CBM has no plan to revise interest rates

The Central Bank of Myanmar (CBM) has no plans to reduce the current interest rates on bank deposits, loans and government treasury bonds, said U Soe Min, Deputy Governor of CBM, at the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw yesterday.

He made the remark in his answer to a query by MP Dr. Thet Thet Khaing about whether the interest rate of the government treasury bonds is rising due to a rate set by the Central Bank of Myanmar.

U Soe Min said businesses have the opportunity to negotiate with banks to reduce interest rates for borrowings under 13 per cent.

Deputy Governor U Soe Min said that a budget deficiency in the Union Government was funded by selling treasury bonds to the Central Bank of Myanmar, and that weakened the social policy to control the inflation rate.

He said the interest rate set by the Government and by the Central Bank for the Treasury Bill and Treasury Bond Auction are different.

He said the interest rate for the Government Treasury Bond for the 2016-2017 Financial Year was 7 per cent for 3 months, 8.4 per cent for 6 months, and 8.8 per cent for one year.

The Central Bank’s aim for the fiscal policy is to stabilise the domestic market and the inflation rate. He said the interest rate is important for a stable fiscal policy.
CBM has no plan to revise interest rates

FROM PAGE 1

Currently, Myanmar’s inflation rate has stabilised at 4.47pc. That’s down from 6.8pc in 2016-17 and 10pc in 2015-16. According to forecasts made by the ASEAN+3 Macroeconomic Research Office (AMRO), inflation in 2018-19 could rise to 5.5pc.

At the yesterday meeting, the Speaker of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw announced that the Hluttaw has approved new appointments for minister level positions in various regions. Dr. Saw Nyo Win is appointed as the Bago Region Minister for Natural Resources, Forestry and Environmental Conservation, Daw Nyunt Nyunt Htay is appointed as the Bago Region Minister for Development Affairs and Social Welfare, and U Tin Maung Win is appointed as the Ayeyawady Region Minister for Agriculture, Livestock, Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation.

Next, U Steven from Kengtung Constituency read the Bill for amending the Drugs and Psychotropic Drugs Law sent back from the President’s Office. Speaker Mahn Win Khaiing Than announced for MPs interested in discussing the Bill to sign their names in a list.

Next, the Speaker sought approval for the Myanmar Hluttaw Bill that has two separate views from the two Hluttaws.

—Myanmar News Agency

NLD members led by Kawlin Pyithu Hluttaw representative visit NRPC

National League for Democracy (NLD) members, led by the Pyithu Hluttaw representative of Kawlin, visited the National Reconciliation and Peace Centre (NRPC) in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning.

They observed the implementation of the peace process by the centre.

During the visit, officials from the department explained that the government aimed to implement the peace process through three branches: judicial, legislative and executive bodies.

A Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement is the centre’s main aim and negotiations are underway to sign the agreement with armed ethnic races, as the current peace process is of paramount importance in the country.

Pyithu Hluttaw representative U Myo Zaw Aung explained about the trip. Later, they watched a video on the implementation of the peace process by the NRPC.

Next, they asked questions and received responses from the concerned officials.

—Myanmar News Agency

Union Minister for Information attends conference on film industry

UNION Minister for Information Dr. Pe Myint attended the conference on development of the Myanmar Motion Picture Association at 1 p.m. yesterday at the meeting hall of Ministry’s office in Nay Pyi Taw.

The Patron of the Myanmar Motion Picture Association U Aung Lwin, Chairman of Myanmar Motion Picture Association U Zin Wine, Consultant of Forever Group Co., Ltd U Thein Tun Aung and Director-General of Information and Public Relations Department U Ye Naing discussed matters relating to the difficulties, challenges and development of Myanmar Motion Picture Association.

In attendance at the conference were the Deputy Minister for Information U Aung Hla Tun, Permanent Secretary, Directors-General, Managing Director, Officials, Patrons, Chairman, Vice Chairman and Secretaries of the Myanmar Motion Picture Association, Advisors and officials from Forever Group Co. Union Minister for Information Dr. Pe Myint made reviews of the discussions and concluded the meeting.

—Myanmar News Agency
Reception to mark Australian National Day Held

UNION ministers attended a reception to mark the Australian National Day at the Hilton Hotel in Nay Pyi Taw at 6.30 p.m. yesterday.

The ceremony was opened with the singing of the national anthems of Myanmar and Australia. Nicholas Coppel, Australia’s Ambassador to Myanmar, and Union Minister for Education Dr. Myo Thein Gyi extended their greetings at the reception.

Besides Dr. Myo Thein Gyi, Chairman of the Union Election Commission U Hla Thein; Union Minister for Information Dr. Pe Myint; Union Minister for Labour, Immigration and Population U Thein Swe; Union Minister for International Co-operation U Kyaw Tin; Lt-Gen Min Naung, Commander of Nay Pyi Taw Command; Deputy Minister for Information U Aung Hla Tun; Hluttaw representatives; permanent secretaries; officials from government offices and invited guests also attended the reception.—Myanmar News Agency

Former MraukU administrator stabbed to death

An official who worked as an administrator in MraukU Township was stabbed to death in his car on Tuesday, according to local authorities.

U Bo Bo Min Theik was found dead with several stab wounds to his body, including two on his chest, 12 on his back and one cut on his left eyebrow.

Local police were informed on Tuesday evening that a car had crashed between mile posts No. 169/0 and 169/1 on Yangon-Sittway Road near Thayet Cho Village, between Yonng and Aunggyupin villages, some seven miles north of Punnagyun, Rakhine State, and a body was also reportedly found nearby.

Local police inspected the site and found the dead man under the car. This would be only the first of a number of mysterious occurrences in the apparent murder case.

After examining the documents in his bag, police confirmed that the victim was U Bo Bo Min Theik, who was the former head of the MraukU Township General Administration Department. U Bo Bo Min Theik left his position in MraukU on 19 January to become the Assistant Director of the Rakhine State General Administration Department.

U Bo Bo Min Theik’s body was sent to Punnagyun Township Hospital at 7.15 pm on Tuesday. Earlier in the day, the car was intentionally set on fire by two unknown men. Firemen extinguished the blaze at 7.25 pm.

U Bo Bo Min Theik had arrived in MraukU on 25 January for interrogation as part of an ongoing investigation into the deaths of seven people fatally shot during rioting earlier this month. After being questioned, U Bo Bo Min Theik left to return to Sittway at 2 pm on Tuesday.

According to police sources, the vehicle he was driving was reported stolen from its owner, U Kyaw Myint, 48. Along with U Bo Bo Min Theik, U Kyaw Myint’s two sons and another man were also allegedly present in the car at the time of the accident. Their whereabouts could not be determined.

Photos show CR-V vehicle and scene of an accident. PHOTO: MNA

Union Minister for Information receives Australian Ambassador to Myanmar

UNION Minister for Information Dr. Pe Myint received Australian Ambassador to Myanmar HE Mr Nicholas Coppel in the guest hall of the ministry’s office, yesterday afternoon.

During the meeting, they exchanged views on media affairs.

Also attending the meeting were Deputy Minister for Information U Aung Hla Tun and other responsible officials.—Myanmar News Agency

Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Office of the President
Order 13/2018

15th Waxing of Tabodwe, 1379 ME
31st January, 2018

Resignation of member of the Constitutional Tribunal of the Union approved

In accordance with the provisions stated in article 331 of the Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and Section 28 (b) of Constitutional Tribunal Law of the Union, U Nyi Nyi, member of the Constitutional Tribunal of the Union has been permitted to resign from the position of his own volition with effect from 31 January 2018.

