State Counsellor arrives in Rome

STATE Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi arrived in Italy yesterday afternoon after leaving Brussels, Belgium earlier in the day.

The State Counsellor was welcomed at Rome Fiumicino International Airport by Myanmar Ambassador to Italy U Myint Naung and wife, Mr. Andrea Cavallari, a senior officer of the protocol department of the Foreign Affairs Ministry of Italy and Myanmar embassy staff. The State Counsellor met in the afternoon with Former Italian Prime Minister Mr. Romano Prodi at the Boscolo Hotel.

Accompanying the State Counsellor were the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs U Kyaw Tin, Myanmar Ambassador to Italy U Myint Naung and other officials.

After her visit to Italy, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi will travel to Britain.

During her visit to Brussels, she clarified the government’s efforts for transition to democracy, national reconciliation, efforts being made on the road to eternal peace and stability and development in Rakhine State.

— Myanmar News Agency
World Press Freedom Day event held in Yangon

Win Nandar

THE third of May is World Press Freedom Day, as declared by the United Nations General Assembly in 1993 and supported by the UNESCO General Assembly. An event has been held in Myanmar every year since 2012, and yesterday it was held at the Chatrium Hotel.

Ambassadors from foreign embassies, resident representatives of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UNESCO, Myanmar media organizations, civil societies and invited persons attended the event.

In his opening speech to the event, Union Minister for Information Dr. Pe Myint said the theme for World Press Freedom Day 2017 “Critical Minds for Critical Times: Media’s role in advancing peaceful, just and inclusive societies” is very appropriate for Myanmar and observed that it was created to reflect the world’s international situation.

He said the present world is unjust and not peaceful, while the societies are non-inclusive, to which the role of the media is to help develop it into a peaceful, just world with inclusive societies. He added that in the country today, individuals and organisations who wish well for the country and the government are all aiming toward a peaceful, just and inclusive society.

In the World Press Freedom Index published annually by Reporters Without Borders (RSF), Myanmar was 169 out of 179 countries in 2011-2012. In 2013, 2014 and 2015, it was at 151, 145 and 144, respectively.

Myanmar press freedom ranking jumps, reaching No 3 in ASEAN, just behind Indonesia and the Philippines, according to the latest survey by Paris-based Reporters Sans Frontiers (RSF).

Myanmar press freedom ranking jumps, reaching No 3 in ASEAN, just behind Indonesia and the Philippines

By 2016, it was at 143, making gradual progress. This year, the progress was 12 more levels to 131. “Having achieved 131 out of 180 countries isn’t much to be proud about, but it is progress that we can be happy about”, the minister said. “We will not be satisfied with this and will cooperate with local and international organisations to support the advancement of the freedom of journalists and media organizations”.

Ms. Renata Dessallien, the UNDP Resident Representative, read the UN Secretary-General’s World Press Freedom Day 2017 message which said journalists go to the most dangerous places to give voice to the voiceless and need leaders to defend a free media that is crucial to counter prevailing misinformation. Ms. Renata Dessallien said media freedom in Myanmar is progressing well and last year AP in Myanmar received its first Pulitzer prize.

It also stepped up to 131 in the World Press Freedom Index, jumping 12 steps, but there are 130 countries ahead of it and much need to be done. “Myanmar has reached a certain stage in media freedom and it is very important in the transition to democracy”, Ms Dessallien said.

The UNESCO Resident Representative Ms. Min Jeong Kim then read the message of the UNESCO Director General.

Minister Counsellor Mr. Johan Hallenborg of the Swedish Embassy said that the news media must not use their skills for hate-speech and need to be straightforward.

Later, representatives from the Myanmar Press Council, Myanmar Journalists Association, Myanmar Journalist Network, Myanmar Journalists Union, Burma News International (BNI) and National Management Degree College (News and Media Department) read their World Press Freedom Day messages.

—Myanmar News Agency

Myanmar Gazette

THE President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has transferred Dr. Daw Sandar Oo, Director-General, Budget Department under the Ministry of Planning and Finance as Managing Director of Myanmar Insurance from the date she assumes charge of her duties.

—Myanmar News Agency

Proposed appointment of Nepalese Ambassador agreed upon

THE Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has agreed to the proposed appointment of Mr. Bhim K. Udas as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal to the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

Mr. Bhim K. Udas was born in 1950. He received a Bachelor’s Degree of Arts from the Tribhuvan University, Nepal in 1970 and a Master’s Degree from the University of Peshawar, Pakistan in 1982.

He served in the United Nations World Food Programme for 30 years from 1981 to 2010 at different positions in the Russian Federation, Jordan, Switzerland, Armenia, Italy and Pakistan as well as in Myanmar (October 2003-September 2006), India (August-October 2009) and South Africa (September 2006-December 2010). He also served as Honorary Consul of Jordan until February 2017. He is married.

—Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Appointmen of ambassador agreed upon

THE Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has agreed to the appointment of Mrs. Riikka Laatu as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Finland to the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, with residence in Yangon.

Mrs. Riikka Laatu was born in 1956 in Karvia, Finland. She received a Master’s Degree in Geography from the University of Helsinki. Prior to joining the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, she worked at the University of Helsinki as a Lecturer in Geography.

Mrs. Riikka Laatu has been working in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland since 1985, and served in various capacities.

From 2007 to 2011, she served as Permanent Representative of Finland to FAO and the other United Nations Organizations in Rome.

Afterward, she served as the Director, Unit for Sectoral Policy in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Helsinki, from 2011 to 2013. Since 2013, she has held the position of Deputy Director General, Development Policy.

She is married, and has three adult children.

—Ministry of Foreign Affairs

U Tha Aung Nyun concurrently appointed as Ambassador to Fiji

THE President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has appointed U Tha Aung Nyun, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar to the Commonwealth of Australia, concurrently as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar to the Republic of Fiji.

—Ministry of Foreign Affairs

3  THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

Union Minister Dr. Pe Myint of the Ministry of Information addresses the audience at the World Press Freedom Day 2017 event held at the Chatrium Hotel in Yangon yesterday. PHOTO: ZAW MIN LATT
CBM Governor, US Ambassador hold talks

U Kyaw Kyaw Maung, Governor of the Central Bank of Myanmar, met with a delegation led by US Ambassador Mr Scot Marciel in Gankaw Hall of CBN Bank in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

They discussed policies of the CBM, management of financial organisations, the rate of development in Myanmar’s economy and financial sector, improving monetary transactions in trade deals between Myanmar and other countries, ways in which banks can support small and medium enterprises, status of foreign investment in Thilawa Special Economic Zone, improving infrastructure throughout the country, and endeavours by CBM in providing American scholarships for the development of human resources in Myanmar. The meeting began at 11 am and ended at 12:05.

Also in attendance were Vice-chairman U Sett Aung and the Director-General from the office of Chairman Daw Myint Myint Kyi.

—Myanmar News Agency

JMC-U holds 10th meeting in Yangon

THE Union Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC-U) launched its 10th meeting in Yangon yesterday, expecting to approve directives for monitoring works at the village-level and draft of the rules for security and formation of the Local Joint Monitoring Committee (JMCL) and the landmine clearance issue.

