Established 1914

Volume XVI, Number 36
5th Waning of Kason 1370 ME
Saturday, 24 May, 2008

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NAY PYI TAW, 23 May—Chairman of the State Peace and Development Council of the Union of Myanmar Senior General Than Shwe received UN Secretary-General Mr Ban Ki-moon and party at Bayintnaung Yeiktha, here, at 10:30 am today.

Also present on the occasion were Vice-Chairman of the State Peace and Development Council Vice-Senior General Maung Aye, Member of the SPDC General Thura Shwe Mann, Secretary-1 of the State Peace and Development Council Lt-Gen Thih Ta Thura Tin Aung Myint Oo, Minister for Foreign Affairs U Nyan Win, Deputy Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Brig-Gen Kyaw Myint, Myanmar Permanent Representative to UN Ambassador U Kyaw Tint Swe and Director-General of the Protocol Department U Kyaw Kyaw.

The UN Secretary-General was accompanied by Mr Vijay Nambiar, Senior Adviser, Mr John Holmes, Senior Adviser, Mr Michael Meyer, Director for Communications of EOSG, Mr Bishow Parajuli, Resident Coordinator, Yangon and Mr Daniel B Baker, Representative of the United Nations Population Fund.

Senior General Than Shwe welcomes UN Secretary-General Mr Ban Ki-moon at Bayintnaung Yeiktha in Nay Pyi Taw. — MNA

Senior General Than Shwe receives UN Secretary-General Mr Ban Ki-moon and party at Bayintnaung Yeiktha in Nay Pyi Taw. — MNA

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Four political objectives
- Stability of the State, community peace and tranquility, 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

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

* Strive for sooner completion of rehabilitation tasks

Relief, rehabilitation and long-term disaster preparedness tasks are being carried out in storm-hit regions by the people, social organizations and departments with the contributions of local and international organizations under the leadership of the government.

In that regard, priority is being given to fulfillment of the food, clothing and shelter needs of storm victims and health care services. In the meantime, the Government, the people and the Tatmadaw are fully engaged in reconstruction of the victims’ houses and regenerating their livelihoods.

As the second and third phase rehabilitation tasks could take time it calls for technology and assistance of the international community. A co-ordination machinery led by ASEAN is to be formed so as to ensure international assistance and cooperation in rehabilitation of the victims.

Furthermore, a ASEAN-UN conference to pledge the volume of relief supplies donated by international donors will be held on 25 May in Myanmar. This will contribute a lot to the relief and rehabilitation tasks. The contributions of the State, local and international donors have been the new strengths of storm victims and with them this will be able to overcome difficulties encountered.

As the State, the people and the Tatmadaw are engaged in rehabilitation tasks in concert we firmly believe that the drive for rehabilitation of the storm victims will be materialized soonest.

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**Lt-Gen Myint Swe attends cash and kind donation ceremony for storm victims**

YANGON, 23 May — Myanmar Economic Corporation and its related companies at home and from abroad donated cash and kind to the people in storm-hit regions, at the behest of MEC in Yangon Township yesterday afternoon.

It was attended by Lt-Gen Myint Swe of the Ministry of Defence, Chairman of Yangon Division Peace and Development Council Commander of Yangon Command Maj-Gen Hla Hla Aung (Yangon Wing), Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Maj-Gen Maung Maung Swe and Maj-Gen Htin Aung Kyaw of the Ministry of Defence.

Minister Maj-Gen Maung Maung Swe accepted K 500 million and plastic sheets, disposable syringes worth K 121,265,900 donated by MEC, US$ 250,000 by Taizyazhpromexport, US$ 125,000 by Danicr Inc, US$ 100,000 each by Italian-Thai Corporation and Daewoo International Corporation, US$100,000 by SK- network Corporation of Myanmar, Sejong Corporation, US$ 10,000 by Hyundai Singapore Pte Ltd, 5 million yen by Kawasaki Plant, 20,000 euro by Sinaran Corporation, K 15 million by Dagon Win Win Co Ltd, K 10 million by Ngwe Hsin Co Ltd, K 7.5 million by Grade Nine Co Ltd, K 5 million by Pin Pin Co, K 3 million each by Myanmar Tractors Ltd, YNCC Yunnan and KY Kyaw Kyaw Co Ltd, K 2 million each by Zurt Co Ltd, Moon Ray Co Ltd and VSW Asia Co Ltd, K 1.5 million by Superium Interprize Co, K 1.2 million by JFE Co (Yangon Branch), K 1.129.000 by Marubeni Co Ltd (Yangon Branch), K 1.1 million by Sojitz Co (Yangon Branch), K 1 million each by Polycry Co, GMT Co, Golden Star Co, Thanlwin Co, U Sein Aye Co, PEG Co, Myanmar Kaido Co, Diethelm Co Ltd and MCM, K 900,000 each by Chem Tech Co and IE Petroleum Myanmar.

The supplies weighing 128.52 tons include foodstuff, clothes, CI-sheets and construction materials, drinking water bottles, generators and water purifying machines donated by international and local wellwishers.

The supplies were loaded onto the ships today for delivery of the supplies to the storm-affected areas in Ayeyawady Division.

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**List of donations from abroad and at home, relief goods that have been supplied to storm-hit regions**

YANGON, 23 May — The following is the list of donations from abroad, local donations and relief goods that have been supplied to the storm-hit regions from 21 to 22 May.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr.</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Total tonnage</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Foodstuff</td>
<td>11.258</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Consumer products</td>
<td>110.56</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Construction materials</td>
<td>91.81</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Medicines</td>
<td>33.318</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>248.97</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**List of donations from international donors**

(from 21-5-2008 to 22-5-2008)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr.</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Total tonnage</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Foodstuff</td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Consumer products</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Construction materials</td>
<td>19.04</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Medicines</td>
<td>16.82</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>234.46</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**List of distribution of relief supplies to storm victims**

(from 21-5-2008 to 22-5-2008)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr.</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Foodstuff</th>
<th>Consumer materials</th>
<th>Construction tonnage</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Pyapon*</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mawlamyine*</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Bogale**</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>65.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Labutta**</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>25.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Dlaye**</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Maung**</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Mayang**</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>35.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Wako*</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Kybandah</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Napin</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>40.7</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>244.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Yangon Division**

18 | 30 | 40 | 88 |

**Remarks:**

* Rear camps.
** Middle camps.
*** Forward camps.

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* 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
Venezuela to build 50,000 houses for poor families

CARACAS, 23 May—The Venezuelan Government announced Wednesday that it is to build 50,000 houses for poor families in six urban complexes, Housing Minister Edith Gomez said. The houses will be built by the Housing Ministry in populous sectors in the capital like Lecuna Avenue, Montalban, La Rinconada, and on the outskirts like Filas de Mariche, Guarenas and Vargas.

An additional 5,000 apartments are under construction in Guatire in the state of Miranda as part of a project to build 18,000 apartments. Gomez said the apartments are being built under a government programme called “Mision Villanueva”, in honour of the deceased Venezuelan architect Raul Villanueva. —MNA/Xinhua

Palestinian truck bomber attacks key border crossing

GAZA, 23 May—An explosives-laden truck driven by a Palestinian suicide bomber blew up on Thursday near an Israeli border crossing with the Gaza Strip but only the attacker was killed in a blast heard 30 kilometres (18 miles) away.