Sd/ Htin Kyaw
President
Republic of the Union of Myanmar

Photo: MNA

Photos show CR-V vehicle and scene of an accident. PHOTO: MNA
A tower to overlook Haka Township’s scenery to be accomplished

A tower that is being constructed to overlook Haka Township’s scenery, at the View Point Resort; it will be completed before the 70th Anniversary Chin National Day according to the Chin State Municipal Office.

“The tower is 36 feet high and 16 feet wide and the cost of the tower is estimated at around Ks. 70 million. Now cash donations by local residents is over Ks. 50 million and it is necessary to reach the estimated amount of donations in order to complete construction of the tower. So donors around the country will be invited to donate as much money as they can and their names will be inscribed on a plaque at the base of the tower” said the Director of Chin State Municipal Office.

“When we can take in the view from the tower, we can see all the beauty and scenery of Haka Township as well as the beauty of Falam and Tiddim towns. It is better to have this tower in the View Point Resort because the resort is very popular with visitors. I think it will be even more interesting for visitors because the resort plans to sell traditional instruments and costumes of the Chin ethnic people and the resort will also display clothing and biographies of the iconic ethnic people” said a visitor.

The tower is situated on the side of the Gangaw Road at the entrance of Haka Township. The resort was equipped with railways, and has arranged seating and stairs, Construction for the tower started in 2017.

Haka Township has beautiful scenery and many tourists visit the area, so many hotels are being constructed to make accommodations convenient for visitors. Moreover, the tower’s construction hopes to boost the regional tourism. —Myanmar Digital News

Myanmar-Bangladesh Border Guard Regiment-level flag hoisting ceremony held

The Myanmar-Bangladesh Border Guard Regiment-level flag hoisting ceremony was held near the friendship bridge on the border at noon yesterday.

During the ceremony, the Bangladesh side was led by Commanding Officer Monzural Hassan Khan of the Border Guards Bangladesh No. 34, while the Myanmar side was led by Police Lt Colonel Saw Zeyar.

During the meeting, Police Lt Colonel Saw Zeyar told the Bangladeshi side that Myanmar is ready for the repatriation of returnees from Bangladesh.

Monzural Hassan Khan said the authorities in Bangladesh were collecting lists of returnees, and when they are ready, they will proceed with the process of repatriation.

Following the meeting, Police Lt Colonel Saw Zeyar demonstrated the camps’ readiness to accept returnees from Bangladesh. —Rakhine State IPRD

Local melon farmers face competition from Chinese cultivators

LOCAL watermelon and musk melon farmers are facing stiff competition because Chinese growers have entered the country and started cultivating the fruit, according to watermelon farmers from the Sagaing Region.

“Watermelons and musk melons, which are cultivated in Myanmar, are exported mainly to China. Now, Chinese growers are growing the fruit in Myanmar after taking the land on lease. They are also using their own growing methods. As a result, the rental prices of land have increased. Therefore, it has negatively affected the local farmers who have rented the land to grow the fruit,” said U Daung Shwe, a local cultivator from Monywa.

The Chinese growers had rented the land at the rate of Ks700,000 per acre to grow the fruit. The local farmers also paid the same amount as rent. However, the Chinese growers are selling some of the fruit directly to China through the Muse border gate. Local farmers, on the other hand, have to sell their fruit to local traders, he added.

The cultivation of watermelon and musk melon costs Ks3.5 million per acre. —Maung Wazi Ya (AMT)
Myanmar earns over $535m in fishery exports

MYANMAR's foreign income from fishery exports reached more than US$535 million from 1 April to 19 January in the current fiscal year (FY), which increased by $97 million compared with the same period last FY.

The export volume of fishery products was more than 38,000 tons, according to Myanmar Fisheries Federation.

Despite an increase in the export volume and value, Myanmar's fishery exports cannot keep up with the neighbouring countries.

The Myanmar Fishery Federation is making concerted efforts to increase the earnings from fishery exports by developing fish farming lakes that meet international standards and by adopting advanced fishing methods.

Fishery products, including prawns, crabs, squid, eels, shrimp, dried shrimp and dried fish, were exported to Thailand through the Kawthoung and Myeik border trade gates and to China through the Muse gate.

—GNLM

Exporters concerned about slip in US dollar exchange rate

By May Thet Hnin

EXPORTERS in the country are worried that the exchange rate of the kyat against the US dollar will dip below Ks1,300.

“Businessmen are watching the foreign exchange market closely. It will negatively affect the exporters if the exchange rate slips below Ks1,300,” said Daw Tae Nanda Tin, vice president of Myanmar Processor and Exporter Association.

The majority of exporters imported raw materials at an exchange rate of Ks1,360 per dollar. However, the rate declined to Ks1,320 when they exported their products. There is a gap of Ks40 per dollar in the export versus import exchange rates.

The downward trend in the kyat-dollar exchange rate started from the second week of January. Previously, a dollar fetched some Ks1,356. Currently, the rate has dropped to Ks1,320.

The Central Bank of Myanmar scaled down the US dollar exchange rate from Ks1,340 to Ks1,330 within six days.

U Ye Myint Maung, president of Myanmar Food and Exporters Association, said the export businesses will thrive only if the rate is stable in the foreign exchange (FX) market.

“We cannot do anything as the rate is down due to the depreciation of the dollar in the global market,” he added.

In 2008, exporters were battered by the drop in the exchange rate by some Ks300. The exchange rate was on the rise throughout 2017 and hit an all-time record of Ks1,380 per dollar. The inflation rate, interest rate, terms of trade, country’s current account and deficits, as well as economic performance, contribute to the ups and downs in the dollar price. Currently, foreign currencies have appreciated slightly against the US dollar in the global FX market.

International business websites mention that the dollar depreciation is attributed to the high global gold price and the drop in the stock market.

Myanmar fruits, vegetables penetrate Russian market

Myanmar exports fruits and vegetables to Russia by air; which is a convenient mode of transport, according to a report in the Myawady Daily. Myanmar mostly exports avocado, mangoes, watermelons, musk melons, coffee, a variety of fruits and vegetables and other value-added products to Russia.

“When we export to Russia, we get a good price. We usually export a variety of fruits and vegetables—up to one ton of each product per consignment. The reason why Russia is interested in fruits and vegetables from Myanmar is that the fruits are of good quality and size,” said Daw Le Le Oo, director of Myanma Shwe Fruit Company.

“We started penetrating the Russian market with one ton of the Sein Ta Lone (Diamond Solitaire) mango variety. We have already exported avocados to Russia more than 20 times. However, we still have to meet several requirements while exporting fruits and vegetables. We have already requested the agricultural department to provide us with assistance. We do not want to lose our market in Russia,” she added.

Besides these, Myanmar exports value-added products, such as dry tofu, dry mango and mango paste, to Russia. Russia has bought as many products from Myanmar as it can export. —GNLM

Bilateral trade between Singapore, Myanmar reaches US$2 billion in eight months

Bilateral trade between Singapore and Myanmar has reached US$2.38 billion, with an estimated export value of $685 million and import value of over $1.7 billion.

Among the regional countries, Singapore is placed second in bilateral trade after neighbouring country Thailand.

