President U Thein Sein confers honours on Sayadaws, outstanding individuals

YANGON, 15 May — Sayadaws and outstanding individuals received honours Friday afternoon at Myanmar International Convention Centre-1 in Nay Pyi Taw, in the third annual presidential award ceremony.

The ceremony to confer Sayadaws with presidential honorary certificates was held first, with a presentation on the religious and social endeavours of the 10 award-winning Sayadaws.

President U Thein Sein presented the certificates to the Sayadaws before posing for documentary photos with the Sayadaws, vice presidents Dr Sai Mauk Kham and U Nyan Tun, Speaker of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw U Thein Sein, and the Amyotha Hluttaw U Tun Oo, Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services and Commander-in-Chief (Army) Vice-Senior General Soe Win.

Among the 10 Sayadaws to receive the presidential honorary certificates was Chairman of State Sangha Nayaka Committee Bhano Kyaungtak Sayadaw Abhidajja Maha Rattha Guru Dr Bhaddanta Kumarabhitavamsa of Maha Aungmyay Township in Mandalay Region.

Afterwards, presidential excellence awards were presented to individuals in recognition of their outstanding achievements.

Present were guests, award winners, all-round outstanding youths and Red Cross society members, as well as boy scouts and girl guides.

In his speech at the ceremony, the president highlighted the roles of outstanding people of various sectors in democratic transition and said the government is taking measures to nurture people of high capacity.

The president added that among countries that are undergoing democratic transition, the transition of Myanmar has been smooth thanks to efforts made with genuine goodwill and unity of the people.

Although the government has been able to lead the country through the transition smoothly, it is necessary to exert efforts for national unity and internal peace through successful negotiations and cooperation of national race organizations and the people, the president said.

Afterwards, the president pointed out two endeavours achieved through cooperation of the (See page 3)

Japanese sculptor’s nature-inspired creation ‘gift to Myanmar’

YANGON, 15 May — “I am creating ‘Windy’ for Myanmar,” said Japanese sculptor Katsumi Mukai, sitting on a lawn alongside a group of local artists while taking a break from his work in Yangon.

“Windy” is Mr Mukai’s creation for an upcoming exhibition in Yangon. To make it, the 70-year-old has been using an electric chainsaw to remove parts of a teak tree 20 feet long and 5 feet in circumference.

He has hollowed out sections of the tree to create two channels twisting around it, depicting the movement of the wind.

He will finish the work, his first dedication to Myanmar, in three days, the sculptor said.

“My motive (to create Windy) is my love for nature, because nature is not only important for me, but also for Myanmar,” Mr Mukai said.

Hailing from Ooma town in Japan’s Aomori Prefecture, Mr Mukai creates sculptures from local hiba trees using a chainsaw and chisel. His creations are well-known across Japan, having been exhibited around the world.

(See page 2)

German Myanmar Business Chamber launches eye to increased bilateral trade

YANGON, 15 May — The German Myanmar Business Chamber officially launched Friday in Yangon, with the aim of fostering commercial partnerships between Europe’s largest economy and Southeast Asia’s fastest-growing market.

The chamber will serve as a business platform between German and Myanmar companies, while also seeking to establish a dialogue with the Myanmar government on economic frameworks, the GMBC’s Founding President Mr Jens Knoke said.

With an inaugural membership of more than 50 companies, the Chamber aims to work closely with the Delegation of German Industry and Commerce that has operated an office in Myanmar since 2013, and help develop the country’s private sector through the transfer of knowledge, it added.

“The GMBC will work in a spirit of partnership,” Mr Knoke said. “In order to succeed, German and Myanmar companies need to be committed to sharing market insights and knowledge with each other and building business networks.”

As Germany has a strong basis in manufacturing, a priority development area for Myanmar, the Chamber’s German members will share know-how on efficient technologies and management, as well as building responsible and sustainable business practices, added Mr Knoke, the general manager and Henkel Myanmar, which produces laundry, home care and beauty products.

Despite 60-year-old diplomatic ties between the two countries, the GMBC is the first bilateral business chamber for German and Myanmar companies in the country.

Since Myanmar opened its doors to the international business community in 2011, trade with Germany has increased rapidly. German trade statistics showed the country’s exports to Myanmar last year reached 130 million euros (US $147 million) while its imports from Myanmar totaled $100 million, a staggering 79 percent increase from the previous year.

Germany’s exports to Myanmar are machinery, data-processing equipment, electrical and optical goods, chemical products, motor vehicles and parts and pharmaceutical products, while its main import from Myanmar is garments.

GNLM
**Pyidaungsu Hluttaw approves call to extend ‘state of emergency’ period**

NAY PYI TAW, 15 May — Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann sought approval from the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw on Friday of the extension of the state of emergency for another 90 days in the Kokang self-administered area in Shan State, with MPs condemned acts of disturbance orchestrated by destructive elements, calling for the parliament to put on record whoever makes efforts to remove threats to national security. They shared their sympathy with families of soldiers wounded and killed in defence of the country, stressing the need to join hands with the army to ensure stability and rule of law in the region.

“The issue of Laukkai is a national rather than local concern, so collective participation and cooperation is individual responsibility,” an MP said.

Union Defence Minister Lt-Gen Wai Lwin expounded the handling of situations in Laukkai, including military operations, security, and economic and judicial affairs.—MNA

**Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker receives delegates from Korea-Myanmar Friendship Association**

NAY PYI TAW, 15 May — Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker U Khin Aung Myint on Friday met a delegation led by Mr Park Byeong-Seug, vice chairman of Korea-Myanmar Friendship Association, at his office here to host an informal lunch to them. Also present at the lunch were members of Amyotha Hluttaw committee.—MNA

**Myanmar’s largest food and hospitality trade event set for June**

YANGON, 15 April — Yangon will host Myanmar’s largest international food and hospitality trade event in June, with the aim of creating business opportunities for both local and foreign firms, the event’s organizer said Thursday.

Bangkok Exhibition Services Ltd will host Food and Hotel Myanmar for a second time at Myanmar Event Park in downtown Yangon from 3 to 5 June.

It will present over 250 exhibitions from 20 countries, showcasing over 1,000 different products and services, as well as seven international pavilions from Denmark, Germany, Italy, the Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan and Thailand, BES general manager Mr Justin Paul said at a press conference. In addition, two contests—the Myanmar Culinary Arts Competition and the Myanmar National Bistrita Championship—will take place during the event, the organizer said.

“We expect more than 6,000 visitors to come to this year’s event,” Mr Paul said, adding last year’s event attracted nearly 6,000 visitors.

“Although Myanmar is the new kid on the block on South East Asia, grabbing news headlines and investment. Investment in the hotel sector has now reached US $2.7 billion and it is expected to top $3 billion in 2015. “With all of these significant developments come substantial opportunities as Myanmar’s hospitality industry rapidly tries to modernize and deliver international hospitality standards for both local and foreign customers.”

Admission is free but the exhibition is open to trade and business visitors only. For further information, visit www.foodandhotelyanmar.com.—GNLM

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**Japanese sculptor’s nature-inspired creation . . .**

(from page 1)

His works are largely inspired by nature, with themes including snow, earth, wind and sunshine.

Different countries have different kinds of winds, according to Mr Mukai.

“I got some ice balls when it was windy in summer in Germany,” he said. “But, wind in Asia is the same.

“We are Asian and I feel very relaxed visiting Asian countries.”

Artist friends of Mr Mukai invited him to participate in the Myanmar-Thai and Artist Friends Art Exchange and Workshop, featuring work by more than 20 foreign artists, at the Yangon Gallery in the People’s Park.

The foreign artists, including 18 from Thailand, two from Japan and one from Malaysia, will create pieces during the workshop on 16 May and exhibit them at Yangon Gallery on 17 and 18 May.

Mr Mukai arrived earlier than other painters to create his wood sculpture.

A number of Myanmar artists are working alongside him.

Watching Mr Mukai at work was Myanmar artist Mon Thet, who captured the sculptor’s movement on a canvas using a pastel.

“My workshop starts now,” Mr Thet said jokingly. “I will create a painting with some movements of Mr Mukai in the background and will paint one of his works in the middle of the canvas.”

Well-known Myanmar art master U Tin Win (Beikthano) worked alongside Mr Mukai in Krabi, Thailand, in early February at an international art workshop there.

“When Mr Mukai worked on a big tree in Krabi, the mayor of the city visited him as a great honour to him,” U Tin Win said.

Mr Mukai said he has a big dream for Myanmar, involving the creating of 100 large wooden sculptures for display in public spaces.

“A hundred pieces is a family, and we will sit under them and talk and discuss nature, earth, our Asia, and we can meditate under them with children,” he said.

The Japanese sculptor has invited other people to take part in chiselling “waves” inside the hollowed-out trees.

“I’m not an artist or sculptor, I am just a worker,” Mr Mukai said. “I love working together with other people, especially with children, because I want them to have good memories with me.”

The Myanmar-Thai and Artist Friends Art Exchange and Workshop 2015 will take place at the Yangon Gallery on the People’s Park from 16-18 May.—GNLM

Katsumii Mukai works on a teak tree to create a modern wood sculpture. Sculpture will be on display at No 48, 612-Mile, Pyay Road. PHOTO: AYE MIN SOE
President U Thein Sein confers honours...

(from page 1) government, the parliament, defence services and the people — the hosting of the SEA Games, in which outstanding Myanmar athletes won many awards, and chairmanship of ASEAN, which helped the country to promote international cooperation.

The president explained economic predictions for Myanmar, increases in foreign investment, development of tourism, achievements in digital technologies, rural and urban infrastructure development, agricultural development, poverty reduction and trade.

The president said two new categories of awards were added at this year’s ceremony, for the service sector and research innovation. "The aim of nurturing people of high capacity in various sectors including investment, manufacturing, services and trade.

President U Thein Sein later pointed out that those who won presidential excellence awards included Red Cross society members who helped people in the Kokang area braving dangerous situations, and those who rescued shipwreck victims in Rakhine State.

The president also urged state and region governments to honour outstanding people in their states and regions.

