President U Thein Sein visits Myanmar Aviation Academy, Ngwehsaung Recreation Camp

NAY PYI TAW, 4 May — President U Thein Sein accompanied by union ministers U Soe Than, U Tin Naing Thein, U Htay Aung, U Ye Htut and Dr Daw Khin San Yi, deputy minister Brig-Gen Kyaw Kyaw Tun and officials paid a visit to Pathein, Ayeyawady Region, on Monday.

The president cordially greeted trainees at Myanmar Aviation Academy at Pathein Airport where Chief Executive Officer U Tun Myint explained the main building and training hall of the academy and attendance of the trainees.

The president posed for documentary photo together with trainees of the academy.

On arrival at Ngwehsaung recreation camp, the president met with outstanding students.—MNA

Yangon Region Gov’t to form public bus service company with 40/60 JV system

By Aye Min Soe

YANGON, 4 May — The Yangon Region Government plans to establish a public bus service company to operate a modern bus service along main routes in Yangon, retaining a 40 per cent share of the company while offering 60 per cent to the public.

Authorized capital of the first public bus service company in Myanmar is set at K100 billion, and the business would be established with the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT Lite) system through the Public, Private Partnership (PPP) system, said U Myint Swe, the Yangon Region Chief Minister, at a ceremony held Monday to invite shareholders for establishing the company.

The bus service will operate with the i-pay system and a control system using the Global Positioning System (GPS) and modern communication technology.

The project is divided into phases, with the capital for the first phase set at K25 billion and the government to inject K10 billion during the first phase and invite the public to invest in the business by buying shares, he said. Each unit of the shares is priced at K100,000, he added.

The bus line with BRT (Lite) system is aimed at reducing inconvenience to the public due to traffic congestion and to provide the public with a safe and comfortable bus service, the chief minister said.

The first phase would start with around 100 2010-model buses and

Step taken toward establishment of national minimum wage

By Aye Min Soe

YANGON, 4 May— The Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security will meet owners of garment factories in the near future in Yangon as part of efforts for negotiating the establishment of a national minimum wage.

Nearly all industries except garment factories became hopeful of reaching a compromise solution during recent negotiations between employers and workers in Yangon and upper Myanmar, so the ministry will meet again with employers and workers in Yangon and upper Myanmar.

The ministry will try to get a proposed figure for the national minimum wage during that meeting and submit it to the parliament for debate and approval, he said, quoting the Union Minister for Labour, Employment and Social Security U Aye Myint.

“After the minimum wage is approved by the parliament, theEmployment and Social Security U Aye Myint.

“After the minimum wage is approved by the parliament, the country, based on region or state, based on job type or based on working hours, said the UMFFCCI’s joint-secretary who also participated in the negotiations in Yangon and upper Myanmar. Parts of the negotiations between employers and workers in Yangon and upper Myanmar. The ministry will broker the negotiations between employers and employees for establishment of the minimum wage also has a plan to conduct negotiations comprising all sectors including employers, workers, authorities and representatives from workers’ unions.

The ministry will try to get a proposed figure for the national minimum wage during that meeting and submit it to the parliament for debate and approval, he said, quoting the Union Minister for Labour, Employment and Social Security U Aye Myint.

“After the minimum wage is approved by the parliament, the
Outstanding students visit pagodas in Pakokku, Pakhangyi

Bagan, 4 May—Outstanding ninth grader students from Bagan camp paid homage Thitoshin Pagoda, Shwemuitaw Pagoda and Sittushin Tharekkhan Buddha image in Pakokku and Pakhangyi ancient city on Monday.

The youth visited the ancient monastery in Pakhangyi built by Kyiwunmin U Po Toke in the reign of King Mindon in 1868.

The youths plan to hold the conclusion of the recreation camp in the evening at Bagan Basic Education High School and will leave for Nay Pyi Taw on 5 May.

Min Min Zaw (Kalay)

Yangon Region Gov’t to form public bus . . .

(form page 1)

the company will buy the buses through the tender system, said Dr Maung Aung, an adviser to the Ministry of Commerce.

In the first phase, the bus line will operate along the main route from the southern to northern parts of Yangon.

The first phase is tentatively targeted to launch within five months, and the government has already begun to build stations for the bus line, said Dr Maung Aung. Foreign investment is not allowed during the first phase of the project, he added.

Meanwhile, the Yangon Region Government has invited current private bus service businesses to invest in the project in cash or in kind.

Private bus service businesses are also allowed to invest in the business as an in-kind investment, but their buses must meet the criteria set by the company, said Dr Maung Aung, adding that the buses should be fully air conditioned and should be 2010 model buses or later.

Currently, more than 360 bus lines are operating with 3,500 buses in Yangon, transporting around 2 million people a day.

According to Yangon’s All Bus-Line Control Service, out of its 6,000 buses, just more than 3,000 can operate daily due to the scarcity of drivers and conductors and the difficulty in securing a license for running bus services since 2012 when the number of buses increased in the city.

GNLM

Private bus service businessmen

Step taken toward establishment . . .

(from page 1)

parliament, both employers and employees must follow it,” U Aye Lwin said.

According to the rules and by-laws of the Minimum Wage Law, the minimum wage level can be amended within two years after its announcement.

Representing the UM-FCCI which has brokered the establishment of the minimum wage, Daw Thet Thet Khaiing, Joint-Secretary-3 of the UM-FCCI, has suggested both sides take locations of factories and job types into consideration when establishing the minimum wage and to focus on reaching a win-win solution between them.

“In fact, a figure is just a figure on paper. Market mechanisms or the labour market will decide the minimum wage,” she said.

Speaker of Pyithu Hluttaw Thuha U Shwe Mann suggested that both employers and workers on 24 April consider the daily wage level of K3,000 for government employees set by the Ministry of Finance and Revenue as a “standard” for setting the minimum wage level for workers, urging the ministry to complete the task as soon as possible.

The Pyithu Hluttaw enacted the minimum wage law in March 2013, and the government approved the related by-laws in July 2013.—GNLM

Peru, Nigeria, Morocco, South Africa, Brazil, Slovakia, US and Bosnia.

Thant Kyaw Zin

Scouts take part in skill contest in PyinOoLwin

PyinOoLwin, 4 May—Youth scouts visited Pwekauk waterfalls and the site for construction of new scout camp after paying homage to Maha Arntho Buddha Image in PyinOoLwin on Monday.

In the afternoon, they participated in skill contests of scouts. Yesterday, they sold domestic products for raising the scout fund at Basic Education Basic School No 1 and No 2 in PyinOoLwin.—MNA
Farmer Channel Studio goes into operation

NAY PYI TAW, 4 May—The Farmer Channel Studio was commissioned into service in the compound of the Agricultural Research Department in Yezin, here, on Monday, with Vice President U Nyan Tun in attendance.

The vice president unveiled the signboard of the studio after viewing the harvest of a 50-acre seed production farm of Paleth-we hybrid species of the department.

Union ministers U Myint Hlaing, U Win Myint and U Kyaw Hsan cut the ribbon to open the studio.

The studio was built with the aim of broadcasting modern agricultural technologies, research and educative works, interviews and teleplays in time for the farmers.

The vice president viewed documents related to Myanmar’s agricultural history displayed at the seed bank, and booths on soil, paddy and crops, beans and pulses, maize, preservation of genes of plants, pest prevention, biotechnology and water utilization.

Union Minister U Myint Hlaing reported to the vice president that as the benefit of the agricultural sector is less than other sectors, the ministry and farmers are to join hands in bringing agricultural produce to the market.

Director-General Dr Ye Tint Tun of the Agricultural Research Department briefed the vice president on conducting research works for production of hybrid paddy strains.

Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann meets Myanmar embassy staff in Washington D.C

WASHINGTON D.C., 4 May — A Myanmar delegation led by Speaker of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw and the Pyithu Hluttaw Thura U Shwe Mann met with Myanmar embassy staff at the residence of the Myanmar ambassador in Washington D.C on 2 May.