Fruit, vegetables, rice, green grams and other pulses, ginger and flowers are exported to Singapore, while capital goods, raw industrial materials such as petroleum products and chemicals, and consumer products are imported into Myanmar. Bilateral trade earned some $2.96 billion in fiscal year (FY) 2016-2017, $3.09 billion in FY 2015-16, $4.89 billion in FY 2014-2015, $3.6 billion in FY 2013-2014, $5.82 billion in FY 2012-2013 and $8 billion in FY 2011-2012. In addition, Singapore is the main investor, bringing $1.71 billion in capital into the country as of the end of November in the current fiscal year, according to the statistics of the Myanmar Investment Commission.

—Mon Mon
HANOI — Viet Nam listed a US-based group still loyal to the now defunct state of South Vietnam as a terrorist organization on Tuesday, the Ministry of Public Security (MPS) said.

The California-based Provisional Government of Viet Nam, led by US citizen Dao Minh Quan, established groups inside Viet Nam to “execute acts of terrorism and sabotage, and assassinate officials,” the ministry said in a statement.

Quan was a “former lieutenant” of the US-backed Republic of Viet Nam, the statement said, referring to the now defunct state, also known as South Vietnam, which once ruled the southern half of the country until the Viet Nam War ended in 1975.

Quan did not immediately respond to a request for comment. A US Embassy spokesman in Hanoi said the organization is not designated as a terrorist group by the US State Department.

Despite sweeping economic reform in Viet Nam, and increasing openness toward social change, including gay, lesbian and transgender rights, the ruling Communist Party retains tight media censorship and does not tolerate criticism.

Earlier this month, Viet Nam jailed four men for flying the flag of South Viet Nam. The flag, a bright yellow rectangle with three thin horizontal stripes, is used by political activists in Viet Nam who oppose the Communist-controlled government in Hanoi.

A video on a website the MPS said was operated by Quan’s group showed a convoy of cars moving through a US town, some of which were flying the flag of South Vietnam. The website describes Quan as the “Prime Minister” of the Provisional Government of Viet Nam.

In late December, a Vietnamese court jailed 15 people for their part in an alleged April bomb plot by Quan’s group at Tan Son Nhat airport, the transport hub which serves Ho Chi Minh City — formerly known as Saigon, the capital of South Viet Nam.

Fifteen people acted on instructions from an overseas group which had used social media to spread propaganda and recruit its members, local media said, citing the court indictment.

Viet Nam, one of the top 10 countries for Facebook users by numbers, has called for tougher internet controls and set up a military cyber unit to fight “wrong” views online.

The group “planted fuel bombs in the car park and at the arrival hall at Tan Son Nhat International Airport,” in April 2017, Tuesday’s MPS statement said.—Reuters

**Hackers disperse stolen cryptocurrency to about 20 digital addresses**

TOKYO — The hackers who stole roughly ¥330 million in cryptocurrency from Tokyo-based exchange Coincheck last week have dispersed the stolen NEM coins to around 20 digital addresses in an apparent attempt to avoid being traced, Kyodo News confirmed on Wednesday.

According to online records seen by Kyodo News, the NEM coins, stolen in the largest-ever theft of cryptocurrency by hackers, were first transferred to a single unidentified address in the early hours of Friday before being dispersed to nine addresses.

Some of the coins were moved again between 10:30 pm and 11 pm on Tuesday, this time a total of 11 times in increments of 100 (roughly ¥750 to 10 different addresses, according to the NEM blockchain ledger, an online record of such transactions.

The Singapore-based NEM.io Foundation, which is helping Coincheck to trace the stolen coins, said it had also confirmed the latest movements.

The foundation says it has “tagged” the stolen coins as tainted assets, making them easily identifiable if traded through a regulated exchange.—Kyodo News

**Fewer killings in Philippine drug war make US “cautiously optimistic” — official**

MANILA — The US government is “cautiously optimistic” on Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte’s war on drugs after it saw a decline in “extrajudicial killings,” a US senior narcotics official said.

Washington has shifted away millions of dollars in funding for law enforcement from a drug control programme of the Philippine National Police since the bloody anti-narcotics campaign started in July 2016.

But there are positive signs and the United States remains supportive of the Philippines’ effort to battle illicit drugs, said James Walsh, a deputy assistant state secretary in the international narcotics and law enforcement bureau. “I would describe the United States as being cautious and optimistic,” Walsh told a telephonic news conference late on Tuesday. “Many folks have been tracking the extrajudicial killings in the Philippines and the trends are going down, so there is some encouragement that we are seeing in some of our human rights training working.”

Nearly 4,000 people have been killed in shootouts with the police in raids and sting operations since Duterte came to power in July 2016, government data shows. But human rights groups put the figure higher, accusing police of executing drug users and peddlers in cold blood.

On Wednesday, Duterte’s spokesman, Harry Roque, said there were no “extrajudicial killings” in the war on drugs. But he welcomed the comments as a reflection of Washington’s growing appreciation of the campaign’s benefits.

“These efforts are anchored on respect for human rights, cognizant of our obligation to protect our people’s right to life and to live in peace and security,” Roque said in a statement.

Police resumed their anti-drug campaign on Monday with visits to the homes of users and dealers to convince them to surrender, and police chief Ronald dela Rosa offered an assurance it would be free of violence.—Reuters

**Seaplane that crashed in Sydney killing Compass Group exec was off course investigator**

SYDNEY — A seaplane that crashed in Sydney on New Year’s Eve killing six people, including the chief executive of British catering company Compass Group Plc, was off course but the cause of the crash remains undetermined, Australian investigators said on Wednesday.

Richard Cousins, 58, his two sons, his fiancée and her daughter, and the pilot were killed when the plane hit the water shortly after takeoff on 31 December.

In its preliminary report, the Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB) said the plane was approximately 1 km (0.6 miles) off the standard course before the pilot turned the plane sharply right. Shortly afterwards, the plane nose-dived into the Hawkesbury River, north of Sydney. “One of the key lines of enquiry for us is to try and work out exactly what was happening during that time, firstly why the pilot turned and then whether it was an attempt to turn around or a planned turn,” Nick Nagy, executive director of the ATSB, told reporters in Sydney.

The ATSB said there was no evidence of a collision or bird strike and there was no sign of any problem with the controls of the plane. Nagy said the ATSB will announce its findings should it determine the cause of the crash, but warned it may remain unresolved.—Reuters
China puts finishing touches to two-year smog crackdown plan

BEIJING — China is drawing up plans for tougher curbs on smog during the two years to 2020, an environment ministry official said on Wednesday, after a five-year crackdown on pollution helped it attain air quality targets last month.

“A three-year battle plan in the war to protect blue skies” is being hammered out by officials of the Ministry of Environmental Protection, said spokesman Liu Youbin, and incorporates tougher curbs on major industrial regions.

Key areas facing such restrictions are the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei zone in the country’s north and the Yangtze and Pearl River deltas further south.

The new three-year plan is expected to be completed in the first half of the year, Liu told reporters.

“It will continue to make Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei its key focus, but it will also focus on other major regions like the Yangtze river delta, the northeast and Chengdu-Chongqing,” he added.

China’s previous action plan for 2013 to 2017 spurred action by the smog-prone Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region to cut concentrations of hazardous particles known as PM2.5 by more than 25 per cent.

The Yangtze and Pearl river delta regions, which include Shanghai and Guangzhou respectively, were pushed to make cuts of 20 per cent and 15 per cent.

