

NATIONAL

73rd birthday of State Counsellor celebrated in Nay Pyi Taw

PAGE-3



NATIONAL

Meeting held to prepare for 21st-Century Panglong Peace Conference's third session

PAGE-7

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President, First Lady, State Counsellor enshrine religious objects into Eternal Peace Pagoda



President U Win Myint, First Lady Daw Cho Cho and State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi enshrined religious objects and Buddha images into the relic chamber of the Eternal Peace Pagoda in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

Before the ceremony, the State Counsellor offered alms, flowers and water to the Buddha at the Buddha image kept in a building in the compound of the pagoda, which is still under construction.

The congregation led by the President received the Nine Precepts from State Ovadacariya Sayadaw Abhidaja Maharatthaguru Bhaddanta Kavisara of Zegon Monastery in Nay Pyi Taw, Pyinmana.

Following the recitation of parittas and holy verses of the Buddha by the Members of the Sangha, President U Win Myint and First Lady Daw Cho Cho presented offertories and a Buddha image sculpture symbolizing the Buddha's victory over Mara the evil deva and

SEE PAGE-3

Right, a congregation led by President U Win Myint, First Lady Daw Cho Cho and State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi receive the Nine Precepts from State Ovadacariya Sayadaw Abhidaja Maharatthaguru Bhaddanta Kavisara of Zegon Monastery, above.
PHOTO: MNA



INSIDE TODAY

LOCAL NEWS

Mandalay authority grants permission to renovate U Bein Bridge

PAGE-4



NATIONAL

Suspects in drug haul apprehended, others sought

PAGE-10

BUSINESS

Automobile market remains cool in local market

PAGE-5



OPINION

The plight of the toddy-palm trees in upper Myanmar

PAGE-8-9

17th-day meeting of 8th regular session of 2nd Pyithu Hluttaw held

By Aye Aye Thant (MNA)

THE 17th-day meeting of the eighth regular session of the second Pyithu Hluttaw was held yesterday afternoon at the Pyithu Hluttaw meeting hall, Nay Pyi Taw, where starred questions were answered by Union Minister for Construction U Han Zaw, a motion tabled and a report read and submitted. A message of congratulations, sent to Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker on 16 May 2018 by President of the National Assembly of Bulgaria Mrs. Tsveta Karayancheva, was put on record by the Hluttaw.

Starred questions answered

Dr. U Khin Maung Maung of Dagon Myothit (North) constituency first asked whether or not the 76th-mile mini rest camp on Yangon-Mandalay expressway is within the road area, if the road would be expanded from the current four lanes to six or eight lanes. Union Minister for Construction U Han Zaw replied that the rest camp was constructed according to the regulations. If the road is expanded in the future, the rest camp is still at a



Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker U T Khun Myat. PHOTO: MNA

sufficient distance from the road and will not hinder the road expansion, said the union minister. U Wom Hla of Nanyun constituency then asked if there was a plan to upgrade the road section between Nanyun Town and Pansaung Town in the 2018-2019 fiscal year. Union Minister U Han Zaw replied that Ks189 million was allocated from the Sagaing Region fund for construction in the 2018 (April to September) fiscal year and Ks.749.175 million was allocated from the Sagaing Region fund for maintenance in the 2018-2019 fiscal year. Depending on the funds requested and allocated, other works will be conducted, said the union

minister. Replying to a question posed by Daw Yin Min Hlaing of Gangaw constituency on a plan to build the Thalin-Myintha Myitha river crossing suspension bridge in Gangaw Township, which was swept away during the 2016 rainy season, Union Minister U Han Zaw replied that the subject bridge was on a village-connecting road under the management of the Rural Development Department.

The road is classified as a Class B road and is a priority level 2 road. Funds will be allocated from the Magway Region government fund in the 2018-2019 fiscal year and depending on the availability of funds, the

suspension bridge will be built, said the union minister.

Questions raised by Daw Aye Aye Mu @ Daw Sharmie of Kalay constituency, U Saw Thalay Saw of Shwegyin constituency, U Aung Thaung Shwe of Buthidaung constituency and Dr. Daw Kyi Moh Moh Lwin of Singaing constituency were also answered and explained by Union Minister U Han Zaw.

Motion on conserving natural swiftlet bird nest habitats

Next, Daw Tin Tin Yi of Kyunsu constituency tabled a motion urging the government to conserve and protect mountain cliffs on islands that are a natural habitat for the swiftlet bird nest. Daw Tin Tin Yi explained that there are some 130 man-made swiftlet bird nest houses in Myeik and Kawthaung districts. As more swiftlet birds nested in these man-made nest houses, there is a decline in swiftlet birds nesting in their usual natural habitats causing concern to environmentalists, conservationists and the local populace. Therefore, there is an urgent and real requirement for sustainable

harvesting of bird nests and to protect and conserve the natural habitat, said Daw Tin Tin Yi in her explanation about her motion.

