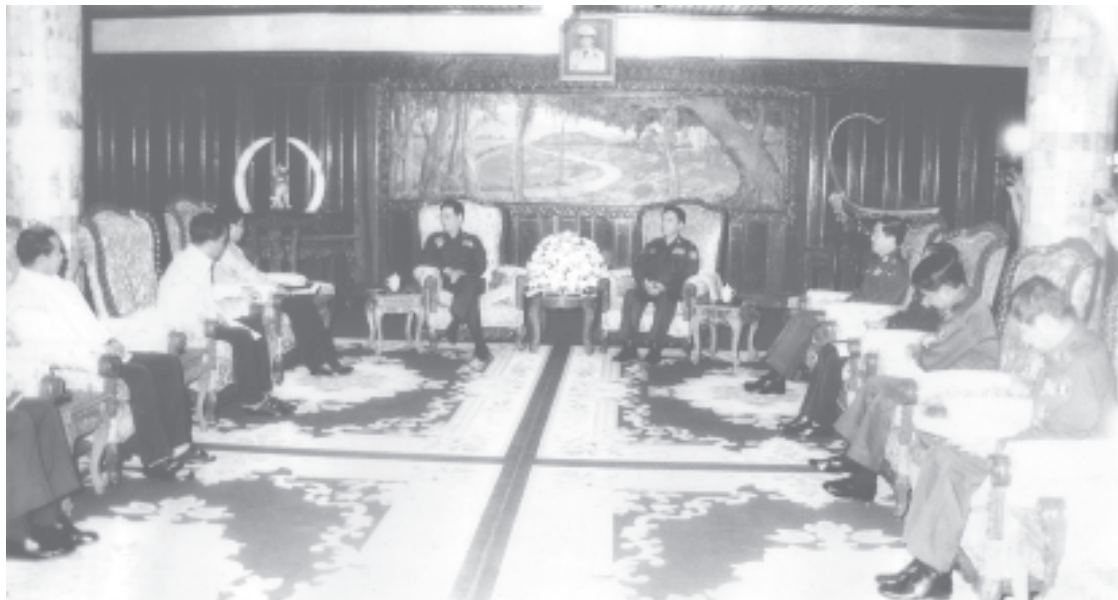
"The oil and gas sector provides a bright future because oil price stays high and will keep climbing," Iin Arifin Takhyan, director-general of oil and gas department under the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources, was quoted as saying by Detikcom online news service.

He claimed that investment in the sector rose to 6 billion US dollars this year from 5 billion in 2002.

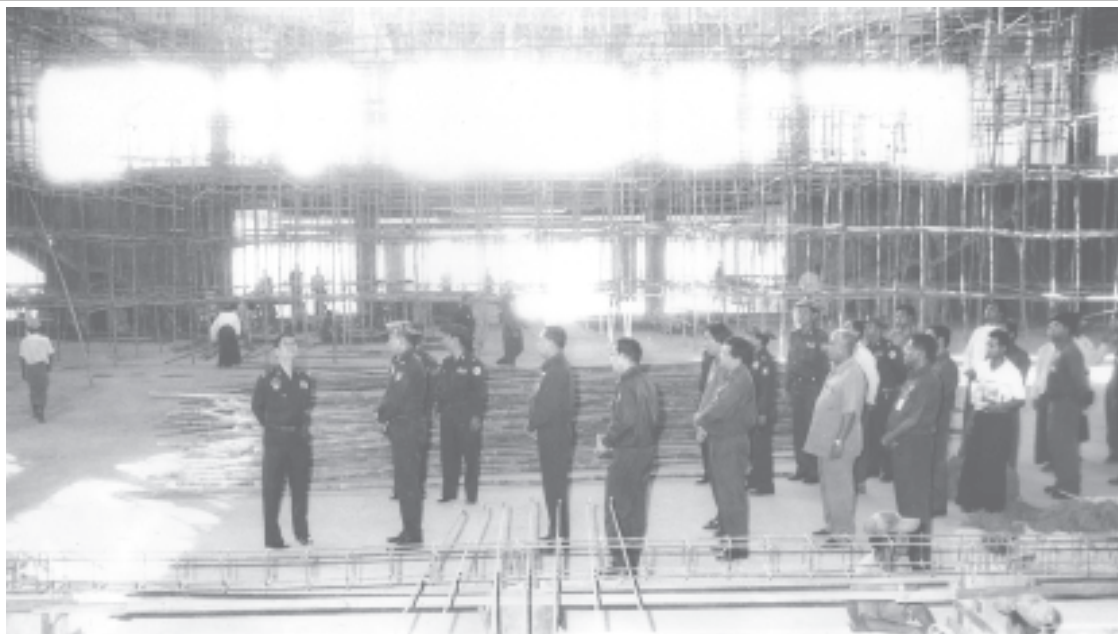
To attract investment, the government next year will open tender for 10 new oil and gas blocs for any eligible investors, foreign or local, he said.

Indonesia is one of the world's major oil producers with an output of around 1 million barrels per day. It is also the only member of the Organization of Petroleum-Exporting Countries (OPEC) in Southeast Asia.

MNA/Xinhua



Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt receives Kayan Pyithit Party Vice-Chairman U Than Soe Naing and party at Zeyathiri Beikman. (News on page 1) — MNA



Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt inspects progress in construction of multi-purpose assembly hall on Mindhamma Road in Mayangon Township. (News on page 16) — MNA

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Indonesia needs infrastructure financing agency

JAKARTA, 25 Dec — Indonesia needs to set up an infrastructure financing agency to help boost private investments in the sector, which has largely been neglected, said the National Development Planning Board (Bappenas). As the state budget will continue to limit the government's spending on infrastructure, the involvement of the private sector is a must, the *Jakarta Post* Wednesday quoted a Bappenas report as saying.

Private investment is the only means through which the government could expect to bridge the financing gap — the margin between the real investment needs for the sector and the budget the government can afford to allocate, said Suyono Dikun, Bappenas deputy chairman.

The breadth of the gap should serve as further evi-

dence of how badly the country's infrastructure sector needs private investment. Citing a Bappenas study, the report forecast that in order to support an economic growth of between 5 per cent to 7 per cent during the 2004-2009 period, some 613 trillion rupiah (72 billion US dollars) in investment would be needed. The figures are a minimum estimate as the study only covered investment for the construction of roads, power plants, fixed and mobile phone services, and irrigation and sanitation systems.

With an estimated government spending of 346.5 trillion rupiah (40.8 billion dollars) in the sector, the financing gap will be about 266.5 trillion rupiah (31.4 billion dollars), which is expected to come from the private sector. —MNA/Xinhua



Construction of Nanmyint Tower in progress at the Union National Races Village, near Yangon-Thanlyin Bridge, Thakayta Township. (News on page 1) — MNA

Cornerstones laid for construction...

(from page 16)

and family; K 7.3 million by Daw Tint Tint May; K 500,000 by Lt-Col Hla Moe (Retd) (Naing Ngan Gonyi Class I)-Daw Khin Ma Lay and family; K 300,000 by Deputy Minister for Hotels and Tourism Brig-Gen Aye Myint Kyu and wife Daw Khin Swe Myint (Professor, Myanmar Language Department of Yangon University) and family; K 500,000 by Director Daw Myint Myint Kyi of the Budget Department; K 4.3 million by Thiri Thudhamma Theingi Agga Maha Thiri Thudhamma Theingi Daw Khin Kyi; K 2.8 million by U Aung Thein-Daw Lay Lwin and family;

K 2.5 million by U Kyin Hok (Daw Thauung Sein) and family; K 2 million by U Maung Maung Kha Swe-Daw Aye Aye Soe and family; K 1.8 million by Daw Than Myint and family (Toyota plastic bag industry); K 1.5 million by Daw Si Si, Daw Kyin Kyin, (U Hla Oo)-Daw Khin Ohn Kyin (Malar Myaing Family); K 1.31 million by Daw Tin Shwe (Pa Shwe Jewellery Shop) and family; K 1.28 million by U Aung Min-Daw Amar Kyu and family; K 1 million by U Ba Thein-Daw Kyi and family; K 780,000 by U Aung Thein-Daw Khin May Myint and family; K 500,000 by U Kyi Lin-Daw Khin May and fam-

ily; K 400,000 by Daw Wan Phwe and family; K 500,000 by U Ye Myint Pe-Daw Nyo Nyo and family; K 450,000 by U Khin Maung Win-Daw San San Khaing; K 400,000 by Ma Tin Tin Htwe and Ma Tin May Htut; and K 300,000 by U Kyaw Hsan-Daw Khin Mya Mya and family.

