

President U Thein Sein confers honours on Sayadaws, outstanding individuals

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

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

President U Thein Sein presented the certificates to the Sayadaws before posing for documentary photos with the Sayadaws, vice presidents Dr Sai Mauk Kham and U Nyan Tun, Speaker of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw and the Pyithu Hluttaw Thura U Shwe Mann, Speaker of the Amyotha Hluttaw U Khin Aung Myint, Chief Justice of the Union U Tun Tun Oo, Commander-in-Chief of Defence Ser-

vices Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, Chairman of the Constitutional Tribunal of the Union U Mya Thein, Chairman of Union Election Commission U Tin Aye and Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services and Commander-in-Chief (Army) Vice-Senior General Soe Win.

Among the 10 Sayadaws to receive the presidential honorary certificates was Chairman of State Sangha Nayaka Committee Bhamo Kyaungtaik Sayadaw Abhidajha Maha Rattha Guru Dr Bhaddanta Kumarabhivamsa of Maha Aungmyay Township in Mandalay Region.

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

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

guides.

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

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

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

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



President U Thein Sein presents trophy to excellent award winner livestock breeding entrepreneur.—MNA

Japanese sculptor's nature-inspired creation 'gift to Myanmar'

By Aye Min Soe

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

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

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

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

"My motive (to create Windy) is my love for na-

ture, because nature is not only important for me, but also for Myanmar," Mr Mukai said.

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

(See page 2)

German Myanmar Business Chamber launches with eye to increased bilateral trade

By Ye Myint

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

The chamber will serve as a business platform between German

and Myanmar companies, while also seeking to establish a dialogue with the Myanmar government on economic frameworks, the GMBC's Founding President Mr Jens Knoke said.

With an inaugural membership of more than 50 companies, the Chamber aims to work closely with the Delegation of German Industry and Commerce that has operated an office in Myanmar since 2013, and help de-

velop the country's private sector through the transfer of knowledge, it added.

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

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

Despite 60-year-old diplomatic ties between

the two countries, the GMBC is the first bilateral business chamber for German and Myanmar companies in the country.

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

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

GNLM

GMBC President Jens Knoke (left), seated next to GMBC Treasurer Philipp Hoffmann, makes a presentation at a press conference for the launch of the German Myanmar Business Chamber in Yangon on Friday.

PHOTO: YE MYINT



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

NAY PYI TAW, 15 May — Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann sought approval from the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw on Friday of the extension of the state of emergency for another 90 days in the Kokang self-administered area in Shan State, with

members of parliament speaking in support of the extension.

A state of emergency with a three-month period of martial law has been declared in the area since 17 February 2015, and expires on 17 May.

MPs condemned acts

of disturbance orchestrated by destructive elements, calling for the parliament to put on record whoever makes efforts to remove threats to national security. They shared their sympathy with families of soldiers wounded and killed in defence of

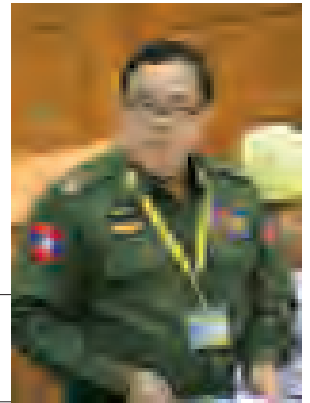
the country, stressing the need to join hands with the army to ensure stability and rule of law in the region.

“The issue of Laukkai is a national rather than local concern, so collective participation and co-operation is individual re-

sponsibility,” an MP said.

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

Union Defence Minister Lt-Gen Wai Lwin.—MNA



Pyithu Hluttaw speaker meets US, ROK delegations



Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann holds talks with Mrs Catherine M Russell, Ambassador-at-Large for US Global Women's Issues Office.—MNA

NAY PYI TAW, 15 May — Speaker of Pyithu Hluttaw Thura U Shwe Mann received Mrs Catherine M Russell, Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues Office of the US Secretary of State, at the hall of

Pyithu Hluttaw Building, here, on Friday.

Also present at the calls were Chairman of Pyithu Hluttaw International Relations Committee U Hla Myint Oo, US Ambassador Mr. Derek Mitchell and officials of

the Pyithu Hluttaw Office.

The speaker also held talks with MP of National Assembly of the Republic of Korea Vice Chairman Mr Park Byeong Seug of Korea-Myanmar Friendship Association and party at the same venue.—MNA

Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker receives delegates from Korea-Myanmar Friendship Association

NAY PYI TAW, 15 May — Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker U Khin Aung Myint on Friday met a delegation led by

Mr Park Byeong-Seug, vice chairman of Korea-Myanmar Friendship Association, at his office here to host an informal

lunch to them.

Also present at the lunch were members of Amyotha Hluttaw committees.—MNA

Myanmar's largest food and hospitality trade event set for June

By Khaing Thanda Lwin

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

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

It will present over 250 exhibitors from 20 countries, showcasing over 1,000 different products and services, as well as seven

international pavilions from Denmark, Germany, Italy, the Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan and Thailand, BES general manager Mr Justin Paul said at a press conference. In addition, two contests—the Myanmar Culinary Arts Competition and the Myanmar National Barista Championship—will take place during the event, the organizer said.

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

“Myanmar is the new

kid on the block on South East Asia, grabbing news headlines and investment. Investment in the hotel sector has now reached US \$2.7 billion and it is expected to top \$3 billion in 2015.

“With all of these significant developments come significant opportunities as Myanmar's hospitality industry rapidly tries to modernize and deliver international hospitality standards for both local and foreign customers.”

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

Japanese sculptor's nature-inspired creation . . .

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

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

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

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

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

lery in the People's Park.

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

Mr Mukai arrived earlier than other painters to create his wood sculpture. A number of Myanmar artists are working alongside him.

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

“My workshop starts now,” Mon Thet said jokingly. “I will create a painting with some movements of Mr Mukai in the back-

ground and will paint one of his works in the middle of the canvas.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Katsumi Mukai works on a teak tree to create a modern wood sculpture. Sculpture will be on display at No 48, 61/2-Mile, Pyay Road.
PHOTO: AYE MIN SOE



NATIONAL



Vice President Dr Sai Mauk Kham presents certificate to an excellent certificate winner.

MNA

President U Thein Sein confers honours...

(from page 1)

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

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

The president said two

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

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

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

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

After the president's



Vice President U Nyan Tun presents certificate to agricultural outstanding farmer.

MNA

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



Vice President U Nyan Tun views documentary photos on Second World War Victory.—MNA

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

Zone, here, on Friday.

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

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

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

MNA

Army captures Point-2202 Hill of MNDAA insurgents in Laukkai

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

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

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

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

On Friday morning,

the army also captured Point 2071 Hill adjacent to Point 2202 Hill while in hot pursuit of the enemies.

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

The army caught 2 enemies alive, 24 bodies, and arms and ammunitions, and suffered some casualties.

MNA

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



Union Minister U Ye Htut speaking at Myanmar Summit.—MNA

YANGON, 15 May—

Myanmar Summit entitled "Taking Stock" that focused on reform and upcoming elections in Myanmar organized by the Economist Events was held at the Strand Hotel in Yangon on Friday morning.

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

in Myanmar.

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

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

Richard Cockett.

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

The facilitators responded to queries raised by participants.—MNA

Rural youths undertake computer training course

TATKON, 15 May—A month-long computer skills course for youths is being conducted at Law-ka Alin Library in Ohnbin Village, Tatkon Township,



until 21 May.