At the meeting, the speaker urged the embassy staff to play their roles in the transition to democracy and market economy.

Then, the speaker met with Myanmar affairs activists at the residence of the ambassador and received an open letter.

On 3 May, the delegation led by the speaker visited Mount Vernon in Washington DC and laid wreaths at the tombs of the wife and relatives of George Washington before sailing along the Potomac River. The delegation also visited the Pentagon Memorial, the Airforce Memorial and Iwo Jima Memorial.

Upper Namhtwam hydropower project to benefit local residents in Putao District

NAY PYI TAW, 4 May — Deputy Minister for Electric Power U Maw Thar Htwe viewed progress of construction of diversion weir, power intake structure and drain, concreting works, building of the water control tank and laying of pre-stressed pipelines at Upper Namhtwam hydropower project on Namhtwam Creek, seven miles southwest of Putao, Kachin State on 1 May.

Efforts are being made for completion of the project in 2015-16 fiscal year, with benefiting local residents in Putao District. The project will install four 0.8 megawatt generators at the power plant to be able to generate 14.13 million kilowatt hours per year for ensuring sufficient electricity consumption of local residents.

While in Machanbaw on 2 May, the deputy minister inspected plans to install a power line between Putao and Machanbaw and met with engineers from Putao District and Township. After the meeting, the deputy minister attended to the needs.
Thai abbot contributes humanitarian assistance to fire victims

Dawei, 4 May — A relief camp was opened for fire victims who lost their property in the outbreak of fire in Ohlok Ward in Dawei, Taninthayi Region on 30 April. Well-wishers donate clothes, foodstuffs, kitchen utensils and foods to the fire victims daily.

On 3 May morning, Thai citizens led by the abbot of Dhammakaing monastery in Thailand together with Taninthayi Region Chief Minister U Myat Ko and ministers comforted the fire victims.

The Thai abbot donated humanitarian assistance worth K4 million for the fire victims through the chief ministers who shared the aid to them.

So far, well-wishers have donated assistance K25,711,550 and K21,559,200 in cash to the fire victims up to 2 May.

Po Shwe Thun (Dawei)

Locals get traffic knowledge at UN Global Road Safety Week activities

Mandalay, 4 May — The educative show and contest in commemoration of the UN Global Road Safety Week May 4 to 10 was held at the office of Mandalay Region Directorate of Road Administration on Monday.

Officials will present prizes to the winners in the quiz and cartoon contests in commemoration of the UN Global Road Safety Week.

“The commemorative week is aim to reduce traffic accidents and disseminate traffic knowledge to the local residents and traffic users,” said Region Transport Minister U Kyaw Hsan.

“The list of traffic accidents is displayed at the educative show. Death in traffic accident stands ninth in 10 types of deaths across the world in 2014,” said an official.

According to the list in 2012, a total of 11,675 traffic accidents left 3,422 persons dead and 19,684 injured in Myanmar.

Aung Ye Thwin

Police prepare taking uric samples from suspect drug users

Mohnyin, 4 May — A squad comprising more than 60 social anti-drug squad members, acting on a tip-off, raided a group who abused narcotic drugs in a jungle, on the eastern bank of Nantyin Creek near Nannya Village, 10 miles north of Mohnyin, Kachin state on 2 May.

The anti-drug squad members arrested 83 suspects and handed them over to Mohnyin police station by car.

In meeting with the civic anti-drug squad members, the commander of Township Police Force explained that the police arrested eight persons along with narcotic drugs in possession among the suspects. But, he said that the police cannot arrest 75 remaining persons due to lack of firm evidence. He noted that only when police have firm evidences over those remaining persons with the results of uric test on using the drugs, will action be taken against them. So, it needs to take sample of uric from them before release, he added.

According to the process, the police must take an adequate time for uric samples from the suspects and send it to Mandalay General Hospital to receive the results.

Po Shwe Thun (Dawei)

Firefighters donate blood at North Okkalapa General Hospital, DSGH (1)

Yangon, 4 May — In honour of the 69th Anniversary Myanmar Fire Brigade Day, a total of 600 firefighters carried out sanitation tasks at North Okkalapa General Hospital on 1 May.

Altogether 53 firefighters donated blood at the hospital while 63 members also donated blood at No 1 Defence Services General Hospital in Mingaladon Township. Deputy Director-General U Myat Thu and Director U Aung Kyaw Myint of Fire Services Department viewed round sanitation tasks of the fire brigade members.

Tin Win Lay (Kymyindine)

Kalewa Township to build independence monument, people’s park

Kalewa, 4 May — In line with the instructions of the Sagaing Region Chief Minister, a plan is underway to construct an independence monument and the People’s Park near Myittha River at the entrance to Kalewa, Sagaing Region.

Chairman of Kalewa District Management Committee U Naung Htoo held a meeting at the office of Township General Administration Department on 30 April with Pyithu Hluttaw MP U Soe Thein, Region Hluttaw MP U Kyaw Soe Win and Chairman of Township Management Committee U Tint Naing together with departmental officials on soonest implementation of the project.

The district and township authorities inspected the site chosen for construction of the Independence Monument and the People’s Park.

Joe Net
Mandalay, 4 May — The Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security organized meetings of representatives of employers and employees to set minimum wage.

The union minister stressed that the agreement must be based on a win-win solution for both sides so as to ensure long-term existence of civil engineering and construction equipment transportation vehicles, generators, compressors, welding and related plants and equipment, construction tasks, implementation of hydropower projects and building of housings.

The base of the company is opened at UE road in Myaungdaga village, Hmaubwy Township, Yangon.

The ceremony was also attended by Mandalay City Development Committee members, departmental officials and engineers.

Tin Maung (Mandalay)

Employers, employees to set minimum wage

Mandalay Region Minister for Planning and Economy U Aung Zan, Vice Chairperson of the minimum wage setting national committee deputy minister for Labour, Employment and Social Security Dow Win Maw Tun and secretary director-general U Myo Aung spoke about coordination for the minimum wage.

Mr Christopher of International Labour Organization, Secretary of UMFC-CCI U Aye Lwin, Chairman of Mandalay Region CCCI U Aung Than, employees and employers participated in the discussions.

Thiha Ko Ko (Mandalay)

Myawady Daily marks 4th anniversary ceremony

Yangon, 4 May — The Myawady Daily under the Directorate of Public Relations and Psychological Warfare of the Commander-in-Chief (Army) Office held its fourth birthday at its branch on Mogaung Road in Yankin Township, here, on 2 May.

Chief Editor Lt-Col Win Bo spoke about aims of publishing the daily to rebut rumours and inform the people of correct news.

Veteran journalists and media persons, Myanmar Writers Association, Myanmar Journalists Association, Myanmar Press Council, Myanmar Writers Association also attended by officials of Mandalay City Development Committee and engineers.

Thiha Ko Ko (Mandalay)

Fire victims receive citizenship scrutiny cards

Dawei, 4 May — An outbreak of fire left 330 people from 67 houses homeless in Ohlok Ward, Dawei, Taninthayi Region on 30 April.

A staff team led by Head of Township Immigration and National Registration Department issued citizenship scrutiny cards to fire victims as of 1 May, and up to 2 May, they have delivered household registrations to 53 households and 70 citizenships scrutiny cards to the local people.

Po Shwe Thun (Dawei)

University students view round thriving paddy, vegetable plantations

Nyaungshwe, 4 May — Students from Yezin University of Agriculture together with supervisors visited a five-acre Paletwe hybrid paddy farm and organic vegetable farm of farmer U Win Shwe and use of fertilizer at the farms in Tilaw village in Nyaungshwe Township, Shan State, on 3 May.

They viewed thriving strains of paddy plantations in the region.

Head of Township Agriculture Department U Zaw Win Tun spoke about development of agriculture sector, environmental conservation, local food sufficiency, increasing family income of local farmers, cultivation of organic plants and use of fertilizers.