The Secretary-1, the commander, ministers and officials accepted the donations.

State Ovadacariya Tipitaka Ovadacariya Agga Maha Pandita Sagaing Hill Maha Thitzanawdagaung Sayadaw Bhaddanta Sijj nabhivamsa delivered a sermon, followed by sharing of merits gained. — MNA



Secretary-1 Lt-Gen Soe Win lays cornerstone of religious buildings at Thiri Lekhanayama Dagon Sasana Yeiktha Alekyaungsaung in Dagon Myothit (East) Township. — MNA

Cambodia's 'IT' industry still faces many hurdles

PHNOM PENH, 25 Dec— A two-day seminar was opened here on Wednesday, aimed to highlight the challenges facing small businesses and teach them practical ways to benefit from the Internet.

"We have to be more conscious, more vocal, more aggressive in pushing policy that helps the poor," Commerce Ministry Secretary of State Sok Siphana said at the seminar.

A report issued Wednesday by the International Trade Centre, a body created by the UN and the World Trade Organization, which sponsored Wednesday's seminar, showed that Cambodia has the "dubious distinction" of having the lowest Internet

penetration in Southeast Asia and at the highest prices.

A major reason for this, the report said, is that the country has only 27 fixed phone lines for every 10,000 people. "Although important progress has been made in the last two years, Cambodia remains one of the least connected countries in the region and perhaps the only country in the world with mobile penetration rates double that of fixed line penetration", the report said.

It also noted that investors shy away from investing in fixed lines because of excessive bureaucracy at the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications and the lack of a clear framework for awarding licences and setting

regulatory rules.

Though the seminar revealed many shortcomings of the country's information technology infrastructure, it also showcased local companies using Internet to increase sales.

Industry leaders said Phnom Penh youths were driving the IT sector here, which includes everything from computer sales to installing Internet networks to designing Web pages. But the industry still has many hurdles. For instance, the number of fixed phone lines for Internet connections remains inadequate, computers are too expensive for many families to afford and students in computer-related courses often lack essential skills. — MNA/Xinhua



Mya Yadana modern cinema in Thakayta Township. — MNA



Secretary-1 Lt-Gen Soe Win offers provisions to Vice-Chairman of Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee Bhaddanta Panindabhiwamsa. (News on page 16) — MNA



Secretary-1 Lt-Gen Soe Win accepts K 10 million for construction of buildings at Thiri Lekhanayama Dagon Sasana Yeiktha Alekyaungsaung in Dagon Myothit (East) donated by U Ba Khaing-Daw Tin Hlaing (Zalat Wah Biscuit). — MNA

Modern Mya Yadana Cinema opened

YANGON, 25 Dec— A ceremony to open the modern Mya Yadana Cinema was held at the venue at the corner of Zingama and Myindawtha Roads in Ward 5, Thakayta Township, this morning.

Present were Minister for Information Brig-Gen Kyaw Hsan, departmental heads of

departments and enterprises under the Ministry of Information, the manager and staff of the cinema and guests.

First, Managing Director U Bo Kyi of Myanmar Motion Picture Enterprise, Managing Director U Kyi Lwin of the cinema and wife Daw Lwin Lwin Maw formally opened the cinema.

Next, the minister and party viewed round there.

On the opening day, Kyar-mee-swe Ko-Ko-hnint Myauk-moo-le Ma-Ma film was shown at the cinema. From now on, there will be four shows a day— 11 am, 2 pm, 5 pm and 8 pm daily.

MNA



Minister for Information Brig-Gen Kyaw Hsan views Mya Yadana Cinema. — MNA

Over 40% of Vietnamese men heavy smokers

HANOI, 25 Dec — Up to 49.2 per cent of Vietnam men smoke cigarettes and 38.9 per cent of them are addicts, showed a latest survey by the Vietnam Association for Standard and Consumer Protection.

Twenty-one per cent of local smokers started smoking when they were juvenile, the association said on

Wednesday.

Vietnamese smokers spend a total of 30 billion Vietnamese dong (1.92 million US dollars) on cigarettes each year, said the survey.

In a bid to reduce the number of smokers, the government has decided to impose higher taxes on cigarettes from January 2004. All kinds of cigarettes will carry

a value-added tax of 10 per cent in addition to fairly high existing special consumption taxes.

It has also decided not to allow investment in new tobacco factories and production expansion. However, renewing equipment to improve the quality of cigarettes is permitted.

MNA/Xinhua



Minister for Religious Affairs Brig-Gen Thura Myint Maung hosts a dinner to Japanese Buddhist delegation led by Most Ven Dr Kori Yoshihiko. — MNA

Dinner hosted in honour of Japanese Buddhist delegation

YANGON, 25 Dec — Minister for Religious Affairs Brig-Gen Thura Myint Maung hosted a dinner in honour of the Japanese Buddhist delegation led by Most Ven Dr Kori Yoshihiko at the Hotel Nikko here yesterday evening.

Also present on the occasion were Deputy Minister for Religious Affairs Brig-Gen Thura Aung Ko,

Director-General Dr Myo Myint of the Religious Affairs Department, Director-General U Sann Lwin of the Department for Promotion and Propagation of the Sasana, Pro-Rector (Administration) Dr Hla Pe of the International Theravada Buddhist Missionary University, officials of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Thidagu Missionary Association.

Before the dinner, the minister made a speech. Afterwards, the minister presented gifts and handed over gifts and documentary photo album presented by Thidagu Missionary Association to the leader of the delegation.

The leader of the delegation spoke words of thanks. The delegation left for home by air this morning. — MNA



Japanese Buddhist delegation led by Most Ven Dr Kori Yoshihiko being seen off at the airport. — MNA

Top German TV comedian quits despite pleas to stay on

BERLIN, 25 Dec — Germany's top comedian Harald Schmidt pulled the plug on his popular late-night television show on Tuesday, ignoring pleas from Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder and thousands of viewers to stay on the air.

Schmidt's eight years of biting satire and self-deprecating humour brought laughter into the lives of millions of Germans and he was a ratings star at the struggling Sat-1 network.

Schroeder said recently he was a big admirer of Schmidt, 46, and joined other fans in urging the comedian to reconsider his

shock decision to quit at the peak of his career.

"He's a brilliant entertainer," Schroeder said. "Sometimes he cracks too many jokes at the expense of others, especially at my expense. But in his show it's all okay. It would be a terrible shame if it quits for good."

Sat-1's share price dropped about 10 per cent in early December after Schmidt announced he was quitting. Investors were worried about the network's loss of its most recognizable name.

In 1,363 shows, Schmidt enjoyed a fiercely loyal following of well-educated and wealthy

viewers loved by advertisers.

"We don't want to bore you anymore", Schmidt said with a deadpan look at the start of his final show on Tuesday.

"Final shows are often big disappointments. I feel sorry for our audience if they're expecting something special tonight."

Schmidt unabashedly copied the studio setting of American late-night entertainer David Letterman, but "The Harald Schmidt Show" had a distinctly German format tailored to German humour and developed a cult-like following.

MNA/Reuters

Education Minister inspects preparations for holding School Family Day

YANGON, 25 Dec — Chairman of Leading Committee for Organizing the School Family Day for 2003-2004 academic year Minister for Education U Than Aung, accompanied by Chairman of the Work Committee-1 for Organizing the School Family Day Deputy Minister for Education Col Aung Myo Min and Chairman of the Work Committee-2 Deputy Minister U Myo Nyunt and departmental heads, arrived at

Diamond Jubilee Hall on Pyay Road in Kamayut Township yesterday afternoon and inspected preparations for holding the school family day.

On the second floor, the minister and party inspected a display of booths of handicraft which were presented by basic education students to the Chairman of Myanmar Education Committee.

On the third floor, the minister viewed clarification

of students with the use of power point and performance of computer skills at Harnessing ICT through Education Booth.