Course instructor Ashin Kavinda, abbot of Mingala Yanaung monastery, said the course gives youths the opportunity to study computer science during their summer holidays.

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

*Tin Soe Lwin
(Tatkon IPRD)*

Canada prepares to assist Myanmar Maternal and Child Welfare Association

NAY PYI TAW, 15 May—A Canadian government representative visited Kyitaungkan Ward in Pobbathiri Township on Thursday to view local facilities of the Myanmar Maternal and Child Welfare Association.

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

Dr McGarry is inspecting clinics, delivery



rooms and pre-primary schools of the MMCWA on behalf of the Canadian government, which is

planning to provide assistance for the facilities.

Shwe Ye Yint

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

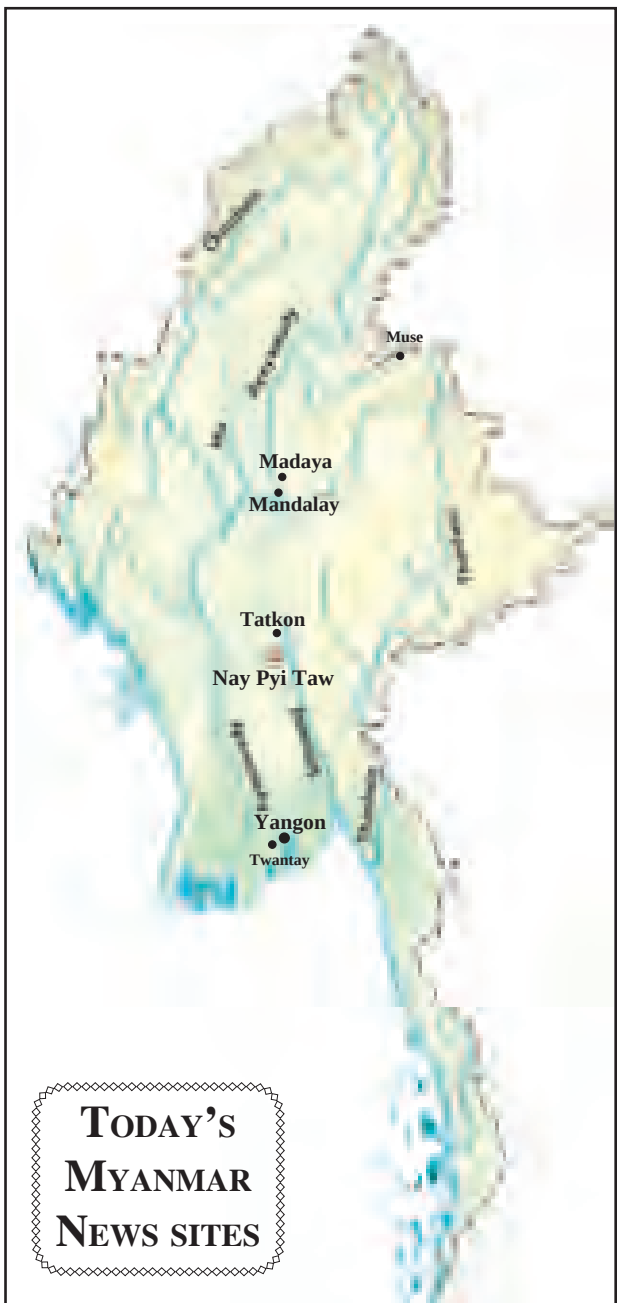
MUSE, 15 May—Work is under way to widen the Muse-Lashio-Mandalay Union Highway in northern Shan State from two to

four lanes.

A wide variety of vehicles including heavy trucks use the road daily. With only two lanes, it is prone

to traffic congestion which delays the transport of locally produced fruit and other commodities.

Ko Mong (IPRD)



As part of activities of UN Global Road Safety Week 2015, staff of Loilem District Directorate of Road Administration distribute pamphlets on road safety to motorcyclists near the clock tower of Loilem Myoma Market on 8 May.—MOE LWIN Oo (LOILEM)



Primary assistance teachers undergo additional training

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

Twantay.

The course is being conducted for 305 teachers from Twantay, Dala and Seikkyi-Khanaungto townships until 8 June.

Course lecturers in-

clude Township Education Officer U Ngwe Thura, Deputy Township Education Officer Daw Aye Aye Maw and 13 instructors.

*Myo Hlaing
(Twantay)*

Chinese premier says talks with India's Modi "meet expectations," 24 deals signed

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

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

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

This is the first time Xi has welcomed a foreign leader to his hometown.

"President Xi's welcome also touched the hearts of 1.25 billion Indian people," Modi said.

"I discussed many is-



Chinese Premier Li Keqiang (2nd L) holds a welcoming ceremony for Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi before their talks in Beijing, capital of China, on 15 May, 2015.—XINHUA

sues with Premier Li, which will take our relations towards a positive direction. Our cooperation not only benefits the two countries, but also sends a positive

signal to the world," Modi said.

China and India have signed a total of 24 treaties and MOUs aimed at boosting cooperation in areas

including railways, aerospace, mineral exploitation, marine science and vocational education.

The countries have decided to set up consulates

in China's Chengdu City and India's Chennai City.

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

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

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

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

S Korea holds drill to defend disputed islets

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

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

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

Kyodo News

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

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

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

His remarks come amid global attention on the

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

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

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

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

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



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

Wreckage of missing US helicopter found in Nepal; no survivors

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

A US search team identified the wreckage as that of the missing Marines UH-1Y Huey helicopter deployed after the Himalayan state was hit by a massive earthquake last month

that killed more than 8,000 people.

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

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

The US statement made no mention of the fate of the six Marines

and two Nepali soldiers on board the Huey that went missing on Tuesday, the day a strong aftershock hit Nepal and killed more than 100 people. Nepal says none of the eight on board could have survived.

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

"The search for oth-

ers is continuing. As the helicopter has broken into pieces and totally crashed there is no chance of any survivors," said Defence Secretary Ishwori Prasad Paudyal.

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

Reuters



A woman grieves outside her collapsed house at the earthquake-affected area in Dolakha, about 150 km from Kathmandu, Nepal, on 15 May, 2015. The death toll in a fresh powerful quake that rocked Nepal on Tuesday has soared to 117 and around 2, 760 others injured, Nepal Police said in its latest update on Friday.—XINHUA

US and Cuba to hold another round of talks next week



US President Barack Obama shakes hands with Cuba's President Raul Castro as they hold a bilateral meeting during the Summit of the Americas in Panama City, Panama on 11 April, 2015.—REUTERS

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

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

The talks are the first

since President Barack Obama announced on 14 April that he had decided to remove Cuba from the US list of state sponsors of terrorism, a step that Cuba had insisted on before agreeing to reopen embassies. Obama and Cuban President Raul Castro announced on 17 December they would work to restore diplomatic ties, which Washington severed in 1961 two years after Raul's brother Fidel took power and began implementing communist rule.—Reuters

Abe mulls meeting Putin aide visiting Tokyo next week

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

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

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

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

Kyodo News

Missile shield for Gulf to take years, and heavy US commitment

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

A renewed joint commitment to build the regional defense system was one of the few firm outcomes of Thursday's Camp David summit between President Barack Obama and Gulf allies, which were seeking fresh US defence pledges ahead of a possible nuclear deal they fear will empower arch-rival Iran. Past efforts have stalled due to tension and mistrust within the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) but US and Gulf officials say the time is now ripe to push ahead as Arab nations mount more joint military missions. A joint statement following the summit said that the GCC states were committed to developing a ballistic missile defence capability, including an early warning system, with US technical help. Washington pledged to fast-track arms transfers to

the GCC states and to send a team to the region in the coming weeks to discuss the details.