Israeli media reports said soldiers fired at the vehicle as it approached Erez Crossing. An Army spokeswoman said it had exploded on the Palestinian side of the frontier, blowing out windows in nearby buildings. The spokeswoman said two other men involved in the attack were killed when two missiles launched from an Israeli helicopter totally destroyed their getaway vehicle. There were no Israeli casualties, she said. —MNA/Reuters

Sarkozy under pressure as French protests escalate

PARIS, 23 May—French President Nicolas Sarkozy will come under renewed pressure on Thursday when trade unions hold a nationwide strike against his pension reform plans.

Workers in transport and various other sectors will take to the streets in cities across France in protest at the plan to increase to 41 from 40 the number of years people must work before being entitled to a state pension.

Port workers have also called for a walkout to coincide with the one-day protest, continuing disruptions to shipping after some fishermen pledged to persist with action over rising diesel costs despite government aid plans unveiled on Wednesday. —MNA/Reuters

Brown faces political test in northern England

LONDON, 23 May—Britain’s opposition Conservative Party looks poised on Thursday to win, for the first time in 26 years, a mid-term parliamentary seat, a victory that would add to Prime Minister Gordon Brown’s woes.

Although only a single seat in the House of Commons is at stake, the by-election in the northern town of Crewe—triggered by the death of the previous incumbent—is being closely watched as a sign of Brown’s diminishing political fortunes since taking over from Tony Blair a year ago. Brown’s popularity ratings in polls have collapsed since last Autumn after he backed away from calling an early election, leading some in his party to question whether he is the best man to lead it into the next general election due by 2010.

Olmert proposes naval blockade on Iran

JERUSALEM, 23 May—Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert proposed in talks with a US congressional leader that a naval blockade be imposed on Iran to try to curb its nuclear programme, an Israeli newspaper reported on Wednesday.

The Haaretz daily quoted Olmert as telling Nancy Pelosi that “the present economic sanctions have exhausted themselves” and the international community needed to take more drastic steps to stop Iran’s efforts to obtain nuclear weapons.

A spokesman for Olmert declined to comment on the Israeli leader’s talks on Monday with Pelosi, the speaker of the US House of Representatives, in Jerusalem. —MNA/Reuters

Bootleg liquor kills 150 in southern India

BANGALORE (India), 23 May—At least 150 people have died in southern India after drinking bootleg liquor laced with chemicals, and another 88 are seriously ill, police said on Wednesday.

Police said mostly labourers in the southern states of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu bought the liquor, sold in plastic pouches from illegal shops, at the weekend and immediately fell sick. In rural India, poor villagers often buy cheap alcohol, also known as “country liquor”, as they cannot afford to buy bottles from state-approved shops. —MNA/Reuters
Ban hails political accord reached by Lebanese parties

UNITED NATIONS, 22 May — UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon welcomed on Wednesday an agreement reached earlier in the day in Doha, Qatar, by Lebanon’s political leaders.

“He hopes this agreement will be the prelude to a lasting period of national reconciliation, political stability, peace and progress for all of Lebanon’s people and for the future of their country, as well as a stepping stone toward the full implementation of the provisions of the Taif Agreement and the relevant Security Council resolutions,” said a statement issued by Ban’s spokesperson.

Ban also expressed his appreciation for the “crucial efforts of the government of Qatar and the League of Arab States in facilitating this agreement”.

The agreement followed recent deadly clashes between supporters of the Lebanese Government and anti-government militias in the capital, Beirut. — MNA/Reuters

Possible US vice presidential picks to see McCain

IRVINE (California), 22 May — Republican presidential candidate John McCain will spend time this weekend with three politicians who have been mentioned prominently by Republicans as possible vice presidential running mates.

A McCain campaign official said on Wednesday that McCain would host former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney, Florida Governor Charlie Crist and Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal at his ranch in Sedona, Arizona. A total of 10 couples were invited.

“It’s a purely social weekend with friends, something he obviously likes to do from time to time,” said the official.

McCain has clinched the Republican presidential nomination and is anticipating a general election campaign against Barack Obama.

Romney, 61, who lost the Republican nomination battle to McCain, has made clear he would seriously consider a vice presidential offer.

Crist, 51, who took office last year, has been more coy. Picking him could help McCain in the battleground state of Florida. Jindal, 36, who was elected last October as the first Indian-American US governor, has said he likes his current job.

Obama eyes general election with Iowa celebration

DES MOINES (Iowa), 22 May — Democrat Barack Obama came close to declaring victory in the race for his party’s presidential nomination on Tuesday, looking to November while thanking the state that launched his underdog White House bid.

Obama sounded like a winner without actually claiming the prize in his battle against Hillary Clinton to run against Republican John McCain in the November 4 general election. Contests in Oregon and Kentucky handed him a majority of the delegates elected in state-by-state nominating contests.

“We have returned to Iowa with a majority of delegates elected by the American people,” Obama said, lauding the state that gave him a win in the first nominating contest in January and pushed his candidacy forward at a time when Clinton was the clear front-runner.

MNA/Reuters

US helicopter strike kills eight Iraqi civilians

BAJJI (Iraq), 22 May — A US military helicopter airstrike on a car on Wednesday night killed eight civilians in Baji, north of Baghdad, two police officials said on Thursday.

Baji’s police chief, Colonel Mudhir al-Qaisi, told Reuters the civilians were shepherds who were in a farming area in the town when the strike took place.

“This is a criminal act. It will make the relations between Iraqi citizens and the US forces tense. This will negatively affect security improvements,” said al-Qaisi.

MNA/Reuters

Blast kills two ISAF soldiers, one Afghan civilian

KABUL, 22 May — An explosion in the eastern Afghan province of Ghazni killed two soldiers from the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and one civilian interpreter, ISAF said in a statement on Wednesday.

Taliban militants regularly use roadside bombs to target foreign and Afghan soldiers in a bid to topple the US-backed government and force withdrawal of the nearly 60,000 foreign troops stationed in the country.

Tuesday’s incident happened while the soldiers were on patrol.

MNA/Reuters

Somali gunmen kidnap two Italian aid workers

MOGADISHU, 22 May — Somali gunmen kidnapped two Italian aid workers on Wednesday in the latest abduction of foreigners in the Horn of Africa country, officials and residents said.

One official said the abducted Italians were a man and a woman. One resident said a Somali aid worker was also seized in the town of Awdile south of the capital Mogadishu.

Residents said gunmen in three vehicles stormed the offices of an aid group called CNIS, which carries out agricultural projects in the area.

MNA/Reuters
Turkey's mediation in the indirect peace talks with Israeli and Syrian counterparts is in Turkey between the two nations, adding that indirect peace talks between the two countries, and that is an important component in the strategic and cooperative partnership.

“China advocates enhancing international cooperation on energy resources to safeguard energy security,” he said. On oil pipeline cooperation, Razov said the Eastern Siberia-Pacific Ocean Pipeline was under construction according to plan. Nuclear energy cooperation, Li said, was a core area for cooperation and had been fruitful in the past.

He said the first phase of the Tianwan nuclear power plan between China and Russia has been constructed smoothly, and the preparatory work for the second phase is under way with some agreements being signed.

Xinhua
Indonesia, Hungary seek to boost trade volume

JAKARTA, 22 May — Indonesia and Hungary agreed Wednesday to strengthen cooperation in bilateral trade which saw a significant decline over the last five years.