On the ground floor, they saw over preparations for holding the education book fair in which handicraft of Basic Education Departments and universities in Yangon, Universities' Library, Myanmar Education Research Bureau and private book stalls will participate. — MNA

Myanmar sports team bags 17 gold, 10 silver, 7 bronze

YANGON, 25 Dec — The Myanmar sports team of disabled led by Director of Resettlement of the Ministry of Defence President of Myanmar Sports Federation for Disabled Maj-Gen Aung Thein has so far bagged 17 gold, 10 silver and seven bronze, totalling 34 in the II ASEAN Countries Sports Meets for Disabled in Hanoi, Vietnam, from 18 to 28 December.

Gold Medals

Kyaw Khaing (Defence) won one gold each in the men's 100-m race event and the men's long jump event; Tin Tin Khaing (YCDC) one gold each in the women's 100-m race event and the women's javelin event; Nan Ma Sein (YCDC) in the women's javelin event; Win Hsan Aung (Agriculture & Irrigation) in the men's 200-m swimming event; Mya Khaing (SWD) in the men's 200-m swimming event; Naing Sit Aung (Commerce) in the men's 100-m back-

stroke event; Win Naing (Agriculture & Irrigation) in the men's shot-put event; Nyunt Nyunt Win (SWD) in the women's javelin event; Mya Khaing (SWD) in the men's 50-m swimming event; Kyaw Khaing (Defence) in the men's 200-m race event; Than Hlaing (Defence) in the men's shot-put event; Tin Tin Khaing (YCDC) in the women's shot-put event; Win Myint (Finance & Revenue) in the men's shot-put event; San San Hla (YCDC) in the women's long jump event; and N Aung Khun (Commerce) in the men's shot-put event.

Silver Medals

Min Lwin (Defence) in the men's long jump event; Zaw Moe Aung (Defence) in the men's long jump event; San San Hla (YCDC) in the women's 100-m race event; Myint Zaw (Commerce) in the men's shot-put event; Aung Lwin Oo (SWD) in the men's 100-m race for the blind event; Than Soe Oo

(Defence) in the men's javelin event; Min Lwin (Defence) in the men's 200-m race event; Zaw Moe Aung (Defence) in the men's shot-put event; Nan Ma Sein (YCDC) in the women's long jump event; and Naw Phaw Ray Htoo (SWD) in the women's 200-m race for the blind event.

Bronze Medals

Than Hlaing (Defence) in the men's javelin event; Tin Htwe (Agriculture & Irrigation) in the men's 200-m swimming event; Wunna (Agriculture & Irrigation) in the men's 50-m swimming event; San San Hla (YCDC) in the women's shot-put event; Win Hsan Aung (Agriculture & Irrigation) in the men's 50-m swimming event; Tin Htwe (Agriculture & Irrigation) in the men's 50-m swimming event; and Win Lwin (Agriculture & Irrigation) & Tin Tun (Industry-1) in the men's double tennis event.

MNA



Kyaw Khaing. — MNA



Tin Tin Khaing. — MNA



Mya Khaing. — MNA

Netherlands provides Rwanda \$6m for agricultural sector

NAIROBI, 25 Dec — The Netherlands has provided Rwanda with five million euros (about six million US dollars) to market oriented agricultural production and export promotion, *Rwanda News Agency* reported Tuesday. Four Rwandan organizations representing rural producers will be involved in preparing action and investment plans of commodities aimed at boosting internal and export markets, the report said. "Targeted investments in the commodity chains will assist farmers, small scale entrepreneurs and public service agencies such as Research Institute for Ag-

riculture will benefit to intensify production and access regional and international markets," the report said.

Meanwhile, Rwanda's 2004 budget proposal shows that the government intends to spend 5.2 million US dollars and 3.7 million US dollars to help promote tea and coffee exports.

The 2004 budget project also indicates that the government would set up an agriculture guarantee fund to stimulate bank lending to the sector. The agriculture sector today receives a miserable 2-per-cent of total bank loans. — MNA/Xinhua

7 crew members of tug boat rescued in Turkey

ANKARA, 25 Dec — A Turkish Coast Guard helicopter rescued on Tuesday seven crew members of a British-flagged tug boat which ran aground in western Turkey on Monday due to strong southwest winds, *Anatolian* news agency reported.

Bozcaada head official Aykut Pekmez cited by *Anatolian* said the tug boat named *Tajfun* ran aground off Ayazma region of Bozcaada in Canakkale Province. — MNA/Xinhua

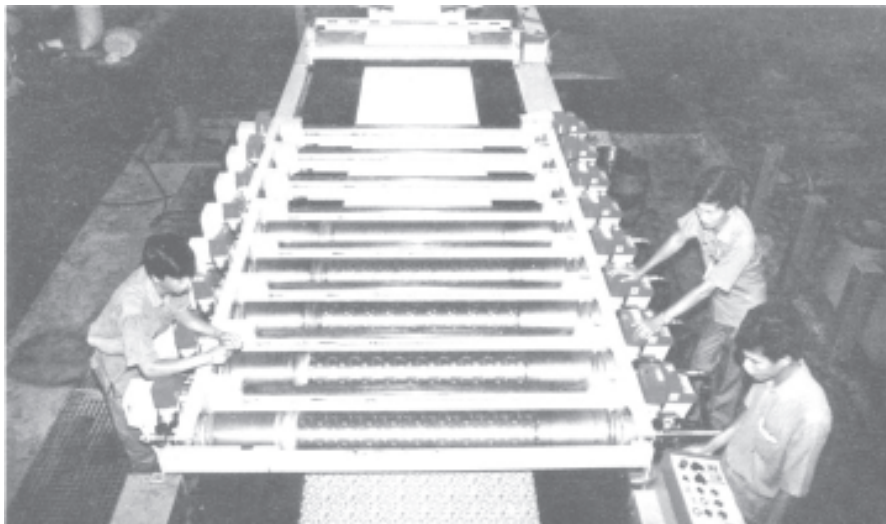
Hailing the 56th Anniversary Independence Day:**Factories of the Ministry of Industry-1 constructed in the time of the State Peace and Development Council****New factories to fulfil the requirements of the people constructed from 1988 to 2003**

No	Industry	Total factories
1.	Textile	33
2.	Foodstuff	43
3.	Pharmaceutical	18
4.	Ceramic	23
5.	General and Maintenance	28
6.	Paper	9
7.	Projects under implementation	23
8.	Projects to be implemented	53
	Total	230

The Ministry of Industry-1 produces household goods and consumer products to fulfil the daily food, clothing and shelter needs of the people including foodstuff, medicines, construction materials and other items. List of the factories under the Ministry of Industry-1 fulfilling the requirements of the people is shown in the table:



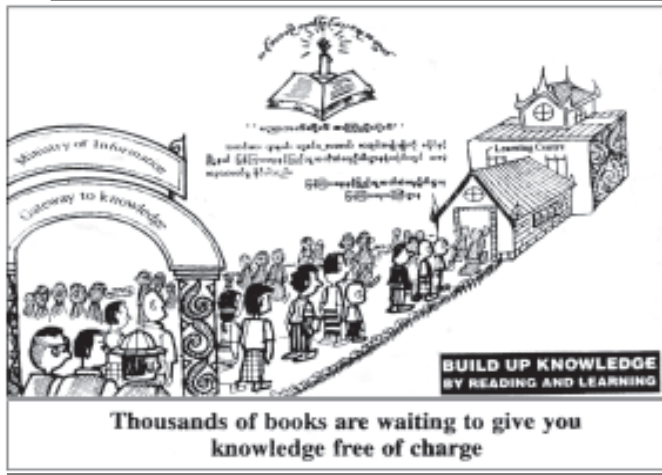
500-ton cement plant in Kyaukse Industrial Zone, Kyaukse Township, Mandalay Division, constructed by the Ministry of Industry-1 in 2002.



Worksite of Shwedaung and Textile Finishing Plant of Myanma Textile Industry of the Ministry of Industry-1.

Myanma Pharmaceutical Factory in Insein Township, Yangon, producing medicines of international standards required for nation people.





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Win Mu Tin,
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P.O. Box 60, Yangon:
Dated: 26 December, 2003

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- Myanmar Data on CD-ROM 2002

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Dip in Marine Affairs(UK)
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Ph : 371 990 2-6-12-2003

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P.O. Box No. 26, Yangon:
Phone: 372416
Dated: 26 December, 2003

NOTICE

The Ninth anniversary golf tournament for the members of the City Golf Resort, Yangon City Development Committee, is scheduled to be held on the 24 th and 25 th of January, 2004, and all our C.G.R members who wish to participate in the tournament are to enroll their names at the Reception Counter, City Golf Resort, not later than January 19. For further details, please contact phone 640086 , 641342. (Entrance Fees K - 2000)

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Argentine President accuses IMF of asking high price for accord

BUENOS AIRES, 25 Dec— Argentine President Nestor Kirchner said on Tuesday that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) was demanding a high price for its economic aid agreement with Argentina.