The Gulf nations fear that the sanctions relief that would accompany a nuclear deal with Teheran due by 30 June could revive Iran's economy and enable it to acquire more accurate and reliable missiles. An integrated defence system would allow Gulf countries to better repel an Iranian attack, stitching together their radars and interceptors to counter a range of different missiles. The system would use US early-warning satellites and a mix of US and Gulf radars to detect the launch of an enemy missile and fire a ground- or sea-based missile to destroy it far above the earth.

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

The biggest challenge to making the shield work

would be securing a broad agreement on the rules for dealing with any threats, said Anthony Cordesman, a senior analyst with the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

"You have to work out the entire engagement structure before the first missile is ever launched," Cordesman said. Getting to that point will require unprecedented agreements between the US military and the GCC, and among the often rancorous Gulf allies, to share sensitive data to avoid the risk of a friendly aircraft being shot down by mistake, experts said. Intensive US-led training would also be vital to minimize the risk of mis-

haps, US officials say.

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

The Gulf countries are upgrading their existing Raytheon Patriot systems to incorporate new PAC-3 missiles built by Raytheon and Lockheed Martin Corp, and are starting to buy wider-area and longer-range systems like the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD), built by Lockheed. [ID:L1N0Y339N]

Reuters



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"I understand that the official misspoke and that the US does not have any plans to base those air-

craft in Australia," Abbott said.

"Australia's alliance with the US is a force for stability," Abbott said.

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

The US Air Force said the B-1 bomber was the backbone of its long-range bomber force. The aircraft, currently being used in Iraq to attack Islamic State, is capable of rapidly delivering 84 bombs weighing 225 kg each "against any adversary, anywhere in the world, at any time."—Xinhua



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

Negotiators discuss UN disarmament paper without Hiroshima invite

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

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

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

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

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

the invite.

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

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

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

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

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

Kyodo News

WORLD

NASA finds Antarctic ice shelf a few years from disintegration

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

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

Larsen B is located

in the Antarctic Peninsula, which extends toward the southern tip of South Amer-

ica and is one of two principal areas of the continent where scientists have docu-

mented the thinning of such ice formations. "This study of the Antarctic Peninsula

glaciers provides insights about how ice shelves farther south, which hold much more land ice, will react to a warming climate," said Eric Rignot, co-author of the study and a glaciologist at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California.

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

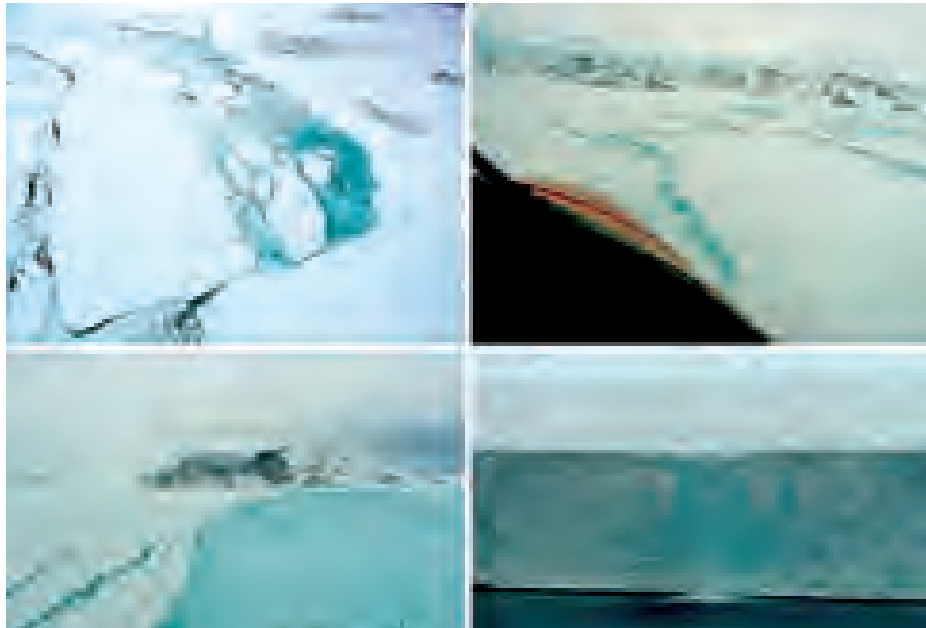
The UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has cited a probability of at least 95 percent that accelerated warming of the planet has been triggered by human activities, led by atmospheric emissions of greenhouse gases from the burning of fossil

fuels. The study, published online in the journal *Earth and Planetary Science Letters*, was based on airborne surveys and radar data.

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

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

Reuters



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

REUTERS

Israeli parliament confirms Netanyahu's new gov't

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

The 20-member cabinet, whose lineup was finalized not long before the vote, is to be sworn in soon after it won the parliament's confirmation in a vote of 61 to 59.

There had been tough haggling over the allocation of cabinet posts be-

tween the Likud and its four coalition partners, and among prominent Likud figures.

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

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

reports.

In the new cabinet, Netanyahu holds concurrently the foreign ministry portfolio, and Moshe Ya'alon of the Likud kept his position as defense minister and Moshe Kahlon, leader of the center Kulanu party, was appointed finance minister. There have been speculations that Netanyahu chose to keep the top diplomatic post vacant for the time being in order to invite opposition leader Isaac Herzog into the ruling coalition in the future.

Xinhua

Obama says Israel-Palestinian two-state solution 'vital' for peace

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

Obama said he believed the two-state option was also the best for the long-term security of Israel. He acknowledged the prospect of a peace accord



"seems distant now," noting that a number of members of the new Israeli government did not share the view that a two-state solution was viable.—Reuters

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

Jeb Bush reverses on Iraq war, highlighting difference with brother

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

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

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

But Jeb's loyalty, plus

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

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

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

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



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

president.

Bush told reporters in Tempe that it was not easy to break away from the positions of his brother, who ordered the US military into Iraq in 2003 based on intelligence that Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction, which were never found.

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

He said he had been reluctant to speak his mind about the invasion because as governor, he had called relatives of military per-

sonnel killed in Iraq.

"It's very hard for me to say that their lives were lost in vain," he said. "In fact, they weren't."

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

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

"I don't know how that was a hard question," Santorum said.

"I've been asked that question a hundred times and the answer is pretty clear. The information was not correct...I think everybody accepts that now."

Others attending the RNC spring meeting thought Bush found the right response even though

it took him a while.

"I think it's important for him to point out he's his own man. He just needs to keep repeating that," said Steve Duprey, an RNC member from New Hampshire who was a top aide to 2008 Republican presidential nominee, Senator John McCain.

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

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

Reuters



Saturday, 16 May, 2015

For better or worse, your vote is your destiny

By Kyaw Thura

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

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

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

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

eye for unscrupulous elements who may seek to spoil or delay the elections.

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

Write for us

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

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

Ba Sein (Religious Affairs)

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

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

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

Buddhist-monk candidates.