Local farmers give priority to cultivation of Paletwe hybrid paddy for boosting production and emergence of a market of organic vegetables for local consumers.

Nay Myo Thurein
ASEAN-plus-3 pledge further structural reform for sustainable growth

BANGKOK, 4 May — Financial chiefs from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations plus Japan, China and South Korea on Sunday agreed on the need to promote structural reforms to remove bottlenecks to sustainable growth and to be vigilant against risks arising from large capital outflows.

Meeting on the fringes of the Asian Development Bank annual meeting in the Azerbaijani capital of Baku, the finance ministers and central bank governors said in a joint statement their economies are poised to sustain this year the momentum of relatively high growth of the previous year. While reaffirming their commitment to “carrying out the necessary structural adjustments,” they sounded the alarm about the possibility of a sharp run-up in oil prices and capital outflows amid the changing global economic environment.

“With ample global liquidity, our macroeconomic policies should remain expansionary and growth-enhancing,” they said. “In the context of robust global growth, we will continue to develop and strengthen the regional financial architecture and deepen regional financial integration to enhance the role of regional financial markets in risk sharing across the region.”

Prateep Chotikasathian, who heads the Thai Finance Ministry, said the region’s financial markets should be made more resilient to shocks from outside. “The region should be more integrated and the crisis management should be strengthened within this framework,” he added.

Malaysia’s Najib faces leadership test in by-elections

KUALA LUMPUR, 4 May — Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak faces a test of his popularity this week in two by-elections that come on the heels of calls by the country’s former long-time leader, Mahathir Mohamad, for him to step down. The influential 93-year-old retired premier, who is widely expected to win the seats he contests, is counting on his financial reforms to help him win the support of a more patriotic electorate.

“The results would be used to test whether Najib is a patriotic leader for his party,” said Oh Ei Sun, a senior fellow at the S Rajaratnam School of International Studies. “If Najib wins the seat than before,” he said, “it will be a sure sign that BN will get more votes in the general elections in 2018.”

Malaysia’s Najib faces test in by-elections

Malaysia’s Najib faces leadership test in by-elections

Kuala Lumpur, 4 May — Najib Razak, Malaysia’s prime minister, said he will step down if he loses the seat he is contesting on Monday.— Reuters

两大会议将举行

GENEVA, 15 May — The World Trade Organization and the International Monetary Fund will meet next month in Geneve to discuss the global economy and the role of trade.

World leaders have made trade a priority in the context of a stronger global economy and the need to boost growth and employment.

Both organizations will also be looking at the impact of the US-China trade war and the ongoing negotiations for a new round of trade talks.

Malaysia’s Najib faces test in by-elections

Malaysia’s Najib faces test in by-elections

Kuala Lumpur, 4 May — Najib Razak, Malaysia’s prime minister, said he will step down if he loses the seat he is contesting on Monday.— Reuters

Xi calls on building community of shared destiny across Taiwan Strait

BEIJING, 4 May — Xi Jinping, general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, met with visiting Kuomintang (KMT) Chairman Eric Chu in Beijing on Monday.— Xinhua

Both sides of the Taiwan Strait to build a community of shared destiny and settle political differences through equal consultations.

Both sides of the Taiwan Strait to build a community of shared destiny and settle political differences through equal consultations.

Xi made the remarks during a meeting with visiting Kuomintang (KMT) Chairman Eric Chu in Beijing on Monday.

The meeting took place in the Great Hall of the People and is the first between Xi and Chu, bringing broad attention and expectations.

Stressing the 1992 Consensus is the foundation for the exchanges with Taiwan authorities and political parties, Xi said the mainland is willing to take the lead to share the development opportunities with Taiwan compatriots.

“We are willing to give priority to Taiwan in opening up. Our efforts to open up to Taiwan compatriots will be bigger,” he said.

Both the CPC and KMT should be brave when facing lingering political differences and difficulties, pool wisdom of compatriots of both sides and actively search for a solution, he said.

“The two sides can consult with each other on an equal basis under the principle of One China, and reach a reasonable arrangement,” Xi said.

The meeting is part of Chu’s first visit to the mainland since he was elected KMT chairman in January. He met with Yu Zhengsheng, top political advisor and member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee, on Saturday and attended the 10th Cross-Straits Economic, Trade and Culture Forum in Shanghai on Sunday.— Xinhua

Jose Antonio Vargas, who has been recognized for his news reporting and activism, said he is being watched by immigration officials.

“I feel like I’m being held hostage by the government,” Vargas told the San Francisco Chronicle. “I’m doing everything I can to get out of the situation.”

Vargas, who is a naturalized citizen of the Philippines and has been living in the US since he was a child, said he was detained by immigration officials at the San Francisco International Airport.

The US government said it has received a request from the Philippine government to detain Vargas, who has lived in the US for about a decade.

Vargas said he hopes to be able to return to the US soon.

“Getting detained is a very embarrassing experience,” he said. “But I’m determined to fight this.”

Philippines says Islamist militant was killed by followers

MANILA, 4 May — The Philippines’ most wanted Islamist militant, whose death at the weekend could boost peace efforts in the country’s south, was killed by his own bodyguards in pursuit of a bounty offered by the United States, the head of the military said on Monday.

Abdul Basit Usman, a militant with strong al-Qaeda links who was blamed for numerous bomb attacks in the southern Philippines, had been hunted by security forces since 2002.

“There was in-fighting among his group,” General Gregorio Pio Catapang told reporters.

Catapang said he had information that Usman and five of his unidentified compatriots were killed in a shootout allegedly with fellow members of his group.

Catapang said he had information that Usman’s followers had turned on him because of a $1 million bounty offered by the US State Department.

But his account was contradicted by the country’s largest Muslim rebel group, which said its fighters killed the renegade Usman.

In March 2014, the Philippines signed a peace deal with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) ending about 45 years of conflict that has killed 120,000 people and displaced a million.

But the rebels will not lay down weapons until after a final peace deal is reached.

They are calling for Manila to set up a new Muslim autonomous government in the south, granting wider powers over its economy, politics and social life.

Catapang said Usman was travelling with seven bodyguards towards a rebel camp in Guindulangan town, on the southern island of Mindanao, when a firefight erupted within his group.

“The bodies were discovered by Moro Islamic Liberation Front rebels,” he said, adding army and police units were trying to establish the identities of the slain militants.

The MILF’s chief peace negotiator, Mohagher Iqbal, told Reuters that Usman was killed by his forces when he resisted arrest.

Usman’s group was targeted by rebel forces near a creek at around 10:30 am (0230 GMT) on Sunday, but chose to shoot it out rather than be taken to the guerrilla’s main camp, he said.

Both Catapang and Iqbal said Usman’s death would be a boost to the peace process.

“Our security operations will continue until we get all the potential spoilers to the peace table,” Catapang said, adding there were still 10 foreign Islamist militants and about 100 local renegade Islamist militants in the south.— Reuters
Israel sets up field hospital in Kathmandu

KATHMANDU, 4 May — As part of Israel’s humanitarian mission to Nepal, a field hospital is being built near Kathmandu. In the next few hours, people affected by the earthquake will begin receiving the same treatment offered in the most high-tech medical facility in Israel.

The 260-member IDF (Israel Defence Force) disaster team sent to Nepal in the wake of the earthquake there includes 40 medical personnel on a mission to save lives. One of their priorities is to set up a field hospital near Kathmandu. “The team brought the most recent technology possible,” explains Lt Col Asi Hempel, a doctor in the IDF’s Medical Corps. “The field hospital will be equipped with everything: x-rays, operating rooms that will work 24/7, laboratories and more.”

The hospital will have the ability to receive and provide care for around 200 patients a day. “Israel’s top specialists for traumatic injuries are among the medical team in Nepal,” says Lt Col Hempel. The IDF has gained much experience from past humanitarian missions, and as a result has developed unique technology for its field hospital. “We pioneered a state-of-the-art system with the IDF’s C4I Branch, that allows us to create an internal digital medical file for every patient.” The Israeli delegation includes also personnel from MOFA, civil society, organ ration, and many volunteers.— GNLM

Japanese lawmakers in Beijing with hope of improving bilateral ties

BEIJING, 4 May — A group of senior Japanese lawmakers from ruling and opposition parties arrived on Monday in Beijing with the hope of keeping up momentum for increased exchanges with China.