“The economic ties between the two countries are doing fine but we agree to do more because we both enjoy expanding economy,” Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono said after a meeting with his Hungarian counterpart Laszlo Solyom at the Merdeka Palace here.

“The Indonesia-Hungary Joint Commission must be more active in identifying areas where we can achieve more, and the private sector needs to enhance communication to explore concrete opportunities,” he said in a Press conference alongside Solyom.

According to the Indonesian statistics, the bilateral trade volume sharply fell to 62.3 million US dollars in 2007 from 109.3 million dollars in 2003.

Solyom said his government would encourage small and medium-scale enterprises to hold partnerships with Indonesian companies. He also underlined the need to revitalize the business council between the two countries in order to lure investments.

Vietnam issues license to new oil refinery

HANOI, 22 May — Vietnam has issued license to the development of an oil refinery with annual capacity of two million tons of crude oil in southern Can Tho City with investment of 538 million US dollars, a local official told Xinhua on Wednesday.

The project’s developer, Can Tho Oil Refinery Company Ltd — a joint venture between a Vietnamese firm and a US partner, is expected to start the construction of the oil refinery, whose products include petroleum, liquefied petroleum gas, diesel oil and naphtha, in the city this year, said Bui Ngoc Vi, chairperson of the Economic Bureau under the Can Tho People’s Committee.

To feed the refinery, Can Tho Oil Refinery Company will mainly use crude oil exploited in Vietnam, and import a small amount of the material, she noted.

Vietnam is building its first two oil refineries, Dan Quat in central Quang Ngai Province and Nghii Son in northern Thanh Hoa Province, whose major investor is state-owned Vietnam National Oil and Gas Group (PetroVietnam).


MNA/Xinhua

EU business gives mixed welcome to new WTO text

BRUSSELS, 22 May — Europe’s biggest employers’ lobby said on Tuesday it was concerned that a revised set of proposals to unblock world trade talks could allow developing countries to protect entire industrial sectors against imports.

But there seemed to be positive elements in the text released at the World Trade Organization on Monday such as progress on sector-specific deals for deep cuts in import duties and lowering non-tariff barriers, a BusinessEurope official said.

“This is very initial as we have only seen the text this morning,” said Carsten Dannoehl, a trade adviser at the Brussels-based European business organization.

“Maybe later today we can give a more detailed assessment.”

The WTO’s Doha Round of negotiations for a global trade deal was launched in 2001 in a bid to fight poverty and boost the world economy.

But it has been beset by deep differences among rich and poor countries and now risks years of further delay without a breakthrough soon, ahead of the US presidential election.

MNA/Reuters

Russia to spend $550b on modernizing transport

SOCHI (Russia), 22 May — Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin on Tuesday pledged nearly 550 billion US dollars to modernize Russia’s creaking transport system by 2015.

“We are talking about the biggest investment project ever launched by the Russian Government,” he told a meeting of top transport officials in the Black Sea resort of Sochi.

Putin said that out of the 13 trillion roubles ($58.1 billion US dollars), 4.7 trillion roubles ($19.1 billion US dollars) would be allocated from the state budget.

Putin, who presided over eight years of economic growth in Russia as president, became Prime Minister this month under his handpicked successor Dmitry Medvedev and promised to make the country one of top six world economies by 2020. Infrastructure projects are a key part of the government’s efforts to diversify the economy using Russia’s new wealth accumulated from high energy prices.

MNA/Reuters

Microsoft not bidding to buy Yahoo

HAEZILVA (Israel), 22 May — Microsoft Corp is not looking to make a bid to buy Yahoo Inc but the company was in talks to make other types of deals with Yahoo, Microsoft Chief Executive Steve Ballmer said on Wednesday.

“We are not bidding to buy Yahoo,” Ballmer said at the launch of Microsoft’s new research and development centre in Israel.

“Yet, we are trying to have discussions about deals with Yahoo that might create value but not a whole acquisition of the company,” he said without elaborating further.

MNA/Reuters

At the Addis Car Sales lot in Tucker, Ga, Mike Haile points out a few of the features in a 2006 Toyota Corolla CE available for $10,900, the Corolla is one of the top selling cars available in the current market on 20 May, 2008. Haile sites graduating students, gas prices and efficiency for the increase in small car sales.

INTERNET
Ecuador proposes reduction in electricity charges

QUITO, 23 May — Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa has proposed to bring down electricity charges to 8.5 US cents per kilowatt-hour for all subscribers of the electrical system, effective from January 2009.

The proposal was put forward by Correa on Wednesday, during a meeting with the director of the National Electricity Council (Conelec) to discuss issues related to the Electrification Master Plan 2007-2015 and development strategies for electrical sector production projects, according to the presidency’s official website.

Electricity charges currently stand at 8.8 cents per kilowatt-hour. However, electrical sector authorities have pointed out that the real cost is 11 cents.

It was agreed at the meeting that the reduced fee will be confirmed or modified when Conelec presents a technical study on 30 June.

Electricity Minister Alecksey Mosquera said that the implementation of this proposal depends partly on the new Constitution, which will create special articles for electrical services.

Romania, Serbia sign MoU on environment protection

BUCHAREST, 23 May— Romania and Serbia signed here on Wednesday a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on the cooperation in the field of environment protection, the first document concluded in this sector between the two countries since 1955.

The sustainable development for the two countries mean a long-term collaboration in the field of environment protection and a mutual support in this sector, Attila Korodi, Romanian Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development stressed at the signing ceremony.

“The signing of this memorandum is a mutual commendable step and a clear proof that our bilateral relations will materialize and there will be many actions which, so far have been at level of decisions,” said Korodi.

The Serbian Minister of Environment Sasa Dragan said Serbia will try to implement as soon as possible the European standards in the field of environmental protection.

In this respect, he stressed that Serbia’s priority is the control of pollution, but also the education in the field of environment protection.

New Zealand pilots land on a wing and a prayer

WELLINGTON, 23 May— Two New Zealand pilots whose plane ran out of fuel landed on a wing and a prayer, literally, local media reported on Wednesday.

Grant Stubbbs and Owen Wilson from Blenheim, at the top of the South Island about 50 kilometres (30 miles) south of Wellington, were in a microlight plane when the engine cut out.

“When you’re in a microlight if you crash, you usually die. I turned to O B (Wilson) and he said we had no fuel,” Stubbbs told the Marlborough Express newspaper. — MNA/Reuters

Food, medicine delivered to pandas in quake-hit China town

CHENGDU, 22 May — Huge quantities of bamboo plants, apples and drugs have been sent to hungry pandas in the China Giant Panda Protection and Research Centre based in Wolong, which is only 30 kilometres from the epicentre of last week’s massive earthquake.

The cargo included 4,500 kilogrammes of bamboo, 1,050 kilos of bamboo shoots and apples, soybeans, eggs, milk powder and other foods, the Sichuan provincial forestry department said on Wednesday.

“...There was only water [for the pandas] for a few days after the earthquake,” said Xiong Beirong, a wildlife protection official with the forestry department.

China vows severe measures against shoddy builders

BEIJING, 23 May— China vowed on Wednesday to take severe measures against any state-owned companies found to have built public buildings such as schools which collapsed like houses of cards following the massive earthquake on 12 May.