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

It is known that the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has been a predominantly Theravada Buddhist nation in the world for nearly one thousand years, and over 90 percent of nation's population has taken faith in Theravada Buddhism since then. Furthermore, the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has been recognized as a permanent higher learning centre of genuine Theravada Buddhism not only in the Buddhist world but also throughout the world. According to historical records of Buddhism, the Fifth and Sixth Great Buddhist Councils (Synods) were successfully convened in the Republic of the Union of Myanmar with a view to ensuring purification, perpetuation and propagation of the Buddha Sasana (the Buddha's teachings) all over the world. The Sixth Great Buddhist Council, which was attended and participated by Mahatheras (Chief monks) from Five Theravada Buddhist Na-

tions, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia, Sri Lanka and Myanmar, was successfully held in the Republic of the Union of Myanmar in 1954.

In order to carefully preserve genuine Theravada Buddhism, a great number of Buddhist Monastic Institutions and learning Centers of Buddhist Scriptures have been established in the Republic of the Union of Myanmar for years. For the time being, the two Pariyatti Sasana Universities, one in Yangon and another in Mandalay have been so far established to promote and propagate the Theravada Buddhism throughout the world. At present, Buddhist monk students are attending these two universities, and if they have got through the prescribed examinations held by these Universities, they will be conferred Takkasila Dhammacariya Degree (Bachelor of Arts) in Buddhism and Tekkasila Maha Dhammacariya Degree (Master of Arts) in Buddhism respectively. And now, the International Theravada Buddhist Missionary University, the very first one in the Buddhist world has been also already established in the Republic of the Union of Myanmar in order to propagate, promote and flourish genuine Theravada Buddhism throughout the world, and to share the knowledge of Buddhism both in theory and practice

with the peoples of the world to promote their happiness and moral well-being.

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

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

Out of these seven kinds of religious examinations, the Sacred Tipitakadhara Tipitakakovida Selection Examination has been separately held by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar since sixty six years ago. Buddhist monk candidates who wish to appear for this Sacred Tipitakadhara Tipitakakovida

Selection Examination must have passed at least the Pathamagyi Examination. In fact, the Sacred Tipitakadhara Tipitakakovida Selection Examination is quite different from other religious examinations because the candidates have to take 33 days to sit for this examination. They have to take both oral examination consists of Pali Texts, 8,026 pages of Tipitaka canons and the written examination consists of Pali Texts Athakatha (Commentaries) and Tika (Sub-commentaries) of 9,934 pages of Tipitaka canons respectively. Only the candidates who have got through both oral and written examinations will be presented the Title of Tipitakadhara Tipitakakovida (the Title of Religious Heroes). Up to now, only thirteen outstanding members of Sangha (Bhikkhus) (Religious Heroes) were presented the Title of Tipitakadhara Tipitakakovida within over 67 years' duration of the Sacred Tipitakadhara Tipitakakovida Selection Examination.

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

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

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

LOCAL NEWS

Govt sends pagoda trustees rules for preservation of ancient sites

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

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

“Ancient cultural heritage sites must be preserved as testament to the flourishing of Buddhism in the history of Myanmar, as well as Myanmar’s high architecture

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

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

Min Htet Aung (Mandalay Sub-printing House)



Farmers receive rights to work newly released land plots

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

Secretary of Township Land Management Committee U Shwe outlined the release of 1,200 acres

of farmland by the Central Command to farmers in Nyaungok village-tract in Madaya Township on 7 March 2014. Officials presented certificates to 12 farmers for 125.20 acres of farmland each.

The authorities are scrutinizing ownership of remaining released farmlands.

Tin Maung (Mandalay)



Plan set to hoist diamond orb and umbrella atop Jade Pagoda

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

Arrangements have been made to hoist a diamond orb and an umbrella atop the pagoda on 5 June.

In commemoration of religious activities, officials will organize a

Chinlone contest from 5 to 11 June, an equestrian contest from 2 to 5 June and a bullock-cart contest from 23 May to 5 June. U Soe Naing (Aye Aye Khaing Jewellery Company) and family plan to serve 70,000 packets of meals as part of the religious celebration.

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

Tin Maung (Mandalay)

New power lines, transformers boost electricity supply in Chanayethazan Tsp

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

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

Tin Maung (Mandalay)



Mandalay set to host invitational volleyball tourney

MANDALAY, 15 May — Mandalay Region Volleyball Subcommittee will hold the inaugural Yadanabon Cup invitational men’s tournament at Bahtoo Gymnasium from 24 to 30 June.

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

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

The volleyball teams may call Mandalay Region Sports and Physical Education Department on 02-33619, or U Tint Wai of Sports and Physical Education Institute in Mandalay on 09-43201320 and 09-790420449.

Tin Maung (Mandalay)

Islamic State battles Syrian army near world heritage site

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

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

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

Syria's antiquities chief Maamoun Abdulkarim said the fighting was just one or two km (1 mile) from Tadmur, warning that

if the militant group seizes the city, "they will destroy everything that exists there".

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

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

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

The Observatory reported heavy casualties on both sides in fighting near



The sun sets behind ruined columns at the historical city of Palmyra, in the Syrian desert, some 240km (150 miles) northeast the capital of Damascus in this file photo taken on 12 Nov, 2010.—REUTERS

al-Sukhna on Wednesday, with at least 70 troops and 40 Islamic State fighters killed.

It would be the first town taken by Islamic State in direct fighting with government forces. Others

seized by the group in the north and east were taken from other insurgents.

Islamic State has in recent months mounted frequent attacks on government- and rebel-held areas to the west of its strong-

holds in Deir al-Zor and Raqqa provinces, where its fighters have been facing air strikes by a US-led coalition.

Tadmur, which has previously been a frontline in the four-year-long Syri-

an conflict, was included in UNESCO's list of World Heritage in danger in 2013, according to the UNESCO web site. It contains the monumental ruins of a city that was one of the most important cultural centres of the ancient world.

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

The military source said Syrian forces had inflicted heavy losses on what it said were many Islamic State fighters targeting al-Sukhna. "They are attacking in large numbers like cattle with heads facing the ground," the source said. The army had yet to confirm losses in its ranks, the source added.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Benghazi has been a battlefield for a year between army forces loyal to Khalifa Haftar, who sup-

ports Libya's international recognized Prime Minister Abdullah al-Thinni, and Islamist groups.

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

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

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

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

Reuters

Iran navy fires shots at tanker as tensions rise in Gulf

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

The incident unnerved the shipping industry just as President Barack Obama met with Gulf allies to try to allay their concerns that Iran would be empowered by a deal to curb Teheran's nuclear programme in exchange for the West lifting sanctions.

US officials, speaking to Reuters on condition of anonymity, said five Iranian Revolutionary Guard

Corps Navy ships approached the Alpine Eternity oil products tanker at about noon (0800 GMT), prompting the ship to flee to safety in United Arab Emirates' waters.

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

The White House, Pentagon and State Department declined to confirm emerging details about the episode but acknowledged concern about Iran's conduct. "This is exactly the type of challenge that

many of the (Gulf) partners are focused on," said White House Deputy National Security Adviser Ben Rhodes.

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

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

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

The Pentagon did not rule out again ordering US warships to accompany commercial vessels passing through the Strait of Hormuz, as it did after the last incident.

The tanker's owner, South Maritime Pte Ltd, said in a statement that the ships, which it believed to be Iranian, first fired warning shots but then directly fired on the vessel after it ignored an order to stop.