In conclusion, the president said the government would always nurture outstanding people in defence, social and economic sectors, as well as youth entrepreneurs, women, outstanding students, boy scouts and girl guides.

After the president’s speech, a presentation on the endeavours of presidential excellence award winners was displayed via a projector. At the ceremony, the president presented prizes to 20 winners of award for excellent and one winner of special reserved award. Vice President U Nyan Tun presented awards to 23 winners in the rural/urban development and socioeconomic field, while Vice President Dr Sai Mauk Kham handed out 20 presidential special honorary awards for excellence. After the ceremony, the president hosted a dinner for award winners and guests. — MNA

Local and foreign experts engage in discussions on progress of reform and future prospects of Myanmar

YANGON, 15 May — Myanmar Summit entitled “Taking Stock” that focused on reform and upcoming elections in Myanmar organized by the Economist Intelligence Unit was held at the Strand Hotel in Yangon on Friday morning.

Southeast Asian Region Representative Richard Cockett extended greetings by saying that discussions of current affairs and future prospects of Myanmar by local and foreign experts would contribute to building a better society in Myanmar.

Union Minister for Information U Ye Htut explained the implementation of reform measures and challenges encountered in Myanmar.

Union Minister U Ye Htut, President Advisor on Economics Prof Dr Aung Tun Thet, U Robert San Pe and Chairman of First Private Bank U Sein Maung took part from the leading role in the discussions entitled “Conversation with Builders of Reform”, which was chaired by Richard Cockett. — MNA

Local and foreign experts engaged in discussions on statistics of investment in Myanmar, transition in Myanmar, puzzles of human development, ways and means for financial development in Myanmar, new generation of Myanmar, peace building in Myanmar and post-2015 prospects for Myanmar.

The facilitators responded to queries raised by participants. — MNA

Army captures Point-2202 Hill of MNDAA insurgents in Laukkai

NAY PYI TAW, 15 May — Government troops have captured Point 2202 Hill, a stronghold of MNDAA in the north of Laukkai, with the help of artillery barrages and air strikes.

Reports said the steeply sloping hill with excessively rough ground, geographical limitations and bad weather conditions posed a challenge to the army to capture it.

Three military columns resumed attacks on the hill on 12 May, when the weather improved, and drew heavy supporting fire from artillery, tanks and air strikes.

The ground troops took the hill on 14 May, following close combat with the enemies, who were forced to retreat after suffering heavy losses.

On Friday morning, the army also captured Point 2071 Hill adjacent to Point 2070 Hill while in hot pursuit of the enemies.

The army is still accelerating its attacks to capture Point 2070 Hill, the last stronghold of MNDAA. — MNA

Vice President attends dinner to mark 70th Anniversary of WWII Victory

NAY PYI TAW, 15 May — Vice President U Nyan Tun attended a dinner in commemoration of the 70th Anniversary of WWII Victory jointly organized by the Russian and Chinese Embassies at Shwe San Ein Hotel in Nay Pyi Taw Hotel Zone, here, on Friday.

Also present at the dinner were senior military officers of the office of the Commander-in-Chief (Army), deputy ministers, Russian and Chinese ambassadors, foreign diplomats and officials.

The vice president viewed documentary photos on the Second World War.

The Russian and Chinese ambassadors extended greetings. Next, they all had dinner and enjoyed video documentary on the war.

In conclusion, the president said the government would always nurture outstanding people in defence, social and economic sectors, as well as youth entrepreneurs, women, outstanding students, boy scouts and girl guides.

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Rural youths undertake computer training course

TATKON, 15 May—A month-long computer skills course for youths is being conducted at Lawka Alin Library in Ohnbin Village, Tatkon Township, until 21 May. Course instructor Ashin Kavinda, abbot of Mingala Yanaung monastery, said the course gives youths the opportunity to study computer science during their summer holidays.

Altogether 32 trainees are taking the course. Local residents have contributed to the cost of fuel for a generator to ensure power supply for computers.

Tin Soe Lwin (Tatkon IPRD)

Canada prepares to assist Myanmar Maternal and Child Welfare Association


Dr Michael McGarry, together with Dr Wai Myint and Dr Thet Oo of MMCWA, visited the pre-primary school of the association, where he inspected wells in the school compound and met with teachers and children.

Dr McGarry is inspecting clinics, delivery rooms and pre-primary schools of the MMCWA on behalf of the Canadian government, which is planning to provide assistance for the facilities.

Shwe Ye Yint

Work under way to widen Muse-Lashio-Mandalay Union Highway

MUSE, 15 May—Work is under way to widen the Muse-Lashio-Mandalay Union Highway in northern Shan State from two to four lanes. A wide variety of vehicles including heavy trucks use the road daily. With only two lanes, it is prone to traffic congestion which delays the transport of locally produced fruit and other commodities.

Ko Mong (IPRD)

Primary assistance teachers undergo additional training

TWANTAY, 15 May—Primary assistance teachers are undertaking a training course to improve their classroom performance at Basic Education High School No 1 in Twantay.

The course is being conducted for 305 teachers from Twantay, Dala and Seikkyi-Khanaungto townships until 8 June. Course lecturers include Township Education Officer U Ngwe Thura, Deputy Township Education Officer Daw Aye Aye Maw and 13 instructors.

Myo Hlaing (Twantay)
**RegEionaL**

**Chinese premier says talks with India’s Modi “meet expectations,” 24 deals signed**

BEIJING, 15 May — Chinese Premier Li Keqiang on Friday said that his talks with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi have met expectations.

“We just had in-depth talks and touched a wide range of topics, which we both expect to yield common ground and results. It is fair to say that we met expectations,” Li said after the talks with Modi at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing.

Modi said he was honoured that the Chinese President gave him a warm welcome in Xi’an, capital city of Shaanxi Province and Xi’s hometown, on Thursday afternoon.

This is the first time Xi has welcomed a foreign leader to his hometown. “President Xi’s welcome also touched the hearts of 1.25 billion Indian people,” Modi said.

“I discussed many issues with Premier Li, which will take our relations towards a positive direction. Our cooperation not only benefits the two countries, but also sends a positive signal to the world,” Modi said.

China and India have signed a total of 24 treaties and MOUs aimed at boosting cooperation in areas including railways, aerospace, mineral exploitation, marine science and vocational education.

The countries have decided to set up consulates in China’s Chengdu City and India’s Chennai City.

An action plan on deepening cooperation in railways has been signed by China’s National Railway Administration and India’s Ministry of Railways.

The two neighbours agreed to strengthen cooperation in science and technology, climate change and polar science. In addition, a five-year outline for cooperation in aerospace has been completed by authorities from the two countries.

Other agreements include strengthening exchanges in media, think tanks, education and tourism. Four pairs of sister cities, provinces and states have been unveiled, including China’s Chongqing City and India’s Chennai City.

Modi’s three-day tour is his first China visit since he took office.—Xinhua

**Thai envoy wants Japan, US to join Chinese-led development bank**

**Tokyo, 15 May — Thailand’s ambassador to Japan voiced hope on Friday that Japan and the United States will eventually join a Chinese-led development bank focused on Asia’s infrastructure development.**

“Asean as a whole support this bank...Japan and the United States, I hope, will follow suit,” Sihasak Phuangketkow told a Press conference, adding he sees the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank as complementing the role of the Asian Development Bank.

His remarks come amid global attention on the future of the AIIB, which has attracted more than 50 countries to become founding members including Thailand. The Chinese-initiated development bank is set to be established later this year.

Japan and the United States have not joined the launch of the bank for now due to concerns about the AIIB’s transparency and its impact on existing financial institutions, the World Bank and ADB.

“I know that there are concerns on the governance structure. We also want to see a strong and transparent governance structure,” Sihasak said.

Turning to his country’s ties with Japan, he said he wants to “see Japan play a bigger role in terms of engagement in Thailand” and their countries become partners in developing the Mekong region, which he dubbed as the “new frontier of trade and investments.”

The leaders of Japan and five Mekong states — Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam — will meet on 4 July in Tokyo to draw up a new strategy for Japan to contribute to the sustainable development of the Mekong region beyond 2015.—Kyodo News

**Visitors look at pictures of Megumi Yokota, who was abducted to North Korea in 1977 at age 13, as a photo exhibition on her days in Japan begins in Kawasaki, just outside of Tokyo, on 15 May, 2015.—Kyodo News**

**Wreckage of missing US helicopter found in Nepal; no survivors**

KATHMANDU, 15 May — The wreckage of a US military helicopter lost on an earthquake relief mission was found on Friday, high on a mountainside in Nepal, with three bodies recovered and the other five people on board feared dead.

A US search team identified the wreckage as that of the missing Marines UH-1Y Huey helicopter deployed after the Himalayan state was hit by a massive earthquake last month that killed more than 8,000 people.

Crash debris was found just 8 miles (13 km) north of the town of Charikot, said Army Major Dave Eastburn, spokesman for the US military’s regional Pacific Command.

“The assessment of the site is ongoing and a thorough investigation will be conducted,” he added in a statement.

The US statement made no mention of the fate of the six Marines and two Nepali soldiers on board the Huey that went missing on Tuesday, the day a strong aftershock hit Nepal and killed more than 100 people. Nepal says none of the eight on board could have survived.

The Huey, an iconic helicopter dating back to the Vietnam War era, was completely destroyed, Nepal’s top defence ministry official said, adding that three charred bodies were found in the wreckage.

“The search for others is continuing. As the helicopter has broken into pieces and totally crashed there is no chance of any survivors,” said Defence Secretary Ishwori Prasad Paudyal.

After a three-day search the Huey was spotted near the village of Ghorthali at an altitude of 11,200 ft (3,400 m), an army general told Reuters earlier, as helicopters and Nepali ground troops converged on the crash site.—Reuters

**EXTRA**

**South Korea holds drill to defend disputed islets**

SEOUL, 15 May — South Korea’s navy and coast guard began a two-day drill on Thursday to defend a pair of South Korean-controlled islets claimed by Japan, Yonhap News Agency reported on Friday.

“It is designed to deter any trespassers on our territory via a sea or air route,” an unidentified navy officer was quoted as saying.