The government has already begun a probe into the huge numbers of school collapses that killed thousands of children and buried thousands more when many other buildings remained standing.

The quake, which struck the populous southwestern province of Sichuan, has killed more than 40,000 people, and that number seems certain to climb further as rescuers keep combing through the rubble.

It struck in the middle of the afternoon when many children were at their desks or taking a nap.

Li Rongrong, head of China’s state-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission who is in charge of overseeing the country’s huge state sector, said generally construction companies under him were very good.

“Their building projects to date have been very good, and these firms have a very good reputation both at home and abroad,” Li told a news conference.

“If these buildings (which collapsed) were built by major state-owned firms, we will take severe measures,” he added, without elaborating.

Li said that the government had sent three experts to Sichuan to probe this issue.

Oman welcomes inter-Lebanese political agreement

ABU DHABI, 23 May— Oman on Wednesday welcomed the political agreement reached by Lebanese leaders in the Qatari capital of Doha earlier in the day to end the Lebanese crisis, the official Oman News Agency reported.

Omani Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs Yousuf bin Alawi bin Abdullah said Lebanon will start a new chapter in its history after suffering from difficulties, political disputes and stress.

The Lebanese leaders have prioritized the interests of Lebanon in inking such a deal, he added.

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Li said that the government had sent three experts to Sichuan to probe this issue.

Oman welcomes inter-Lebanese political agreement

ABU DHABI, 23 May— Oman on Wednesday welcomed the political agreement reached by Lebanese leaders in the Qatari capital of Doha earlier in the day to end the Lebanese crisis, the official Oman News Agency reported.

Omani Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs Yousuf bin Alawi bin Abdullah said Lebanon will start a new chapter in its history after suffering from difficulties, political disputes and stress.

The Lebanese leaders have prioritized the interests of Lebanon in inking such a deal, he added.
Prime Minister hosts dinner to UN Secretary-General

Nay Pyi Taw, 23 May — Prime Minister of the Union of Myanmar General Thein Sein hosted dinner to United Nations Secretary-General Mr Ban Ki-moon and party at the Sedona Hotel on Kaba Aye Pagoda Road, here, yesterday.

Before the dinner, the Prime Minister cordially met with the UN Secretary General. Afterwards, the Prime Minister hosted dinner to the guests.

Also present on the occasion were Minister for National Planning and Economic Development U Soe Tha, Minister for Social, Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Maj-Gen Maung Maung Swe, Minister for Health Dr Kyaw Myint, Myanmar Permanent Representative to the United Nations Ambassador U Kyaw Tint Swe, Director-General of the Government Office and departmental heads. — MNA

Head of Organizational Department of MWAF presents relief aid to victims in Thanlyin Township

Yangon, 23 May — Head of Organizational Department Dr Daw Nyunt Nyunt Oo and party of the Myanmar Women’s Affairs Federation, Chairperson Daw Khin Myo Thu of Yangon Division Women’s Affairs Organization and officials this morning presented household goods and medicines to storm victims at Shwebo Pariyatti Monastery in Thauktawtwin Ward of Thanlyin Township and comforted them. — MNA

People from states, divisions donate cash, relief aid to storm victims

Nay Pyi Taw, 23 May — Departments members of social organizations, families of Tatmadawmen and wellwishers from states and divisions continued to donate cash and kind and relief aid to storm survivors.

Today’s donations for the storm victims were K 17,306,200 by the people from Shan State (North); K 14.4 million and relief aids worth K 20,139,800 by the government employees and the people from Magway Division. Today’s donations including K 694,637,310 were K 850,071,130. The donations of cash and kind up to 23 May reached K 9,382,634,623 in total. — MNA

All this needs to be known

* Do not be frightened whenever intimidated
* Do not be bolstered whenever flattered
* Do not be softened whenever appeased
YANGON, 23 May — Minister for Labour U Aung Kyi visited Hlinethaya and Shwepyitha industrial zones today and inspected running of some factories which were destroyed by the storm.

Out of 2,830 factories in industrial zones in Yangon, 550 were damaged by the storm on 2 and 3 May. Thanks to the cooperative efforts of owners of the factories, workers and employees of the ministries, 2,757 factories can run at full capacity to date. Almost cent per cent of labourers are working at the factories to boost productivity of the factories. Efforts are being made to run other seventy-three factories which were also damaged by the storm. — MNA

**Labour Minister inspects factories**

**Diplomats, resident representatives...**

Afterwards, the guests visited Relief Camp No 1 in Pyapon where they looked into health care services and supply of relief goods. They then raised queries. They viewed repairs of No. 5 Basic Education Primary School and No. 1 Basic Education High School by car.

After that, they helicoptered to Satsan Village in Bogale Township and viewed loss and damage and rehabilitation work. They next proceeded to Kyonda Village in Daye Township. At the briefing hall, officials concerned explained matters relating to Kyonda Relief Camp and damage that occurred due to the storm. The diplomats viewed solar power generators, fuel-powered generators, health care services, water purifier, dining hall and kitchen room. They arrived back in Yangon in the afternoon.

Similarly, Group-2 arrived in Bogale by helicopter. They were welcomed there by No 66 LID Commander Brig-Gen Maung Maung Aye. Minister Brig-Gen Thein Aung explained rescue, resettlement and reconstruction work at the hall of local battalion. Members of Progress of Border Areas and National Races and Development Affairs Col Thein Nyunt answered queries raised by members of the study group.

The study group went around Mawlamyinegyun and arrived back in Yangon.

Likewise, the study group No. 3 arrived at Myaungmya by helicopter. The study group proceeded to the relief camps No. 1 at No. 1 Basic Education High School in Myaungmya, No. 2 at Sasana Beikman, No. 17 at Shwethalyaung Sutaungpyay Pagoda and No. 4 at No 4 BEHS. They observed accommodation, supply of relief supplies, health care services and preparing of meals and chatted with the storm victims.

At Labutta, Col Kyaw Lin Tun of South-West Command explained losses and damages, completion of rescue work and arrangements for reconstruction and resettlement to the study group and they raised queries at Bayintnaung Yeiktha. Later, the study group went to the People’s Hospital in Labutta and observed treatment of the patients there. They viewed accommodations, health care services and supply of drinking water at the relief camp in Yadanadipa Sports Ground.