In the first day of the three-day meeting, the participants approved directives for monitoring by both sides at the local level, said Dr ShweKhar, Secretary-1 of the JMC-U.

Lt-Gen YarPyai, Chairman of the JMC-U, called on signatories to the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement to follow the points in the agreement, stressing the need to clear up doubts when they arise at the ground level.

In his opening remarks, Saw Zet I Poe, Vice-Chairman-1 of the JMC-U, stressed the importance of cooperation from the people in implementing the NCA, urging the local people in the conflict areas to participate in joint monitoring works of the ceasefire agreement. Local Joint Monitoring Committee-L will establish 10 local offices.

The JMC set up a budget of US$6.5 million for the first year contributed by international donors. Representatives of the JMC will hold a meeting next week to discuss the establishment of the 10 local-level offices of the JMC.

—Ye KhaungNyun

Secretary of Maungtaw Investigation Commission meets United States Ambassador

SECRETARY of Maungtaw Investigation Commission, U Zaw Myint Pe met with Mr. Scot Marciel, United States Ambassador to Myanmar, at the President’s office in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning.

During the meeting with U Zaw Myint Pe, Mr. Scot Marciel, United States Ambassador, discussed matters relating to the tasks of the Maungtaw Investigation Commission and exchanged views what he wants to know.

Present at the meeting was Dr. Daw Thein Thet Zin, member of the Maungtaw Investigation Commission.

—Myanmar News Agency

Outstanding students in Ngwehsaung and Bagan camp on sightseeing tours

OUTSTANDING students who are currently staying at Ngwehsaung and Bagan camp visited places of local interest and observed livelihoods of local people separately yesterday.

Firstly, they went to Yazana sea prawn breeding farm and observed the R.O water purification system that is necessarily in the breeding process. They also viewed the latest technology performed with the special purifier donated by Morkwater Solutions from Germany that turns the sea water to fresh water step-by-step using solar power and kills microbes. After that, they visited Thazin village and examined the fishery products by the local people and officials from the fishery department explained the procedures. “By visiting the villages, the outstanding students will sympathize the local people’s livelihood and they will have a vision to improve it as much as they can in the future,” said, U NyanThein, an officer of the camp. In the evening, they also visited the Hotel zone and bought traditional presents. Outstanding students from Bagan camp also visited interesting places and religious centers in Bagan and Chauk regions respectively in the morning. At first, they went to Salay Wood-monastery also known as Yoke SoneKyaung and saw various arts made from carvings. Then they visited Shin Pinsar Kyo Ilha Pagoda. In the afternoon, they visited Bagan Archaeological Museum, Thiri Zaya Bhum Bagan Golden Palace and old palace excavation site, accordingly—Min Thit and Naing Lin Kyi
Agricultural service centres to be established in 33 places within four years

Agricultural service centres will be established in 33 sites in states and regions within four years, said an official from the Myanmar Rice Federation (MRF).

The agricultural service centre will be set up with an aim to provide services to local farmers and to develop the farming sector and rice sector. “We have already requested that private companies provide loans to implement the project in 33 places”, said U Ye Min Aung, the general secretary from MRF. The agricultural service centres will distribute pedigree seeds for local farmers, build godowns for storing crops and rice drying machines in the post-harvest period, provide transplanting machines, tractors and harvesting and threshing machines, implement a contract farming system, distribute and sell fertilizer, rice milling and generations of electricity from rice husks. The agricultural service centres will be set up with the open tender system. An estimated cost of the project is US$12.14 million. A total of 33 projects will cost US$400.884 million.—Min Min

Over Ks58 billion to be spent to supply electricity to rural areas

Over Ks58 billion will be spent to supply electricity to 1,233 villages in the 2017-2018 fiscal year, said U Khant Zaw, the Director-General from the Department of Rural Development.

To supply electricity to the villages, the government will provide Ks11.06 billion, while the remaining amount of Ks47.76 billion will be granted by the World Bank. The electricity supplying project is expected to be completed in June, 2018.

“To start the project as soon as possible, we invited tenders starting on 27 February 2017. The tender was opened on 27 April. We are now making arrangements to enter into a contract with the selected company. We will start to check the sample before installations starting in October,” said U Khant Zaw. Home solar power systems will be supplied to 95,639 houses in 34 villages.

The department will also supply electricity to public buildings such as schools, health care centres, religious buildings and street lamp posts.—200

Government exceeds revenue target in fiscal 2016-2017

The government exceeded revenue targets in the revised budget in the fiscal year 2016-2017. The revenue from all sectors was Ks360 billion higher than the target set by the government, said an official from the Internal Revenue Department.

The revenue target according to the revised budget was Ks5 trillion in the 2016-2017 fiscal year. The government had collect revenue of over Ks1.62 trillion from commercial taxes, Ks30 billion from lottery taxes, over Ks37 billion from stamp duty taxes, Ks600 billion from special commodity taxes and over Ks2.37 trillion from incoming taxes, for a total of Ks4.66 trillion.

Although the revised budget targets revenue of Ks5 trillion, the revenue earned was over Ks5.4 trillion. The revenue of the Myanmar government is the lowest when compared to other Asian countries.

Therefore, the government needs to ensure full collection of all the taxes due and to expose tax evaders.—200

Yaba pills seized in Mandalay and Yangon

An anti-narcotic squad from northern Mandalay searched a suspicious looking man called Wai Lwin Oo at Shwe Taung tea shop at the corner of Manawhari street and 49th street in Chanmyathazi Township, Mandalay on 2 May. Police discovered 1,385 yaba pills and a phone handset from him.

Another anti-narcotic squad from Yangon (East) searched residence of Ma May Thada Htet and Ma Than Than Khaiing on the road in front of No.44, 157th street in Tamwe Township, Yangon. Police found Kyaw Thu, the husband of Ma Than Than Khaiing in possession of 1,780 yaba pills.

Police have taken action against them under the Anti-narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law.—Myanmar Police Force

Super Custom Overturns on Ygn-Mdy Highway

A Super Custom heading from Mandalay to Nay Pyi Taw driven by Hlaing Thin hit a road-divider and overturned when the right wheel burst out between mile posts 235/7 and 236/0 at 7:45 am yesterday.

Out of seven passengers, a sangha, four women and a man were injured. The injured people were taken by Phayataung highway police to 1,780 yaba pills. The department also supply electricity to public buildings such as schools, health care centres, religious buildings and street lamp posts.—200

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YSX hit all-time stock trading low in April

STOCK trading on the Yangon Stock Exchange (YSX) reached its lowest value of about Ks1.2 billion in April when compared to monthly stock trading values over the past 14 months.

First Myanmar Investment (FMI), Myanmar Thilawa SEZ Holdings (MTSH), Myanmar Citizens Bank (MCB) and FPB are currently trading their shares on YSX.