The three-day trip by the group comes as Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Chinese President Xi Jinping held talks, on 23 April, the second in the last five months, on the sidelines of a regional summit in Jakarta.

Amid further signs of the hope of improving bilateral ties, Abe and Xi at that time agreed to promote various exchanges, despite remaining political difficulties.

One month ago, lawmakers representing the Japanese and Chinese parliaments resumed their meeting for the first time since January 2012, as tensions over territory and wartime issues have eased somewhat over the last several months.

The cross-party delegation headed by Masahiko Komura, vice president of Japan’s ruling Liberal Democratic Party, has requested to hold talks with someone from the Chinese leadership.

On Monday evening, the Japan-China Friendship Parliamentarians’ Union will meet with former Chinese State Councilor Tang Jiaxuan.

During their stay through Wednesday, members of the parliamentarians group are also scheduled to discuss Abe’s government security policies with experts from the China Institute for International Strategic Studies, which is affiliated with the People’s Liberation Army.

Local al-Qaeda claims February murder of US citizen in Bangladesh

DHAKA, 4 May — The leader of al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) claimed responsibility for the murder of a US citizen hacked to death in Bangladesh in February and the deaths of other “blasphemers” in the region, SITE Intelligence Group reported on Sunday.

Bangladeshi police stood by their assessment that the murder of blogger Avijit Roy, a US citizen of Bangladeshi origin, was the work of a local militant group called Ansarullah Bangla Team which claimed responsibility shortly after the attack.

“As we are working in the branch of al-Qaeda,” said Dhaka police chief Muhammad Habibur Rahman. Avijit, who wrote a blog that highlighted humanism and rationalist ideas and condemned religious extremism, was hacked to death in Dhaka on 26 February. His family said radical Islamists were to blame.

SITE, which monitors Internet messages posted by jihadist groups, said AQIS leader Asim Umar made his claim in a 9-minute video, listing several people killed in Bangladesh and Pakistan.— Reuters

Korea reafirms opposition to Japan’s Meiji industrial heritage listing

SEOUL, 4 May — Foreign Minister Yun Byung Se reiterated on Monday that South Korea is opposed to the listing of the Japanese Meiji-era industrial sites as an UNESCO heritage site, saying Korean laborers were forced to work at some of the locations. Japan has listed 23 manufacturing, shipbuilding and coalmining sites of the Meiji era as heritage of the Japanese industrial revolution and asked UNESCO, the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, to register them as a world cultural heritage site.

South Korea has expressed opposition to the Japanese move, and Yun repeated the government’s position in testimony to the National Assembly on Monday.

The Japanese listing violates the spirit of the World Heritage Convention that aims to protect human heritage that possesses “universal values,” Yun said.

Yun made the remarks shortly before an advisory panel to UNESCO endorsed Japan’s application. According to South Korean government data, 57,900 Koreans were sent to work in seven of the 23 facilities, including those in Nagasaki and Kitakyushu.

Japan says the 23 industrial sites, located in eight prefectures, represent the country’s industrialization in the late 19th to the early 20th centuries.

— Kyodo News

Maersk meets Iranian officials over vessel, says no progress

COPENHAGEN, 4 May — Maersk Line said on Monday it has met again with the Ports & Maritime Organization (PMO) in Iran regarding the seizure of the vessel Maersk Tigris but the shipping company has still not received any official documents from Iranian authorities.

“We have yet to receive any written notifications (court ruling, arrest order or similar) pertaining to the seizure of Maersk Tigris or the cargo case,” Maersk wrote in a statement.

The shipping company reiterates that it is not the owner of the vessel, which is unconnected to any cargo dispute, and therefore insists again the crew and vessel be released as soon as possible.

— Kyodo News

Heavy snow hits north China’s Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region

Heavy snow hits north China’s Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region on 3 May, 2015.— XINHUA

Japan’s MDA helps local rescue efforts.— MDA (Magen David Adom)
Taxpayers should be duly recognized

By Myint Win Thein

Myanmar has undergone a democratic transition for over four years, but some words and phrases of the past are still lingering. As these words and phrases can only represent the old era, they should be left behind in the past.

For example, Myanmar media still use the phrases “government funds” or “state funds”, but it is common to see the phrases “taxpayers’ money” or “public taxes” in Western media and those of many other countries in the world. Although it is true that the government constitutionally has the right to manage taxes, it is also undeniable that taxpayers’ money consists of tax revenue collected from the people.

In addition, the government is also placing more emphasis on public taxes than any other income source, especially from transnational resources. This factor is one of the most important characteristics of democratic reform. The media should use the phrase “taxpayers’ money” to duly recognize taxpayers and honour them as responsible citizens of Myanmar.

Moreover, no two words or phrases have exactly the same meaning and so cannot be substituted for each other. They have different definitions literally, logically, socially and so on, according to semantics, the study of meanings of words and sentences.

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Due to limitation of space we are only able to publish “Letter to the Editor” that do not exceed 500 words. Should you wish to submit a text longer than 500 words please be aware that your letter will be edited.

PERSPECTIVES

Tuesday, 5 May, 2015

A Visit to Room No.113 of the Bago Hostel

By Dr. Saw Mra Aung

(Continued from 4-5-2015)

Thus Ko Aung San came to Yangon University at the age of 17, where he took the combination of Myanmar, History, Pali and English. As he was peaked on prentice, social conventions, formalities and courtesies, he never paid heed to these matters. As a day student, he was then accommodated at room No. 15 on the ground floor of the Bago Hostel. A few days after his hostel life had started, he was got by Ko Kyi Sein, a native of Dawau, who was one of his table-partners in the dining hall, for using the terms “Min(you)” and “Ngar (I)” which are the addressing terms used only among the intimate friends of same age in the Myanmar. Despite the protest of the latter, he persisted with them by answering that he could also use the same addressing terms when talking with him. In profound friendship, Ko Aung San believed, these idle things should be left behind in the past. These words and phrases can only represent the old eras, they should be left behind in the past.

During his early university days, Ko Aung San was almost always, sometimes being lost in thoughts and sometimes with his eyes glued to books in his room. He hardly made friends with other students as these words and phrases can only represent the old era, they should be left behind in the past.

When he came to the second year, he had to move to room No. 105 on the first floor of the same hostel. At that time, he diverted his attention from school lessons to politics, particularly to political thoughts. On the other hand, having understood that English was the key to the success in life, he spoke English extensively and practiced speaking it before the mirror in the privacy of his room to the extent that the passers-by took him to be a talkative fellow to them to every inch. When he was about to go to the second year, he played with his fellow students to every inch. He became Gen-San was that type. So Thakin fitted him to a “T”. In the Thakin group he was at home. He became General Secretary of the Doe Bhmar Association. He had an excellent academic performance. In those days, Thakins were known to be aggressive, recalcitrant, crude, obstinate, blunt, outspoken and high-handed in manner. Ko Aung San was so good with English and he was accepted in the Thakin group he was at home. He became General Secretary of the Doe Bhmar Association. He had an excellent academic performance. In those days, Thakins were known to be aggressive, recalcitrant, crude, obstinate, blunt, outspoken and high-handed in manner. Ko Aung San was so good with English and he was accepted in the Thakin group he was at home. He became General Secretary of the Doe Bhmar Association.

Having loathing for formalities, pushiness and flatulent boasts, he never frittered away his precious time on tending to his room and the passers-by gave a peep into the room out of curiosity. Often, he participated in the debates to improve his public speaking-skills. In July 1932, at the ceremony of appointing new chairman, he spoke in English. He tried to put on the airs of Dr. Ba Maw or Sir Maung Ji who were then the most considered educed personalities in Myanmar. But it was a miserable show and students boomed him in the mocking manner. But he spoke on unperturbed, making the mockers feel exhausted. Later, to improve his English, he, together his friend Ko Hla Pe (who was later known as Bo Lat Ya), went to English professor Mr. Rhodes and practiced speaking English with him.