Hluttaw Speaker announced the decision of the Hluttaw to discuss the motion after the agreement of the Hluttaw was obtained. The Hluttaw speaker also announced for the Hluttaw representatives who wanted to discuss the motion to enrol their names.

Bill committee reads, submits report on 2017 Myanmar Gemstone bill

Later, a report by the bill committee on the 2017 Myanmar Gemstone bill, sent back with amendments by the Amyotha Hluttaw, was read and submitted by bill committee secretary U Kyaw Soe Lin.

An announcement was then made for the Hluttaw representatives who wanted to table an amendment motion to the bill to enrol their names. The 18th-day meeting of the eighth regular session of the second Pyithu Hluttaw will be held on 20 June. ■

2nd Amyotha Hluttaw's 8th regular session holds 17th-day meeting

By Aung Ye Thwin

THE second Amyotha Hluttaw's eighth regular session held its 17th-day meeting at the Amyotha Hluttaw meeting hall yesterday afternoon, where starred questions were answered, two reports read and a bill approved.

Q&A session

In the first question during the question-and-answer (Q&A) session, Dr. Zaw Lin Htut of Mon State constituency (9) asked if there was a plan to conduct major repairs to Thaton Prison, which was not in accordance with the set standards and area requirements. He further asked if there was a plan to relocate and construct a new prison at the Correction Department, which owned 25.17 acres in Zaymathwe Village, Thaton Township, and if there are sufficient funds. Deputy Minister for Home Affairs Maj-Gen Aung Thu said Thaton Prison is a grade B level prison that is specified to house 500 prisoners. Currently, it has 539 prisoners. As the number of prisoners exceeded the specification, a small 13x40



Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than. PHOTO: MNA

ft. building was constructed and a mezzanine or an intermediate floor was also added to the five-cell building to provide space for additional prisoners.

As temporary solutions have been taken for the additional prisoners, and there is no place to house the prisoners temporarily while a major repair is conducted, there is no plan yet to conduct a major repair at the prison, said the deputy minister.

The subject land in Zaymathwe Village, Thaton Township, is found to be suitable for a prison, and arrangements are being made to register the land under the Correction Department. A funding request total-

ling Ks1,951.761 million for the construction of new prison was also made for the 2018-2019 fiscal year, said the deputy minister. For the time being, Thaton prison will remain as it is, explained the deputy minister. U Bwe Khane of Chin State constituency (3) then asked if there was a plan to upgrade the Chin State, Thantlang Township, Thau sub-rural health centre. Union Minister for Health and Sports Dr. Myint Htwe said although Thau is on the border trade road, the Thau sub-rural health centre is 36 miles from Thantlang, 68 miles from Haka Hospital and 34 miles from Salen rural health centre, and thus very remote and far off. It doesn't meet

two of the five main criteria for the rural health centre, but from a social standpoint, it is found to be in a very remote area, and the case to upgrade it had been submitted to the assessment board. If the board supports the upgrade, the matter will be submitted to the union government meeting and it will be upgraded in the 2018-2019 fiscal year, said the union minister.

In response to a question posed by U Kyaw Than of Rakhine State constituency (10) on the plan to prevent salt (sea) water from entering and inundating Mawphyia Village, Kyauk Kyi Pyin Village-tract, Kyaukpyu Township, Rakhine State, Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation U Hla Kyaw said the subject village is located on the junction of Ngankyun river and Hnamahtway river, where the river flows into the sea. An embankment that is some 6,500 ft. long is required to prevent salt water from entering the village.

This embankment is the continuation of the 11,500 ft. long Bawmakandaunt embankment,

and the total embankment will be 18,000 ft. long. This work has been included in the projects to be conducted with the Rakhine State government fund for the 2018-2019 fiscal year (October to September) and a total of Ks400 million funding for the Bawmakandaunt embankment is already requested. The union minister replied that the whole work will be implemented depending upon the availability of funds in the 2018-2019 fiscal year.

Similarly, questions raised by U Sai Than Naing of Kayin State constituency (5), U Khin Win of Magway Region constituency (2) and U Kyaw Toke of Mandalay Region constituency (7) were answered by Union Minister Dr. Myint Htwe and Deputy Minister U Hla Kyaw.

Bill committee read two reports

Amyotha Hluttaw bill committee reports on Myanmar dental, oral medical council bill and Myanmar traditional medicine council bill, sent back with amendments by the Pyithu Hluttaw. ■

President, First Lady, State Counsellor enshrine religious objects into Eternal Peace Pagoda



President U Win Myint and First Lady Daw Cho Cho present offertories to Sayadaw Bhaddanta Kavisara. **PHOTO: MNA**



State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi presents the Buddha Images and offertories to Sayadaw Bhaddanta Janinda. **PHOTO: MNA**

FROM PAGE-1

achievement of His Enlightenment to Sayadaw Bhaddanta Kavisara before they were enshrined in the reliquary chamber of the pagoda.