Last year, the monthly stock trading values by FMI on YSX were over Ks24 billion in March and over Ks3.8 billion in April. With MTSH entering YSX on 20th May, stock trading values of FMI and MTSH amounted to over Ks1.6 billion in May and over Ks6.8 billion in June and over Ks3.7 billion in July. After MCB listed on YSX, the monthly stock trading values were over Ks2.9 billion in August, over Ks2.4 billion in September, over Ks8.8 billion in October and over Ks2.2 billion in November. YSX stock trading in December hit an all-time low with a trading value of only Ks1.5 billion last year, it is learnt from the monthly reports of YSX.

With the debut of First Private Bank (FPB) on YSX, stock trading in January and February 2017 hit over Ks8 billion and over US$3.3 billion in March.

The stock trading on YSX in April hit the record low of over Ks1.2 billion in the past 14 months, according to the stock trading data of YSX. A total of 5,227 shares worth Ks70,749,500 were traded on 3rd May 2017, with trading volumes of 3,226 shares from FMI, 1,327 shares from MTSH, 44 shares from MCB and 430 shares from FPB. The share prices are Ks16,600 for FMI, Ks4,100 for MTSH, Ks9,000 for MCB and Ks29,000 for FPB at the closing time.—Mon Mon

India, Myanmar chambers of commerce sign MoU

Ko Moe

Myanmar’s large, inexpensive labour force and proximity were cited as major reasons for increased investment by manufacturing entrepreneurs from India.

Mr Rafeeque Ahmed, Chairman of the Southern India Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SICCI), said yesterday that entrepreneurs in India are preparing to set up factories for producing bean-based foodstuff of high value.

“India is a country with potential prospects for economic development. Businessmen in India are preparing to produce bean-based foodstuff in the country for sale in the local market and simultaneously for export to India,” Mr Ahmed said at the ceremony of the signing of an MoU between SICCI & UMFFCCI and Business Matching held at the Office of UMFFCCI on Wednesday. In addition to factories producing bean-based foodstuff, it has been learnt that other entrepreneurs are also interested in investing in Myanmar to produce leather goods such as shoes and purses.

“Myanmar is a specially favoured country of the WTO (World Trade Organisation),” said Mr Habib Hussain, Director of the AV Thomas Group which manufactures and exports leather goods to the U.S., Japan and EU countries. “Besides labour charges in Myanmar are very cheap compared to those from other countries. These are attracting many countries to invest.” It has also been learnt that the manufacture of drugs, agricultural tools and equipment, and bilateral cooperation in the sector of services on technology have made potential progress.

Under the MoU signed between SICCI & UMFFCCI, matters on promotion of investments and trade between two countries and meeting of entrepreneurs from two countries, holding seminars, interchange on facts of economy and markets were agreed upon. India is fourth on the list of countries with the most investment in Myanmar. The amount of India’s investment was about US$2 billion in the 2015-2016 financial year, it was learnt.

Thailand CRC Sports to expand into region

CRC Sports Co, the sports retailer and distributor in Thailand, is reportedly extending its investments into Myanmar, Cambodia and Viet Nam.

The CRC Sports Company targets the top spot in the ASEAN region by 2020 and also aims to rank among the top 50 players list worldwide.

As an effort for this plan, the CRC Sports Company has opened more outlets in Viet Nam and are eyeing Myanmar and Cambodia to open more stores as the two countries have the economic opportunities for investors.

The CRC Sports is a leading sports retailer and distributor in Thailand, the second largest company in ASEAN after Indonesia’s Mitra Adiperkasa and listed at 99th place worldwide.

In order to strengthen its role in the market, 400 million baht will be allocated to renovation of its existing branches and open 29 more outlets in Thailand by the end of this year: —Ko Khant

3,400 jobs created by recently permitted enterprises

THE Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC) permitted 29 more enterprises under the Foreign Investment Law and the Myanmar Citizens Investment Law in the current Fiscal Year 2017-2018, creating 3,424 job opportunities, it was learnt at the MIC meeting held on Tuesday.

There are 11 Myanmar citizens enterprises, seven joint ventures and two foreign-owned enterprises in various fields including manufacturing and marketing; international port service; a medical clinic; electricity generation; real estate, hotel services, network facilities service and a forest reserve, according to an announcement of the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA). Over US$160 million of investments were permitted to put into Myanmar and a total of 9,476 job opportunities were created from the 17 permitted enterprises, according to the very first Myanmar Investment Commission meeting held on 5th April in the current FY.

The FDI flowing into the country in the previous FY 2016-2017 hit over US$6.8 billion, which exceeded the expectation of US$6 billion, mostly into industrial manufacturing and transport and communication sectors. The foreign investments enter these sectors; oil and gas, power, transport and communication, manufacturing, real estate, mining, hotel and tourism, live-stock and fisheries, agriculture, industrial estate, construction and other services, according to DICA. Foreign direct investment (FDI) of over US$6 billion is likely to flow into the country this Fiscal Year 2017-2018, according to the DICA. —Ko Htet
Xi, Duterte discuss Korean Peninsula, S China Sea by phone: Xinhua

BEIJING — Chinese President Xi Jinping and his Philippine counterpart Rodrigo Duterte held telephone talks on Wednesday in which they discussed Korean Peninsula tensions, the South China Sea issue and bilateral ties, China’s state-run media reported.

The two leaders, who met in person twice last year and reached agreements that “greatly improved” ties between the two countries, also discussed regional cooperation in East Asia, the Xinhua News Agency report said.

Regarding their territorial disputes over islands and reefs in the South China Sea, Xi noted that a channel of dialogue and consultation has been set up.

“Duterte said he was happy to see Philippine-China friendship and solidarity enhanced and their exchanges and cooperation in various areas restored and pushed forward,” the report said.

In Manila, the presidential office released a photo of Duterte speaking with Xi, who it said initiated the call. It said he thanked China for inviting him to tour a Chinese warship that made goodwill visit to the Philippines along with two others earlier this week.

It was not immediately clear what they discussed regarding the Korean Peninsula, but their conversation took place just days after Duterte and US President Donald Trump spoke on telephone on that and other issues.

Just ahead of that conversation, the Philippine leader had told reporters he would appeal to Trump not to go to war with North Korea as it could spell disaster for the whole region, especially if China were to “come to the rescue” of its neighbor.

Ties between the Philippines and China sharply deteriorated in 2013 when the previous Philippine government filed a case with the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague questioning China’s encroachment inside the Philippines’ 200-nautical-mile exclusive economic zone.

China responded by driving away Filipino fishermen at hotly contested Scarborough Shoal, which it earlier seized effective control over, and by halting agricultural imports.

In July last year, the court ruled in Manila’s favor by invalidating China’s sweeping claims over almost the entire South China Sea and calling for Filipino fishermen to be allowed access to the shoal.

Duterte came to power just two weeks before the ruling, however, and since then he has drastically changed the country’s approach to its disputes with China, setting them aside indefinitely in favor of repairing damaged bilateral ties.

China has since stopped blocking Philippine vessels at Scarborough Shoal and promised to resume imports of Philippine produce, while Duterte secured up to $24 billion worth of investment and financing commitments when he visited Beijing and met there with Xi last October.