On 3 November 1938, he resigned from the All Burma (Myanmar) Students’ Union and entered the Doe Bhmar Association. He had an excellent academic performance. In those days, Thakins were known to be aggressive, recalcitrant, crude, obstinate, blunt, outspoken and high-handed in manner. Ko Aung San was so good with English and he was accepted in the Thakin group he was at home. He became General Secretary of the Doe Bhmar Association.
NAT PYI TAW, 4 May — At the invitation of the speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Korea, Myanmar delegation

A Visit to Room No.113 ...

(from page 8)

When Bogyoke Aung San returned to Yangon, he was attacked with a fit of severe fever. The five-month labourious march seemed to make him weak physically and mentally. So he was forcibly put to the BIA hospital, where he was attended patiently and kindly by Daw Khin Kyi, a senior nurse. After a few days at the hospital, the stone heart of Bogyoke Aung San yielded to great kindness and tenderness of Daw Khin Kyi. He took only the meal fed by her. U Aung San, who was an invalid, had no appetite for eating but ate the plain fried rice plate and swallowed it. Bo Tun Hla, his younger brother, received the sausage from his father’s plate and snapped at it. But when Bo Tun Hla asked his mother for the sausage, suddenly snapped at the mother with a great relish. U Aung San, whose selfless and ruthless war minister took off his military jacket, he had nothing underneath, not even a vest. That was Bogyoke Aung San whose selfless dedication to the country was unsurpassed by anyone.

In August 1944, the Anti-Fascist People Freedom League was formed. Then the resistance against the Japanese was declared on 27 March 1945. During the resistance, Bogyoke Aung San himself took command at the forward area. Unlike most commanders, he always led his men in the field. He ordered from the rear command posts. He always wanted to be with his men in the forward area. So it was necessary for his dependability. Once, when Bogyoke Aung San was in Tokyo in April, he asked the Headquarter which the Japanese wanted very much to destroy was besieged by them. Heavy fighting at close range ensued. Having found that the situation was challenging, he left cover to direct a machine gunner. His aides were alarmed. When they could not persuade him to go back under cover, they took their courage in both hands and dragged him back. That was typical of Bogyoke Aung San. At the beginning of May 1945, the B.L.A. occupied Yangon. The Conference of the Middle Receding Terrace of the Shwedagon Pagoda was held on 20 January 1946 and the First Panglong Conference in March. On 2 January 1947, Bogyoke Aung San set out for England and met Neru during his stop-over in India. On January, he reached England and signed the Aung San-Atlee Agreement on 27 month and left England on 31. The Panglong Agreement could be signed under the auspices of Bogyoke Aung San on 12 February 1947. He delivered a speech on rebuilding the nation on 7 June. Bogyoke Aung San and some national leaders were assassinated on 19 July by Galon U Saw and his accomplices.

The untimely fall of Bogyoke Aung San was an irreparable loss and a severe blow to Myanmar. But the influences exerted by his unspiring, tireless and selfless endeavours could procure a new hope. One must be independent from the hands of the British. He foresaw that his country would emerge as a free state. Even now, the world is cherishing his memory. His exemplary actions constituted a perpetual impact on the mind of the public. Bogyoke was just an ordinary worldling. He, therefore, could by no means be a perfect man. He might have his own defects and weaknesses. Some attribute his sensitiveness, credulity, being unsociable and untidiness to his weaknesses. But his honesty, frankness, selflessness, resoluteness, perseverance, patriotism could surpass these so-called weaknesses. To be candid, neither he is an idealist nor I stick to personal cult. But I hold Bogyoke in high esteem and consider him a public celebrity nor for his being a public figure. It is his selflessness or having no interest in personal gain and his resoluteness which make the impossible, possible and that is , with a wattle army with a minimum training, he fought against that of the sun-never-set empire that made me admire and adore him. Today, it has been 68 years since Bogyoke left us behind. But we still remember him for these elusive qualities of his. The present population of Myanmar is over 50 million. If only one million people out of them have selflessness and resoluteness like Bogyoke, we, honestly and honestly, would have our country out of the depth of poverty. Especially, I would like to request the new generation youth who are to shoulder the State’s responsibility to make contributions to the nation and the people following in the footsteps of our Bogyoke! ****

Speaker U Khin Aung Myint poses for documentary photo together with Speaker of National Assembly of ROK Dr Chung Eui-hwa and party. — MNA

Building and discussed cooperation between parliaments of the two countries, the meeting, U Khin Aung Myint said that there are about 30,000 Korean working in Myanmar and Korea is the sixth largest foreign investors in Myanmar. The Myanmar delegation was composed of members of different political parties and Myanmar has been undergoing a democratic transition for more than four years, according to U Khin Aung Myint.

Then, U Khin Aung Myint said he would like to study the experience of Korean Parliament, which has more experience. Also present at the meeting were Chairman U Khin Shwe of an Amyotha Hluttaw Committee, repre- sented by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi with a special dinner and asked her for the Shooting Factory and viewed round machinery before at- tending a luncheon hosted by Vice Chairman Mr Park Byeong Young of Korea-Myanmar Friendship Association, meeting with Mr Koh In Suck of Seoul Water Supply Centre and visiting the national museum and the museum of military history in Seoul.

On 3 May, the Amyotha Hluttaw delegation visited the museum of traditional cul- ture and Bogyoke Aung San’s place of birth. Then, the Amyotha Hluttaw speaker gave interviews on democratic reform, constitutional reform and elections to journalists from Yonhap News Agency and Korean Parliament Television Channel before attend- ing the luncheon hosted by the speaker of the National Assembly.

In the afternoon, the Amyotha Hluttaw speaker met with parliamentarians led by Chairman Mr Lee San Dong and the Judicial Committee and discussed cooperation between the two parliaments.

Then, the Amyotha Hluttaw speaker viewed round machinery including the library and records of prominent of par- liamentarians.

On 30 April morning, the Myanmar Hluttaw speaker and the delegation visited Paldang Hydropower Plant in Namyangju before meet- ing with Agriculture, Food and Rural Development Minister of Korea Mr Lee Dong Phil and visiting the exhibitions of Samsung Company.

On 1 May, the Amyotha Hluttaw speaker visited the Cultural Machin- ery Factory and viewed round machinery before at- tending a luncheon hosted by Vice Chairman Mr Park Byeong Young of Korea-Myan- mar Friendship Association, meeting with Mr Koh In Suck of Seoul Water Supply Centre and visiting the national museum and the museum of military history in Seoul.

Tuesday, 5 May, 2015

NATIONAL

Amyotha Hluttaw speaker visits Republic of Korea

The golden moon-light, cool night breeze, the song of Daw Khin Kyi and the melodious sound produced from the violin played by Dr. Myint Swe would surely carry away Bogyoke, who was always locked in his enemy, to a romantic fairy land. Rare occasion of happiness and romance it would be for Bogyoke, a crude and heartless soldier! Some days after he had been discharged from the hospital, he entertained Daw Khin Kyi with a special dinner and asked her for the permission of marriage. Thus the wedding ceremony of Bogyoke and Daw Khin Kyi was celebrated at the BIA hospital on 6 September 1945. Although Bogyoke was Minister of War at that time, he contented himself with whatever he had. He wore and ate whatever given and prepared by his beloved wife. Every morning, Daw Khin Kyi used to prepare fried rice with a piece of sausage for Bogyoke and the three children. One morning, during the vis- it of U Aung Thang to his younger brother’s house, Bogyoke and the three children were sitting with each fried rice plate with a piece of sausage in front. At that instant, Aung San Lin, who was not satiated with his sausage, suddenly snatched at the sausage from his father’s plate and swallowed it. Bogyoke, casting a look of sympathy and understanding at his beloved son, said noth- ing but ate the plain fried rice with a great relish. U Aung Thang, at the plight of his younger brother who was then Minister of War, felt touched. On one occasion, he asked Bo Tun Hla, his personal assistant, to enquire about the price of a plot of land in May Myo so that he could resign from the mili- tary position and live there peacefully as a writer after the regaining of independ- ence. But when he heard the price of the land of May Myo, he with a sigh of disap- proval murmurered that he was too far poor to live there. Even men who were not in- vested with his power and influence were able to amass large fortunes then. But he led by Speaker of Amyotha Hluttaw U Khin Aung Myint left for Seoul on 28 April evening and arrived at the Incheon International Air- port on 29 April morning. Then, Speaker U Khin Aung Myint met with the speaker of the National As- sembly at the parliament
**Win or lose, Cameron’s political career hangs by a thread**

**LONDON, 4 May** — Prime Minister David Cameron is Britain’s most popular major party leader and his Conservative Party the most trusted on the economy after helping to revive it. But win or lose a knife-edge election this week, his career hangs by a thread.