In a speech on the newly released Local Development Plan and Social Economy, Kirchner said that the IMF wants to "go for" economic recovery in Argentina.

"We want to generate investments. At the same time we have to fight day by day the decision of international organizations, which go for that recovery when seeing

Argentina recovering fast," said Kirchner.

"I tell the international organizations, we want to be responsible for our obligations but the Argentine recovery has to reach the Argentine people first," he said.

The economic recovery is not "miraculous," so Argentina will not "go from hell to heaven," said the

President.

The IMF decided last week to postpone approval of the agreement with Argentina, and asked the Argentine Government to speed up negotiations with the international holders of its treasury bonds on the defaulted payment of private debts.

The IMF agreed in September to grant a three-year loan package of 12.5 billion US dollars to Argentina, a key step in helping the country recover from the worst economic crisis in its history.

The package will also allow Argentina to restructure 21 billion dollars of debt to the IMF, the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank.

Under the agreement, Argentina is committed to controlling spending at the federal and provincial levels to achieve a budget surplus of 3 per cent of its gross domestic product in 2004.

MNA/Xinhua

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV YANGON STAR VOY NO (343)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV YANGON STAR Voy No (343) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 25-12-03 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.T.T where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

Damaged cargo will be surveyed daily from 8 am to 11.20 am and 12 noon to 4 pm upto Claims Day now declared as the third day after final discharge of cargo from the vessel.

No claims against this vessel will be admitted after the Claims Day.

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY

AGENT FOR: M/S EAGLE CORPORATION

Phone : 256908/378316/376797

China's FM talks with public first time via Internet

BEIJING, 25 Dec— China's Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing answered questions raised by Chinese people through the Internet Tuesday afternoon, saying ordinary people's questions about whether China should adopt more aggressive diplomatic policies often left them deep in thought.

It was the first time that a Chinese Foreign Minister has communicated with ordinary Chinese via the Internet.

"Many of the Internet users' viewpoints are helpful for the government's diplomatic policy making," Li said. "We need help and support from our people."

The 105-minute-long online communication via the Foreign Ministry's website and Xinhua News Agency's website was arranged at the request of the public, ministry sources said.

People asked more than 2,000 questions of the minister, including "Will China participate in the reconstruction of Iraq?" "How are diplomatic policies made?" and "Are there any shortcomings in China's current diplomacy?" Observers say the communication was a sign that ordinary Chinese are increasingly interested in discussing their viewpoints on China's diplomatic policies openly.

"The public will have a more significant influence on China's diplomacy as they are motivated by this fast-changing world," said Pro-

fessor Shi Yinzhong of the School of International Relations of Beijing's People's University.

Shi said different voices and even fierce controversies arose among the public in recent years as they feel directly the pressure from major international events like the September 11 terrorist attacks, the nuclear crisis on the Korean Peninsula and the Iraq War.

"China's surrounding security environment, and its status and role in the international arena will remain among the hottest topics for public discussion for the next few decades," Shi said.

More and more ordinary people in China are expressing their views boldly about diplomatic policies in the mass media, and this has begun to win support from the country's media, especially the popular Internet web sites.

Even the official web site of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has already opened an online diplomatic forum welcoming ordinary people's opinions and perspectives.

MNA/Xinhua

China provides \$100,000 to Philippines for disaster relief

MANILA, 25 Dec— The Philippine Government Wednesday received 5.5 million pesos (100,000 US dollars) from China for disaster relief work in several provinces in central and southern areas hit by floods and landslides recently.

The donation delivery was made during a meeting between the newly-appointed Philippine Foreign Affairs Secretary Delia Domingo Albert and Chinese Ambassador to Manila Wang Chungui.

During the meeting, Wang also conveyed Chinese President Hu Jintao's message to his Philippine counterpart Gloria Macapagal Arroyo which extended sympathy and condolences to the Philippine people and victims.

He also extended Chinese Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing's congratulations for Albert's appointment as the Philippine Foreign Minister.

Arroyo appointed Albert Monday as the first Philippine female Foreign Minister to replace the late Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas Ople, who died of heart attack earlier this month at a hospital in China's Taipei.

MNA/Xinhua

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India, Myanmar, Thailand to take up Trilateral Highway Project

NEW DELHI, 25 Dec— Embarking on a new spell in trilateral relations, India, Myanmar and Thailand on Tuesday decided take up from early next year the first phase of the 700 million dollar 1,360-kilometre-long Trilateral Highway Project linking the three countries.

The first phase of the highway running from Moreh (India), Mae Sot (Thailand) through Bagan in Myanmar includes construction of 78 kilometres of new roads and upgrading about 400 kilometres of single lane roads into two-lane ones, External Affairs Minister Yashwant Sinha told reporters at a joint Press meet here with his counterparts from Thailand Surakiart Sathirathai and from Myanmar Foreign Minister.

Sinha said the first phase is estimated to cost 252 million dollars of which India will contribute about 100 million dollars, Thailand about 90 million dollars and the remaining coming from Myanmar.

The second phase would involve 154 million dollars and the final phase likely to cost 284 million dollars.

A decision on constructing the trilateral highway was taken by the three foreign ministers when they met in Yangon in April last year to discuss transport linkages.

Sinha said the three sides have decided to appoint a group of senior officials to continuously review the progress of the project. This will be at the level of Directors General

(Joint Secretary) and the group's first meeting will be held in Myanmar in January, he said.

The three foreign ministers would meet again in Myanmar in the first half of next year to review the progress of the work, Sinha said.

He said the effort was on to bring political will to bear on administrative issues to ensure that this was translated into intensive trilateral cooperation.

With the implementation of the first trilateral project, the second project for the promotion of a highway from Kanchanaburi in Thailand to Dawei deep seaport in Myanmar and shipping links to seaports in India would be on the fast track, he said.

Both the projects are expected to facilitate movement of goods and peoples across borders and cooperation in other areas.

Sathirathai said "it is a win-win situation for all the three countries and would lead to all round prosperity besides promoting tourism, trade and investments.

MNA/PTI

Researchers warn of higher cold death toll in Britain

LONDON, 25 Dec — British researchers on Tuesday warned of higher death toll from cold around the Christmas season in Britain, describing Britain as one of the worst countries in the world at coping with icy conditions.

"If we see much more of the cold weather of recent days, it is likely that as many as 50,000 people will die unnecessarily over this winter," said Professor Sian Griffiths, president of the Faculty of Public Health said.

She noted that many of the illnesses and deaths resulted from people living in damp and cold housing.

"Although the government has shown commitment to tackling the problem, it has not given sufficient priority to such an important public health issue," she said, urging everyone to look out for vulnerable family, friends and neighbours. Researchers from her institute said the death toll from cold might be higher than those in Finland or Russia, Sky News reported.

An estimated 40,000 more people may die between December and March in Britain than at other times of the year. Most of the victims are elderly. More than half of the deaths are due to heart attacks, strokes and circulatory problems and a third from lung disease, researchers said.

MNA/Xinhua

Bad weather leaves nearly 300 Filipinos dead or missing

MANILA, 25 Dec — The Philippine authorities said Tuesday the number of the dead or missing reached nearly 300 in the series of disasters caused by the recent spate of bad weather across much of the Philippines.

The National Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC) said the death toll of last week's heavy landslides in the central Visayas and the southern Mindanao reached 133 persons as efforts were stepped up to account scores of others who are still missing.

"A total of 133 persons were confirmed dead and numbers of fatalities are expected to increase as recovery operations continue,"

said the NDCC, adding that 109 persons remained missing in the Southern Leyte, Central Visayas, Caraga, and Southern Mindanao.

Philippine Defence Secretary Eduardo Ermita, who is also chairman of the disaster agency, said he was considering calling off search operations and declaring those missing as dead as hopes for more survivors dimmed.

The official number of

injured victims was placed at 53 persons Tuesday, against the erroneously reported 120 injured on Monday in the calamity.