He has said he has no intention to raise the South China Sea issue unless China starts extracting resources from the Philippine-claimed areas.

—Kyodo News ■

Cambodia ready to host World Economic Forum on ASEAN: minister

PHNOM PENH — Cambodia is ready to host the World Economic Forum on ASEAN, which is scheduled from 10 to 12 May in Phnom Penh, government officials said on Wednesday.

Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte, Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc, Lao Prime MinisterThongloun Sisoulith and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank President Jin Liqun will be among the 520 participants attending the forum, said Cambodian Transport Minister Sun Chanthol.

He said the participants include political and business leaders, civil society and other key researchers from around the world.

According to Chanthol, Cambodian Prime Minister Samdech Techo Hun Sen will open the forum on 11 May under the theme “Youth, Technology and Growth”.

“This forum will be a good opportunity for Cambodia to showcase its investment potential to foreign investors, and to attract more foreign investors and tourists to Cambodia,” he said at a press conference.

In order to promote Cambodia’s tourism, after the forum foreign participants will be granted free air-tickets from Phnom Penh to northwestern Siem Reap province to see the famed Angkor archeological park.

The World Economic Forum was established in 1971 as a non-profit foundation with its headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland. The forum holds annual meetings in Davos, Switzerland, but also convenes regional meetings each year across Africa, Europe, Latin America and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Last year, the World Economic Forum on ASEAN was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.—Xinhua ■

Bangladesh signs deals with Chinese, Thai firms for building metro rail project

DHAKA — TheBangladeshi government has signed three deals with Chinese-Thai companies each year across Africa, Europe, Latin America and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

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Bangladesh signs deals with Chinese, Thai firms for building metro rail project

DHAKA — The Bangladeshi government has signed three deals with Chinese-Thai firms on the country’s first-ever metro rail project.

Dhaka Mass Transit Company Limited (DMTCL), a Bangladeshi state-owned enterprise founded to implement the metro rail lines across the Dhaka city, signed the separate contract packages (CPs) including CP-2, CP-3 and CP-4 worth over 38.26 billion taka (about 719 million US dollars) with the firms, Italian-Thai Development Public Company Limited, a Thailand-based construction firm, and Chinese state-owned Sinohydro Corporation Limited.

Under the deals, the firms will build metro rail tracks, stations and depots of the long cherished 28.1-km Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) Line-6 that will link north Dhaka with the south through 16 stations.

According to the project, the package CP-2 is for the civil and building works of the Depot, CP-3 and CP-4 is for the construction of metro rail tracks and elevated stations. Officials of DMTCL, Italian-Thai Development Public Company Limited, a Thailand-based construction firm, and Chinese state-owned Sinohydro Corporation Limited signed the agreements on behalf of their respective sides at a ceremony on Wednesday in capital Dhaka.

Sinohydro signed the deal worth 15.96 billion taka for CP-2 while Italian-Thai Development Public Company Limited signed deal for all the three packages.—Xinhua ■

Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte (R) speaks with China’s President Xi Jinping over the phone while with Christopher ‘Bong’ Go, Special Assistant to the President, in Davao City, southern Philippines on 3 May, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte (R) speaks with China’s President Xi Jinping over the phone during his official visit to China in Beijing in this handout picture obtained by Reuters from the Philippine President’s Office on 3 May 2017. PHOTO: REUTERs
Thai news organizations urge govt to scrap media control bill

BANGKOK — Thirty media bodies in Thailand marked World Press Freedom day on Wednesday by calling on the military government to scrap legislation that seeks to tighten control of news reporting in the Southeast Asian country.

The call came days after a junta-appointed reform panel approved a bill to regulate the media that has drawn opposition from rights groups who say it is designed to boost state interference and curb independent reporting.

If adopted, the bill could establish a regulatory panel of 15 people, including two state officials and seven media representatives, to oversee all media platforms in Thailand, whether print, broadcast or online.

“The bill is essentially designed to facilitate political interference in the media and restrict press freedom,” the Thai media organizations said in a joint statement.

The military government on Wednesday called off an event hosted by the Foreign Correspondents’ Club of Thailand (FCCT) focusing on the Asian country.

The call came days after a constitutional referendum the Thai media organizations said in a joint statement.

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Emergence of jewels—youths of great value for future

Khin Maung Oo

Civil ethics means habits, behaviors and principles for citizens to follow while living in a society. Only if it is spread through teaching, can people learn to abide by it. In the early years of monastic education and basic education schools, it was emphatically taught. Yet, in teaching it, making children who are still immature learn civics is likely to be effective while teaching adults cannot give results as expected.

Prior to 30 years ago, students in basic education primary schools were taught civil ethics, which deeply impressed on children’s minds. When they have grown up, they became civilized and well-behaved citizens.

In later years following that period, civil ethics was no longer taught in schools, hence most of today’s youths are found to lack the knowledge of moral principles, polite behaviors and social ethics.

Civil ethics is a code of conduct and moral principles for us to keep in our social environment and it teaches us how to behave and conduct ourselves in our society. In essence, it is the good conscience for people to bear in their minds. Civics knowledge gives us a desire to get involved if one encounters something unfair; it also teaches us to respect and show pity and kindness towards the aged, and those who are weaker than us.

In transforming a country from a dictatorship to a democracy, change of attitude is of great importance. Accordingly, we must try to accomplish the task of changing minds and attitudes of children, youths and adults. We need to make sure that when these children grow up they will become good citizens who are polite and civil.

At one time in the past, teachers were asked to teach students civics written by Sayar U Ohn Maung. This book which was very well written gave very good examples for each of the lessons clearly and effectively.

Thanks to the concerted efforts of teachers, a whole generation of civil and polite citizens were produced.

It has been found that civics is being taught as an additional subject in international school curriculums, in the interest of the country and its people.

Prior to 1980, civics was taught in Myanmar so those who became grown-ups in 1988 were found to be well versed civics.

However, we came to notice that today’s people have very little knowledge of civics. Due to the deterioration of moral standards and ethical behavior, it is a sorrowful thing to see rude, selfish and disgusting deeds increasing in our social environment.

Therefore, we must welcome the revival and restoration of good habits, which are the result of civics lessons, with open arms. On knowing that tests on civics and programs for nurturing good civil habits will be held in Yangon under the aegis of Yangon City Mayor, all of us — teachers, parents and people are required to join and support it which is nearly on the verge of extinction now.
3rd batch training for upgrading leadership capacities conducted

THE opening ceremony of 3rd batch training for upgrading leadership capacities opened under the sponsorship of the Ministry of Border Affairs, was held Tuesday morning at the central training school in Yangon.

The ceremony was attended by responsible officials, authorities concerned from the Nippon Foundation, the International University in Japan and the AAT Business Center and trainees.

At the ceremony, Dr. Min Thant, principal of degree college of capacity development for ethnic youths, made an opening address, with Mr Takehiro Umemura, Programme Director of the Nippon Foundation.