The exercise to defend the rocky outcrops known as Dokdo in South Korea and Takeshima in Japan has been carried out twice a year since 1986. This time, it involves destroyers, an antisubmarine helicopter, jet fighters and patrol planes, Yonhap said. The report said a planned landing exercise by a squid of marines was canceled due to bad weather conditions.

**Kyodo News**
WASHINGTON, May 15 — US and Cuban negotiators will meet next week to discuss the reopening of embassies in each other’s capitals as part of efforts to restore diplomatic ties, the State Department said on Thursday. The talks will be held on 21 May in Washington, the State Department said in a statement.

The meeting will focus on practical measures needed to reopen embassies in Havana and Washington, the official added.

Abe mulls meeting Putin aide visiting Tokyo next week

TOKYO, 15 May — Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is considering meeting with Russian State Duma chairman Sergey Naryshkin, a close aide to President Vladimir Putin, during his visit to Japan next week, bilateral relations sources said on Friday.

But Abe has not decided yet on the meeting requested by Moscow, as the lower house speaker is among Russian officials subject to European and US sanctions including an asset freeze over the country’s annexation of Crimea in southern Ukraine in March last year.

If realized, Abe and Naryshkin are likely to exchange views on a visit to Putin by Japan, which was put off last year and has yet to be rescheduled.

Naryshkin is slated to visit Japan next Tuesday to attend the Russian Cultural Festival 2015 starting in Tokyo the next day, and hold talks with his Japanese counterpart, House of Representatives Speaker Tadamori Oshima, during his three-day stay, the sources said.

Kyodo News

US and Cuba to hold another round of talks next week

WASHINGTON, May 15 — US President Barack Obama and his Cuban counterpart, President Raul Castro as they hold a bilateral meeting during the Summit of the Americas in Panama City, Panama on 11 April, 2015.— Reuters

WASHINGTON, 15 May — A US-supplied missile shield to protect Gulf nations against Iranian attacks will take years to complete, requiring a step-up in regional trust, more US sales of sensitive weapons, and intensive US training to avoid mishaps in the volatile region.

A renewed joint commitment to build the regional defense system was one of the few firm outcomes of Thursday’s Camp David summit between President Barack Obama and Gulf allies, which were seeking fresh US defense pledges ahead of a possible nuclear deal they fear could erode the power arch-rival Iran. Past efforts have stalled due to tension and mistrust within the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) but US and Gulf officials say the time is now ripe to push ahead as Arab nations mount more joint military missions.

A joint statement following the summit said that the GCC states were committed to developing a ballistic missile defense capability, including an early warning system, with US technical help. Washington pledged to fast-track arms transfers to the GCC states and to send a team to the region in the coming weeks to discuss the details.

The Gulf nations fear that the sanctions relief that would accompany a nuclear deal with Tehran due by 30 June could revive Iran’s economy and enable it to acquire more accurate and reliable missiles. An integrated defense system would allow Gulf countries to better repel an Iranian attack, stitching together their radars and interceptors to counter a range of different missiles.

The system would use US early-warning satellites and a mix of US and Gulf radar to detect the launch of an enemy missile and fire a ground- or sea-based missile to destroy it far above the earth.

Lockheed Martin Corp (LMT.N), Raytheon Co (RTN.N) and Northrop Grumman Corp (NOC.N) would be key contenders to build a central command-and-control system to defend the shield since they already do similar work for the US military and key allies.

The biggest challenge to making the shield work would be securing a broad agreement on the rules for dealing with any threats, said Anthony Cordesman, a senior analyst with the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

“You have to work out the entire engagement structure before the first missile is ever launched,” Cordesman said. Intensive US-led training would also be vital to minimize the risk of mishaps, US officials say.

The US military already has 10 Patriot missile batteries to defend against short-range ballistic missiles in the Gulf region and Jordan, as well as a powerful AN-TPY-2 radar system to scan for missile launches, according to US officials.

The Gulf countries are uppermost Raytheon Patriot systems to incorporate new PAC-3 missiles built by Raytheon and Lockheed Martin Corp, and are starting to buy wider-area and longer-range systems like the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD), built by Lockheed, [ID: LN0Y39N]

Reuters

US President Barack Obama speaks while hosting the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) at Camp David in Maryland on 14 May, 2015.— Reuters

Negotiators discuss UN disarmament paper without Hiroshima invite

NEW YORK, 15 May — Participants in the UN review conference on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty held discussions on Thursday in a draft outcome document after a call for world leaders to visit Japan’s atomically-bombed cities was dropped from the paper.

The latest version was handed out as the first revised draft by Enrique Roman-Roery, chairman of the disarmament committee, one of the three subgroups at the conference.

Japan is opposed to continued diplomatic efforts at reinstating the invitation to Hiroshima and Nagasaki, believing such an initiative will help generate momentum toward a world free of nuclear weapons.

A Spanish representative told the conference that Madrid had “sought inclusion” of a call for world leaders to visit the two cities on the 70th anniversary of the atomic bombings, expressing regret at the absence of the language.

Toshio Sano, a Geneva-based Japanese envoy for disarmament, spoke at Thursday’s meeting but did not mention the invite.

An invitation to Hiroshima and Nagasaki was referenced in the process of compiling elements for a draft last week but it was dropped after China requested deletion.

A Chinese envoy, while expressing sympathy to victims of the atomic bombings, said that Japan was trying to portray itself as a victim of war.

On other aspects of the draft, non-nuclear states and nuclear-weapons states appeared to have still divergent views.

A representative of France, a nuclear power, argued that the draft contains too many references to the humanitarian aspect of nuclear weapons, to be a representative of the non-aligned movement, speaking on behalf of non-nuclear parties, called for negotiations on a convention to outlaw nuclear weapons.

Chairman Roman-Roery sought cooperation of member states for a document that “will benefit the entire international community and further strengthen the NPT.” The conference is scheduled to run through 22 May.

Kyodo News

Australian PM denies US B-1 bombers to be based in Darwin

CANBERRA, 15 May — The Australian government on Friday downplayed inflammatory comments made by a US military official regarding sending US B-1 bombers to Australia to bolster what America describes as “destabilizing effect” in the South China Sea.

US Defense Department Assistant Secretary for Asian and Pacific Security Affairs David Shear told a Congressional hearing on Wednesday that B-1 bombers and surveillance aircraft would soon be based in Australia.

Before testimony to a US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Shear also said that as US Marine and Army units “pivot” toward the Western Pacific region, “we will be placing additional Air Force assets in Australia as well, including B-1 bombers and surveillance aircraft.”

The comments were however downplayed by Australia, which hosts approximately 1,150 US Marines at its Royal Australian Air Force base in Darwin, capital of the Northern Territory.

Prime Minister Tony Abbott said on Friday that Shear’s comments were not an accurate reflection of the current situation.

“I understand that the official misspoke and that the US does not have any plans to base those air-craft in Australia,” Abbott said. “Australia’s alliance with the US is a force for stability,” Abbott said.

An Australian Defence Department spokesman said the department was “aware of the comments made by a US official in Congressional testimony over night.” The spokesman said an agreement signed by the former federal government that involved the deployment of US Marines was “not directed at any one country.”

The US Air Force said the B-1 bomber was the backbone of its long-range bomber force. The aircraft, currently being used in Iraq to attack Islamic State, is capable of rapidly delivering massive bombs weighing 225 kg each “against any adversary, anywhere in the world, at any time.”

Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott arrives at Auckland Airport on his first official visit to New Zealand, on 27 Feb, 2015.—Reuters

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NASA finds Antarctic ice shelf a few years from disintegration

LOUISIANA, 15 May — The last intact section of one of Antarctica’s mammoth ice shelves is weakening fast and will likely disintegrate completely in the next few years, contributing further to rising sea levels, according to a NASA study released on Thursday. The research, focused on a remnant of the so-called Larsen B Ice Shelf, which has existed for at least 10,000 years but partially collapsed in 2002. What is left covers about 625 square miles (1,600 square km), about half the size of Rhode Island.

Antarctica has dozens of ice shelves — massive, glacier-fed floating platforms of ice that hang over the sea at the edge of the continent’s coast line. The largest is roughly the size of France.

Larsen B is located in the Antarctic Peninsula, which extends toward the southern tip of South America and is one of two principal areas of the continent where scientists have documented the thinning of such ice formations. “This study of the Antarctic Peninsula glaciers provides insights about how ice shelves further south, which hold much more land ice, will react to a warming climate,” said Eric Rignot, co-author of the study and a glaciologist at NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California.

Almost 200 countries have agreed to negotiate a United Nations pact by the end of 2015 to combat global climate change, which most experts expect will bring about more flooding, droughts, heat waves and higher seas.

The UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has cited a probability of at least 95 percent that accelerated warming of the planet has been triggered by human activities, led by atmospheric emissions of greenhouse gases from the burning of fossil fuels. The study, published online in the journal Earth and Planetary Science Letters, was based on airborne surveys and radar data.

The study’s lead scientist, Ala Khauszandar, said analysis of the data reveals that a widening rift in Larsen B will eventually break it apart completely, probably around the year 2020.

Once that happens, glaciers held in place by the ice shelf will slip into the ocean at a fast rate, contributing to rising sea levels, scientists say. The study also found Leppard and Flask, two main tributary glaciers of the ice shelf, have thinned by between 65 and 72 feet (20 to 22 meters) in recent years, and the pace of their shrinking has accelerated since the immediate aftermath of the 2002 partial collapse of the ice shelf.

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Israel parliament confirms Netanyahu’s new govt

JERUSALEM, 15 May — The Israeli parliament approved late Thursday night a right-wing government formed by incumbent Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu after his Likud party won an early election nearly two months ago.

The 20-member cabinet, whose lineup was finalized not long before the vote, is to be sworn in near two months ago.

The 20-member cabinet, whose lineup was finalized not long before the vote, is to be sworn in near two months ago.

There had been tough negotiations between Netanyahu and Moshe Ya’alon, who is likely to run for the Likud’s four coalition partners, and among prominent Likud figures.

The presentation of the new cabinet to parliament, supposed to take place early Thursday night, was delayed due to last-minute disagreements over ministerial appointments within the Likud.