Despite near-record PM2.5 readings in January and February last year, China managed to reach all its 2015-2017 air quality targets by the end of 2017, following efforts to curb coal use and cut output from polluting factories in 28 northern cities in winter.

With the campaign set to end in March, China wants to subject firms to more permanent scrutiny, so as to avert any possible backsliding after 2017 targets were met.

Beijing has already sought to impose new special emissions curbs on major industrial sectors in the north.

Liu said China would continue to battle scattered coal-burning sources, a major source of uncontrolled pollution in provinces like Hebei, and would promote clean energy heating.

This week media reports said Hebei was forced to suspend plans to convert large numbers of coal-fired heating boilers to natural gas after winter supply shortages left thousands of homes without heat.

However, Liu denied the reports, telling reporters the Hebei government would continue to pay close attention to its coal-to-gas conversion efforts.

Beijing could adjust priorities this year and focus on vehicle pollution, Yu Jianhua, chief engineer of the capital’s environmental protection bureau, told a separate briefing on Wednesday.

Beijing will keep up the toughest emissions curbs on industrial firms this year, not only to cut pollution but also spur industries to relocate, Yu added.

Car emissions contribute about 40 per cent of air pollution in Beijing, the government estimates.

Sensitive Australian gov’t documents found in sold filing cabinets

SYDNEY — The Australian government launched an “urgent investigation” on Wednesday after hundreds of top-secret and highly classified documents were found in two filing cabinets that had been sold at a secondhand furniture store in the nation’s capital.

The Australian Broadcasting Corp. obtained the documents and has begun reporting their contents in recent days, describing the discovery as “one of the biggest breaches of Cabinet security in Australian history.”

The secretary of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet in a statement declined to comment further while the investigation into the so-called “Cabinet Files” is underway.

According to the ABC, the filing cabinets — heavy with papers — and multiple other items of significant importance were sold to a Canberra secondhand furniture buyer by a man who would not be identified.

The ABC reported that the ex-government furniture sale was not restricted to Australianians. “Had (the buyers) been inclined, there was nothing stopping them (from) handing the contents to a foreign agent or government,” the report said. — Kyodo News
The role of state-run media in an emerging democracy

Maung Aung Win (Ex-diplomat)

The news last week that two ethnic armed armed groups, the New Mon State Party (NMSPI) and the Lahu Democratic Union (LDU), signed the Nationwide Peace Agreement (NCA) to end the conflict between the government and the New Mon State Party and the Lahu Democratic Union, respectively, brought hope to the people of Myanmar. The NCA, which was signed on 15 October 2015, is a comprehensive peace agreement that includes constitutional reform and the establishment of a federal system. It is hoped that the NCA will bring about peace and stability to the country. However, the role of state-run media in an emerging democracy is a complex issue that requires careful consideration.

If all ethnic armed groups signed the NCA, displaced persons could live peacefully in their own homes. For the children, they would be able to pursue their studies without any difficulties. Smooth and efficient transportation systems would be possible, making for faster shipping of goods that will make commodity prices fall. All this will result in higher living standards for local residents.

Find a way to sign the cease-fire agreement

It is essential to see that some ethnic armed groups from the north and north-east parts of Myanmar have signed the cease-fire agreement with the government, thereby enabling them to live a normal life.

NCA negotiations were made with the Union Peace-Making Central Committee (UPCC) and ethnic-armed group and several discussions were held to sign the NCA.

During the final stages of drafting the NCA, agreements were made on seven chapters, including 23 paragraphs and 86 sub-paragraphs. After reviewing the final parts of the agreements, preliminary agreements were made on 23 March, 2017. As a result, the NCA was made and finalised in August, 2015.

The Union Government, the NCA groups, and ethnic-armed groups signed the NCA on 15 October, 2015.

All-inclusive signing

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Myanmar to host ASEAN SCI meeting from 5 to 8 March

THE Ministry of Information held a coordination meeting in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday to host the 19th meeting of the ASEAN Sub-Committee of Information (19th SCI).

The meeting was opened with an address by Union Minister for Information Dr. Pe Myint.

It was also attended by Deputy Minister for Information U Aung Hla Tun, Directors General and Managing Director of the departments and enterprises operating under the Ministry of Information, and representatives of the Yangon Regional Government.

Also present were representatives of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Home Affairs; Religious Affairs and Culture; Transport and Communications; Labour, Immigration and Population; Health and Sports; Planning and Finance; and Hotels and Tourism, as well as other invited guests.

Leaders of the ASEAN had announced the Bali Concord-II declaration on 7 October 2003 to establish the ASEAN community by 2020.

The ASEAN charter was signed in Singapore on 20 November 2007.

The SCI meeting is held to review resolutions related to the information sector in ASEAN summits and other meetings, present new project proposals for the next fiscal year, negotiate for the ASEAN Cultural Fund, make financial rules and select a host country for the next meeting.

The 19th meeting will be held from 5 to 8 March at the Sky Star Hotel in Yangon. During the coordination meeting, Director-General of the Myanmar Radio and Television (MRTV) U Myint Htwe reported on the preparations for hosting the 19th SCI meeting.

Director of MRTV U Zeyar reported on the preparations and establishment of the leading committee, work committee and sub-committees for hosting the meeting successfully.

The participants at the meeting also discussed accommodation, transport, communication, security, the opening ceremony and medical coverage for the delegates from the ASEAN countries.

Deputy Minister U Aung Hla Tun also discussed preparations for transport and food for the delegates.

The coordination meeting came to an end with concluding remarks by Union Minister Dr. Pe Myint.—Myanmar News Agency

Need of Developing Employability Skills in Young Minds of Myanmar . . .

FROM PAGE-9

The list of set of skills that come under Employability Skill may not be limited but here are few of major skills that need to be inculcated or developed in young minds:

- Technical and Analytical Skill
- Critical Thinking
- Communication Skill (Listening, Reading, Writing and Speaking)
- Planning and Team Work
- IT and Computing Skill
- Adaptability and Leadership Skill
- Presentation Skill
- Decision Making

- Lateral Thinking or “Out-of-Box” Thinking
- Problem based Learning
- Collaboration Skill
- Project based Learning
- Skill to make Effective Use of Social Media
- Lifelong Learning Skill
- Ethical and Human Values
- Many more . . .

The above includes few major skills as a part of Employability Skill. The subsequent parts of this article would highlight and stress upon How Each One of the above Skills could be developed in Pragmatic ways. (Please do write for feedback to me at drgsinh@ieee.org, ganeshsinh@acm.org, gr.sinha@mit.edu.mn)

Foreign Heads of State send felicitations to President U Htin Kyaw

The following are messages of felicitations from Foreign Heads of State / Government sent to President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar U Htin Kyaw, on the occasion of the 70th Anniversary Independence Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

From Mr. Roch Marc Christian Kabore, President of Burkina Faso, Sir President,

The celebration of the national day of your country on January 4th 2018 gives me the pleasant opportunity to address you, on behalf of the People of Burkina Faso and my personal name, my warm congratulations.

I express to you and to your People, the wishes of health, peace, prosperity and continuous progress.

In reassuring you of my constant availability to work with you to continued strengthening of friendship and cooperation between our two countries, please, accept, Sir President, the assurances of my highest consideration.

From Mr. Rodrigo Roa Duterte President of the Philippines Excellency,

Please accept my warm felicitations to Your Excellency and the people of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar on your 70th Anniversary of Independence.