The training will be opened for 12 weeks, to be attended by 39 trainees, 18 male and 21 female. Out of them, 10 or 20 trainees will be selected for a one-week study tour to Japan, it has been learnt.—Myanmar News Agency ■

Myanmar Requires Direct Selling Law

FROM PAGE 8

Side Effects

Direct Selling is actually a system that can engender the beneficial result for the users, however if the main player of the system ie. sellers are so greedy and selfish the buyers or consumers has to suffer the adverse effects generated by the system. This is the side effect of the Direct Selling System. In this situation the Law of Direct Selling is sine qua non to protect and safeguard the buyers from being swindled.

By enacting the Direct Selling Law, the consumers will get the following benefits.

1. The Direct Selling Companies, producers or inventors shall be officially registered so as to not be able to avoid the accountability and responsibility of sellers.

2. The sellers shall be absolutely honest and sincere in explaining the benefits and harmful effect of their products.

3. Under the law, the sellers shall be taken action if they commit cheating concerning with the genuine properties of their products and if they don’t tell or keep secret about the possible side effects of the products.

4. The buyers shall have the right to return the product within a specified time limit on condition that the product remains the same as original one. The sellers shall refund the whole amount of money that buyer has paid.

5. On condition that the product of direct seller doesn’t meet the quality that direct seller has expressed in their explanation or in their ads or in discussion meeting, direct seller shall legally require to indemnify the buyer for their grievances and losses.

6. All the products under Direct Selling System shall have the certificate from the Consumer’s Right Protection Association, guaranteeing the clearance of harmful contents in the product.

7. All the direct selling products shall be legally imported materials and tax shall be paid to the State for the direct selling products.

In conclusion, It is suggested to enact the Direct Selling Law as soon as possible so as to be able to protect the consumers from any kind of cheating and fraud and the Direct Selling System to emerge as a clean, proper and reliable way of commerce in the market economic system of the country.

(Translation by: Khin Maung Win)
Trump, Putin discuss Syria ceasefire in first talks since US air strikes

WASHINGTON/MOSCOW — US President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday moved to ease the tension from US air strikes in April against Russian ally Syria, expressing a desire for a Syrian ceasefire and safe zones for the civil war’s refugees.

The two leaders spoke by phone for the first time since US relations with Russian were strained by the US attack on a Syrian airfield. They two leaders set the foundation for what could be their first face-to-face meeting in July.

Statements from both the White House and the Kremlin suggested the two leaders had a productive conversation that included North Korea and fighting Islamist militants throughout the Middle East.

A senior Trump administration official said Putin had requested the call and described it as an effort to present his ideas for Syria.

US President Donald Trump ordered 59 cruise missiles launched in retaliation for a chemical weapons attack that the United States blamed on Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

The attacked prompted protests from Assad ally Russia, which blamed Syrian rebels for the use of outlawed nerve gas and said Assad was not at fault.

The White House said the two leaders agreed that “all parties must do all they can to end the violence” in Syria.

“The conversation was a very good one, and included the discussion of safe, or de-escalation, zones to achieve lasting peace for humanitarian and many other reasons,” a White House statement said.

Trump during his presidential campaign last year frequently said he wanted safe zones established for Syrian refugees, paid for by Gulf states, to alleviate any need for the refugees to move elsewhere, including to the United States.

Candidate Trump had also expressed a desire for a US alliance with Russia to fight Islamist militants, a goal that has been elusive since he took office on 20 January.

With a ceasefire ever elusive in Syria, the White House said Washington would send a representative to ceasefire talks in Astana, Kazakhstan, on Wednesday and Thursday.

The State Department said acting Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs Stuart Jones will attend as an observer.

With North Korea’s nuclear and ballistic missile programs posing a major global challenge, the two leaders also discussed how to go about resolving a crisis that has raised tensions throughout the Asia-Pacific.

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More than 50 miners trapped in explosion in Iran, some feared dead

TEHRAN — More than 50 miners were trapped after a huge explosion in a coal mine in northern Iran on Wednesday, and some were feared to have died, state media reported. The reports said more than a dozen injured people had been transferred to hospital after the blast at 12:45 pm local time in the Zemestanyurt coal mine in Golestan province.

State news agency IRNA quoted a local official as saying some of the trapped miners may have died in the explosion. A rescue operation was underway.

Iran extracted 1.68 million tons of coal in 2016, an increase on previous years, thanks to an easing of international sanctions. It exports only a fraction of the coal and uses most of it in domestic steel production.

—Reuters ■

Syrian armed opposition suspends participation in Astana peace talks

ASTANA — The Syrian armed opposition said on Wednesday it had suspended its participation in peace talks being held in Astana, the capital of Kazakhstan, and demanded an end to government bombing of areas under its control.

A source close to the talks told Reuters that the armed opposition delegation had so far not left the building where the talks were being held however, while a senior official from Kazakhstan’s Foreign Ministry told reporters he expected the Syrian armed opposition to return to the talks on Thursday.

“The delegation has suspended its participation after presenting a memorandum for a total commitment to stopping (government) bombardments,” Ahmad Ramadan, a spokesman for the opposition Syrian National Coalition (SNC), said.

He gave no further comment.

In a phone call on Tuesday, US President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin moved to ease the tension from US air strikes in April against Russian ally Syria, expressing a desire for a Syrian ceasefire and safe zones for the civil war’s refugees.—Reuters ■

South Sudanese judges on strike over poor salaries

JUBA — Judges in South Sudan have gone on strike over poor pay and living conditions, a spokesman for the judges union said on Wednesday, raising the risk of impunity in a country already convulsed by criminality and war.

South Sudan, the world’s youngest country, descended into civil war in 2013 after President Salva Kiir fired his deputy, unleashing a conflict that has spawned a patchwork of armed factions.

The conflict has slashed oil revenues and paralysed agriculture, spurring hyperinflation that has rendered many civil servants’ salaries almost worthless, said Guri Ramondo, a spokesman for the judges’ union.

“A junior judge today receives about $15,” Ramondo said. “If you go to the market now you cannot buy anything with that money.”

A kilo of rice costs $130 South Sudanese pounds. There are 14.5 pounds to the dollar on the black market. Courts already faced a huge backlog, Ramondo said, since the nation of 12 million people only had 274 judges on the payroll in its last budget. Out of those, some had resigned, some were sick and others had gone on leave, he said.

“We are not saying all the demands should be resolved in one day, but for example, a judge needs the provision of courtrooms, a means of transport that will take a judge from his house to court, we need office stationery, we need papers so that we can give our service to our people,” Ramondo said.

He said the judges, who went on strike on Tuesday, also wanted the chief justice to resign, saying he was not prepared to oversee reform in the judicial system. The government said it was waiting to hear from a committee set up by Kiir to resolve the issue.

“We can’t wait for the final recommendation of the committee,” presidential spokesman Ateney Wek Ateny said.

The fighting has forced more than 3 million people to flee their homes and plunged parts of the country into famine, creating Africa’s biggest refugee crisis since the Rwandan genocide in 1994.