Two prominent Likud members, Gilad Erdan and Silvan Shalom, were voting for the post of foreign minister, but their requests were both rejected by Netanyahu, according to media reports.

In the new cabinet, Netanyahu holds concurrently the foreign ministry portfolio, and Moshe Ya’alon of the Likud kept his position as defense minister and Moshe Kahlon, leader of the center Kulanu party, was appointed finance minister.

There have been speculations that Netanyahu chose to keep the top diplomatic post vacant for the time being in order to invite opposition leader Isaac Herzog into the ruling coalition in the future.

Obama says Israel-Palestinian two-state solution ‘vital’ for peace

WASHINGTON, 15 May — US President Barack Obama said on Thursday he continues to believe in a two-state solution for Israel and the Palestinians was “absolutely vital” for achieving Middle East peace.

Obama said he believed the two-state option was also the best for the long-term security of Israel. He acknowledged the prospect of a peace accord “seems distant now,” noting that a number of members of the new Israeli government did not share the view that a two-state solution was viable.

US President Barack Obama speaks at an event recognizing emerging global entrepreneurs at the White House in Washington on 11 May, 2015.—REUTERS

Jeb Bush reverses on Iraq war, highlighting difference with brother

SCOTTSDALE, (Ariz), 15 May — Republican presidential candidate Jeb Bush reversed position Thursday on whether the US should have invaded Iraq, reflecting a struggle between being his own man in his expected run for the White House and remaining loyal to his brother who started the war, former President George W Bush.

Jeb Bush’s days-long search for the right formulation to describe his position on Iraq appeared to expose some rustiness on the campaign trail eight years after serving as governor of Florida.

George W Bush has privately made clear to his brother that it is okay to put some distance between the two of them, a source close to the Bush family said.

But Jeb’s loyalty, plus his belief that the service of people who fought and died in Iraq must be respected, led him into a wobbly response in a Fox News interview early this week when he said he would have invaded Iraq.

He finally straightened it out on Thursday at a town hall event in Tempe, Arizona, ahead of an evening appearance before members of the Republican National Committee (RNC) in Scottsdale.

“Knowing what we now know, I would have not engaged, I would have not gone into Iraq,” Bush said.

Jeb Bush has said throughout his exploration of a run for the Republican presidential nomination for the November 2016 election that while he loves his family, he would be “my own man” as president.

“Jeb don’t go out of my way to disagree with my brother,” Bush said. “I am loyal to him. I don’t think it’s necessary to go through every place where I disagree with him.”

He said he had been reluctant to speak his mind about the invasion because as governor, he had called relatives of military personnel killed in Iraq to say that their lives were lost in vain,” he said. “In fact, they weren’t.”

The issue may continue to dog Bush on the campaign trail.

Former Pennsylvania Senator Rick Santorum, who is likely to run for the Republican nomination, told reporters he was puzzled at Bush’s inability to dissuade the Iraq war from the outset.

“I don’t know how that was a hard question,” Santorum said. “I’ve been asked that question a hundred times and the answer is pretty clear. The information was not correct... I think everybody accepts that now.”

Others attending the RNC spring meeting thought Bush found the right response even though it took him a while. “I think it’s important for him to point out he’s his own man. He just needs to keep repeating that,” said Steve Duprey, an RNC member from New Hampshire who was a top aide to 2008 Republican presidential nominee, Senator John McCain.

What matters to voters is whether Bush is perceived to have flip-flopped on the issue for political purposes, said Saul Anuzis, former chairman of the Michigan Republican Party.

“I think he can get past it assuming he can write it off as poor articulation of the views,” said Anuzis, a supporter of the presidential bid of Texas Senator Ted Cruz. “If it is actually viewed as a flip-flop, then it becomes an issue.”

Former Florida Governor Jeb Bush talks with the media after speaking at a town hall meeting in Reno, Nevada on 13 May, 2015.—REUTERS

Comms and visual: Aerial photographs taken in February and March 2002 of parts of the Larsen B shelf in the Antarctic show different aspects of the final stages of the collapse that has reignited fears of global warming and its catastrophic effects. —Reuters

COMBO PHOTO- Aerial photographs taken in February and March 2002 of parts of the Larsen B shelf in the Antarctic show different aspects of the final stages of the collapse that has reignited fears of global warming and its catastrophic effects. —Reuters

Obama speaks at an event recognizing emerging global entrepreneurs at the White House in Washington on 11 May, 2015.—REUTERS

Washington, DC — President Barack Obama speaks at an event recognizing emerging global entrepreneurs at the White House on 11 May, 2015.—REUTERS
For better or worse, your vote is your destiny

By Kyaw Thura

Myanmar has entered its fifth year of a historic transition to democracy amid allegations of mismanagement and repression in areas including education, health, the economy, human rights, constitutional change, press freedom, the peace process and political reform.

Among a multitude of political and social groups, it is widely accepted that the country has turned a corner, with widespread hope that solutions to the challenges facing it are within reach.

The signing of the draft of a nationwide cease-fire accord between the government and ethnic armed groups can be interpreted as a sign of significant progress in political reform, with political dialogues likely to follow.

Holding a free and fair 2015 general election, planned for late October or early November, is commonly viewed as essential to national consolidation and reconciliation. The onus is therefore on all of us to seize every opportunity to help realize positive changes, while keeping a watchful eye on unscrupulous elements who may seek to spoil or delay the elections.

It is time, especially in the corridors of power, to hammer out compromises that can steer the country toward a stable democracy.

Write for us

We appreciate your feedback and contributions. If you have any comments or would like to submit editorials, analyses or reports please email Wallace.tuw@gmail.com with your name and title.

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

The great grand and auspicious paying homage ceremony for conferring the noblest religious titles on the outstanding Buddhist-monk candidates who distinctively got through the 67th Sacred Tipitakadhara Tipitakakovida Selection Examination in the year 2015

We all Buddhists across the Republic of the Union of Myanmar know that the 67th Sacred Tipitakadhara Tipitakakovida Selection Examination was successfully held at the Mahapasana (Great) Cave on the Siri Mingala Kaba Aye Hillock, Yangon, Myanmar from 28th December 2014 to 29 January 2015 and it took 33 days.

It is further learnt that altogether 360 entitled Buddhist-monk candidates sat for the exam. Out of them, 200 Buddhist-monk candidates took the oral examination and 160 candidates, the written examination. A total of 54 candidates and 36 candidates got through oral and the written examination respectively.

In this regard, the great grand and auspicious paying homage ceremony for conferring the noblest religious titles on those 90 outstanding Buddhist-monk candidates who distinctively got through the examination will be grandly held at the Mahapasana (Great) Cave on the Siri Mingala Kaba Aye Hillock, Yangon, Myanmar on the 16th May, 2015. It is further learnt that the eminent Mahatheras (Chief monks) will be present at this very great and auspicious paying homage ceremony including 90 outstanding Buddhist-monk candidates.

In order to hold successfully this ceremony, all necessary arrangements and requirements have already been conducted by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and the Government of Yangon Region.

It is known that the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has been a predominantly Theravada Buddhist nation in the world for nearly one thousand years, and over 90 percent of nation’s population has taken faith in Theravada Buddhism since then. Furthermore, the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has been recognized as a permanent higher learning centre of genuine Theravada Buddhism not only in the Buddhist world but also throughout the world. According to historical records of Buddhism, the Fifth and Sixth Great Buddhist Councils (Synods) were successfully convened in the Republic of the Union of Myanmar with a view to ensuring purifi- cation, perpetuation and propagation of the Buddha Sasana (the Buddha’s teachings) all over the world. The Sixth Great Buddhist Council, which was attended and participated by Mahatheras (Chief monks) from Five Theravada Buddhist Nations, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia, Sri Lanka and Myanmar, was successfully held in the Republic of the Union of Myanmar in 1954. In order to carefully preserve genuine Theravada Buddhism, a great number of Buddhist Monastic Institutions and learning Centers of Buddhist Scriptures have been established in the Republic of the Union of Myanmar for years. For the time being, the two Pariyatti Sasa- na Universities, one in Yangon and another in Mandalay have been so far established and it is hoped to propagate the Theravada Buddhism throughout the world. At present, Buddhist monk students are attending those two universities, and if they have got through the prescribed examinations held by these Universities, they will be conferred Takkasala Dhammacariya Degree (Bachelor of Arts) in Buddhism and Tekkasala Maha Dhammacariya Degree (Master of Arts) in Buddhism respectively. And now the international Theravada Buddhist Missionary University, the very first one in the Buddhist world has been also already established in the Republic of the Union of Myanmar in order to propagate, promote and flourish genuine Theravada Buddhism throughout the world, and to share the knowledge of Buddhism both in theory and practice with the peoples of the world to promote their happiness and moral welfare.

According to the Pariyatti (learning canonical Texts) Education System of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, there are seven kinds of religious examinations including the Sacred Tipitakakovida Selection Examination yearly held by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar. The seven kinds of religious examinations are as follows:-

(1) Tipitakadhara Tipitakakovida Selection Examination
(2) Dhammacariya Examination
(3) Pithamagyi Examination
(4) Pathamalat Examination
(5) Pathamange Examination
(6) Abhidhamma/Visuddhimagga Examination (only for Laymen and Nuns)
(7) Five Nikaya Examination

Out of these seven kinds of religious examinations, the Sacred Tipitakadhara Tipitakakovida Selection Examination has been separately held by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar since sixty six years ago. Buddhist monk candidates who wish to appear for this Sacred Tipitakadhara Tipitakakovida Selection Examination must have passed at least the Pathamagyi Examination. In fact, the Sacred Tipitakadhara Tipitakakovida Selection Examination is quite different from other religious examinations because the candidates have to take 33 days to sit for this examination. They have to take both oral examination and the written examination consists of Pali Texts, 8,026 pages of Tipitaka canons and the written examination consists of Pali Texts, 9,934 pages of Tipitaka canons respectively. Only the candidates who have got through both oral and written examinations will be presented the Title of Tipitakadhara Tipitakakovida (the Title of Religious Heroes). Up to now, only fourteen outstanding members of Sangha (Bhikkhu) (Religious Heroes) were presented the Title of Tipitakadhara Tipitakakovida within over 67 years’ duration of the Sacred Tipitakadhara Tipitakakovida Selection Examination.