The number of evacuees also rose to 2,816 families or 13,365 individuals, and the initial assessment on the damage incurred by the disaster on infrastructure and agriculture and private properties was placed at 151.45 million pesos (2.73 million US dollars). —MNA/Xinhua

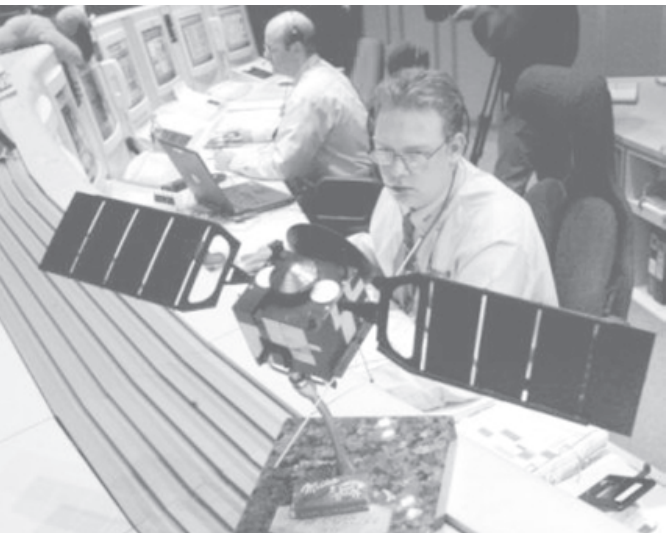
Russia, India discuss strategic partnership

Moscow, 25 Dec— India and Russia on Tuesday exchanged views on counteracting the new global challenges and threats along with a range of key international and regional issues to further advance their strategic partnership.

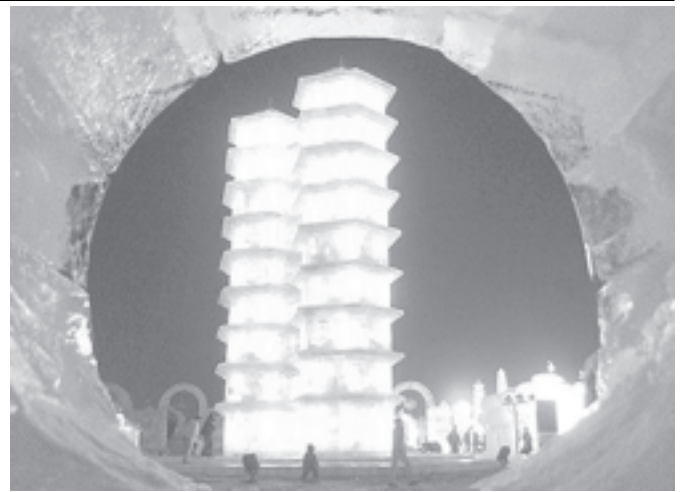
Indian Ambassador Krishnan

Raghunath and First Deputy Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Trubnikov also discussed the current state of Indo-Russian strategic partnership, said a Russian Foreign Ministry release on their meeting here.

MNA/PTI



A tiny model of the Mars Express is seen in the control room of the European Space Agency (ESA) in Darmstadt, central Germany, on early Thursday, 25 Dec, 2003, where specialists wait for the first European Mars probe 'Beagle 2' landing later on Thursday. —INTERNET



Art from ice: Visitors admire the ice lanterns on display during the 30th Harbin Ice Lantern Festival in Harbin, capital of the northeast China's Heilongjiang Province. —INTERNET

Greek officials refuse to take extra measures on flu outbreak

ATHENS, 25 Dec— Greek Health Ministry staff and experts decided Tuesday against additional measures to cope with an outbreak of influenza detected in Greece, saying that the existing mobilization of health services was adequate.

In statements after a meeting, Health Minister Costas Stefanis said that hospitals and health services had already been placed on alert and no further measures were deemed necessary.

Scientists said the Greek outbreak was probably due to the fujian variety of virus that had caused epidemics in the United States and Europe but noted that its clinical image was less virulent than that seen in other countries.

Official confirmation on whether fujian was involved would be given by the Pasteur Institute within a few days, after tests on samples from 28 children admitted to hospital with flu were complete.

Doctors at the Aglaia Kyriakou hospital reported that a further 15 cases of flu were detected during Monday's all-day outpatient clinic but none merited hospitalization.

MNA/Xinhua

WFP cuts food rations in Zimbabwe amid cash crunch

JOHANNESBURG, 25 Dec— The UN food relief agency has slashed rations for more than 2.6 million people in Zimbabwe after global donors failed to contribute sufficient funds, officials said recently.

"It's tragic that these ration cuts have come at a time when people are normally celebrating the festive season but if we're not given food or cash by donors, then we're simply unable to meet their food needs," said Mike Sackett, the World Food Programme (WFP) regional director for

Southern Africa.

WFP officials said Zimbabwe food aid recipients who normally would get a monthly allocation of 10 kilos of maize meal per person were now receiving only five kilos.

They could receive even less in January as the WFP seeks to expand food distri-

bution services to a total of four million Zimbabweans deemed at highest risk, WFP spokesman Mike Huggins said.

"It is going to diminish in January, and again in February and March unless there is a drastic cash injection from donors," Huggins said.

MNA/Reuters

SPORTS

Club chairman says Leeds do not have to sell players

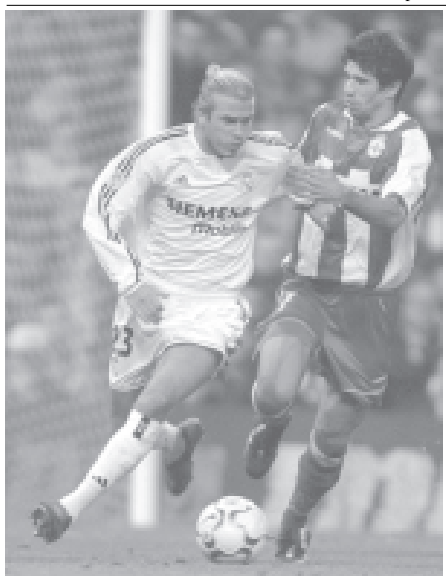
LEEDS (England), 25 Dec—New Leeds United chairman Trevor Birch told disgruntled shareholders on Tuesday that the club fighting for its Premier League and financial future did not have to sell any players in the January transfer window.

Strikers Mark Viduka and Alan Smith have been linked with moves away from the club following the exodus of a number of key players including Harry Kewell and Jonathan Woodgate to cut debts.

"It was good that the meeting finished on a more upbeat note. Everyone was particularly pleased when Trevor Birch said there was no need for Leeds to sell players when the January window opens," said Ray Fell, Leeds Supporters' Club chairman, after the club's annual meeting.

Birch, appointed as chief executive in October, was named as the club's new chairman after John McKenzie stepped down last week to avoid any conflict of interest in negotiations with potential investors.

Leeds's current and previous boards came in for much criticism during the meeting for their running of the club, which has resulted in debts of around 80 million pounds. —MNA/Reuters



Real Madrid will see in 2004 leading the Spanish first division with their bank balance considerably helped thanks to the arrival of England captain David Beckham (L), the central figure in Real's lucrative pre-season tour of the Far East. The club's merchandising sales have since hit record highs both in Spain and overseas. —INTERNET

Bobby Charlton regrets Ferdinand ban

LONDON, 25 Dec—Former Manchester United playing great Bobby Charlton has described Rio Ferdinand's eight-month ban for missing a drugs test as "a tragedy".

United's England defender was given the ban last Friday after missing a routine test at the club's training ground on September 23. United have indicated they will appeal against the verdict. "It is a great tragedy that a young player can have a big chunk of his career taken away," said Charlton, a club director, in an interview with United's television channel MUTV.

MNA/Reuters

Kewell to be back, Owen follows

LONDON, 25 Dec—Harry Kewell should be fit to play for Liverpool against Bolton Wanderers on Friday and Michael Owen is also recovering from his injury for a return, Liverpool manager Gerard Houllier said on Tuesday.

Houllier said Australian international Kewell trained with team well on Tuesday after missing three weeks with an ankle injury.

England striker Owen would be likely to be back against Yeovil Town in the FA Cup third round on Sunday, January 4.

"Harry Kewell trained today without any problem. He is improving every day and I think he will be back on Boxing Day (December 26)," Houllier told reporters.

"Michael needs another fortnight but I hope he can be there against Yeovil.

Owen and Kewell have scored 13 of Liverpool's 23 Premier League goals this season and their absence has left the team adrift of the race title in ninth place.