Stories of atrocities by armed men are common, and the UN has said that ethnic killings are taking place. Reports of gang-rape and banditry, often by soldiers or rebels, are also widespread.—Reuters ■
Russia may build unique seismic survey submarine

MOSCOW — The Russian Advanced Research Fund and the Rubin Central Design Bureau for Marine Engineering have developed a project to build a unique nuclear-powered submarine for seismic surveys, Rubin Chief Designer Evgeny Toporov told Izvestia daily on Wednesday.

The construction of the submarine that has no analogues in the world is planned to start in 2020, the chief designer said.

“This ship will cost 60% less than a combat submarine,” Toporov said. “We don’t have any armaments aboard it,” he added.

The submarine-scanner is a typical nuclear-powered underwater vessel featuring some changes in its design. As its main feature, it has special seismic sensor wings that are hidden in their operational state between the submarine’s outer and internal hulls. They open in their working position to form a scanning surface of hundreds of square meters, the newspaper said.

The submarine’s sensors allow it to “look into” the seabed and develop its three-dimensional model. As Head of the Fund’s Project Group for Physical Technical Research Viktor Litvinenko told Izvestia, the submarine will specifically engage in the prospecting of natural resources.

According to the newspaper, the submarine will have a displacement of no less than 14,000 tonnes, a cruising capacity of 90 days and a crew of 40. It will be able to submerge to a depth of 400 metres.

—Tass

According to a source in the industry, the construction of the submarine that will have no analogues in the world is planned to start in 2020. PHOTO: TASS
ASSANGE LAWYER ASKS SWEDISH COURT TO TEAR UP DETENTION ORDER

STOCKHOLM — Julian Assange’s lawyer has requested a Swedish court rescind a detention order against the WikiLeaks founder over an alleged rape and allow him to go to Ecuador to be safe from extradition to the United States.

Assange, 45, has been held up in the Ecuadorian Embassy in London since 2012, after taking refuge there to avoid extradition to Sweden over allegations of rape, which he denies.

He fears Sweden would in turn hand him over to the United States to face prosecution over WikiLeaks’ publication of thousands of classified military and diplomatic documents in one of the largest information leaks in US history. Lawyer Per Samuelson said the United States had now openly said it wants to arrest Assange. “Given that the US is obviously hunting him now, he has to make use of his political asylum and it is Sweden’s duty to make sure that Sweden is no longer a reason for that fact he has to stay in the embassy,” Samuelson said.

“If they rescind the detention order, there is a possibility he can go to Ecuador and then he can use political asylum in an entire country.”

CIA Director Mike Pompeo last month called WikiLeaks a “hostile intelligence service”, and Attorney General Jeff Sessions, responding to a question about Assange, said the administration was stepping up its efforts against all leaks of sensitive information.

“Whenever a case can be made, we will seek to put some people in jail,” Sessions said. Samuelson said Sweden’s Supreme Court had previously rejected a similar request for the detention order to be torn up on the grounds that there was little chance that Assange would be handed over to the United States. “With the Supreme Court’s own reasoning, his detention should now be rescinded because we can now prove that the US is hunting Julian Assange,” he said. He said it was unreasonable to demand that he should give up the 100 percent security of political asylum in Ecuador in exchange for the lower protection given by Swedish rules on extradition to the United States.

Samuelson said he expected the High Court to consider the request in the next few weeks.

“Assange was questioned in November in Ecuador’s London embassy over the alleged rape, and Sweden is now considering whether to proceed with its preliminary investigation. The offence is alleged to have occurred in 2010.” — Reuters

JAPAN’S LEADING POSTWAR ARCHITECTS TAKE CENTER STAGE IN LONDON

LONDON — Londoners take center stage in London Japan’s leading postwar architects — have never been seen in Britain before.

Many of the exhibited works from over 40 architects — which include installations, models, drawings, photographs and films — have never been seen in Britain before.

And the curators have tried to show how social and economic change has influenced designers over the decades. Celebrated architects such as Tadao Ando, Toyo Ito and Kenzo Tange are featured, as well as figures less well-known outside Japan.

The exhibition shows how a shortage of postwar housing led architects to design prefabricated, modular homes, and this practice has continued to evolve up to the present day.

The 1960s brought about radical, futuristic designs and this is perhaps best reflected in the work of Kisho Kurokawa with his Nakagin Capsule Tower in Tokyo. It was seen as the future of urban living with 140, single-room capsule dwellings, now largely in disuse.

The 1970s heralded a move toward more enclosed designs with higher walls and fewer windows at street level. The next decade saw a shift toward homes that were more open to the outside world.

At the heart of the gallery is a full-size recreation of a famous design by Ryue Nishizawa for his client Yusuo Moriyama.

Moriyama’s home was redeveloped to make way for 10 distinct and small living spaces which could be remade out. All are linked through small courtyards. The design is meant to replicate the local neighborhood. Also occupying the main floor space is a large tea house, with a hand-charred timber exterior, and garden designed by Terunobu Fujimori — Kyodo News

TRADEMARK CAUTION

Juve sporting memorabilia

In respect of “Apparatus and instruments for recording, transmission and reproduction of sound or images; video and/or sound recordings; audio and/or video CDs; audio and/or video film clips made for the purposes of teaching, training and information; PC games; downloadable application software for smartphones and tablets; electronic publications; electronic downloadable publications; downloadable publications and multimedia content in digital format; eyewear; glasses; sun glasses; spectacle frames; wallets; eyeglass cases; safety clothes; safety glasses; cases for telephones; cases for smartphones; tablet cases; cell phone straps; smartphone straps; tablet straps; shoulder straps for smartphones; acoustic headphones; headsets for mobile phones; headphones for smartphones and tablets” in Class 9; “Stationery; writing and drawing instruments; office requisites (except furniture); photos; audio and/or video CDs; audio and/or video film clips made for the purposes of teaching, training and information; PC games; downloadable application software for smartphones and tablets; electronic publications; electronic downloadable publications; downloadable publications.”

Juventus Football Club S.p.A. (Italian corporation), a company incorporated in Italy and having its registered office at Corso Galileo Ferraris 32 10128 Torino Italy is the owner and proprietor of the following Trademark:

Class 11; Casualwear; formalwear; sportswear; technical apparel for the practice of sports; sports balls; balls and balloons for sports; soccer balls; guards for sports including elbow guards, knee pads, shin guards; goalkeeper gloves; soccer ball goal nets; soccer goals; Christmas tree decorations” in Class 28; “Sporting and cultural activities; education and educational services; training courses, organisation and management of training courses, refresher courses, events, symposiums, colloquia, exhibitions, workshops or other activities and events for educational, training, cultural, recreational or sporting purposes; arranging and conducting of events for cultural, educational, entertainment, training, sports and recreational purposes; organisation and conducting of sporting events and tournaments, shows, concerts, festivals, awards; organisation of awards ceremonies and ceremonies for awarding sporting and academic titles; hire of equipment for sports; provision of courses of instruction relating to sport, entertainment, namely providing multimedia content, information, libraries and podcasts via the internet and/or other communications networks; publication of audio and digital multimedia content; paper and online publishing services” in Class 16.