It is learnt that many members of Sangha throughout the country appeared for the Sacred Tipitakadhara Tipitakakovida Selection Examination from year to year. However, most of them were not successful. In fact, the Sacred Tipitakadhara Tipitakakovida Selection Examination is the most difficult of the religious examinations which are yearly held in the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

Such Sacred Tipitakadhara Tipitakakovida Selection Examination can be held only in the Republic of the Union of Myanmar which has carefully preserved the genuine Theravada Buddhism for nearly one thousand years. It is learnt that such examination cannot be held in other Theravada Buddhist nations.

Members of Sangha, multifarious Buddhist people and Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, hand in hand, are striving to propagate, preserve and flourish the genuine Theravada Buddhism not only in homeland but also at abroad. We all Buddhists know that the Buddha Sasana of the three kinds, viz (1) Pariyatti Sasana (Learning the Buddha’s teachings), (2) Patipatti Sasana (Practical application of the Buddha’s teachings) and (3) Pa-tivdeesa Sasana (Realization of the Buddha’s teachings). Out of them, the Pariyatti Sasana is the most important one which mainly leads to the purification, perpetuation and propagation of the Buddha Sasana (the noble teachings of the Buddha). The aims and objectives of holding the Sacred Tipitakadhara Tipitakakovida Selection Examination are to preserve, promote and flourish the genuine Theravada Buddhism all over the world.

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Ba Sein (Religious Affairs)

Saturday, 16 May, 2015

GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

OPINION
Govt sends pagoda trustees rules for preservation of ancient sites

Mandalay, 15 May—The Ministry of Culture has sent a list of rules and regulations for the preservation of ancient pagodas to the respective boards of trustees for pagodas around the country.

Boards of trustees are required to cooperate with the Department of Archaeology and National Museum in preservation of cultural heritage sites, said U Nyo Myint Tun, director of the Department of Archaeology and National Museum (Mandalay).

“Ancient cultural heritage sites must be preserved as testament to the flourishing of Buddhism in the history of Myanmar, as well as Myanmar’s high architectural skills,” the director said.

“If the cultural heritage disappears, we will lose invaluable evidence in the future, people should therefore not blame us for publishing these regulations.” The government cannot allocate adequate funds for the maintenance of the cultural heritage site, meaning local people, religious organizations and Buddhist monks must cooperate to ensure their preservation, he added.

“People need to inform the department of any repairs or construction required in the precincts of religious edifices and cultural heritages,” he said.

Min Htet Aung (Mandalay Sub-printing House)

Farmers receive rights to work newly released land plots

Mada, 15 May — A ceremony to present temporary farming rights certificates to local farmers was held at the Madaya Township General Administration Department in Mandalay Region on 14 May.

Secretary of Township Land Management Committee U Shwe outlined the release of 1,200 acres of farmland by the Central Command to farmers in Nyaungok village-tract in Madaya Township on 7 March 2014. Officials presented certificates to 12 farmers for 125.20 acres of farmland each.

The authorities are scrutinizing ownership of remaining released farmlands.

Tin Maung (Mandalay)

New power lines, transformers boost electricity supply in Chanayethazan Tsp

Mandalay, 15 May—Electricians from the Township Electrical Engineer’s Office and technicians from Myanmar Integrated Power Energy have upgraded power lines and transformers in Chanayethazan Township, enabling local residents to consume electricity at full capacity.

Township Electrical Manager U Aung Kyaw Lin and electricians installed one 200-KVA transformer on 67th Street, one more transformer at the corner of 71st and 32nd streets and another one on 69th Street. They also substitute old power lines with new ones.

Tin Maung (Mandalay)

Plan set to hoist diamond orb and umbrella atop Jade Pagoda

Mandalay, 15 May—Weirawana jade pagoda has been built in Hsanywa village, 600 feet west of Yangon-Mandalay Expressway in Amarapura Township, Mandalay Region.

Arrangements have been made to hoist a diamond orb and an umbrella atop the pagoda on 5 June. In commemoration of religious activities, officials will organize a Chinlone contest from 5 to 11 June, an equestrian contest from 2 to 5 June and a bullock-cart contest from 23 May to 5 June. U Soe Naing (Aye Aye Khaing Jewellery Company) and family plan to serve 70,000 packets of meals as part of the religious celebration.

At present, people young and old visit the Jade Pagoda daily.

Tin Maung (Mandalay)

Mandalay set to host invitational volleyball tourney

Mandalay, 15 May—Mandalay Region Volleyball Subcommittee will hold the inaugural Ya-danabon Cup invitation al men’s tournament at Bahtoo Gymnasium from 24 to 30 June.

Sixteen teams will contest the tournament — sponsored by Aung Thamadi Goldsmith and Gold Refinery and Dragon One Company — with each team allowed to include up to three players from youth, region and state representative teams, as well as the Ministry of Defence team. Players previously selected for the national team are ineligible.

Team officials can apply for registration with 15 members, including one manager and two coaches, along with the K30,000 entry fee.

The volleyball teams may call Mandalay Region Sports and Physical Education Department on 02-33619, or U Tint Wai Education Department on 09-43201320 and 09-79042049.

Tin Maung (Mandalay)
Islamic State battles Syrian army near world heritage site

BEIRUT / AMMAN, 15 May — Islamic State militants were fighting government forces near an ancient city which is home to one of Syria’s world heritage sites on Thursday, part of a major offensive in central regions by the jihadist group that has destroyed antiquities in Iraq.

Islamic State fighters reached online said the group was shelling an air base near Tadmur, an oasis in the desert north-east of Damascus also known as Palmyra.

One of the fighters said it was also attacking areas around the town’s prison where some of its members are believed to be held. “The airport is also a major weapons depot. We want these weapons,” he said.

Syria’s antiquities chief Maamoun Abdulakir said the fighting was just one or two km (1 mile) from Tadmur, warning that if the militant group seizes the city, “they will destroy everything that exists there”.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitoring group said the militants had taken up positions outside Tadmur, which is listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site, after capturing al-Sukhna, 75 km (46 miles) to the northeast, on Wednesday.

An army source said fighting continued in al-Sukhna for a second day on Thursday and troops were still in their positions.

The Syrian military and allied Lebanese militants have been pushed back in the northwest and south recently, but this week cleared insurgents from mountains near the Syria-Lebanon border north of Damascus in a notable advance.

The Observatory reported heavy casualties on both sides in fighting near al-Sukhna on Wednesday, with at least 70 troops and 40 Islamic State fighters killed.

It would be the first town taken by Islamic State in direct fighting with government forces. Others seized by the group in the north and east were taken from other insurgents.

Islamic State has in recent months mounted frequent attacks on government- and rebel-held areas to the west of its stronghold in Deir al-Zor and Raqqa provinces, where its fighters have been facing air strikes by a US-led coalition.

Tadmur, which has previously been a frontline in the four-year-long Syrian conflict, was included in UNESCO’s list of World Heritage in danger in 2013, according to the UNESCO website. It contains the monumental ruins of a city that was one of the most important cultural centres of the ancient world.

The ultra-radical Islamic group has systematically destroyed antiquities in Iraqi territory it seized last year.

The military source said Syrian forces had inflicted heavy losses on what it said were many Islamic State fighters targeting al-Sukhna. “They are attacking in large numbers like cattle with heads facing the ground,” the source said.

Army said it had yet to confirm losses in its ranks, the source added.

Syrian state media said Islamic State fighters were being hit by Syrian army air strikes, adding that an Islamic State convoy had been destroyed to the east of al-Sukhna.

Since March, the Syrian army and allied militias have lost control of wide areas of the northwestern province of Idlib, and also a crossing at the border with Jordan.

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Eight killed, seven of them children, in rocket strike in Libya’s Benghazi

BENGHAZI, Libya, 15 May — Eight people were killed, including seven children, when a rocket hit a residential building in the city of Benghazi in eastern Libya on Thursday, medics said, two days after a similar attack claimed by Islamic State militants.

A Reuters reporter saw several dead children in a hospital in the city, the oil-producing North African state’s second largest, where army forces and Islamic factions have been fighting each other for a year.

The other person killed in Thursday’s rocket strike was an adult whose gender was not immediately known, medics said, and 11 people were wounded.

There was no claim of responsibility for the attack, which came after four children were killed on Tuesday in a nearby area in the port city. Islamic State militants claimed responsibility for that attack, according to a Twitter message.

Benghazi has been a battlefield for a year between army forces loyal to Khalifa Haftar, who supports Libya’s international recognized Prime Minister Abdullah al-Thinni, and Islamist groups.

The battle is part of wider conflict between former rebel groups who helped topple Muammar Gaddafi in 2011 but have now fallen out along tribal, regional and political lines.

Islamic State militants have exploited the security vacuum as two rival governments fight each other, with neither side able to turn the tables. The militants have killed dozens of foreign Christians and attacked oil fields and a luxury hotel in the capital Tripoli, 1,000 km (625 miles) west of Benghazi.

Thinni was forced to flee Tripoli last August when a rival group seized the city and set up a rival administration backing the Benghazi-based Islamist groups.

Army forces have regained some districts of Benghazi lost last year, but the port and several other areas are still dominated by the umbrella Islamist movement Majlis al-Shura.

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Iran navy fires shots at tanker as tensions rise in Gulf

WASHINGTON / LONDON, 15 May — Iranian naval vessels fired shots at a Singapore-flagged tanker in the Gulf on Thursday, in what appeared to be Iran’s latest attempt to set a legal dispute by force with passing commercial vessels, US officials said.

The incident unnerved the shipping industry just as Iran would be empowered to age to an Iranian-owned oil products tanker at about noon (0800 GMT), prompting the ship to flee to safety in United Arab Emirates’ waters.

One US official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Iran had attempted to intercept the vessel in international waters because Tehran says the tanker is liable for damage to an Iranian-owned oil platform it hit on 22 March.