It is my hope that our common desire for the development of our countries will continue to bind our nations to work closely to achieve greater peace, progress and prosperity for our peoples.

I take this opportunity to reaffirm the Philippines’ commitment to further strengthen engagement with Myanmar in various aspects to move our bilateral relations forward.

Please accept, Excellency, the renewed assurances of my highest consideration.

Foreign Head of State sends felicitations to State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi

The following is message of felicitations from Foreign Head of State / Government sent to State Counsellor and Union Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, on the occasion of the 70th Anniversary Independence Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

From Mr. Walid Al-Moualem Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates Government of the Syrian Arab Republic Excellency,

I have the pleasure to present to your Excellency, my truthful congratulations on the occasion of the National day of your country, and I avail this opportunity to express my wishes of good health and happiness for you personally, more progress and prosperity to your friendly people.

Please accept, Your Excellency, my highest consideration.

Head of Service Organization appointed

The President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has appointed Daw Tin Nwe Soe, Deputy Director-General, Office of the Supreme Court of the Union, as Director-General of the Office of the Union Judiciary Supervision on probation from the date she assumes charge of her duties.
WASHINGTON — US President Donald Trump urged lawmakers on Tuesday to work toward bipartisan compromises, but pushed a hard line on immigration, insisting on a border wall and other concessions from Democrats as part of any deal to protect the children of illegal immigrants.

Trump, in his first State of the Union speech, gave no ground on the contentious issue of whether to shield young immigrants known as “Dreamers” from deportation.

Aiming to keep conservative supporters happy as he looks to November congressional elections, Trump stood by a set of principles opposed by Democrats, including the border wall with Mexico and new restrictions on how many family members that legal immigrants can bring into the United States.

“Tonight, I call upon all of us to set aside our differences, to seek out common ground, and to summon the unity we need to deliver for the people we were elected to serve,” Trump said in his address.

Trump used the hour-and-20-minute speech, given annually by presidents to Congress, to try to overcome doubts about his presidency at a time when he is battling a probe into his campaign's alleged ties with Russia and suffering low job approval ratings.

Trump made no mention of the federal probe into whether his campaign colluded with Russia in the 2016 presidential election, a controversy that is frequently annoyed lawmakers in both parties chamber where Trump spoke. Republican lawmakers cheered wildly at the president's applause lines. Democrats often sat in their seats silently and many booed when he laid out his immigration proposals.

Trump has denied collusion and has called the probe a “witch hunt.”

The speech was short on details about Trump's policy proposals.

But his sober, measured approach was welcomed by the public. A CNN/SOPES snap poll said 48 per cent of those surveyed had a “very positive” response to the speech and 22 per cent “somewhat positive.”

There was little sign of unity inside the House of Representatives chamber where Trump spoke. Republican lawmakers cheered wildly at the president’s applause lines. Democrats often sat in their seats silently and many booed when he laid out his immigration proposals.

DENOUNCES NORTH KOREAN LEADERSHIP

Turning to foreign policy late in the speech, Trump denounced the “depraved character” of North Korea’s leadership and said Pyongyang’s “reckless pursuit of nuclear missiles could very soon threaten our homeland.”

“We are waging a campaign of maximum pressure to prevent that from happening,” he said. In a surprise moment, he singled out a North Korean defector in the crowd, Ji Seong-ho, as an example of what he called the reclusive country’s brutal nature.

Trump also said he had signed an order to keep open the US military prison at Guantnamo Bay, Cuba, for foreign terrorism suspects. Former Democrat President Barack Obama had vowed to close the prison, which has been condemned by human rights groups, but was unable to shut it down completely.

Whether Trump would follow through on his appeal for bipartisan harmony was far from clear. Trump's past attempts at a unifying message have been undermined by his later rancorous tweets and divisive statements that angered Democrats and frequently annoyed lawmakers in his own Republican Party.

The unity plea will first be put to the test in his drive for a compromise on protecting 1.8 million Dreamers — people brought illegally to the country as children — who face a March deadline on whether they can begin to be deported.

Republicans welcomed Trump's immigration proposals, with US Senator James Lankford of Oklahoma saying Trump tried to strike a middle ground.

“My Democratic colleagues can say he didn’t move enough, but you can’t deny he moved a lot. There are people in his core base who think he has moved way too far.”

But Senator Patrick Leahy, a Vermont Democrat and the longest-serving senator, said Trump's words about unity after a year of “divisive actions, petty insults and disgraceful race-baiting ... ring hollow.”

Trump said he was “extending an open hand” for an immigration deal and that he would provide Dreamers a pathway to citizenship over 10 to 12 years in exchange for funding the border wall, which he promised during his campaign, and restrictions on legal immigration.

He called his plan a “down-the-middle compromise,” but some Democrats hissed when he said he wanted to rein in “chain migration,” the ability of legal immigrants to bring a wide-ranging number of family members into the country.

“Let’s come together, set politics aside and finally get the job done,” Trump said.

— Reuters

France’s Macron warns Turkey over Syrian operation — Le Figaro interview

PARIS — French President Emmanuel Macron warned Turkey that its operation against Kurdish militias in northern Syria should not become an excuse to invade the country and said he wanted Ankara to coordinate its action with its allies.

Turkey last week launched an air and ground offensive in northwest Syria, targeting the Kurdish YPG militia in the Afrin region. That has opened a new front in the seven-year-old civil war and strained ties with Turkey’s NATO allies.

“If it turns out that this operation takes a turn other than to fight a potential terrorist threat to the Turkish border and becomes an invasion operation, (then) this becomes a real problem for us,” Macron said in an interview with Le Figaro newspaper published on Wednesday.

Macron considers the YPG a terrorist organisation and an extension of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), which has waged a three-decade-long insurgency in Turkey’s largely Kurdish southeast.

The United States and France have armed and trained YPG-led militia in the fight against Islamic State in Syria.

Macron said he would bring the issue up again with Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan and that the nature of the operation meant there should be discussions between Europeans, but also more widely among allies.

Earthquake kills child, injures dozens in Pakistan

KABUL — A 6.1 magnitude earthquake struck northeast Afghanistan on Wednesday, shaking large parts of the region and killing a child and injuring several people in neighbouring Pakistan, officials said.

The quake, which rattled buildings in the Afghan capital and was also felt in parts of India, struck 270 km (167 miles) northeast of Kabul in the Hindu Kush mountains, at a depth of 180 km, the European Mediterranean Seismological Centre said.

A baby girl was killed and 10 people were injured when roofs of mud-walled houses collapsed in the southwestern Pakistani province of Baluchistan, a district chief, Shabbir Meghal, said.

There were no immediate reports of any serious damage or casualties in Afghanistan.

Large parts of the region are seismically active because of a tectonic plate, known as the Indian plate, is pushing north into the Eurasian plate.

A 7.6-magnitude quake in northern Pakistan in October 2005 killed about 75,000 people.

— Reuters

Photo: Reuters

US President Donald Trump waves as he arrives to deliver his first State of the Union address to a joint session of Congress inside the House Chamber on Capitol Hill in Washington, US on 30 January, 2018.

Photo: Reuters

President Donald Trump waves as he arrives to deliver his speech in front of a joint session of Congress inside the House Chamber on Capitol Hill in Washington, US on 30 January, 2018.