They viewed the storm-hit villages-Theikpungongyi, Hlinetha and Kyahon by helicopter and arrived back Yangon in the afternoon. — MNA

**Diplomats, UN officials and representatives of ASEAN and international organizations visit a relief camp in Labutta Township.** — MNA

**Diplomats, UN officials and representatives of ASEAN and international organizations visit Bogale Township People’s Hospital.** — MNA

**Diplomats, UN officials and representatives of ASEAN and international organizations view arrival of relief items in Mawlamyinegyun Township.** — MNA

**Diplomats, UN officials and representatives of ASEAN and international organizations visit a relief camp in Labutta Township.** — MNA
More international aids arrive

YANGON, 23 May — IL-76 flight carrying 38 tons of tarpsaulins and tents and accessories donated by IFRC, 747 flight carrying 52 tons of construction materials for schools worth US$100,000 donated by Care group in Brunei Darussalam, IL-76 flight carrying 40 tons of biscuit donated by Pakistan, DC-8 flight carrying 33 tons of medicines, foodstuff and tarpsaulins donated by Ministry of Foreign Affairs of France, three C-130 flights carrying 35 tons of mosquito nets, eggs, rice, blankets, plywood, purified bottled water and gloves donated by Thai government and people and two C-130 flight carrying 23 tons of tarpsaulins and empty bottles donated by the US arrived at Yangon International Airport today. Similarly, TG-303 flight carrying 2 tons of personal goods donated by Red Cross Society of the Republic of Korea, TG-303 flight carrying 2 tons of personal goods donated by Red Cross Society of Switzerland, MI-512 carrying 0.08 ton of medicines donated by Singapore-Myanmar Christian Association, FD-3770 carrying 0.434 ton of foodstuff and medicines donated by wellwishers from Malaysia, DC-8 flight carrying 18 tons of kitchen utensils donated by Indonesia and IL-76 flight carrying 34 tons of medicines, foodstuff and tarpsaulins donated by France Red Cross Society arrived at Yangon International Airport yesterday. Relief supplies donated by wellwishers from foreign countries have been distributed to storm-hit regions by helicopter vehicle and vessel without delay.

Health Minister meets mobile medical teams bound for Ayeyawady Division

YANGON, 23 May — Minister for Health Dr Kyaw Myint greeted mobile medical teams comprising specialists and health assistance trainees who will provide medical treatment to storm victims in Yangon and Ayeyawady Divisions and another specialist group led by Rector of University of Nursing (Yangon) Dr Khin May Ohn who will perform health care in Maubin, Ayeyawady Division at Yangon General Hospital this morning.

Next, the minister and party looked into packaging and distribution of medicines by doctors, nurses and health assistants from states and divisions and attended to the needs. The minister stressed the need to carry out public health care and preventive measures against infectious diseases and urged the officials to fulfill requirements of the mobile medical teams.

A total of 73 health assistant trainees from the University of Primary Health (Magway) left for affected-villages in Yangon and Ayeyawady Divisions. — MNA

UN Secretary-General arrives in Nay Pyi Taw

NAY PYI TAW, 23 May — A delegation led by UN Secretary-General Mr Ban Ki-moon currently in Myanmar arrived in Nay Pyi Taw by special flight at 9 am today. The UN Secretary-General and party were welcomed at Nay Pyi Taw airport by Minister for Foreign Affairs U Nyan Win and officials. — MNA

Foreign Minister hosts luncheon to UN Secretary-General and party

NAY PYI TAW, 23 May — Accompanied by officials concerned, UN Secretary-General Mr Ban Ki-moon and party this afternoon observed the President’s House, the Hluttaw Building, staff housing complexes here and development of Nay Pyi Taw in a motorcade. At 2 pm, Minister for Foreign Affairs U Nyan Win hosted a luncheon to the UN Secretary-General and party at Shwe Nandaw Hotel in Nay Pyi Taw hotel zone.

Also present at the luncheon were Deputy Minister for Progress of Border Areas and National Races and Development Affairs Col Tin Ngwe, Deputy Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Brig-Gen Kyaw Myint, Myanmar Permanent Representative to UN Ambassador U Kyaw Tint Swe and Director-General of the Protocol Department U Kyaw Kyaw. At 3.20 pm, the UN Secretary-General and party left here for Yangon by special flight. — MNA

Daw Yin and U Kyin Hline on Airport lane-1 in Sawbwyegon, Insein Township recently donated K 100,000 to Hninzigon Home for the Aged through a responsible person of the Home. — MNA
Maj-Gen Tha Aye on inspection tour of Kalai-naung Township

NAY PYI TAW, 23 May—Maj-Gen Tha Aye of the Ministry of Defence together with Chairman of Taninthayi Division Peace and Development Council Commander of Coastal Region Command Maj-Gen Khin Zaw Oo and officials on 20 May inspected maintenance of Ye-Dawes road section at Mahlwetaung camp in Kalai-naung Township and heard reports on progress of road works presented by Senior Engineer U Kyi Soe of Mawlamyne District Public Works and officials.

Next, Maj-Gen Tha Aye gave necessary instructions and looked into Mahlwetaung-Kali-naung road section at mile posts 68/6 and 63/7.

At the briefing hall of Kanbauk oil palm farm in the township, the Project Director of the farm reported on cultivation and nursery of oil palms and operations of oil-palm factory. Maj-Gen Tha Aye and party inspected thriving oil palm plantations, nursery of 50,000 saplings of oil palm and raw oil palm factory that can produce 10 tons of palm oil per hour. He left necessary instructions.

Later, Maj-Gen Tha Aye met with senior military officers and other ranks and their families at Mawyawady Hall of Kanbauk Station.

Commander inspects relief camps in Yangon North District

YANGON, 23 May—Chairman of Yangon Division Peace and Development Council Commander of Yangon Command Maj-Gen Hla Htay Win this afternoon comforted storm victims at the relief camps in Insein Township.

Maj-Gen Tha Aye of the Peace and Development Council Commander of Yangon Command Maj-Gen Hla Htay Win this afternoon comforted storm victims at the relief camps in Insein Township.

The commander inspected repair of roofs at the Monastery in Ward 11.

In Hlinethaya Township, he viewed reconstruction of the two-storey building at Aungmingala Missionary Monastery in Ward 11.

The commander inspected repair of roofs at the monasteries in Hlinethaya and Bahan townships.

Turkish Ambassador calls on Health Minister

YANGON, 23 May—Minister for Health Dr Kyaw Myint received Ambassador of Turkey Mr Cinar Aldemir at Yangon General Hospital here today.

At the meeting, Mr Cinar Aldemir said Turkey was willing to provide health care service for storm victims and pledged US$ 1 million-US$500,000 through UNICEF and US$ 500,000 through OCHA for the storm victims. Health Minister Dr Kyaw Myint briefed on health care services being provided by Myanmar in cooperation with neighbouring countries.

Lt-Gen Myint Swe inspects clearing of debris, sanitation, repair of lamp-posts

YANGON, 23 May—Accompanied by Chairman of Yangon Division Peace and Development Council Commander of Yangon Command Maj-Gen Hla Htay Win, Chairman of Yangon City Development Committee Mayor Brig-Gen Aung Thein Lin and Deputy Commander Brig-Gen Kyaw Kyaw Tun, Lt-Gen Myint Swe of the Ministry of Defence inspected clearing of debris on roads, sanitation for proper flow of drains and repair of lamp-posts in downtown Yangon this morning.

They viewed clearing of debris being carried out by servicemen of No 77 LID on Hline Campus of Yangon University.

Lt-Gen Myint Swe and party inspected participation of servicemen in clearing debris on roads, carrying out sanitation along drains and re-erecting lamp-posts in Ashlon, Pazundaung, Thimgangyun and South Okkalapa townships.

UN Secretary-General confers with ministers

YANGON, 23 May—Minister for National Planning and Economic Development U Soe Tha, Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Maj-Gen Maung Maung Swe and Minister for Health Dr Kyaw Myint held talks with United Nations Secretary-General Mr Ban Ki-moon at Sedona Hotel on Kaba Aye Pagoda Road, here, at 6.40 pm yesterday.

At the call, the ministers were accompanied by departmental officials, and the UN Secretary-General, with UN Senior Adviser Mr Vijay Nambiar and Under Secretary-General and Emergency Relief Coordinator Mr John Holmes and party.