The White House, Pentagon and State Department declined to confirm emerging details about the episode but acknowledged Iran’s conduct. “This is exactly the type of challenge that many of the (Gulf) partners are focused on,” said White House Deputy National Security Adviser Ben Rhodes.

Two weeks ago, Iranian patrol ships diverted a Marshall Islands-flagged container vessel from the Strait of Hormuz to settle a years-old debt case.

Shipping industry officials said they were bracing for the likelihood of even more tensions at sea, which could lead to a spike in shipping costs.

“The pattern looks like the Revolutionary Guards are using a commercial pretext to intervene in the incidents to date,” said one shipping underwriter. “This could start to impact upon (insurance) rates.”

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Bomb threat disrupts season finale of German TV model show

FRANKFURT, 15 May — German police said on Friday they had opened an investigation into an unidentified female who called in a bomb threat during the live finale of a model competition, prompting broadcaster ProSieben to stop the show.

Thousands of people were evacuated from the SAP Arena in the southwestern German city of Mannheim, where German model Heidi Klum was presenting the finale of Germany’s Next Topmodel, after the bomb threat was called in at 9 pm (1900 GMT) on Thursday.

Concern was also raised by a suspicious suitcase near the cloakroom, which was later found not to have contained explosives, police said.

The rest of the arena was searched with a bomb-sniffing dog, but no further suspicious objects were found and the all clear was given around 0100 GMT, they said in a statement.

Police said the investigation into the unidentified caller was ongoing and they could give no further information.

ProSieben said on its Twitter account: “We’re sorry. We’ll no longer be broadcasting today.”

Police said the audience of around 8,000 to 10,000 people left the SAP Arena in a calm fashion. Newspaper Bild reported on its website that Klum, her daughter Leni and the show’s jury had been taken to an undisclosed location outside the venue.

“Unfortunately we couldn’t celebrate our big finale the way we had planned,” Klum said on Facebook, adding a winner of the contest would be named in a few days.

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Honda executive says latest air bag-linked recall may impact Japan sales

Tokyo, 15 May — Honda Motor Co (7207.T) could see an impact on sales in Japan from its plans to recall some 5 million cars to replace potentially fatal air bags made by Japan’s Takata Corp (7312.T), a top executive said on Friday.

Senior Managing Officer Sho Minekawa, who oversees Honda’s sales and marketing operations, told reporters the recall announced a day earlier was a precautionary measure and investigations into the cause of the problem were still ongoing.

“There may be some impact (on sales in Japan) but we want to make sure we take the right steps,” Minekawa said at the launch of Honda’s new Shuttle hybrid model.

Honda’s move follows a recall announced this week by rivals Toyota Motor Corp (7203.T) and Nissan Motor Co (7201.T) of some 6.5 million vehicles.

It also comes after investigators showed that some Takata air bag inflators were not sealed properly, allowing moisture to seep into the propellant casing, that could make the air bag explode with excessive force.

Some 36 million vehicles globally have been recalled since 2008 for issues linked to Takata air bags, at the centre of one of the world’s biggest auto safety crises.

The tally could rise after Japan’s transport minister said the government would ask other automakers to consider recalls of cars equipped with Takata’s inflators made during the same time period as the cars covered by the current recall. The auto makers and Takata have not disclosed the time period.

Six deaths have been linked to the defective air bags, all on cars made by Honda, which has borne the brunt of the Takata recall, to date, and which posted disappointing profit forecasts last month citing high quality-related costs.

Minekawa said Honda would negotiate how to share the burden of the costs with Takata only after the cause of the problem is identified and linked back to the supplier.

Takata, in turn, has said it had no immediate plans to set aside more reserves for the fresh recalls — totalling more than 11 million vehicles — since a defect had not been officially identified.

Takata shares, which fell more than 7 percent early on Friday, were trading down 3 percent at 0548 GMT.

Gold near three-month high; eyes weekly gain on US rate expectations

SINGAPORE, 15 May — Gold traded near a three-month high on Friday and was on track for its biggest weekly gain in four months on receding expectations the Federal Reserve would hike US interest rates soon.

The bullion market was getting comfort from Wednesday data that showed US retail sales were flat in April, weaker than expected, as households cut back on purchases of automobiles and other big-ticket items.

But fears of a delayed rate hike could be keeping some investors away. The possibility of a delayed rate hike helped push the S&P 500 to a record high close on Thursday.

Among other precious metals, silver was headed for a third straight weekly gain in two months. Platinum was on track for a third straight weekly gain, but palladium was set for a weekly decline.

Brait to pay $1 billion for control of retailer New Look

JOHANNESBURG, 15 May — South African investment house Brait SE will pay $1 billion (0.63 billion pounds) for a controlling stake in British fashion retailer New Look, it said on Friday.

New Look, owned by private equity groups Apax and Permira as well as founder Tom Singh, has 600 stores in the UK and Ireland and trades from a further 200 across Europe, China, North Africa, the Middle East and Asia.

Brait said it will buy a 90 percent stake in New Look for 780 million pounds ($1.23 billion), putting the retailer at an enterprise value of 1.9 billion pounds.

“Brait will fund the purchase consideration using facilities and cash on hand,” the company said in a statement.

New Look Chief Executive Anders Kristiansen told reporters in February that the retailer was ready for a stock market flotation, though that decision was up to the owners.

New Look pulled a planned stock market listing in 2010 amid turbulent financial markets.

In April Brait bought an 80 percent controlling stake in gym group Virgin Active for $1 billion, seeking to tap the growing health-conscious middle classes, particularly in Africa and Asia.—Reuters

Green tea, red wine reduce cold, cough risk: NZ study

WELLINGTON, 15 May — The study from the University of Auckland showed on Friday that eating flavonoids, found in green tea, apple, blueberries, cocoa, red wine and onions can significantly reduce the risk of catching colds and coughs.

The study showed adults could be 33 percent more protected against the common cold, or upper respiratory tract infections, if people who eat flavonoids or take flavonoid supplements, compared with those who don’t.

People who eat flavonoids also took fewer sick days off work, nutrition researcher Andrea Braakhuis said in a statement.

“These findings show that if you’re generally healthy, eating flavonoids found in lots of fruits and vegetables can help stave off the bugs over winter,” said Braakhuis.

Most adults had two or three colds a year and children could have up to five, with symptoms including a sore throat, cough, runny nose and headache.

“We’d all love to make it through winter without one of these nasty colds. They’re a leading cause of visits to a doctor, yet antibiotics don’t help, so it’s worth giving flavonoids a go as part of a healthy diet,” said Braakhuis.

Nutrition scientists were learning more about the special components in foods, like flavonoids, which were thought to have anti-viral, anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties that help reduce the incidence of coughs and colds and boost immune function.

“Eating five serves of vegetables and two of fruit each day, in a variety of colors, will put you well on the path to getting enough flavonoids. Make sure your dinner plate is at least half full of vegetables, sip green tea over winter and enjoy the occasional red wine,” she said.—Xinhua

Women hold New Look shopping bags on Oxford Street in London, on 12 Feb, 2010.—Reuters

Gold Trust, the world’s largest gold-backed exchange-traded fund, fell 0.61 percent to 723.91 tonnes on Thursday, a four-month low.

Strength in equities could be keeping some investors away. The possibility of a delayed rate hike helped push the S&P 500 to a record high close on Thursday.

Among other precious metals, silver was headed for a third straight weekly gain in two months. Platinum was on track for a third straight weekly gain, but palladium was set for a weekly decline.

Reuters
**IAEA urges more dialogue for progress on scrapping Fukushima plant**

**VIENNA, 15 May —** The International Atomic Energy Agency called on Thursday for continued dialogue among Tokyo Electric Power Co, local communities and regulatory authorities to “make effective progress” in dealing with the challenging task of scrapping the crisis-hit Fukushima Daichi nuclear power plant.

“Continued effective dialogue with stakeholders, strengthening trust and respect between all parties, will remain valuable in making effective progress,” the UN nuclear watchdog said in a final report that contained the assessment by a team of experts that visited Japan from 9 to 17 February to review the decommissioning process.

TEPCO has come under renewed criticism after it was found in late February that it had not disclosed that rainwater contaminated with radioactive material was flowing into the nearby Pacific Ocean through a drainage channel, even though it detected relatively high radiation levels in the gutters in May last year.

TEPCO has denied there was any environmental impact due to the rainwater outflow, saying it has not seen any major changes in radiation levels in the sea.

While urging more efforts on information dissemination, the IAEA acknowledged Japan has “achieved good progress” in its efforts toward the safe decommissioning of the crippled reactors.

“Since the previous IAEA missions (in 2013), the government of Japan and TEPCO have implemented planned measures aimed at reducing nuclear and radiological hazards on the site and safely decommissioning the plant,” the report said.

The latest IAEA mission in February was the third of its kind that focused on reviewing the decommissioning process of the Fukushima plant, which was devastated by the huge earthquake and tsunami in March 2011.

The IAEA initially planned to release the final report at the end of March but pushed back the schedule partly due to the delayed disclosure of the rainwater leakage.

The IAEA experts visited Japan also in April and the findings of the visit were also included in the final report.—Kyodo News

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**Venezuela parliament leader squeezes media bosses over drugs story**

**CARACAS, 15 May —** Venezuela’s powerful parliament head Diosdado Cabello has sought a travel ban on some media bosses he is suing for slander over reproducing a story from a website La Patilla for picking up by the British newspaper ABC alleging his former security chief had fled to the United States with evidence the Socialist Party’s No 2 controlled a military-run drug cartel.

Cabello sued opposition-leaning newspaper El Nacional and web site La Patilla for picking up an article by Spanish newspaper ABC alleging his former security chief had fled to the United States with evidence the Socialist Party’s No 2 controlled a military-run drug cartel.

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Opposition leaders and US officials have for years made accusations of money laundering and drug-trafficking against the governments of President Nicolas Maduro and predecessor Hugo Chavez.

Officials call them unfounded smears that are part of a wider, US-led campaign to end the OPEC nation’s 16 years of socialism. “They accused me of being a drug trafficker without any proof,” said Cabello, a former soldier, on his Wednesday night television show. “I've requested, as a victim … that they be probed, said Cabello, a former soldier, on his Wednesday night television show. “I've requested, as a victim … that they be probed.