"No serious damage was sustained by the vessel and none of the 23 crew members were injured," the statement said. The owner said the vessel safely reached the port of Jebel Ali.

Reuters

Bomb threat disrupts season finale of German TV model show

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

Thousands of people were evacuated from the SAP Arena in the southwestern German city of Mannheim, where German

model Heidi Klum was presenting the finale of Germany's Next Topmodel, after the bomb threat was called in at 9 pm (1900 GMT) on Thursday. Concern was also raised by a suspicious suitcase near the cloakroom, which was later found not to have contained explosives, police said.

The rest of the arena was searched with a bomb-sniffing dog, but no further suspicious objects were found

and the all clear was given around 0100 GMT, they said in a statement.

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

ProSieben said on its Twitter account: "We're sorry. We'll no longer be broadcasting today."

Police said the audience of around 8,000 to 10,000 people left the SAP Arena in

a calm fashion. Newspaper *Bild* reported on its website that Klum, her daughter Leni and the show's jury had been taken to an undisclosed location outside the venue.

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

Reuters

BUSINESS & HEALTH

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

TOKYO, 15 May — Honda Motor Co (7267.T) could see an impact on sales in Japan from its plans to recall some 5 million cars to replace potentially fatal air bags made by Japan's Takata Corp (7312.T), a top executive said on Friday.

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

"There may be some impact (on sales in Japan) but we want to make sure we take the right

steps," Minekawa said at the launch of Honda's new Shuttle hybrid model.

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

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

Some 36 million vehicles globally have been recalled since 2008 for issues linked to

Takata air bags, at the centre of one of the world's biggest auto safety crises.

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

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

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

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

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

Reuters



An airbag logo is seen on a steering wheel of Honda Motor Co's hybrid sedan "Grace", which installed the airbag made by Takata Corp, in Tokyo, on 1 Dec, 2014.—REUTERS

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

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

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

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

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

Most adults had two or three colds a year and children could have up to five,

with symptoms including a sore throat, cough, runny nose and headache.

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

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

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

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



A woman looks at a gold bangle inside a jewellery showroom at a market in Mumbai on 15 Jan, 2015.

REUTERS

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

Spot gold was steady at \$1,219.50 an ounce by 0219 GMT, after rising 0.5 percent on Thursday. Prices had climbed to \$1,227.04 in the previous session, their highest since 17 February.

The metal is up nearly 3 percent this week, the biggest weekly gain since mid-January.

"Gold's break over the technical 200-day moving average of \$1,218 triggered further buying from momentum investors," said HSBC analyst James Steel.

A convincing close above \$1,228 will be technically bullish for bullion and may prompt further gains, he said, adding that bullion will continue to be sensitive to US economic data.

Recent US data has supported market expectations that the economy is not strong enough for the Fed to start rising record-low rates from June.

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

That added to second-quarter growth concerns already prompted by sluggish US nonfarm payrolls data last week.

Data on Thursday that showed the number of Americans filing new claims for unemployment benefits falling last week towards a 15-year low failed to alleviate concerns over the economy.

The dollar was trading close to four-month lows on Friday against a basket of major currencies, on speculation the US central bank will not hike rates until later this year.

Higher rates would boost demand for the greenback, but diminish the appeal of non-interest-paying bullion.

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

US data due on Friday, including April industrial production and the University of Michigan's preliminary May reading on consumer sentiment, should provide more cues.

Investors however seemed uncertain about bullion's rally and how long it would last.

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

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

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

Reuters

IAEA urges more dialogue for progress on scrapping Fukushima plant

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

“Continued effective

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

TEPCO has come under renewed criticism after

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

TEPCO has denied there has been any environmental impact due to the rainwater outflow, saying

it has not seen any major changes in radiation levels in the sea.

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

“Since the previous IAEA missions (in 2013), the government of Japan

and TEPCO have implemented planned measures aimed at reducing nuclear and radiological hazards on the site and safely decommissioning the plant,” the report said.

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

earthquake and tsunami in March 2011.

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

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

Venezuela parliament leader squeezes media bosses over drugs story

CARACAS, 15 May — Venezuela’s powerful parliament head Diosdado Cabello has sought a travel ban on some media bosses he is suing for slander over reproducing a story from a Spanish newspaper accusing him of running a drug ring. Local media said the court hearing the case had granted the request against 22 media figures.

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

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

Officials call them unfounded smears that are part of a wider, US-led campaign to end the OPEC nation’s 16 years of social-



A man reads an *El Nacional* newspaper in front of a kiosk in Caracas on 14 May, 2015. — REUTERS

ism. “They accused me of being a drug trafficker without any proof,” said Cabello, a former soldier, on his Wednesday night television show. “I’ve requested, as a victim ... that they be prohibited from leaving the country,” he added, saying he was also seeking to prohibit them from selling assets. A Venezuelan judge earlier this month imposed the travel bans as a cautionary measure, according

to journalists, a lawyer and the national press workers’ union.

Judicial officials could not be reached for comment. Miguel Otero, *El Nacional*’s editor, said he and his peers had also been ordered to report to court weekly. “This is part of a government strategy to silence independent journalism,” added Otero in an interview from Miami, saying he left Venezuela three weeks ago

but would return in days. “I’m not running away.”

Venezuela’s media arena was once virulently anti-government, and even contributed to stirring up a brief coup against Chavez in 2002. Under Maduro, however, three of the best-known media groups have gained new owners, bringing with them an overhaul of coverage and a softer stance toward the authorities.—Reuters

Italy reports 3,600 migrant rescues in two days

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

As more than 600 migrants were brought ashore at the port of Catania in Sicily, rescuers plucked another 2,500 from rickety boats off the coast of Libya, the coast guard said.

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

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

ger of attacks by the armed Islamist group Boko Haram.

“It’s not safe to go to a public place, like a church, the market.

They (Boko Haram) might bomb the place at any time,” she said. “The war in Libya is worse. That’s why we decided to come to Italy.”

Boko Haram, which has killed thousands in its attempt to carve out an Islamist state, has suffered major setbacks this year following a co-ordinated military offensive by Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon. A German ship, Italian navy vessels, a merchant ship, and Italy’s finance police and coast guard all conducted rescue operations on Thursday, a coast guard official told *Reuters*.

The 40-metre Phoenix, based in Malta and run by the Migrant Offshore Aid Station (MOAS) and Doctors Without Borders, rescued 561 people, including 136 women and 60 children, mostly from Eritrea. The ship picked up 188 people on Wednesday.

Reuters

Okinawans march against US bases on 43rd reversion anniversary

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

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

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

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

“We’ve long suffered from the bases, and I’m angered by the outrageousness of both the US and Japanese governments in insisting a new base be built in Henoko,” Fujiko



People stage a protest rally on 15 May, 2015, in the Henoko area of Nago, Okinawa Prefecture, against a plan to relocate a US Marine Corps base there from another part of Okinawa. The day was the 43rd anniversary of Okinawa’s reversion to Japan from US control. — KYODO NEWS

Matsuda, who heads a local civic group, said before the march referring to the relocation site in Nago.

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

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

Kyodo News

ADVERTISEMENT & GENERAL

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE MV HUI AN VOY NO (96)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV HUI AN VOY NO (96) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 17.5.2015 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.T.T-5 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 Claims 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.