Owen has been suffering from various leg injuries and has not played since Liverpool's 1-0 UEFA Cup win over Steaua Bucharest on November 27 when he tore a thigh muscle.

England defender Jamie Carragher is also back in training after a broken leg and should be fit in mid-January.

Houllier has been under mounting pressure but the French manager predicted Liverpool having players back would enter next season's Champions League. —MNA/Xinhua

Mboma recalled to Cameroon squad for African Nations Cup

YAOUNDE, 25 Dec — Striker Patrick Mboma's on Wednesday was recalled to the 31-man Cameroon squad for the African Nations Cup finals next month.

The country's football federation named Mboma, who plays in Japan's J-League, in their preliminary roster after he returned to international action in a friendly against

Japan last month.

The 33-year-old is one of eight players who were also part of Cameroon's winning squads at the last two Nations Cup finals in 2000 and 2002.

The squad will be cut down to a final list of 22 before the deadline of January 14.

MNA/Xinhua

Bergkamp doubtful for Arsenal's game against Wolves

LONDON, 25 Dec—Striker Dennis Bergkamp is Arsenal's only injury concern for the London side's Premier League match against bottom club Wolverhampton Wanderers on Friday, manager Arsene Wenger said on Tuesday.

"We have no big injuries," Wenger said. "There is a slight doubt for Dennis Bergkamp with a calf injury but that is basically it."

The in-form Dutchman scored in Arsenal's last home match against Blackburn Rovers and set up Gilberto in the previous game, a 1-1 draw at Leicester.

Wenger said defender Lauren was expected to make a comeback over the busy end-of-year period after being sidelined for six games with a knee injury and also because of a suspension.

Arsenal travel to Southampton for their second match of the holiday season on Monday.

Arsenal, the only team unbeaten in the league this season, are joint second in the

table with big-spending Chelsea, one point behind leaders Manchester United.

Wenger said he was pleased with the team's good start, which has seen them go through to the next phase of the Champions League, particularly after spending very little on strengthening the squad in the English summer.

"At the start of the season, we were not calculated as one of the teams that could fight for the championship," Wenger told reporters.

"We've been remarkably consistent, we've turned it round in the Champions League.

"I knew we could be in there, but you never know the mental impact of Chelsea buying and Manchester United buying, and us not buying," he said.

Chelsea spent 111 million pounds on new players in the off-season transfer window after Russian billionaire Roman Abramovich bought the club in July. United spent around 25 million. —MNA/Reuters



Manchester United will still be able to shine even if an appeal of star defender Rio Ferdinand's eight-month ban for missing a drugs test fails, the squad's teenaged winger Cristiano Ronaldo (L) has said. —INTERNET

Wenger has no plan to buy any new players

LONDON, 25 Dec — Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger has no plan to buy any new players in the January transfer window, local reports said Wednesday.

Wenger told a news conference on Tuesday he could see no immediate need to bolster an Arsenal squad already well placed in joint second with Chelsea, a point behind leaders Manchester United.

Arsenal, double winners in 2001-02, added only German keeper Jens Lehmann to their squad in the close season while Chelsea owner Roman Abramovich splashed out over 100 million pounds (176.5 million US dollars) on fresh talent from around Europe. "At the moment, I'm not in the market. I don't see any reasonable target," Wenger said. —MNA/Xinhua

Buffon, Nesta, Maldini named in "L'Equipe's" ideal team

ROME, 25 Dec — Juventus goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon and AC Milan defenders Alessandro Nesta and Paolo Maldini made it into this year's ideal team selected by the prestigious French sports daily L'Equipe, the local media reported Wednesday.

Juventus defender Lilian Thuram and his midfield teammate Pavel Nedved, recently named European footballer of the year by France Football, were also voted into the team dominated by Real Madrid.

MNA/Xinhua

Everton freezes contract talks to season end

LONDON, 25 Dec—English Premiership side Everton have decided to freeze negotiations with all its players including shelving new contract talks with teenage star Wayne Rooney, who was targeted by Chelsea, until the end of the season.

It had been expected that Everton would open negotiations to improve and extend Rooney's contract when he passed his 18th birthday in November, but that did not happen. Now the cash-strapped club will suspend talks with any of its players until the summer.

A statement on the club's web site says that Everton have made the decision to wait until the summer to leave boss David Moyes enough time to take "fully take stock of all his options".

Chief executive Michael Dunford revealed: "All contract talks will take place in the summer. The club is unlikely to be entering into any talks before then."

Rooney still has two and a half years of his current deal left and has consistently expressed his desire to continue to play for his boyhood heroes.

Contract talks are also expected to begin with Tomasz Radzinski in the summer.

The Canadian international has 18 months remaining on his current deal, while injury-jinxed Alessandro Pistone is in the same situation and wants to continue his stay at the club. —MNA/Xinhua



Ireland winger Damien Duff is hopeful of making his Chelsea comeback within three weeks following the dislocated shoulder he suffered in the win over Fulham last weekend. —INTERNET

MRTV-3



26-12-2003 (Friday) (Programme Schedule) Morning Transmission (9:00 - 10:00)

- 9:00 Signature Tune Greeting
- 9:02 Song of Myanmar Beauty & Scenic Sights "Myanmar Panorama & Myanmar Sentiment"
- 9:06 Union of Myanmar (I)
- 9:10 **Headline News**
- 9:12 Easily Cooked Tasty Dishes (Prawn Salad)
- 9:15 **National News**
- 9:20 Unique Biodiversity of Indawgyi Lake (III)
- 9:25 Scenic Beauty of Tiddim & Cultural Dance
- 9:30 **National News**
- 9:35 Marvel of a Pagoda with uncountable Buddha Images
- 9:40 Myanmar Modern Song "Feel like an earthquake"
- 9:45 **National News**
- 9:50 Biological Expedition to Hponkan Razi Region (IV)
- 9:58 Song of Myanmar Beauty & Scenic Sights "Come and See Myanmar"

26-12-2003 (Friday) Regular Programmes for Viewers from Abroad Evening Transmission (15:30 - 17:30)

- 15:30 Signature Tune Greeting
- 15:32 Song of Myanmar Beauty & Scenic Sights "Mingalabar"
- 15:36 Union of Myanmar (I)
- 15:40 **Headline News**
- 15:42 Easily Cooked Tasty Dishes (Prawn Salad)
- 15:45 **National News**
- 15:50 Unique Biodiversity of Indawgyi Lake (III)
- 15:55 Scenic Beauty of Tiddim & Cultural Dance
- 16:00 **National News**
- 16:05 Marvel of a Pagoda with uncountable Buddha Images
- 16:10 Myanmar Modern

- Song "Feel like an earthquake"
- 16:12 Mazin Industry's Wood Products
- 16:15 **National News**
- 16:20 Biological Expedition to Hponkan Razi Region (IV)
- 16:25 Song of Myanmar Beauty & Scenic Sights "Myanmar Panorama & Myanmar Sentiment"
- 16:30 **National News**
- 16:35 Lobsters Trading
- 16:40 Myanmar Cuisine "Steamed Fish"
- 16:45 **National News**
- 16:50 Livistona Speciosa (Taung Htan)
- 16:55 A Romantic Duet
- 17:00 **National News**
- 17:05 Medicinal Plants at Popa Mountain Park
- 17:10 Song "Bagan the wonder land"
- 17:12 Myanma Eretes Sticticus
- 17:15 **National News**
- 17:20 Meditation Centre
- 17:25 Song of Myanmar Beauty & Scenic Sights "Come and See Myanmar"
- Evening Transmission (19:30 - 23:30)**
- 19:30 Signature Tune Greeting
- 19:32 Song of Myanmar Beauty & Scenic Sights "Myanmar Panorama & Myanmar Sentiment"
- 19:36 Mandalay, A Close Distance
- 19:40 **Headline News**
- 19:42 Easily Cooked Tasty Dishes (Fry bitter gourd with pounded dried Prawn powder)
- 19:45 **National News**
- 19:50 Myanmar Royal Regalia (II)
- 19:55 The Unforgettable Bonfire Dance
- 19:57 Let's mail the Lovely Cards
- 20:00 **National News**
- 20:05 Unique Biodiversity of Indawgyi Lake (II)
- 20:10 Song "Come visit Myanmar"
- 20:15 **National News**
- 20:20 Biological Expedition to Hponkan Razi Region (IV)
- 20:25 Myanmar Modern Song "Magnificent Darka Bridge"
- 20:30 **National News**
- 20:35 Daungumaw Mud-crab Breeding
- 20:40 Myanmar Cuisine "Steamed Eggplant with Tomato Sauce"