The above mark has been filed in Italy as application no. 302016000096097, on July 12, 2016. Fraudulent or unauthorised use or actual or colourable imitation of the said Mark shall be dealt with according to law.

Daw Htoo Htoo, H.G.P
For Juventus Football Club S.p.A. (Italian corporation),
C/o Kelvin Chia Yangon Ltd., Level 5A, Union Financial Centre (UCF)
Corner of Mahabandoola Road & Thet Pyin Road,
Botataung Township, Yangon, Myanmar
ht@kyayangon.com

Dated 4 May 2017

This photo taken on 4 April, 2017, shows a teahouse specially built by Terunobu Fujimori for a new exhibition on Japanese architecture at London’s Barbican Centre. The event showcases some of Japan’s most innovative designs since World War II. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

LONDON — Londoners are currently being treated to a major showcase of Japan’s most innovative designs since World War II.

Visitors are shown a wide variety of influential and extraordinary Japanese family homes constructed since 1945.

Many of the exhibited home designs are specially built by Terunobu Fujimori for a new exhibition on Japanese architecture at London’s Barbican Centre. The event showcases some of Japan’s most innovative designs since World War II. IMAGE: KYODO NEWS
Midler, Groban score Tony nominations, ‘Sunset Boulevard’ snubbed

NEW YORK — Cate Blanchett, Sally Field and Bette Midler received acting nominations for Broadway’s Tony Awards on Tuesday, while “Natasha, Pierre & The Great Comet of 1812” led the pack with 12 nods including the top prize, best musical.

Close behind was the hit revival of “Hello, Dolly!” which took 10 nominations, including one for lead actor David Hyde Pierce. He will compete against Josh Groban making his Broadway debut in “Natasha, Pierre,” a lavish spectacle based on a snippet of Tolstoy’s “War and Peace.”

“Goodnight Day The Musical,” “Come From Away” and teen-aged angst drama “Dear Evan Hansen,” which won rave reviews and took nine nominations, were other best musical nominees.

Best play nominees were led by “A Doll’s House, Part 2” with eight nominations including ones for stars Laurie Metcalf and Chris Cooper, “Oslo,” about the 1993 Oslo peace accords, Pulitzer Prize winning drama “Sweat” and “Indecent.”

Only three shows were nominated for best musical revival: “Falsettos,” “Miss Saigon” and “Hello, Dolly!” In a year crowded with dozens of new plays and musicals, major productions of “Cats,” “Sunset Boulevard” starring Glenn Close, “A Bronx Tale” and “Charlie and the Chocolate Factory” were shut out.

Big names appearing this season who were not nominated included Diane Lane, Mark Ruffalo and Allison Janney.

The best play revival nominees were “Present Laughter,” “August Wilson’s Jitney,” “Six Degrees of Separation” and “Lillian Hellman’s The Little Foxes,” which won nominations for actresses Laura Linney and Cynthia Nixon. Nixon, who has been exchanging roles with Linney during the play’s run, said she found out about her featured actress nomination by text message and had not yet heard from Linney. “I’m sure we will be chatting this morning,” she added.

Joining Midler, whose turn in “Hello, Dolly!” has been breaking box office records, as best actress in a musical, are Patti LuPone and Christine Ebersole in “War Paint,” newcomer Denée Benton for “Natasha, Pierre & The Great Comet of 1812” and Eva Noblezada in “Miss Saigon.”

Blanchett, who made her Broadway debut in “The Present,” is joined by Jennifer Ehle ("Oslo") in addition to Field (“The Glass Menagerie”), Linney and Metcalf. Best play actor nominees included Denis Arndt in “Heisenberg,” Kevin Kline in “Present Laughter,” Jefferson Mays in "Oslo" and Corey Hawkins in “Six Degrees of Separation.”

The Tony Awards will be presented on 11 June on Manhattan’s Radio City Music Hall in a ceremony headlined by film and stage star Kevin Spacey. — Reuters

Mexican singer Luis Miguel surrenders to US marshals

LOS ANGELES — Mexican singer Luis Miguel surrendered to US marshals and was released on bond on Tuesday after an arrest warrant was issued for him in April in a case where he is suspected of failing to pay more than $1 million to his former manager.

The Grammy Award-winning singer, whose full name is Luis Miguel Gallego Bastieri, appeared at federal court in Los Angeles on Tuesday. The arrest warrant had been issued for failure to appear at court hearings in the case, the US Marshals Service in Los Angeles said.

There was no lawyer listed for Miguel in federal court filings. The singer was ordered by a US judge in New York to pay the money to the former manager, William Brockhaus, and the case was later transferred to federal court in California.

Miguel, known as “El Sol de Mexico” or Mexico’s Sun, rose to fame with hits such as “La Incondicional” (The Unconditional) and a Spanish cover of 1978 hit “Blame it on the Boogie,” gathering legions of fans.

Johnny Depp is a gentleman, says Javier Bardem

LONDON — Spanish actor Javier Bardem says his “Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Men Tell No Tales” co-star Johnny Depp is a gentleman who cares about people.

The 48-year-old actor says that during the shoot of the film he grew very fond of Depp, reported Contactmusic.

“With Johnny you can tell there is a very sensitive person there, a man who cares about people. That hasn’t changed. For me as an actor Johnny Depp is a gentleman, that’s it. I’ve been friends with him for years and we have a lot of respect for each other.” —PTI

Singer Janet Jackson to go back on tour after time off for family

LONDON — Singer Janet Jackson has announced she is going back on tour later this year, returning to the stage in the United States and Canada after taking time off to give birth to her first child.

In a video message to fans, the pop star also referred to media reports that she had split from her Qatari businessman husband Wissam Al Mana, saying: “Yes I separated from my husband, we are in court and the rest is in God’s hands”.

Jackson, 50, last year said she was postponing her “Unbreakable” music tour due to a “sudden change” in the couple’s plans to start a family. She gave birth to son Eissa in January.

“I’m continuing my tour as I promised, I’m so excited,” the singer said in the video posted on her Twitter feed, thanking fans for their patience and support.

“I decided to change the name of the tour: State of the World’ tour. It’s not about politics, it’s about people, the world, relationships and just love.”

The youngest child in the famed musical Jackson family, the Grammy Award winning singer began her “Unbreakable” tour in summer 2015.

She will kick off the 4-month, 56-date North American “State of the World” tour on 7 September in Lafayette, Louisiana. “I am so excited,” Jackson said. “I cannot wait to see you on stage September 7th.” — Reuters
Miles high on Lost City jump

PETRA, JORDAN — American Daisher celebrates BASE jump 4,300 in iconic location Petra.

Red Bull Air Force member Daisher chose Petra, one of the Wonders of the World, as the stunning location to celebrate his 4,300ft BASE jump and make history.

The American legend, who has completed a staggering 7,200 skydives in his career as well, has set a new benchmark, having set the conditions at 7am, Miles then said “See ya” to Andy and BASE jumped - a leap of faith that In- diana Jones would have been proud of. Thankfully, after going 32 kilometres per hour in a cir- cular motion across the 100-feet wide space between the valley and The Treasury, he landed per- fectly right in front of the doorway in less than 15 seconds.