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CLAIMS DAY NOTICE MV THAI BINH STAR 01 VOY NO (-)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV THAI BINH STAR 01 VOY NO (-) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 16.5.2015 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of A.I.P.T 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 Claims 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.

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THE REPUBLIC OF THE UNION OF MYANMAR MINISTRY OF ENERGY MYANMA OIL AND GAS ENTERPRISE (INVITATION FOR OPEN TENDER) (8/2015)

Open tenders are invited for supply of the following respective items in United States Dollars / Myanmar kyat.

Sr.No	Tender No	Description	Remark
(1)	IFB-009(15-16)	Electrical Spares for HDD Rig (46) Items	US\$
(2)	IFB-010(15-16)	Spares for Cooper Well Servicing Unit (11) Items	US\$
(3)	IFB-011(15-16)	Spares for Rig Engine / Rig Pump Ex HDD Rig (16) Items	US\$
(4)	IFB-012(15-16)	Casing Lines (3) Items	US\$
(5)	IFB-013(15-16)	Spares for National Drive Group Ex NAT-55 Drilling Rigs (3) Items	US\$
(6)	IFB-014(15-16)	Spares for Kenworth Trucks (6) Items	US\$
(7)	DMP/L-004(15-16)	33 KV Current Transformer for GCB (5) Sets	KS

Tender Closing Date & Time - 9-6-2015, 16:30 Hr

Tender Document shall be available during office hours commencing from 12TH May, 2015 at the Finance Department, Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise, No(44) Complex, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar.

Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise
Ph.+95 67-411097/411206

WEATHER REPORT

BAY INFERENCE:

Weather is generally fair in the North Bay and partly cloudy to cloudy in the Andaman sea and elsewhere in the Bay of Bengal.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL EVENING OF THE 16th May, 2015:

Rain or thundershowers are likely to be fairly widespread in Taninthayi Region, scattered in Sagaing Region, Kachin, Shan, Kayin and Mon States and isolated in the remaining Regions and States. Degree of certainty is (60%).

US citizens in Australia reminded to be on high terror alert

CANBERRA, 15 May — American citizens in Australia have been warned to be on high alert as a terror attack in Australia was “likely.”

The US embassy in Canberra issued the security message on Friday, the first of its kind, saying it reflected Australian National Terrorism Public Alert level set by the Australian government. “Australian law enforcement agencies have announced an arrest in Melbourne,” the statement said. “Authorities have noted that the arrest-

ed individual had the intent to conduct terrorist attacks against members of the general public.”

“Maintain a high level of vigilance and take appropriate steps to enhance your personal security,” it said. The alert came in the wake of a number of terror-related arrests in the past six months. Last month, a 17-year-old was charged on suspicion of planning an attack on Mothers’ Day (10 May).

The teen is alleged to have written a series of on-line rants defending radical

elements of Islam. That arrest came just weeks after an 18-year-old Melbourne man was arrested when police in Britain uncovered internationally coordinated plans for a Islamic State-inspired attack on ANZAC Day, Australia’s most significant military commemoration day.

“Due to the nature of this threat, US citizens are reminded to be aware of your surroundings during this time of heightened alert, and report to authorities any suspicious individuals or items you may

see,” the statement said. “US citizens are strongly encouraged to review your personal security plan, remain aware of your surroundings including local events, and monitor local news stations for updates,” it said. In September, Australia’s prime minister, Tony Abbott, increased the nation’s terror alert to high, the second highest of its four levels. The terror alert for police was lifted to high in January in recognition of the risk they take as first responders.

Xinhua



A woman reads a book at the seaside public library, in Qinhuangdao, north China's Hebei Province, on 14 May, 2015. Situated on the seafront of Qinhuangdao, the newly-built library opened its door recently. Standing alone on an empty beach, the 450-square-metre library was called “the loneliest library” by Chinese netizens and became a hot topic quickly. Designed by an architect named Dong Gong, the two-story library creates a peaceful sea view for readers.—XINHUA

Chinese banks urged to support infrastructure projects

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

In his inspection tours made on Thursday to several branches of Shanghai Pudong Development Bank, Bank of Communications and China Construction Bank in Shanghai, the vice premier called on them to improve efficiency in lending to enterprises and prioritize financial

lending to sectors backed by the government, including railways, water projects and emerging sectors.

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

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

Amid a cooling real estate market and shrinking exports due to uneven global economic recovery,

the world’s second largest economy saw its growth slide to 7 percent in the first quarter, marking the lowest quarterly growth rate since 2009.

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

Xinhua

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

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

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

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

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

Jason Byrne to go on new UK tour

LONDON, 15 May — Comedian Jason Byrne is hitting the road with his new UK autumn tour 20 Years a Clown.

The new stand-up tour marks Byrne's 20th year working the comedy circuit, and will begin on 1 October in Colchester, reported *Digital Spy*.

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

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

Byrne is currently a co-presenter of Sky1's woodland gameshow "Wild Things" alongside Kate Humble.—PTI

Women's role in film on the red carpet at Cannes

CANNES, (France), 15 May — Charlize Theron's character Imperator Furiosa in "Mad Max: Fury Road" is pretty much on an equal footing with Tom Hardy playing the road warrior of the title, but the South African actress says it's not often that way in an industry dominated by men.

The much heralded reboot of the famous 1980s dystopian action franchise is being screened on Thursday at the Cannes International Film Festival, where the subject of women's role in cinema — not just in front of the camera but behind it — has been in the spotlight this year.

Theron, who is best known as an actress but also produced and starred in "Monster" (2003), said too many women "have to sit around and really wait for the right thing to come around and there's a lot of wrong things going around and I feel like there is an injustice".

Men get the better op-

portunities, she told *Reuters*, but when women do get a chance, people connect strongly with the films.

"They're always the movies people talk about the most, they're the critically acclaimed ones, and I just don't understand why we can't take that momentum and really put it in gear," she said.

Thierry Fremaux, the director of the Cannes festival, provoked the debate by pointing out in interviews that "the number of female directors in the world is too low".

For the first time in decades, the festival opened with a film directed by a woman, France's Emmanuelle Bercot, but Fremaux said films had been selected because they suited the festival, not because of the director's gender.

"I think the most important fight is the situation of women in the world, not only in cinema," he said.

Bercot said she didn't think gender had been a factor in her film being

shown, out of competition, at the star-studded gala on Wednesday night.

"I happen to be a woman, but I am honoured by the fact that the film has been selected not by the fact that I'm being gifted with something that is usually reserved to men," she said.

Just two of the 19 in-competition films are directed by women — "Marguerite et Julien" by Valerie Donzelli and "Mon Roi" by Maiwenn. But Oscar winning actress Natalie Portman marks her directorial debut with an out-of-competition screening of "A Tale of Love and Darkness".

According to Isabella Rossellini, who heads the jury of Un Certain Regard — a competition that runs parallel to the main Palme d'Or event at Cannes — entering the film industry is not the hardest part of a woman's career.

"One thing that was difficult to me was integrating my family with my ca-



Director George Miller (C), cast members Tom Hardy (L) and Charlize Theron (R) pose during a photocall for the film "Mad Max: Fury Road" out of competition at the 68th Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France on 14 May, 2015.—REUTERS

reer. Women were able to enter the workforce but ... (it was) harder for me was to integrate my children with my professional life," she said on Thursday.

"I tried to have them come with me on the set, but as they grew older they wanted to stay with their friends, there was school."