- 20:45 **National News**
- 20:50 Let us preserve the Watershed Areas
- 20:55 Auspicious Glory
- 21:00 **National News**
- 21:05 Myanmar Crocodiles
- 21:10 Song "Glory of Myanmar"
- 21:15 **National News**
- 21:20 Leisurely Cruise along the Coast (Yangon to Mawla-myaing)
- 21:25 Song of Myanmar Beauty & Scenic Sights "Mingalabar"
- 21:35 Union of Myanmar (I)
- 21:40 **Headline News**
- 21:42 Easily Cooked Tasty Dishes (Prawn Salad)
- 21:45 **National News**
- 21:50 Unique Biodiversity of Indawgyi Lake (III)
- 21:55 Scenic Beauty of Tiddim & Cultural Dance
- 22:00 **National News**
- 22:05 Marvel of a Pagoda with uncountable Buddha Images
- 22:10 Myanmar Modern Song "Feel like an earthquake"
- 22:12 Mazin Industry's Wood Products
- 22:15 **National News**
- 22:20 Biological Expedition to Hponkan Razi Region (IV)
- 22:25 Song on Screen "Hmoneshwee"
- 22:30 **National News**
- 22:35 Lobsters Trading
- 22:40 Myanmar Cuisine "Steamed Fish"
- 22:45 **National News**
- 22:50 Livistona Speciosa (Taung Htan)
- 22:55 A Romantic Duet
- 23:00 **National News**
- 23:05 Medicinal Plants at Popa Mountain Park
- 23:10 Song "Bagan the wonder land"
- 23:12 Myanma Eretes Sticticus
- 23:15 **National News**
- 23:20 Meditation Centre
- 23:25 Song of Myanmar Beauty & Scenic Sights "Come and See Myanmar"

26-12-2003 (Friday) & 27-12-2003 (Saturday) Evening & Morning Transmission (23:30 - 1:30)

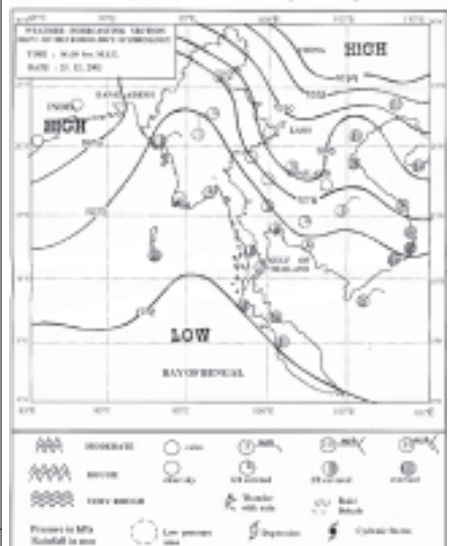
- 23:30 Signature Tune Greeting
- 23:32 Song of Myanmar Beauty & Scenic Sights "Mingalabar"

- 23:36 Union of Myanmar (I)
- 23:40 **Headline News**
- 23:42 Easily Cooked Tasty Dishes (Prawn Salad)
- 23:45 **National News**
- 23:50 Unique Biodiversity of Indawgyi Lake (III)
- 23:55 Scenic Beauty of Tiddim & Cultural Dance
- 24:00 **National News**
- 00:05 Marvel of a Pagoda with uncountable Buddha Images
- 00:10 Myanmar Modern Song "Feel like an earthquake"
- 00:12 Mazin Industry's Wood Products
- 00:15 **National News**
- 00:20 Biological Expedition to Hponkan Razi Region (IV)
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- 01:05 Medicinal Plants at Popa Mountain Park
- 01:10 Song "Bagan the wonder land"
- 01:12 Myanma Eretes Sticticus
- 01:15 **National News**
- 01:20 Meditation Centre
- 01:25 Song of Myanmar Beauty & Scenic Sights "Come and See Myanmar"
- 27-12-2003 (Saturday)
Morning Transmission
(03:30 - 07:30)**
- 03:30 Signature Tune Greeting
- 03:32 Song of Myanmar Beauty & Scenic Sights "Myanmar Panorama & Myanmar Sentiment"
- 03:36 Mandalay, A Close Distance
- 03:40 **Headline News**
- 03:42 Easily Cooked Tasty Dishes (Fry bitter gourd with pounded dried Prawn powder)
- 03:45 **National News**
- 03:50 Myanmar Royal Regalia (II)
- 03:55 The Unforgettable Bonfire Dance
- 03:57 Let's mail the

- Lovely Cards
- 04:00 **National News**
- 04:05 Unique Biodiversity of Indawgyi Lake (II)
- 04:10 Song "Come visit Myanmar"
- 04:15 **National News**
- 04:20 Biological Expedition to Hponkan Razi Region (IV)
- 04:25 Myanmar Modern Song "Magnificent Darka Bridge"
- 04:30 **National News**
- 04:35 Daungumaw Mud-crab Breeding
- 04:40 Myanmar Cuisine "Steamed Eggplant with Tomato Sauce"
- 04:45 **National News**
- 04:50 Let us preserve the Watershed Areas
- 04:55 Auspicious Glory
- 05:00 **National News**
- 05:05 Myanmar Crocodiles
- 05:10 Song "Glory of Myanmar"
- 05:15 **National News**
- 05:20 Leisurely Cruise Along the Coast (Yangon to Mawla-myaing)
- 05:25 Song of Myanmar Beauty & Scenic Sights "Mingalabar"
- 05:35 Union of Myanmar (I)
- 05:40 **Headline News**
- 05:42 Easily Cooked Tasty Dishes (Prawn Salad)
- 05:45 **National News**
- 05:50 Unique Biodiversity

- of Indawgyi Lake (III)
- 05:55 Scenic Beauty of Tiddim & Cultural Dance
- 06:00 **National News**
- 06:05 Marvel of a Pagoda with uncountable Buddha Images
- 06:10 Myanmar Modern Song "Feel like an earthquake"
- 06:12 Mazin Industry's Wood Products
- 06:15 **National News**
- 06:20 Biological Expedition to Hponkan Razi Region (IV)
- 06:25 Song on Screen "Hmoneshwee"
- 06:30 **National News**
- 06:35 Lobsters Trading
- 06:40 Myanmar Cuisine "Steamed Fish"
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- 06:50 Livistona Speciosa (Taung Htan)
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- 07:00 **National News**
- 07:05 Medicinal Plants at Popa Mountain Park
- 07:10 Song "Bagan the wonder land"
- 07:12 Myanma Eretes Sticticus
- 07:15 **National News**
- 07:20 Meditation Centre
- 07:25 Song of Myanmar Beauty & Scenic Sights "Come and See Myanmar"

Weather Map of Myanmar and Neighbouring Areas



WEATHER

Thursday, 25 December, 2003

Summary of observations recorded at 09:30 hours MST: During the past 24 hours, weather has been generally fair in the whole country.

Night temperatures were (3°C) to (4°C) below normal in Rakine and Eastern Shan States, (3°C) to (4°C) above normal in Chin State, Sagaing, Mandalay, Magway and Bago Divisions and about normal in the remaining areas.

Maximum temperature on 24-12-2003 was 33.0°C (91°F). Minimum temperature on 25-12-2003 was 16.0°C (61°F). Relative humidity at 09:30 hrs MST on 25-12-2003 was 76%. Total sunshine hours on 24-12-2003 was (8.6) hours approx.

Rainfall on 25-12-2003 was nil at Yangon Airport, Kaba-Aye and central Yangon. Total rainfall since 1-1-2003 was 2211 mm (87.05 inches) at Yangon Airport, 2315 mm (91.14 inches) at Kaba-Aye and 2394 mm (94.25 inches) at central Yangon.

Maximum wind speed at Yangon (Kaba-Aye) was 14 mph from East at (08:40) hours MST on 25-12-2003.

Bay inference: Weather is partly cloudy in the south Bay and generally fair elsewhere in the Bay of Bengal.

Forecast valid until evening of 26-12-2003: Weather will be generally fair in the whole country.

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

Outlook for subsequent two days: Generally fair weather in the whole country.

Forecast for Yangon and neighbouring area for 26-12-2003: Fair weather.