If he loses, it’s over instantly. A prime minister who doesn’t secure an overall majority, which opinion polls suggest no party will achieve, he could face a leadership challenge from inside his famously ruthless party before too long.

A descendent of King William IV, Cameron, who came to power in a coalition with the centre-left Liberal Democrats in 2010, says he wants to go down in history having run a five-year term “to finish the job” of fixing the economy. He also plans to deliver a European Union referendum referendum, which he hopes will cure his country and party of its Eurosceptic angst.

But if he doesn’t get the Conservatives re-elected on their own, with their first overall majority in the House of Commons for 23 years, he might struggle to serve out a full term.

“The Conservatives are very hard-nosed,” Gregor Baker, a former Conservative whip who now runs a public affairs firm called Guido told Reuters. “If Cameron can deliver them a Liberal Democrat red box he’ll survive the election. But his long term prospects are very bleak. The party has never loved him.”

Tim Bale, author of a history of the Conservative Party, says Cameron faces a rough ride from his party even if he keeps them in power. “It’s the prime minister’s residence, 10 Downing Street. “If he manages to hang onto Numerous red boxes he’ll strong them for a couple of weeks,” said Bale. “Then it could be difficult.”

In a country acutely aware of the past, the prime minister’s residence back to another king — Charles II of England. Perhaps Cameron’s biggest weakness is that he has failed to quash a perception among some voters that he heads “the nasty party.”

Tim Bale, author of a history of the Conservative Party, says Cameron faces a rough ride from his party even if he keeps them in power.

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Taliban, Afghan negotiators unable to agree ceasefire

The informal talks, hosted by Qatar’s foreign ministry, came as fighting escalated after the withdrawal of most US and allied troops. The Taliban recently launched an offensive in northern Afghanistan that brought its fighters to the outskirts of Kunduz city, a provincial capital.

The United States and Pakistan, long-angered by criticisms as sympathetic to the Afghan Taliban, both welcomed the closed-door talks aimed at ending an insurgency that has raged in Afghanistan since US-backed forces drove the Taliban from power in 2001.

The talks began, our people gave demands and conditions in written form and ... distributed copies among all the participants,” he said on condition of anonymity.

Then the dialogue started openly, and the Taliban and Afghan sources have said the Qatar dialogue was also attended by representatives of several countries including the United States, China and Pakistan.

An official of the US State Department said the United States had “no meetings ongoing or scheduled with the Taliban in Doha or elsewhere”, but Washington was “strongly supportive of an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned reconciliation process whereby the Taliban and the Afghans continue engaging in talks towards a settlement to resolve the conflict in Afghanistan”.

Pakistan had no comment on whether it attended but applauded the dialogue.

“Pakistan fully supports peace talks between the Afghan government and Taliban in Qatar,” said Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry, the foreign secretary of Pakistan.

“Peace in Afghanistan is imperative for peace in the region.”

Chinese officials could not immediately be reached for comment.—Reuters

Heavy clashes in Aden airport, alliance accused of cluster bomb use

Suicide bomber blows himself up in heart of Damascus

Suicide bomber blows himself up in heart of Damascus

A Southern Popular Resistance fighter fires a weapon mounted on a truck during clashes with Houthi fighters in Yemen’s southern city of Aden on 3 May, 2015. —Reuters

Amman, 5 May — A suicide bomber blew himself up on Monday in a central neighbourhood of the Syrian capital where major security compounds are housed, according to a Syrian army source.

Suicide bombings are rare but one killed several members of President Bashar al-Assad’s inner circle in the Syrian capital in July 2012. —Reuters

A Southern Popular Resistance fighter fires a weapon mounted on a truck during clashes with Houthi fighters in Yemen’s southern city of Aden on 3 May, 2015. —Reuters

Dubai, 4 April — An Air Arabia plane flying from the United Arab Emirates was diverted to a UAE military airbase on Sunday after a passenger warned the plane was about to explode, the UAE state news agency WAM reported.

Arieliner diverted to UAE airbase after blast warning — news agency

A passenger warned the plane was about to explode, the UAE state news agency WAM reported.

DUBAI, 4 April — An Air Arabia plane flying from the United Arab Emirates was diverted to a UAE military airbase on Sunday after a passenger warned the plane was about to explode, the UAE state news agency WAM reported.

The aircraft was boarded after landing at the Al Minhad airbase by the authorities who resolved the situation using “appropriate procedures”, the agency reported, without elaborating.

The UAE-based budget carrier said in a statement that Air Arabia flight G9128 from Kuwait to the UAE emirate of Sharjah was diverted following instructions from air traffic control due to an unruly passenger onboard.

The "flight landed safe and sound, authorities are currently holding the necessary investigation", the statement said.

Air Arabia is based in Sharjah, one of seven emirates that make up the UAE. The Al Minhad airbase near Dubai is a hub for US-allied forces in the Middle East.—Reuters
Baltimore lifts curfew imposed after unrest, relieving many

Baltimore, May — The mayor of Baltimore on Sunday lifted a curfew imposed on the city last week to stem a spate of looting and arson that followed the funeral of a young black man who died from injuries suffered while in police custody.

Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake said she believed sufficient calm had been restored while for us to get totally back to normal, but I think lifting the curfew is a good idea," he said at a separate news conference on Sunday. He added that the city is working as spies for South Korea’s National Intelligence Service wanted itineraries of foreign leaders visiting North Korea and other information. North Korea has arrested others it believed were spies in recent years. On Saturday, it arrested a South Korean man with a US green card who was a student at New York University, Joo Won-moon, 21, was detained on 22 April crossing from the Chinese side of the Yalu River, according to North Korea’s KCNA news agency.

Washington, 4 May — Two men arrested by North Korea in March said in interviews with CNN that they spied for South Korea’s intelligence agency, the cable television network reported on Sunday.

North Korea said Kim Kuk Gi and Choe Chun Gil were South Korean nationals working as spies for Seoul’s National Intelligence Service from the Chinese border city of Dandong. North Korea’s National Intelligence Service accused one of them of running an “underground church” and spreading foreign information on USB sticks and SD memory cards in the country. South Korea has called the accusations “groundless.” On Sunday, CNN reported North Korea made the two men available for separate interviews, with official bodies present.