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— Reuters
Advanced Kalashnikov assault rifles accepted for service in Russian troops

SAO PAULO — Former Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva leads in the first presidential poll published since an appeals court upheld his conviction on corruption charges, a decision which is likely to knock him out of contention for the October election. The Datafolha survey published on Wednesday in the Folha de Sao Paulo newspaper shows that if Lula cannot run, right-wing candidate Jair Bolsonaro would take the lead and make it to the second round. The poll showed that Bolsonaro would lose badly in a second-round vote to environmentalist and two-time presidential hopeful Marina Silva, and be in a second-round dead heat with likely center-right candidate Geraldo Alckmin, the governor of Sao Paulo state. If Lula is not allowed to run by the courts, a record 32 per cent of Brazilians polled by Datafolha said they would vote for no one in the presidential race. Showing widespread contempt for a political class engulfed by kickback scandals since 2014, while Lula leads in the polls, he also has by far the highest rejection rate among voters, at 40 per cent.

LAURA RUNS

The survey showed that Lula, as the former president is known, would receive 34 per cent of the first-round vote if he can run, compared with 16 per cent for right-wing candidate Jair Bolsonaro and 8 per cent for Marina Silva.

The poll also indicated that Lula would beat all other likely candidates in a second-round runoff race, required if no single candidate wins a majority of the vote in the first round. If Lula does not run, Bolsonaro would get 18 per cent of first-round vote while Marina Silva would get 13 per cent and Gomes 10 per cent. TV presenter Luciano Huck and Alckmin would each get 6 per cent of the votes without Lula.

The Datafolha interviews were conducted on 29-30 January, a few days after three appellate court judges voted to uphold Lula’s convictions on taking bribes and money laundering. Lula, Brazil’s first working-class leader, held office from 2003 to 2010. He remains free pending future appeals. Datafolha interviewed 2,626 people across Brazil. The margin of error is two percentage points.—Reuters

Brazil’s Lula leads presidential poll despite upheld conviction

EIA Study of M9 East Appraisal and Exploration Drilling in Block M9 by PTTEPI

PTTEP International Limited (PTTEPI) plans to conduct an appraisal and exploration drilling campaign in the eastern part of Offshore Block M9 with objective to confirm (or deny) and to indicate the presence of hydrocarbon reservoirs, and serve the development of the existing Zawtika gas field. The proposed appraisal and exploration drilling will be up to 12 wells which will begin in Q2 2018.

Regarding the Scoping Report which was submitted to Environmental Conservation Department (ECD), PTTEPI and Artelia Eau & Environment (Artealia) are currently undertaking an EIA Study which includes associated stakeholder engagement. The EIA will be conducted in accordance with the Myanmar EIA Procedure (2015).

More information about the proposed activity can be found on PTTEPI’s website as follows: www.pttep.com

Questions and comments can also be submitted to PTTEPI in writing by contacting the following email address: TinNilarSoe@pttep.com

German industrial workers start 24-hour strikes in row over pay, hours

EIA Study of M11 Exploration Drilling in Block M11 by PTTEPI

PTTEP International Limited (PTTEPI) plans to conduct an exploration drilling campaign in the Offshore Block M11 with objective to confirm (or deny) the presence of hydrocarbon reservoirs. The proposed exploration drilling will be one well which will begin in Q4 2018.

Regarding the Scoping Report which was submitted to Environmental Conservation Department (ECD), PTTEPI and Artelia Eau & Environment (Artealia) are currently undertaking an EIA Study which includes associated stakeholder engagement. The EIA will be conducted in accordance with the Myanmar EIA Procedure (2015).

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FRANKFURT — Industrial workers in Germany started 24-hour strikes overnight, affecting companies including automotive supplierZF Friedrichshafen and lighting company Zumtobel, amid a dispute over wages and working hours. Powerful German union IG Metall has called for daily walkouts through Friday, firing a last warning shot before it ballots for extended industrial action that could be crippling to companies reliant on a well-oiled supply chain of car parts and other components.

Emboldened by the fastest economic growth in six years and record low unemployment, the union is demanding an 8 per cent pay rise over 27 months for 3.9 million metals and engineering workers across Europe’s largest economy. The union has also asked for workers to be given the right to reduce their weekly hours to 28 from 35 to care for children, elderly or sick relatives, and return to full time after two years. This is IG Metall’s first major push for shorter hours since workers staged seven weeks of strikes in 1984 to help secure a cut of the working week to 35 hours from 40 hours. Employers have offered a 6.8 per cent increase but rejected the demand for shorter hours unless they can also increase workers’ hours when necessary. Across Germany, around 260 companies are expected to be hit by walkouts lasting 24 hours each this week in support of IG Metall’s demands. Workers at printing press maker Heidelberger Druckmaschinen in Heidelberg are among those downsizing their tools on Wednesday, as are staff at Kiso’s Still brand of forklift trucks in Hamburg and at valve maker Gesta in Bremen. Workers at automotive supplier Robert Bosch in Stuttgart are due to go on strike later on Wednesday, to be followed by Mercedes-Benz maker Daimler and sportscar firm Porsche on Friday.

Both the union and the employers have left the door open to resuming talks after the planned strikes end on Friday but each said they demanded more willingness to make concessions.—Reuters

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China’s Li says ties with Britain will remain unchanged through Brexit

BEIJING — China’s relations with Britain will not change because of changes in Britain’s EU relations, Premier Li Keqiang said on Wednesday.

Speaking after meeting visiting British Prime Minister Theresa May in Beijing’s Great Hall of the People, Li said the two discussed upbeat free-trade and that China would become more open to agricultural products.

Britain’s May says committed to deepening relationship with China.

British Prime Minister Theresa May said on Wednesday in Beijing that she is committed to deepening Britain’s relationship with China in light of Brexit and would explore all opportunities for future trade relationships.

May made the comments speaking alongside Chinese Premier Li Keqiang during a three-day state visit to China where she is accompanied by business people from sectors where Britain feels it can capitalize on China’s growing middle class consumers. The two countries have also agreed to lift a ban on British beef exports to China in six months, May said.—Reuters

India boosts maritime reach with Seychelles pact to build naval facilities

NEW DELHI/PORT VICTORIA — India has signed a 20-year pact with the Seychelles to build an airstrip and a jetty for its navy in the island chain, the Seychelles to build an airport on the Indian Ocean.

China last year inaugurated its first overseas military base in Djibouti, near one of the world’s busiest shipping lanes, deepening Indian insecurities and pushing it to gain a foothold in the region.

The agreement signed in the Seychelles’ capital of Victoria last weekend provides for India to develop the airstrip and jetty on the Assumption islands, near another shipping route. ‘India is helping us free of charge, and the facilities and activities will entirely be at the control of Seychelles and will be conducted as per the laws of Seychelles,” Barry Faure, its secretary of state for foreign affairs, told Reuters.

But nothing had been leased to India and the new facilities would help Seychelles better control its exclusive economic zone of 1.3 million square kilometres, Faure added.—Reuters

CLAIM'S DAY NOTICE

MV MERKUR TIDE VOY. NO. ( )

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V MERKUR TIDE VOY. NO. ( ) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 1-2-2018 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of MITT where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

Damaged cargo will be surveyed daily from 8 am to 11:20 am and 12 noon to 4 pm to Claim’s Day now declared as the third day after final discharge of cargo from the Vessel.

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY AGENT FOR: MS MCC TRANSPORT (STORE) PTE LTD

Phone No: 2301185

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HYALIS


In respect of “Cosmetic preparations for skin renewal” all included in Class 03.