Rossellini, who burst into the limelight when she played Dorothy Vallens in David Lynch's "Blue Velvet" in 1986, believes

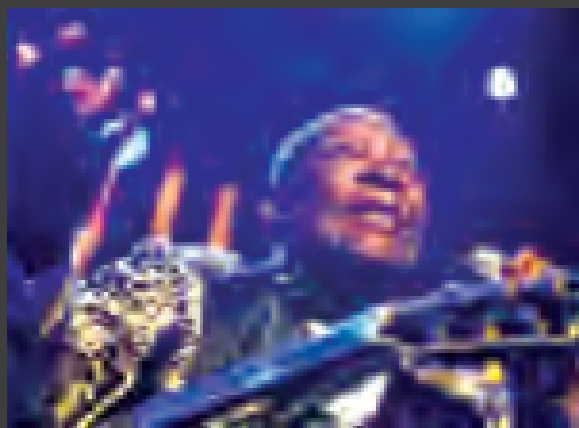
things will change faster if the film industry broadens its audience base.

"Especially in American cinema, you foster an audience of young males," she said.

"If you foster an audience for subjects that are interesting to women then you also have an audience that is interested in these subjects. A lot of films where people punch each other... I'm not interested."

Reuters

B B King, legendary guitarist known as "King of Blues," dies at 89



US blues legend B B King performs during the 43rd Montreux Jazz Festival in Montreux on 12 July, 2009.—REUTERS

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

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

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

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

Selena Gomez happy with curves

LOS ANGELES, 15 May — Singer-actress Selena Gomez is happy with her figure despite coming under fire from Instagram users who claimed she had gained weight.

The "Come & Get It" hitmaker recently faced criticism from social media users, who speculated she had gained weight after she showed off her curvaceous figure in a series of revealing photographs from her holiday in Mexico on Instagram, reported *In Style* magazine.

However, according to her swimwear designer, Draya Michele, the 22-year-old star doesn't

care what her critics have to say and loves the way her body looks.

Draya said, "I love how she didn't let people being critical get to her. I love that she wanted to let people know that she's happy with the size that she is, regardless of who thinks it's fat or who thinks it's skinny, she was happy with it."

"Knowing her and knowing the size that she is, she's really not overweight at all."

Gomez defended herself over the comments in a series of posts on the picture sharing site which have since been deleted.

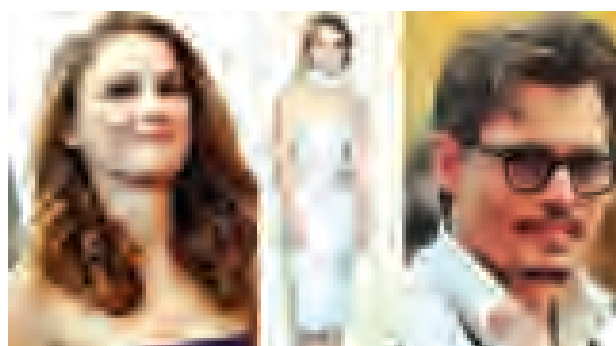


Singer-actress Selena Gomez

"I am in the business and I could care less about what 'they' or you said I should look like. I don't need to do anything other than love myself, take

care of my work, fans, family and friends...And I do work out. It's not your place to tell anyone what they should or should not do."—PTI

Johnny Depp's teenage daughter stars opposite Natalie Portman



The new stand-up tour marks Jason Byrne's 20th year working the comedy circuit, and will begin on 1 October in Colchester.—PTI

LOS ANGELES, 15 May — Natalie Portman and Lily Rose Depp, the daughter of actor Johnny Depp, will play spiritualist sisters in "Planetarium".

The film is a 1930s-set drama to be directed by French helmer Rebecca Zlotowski, reported *Variety* online.

"Planetarium" will mark Portman's first time working with a French director since her role in Luc Besson's "Leon" in 1994. The 33-year-old ac-

tress has been beefing up on her French to prepare for the role.

Although plot details are kept under wraps, Zlotowski said the film follows the journey of sisters who are believed to possess the supernatural ability to connect with ghosts. They cross paths with a visionary French producer while performing in Paris.

The film is co-written by Zlotowski and Robin Campillo, who previously penned "The Returned".

PTI

GENERAL

Vietnam targets 10 gymnastics golds at SEA Games

HO CHI MINH CITY, 15 May — Ten Vietnamese gymnastics athletes are poised to win at least 10 golds at the 28th SEA Games to be held in Singapore next month, with the biggest hope pinned on top female gymnast Phan Thi Ha Thanh, the online version of local newspaper *People* reported on Friday.

Phan Thi Ha Thanh has recently brought home the balance beam gold at the 2015 Varna World Challenge Cup in Bulgaria — her second World Cup title since the beginning of this year. In March, she secured one gold in the same category at the eighth FIG Artistic Gymnastics Challenge Cup in Qatar, where she also won one bronze on vault.

According to experts, it will be relatively possible for Ha Thanh to walk away with five of six golds in her registered events. Except for the women's team events, she has been highly appreciated in the all-around, vault, balance beam, uneven bars and floor exercise. —Xinhua

Malaysia cagey on SEA Games gold targets

KUALA LUMPUR, 15 May — Cagey Malaysia have delayed revealing their gold medal target for next month's Southeast Asian Games in Singapore.

Malaysia's Youth and Sports Minister Khairy Jamaluddin declined to follow Chef de Mission Norza Zakaria in targeting 50 golds at the 5-16 June multi-sport biennial Games for the 11-nation bloc. "We have yet to come up with the final target," Khairy was quoted as saying by local media in Friday's papers. "We'll decide eventually ... whether it's the gold medal target or overall medal target. It's something we're still discussing. It's not a matter that we see as urgent. I'll announce it when the time comes." Khairy added that the measure of Malaysia's success should not be restricted to medals, but also factor in promising performances from younger athletes.

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

Footballer Ronaldo campaigns for Nepal but \$8 million donation is false



Real Madrid's Cristiano Ronaldo

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

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

He was reported to have given 7 million euros (£5

million) of his own money.

But the charity said the report, which originated in the French magazine *So Foot* on 7 May and has since been published widely by other international media, was false.

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

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

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

The Himalayan nation

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

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

Reuters

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

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

El Niño also reduces the likelihood of a busy hurricane season, which lasts from June to November and can disrupt energy operations in the Gulf of Mexico. In its monthly report released on Thursday, the National Weather Service's Climate Prediction Centre (CPC) said El Niño,

a phenomenon which warms sea-surface temperatures in the Pacific, had a 90 percent likelihood of continuing through the summer. In April it estimated the odds at 70 percent.

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

"[El Niño]'s definitely upon us and it should remain so for the next few months," said Don Keeney, a meteorologist with Maryland-based MDA Weather Services.