The UN Secretary-General said that he mourned the victims to the cyclone ‘Nargis’ and felt sorry for the loss; he was greatly sympathetic to the nation because he witnessed the damage from the helicopter; that rehabilitation tasks after such a severe natural disaster was a long-term process; that even a developed country facing such a natural disaster was not capable of carrying out rehabilitation works alone; that international community including the UN was willing to provide relief supplies for Myanmar; and that in that regard, it was required to cooperate with the Myanmar government.

The ministers briefed him on the destruction caused by the storm ‘Nargis’, relief, supply and rehabilitation tasks being carried out by the government; health care provided to the victims by local health staff reinforced with health care teams; health care contributed by medical staff from neighbouring countries; and measures co-ordinated for ensuring systematization in providing health care and carrying out rehabilitation undertakings in cooperation with international organizations.

Minister for Health Dr Kyaw Myint receives Turkish ambassador to Myanmar Mr Cinar Aldemir.
Obama rakes in more cash, Clinton heavily in debt

WASHINGTON, 22 May—New US Federal Election Commission files show Democratic presidential contender Barack Obama collected 31.3 million US dollars in April from more than 200,000 new donors, the Washington Times said Wednesday.

The Senator from Illinois now has 37.3 million dollars in cash on hand to spend until the Democratic nomination convention in late August, according to the reports. In contrast, his rival, Senator Hillary Clinton of New York, is 19.5 million dollars in debt, including 10 million dollars to herself.

She brought in about 22 million dollars in April, and has eight million dollars in cash on hand. All told, Obama has now raised 256 million dollars for the primary election, just behind the 262 million dollars taken in by President George W Bush in 2004. He has already surpassed the 219 million dollars raised by 2004 Democratic presidential nominee John Kerry.

Meanwhile, Senator John McCain, the Republican presumptive presidential nominee, is closing the gap with Obama in campaign financing. He brought in 18.5 million dollars during April, spent only 8.5 million dollars, and started this month with 22 million dollars in the bank. In effect, McCain has whittled down Obama’s financial advantage from nearly 5 to 1 at the start of April to slightly more than 2 to 1 at the start of May.

Researchers see flood of “brain-boosting” drugs

LONDON, 23 May—A flood of new “brain-boosting” drugs will emerge in coming decades for diseases like Alzheimer’s, putting pressure on authorities over the drugs potential misuse for non-medical purposes—such as helping students cram for exams, scientists said on Thursday.

“The use of psychoactive drugs by patients and health individuals will become an increasing feature in all our lives,” said Gabriel Horn on Thursday.

Wild varieties often have natural characteristics that can be bred into food crops to help them resist everything from new pests or diseases to a changing climate.

“Basic food crops dangerously vulnerable,” the WWF said on Thursday.

Over 40,000 ecstasy pills seized at Rio Airport

RIO DE JANEIRO, 22 May—Brazil’s Federal Police seized 41,000 ecstasy pills, 17,600 LSD tablets and 310 grammes of skunk cannabis at Rio’s Tom Jobim International Airport on Wednesday.

The drugs were found on Jose Luis Aromatiz Neto, 26, a student at a local private university, as he was trying to smuggle them in from Europe.

It marks the biggest seizure of ecstasy at the airport, said police. The previous record haul was in 2005 when a university student was caught with 33,000 ecstasy pills and 1 kilo of skunk. The drugs are worth between 3 million and 4 million reais (1.8 million to 2.4 million US dollars), according to police estimates. They were packed in plastic bags covered with carbon paper, and hidden in a sleeping bag, but were detected by the airport’s X-ray machine.

The arrested student faces international drug-trafficking charges. If convicted, he can be sentenced up to 25 years in prison.

Crops’ wild relatives need better protection

OSLO, 23 May—Wild relatives of crops such as wheat, rice and potatoes are “dangerously vulnerable” and areas where they grow need more protection to aid world food supplies, the WWF said on Thursday.

Wild varieties often have natural characteristics that can be bred into food crops to help them resist everything from new pests or diseases to a changing climate.

“Basic food crops dangerously vulnerable,” said the WWF, which questioned why the British Government had cleared the way for the drug trade.

The study from the Academy of Medical Sciences said the government would have to deal with the likely increase of “brain-boosting” drugs that may improve short-term memory or speed of thought.

93 kilos of heroin seized at Bulgarian Turkish border

SOFIA, 22 May—Bulgarian Custom officers at the frontier post Malko Turnovo between Bulgaria and Turkey confiscated over 93 kilogrammes of heroin Monday night, local Press reported Tuesday.

The narcotic drug has been discovered after the selection of a vehicle arriving from Turkey by using the “risk-analysis” method, announced the Press-centre of the Regional Customs Agency in the Black Sea port of Burgas.

The heroin packages were discovered in a special hiding place in the car’s ceiling. The vehicle had Bulgarian registration plates. Two Bulgarian citizens, 40 and 28 years old respectively have been detained. Preliminary legal proceedings have been initiated against them while the authorities continue working on the case.

According to the preliminary estimation, the confiscated heroin is valued at over 12 million leva  (about 9.6 million US dollars).

Ecuador to build 11 new hydroelectric dams

QUITO, 23 May—Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa announced Wednesday that his government would build 11 hydroelectric dams with a capacity of 1,500 megawatts in the Guayllabamba River’s watershed in the province of Pichincha.

Correa made the announcement in the Carondelet Palace as the National Council of Electricity (Conelec) and the Provincial Council of Pichincha signed an agreement to jointly develop and upgrade the hydroelectric projects.

Correa said construction on the Chespi dam with 167 megawatts, Villadura with 250 megawatts and Chontal with 79 megawatts will begin on 12 September. The construction of the other eight will be completed in two years.

Correa said the Coca-Codo-Sinclair project, the biggest in Ecuador, would be a massive boost for the Amazonian Region.

Crops’ wild relatives need better protection

OSLO, 23 May—Wild relatives of crops such as wheat, rice and potatoes are “dangerously vulnerable” and areas where they grow need more protection to aid world food supplies, the WWF said on Thursday.

Wild varieties often have natural characteristics that can be bred into food crops to help them resist everything from new pests or diseases to a changing climate.

“Basic food crops dangerously vulnerable,” the WWF said in a headline of a statement about a new WWF map showing that areas in which wild varieties of crops are protected often cover less than 5 per cent of their natural ranges.

“We already have reserves and national parks to protect charismatic species like pandas and tigers, and to preserve outstanding areas of natural beauty,” said Liza Higgins-Zogib, Manager of People and Conservation at WWF International.

“It is now time to offer protection to the equally valuable wild and traditional relatives of the plants that feed the world like rice, wheat and potatoes,” she said. — MNA/Reuters
**Russian-Ukrainian rocket sends US satellite into orbit**

Moscow, 22 May—A Russian-Ukrainian carrier rocket on Wednesday sent a US telecommunications satellite into orbit from a floating launch pad in the Pacific Ocean, the control centre said.

The Zenit-3SL rocket boosted off at 1:43 pm Moscow Time (0943 GMT) under an international Sea Launch programme.

The satellite has separated from the booster and entered orbit, Interfax news agency reported, citing sources of the control centre near Moscow.

This was the third successful launch under the Sea Launch programme in 2008. The first and second stages of the rocket are designed and produced by Ukraine and the upper stage by a Russian company, the Energia space rocket corporation.