Judicial officials could not be reached for comment.

Miguel Otero, El Nacional’s editor, said he and his peers had also been ordered to prepare to report to court weekly.

“That is part of a government strategy to silence independent journalism,” added Otero in an interview from Miami, saying he left Venezuela three weeks ago but would return in days.

“It’s not running away,” Venezuela’s media arena was once virulently anti-government, and even contributed to stirring up a brief coup against Chavez in 2002. Under Maduro, however, three of the best-known media groups have gained new owners, bringing with them an overhaul of coverage and a softer stance toward the authorities.

— Reuters

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**Okinawans march against US bases on 43rd reversion anniversary**

**NAHA, Japan, 15 May —** About 1,200 people marched in protest against US military bases in Okinawa on Friday as Japan’s southernmost prefecture marked the 43rd anniversary of its reversion to Japanese sovereignty.

Bitterness over divides with the mainland remained strong as the small island prefecture hosting around 75 percent of the military facilities occupied by US military facilities in Japan seeks a reduced burden, while Tokyo pushes forward with a plan to relocate US Marine Corps Futenma Air Station in densely populated Ginowan to the coastal area of Nago instead of taking it outside the prefecture.

“Even after our reversion, the problems of the bases remain unchanged,” Okinawa Gov Takeshi Onaga said at a press conference, adding true democracy sought by prefecture residents has not been realized with the relocation plan being forced against their wishes.

The island prefecture spent 27 years under US military rule following the Battle of Okinawa late in World War II.

“We've long suffered from the bases, and I'm angered by the outrageousness of both the US and Japanese governments in insisting a new base be built in Henoko,” Fukuji Matsuda, who heads a local civic group, said before the march referring to the relocation site in Nago.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and US President Barack Obama confirmed the need for relocating the Futenma base at their summit last month in Washington.

Participants in the march in the prefecture were also critical of the Cabinet’s approval on Thursday of bills which will ease limitations on the Self-Defense Forces’ operations, allowing Japan to exercise the right to collective self-defense, or coming to the aid of allies under attack even if Japan itself is not attacked.

— Kyodo News

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**Italy reports 3,600 migrant rescues in two days**

**CATANIA, Italy, 15 May —** Almost 3,600 migrants have been rescued from overcrowded boats sailing from Africa to Europe over the past 48 hours, Italy said on Thursday, with sea conditions seen as perfect for attempting the crossing.

As more than 600 migrants were brought ashore at the port of Catania in Sicily, rescuers picked another 2,900 from rickety boats off the coast of Libya, the coast guard said.

Most of those who arrived in Catania had been picked up by the British warship HMS Bulwark and were Somali and Nigerian, port officials said.

With Libya engulfed in strife, people smugglers are increasingly free to pack migrants onto unsafe boats, and they are expected to push total arrivals in Italy for 2015 to 200,000, an increase of 30,000 on last year, according to an Interior Ministry projection. San德拉, a heavily pregnant 20-year-old Nigerian woman, said she left her home country because of the danger of attacks by the Islamist group Boko Haram.

“It’s not safe to go to a public place, like a church, the market,” Boko Haram might bomb the place at any time,” she said. “The war in Libya is worse. That’s why we decided to come to Italy.”

Boko Haram, which has killed thousands in its attempt to carve out an Islamist state, has suffered major setbacks this year following a co-ordinated military offensive by Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon.

A German ship, Italian navy vessels, a merchant ship, and Italy’s finance police and coast guard all conducted rescue operations on Thursday, a coast guard official told Reuters.

The 40-metre Phoenix, based in Malta and run by the Migrant Offshore Aid Station (MOAS) and Doctors Without Borders, rescued 234 migrants including 136 women and 60 children, mostly from Eritrea. The ship picked up 188 people on Wednesday.

— Reuters

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US citizens in Australia reminded to be on high terror alert

SHANGHAI, 15 May — Chinese Vice Premier Ma Kai has asked banks to enhance lending support to major infrastructure projects amid an economic slowdown.

In his inspection tours made on Thursday to several branches of Shanghai Pudong Development Bank, Bank of Communications and China Construction Bank in Shanghai, the vice premier called on them to improve efficiency in lending to enterprises and prioritize financial lending to sectors backed by the government, including railways, water projects and emerging sectors.

He said banks should also improve lending to small firms, agriculture, and tech companies.

“The real economy and the financial sector rely on each other... We need to take all available measures to reduce financing costs for borrowers,” Ma said.

Amid a cooling real estate market and shrinking exports due to uneven global economic recovery, the world’s second largest economy saw its growth slide to 7 percent in the first quarter, marking the lowest quarterly growth rate since 2009.

To offset the downward pressure in the economy and reduce the financing costs for companies, the central bank has cut the benchmark interest rate three times since November. It has also dropped the reserve requirement ratio of banks twice since February this year.

Xinhua

Chinese banks urged to support infrastructure projects

HK grants 903,000 USD to help quake victims in Nepal

HONG KONG, 15 May — The Hong Kong government on Friday approved a grant of 7 million HK dollars (about 903,000 US dollars) to World Vision Hong Kong for providing relief to earthquake victims in Nepal.

The government made the decision advised by the region’s Disaster Relief Fund Advisory Committee which hoped that the grant would facilitate the provision of timely relief to the victims and help them restore their normal living.

The grant is further to a disbursement of 50 million HK dollars made earlier for the government of Nepal to provide emergency relief to victims affected by the 7.9-magnitude earthquake on 25 April and 7.4-magnitude aftershock on 12 May. It takes the accumulative value of grants for earthquake victims in Nepal to 57 million HK dollars.

A spokesman for the Hong Kong government said that the money would be used for the designated purposes, World Vision Hong Kong would be asked to submit an evaluation report and an audited account on the use of the grant after the relief project has been completed.—Xinhua
**Entertainment**

**Women’s role in film on the red carpet at Cannes**

*Cannes (France), 15 May — Natalie Portman marks her directorial debut with an out-of-competition screening of “A Tale of Love and Darkness” in 1994. The 33-year-old actress produced and narrated the film about the life of her mother, actress Ophelia Lovibond. Portman, who heads the jury of Un Certain Regard, said: “I think the most important thing is to give women in the world, not just in cinema, the chance to tell their stories.”*

**Selena Gomez happy with curves**

*Los Angeles, 15 May — Singer-actress Selena Gomez is happy with her figure despite coming under fire from Instagram users who claimed she had gained weight. The “Come & Get It” hitmaker recently faced criticism from social media users, who speculated she had gained weight after she showed off her curvaceous figure in a series of revealing photographs from her holiday in Mexico on Instagram, reported In Style magazine. However, according to her swimsuit designer, Draya Michele, the 22-year-old star doesn’t care what her critics have to say and loves the way her body looks.*

**Johnny Depp’s teenage daughter stars opposite Natalie Portman**

*Los Angeles, 15 May — Johnny Depp, who is the father of 15-year-old Lily Rose Depp, will play spiritualist sisters in “Planetarium”. The film is co-written by Zlotowski and Robin Campillo, who previously penned “The Returned”. The new stand-up tour marks Jason Byrne’s 20th year working the comedy circuit, and will begin on 1 October in Colchester.*

**B B King, legendary guitarist known as “King of Blues,” dies at 89**

*US blues legend B B King performs during the 43rd Montreux Jazz Festival in Montreux, Switzerland on July 6, 2009.— Reuters*

**B B King, legendary guitarist known as “King of Blues,” dies at 89**

*New York, 15 May — Blues legend B B King, known as “The King of Blues” for a music career spanning over half a century and who influenced scores of guitarists from Eric Clapton to Jeff Beck, died in Las Vegas on Thursday, local media reported. He was 89.*

King, whose real name was Riley B King, was born on 16 September, 1925, the son of a poor farmer in Mississippi. His parents divorced and his mother died when he was a youngster.

After coming to enjoy music at church, he hoped to pursue a career in music and, when he was 22, moved to Memphis, Tennessee, the centre of black music at the time. He quickly grabbed attention and began working himself up.

King reached stardom with his hit “Three O’Clock Blues,” and went on to win 15 Grammys while touring extensively around the world. He was also awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Beginning in 1971, he performed in Japan a number of times.—Kyodo News

**Jason Byrne to go on new UK tour**

*London, 15 May — Comedian Jason Byrne is hitting the road with his new UK autumn tour 20 Years a Clown. The new stand-up tour marks Byrne’s 20th year working the comedy circuit, and will begin on 1 October in Colchester, reported Digital Spy.*

The comedian will also play dates in places such as Belfast, Cambridge, Canterbury, Huddersfield and Glasgow, before finishing in London’s Leicester Square Theatre.

Byrne said: “I’ve been doing the comedy circuit for 20 years and I enjoy it more than ever. I’m really looking forward to getting back out on the road; this show will be more energetic and more fun than ever before!”

Byrne is currently a co-producer of Sky1’s woodland gameshow “Wild Things” alongside Kate Humble.—PTI
Footballer Ronaldo campaigns for Nepal but $8 million donation is false

Real Madrid’s Cristiano Ronaldo

New Delhi, 15 May — Football idol Cristiano Ronaldo has actively campaigned to help raise funds for victims of the Nepal earthquakes but he has not donated $8 million (£5 million) himself as widely reported, the charity Save the Children said on Thursday.

The 30-year-old Real Madrid striker appealed to his 100 million-plus Facebook followers to donate to the charity after the first of two quakes struck, killing more than 8,000 people.

He was reported to have given seven million euros (£5 million) of his own money. But the charity said the report, which originated in the French magazine So Foot on 7 May and has since been published widely by other international media, was false.

“The global ambassador for Save the Children, Cristiano Ronaldo, has used his voice and global visibility to raise awareness of the problems that the most vulnerable children around the world, including those affected by the earthquake in Nepal, face,” said a statement from the charity.

“The latest information on the donation of Cristiano Ronaldo to the emergency response of Save the Children in Nepal is false.”

Ronaldo, who is Portuguese, and his representatives were not immediately available for comment by phone or email.