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

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

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

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

Reuters



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

REUTERS

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| * News | * Myanmar National Poet and Literary Icon; Prolific Writer of Poems & Prose — Min Thu Wun (Ep-1) In Memory of Him & His Childhood |
| * Great Shwedagon: Nine Wonders Around The Platform of Shwedagon Pagoda | * Myanmar Masterclass: Cubism |
| * Moving Meditation: Aikido | * News |
| * Black Gold (P- I) | * Visiting a Serene Village in The Northwest of Myanmar |
| * News | * Myanma Pioneer Female Bodybuilder |
| * A Pretty Custom of Kandayawady Asia Vut A @ Rice Pounding Competition | * News |
| * Bollywood Actress "Laila Khan" Born & Raised in Myanmar (Part-1) | * Development Momentum of Sittway |
| * News | * "Moe Hnyin Than Buddha", The Unique Pagoda in Monywa |
| * Ngapali Beach: Fishing Villages | * News |
| * Bagan: The Land of Pagoda | * Traditional Matrimony of Khamti Shans |
| * News | * A Visit to Ye |
| * Mesmerizing Scenes or Image of Japan (Part-1) | * Fortune Teller |
| * News | * News |
| * Food Trip (Ep-5) (Part-2) | * Ambassador's View: China — Myanmar Bilateral Ties |
| * Today Myanmar "YUFL" | * Lucrative Businesses of Tanintharyi Region |
| * News | * Next Weekend |

MRTV News Channel in Brief

(16-5-2015, Saturday)

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|--|---|
| 6:00 am | 1:50 pm |
| • Paritta by Venerable Mingun Sayadaw | • Round up of the Weeks's Local Hluttaw News |
| 7:00 am | 3:00 pm |
| • News / Weather Report | • News |
| 7:35 am | 4:35 pm |
| • Hyper Sports | • University of Distance Education (TV Lectures) — First Year (Myanmar) |
| 8:00 am | 5:30 pm |
| • News / International News | • Head Line News |
| 9:35 am | 6:35 pm |
| • MRTV's Youth Programme | • MRTV Youth Programme |
| 10:35 am | 7:00 pm |
| • Science and Technology Programme | • News / Weather Report |
| 11:35 am | 8:00 pm |
| • Game for Children | • News |
| 12:00 noon | • International News / Weather Report |
| • News / International News / Weather Report | 9:00 pm |
| 12:35 noon | • News |
| • Hluttaw Image | • Sport |
| 12:50 pm | • Pyi Thu Ni Ti |
| • Round up of the Weeks's Local TV News | |

MRTV Entertainment Channel

(16-5-2015, Saturday)

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| 6:00 am | 8:10 am |
| • Classical Songs | • Radio Teleplay |
| 6:10 am | 8:40 am |
| • Myanmar Video | • Dramatic Arts |
| 7:45 am | 9:10 am |
| • Myanmar Series | • Myanmar Video |
| 8:00 am | 12:00 noon |
| • Fashion Show | • Close Down |

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

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

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

On Friday, Iran met with Qatar; Taipei vied with China; and Indonesia competed with Kazakhstan. In the fourth and last-day group matches Saudi Arabia



will play against Maldives, Qatar with India,

the Philippines with Iran, Vietnam with Australia

and Japan with Korea on 16 May. —MNA

AFC, MFF to conduct “A” certificate coaching course

YANGON, 15 May — With the aim of improving Myanmar football sport standard and turning out qualified football coaches, Asian Football Confederation and Myanmar Football Federation will jointly organize the AFC “A” certificate coaching course at Youth Training Centre, here, from 7 July to 5 August.

The candidates must have at least one-year experience in “B” licence

with fitness to join practical and theoretical works. The trainees must have capacity to draw a log book for 80 hours training of the clubs. The trainees must have skill in English.

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

Holders Sevilla sweep into Europa League final

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

Sevilla had all-but booked their place in the showpiece in Warsaw after thumping the Italian side 3-0 in last week's first leg in Spain and will seal a record fourth triumph in Europe's second-tier club competition if they can overcome DniproDnipropetrovsk on 27 May.

The Ukrainians won 1-0 at home to Fiorentina's Serie A rivals Napoli to progress to their first European final 2-1 on aggregate.

50 and we won't be going there as favourites.”

Carlos Bacca fired Sevilla ahead in the 22nd minute at the Stadio Comunale Artemio Franchi in Florence when he sent a close-range effort arrowing into the roof of the net.

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

Fiorentina's night went from bad to worse midway through the second half when Josipilic sent a penalty kick sailing over the crossbar after Sevilla defender Grzegorz Krychowiak had felled David Pizarro in the penalty area.

If Sevilla clinch a



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

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

“Dnipro have made it and nobody has gifted them anything,” Emery told Spanish television broadcaster Cuatro.

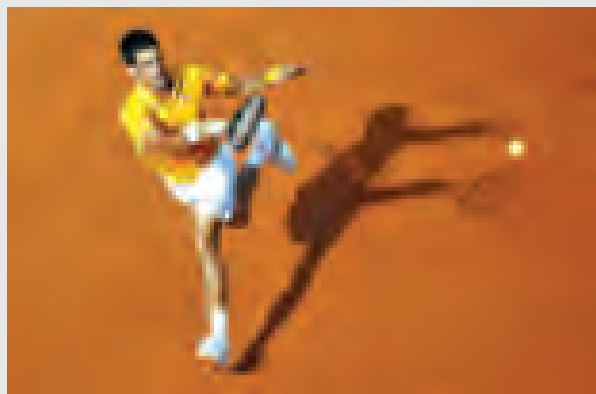
“Knocking out Napoli is an impressive achievement,” he added. “It's not going to be easy, it's 50-

fourth UEFA Cup/Europa league crown in their fourth final they would surpass Inter Milan, Juventus and Liverpool, who also have three.

Sevilla won back-to-back UEFA Cups in 2006 and 2007 and beat Benfica on penalties to secure the renamed trophy last term.

Another triumph would also carry a lucrative berth in the group stage of next season's Champions League.—Reuters

Djokovic battles through to Rome quarter-finals



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

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

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

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

Once the Serb broke in the fourth game of the second set he relaxed and took control, running Bellucci all over the court with precise ground strokes and

impeccable backhand drop shots.

“It was a hard-fought match and I have to give him credit for the way he played,” added Djokovic.

He next meets Japan's fifth-seeded Kei Nishikori, who beat Djokovic's compatriot Victor Troicki 6-4, 6-3.

Fourth seed Nadal, who has struggled to find his best form this season in the wake of the wrist injury and appendicitis issues that undermined his performances last year, was imperious against the big-serving American and triumphed 6-4, 6-4.

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

The Spaniard, who fell to seventh in the rankings after Sunday's Madrid final defeat by Andy Murray, looked to be back on the

path to discovering his best claycourt form.

The warm weather made the court faster and Nadal's top-spin forehand forced Isner on the defensive, something the statuesque American does not handle well.

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

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

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

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

In the women's event, Maria Sharapova came back from a 3-1 first-set deficit to beat Bojana Jovanovski 6-3, 6-3.

The third-seeded Rus-



Japan's Kei Nishikori celebrates after his 6-4, 6-3 victory against Viktor Troicki of Serbia in the third round of the Internazionali BNL d'Italia tennis tournament in Rome on 14 May, 2015. Nishikori set up a quarterfinal match against World No 1 Novak Djokovic. KYODO News

sian, a Rome winner in 2011 and 2012, has taken up the favourite's mantle after Serena Williams withdrew due to a right elbow injury.

Fourth-seeded Czech Petra Kvitova was too powerful for former world number one Jelena Jankovic, hitting 23 winners in a 6-3, 6-2 win, and faces Carla Suarez Navarro in the last eight.

Canada's sixth seed Eugenie Bouchard double faulted when she had match point in the third set tiebreak before losing a three-hour battle to Spaniard Suarez Navarro 6-7 (2), 7-5, 7-6 (7).

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