Forecast for Mandalay and neighbouring area for 26-12-2003: Fine weather.



Friday, December 26

View today:

- 7:00 am 1. Recitation of Parittas by Missionary Sayadaw U Ottamathara.
- 7:25 am 2. To be healthy exercise
- 7:30 am 3. Morning news
- 7:40 am 4. Nice and sweet song
- 7:55 am 5. လှပစရာပုံပြင်စိတ်ပျော်ရွှင်
- 8:10 am 6. အတုပြိုင်ပွဲ
- 8:15 am 7. The mirror images of the musical oldies
- 8:25 am 8. ရုတ်တရက်သတိပေး
- 8:30 am 9. International news
- 8:45 am 10. English for Everyday

- Use 4:00 pm 1. Martial song
- 4:15 pm 2. Song to uphold ` National Spirit
- 4:30 pm 3. Practice in Reading
- 4:45 pm 4. Musical programme
- 5:00 pm 5. အသံသံတူကွဲလွန်သော ရုပ်ပြင်သံကြားသံစုံစာတတ်သရုပ် (ရုပ်စားအသံပြု) (ရုပ်စား)
- 5:15 pm 6. Musical Programme
- 5:30 pm 7. လက်ဆွဲကမ်းစားဂီတစား
- 5:40 pm 8. Song of National Races
- 5:55 pm 9. ရည်ရွယ်ချက်မရှိဘဲအားတစားအသံပြု
- 6:05 pm 10. Song of yesteryears
- 6:15 pm 11. Discovery
- 6:30 pm 12. Evening news

- 7:00 pm 13. Weather report
- 7:05 pm 14. Milo success in soccer
- 7:10 pm 15. စတုတ္ထအကြိမ်တိုင်းရင်းဆေးနှင့် ဆေးပစ္စည်းပြပွဲ (အစိုးရ-၄)
- 7:25 pm 16. Musical programme
- 7:40 pm 17. အချုပ်အခြာအာဏာခွင့်ရည်ကြာ မိုင်မေဗျာ ဦးရွှေ "ကျေးလက်လမ်းပန်းကွန်ရက် ဖက်ရှပ်ပြိုင်ပွဲဝင်" (အစိုးရ-၂)
- 8:00 pm 18. "News"
- 19. International news
- 20. Weather report
- 21. Myanmar video
- Feature: "စာ" (အစိုးရ-၁) ကျော်သူ၊ နေထိုင်လမ်း၊ ဓမ္မသင်္ဂါး (ဒါရိုက်တာ-ခင်စောမျိုး)
- 22. The next day's programme



Tune in today:

- Friday, December 26**
- 8:30 am Brief news
- 8:35 am Music
- 8:40 am Perspectives
- 8:45 am Music
- 8:50 am National news/Slogan
- 9:00 am Music
- 9:05 am International news
- 9:10 am Music
- 1:30 pm News/Slogan
- 1:40 pm Lunch time music - Winter Tale (David Essex)
- Frosty the snow man (Jackson 5)
- 9:00 pm 56th Anniversary Independence Day Commemorative Talk "Morality of Myanmar"
- 9:15 pm Article/Music
- 9:25 pm Music at your request - White X'mas (Boney M)
- 9:45 pm News/Slogan
- 10:00 pm PEL

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



Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt inspects construction of Water Treatment Plant in Thanlyetsoon.—MNA

Prime Minister inspects Water Treatment Plant Project, Assembly Hall Construction Project

YANGON, 25 Dec — Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt, accompanied by officials of the State Peace and Development Council Office, arrived at the Water Treatment Plant Construction Project being undertaken by Yangon City Development Committee in Thanlyetsoon, Botahtaung Township, this afternoon. They were welcomed there by Chairman of Yangon Division Peace and Development Council Commander of Yangon Command Maj-Gen Myint Swe, ministers, the mayor of Yangon and departmental heads.

Head of YCDC Assessor Department U Tun Than Tun reported on the layout of the plant, construction of sections of the plant phase-wise, civil engineering and electrical tasks

and collection of construction materials with the use of audio-visual aids. Concrete expert U Toe Hlaing also reported on quality control tasks. Mayor Brig-Gen Aung Thein Lin gave a supplementary report.

The Prime Minister gave necessary instructions and inspected construction tasks round the project site.

Later in the afternoon, the General and party proceeded to the Assembly Hall Construction Project on Mindhamma Road, Mayangon Township. There the Yangon mayor and officials welcomed the General and party, conducted them round the project site. Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt gave necessary instructions to the officials. —MNA

Meeting on implementation of ASEAN economic agreements held

YANGON, 25 Dec — The first coordination meeting of the work committee for implementation of ASEAN economic agreements was held at the Ministry of Commerce on Strand Road here this afternoon with an opening address by Chairman of the work committee Minister for Commerce Brig-Gen Pyi Sone.

It was also attended by

deputy chairman of the work committee Minister for Finance and Revenue Maj-Gen Hla Tun, member of the work committee Minister for Foreign Affairs U Win Aung, the deputy ministers and officials.

At the meeting, those present discussed matters on ASEAN-China, ASEAN-Japan and ASEAN-India cooperation, establishment of sub-committees, cooperation in investment, industries, agriculture, fisheries, forestry, tourism, transport, communication and e-ASEAN and energy sectors.

The meeting came to an end with the concluding remarks by the work committee chairman. —MNA

Cornerstones laid for construction of Buddha Adhivasa Gandakuti Kyaungsaung and Atisukhavakha Sankyaung (Sanusaung) in Dagon Myothit (East) Township

YANGON, 25 Dec — The cornerstone-laying ceremony for construction of Buddha Adhivasa Gandakuti Kyaungsaung and Atisukhavakha Sankyaung (Sanusaung) of Thiri Letkhanayama Dagon Sasana Yeiktha Alekyaungsaung in Ward 4, Dagon Myothit (East) Township, Yangon East District, took place at the Yeiktha this morning, attended by Secretary-1 of the State Peace and Development Council Lt-Gen Soe Win.

The ceremony was graced by the presence of State Ovacariya Sayadaws, member Sayadaws of the State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee and members of the Sangha.

Also present on the occasion were Chairman of Yangon Division Peace and Development Council Commander of Yangon Command Maj-Gen Myint Swe, Minister for Religious Affairs Brig-Gen Thura Myint Maung, Chairman of Yangon

City Development Committee Mayor Brig-Gen Aung Thein Lin, officials of the State Peace and Development Council Office, departmental heads, wellwishers and guests.

Thiri Lekhanayama Dagon Sasana Yeiktha Buddha Sasana Hitakayi Committee Patron Lt-Col Hla Moe (Retd) (Naing Ngan Gonyi Class I) and Vice-Chairman U Aung Thein reported to the Secretary-1 on arrangements for construction of the buildings in line

with Myanmar traditional style.

Next, the cornerstone-laying ceremony followed. The Secretary-1 laid the silver casket and cornerstone. The commander, the ministers, officials and wellwishers put cornerstones at designated places.

The Secretary-1 laid the stone inscription and performed rituals of golden and silver showers.

The Secretary-1 presented offertories to Vice-Chairman of the State Sangha

Maha Nayaka Committee Abhidha Maha Rattha Guru Aungmyebonsan Monastery Sayadaw Bhaddanta Panñindabhivamsa. Afterwards, offertories were presented to the Sayadaws.

Wellwishers presented over K 60 million for the construction including K 10 million donated by U Ba Khaing-Daw Tin Hlaing and family (Zalat Wah Biscuit); K 8.1 million by U Shein Myint-Daw Khin Than Myint (Gon Shein Myint) (See page 9)

Delivery room of MMCWA (Branch) of MPF opened

YANGON, 25 Dec — The delivery room of the Myanmar Maternal and Child Welfare Association (Branch) of the Myanmar Police Force was opened this morning at the Kyeikkasan police quarters on Saya San Road in Yankin Township. MMCWA President Dr Daw Khin Win Shwe formally opened the room.

At the opening ceremony, MMCWA Vice-President Dr Daw Tin Lin Myint accepted the membership applications of the MPF presented by the wife of the deputy-director general of the MPF.

Afterwards, wellwishers made cash donation for the delivery room through the officials. —MNA



Dr Daw Khin Win Shwe unveils the signboard of the delivery room of Myanmar Police Force Maternal and Child Welfare Association.—MNA