**Lifestyle diseases may cause huge losses to India**

New Delhi, 22 May—India will incur an accumulated loss of 236.6 billion US dollars by 2015 on account of unhealthy lifestyles and faulty diet, The Times of India’s report quoted the World Health Organization’s research as saying Tuesday.

Smoking, consuming high-calorie fast food and being a couch potato will not only cut short people’s lifespan but will also cost the country dearly, the report said.

The resultant chronic diseases—heart disease, stroke, cancer, diabetes and respiratory infections, will severely affect people’s earnings.

According to the research, which was released in Geneva on Monday, 35 million people died from chronic disease, representing 60 percent of all deaths worldwide in 2005. What’s worse, around 80 percent of these deaths will occur in low and middle-income countries like India.

In India, 10 percent of adults suffer from hypertension while the country is home to 25-30 million diabetics. Three out of every 1,000 people suffer a stroke. The number of deaths due to heart attack is projected to increase from 1.2 million to two million in 2010, the report said.

**Chirac wins top Russian award**

Moscow, 22 May—Former French president Jacques Chirac has won a Russian state award for his humanitarian activities, the Kremlin announced on Tuesday.

Chirac, honoured for his “outstanding achievements in the humanitarian sphere”, will be the only foreigner among nine prominent figures to receive the State Award at a Kremlin ceremony on 12 June, according to a presidential decree.

“I am very happy and deeply touched by the Russian people’s recognition of my work,” Chirac said in a statement.

He added: “I have spent more than 20 years in France and will always think of this country as a second home.”

**Modern-day alchemy turning trash into power in US**

Boston, 22 May — It’s not turning lead into gold, but General Electric is working on a form of modern alchemy, converting garbage into electricity.

GE, which aims to make $25 billion US dollars in annual sales from green businesses by 2010, is working to adapt its gasification technology—used to burn coal more cleanly, to turn municipal waste into a relatively clean-burning gas. The process takes solid material and heats it to temperatures up to 1,400 Celsius (2,552 Fahrenheit)—far hotter than an incinerator—which causes most matter to shift into a gaseous state.

That gas is then converted into a synthetic fuel called syngas, largely free of pollutants, that can be burned in an electricity-generating turbine.

The materials that do not convert to gas, including some metals and minerals, shift to a liquid state and when they cool turn into slag, a stable rocklike substance.

**Chronic diseases top causes of deaths globally**

Geneva, 22 May—Chronic conditions such as heart disease and stroke, often associated with a Western lifestyle, have become the chief causes of death globally, the World Health Organization (WHO) said on Tuesday.

The shift from infectious diseases including tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS and malaria—to noncommunicable diseases is set to continue to 2030, the UN agency said in a report.

“In more and more countries, the chief causes of death are non-communicable diseases such as heart disease and stroke,” Ties Boerma, director of the WHO department of health statistics and informatics, said in a statement.

The annual report, World Health Statistics 2008, is based on data collected from the WHO’s 193 member states.

**Couples and photo studio staff react immediately after an earthquake struck during a wedding photo shoot at a deserted catholic seminary in Pengzhou in southwest China’s Sichuan province on 12 May, 2008. Five couples were having wedding photos taken when the earthquake struck, and all escaped without injury. The century-old seminary was destroyed in the quake, which left tens of thousands dead in Sichuan.—INTERNET**

**NASA image shows an artist’s impression of the Phoenix probe landing on Mars. After a nine-month journey through space, the US probe will land on the arctic surface of Mars on 25 May to dig for ice in a new quest for signs of life on the Red Planet.—INTERNET**

**This handout image obtained in 2007 and taken by NASA’s Hubble Space Telescope shows the colorful “last hurrah” of a star like our Sun. Space shuttle Atlantis will embark on the final repair and maintenance mission to the Hubble Space Telescope on 8 October, instead of the end of August as planned, NASA announced on 22 May, 2008.—INTERNET**

**Co is working on a form of modern alchemy, converting garbage into electricity.**

**This was the third successful launch under the Sea Launch programme in 2008. The first and second stages of the rocket are designed and produced by Ukraine and the upper stage by a Russian company, the Energia space rocket corporation.**
**SPORTS**

**Ferguson thanks fate for Champions League triumph**

MOSCOW, 22 May — Alex Ferguson said fate played a big hand on Wednesday as his Manchester United team won the Champions League 50 years after the Munich air disaster, having been watched by some of the survivors.

Harry Gregg, Albert Scanlon, Kenny Morgans, Bill Foulkes and Bobby Charlton were among those in the Luzhniki Stadium where United came back from the brink to beat Chelsea 6-5 on penalties after the match had finished 1-1 after extra time.

Chelsea would have won the trophy had their captain John Terry not slipped and missed his penalty, Ferguson said at his post-match news conference.

"I think fate played its hand, just as it has all season. We had a cause today and that’s important. Causes are hard to fight against. People with causes become very difficult to go up against. Fate played its hand today when Terry slipped."

Those were familiar words from Ferguson.

In 1959, when United staged an astonishing comeback to beat Bayern Munich in the final, Ferguson gave much of the credit to the spirit of Sir Matt Busby, who would have been celebrating his 90th birthday on the night of that game in Barcelona. "I think he was doing a bit of kicking for us up there," Ferguson said at the time. On Wednesday, he was proud to claim his second European Cup — United’s third in all and was delighted to win a penalty shootout after tasting defeat on six previous occasions. — MNA/Reuters

**Hosts praised after trouble-free Champions final**

MOSCOW, 22 May — Thousands of English soccer fans flew out of Moscow on Thursday praising their Russian hosts for a trouble-free Champions League Final in which Manchester United beat Chelsea.

Police said there were no serious disturbances and described the atmosphere in Moscow as calm and the fans as well-behaved.

"Most have gone back home on the buses to the airports," a police spokesman said. "They have gone to their hotels or are relaxing in bars and restaurants. It’s all quiet." Manchester United beat Chelsea on penalties after the teams drew 1-1 in the first all-English Champions League Final. United also beat Chelsea to the English Premier League title this season.

— MNA/Reuters

**Champions Argentina knocked out of World Team Cup**

DUESSELDORF (Germany), 22 May — Argentina’s hopes of successfully defending the World Team Cup ended on Wednesday when they lost a tight rubber against a resilient US team.

After splitting the singles rubbers on Tuesday, the Americans wrapped up the tie 24 hours later when Wayne Odesnik and Bobby Reynolds edged past Lucas Arnold Ker and Sebastian Prieto 6-3, 6-7, 10-7. In the other group tie, Sweden swept aside the challenge of the Czech Republic 3-0. Robin Soderling and Thomas Johansson teamed up to dispatch Michal Tabara and veteran Pavel Vrner 6-4, 7-5 in the doubles.

Sweden and the United States will next face each other to decide which nation will advance to Saturday’s final. In the Blue Group, Feliciano Lopez kept Spain’s hopes of qualifying for the final alive by beating Russia’s Igor Andreev 6-4, 6-4 to give his team an unassailable lead.

Russia won a consolation point against Mikhail Youzhny and Dmitry Tursunov defeated Lopez and Marcel Granollers 6-3, 6-4.

In the group’s other tie, Italy notched up two wins to reverse an overnight deficit against Germany for a 2-1 victory.