The extreme challenge for Miles was in the short length and altitude of the jump along with the incredibly tight space that left him with little room to escape the walls of the limestone mountains.

Afterwards, Miles enthused: “My heart is coming out of my chest. The lowest I’ve ever BASE jumped over land!” — Reuters

Ancient mummies rot as Yemen war vexes even the dead

SANAA — Famine and disease haunt the living, but not even the dead are spared the calamities of Yemen's two-year-old civil war.

Ancient mummies are withering away in a major museum for lack of electricity and preservative chemicals from abroad — a sign that the conflict is harming not only the country's present and future but also its rich past.

The dozen spindly corpses, curled into the fetal position or swaddled in baskets, belong to a lost pagan civilization around 2 1/2 millennia ago — long before the advent of Islam.

Lying beneath glass panes within the archaeology depart- ment in the capital Sanaa's main university, the mummies might have spent their eternal slumber blissfully unaware of the oth- erworldly warplanes pounding their homeland. A Saudi-led military coalition has carried out thousands of air strikes in a bid to dislodge Yemen's armed Houthi movement from the capi- tal. The conflict has killed at least 10,000 people and unleashed a humanitarian crisis.

But a timeless enemy, abet- ted by the disorder of war, threat- ens the mummies' repose. “The mummies have started to decay and are infected with bacteria. This is because we don’t have electricity and the machines that are supposed to maintain them,” said Abdelrahman Jallal, head of the university’s antiquities department.

“We need some chemicals to sanitise the mummies every six months, and they aren’t available due to the political situation.”

Power cuts plague Sanaa, sapping the dehumidifiers that help preserve the “Hall of Mum- mies.” Funding to government bodies like the university have suffered from a struggle between Yemen's warring parties for control of the central bank.

Antiquities experts are appealing to the university and the culture ministry for funding and equipment to better fend off the microbes eating into the mum- mies’ flesh. But the coalition’s closure of Sanaa airport and a near-blockade over a key Red Sea port — aimed at stopping weapons shipments — have cut off imports of specialty goods like the chemicals needed to ward off the microscopic menace.

She- ba and other Yemeni kingdoms once provided the frankincense and myrrh hauled by desert car- avans to perfume the temples of the Holy Land and ancient Rome. Modern combat, how- ever, is disfiguring important cultural treasures. Air strikes have levelled medieval mudbrick towers in Sanaa’s old quarter, a medieval mosque and an Otto- man fort. — Reuters

Miles Daisher performs a BASE jump at The Treasury in Petra, Jordan on 11 April, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS
Murray confident that Sharapova will play at Wimbledon

STUTTGART, GERMANY — Maria Sharapova is still waiting to hear if she can play at the French Open later this month but men’s world number one Andy Murray expects her to be at Wimbledon in July.

Sharapova returned last month from a doping ban to reach the semi-finals at the Stuttgart Open, but did not earn enough points to qualify for Roland Garros and is reliant on a wildcard for the qualifying tournament.

The French Tennis Federation will announce their decision on 16 May.

Murray, however, said he expected the five-times grand slam champion would be on the grass-courts of south-west London.

“I think there’s a good chance Wimbledon would give her one (a wildcard) to get into qualifying,” Murray told reporters at an event for June’s Aegon Championships tournament at the Queen’s Club in London.

“I think we’ve got to wait and see what happens because there might not even be a decision to be made because she might be in the main draw after Madrid or Rome, so there’s a good chance she can get in by right.”

The Russian can qualify for the main draw at Wimbledon by reaching the semi-final of either the Madrid or Rome tournaments.

The rankings deadline for Wimbledon qualification is 29 May. Murray, who sustained an injury in March, returned to action at the Barcelona Open last month and said he was feeling good as he looked ahead to Roland Garros. “I feel much better than I did three or four weeks ago,” he added.

“I feel like physically I am getting back to where I need to be and I feel like I am able to put in the work I need to, to be able to play my best tennis.”

—Reuters

Myawady FC beats City Yangon FC 4-3 after penalty shoots

THE second day play-off matches of Aung San Shield started yesterday and Myawady FC defeated City Yangon 4-3 after the decisive penalty shoots.

Both teams concluded elite players and played responsively until the last minutes of the match. Although City Yangon got chances to have shining passing and crossing in the penalty area by the expatriate players just after the kick-off, they could not transform any chances to goals. Myawady FC defenders also made good clearances with-in the dangerous area. Myawady FC got an opener at 39 min. The opener was created by the striker Kaung Si Thu from the corner kick ball.

In the second half, the City Yangon changed their game tactic and possessed more accurate pitching than in the first half. Ann Nat from the City Yangon FC equalized at 52 min by the penalty shoot. Both teams played interchangeably until the last min of second over-time with 1-1 result. One protection ball by goalkeeper from Myawady makes 4-3 end result in penalty shoots and ensures Myawady FC to step up the next steps.

—Kyaw Zin Lin

Talent-packed squad as key to Real success as Ronaldo — Ramos

BARCELONA — Cristiano Ronaldo blogged the headlines after his hat-trick against Atletico Madrid put Real Madrid on the verge of the Champions League final, although captain Sergio Ramos believes an effervescent squad was a crucial factor behind their success.

Real shook off the absence of record signing Gareth Bale and an injury to Dani Carvajal in the first half to crush Diego Simeone’s usually resilient side, scoring as many goals on Tuesday as Atleti had conceded in their previous seven games.

Real’s least experienced defender Nacho Fernandez was called on to deputise for Carvajal in the unfamiliar right-back role while the display of Isco was viewed by many in the Spanish media as an upgrade on Bale, and 21-year-old Marco Asensio caused Atleti numerous problems down the left when he came on. “The squad is the key to our success, having substitutes that always make their presence felt and play as well as those of us who play more often,” Ramos told reporters. “This is the path we need to follow, where everyone is committed and ready to do their part. It’s difficult at Madrid to keep everyone happy because everyone is so good but those demands and the level of competition makes everyone eager to play and make the difference.”

Barring a remarkable turnaround in next Wednesday’s semi-final second leg at the Vicente Calderon, Real will reach a third Champions League final in four years, while they are on course to win a first domestic league title since 2012.

“It was one of those games where everything went well, it was an impeccable performance,” said Ramos. “We kept a clean sheet and as well as Simeone’s goals, which will grab the front pages, you have to highlight the mentality of the group, our efforts, our willingness to press Atletico high in their own half.” Atletico also had injury problems going into the game and were missing both of their right backs in Juanfran and Sime Vrsaljko as well as Jose Gimenez. Yet Simeone’s side looked flustered, while there was a remarkable freshness to Madrid, which Ramos said was down to Zinedine Zidane’s rotation policy. The Frenchman, who is on track to become the first coach to successfully defend the European Cup since AC Milan’s Arrigo Sacchi in 1990, has carefully managed his squad throughout the season.—Reuters

Myawady FC players take a group photo after the competition.

PHOTO: MFF