The network said it could not independently verify the accounts, which it said were similar to each other and to a North Korean state media report in March about their arrests. Choe told CNN he had been a businessman and worked as a spy for three years. He said he was arrested while trying to obtain boxes of materials from North Korea that were related to military operations, CNN reported. Kim said he was a missionary and worked as a spy for nine years. He told CNN he was an official of North Korea’s National Intelligence Service who was involved with intelligence activity and who in March was arrested by North Korea. The North Korean acting prosecutor in March that the case was closed as he was a minor. He was arrested while trying to obtain materials from North Korea that were related to military operations. CNN reported. North Korea has arrested others it believed were spies in recent years. On Saturday, it arrested a South Korean man with a US green card who was a student at New York University, Joo Won-moon, 21, was detained on 22 April crossing from the Chinese side of the Yalu River, according to North Korea’s KCNA news agency.
Four killed in shooting on Wisconsin foot bridge, including suspect

Wisconsin, 4 May — A man fatally shot three people on a walking and biking bridge in central Wisconsin on Sunday, and wounded a fourth before being found dead himself, police said. “We believe that this was a random act and we do not believe that anyone was targeted,” Menasha Police Chief Timothy Styka said during a news conference aired on local television. It was unclear how the suspected shooter died. The attack occurred at 7:30 pm on the Trestle Trail bridge over Little Lake Butte des Morts in Menasha, about 35 miles southwest of Green Bay. The wounded person was in surgery at a nearby hospital, the police chief said. Authorities did not release the identities of the victims. —Reuters
‘Avengers: Age of Ultron’ scores second biggest opening with $187.7 million

 LOS ANGELES, 4 May — “Avengers: Age of Ultron” results second biggest domestic opening in history this weekend, kicking off summer blockbuster season with a mammoth $187.7 million ($123.97 million pounds) debut.

 Globally, the film is a juggernaut, pulling in an estimated $627 million in 12 days of release. At that pace, “Avengers: Age of Ultron” should pass $1 billion, particularly after it opens in China on 12 May.

 One record remained tantalisingly out of grasp for Captain America, Iron Man and company, however. Going into the weekend many analysts predicted that “Avengers: Age of Ultron” would top the $207.4 million haul posted in 2012 by the first film in the super-team series. That box office high-water mark will stand... at least until “Star Wars: The Force Awakens” lands in theatres this Christmas.

 Part of the issue may have been weaker reviews than the first “Avengers” film, as well as competition from the NBA playoffs, the Kentucky Derby and the hotly anticipated boxing match between Floyd Mayweather Jr and Manny Pacquiao.

 The “Avengers: Age of Ultron” results are still an astonishing feat and a testament to the powerful way that Disney and Marvel have over moviegoers around the world. The three biggest North American releases in history are all Marvel movies, with “Avengers: Age of Ultron” displacing “Iron Man 3” and its $174.1 million opening from its runner-up perch on the all-time list. “It would be a shame to see headlines saying ‘Avengers 2’ fails by not setting opening weekend records,” said Phil Contrino, vice president and chief analyst at BoxOffice.com. “This is still a massive debut, but there’s something about the movie industry where people feel every weekend should set a new record.”

 Roughly $18 million of “Avengers” opening weekend loot came from 364 Imax screens, while premium large format screens scored a record $13.5 million haul. The film played broad appeal on all demographics categories. Roughly 59% of the audience was male, 41% was 25 years and older, 12% were teenagers and 22% were families. “Avengers: Age of Ultron” carries $250 million in production costs and screened in 4,276 North American locations.

 Earth’s Mightiest Heroes didn’t leave much left over for other films in the marketplace. A vast chasm exists between the first and second place finishers on the domestic charts, with “Avengers: Age of Ultron” clocking in behind “Avengers: Age of Ultron” with $6.3 million, bringing Lionsgate’s romantic fantasy’s total to $23.4 million. Universal’s “Furious 7” nabbed third place with $6.1 million, bringing its stateside plunder to $330.5 million. The action sequel is now the fourth highest-grossing film of all time on a worldwide basis with $1.4 billion in tickets sold.—Reuters

 David Beckham celebrates 40th birthday with wife, kids

 LOS ANGELES, 4 May — Former soccer star David Beckham started off his 40th birthday in Morocco shirtless.

 The former pro soccer player joined Instagram on the same day, and shared several photos from his family getaway, reported Us magazine.

 “Good morning and hello! It’s great to finally be on Instagram, been a long time coming but I can’t wait to start sharing all my special moments with you,” Beckham captioned his first pic.

 “Thank you for all your birthday messages so far. Looking forward to a great day with friends and family,” he added.

 Sharing a snap with his eldest son Brooklyn, 16, he continued, “I feel a very lucky man. Here’s a photo with @brooklynbeckham the real boss of the family!” Victoria, 41, even added a special touch with a “Happy Birthday” banner, confetti, and birthday hats. “So excited to be spending this special day with David and the kids in Marrakech,” she wrote. —PTI

 New ‘Star Wars’ products to debut at 4 September global event

 Hollywood star George Clooney is getting a brand new Porsche from wife Amal Alamuddin on his 54th birthday.—REUTERS

 LOS ANGELES, 4 May — Hollywood star George Clooney is getting a brand new Porsche from wife Amal Alamuddin on his 54th birthday. The lawyer reportedly is getting her actor husband a Porsche 911 GT3 RS worth $135,000 pounds, reported Ace Showbiz.

 A family source has been quoted as claiming, “Amal has been looking for the right car for him to replace his black Porsche 911 and the new one is much faster.” The source added, “He’s already test-driven it for his birthday present.”

 Amal, 37, was said to have arranged to buy George one of the first available in the US. The four-litre, 200mph motor will be placed in the same garage as George’s 1959 red and white Chevrolet Corvette. In addition to the pricey car, Amal plans to buy George a smoothie maker.—PTI

 Amal Alamuddin to gift George Clooney a Porsche for his birthday

 New ‘Star Wars’ products to debut at 4 September global event

 LOS ANGELES, 4 May — Major retailers and Disney Stores around the world will start selling the first merchandise tied to the upcoming film “Star Wars: The Force Awakens” during an event that will kick off just after midnight on 4 September.

 Walt Disney Co announced the plans on Sunday, just ahead of May the Fourth, an unofficial holiday known among fans as Star Wars Day.

 Demand for “Star Wars” merchandise is expected to jump with the 18 December release of “The Force Awakens,” the first movie in 10 years from the celebrated sci-fi franchise, Wall Street analysts say. At the 4 September event, Disney stores and other retailers will open at 12.01 am to sell products ranging from toys, books, and collectibles to comics, e-books, apps, apparel and lifestyle accessories, Disney said in a statement. New products will also be sold online at DisneyStore.com.

 The company urged fans to document their 4 September shopping experiences on social media with hashtags #ForceFriday and #MidnightMadness.

 It also unveiled new product packaging that features Kylo Ren, a masked villain from “The Force Awakens.” Disney bought “Star Wars” producer Lucasfilm for $4.05 billion in 2012.—Reuters

 ‘Avengers: Age of Ultron’ scores second biggest opening with $187.7 million

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Laos’ government supervises enterprises to ensure increases of minimum wage flowing to workers.

Vientiane, 4 May — Factories and manufacturing assembly plants are in the sights of Laos’ officials as the government seek to ensure recent increases of the minimum wage flowing to workers, Lao News Agency KPL reported on Monday. The minimum monthly wage for unskilled labour increased to 900,000 kip (111.25 US dollars) from 626,000 kip (77.39 US dollars) as a result of regulations that came into force on 1 April.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare began inspections of businesses in the capital to ensure compliance with legislation and expects to complete its nationwide inspection by September.

Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare’s Director of Labour Management Phongsaysack Inthalath said the minimum wage of 900,000 kip had been calculated based on a typical basket of necessities including rice, meat, fish, electricity and water.

The rate applied to staff deemed unskilled, inexperienced and without vocational qualifications employed by manufacturers, retailers and service providers and social sectors as well as to domestic workers and those engaged in the non-formal sector.

Meanwhile, employees with trade or professional skills and related vocational qualifications should be paid more.

He said some businesses were ahead of others in implementing the pay rise.

“Some companies have asked for the postponement of the new minimum wage payment to improve their pay roll or be better prepared,” Phongsaysack was reported as saying.—Xinhua

American Vonn named Pyeongchang honourary ambassador

Seoul, 4 May — United States Olympic skier Lindsey Vonn has been named an honourary ambassador for the 2018 Winter Games in South Korea’s Pyeongchang, organizers (POCOG) said on Monday.