Simone Bolelli squeezed past Nicolas Kiefer 7-6, 7-6, 6-4 before combining with Potito Starace to beat the German doubles pairing of Philipp Petzschner and Christopher Kas 2-6, 6-3, 10-4. — MNA/Reuters

**Proud Grant praises team, tearful skipper Terry**

MOSCOW, 22 May — Chelsea manager Avram Grant praised his team and especially his distraught skipper John Terry after their agonising Champions League penalty shootout defeat by Manchester United on Wednesday.

"I am very proud of my team and what we have done this season and I have told them that," alty, he is a great player, a great captain and was fantastic today."

Terry might not have been called on to take a spot kick if striker Didier Drogba had not been red carded in extra time and therefore off the field for the shootout.

Grant quickly declined that idea. Asked if Drogba could have taken a penalty and not Terry he replied tersely: "He was not on the field."

Grant took control of Chelsea in September after the previous coach Jose Mourinho left the club and he guided them to second place in the Premier League behind United.

As well as losing in the Champions League final, their first appearance in Europe’s premier competition, they also lost in the League Cup final to Tottenham Hotspur but Grant maintained the club had improved since Mourinho left.

— MNA/Reuters

**Van der Sar the hero in Man Utd shootout win**

MOSCOW, 22 May — Manchester United were crowned kings of Europe for the third time on Wednesday when they beat Chelsea 6-5 on penalties after a breathless all-English Champions League final had finished 1-1 after extra time.

United’s 37-year-old goalkeeper Edwin van der Sar, appearing in his third final 13 years after his first with Ajax Amsterdam, saved the decisive spot kick from substitute Nicolas Anelka.

The victory completed a remarkable turnaround for the Old Trafford team who pipped Chelsea to the Premier League title 10 days ago.

It was an emotional triumph for United, coming 50 years after the Munich air disaster, and there was a huge cheer for one of the survivors, Bobby Charlton, who when he joined the team at the presentation of the trophy he lifted in 1968 before Alex Ferguson led the team to a second success in 1999. "We’ve had fate on our side all season and I felt that fate played its hand with John Terry slipping," Ferguson said of the Chelsea captain’s penalty miss. — MNA/Reuters

**Leverkusen sack coach after missing out on Europe**

BERLIN, 22 May — Bayer Leverkusen have sacked coach Michael Skibbe after the Bundesliga side finished seventh in the league and failed to qualify for the UEFA Cup, the club said on Wednesday. "Because of recent Bundesliga results and the failure to achieve the season’s goal of reaching the UEFA Cup we have decided to part with Michael Skibbe with immediate effect," Managing Director Wolfgang Holzhaeuser said on the club’s website. — MNA/Reuters
Summary of observations recorded at 9:30 hours

MST: During the past 24 hours, weather has been partly cloudy in Rakhine State and Magway Division, rain or thundershowers have been widespread in Kachin States, Upper Sagaing Division, fairly widespread in Lower Sagaing, Yangon and Taninthayi Divisions and isolated in the remaining States and Divisions with isolated heavyfall in Mandalay Division. Day temperatures were (4°C) below May average temperatures in Kachin States, (3°C) to (4°C) above May average temperatures in Bago, Ayeyawady and Yangon Divisions, (5°C) above May average temperatures in Taninthayi Division and about May average temperatures in the remaining States and Divisions. The noteworthy amounts of rainfall recorded were PyinOoLwin (2.75) inches, Yangon (Central) (2.13) inches, Machanw (2.01) inches, Patan (1.46) inches, Dawei (0.75) inches and Bago (0.51) inch.

Maximum temperature on 22-5-2008 was 91°F. Minimum temperature on 23-5-2008 was 75°F. Relative humidity at (09:30) hours MST on 23-5-2008 was 79%. Total sunshine hours on 22-5-2008 was (2.4) hours approx.

Rainfall on 23-5-2008 was (Tr) at Mingaladon, (0.04) inch at Kaba-Aye and (2.13) inches at Central Yangon. Total rainfall since 1-1-2008 was (27.76) inches at Mingaladon, (32.01) inches at Kaba-Aye and (36.89) inches at Central Yangon. Maximum windspeed at Yangon (Kaba-Aye) was (4) mph from Southwest at (13:30) hours MST on 22-5-2008.

Bay inference: Weather is cloudy in the North Bay and monsoon is weak in the Andaman Sea and elsewhere in the Bay of Bengal.

Forecast valid until evening of 24-5-2008: Rain or thundershowers will be widespread in Mon State and Taninthayi Division, fairly widespread in Kachin State, upper Sagaing, Ayeyawady and Yangon Divisions, scattered in Shan and Rakhine States, Bago Division and isolated in the remaining areas. Degree of certainty is (80%).

State of the Sea: Seas will be moderate in Myanmar waters.

Outlook for subsequent two days: Likelihood of thundery conditions in the Central Myanmar areas.

Forecast for Nay Pyi Taw and neighbouring area for 24-5-2008: Likelihood of isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (60%).

Forecast for Yangon and neighbouring area for 24-5-2008: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (80%).

Forecast for Mandalay and neighbouring area for 24-5-2008: Likelihood of isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (60%).

Weather outlook for last weekend of May 2008: During the coming weekend, likelihood of scattered rain or thundershowers in Nay Pyi Taw, Yangon and Mandalay Divisions.
Nay Pyi Taw, 23 May—General Thein Sein, Prime Minister of the Union of Myanmar, received United Nations Secretary-General Mr Ban Ki-moon and party at Zeyathiri Beikman on Konmyittha in Yangon yesterday morning.

Also present at the call were Minister for Foreign Affairs U Nyan Win, Myanmar Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador U Kyaw Tint Swe, Director-General of the Government Office Col Than Tin and Director-General of Protocol Department U Kyaw Kyaw of Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Prime Minister receives UN Secretary-General

Diplomats, resident representatives of UN agencies and ASEAN, donors, officials of int’l organizations tour storm-hit regions

YANGON, 23 May—Local and international diplomats, resident representatives and officials of UN agencies, representatives of ASEAN countries and officials of donor countries and international organizations in three groups viewed damage and rehabilitation work in the cyclone-ravaged regions in Ayeyawady Division this morning.

First, Group-1 arrived in Pyapon by helicopter and they were welcomed by Minister for Hotels and Tourism Maj-Gen Soe Naing, officials and members of social organizations. Next, they looked into damage and rehabilitation work being carried out in Pyapon. On arrival at Pyapon Bridge, the group members viewed arrivals and departures of motorboats for mobile health care for the storm victims and reconstruction tasks being carried out in Pyapon. Then they raised questions, which were answered by Minister Maj-Gen Soe Naing and officials concerned.

In front of Sayar Zawgyi Library, officials concerned explained to the guests matters related to relief and rehabilitation work being carried out in cooperation with UN agencies, INGOs and NGOs. Minister Maj-Gen Soe Naing also briefed them on loss and damage, availability of relief supplies, medical treatment being given to the victims by mobile medical teams, participation of private companies in reconstruction work and adoption of short- and long-term plans of rehabilitation work.

(See page 9)

Weather Forecast for (24-5-2008)

Nay Pyi Taw and neighbouring area: Likelihood of isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (60%).

Yangon and neighbouring area: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (80%).

Mandalay and neighbouring area: Likelihood of isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (60%).