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Daw Htoo Htoo, M.G.P

For Neocutis S.A.,

C/o Kelvin Chia Yangon Ltd.,

Level 8A, Union Financial Centre (UFC),

Corner of Mahabandoola Road & Thein Phyu Road,

Botataung Township, Yangon,

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

Dated 1st February 2018

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For RéACTIVE

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Dated 1st February 2018

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Qualcomm Snapdragon

Reg. No. 4/15883/2014 (29.10.2014)

In respect of “Integrated circuits, computer hardware and software for signal processing in wireless communication apparatus, modems, decoders, tablet computers, handheld computers, and pocket computing devices; modems and amplifiers; signal compression and decompression instruments, voice coders and decoders, namely, vocoders, and signal compression and decompression software and technical manuals sold as a unit therewith; computer hardware and software for electronic multimedia content protection; mobile application software; software in the nature of a mobile application for discovering, organizing, sharing, connecting, playing and accessing video games; downloadable software in the nature of a mobile application for retrieving and displaying articles, videos, and other news related to video games; computer programs and software for communication devices; computer software and programs enabling users of communication devices to simultaneously access databases and global computer networks; computer software enabling transfer of data between mobile communication apparatus; mobile communication terminals, including voice and data communication devices, used in terrestrial or satellite-based communications systems; telecommunications and data networking hardware, namely devices for transporting and aggregating voice, data, and video communications across multiple network infrastructures and communications protocols; electronic devices, namely, computer hardware for accessing global computer and communication networks; computer programs and software; computer monitors, modems, decoders, tablet computers, handheld computers, and parts, components and fittings for the above goods; wireless communication apparatus, namely, modems, cellular telephones, mobile telephones, smart phones, wireless local loop telephones and personal communication services (PCS) handsets, and component parts and instruction manuals sold as a unit therewith; radio frequency (RF) and intermediate frequency (IF) transceiver circuit assemblies, and analog and digital signal processing circuit assemblies for wireless communication apparatus” in Class 9.

Fraudulent or unauthorised use or actual or colourable imitation of the Mark shall be dealt with according to law.

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Dated 1st February 2018
CANNES, France — Every year the French Riviera town of Cannes rolls out the red carpet to A-list celebrities at the world’s most glamorous film festival. Now it wants to roll out a bigger beach too.

The Mediterranean resort is shipping in 80,000 cubic metres of white sand — enough to fill 32 Olympic swimming pools — to widen the beach along a 1.4 kilometre (0.9 mile) stretch of seafront beside the famed “Croisette” promenade.

From Brigitte Bardot in the 1950s to Nicole Kidman and Leonardo DiCaprio in more recent years, the Croisette’s fine sands, glitzy hotels and gourmet restaurants have hosted film’s biggest stars during the annual festival. By the time of this year’s event in May, the expanded stretch of sand should be in place and for private beach managers means more room to make money.

“We had a strip of sand which was about 20 metres wide, now we’ll get an extra 10 to 12 metres,” said Bruno Richard, manager of the privately owned Long Beach, where bulldozers pumped via a floating pipe onto the beach, where bulldozers shape the new waterfront.

Locals are divided over the development. While some applaud a bigger public beach, others fret it may be a waste of money, “What worries me is whether the sea will just take it all back. It cost the town a lot of money,” said resident Gerard Rollandin.

— Reuters

Irish group U2 receive an award at the 2017 MTV Europe Music Awards at Wembley Arena in London, Britain on 12 November, 2017. PHOTO: REUTERS

U2 defeats lawsuit claiming it stole part of ‘Achtung Baby’ song

NEW YORK — A US judge on Tuesday dismissed a lawsuit accusing U2 of lifting part of a British songwriter’s work for a song on the Irish rock band’s 1991 blockbuster album “Achtung Baby.”

US District Judge Denise Cote in Manhattan rejected Paul Rose’s claim that U2 willfully copied from a 13-second guitar riff near the start of his 1989 instrumental “Nae Slappin,” to create a 12-second segment featuring a guitar solo for its song “The Fly.”

Rose, who lives in New York, claimed that U2 copied from his song “virtually note-for-note,” and also used a tambourine and the same drum, percussion and bass line without permission.

But the judge said the riff was not a “sufficiently substantial” portion of “Nae Slappin,” a 3-1/2-minute composition that “demonstrates the plaintiff’s impressive guitar skills, to be a protectable ‘fragment’ of the work.”

She also said that even if the riff were protectable, a reasonable jury could not find that U2 copied it.

Rose had been seeking at least $5 million in damages from U2 lead singer Bono; bandmates The Edge, Adam Clayton and Larry Mullen Jr, and UMG Recordings Inc, a Vivendi SA unit that releases records under U2’s label Island Records.—Reuters

19th February 2018

LOS ANGELES — The stars of “Black Panther” dressed in their finest African-inspired royal attire and spoke about the importance of representing a black superhero story on screen at the premiere of the new film from Walt Disney Co’s Marvel Entertainment.

Chadwick Boseman, who plays T’Challa, the titular hero and king of fictional African nation Wakanda, led his co-stars including Lupita Nyong’o, Daniel Kaluuya, Michael B Jordan, Danai Gurira and Angela Bassett, on the purple carpet on Monday.

“Something like Marvel has a way of really affecting popular culture, and to have that popular culture informed with things that are of African origin and people knowing they are of African origin ... is powerful,” Nyong’o, who plays warrior Nakia, told Reuters.

“Hopefully it changes the general idea of what being an African is. Too often times we see Africa as a place that is wanting and here it’s a place that you want to go,” she said.

The Oscar-winning actress matched the purple carpet in an amethyst-hued Versace gown with gold-detailed shoulders and belt. Gurira wore a bright pink Viktor & Rolf dress with a dramatic shoulder ruffle, and Bassett opted for a golden yellow Naeem Khan fringe jumpsuit.

The men also served up colorful looks. Boseman rocked a gilded print Emporio Armani suit, actor Donald Glover opted for a tangerine Dolce & Gabbana suit, and the film’s director, Ryan Coogler, added a printed scarf to his black ikre Jones suit, a Philadelphia label that draws from West African influences.

“Black Panther,” out in theaters on 16 February, earned rave early reactions from attendees at the premiere, including “Guardians of the Galaxy” director James Gunn, who praised the film as an “extraordinary work.”

“It’s just filled with so much talent, so much beauty, the aesthetic of it is so pleasing and so black and Afro-centric and African and modern and worldly and futuristic. You know, it’s got a lot of swag. This movie is on fire,” said Bassett, who plays T’Challa’s mother.—Reuters
Beirut guide gives walking tours of city’s history and his own

BEIRUT — Tour guide Ronnie Chatah, 36, is once again doing what he loves after a four-year hiatus — telling the stories that have shaped Beirut’s history from ancient to modern times.

Chatah put the walking tours on hold in late 2013 after the assassination of his father Mohammad Chatah, a former minister and diplomat. He was worried he would not be able to give an impartial view of the city, he said.

“My father is buried in what is probably the most climactic part of the tour,” he said, referring to Martyrs’ Square, a pockmarked statue in the epicenter, where many Lebanese have rallied in times of political crisis since World War I.

“It is not easy to look at your father’s burial site and just ignore the emotions.”

But reviving the tour has had a surprising effect.

“I have not had a better therapy session,” said Chatah, who first launched the tours in 2009.