The Himalayan nation is still reeling from last month’s 7.8 magnitude earthquake, which has disrupted the lives of around eight million people — almost a third of the population. Another quake measuring 7.3 magnitude struck on Tuesday, worsening the situation and further hampering efforts by the government and aid agencies to get aid to survivors who are stranded in remote rural regions.

The United Nations has appealed for foreign donors to pay $423 million to be able to provide survivors with basic relief such as tents or tarpaulin sheets, dry food rations, safe drinking water and toilets for the next three months. As of Thursday, the UN Financial Tracking System showed that $59.5 million has been raised, only 14 percent of the total funds required.

Reuters

El Niño near-certain to last through summer: US climate centre

New York, 15 May — The El Niño climate phenomenon is almost certain to last through the Northern Hemisphere summer, the US weather service said on Wednesday, raising the chance of heavy rain in the southern United States as well as South America, and scorching heat in Asia that could devastate crops of thirsty food staples like rice.

El Niño also reduces the likelihood of a busy hurricane season, which lasts from June to November and can disrupt energy operations in the Gulf of Mexico. In its monthly report released on Thursday, the National Weather Service’s Climate Prediction Centre (CPC) said El Niño, a phenomenon which warms sea-surface temperatures in the Pacific, had a 90 percent likelihood of continuing through the summer. In April it estimated the odds at 70 percent.

El Niño conditions will likely last through the end of the year, the CPC said, pegging the chance at 80 percent.

“(El Niño)’s definitely upon us and it should remain so for the next few months,” said Don Keeney, a meteorologist with Maryland-based MDA Weather Services.

A strong El Niño last appeared in 2009-2010 and resulted in significant spikes in sugar, cocoa and wheat prices.

If a strong El Niño does develop the likely US impacts include wetter conditions across the southern US, from drought-stricken California through Texas to Florida, said Jeff Masters, a meteorologist for Weather Underground.

Recent rains across the central and southern Plains and reaching as far as southern California “could be seen as a sneak preview,” he wrote on his blog.

But the El Niño effect did not guarantee drought relief for the Golden State, he said. “The strong El Niño of 1987-88 ... produced a drier-than-average winter from California to Washington,” he wrote.

Reuters

Malaysia cagery on SEA Games gold targets

Kuala Lumpur, 15 May — Cager Malaysia has delayed revealing their gold medal target for next month’s Southeast Asian Games in Singapore.

Malaysia’s Youth and Sports Minister Khairy Jamaluddin declined to follow Chef de Mission Norzu Zakaria in targeting 50 golds at the 5-16 June multi-sport biennial Games for the 11-nation bloc. “We have yet to come up with the final target,” Khairy was quoted as saying by local media in Friday’s papers. “We’ll decide eventually ... whether it’s the gold medal target or overall medal target. It’s something we’re still discussing. It’s not a matter that we see as urgent. I’ll announce it when the time comes.”

Khairy added that the measure of Malaysia’s success should not be restricted to medals, but also factor in promising performances from younger athletes.

Malaysia won 43 golds at the 2013 SEA Games in Myanmar. — Reuters

A woman carries a bucket of water on her head in Santa Isabel on 19 Aug, 2014. — Reuters

Myanmar International

News Channel in Brief

Entertainment Channel

Saturday, 16 May, 2015
Djokovic battles through to Rome quarter-finals

Novak Djokovic of Serbia returns the ball to Nicolas Almagro of Spain during their match at the Rome Open tennis tournament in Rome, Italy on 12 May, 2015.—Reuters

ROME, 15 May — Novak Djokovic had to fight back from a set down to beat Thomaz Bellucci and reach the Italian Open quarter-finals on Thursday while Rafa Nadal produced an "almost perfect" display to dispatch John Isner.

World number one Djokovic won 5-7, 6-2, 6-3 but was made to work hard after his left-handed opponent, ranked 68th, played a flawless opening set with his left-handed serve and powerful forehand repeatedly troubled the holder.

"He (Bellucci) kept me off balance with the variety on his serve," Djokovic said. "I couldn’t quite find the right position where to stand on the return."

Once the Serb broke in the fourth game of the second set he relaxed and took control, running Bellucci all over the court with precise ground strokes and impecable backhand drop shots. "It was a hard-fought match and I have to give him credit for the way he played," added Djokovic.

Next Djokovic meets fifth-seeded Kei Nishikori, who beat Djokovic's compatriot Victor Troicki 6-4, 6-3. Fourth seed Nadal, who has struggled to find his best form this season in the wake of a wrist injury and appendicitis issues that undercut his performances last year, was imperious against the big-serving American and triumphed 6-4, 6-4.

He did not face a single break point and won 90 percent of his first-service points. "I was almost perfect," Nadal told Sky Sports Italia. "It was a good match. I’m satisfied."

The Spaniard, who fell to seventh in the rankings after Sunday’s Madrid final defeat by Andy Murray, looked to be back on the path to discovering his best claycourt form. The warm weather made the court faster and Nadal’s top-spin forehand forced Isner on the defensive, something the statuesque American does not handle well.

Nadal, a seven-time champion in Rome, will now face Stanislas Wawrinka, who beat Dominic Thiem 7-6 (3), 6-4 to record consecutive victories for the first time since February.

Second seed Federer appeared to be heading for an easy win against Anderson as he broke early in both sets and held two match points on serve, leading 5-2 in the second set.

Anderson valiantly fought back to level, however, before losing the last two games and the match 6-3, 7-5. The Swiss will now face Tomas Berdych who was stretched to the limit by home favourite Fabio Fognini. The sixth seeded Czech won 6-3, 3-6, 7-6 (2) to reach his ninth quarter-final of the year in as many tournaments.

Seventh seed David Ferrer crushed fellow Spaniard Guillermo Garcia-Lopez 6-1, 6-3 and will play Belgian David Goffin who had a walkover when third seed Andy Murray withdrew due to a right elbow injury.

Fourth seeded Czech Petra Kvitova was too powerful for world number one Jelena Jankovic, hitting 23 winners in a 6-3, 6-2 win, and faces Carla Suarez Navarro in the last eight. Canada’s sixth seed Eugenie Bouchard double faulted when she had match point in the third set tiebreak before losing a three-hour battle to Spaniard Suarez Navarro 6-7 (2), 7-5, 7-6 (7-3).

Romanian second seed Simona Halep beat Venus Williams 6-2, 6-1 in just over an hour and next meets compatriot Alexandra Dulgheru.—Reuters

AFC, MFF to conduct “A” certificate coaching course

YANGON, 15 May — With the aim of improving Myanmar football sport standard and turning out qualified football coaches, Asian Football Confederation and Myanmar Football Federation will jointly organize the AFC “A” certificate coaching course at Youth Training Centre, here, from 7 July to 22 July this year.

The candidates must have at least one-year experience in “B” licence with fitness to join practical and theoretical works. The trainees must have capacity to draw a log book for 90 hours training of the clubs. The trainees must have skill in English.

The list of candidates is to be submitted to the Myanmar Football Federation not later than 25 May. The course will not admit the overdue list of trainees as it limits number of trainees.—MNA

Holders Sevilla sweep into Europa League final

FLORENCE, (Italy), 15 May — Holders Sevilla swept into a second consecutive Europa League final when a 2-0 victory at Fiorentina on Thursday secured a crushing 5-0 aggregate success for the La Liga club in their semi-final tie.

Sevilla had all-but booked their place in the showpiece in Warsaw after thwarting the Italian side’s first-leg success late in the first half, but scored twice in the second half to dispose of Fiorentina.

The Whites had already reached the final of this season’s Champions League, but once again the team from Seville were too good for their opponents, who had won all three matches they played in the competition if they can overcome Dinipro-Dnipropetrovsk on 27 May.

The Ukrainians won 1-0 at home to Fiorentina’s Spanish coach Unai Emery a week earlier, but lost 2-1 in the return leg in Spain in 2015.

The referee lifted the final tie on penalties to seal the Spanish club’s fourth final in five years, and they are now in a position to become the first team to retain the Europa League trophy since 1996.

Sevilla have won back-to-back Europa Cups in 2006 and 2007, and beat Benfica on penalties to secure the renamed trophy last year.

Napoli were the second, but they would also carry a lucrative berth in the group stage of next season’s Champions League.—Reuters

Myanmar cruise into quarterfinal with 3-0 win over Saudi Arabia

NAY PYI TAW, 15 May — Host Myanmar trounced Saudi Arabia with a 3-0 result (25-20, 26-24 and 25-19) in the group match of the 1st Asian U-23 Men’s Volleyball Championship at Wunna Theikdi Gymnasia, here, on Friday.

Myanmar also won over Thailand on 12 and 13 May. Myanmar cruised into the quarterfinal without any loss in the group matches.

On Friday, Iran met with Qatar; Taipei vied with China; and Indonesia competed with Kazakhstan. In the fourth and last-day group matches Saudi Arabia will play against Maldives, Qatar with India, the Philippines with Iran, Vietnam with Australia and Japan with Korea on 16 May.—MNA

Sevilla players celebrate at the end of the match during UEFA Europa League Semi Final Second Leg at ArtemioFranchi Stadium, Florence, Italy on 14 May, 2015.—Reuters

Sevilla coach Unai Emery paid tribute to his players, who also dispatched BorussiaMoenchengladbach, Villarreal and Zenit St Petersburg in the knockout rounds.

"Dinipro have made it and nobody has gifted them anything," Emery told Spanish television broadcaster Cuatro.

"Knocking out Napoli is an impressive achievement," he added. "It’s not going to be easy, it’s 50-50 and we won’t be going there as favourites."

Carlos Bacca fired Sevilla’s opener in the 22nd minute at the StadioComunale Artemio Franchi in Florence when he sent a close-range effort arrowing into the roof of the net.

That left Fiorentina needing five goals without reply to progress but they fell further behind when Daniel Carrico made it 2-0 to the visitors five minutes later.

Fiorentina’s next went from bad to worse midway through the second half when Josip Ilicic’s equaliser was soon cancelled out by David Pizarro in the penalty area. If Sevilla clinch a