Vonn, an Olympic gold medallist at the 2010 Vancouver Games, becomes the first international honourary ambassador for Asia’s first Winter Games outside of Japan.

Local athletes under-taking the role include Olympic figure skating gold medallist Kim Yuna, Major League Baseball player Choo Shin-soo and speed skater Lee Kyou-hyuk.

Vonn, who on Sunday announced the break-up of her relationship with tennis player Chardy, was scheduled to appear at a ceremony in Seoul on Wednesday to mark her appointment, POCOG said.

France, Qatar sign 6.3 billion euro Rafale warplane, missile deal

Doha, 4 May — President Francois Hollande and Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani signed on Monday a 6.3 billion euro (£4.6 billion) agreement for the sale of 24 Dassault Aviation-built Rafale fighter jets.

The contract — the third this year for Dassault AVMD.PA after deals to sell Rafale jets to Egypt and India — also includes MBDA missiles, and the training of 36 Qatari pilots and 100 technicians by the French military.

Officials said the accord also provided for the training of a number of Qatari intelligence officers.

“It’s a good choice,” said Holland, who had talks with Sheikh Tamim and will go on later to Saudi Arabia, where he is due to attend a summit on Tuesday of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in Riyadh.

Dassault is in talks aimed at supplying 16 of the multi-role combat jets to Malaysia and has resumed discussions over potential fighter sales to another Gulf Arab state, the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Dassault chief executive Eric Trappier told reporters Kuwait was also evaluating the plane. The Qatar sale was “a good sign for all the countries of the region” because now they would see the capabilities of the aircraft, he said.

“It’s a little bit the snowball effect — except it’s in the desert,” he said.

An archer in traditional costume shoots an arrow while riding a horse at full speed during the annual “Yabusame Shintai” event at Shimogamo Shrine in Kyoto on 3 May, 2015. Arrows shot at three 50-centimetre-square targets set at 100-metre intervals.—Kyodo News

Earthquake rattles New Zealand’s South Island — USGS

London, 4 May — An earthquake with a magnitude of 5.6 hit the near the New Zealand South Island resort towns of Queenstown and Wanaka, the US Geological Survey said on Monday.

The quake was centred 59 km (36 miles) north of Queenstown at a depth of 10 km (six miles) according to the USGS. Social media users reported feeling the tremor but there were no immediate reports of damage or injury. The quake was initially measured at 5.9 magnitude.—Reuters
Real Madrid face another defensive barrier at Juventus

TURIN, (Italy), 4 May — Having battled to break down one of Europe’s meanest defences in the quarter-finals, Real Madrid will have to do it all over again when they face Juventus in their Champions League semi-final.

The defending champions took just under three hours to break down Atlético’s resistance in the previous round, winning 1-0 on aggregate with a goal in the 88th minute of the second leg.

On Tuesday, they face a Juventus side who were crowned Serie A champions on Saturday with four games to spare after conceding only 19 goals in 34 games. Juve’s defence has been just as impressive in the Champions League with only five goals against in 10 games and six clean sheets.

However, Juventus are also a more refined outfit than Atlético, less prone to rough-arm tactics and capable of coming out and attacking depending on the circumstances.

Central defenders, Giorgio Chiellini, Andrea Barzagli and Leonardo Bonucci, have been playing together for four seasons for both Juventus and Italy, winning four successive Serie A titles.

“I think we have the best defence,” Bonucci said ahead of their semi-final first leg against Real. “We know and understand each other perfectly after playing together for so long.”

The question is whether it is good enough to stand a Real Madrid attack led by the prolific Cristiano Ronaldo, who sounded another away goal in the competition since their 2-1 win at Ludogorets Razgrad on 1 October, a total of 444 minutes’ playing time. Although Juventus are the dominant force domestically, Italian football has been in the doldrums for several years and they cannot compete with Real’s spending power.

A lot of water has passed under the bridge since Juventus last played in the semi-finals 12 years ago when, coincidentally, they also faced Real and won 4-3 on aggregate.

The only two surviving players from those ties are the respective goalkeepers Gianluigi Buffon and Iker Casillas.

Altogether, Juventus and Real have met 16 times before, all in the European Cup/Champions League, since their first meeting in the 1961/62 quarter-finals.

Those games have included one in the final in 1998, when Real Madrid won 1-0 to claim their seventh title. The most recent was in the group stage last season when Real won 2-1 at the Bernabéu and drew 2-2 in Turin.

Juventus coach Massimiliano Allegri, who has surpassed expectations in his first season at the club, was happy to accept the underdogs’ role.

“It’s not every day you get to play Real Madrid so we have to keep our heads to reach the final. If we don’t get there, it’ll be expected,” he told reporters.

“We are among the top four teams in Europe, have won the Scudetto and are in the Coppa Italia final. Nobody would have bet on us at the start of the season.

“Many thought we would be eliminated in the group stage but instead we are facing the reigning champions for a place in the final.”

— Reuters

Roger Federer crowns first Istanbul Open title

ISTANBUL, 4 May — Seventeen-time Grand Slam winner Roger Federer lifted his first Istanbul Open trophy on Sunday after defeating Pablo Cuevas of Uruguay.

Federer started in the opening set with a 3-0 lead. The 33-year-old world No 2 finished the set 6-3 in 33 minutes over Pablo Cuevas, who stunned Grigor Dimitrov in the semi-finals.

Cuevas played a much closer set in the second. But it was Federer who broke the Uruguayan on the seventh game for a 4-3 lead, before giving the advantage back on the next game. However, coming from 0-40 on the ninth game, world No 23 Cuevas showed heart by earning five consecutive points to move 5-4 ahead. And both played tough and proceeded into tie-break.

Federer lost two championship points at 6-4, and missed two more at 7-6 and 9-8. Cuevas also wasted three set points at 8-7, 8-8 and 11-10. After Cuevas’s backhand was short in the net at 11-12, Federer was crowned as Istanbul’s first champion in his career.

Federer also claimed his first victory on clay since 2012 Madrid Masters, and added the 85th title in his trophy cabinet.

— Xinhua

More than 10,000 runners lighten downtown Athens in half marathon

ATHENS, 4 May — More than 10,000 runners from Greece and abroad ran different races of the 4th Athens Half Marathon on Sunday, enjoying the beauty of downtown Athens free of vehicles. According to the Hellenic Athletics Federation and the Municipality of Athens, coorganizers of the annual event from 2012, more than 4,000 runners competed this year’s half marathon while more than 8,000 people ran the 5km and 3km road races.

Michalis Parmakis, who was struggling with fever, won the half marathon with 1:11:38. He was followed by Georgios Menis with 1:12:36. Seconds later, Giorgos Karavidas arrived at the finish line in front of the parliament building with 1:12:58.

In the 5km and 3km road races, the winners were Christos Kallias and Jorge Minto with 15:35 and 8:35 respectively.

Organizers said the Athens Half Marathon, exclusively held in the streets of the Athens city center, is acknowledged as a major national, cultural, tourist and sport event, with the participation of more and more runners from other countries.

— Xinhua

Nishikori eyes return to Madrid final

MADRID, 4 May — Kei Nishikori hopes to pick up what he left behind in the final last year as the World No 5 Japanese gears for the Madrid Open.

“I’m stronger both physically and mentally this year,” Nishikori said on the opening day of the tournament on Sunday. “I’m not insecure about playing on clay and I just have to keep my cool.”

Fourth seed Nishikori receives a first-round bye and will face either Ernesto Gulbis or David Goffin in his first match at the tournament, where three of the Big Four — defending champion Rafael Nadal, Roger Federer and Andy Murray — have entered.

Nishikori settled for a runner-up finish in 2014 after pulling out of the final against Nadal because of a hip injury but hopes to make up for it this week, coming off a successful defence of the Barcelona Open title.

“I won in Barcelona so I feel confident,” said Nishikori, who has also won in Memphis this season. “I was able to play well here last year, and I want to go into the tournament with a fresh feeling.”

— Kyodo News