Now for four hours every other Sunday, people follow Chatah as he explains some of the most complicated aspects of Lebanon’s history.

He explains that the local currency is pegged to the US dollar and about how since the civil war political power is shared between Lebanon’s 18 different religious sects. He also explains why so many abandoned heritage buildings have been seemingly left to disintegrate.

Standing outside what was once the Holiday Inn hotel, Chatah recounts how the building that once exemplified Beirut’s Seventies glamor became an icon of the 1975-1990 civil war only a few weeks after it opened. It became the military headquarters of whichever militant faction was winning the war in Beirut over the next 15 years.

For him, the building — with its grey exterior, huge gaping holes and revolving balcony — is the best reflection of how the Lebanese have yet to make peace.

“We don’t reflect properly and I think that is our problem. Maybe that is part of our story too, that we are constantly avoiding the deeper issues, and hence a country that still cannot stand properly on its own two feet,” he said.

The tour allows visitors to discover parts of the city that have either ceased to exist or cordoned off by security because of close proximity to government buildings or politicians’ residences. This includes what used to be the old Jewish neighbourhood, once home to a small community that is now all but gone save for a restored synagogue.

“I thought I knew the area but I was surprised to find out about ... a neighbourhood that I never knew existed,” Sarah Harekhe, 24, a teacher said.

Chatah said he had been planning to resume the walks for just a couple of months, but the interest that has come back is such that even this spring the tours are already scheduled for the rest of the year. “That is the persuasion of this city, you keep coming back, and even when you know it is not good for you,” he said. —Reuters

Wings of joy: Kabul’s bird market brings comfort to war-weary Afghans

KABUL — For some Afghans weighed down by decades of war and struggle, a little comfort and distraction can be found in the company of birds.

The war seems a long way off in the Ka Faroshi bird market in the heart of Kabul’s old city, a narrow lane with a few alleys off it, packed with small, mud-walled shops festooned with bird cages.

Customers, most of them men, but some blue burqa-clad women too, squeeze down the crowded street, stopping to inspect birds on display, haggle with shopkeepers and buy bird seed and other supplies.

Fighting cocks and partridges squawk in bell-shaped wicker cages, while finches, larks and canaries of all varieties hop about in cages, and pigeons coo in small aviaries made of wire.

“In Afghanistan, it’s a passion to keep birds,” said Ruflullah Ahmad, who sells fighting cocks at the market.

“Some people love to keep fighting cocks, some love to have partridges and some love to have other kinds of birds. It’s a custom in Afghanistan.”

Most of the birds come from Afghanistan, caught in the wild or raised. Some are imported from neighboring countries, such as Iran and Pakistan, but traders said business was down, with few birds being imported these days.

Ahmad said the best fighting cocks come from northern Afghanistan. The most expensive ones can bring up to 1 million afghani ($14,000). But the favourite of many Afghans is the chukar partridge, an elegant reddish-grey bird with a black band across its eyes and around its throat, a red beak, and black stripes on its side.

The partridges are bred for fighting. “My passion is partridges, I’ve been keeping partridges for about 60 years,” said Abdul Ahmedi, another market trader. “I’m first in Kabul in partridge fighting.”Another trader, Mohammad Zahir Tanha, said birds helped bring relief from the stress of life in the Afghan capital, recently hit by a spate of bloody militant attacks. “I have a mental problem and doctors advised me to keep birds,” Tanha said in his shop, stacked with cages. —Reuters

China to stage production of “Thais” in February, with Placido Domingo performing

BEIJING — A Chinese production of Jules Massenet’s opera “Thais” will make its debut on 2 February, according to the National Centre for the Performing Arts (NCPA). Spanish tenor Placido Domingo will perform in the opera, which will be staged at the NCPA in Beijing until 6 February, according to the NCPA.

The opera tells the story of a young monk, Athanael, who saves the beautiful Thais from hedonism, while the monk becomes degenerate and sinks into carnal desire for Thais.

Composed by Jules Massenet, the opera was adapted from the novel by the same name, which helped Anatole France win the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1921. —Xinhua

Canary cages hang inside a shop, for sale, at Ka Faroshi bird market in Kabul, Afghanistan on 18 January, 2018. PHOTO: REUTERS

Tour guide Ronnie Chatah, 36, gives the tour brochures to visitors in Beirut, Lebanon on 28 January, 2018. PHOTO: REUTERS
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**Yangon and Ayeyawady play to a draw in U-19 MNL match**

THE U-19 teams from Yangon United and Ayeyawady United played to a 1-1 tie yesterday in a Myanmar National League match at Salin Stadium in Yangon.

With both teams comprised of young, energetic players, the ball went to and fro with speedy play.

The opening goal occurred early for Ayeyawady, when Nay Don Khant scored at the 6-minute mark.

The equalising goal was scored just as quickly by Yangon United’s brilliant player Hlwan Moe Oo, who scored in the restart just after the opening goal.

The players from Yangon made further attempts to score, but Ayeyawady’s defence was strong and was able to thwart further goal scoring.

The struggle for more goals continued in the second half, with strikers from both teams making sweaty efforts to break the draw.

But Yangon and Ayeyawady were equal on this day in stami-

na, skill and defence.

**Palace covet attacking cover after Sako injury**

LONDON — Crystal Palace will look to sign an attacking player before the transfer window closes later on Wednesday after midfielder Bakary Sako picked up an injury in their 1-1 draw at West Ham United, manager Roy Hodgson said.

Sako is facing an extended spell on the sidelines after limping off with an ankle injury before halftime on Tuesday and Hodgson revealed that the Malian international’s chances of a quick recovery appeared unlikely.

“My medical staff... don’t think it’s very good at all,” the former England manager said.

“We don’t really have the luxury of losing a forward player because we are so short in that area.”

“It makes it a little bit more imperative that we bring some players in because otherwise we’ll have a very thin squad, especially in the forward areas.”

Hodgson has signed two players so far, with centre back Jaroslaw Jach joining on a three-year deal and Sweden under-21 midfielder Erdal Rakip coming in on loan from Benfica until the end of the season. — Reuters

**Myanmar Futsal team departs for AFC Futsal Championships**

THE Myanmar National Futsal Team departed for Chinese Taipei yesterday morning from Yangon International Airport to compete in the AFC Futsal Championship 2018.

This is the 15th edition of the AFC Futsal Championship, the biennial international competition organised by the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) for the men’s national teams of Asia. The competition will take place in Chinese Taipei, also known as Taiwan, which was appointed by the AFC to host the event from 1 to 11 February. Sixteen teams including Myanmar will play in the tournament.

The teams will be divided into four groups each consisting of four teams.

Myanmar is in Group C with Asian Futsal powers Iran, Iraq and China. Myanmar will play against Iran on Friday, Iraq on Sunday and China on Tuesday. The top two teams of each group will advance to the quarterfinals. — Kyaw Zin Lin

**Allardyce takes aim at deadline day fixtures**

LONDON — Everton manager Sam Allardyce has called for the Premier League to avoid scheduling games on transfer deadline day as it puts clubs under too much pressure.

Everton host Leicester City on Wednesday, one of six games on the schedule, and Allardyce said speculation about players coming and going before the transfer window closed was a distraction.

“I’m a manager and I want the best possible opportunities to function correctly,” he said.

“I have enough pressure in the game as it is at the moment without heaping more on top of me, which is exactly what this does, on every manager in the Premier League.”— Reuters