Afterwards, State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi presented a Buddha images symbolizing the Buddha's Great Eight Victories to Sayadaw Bhaddanta Janinda, a

golden reliquary, a golden lotus flower and offertories to Shwe Parami Tawya Sayadaw Ashin Sanda Dhika.

Afterwards, Vice President U Myint Swe and wife Daw Khin Thet Htay, presented a Buddha image and offertories to Maha Ledisan Sayadaw.

Union Ministers, the Union Attorney-General, Union

Auditor-General, Nay Pyi Taw Council Chairman and donors also presented Buddha images and offertories to the Members of the Sangha.

Sayadaw Bhaddanta Kavisara administered the sermon to the congregation before the second session of the ceremony.

Before the Buddha images and religious objects were en-

shrined into the reliquary chamber of the pagoda, they were conveyed in a procession around the pagoda clockwise for obeisance.

Afterwards, the State Counsellor and Union ministers relayed the Buddha images and religious objects to the original reliquary chamber of the pagoda.

At the auspicious time, Shweparami Sayadaw Ashin

Sanda Dhika, President U Win Myint, Vice President U Myint Swe and donors enshrined them in the chamber.

Afterwards, they spread the jewelries in the chamber and closed it. The ceremony came to an end with the recitation of holy verses of the Buddha by the Members of the Sangha.—Myanmar News Agency ■

73rd birthday of State Counsellor celebrated in Nay Pyi Taw



State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi cuts her birthday cake to mark her 73rd birthday.



State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi releases the white dove as a symbol of peace to mark her 73rd birthday.

An event to mark the 73rd birthday of State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was held at building I-12 in the Hluttaw compound, Nay Pyi Taw, yesterday morning.

The event was attended by President U Win Myint and First Lady, former President

U Htin Kyaw and wife, Vice President U Henry Van Thio, Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker U T Khun Myat and wife, Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than, Pyithu Hluttaw Deputy Speaker U Tun Tun Hein, Pyidaungsu Hluttaw's Legal Affairs and Special Cases

Assessment Commission Chairman Thura U Shwe Mann, Nay Pyi Taw Council Chairman Dr. Myo Aung and wife, Chairman of Peace Commission Dr Tin Myo Win and wife, Office of the President Deputy Minister U Min Thu and wife, and the Hluttaw representatives.

At the event, the attendees first sang a birthday song for the State Counsellor, as she cut the birthday cake.

Next, the State Counsellor distributed cakes, cold drinks and lunch boxes to the Hluttaw representatives, Hluttaw staff and the landscape group

personnel.

Later, the State Counsellor, released white doves as a symbol of peace in front of building I-12 and took a commemorative group photograph together with the event attendees.—Myanmar News Agency, Photo: Hein Htet/EPA ■

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Mandalay authority grants permission to renovate U Bein Bridge

By Aung Thet Khaing
Mandalay Region Government has granted its approval for renovating U Bein bridge, which has been submitted by Myanmar Teak Wood Co., said U Myo Thit, Region Minister for Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation. U Bein Bridge spans the Taungthaman Lake near Amarapura in the Mandalay Region. The bridge was built around 1850 and is believed to be the oldest and longest teakwood bridge in the world.

"Recently, the regional government accepted the design to renovate the U Bein Bridge. The Myanmar Teak Wood Co. will carry out the renovation with the help of specialised carpenters from Inle, in consultation with engineers and historical experts. The bridge will be replaced with teak, because the original design utilised teak. We should think about making the bridge's structure strong. Myanmar Teak Wood will carry out the work with the approval of the



U Bein Bridge is one of the tourist attractions in Mandalay. PHOTO: KHAING SAT WAI

Archaeology, National Museum and Library Department. Our regional government will not make any decision about it," said the minister.

"Only a few tourists visited U Bein Bridge these days because it is not the peak sea-

son. U Bein Bridge is a major tourist attraction in the ancient Myanmar capital. Most tourists love to watch the sunset on the boat, providing a good source of income for the local people. In the low season, residents have to rely on local travellers," said

U Nyan Lin, a tour guide.

An inspection of U Bein Bridge started in 2016, and the project was suspended after 30 per cent of it was completed. The bridge, which is 165 years old, has been renovated five times since 2000. ■

Action to be taken against illegal fishermen in Yangon River: Fisheries Department

By May Thet Hnin

The Yangon Region Fisheries Department is planning to arrest fishermen using illegal fishing methods in the Yangon River, said U Hla Htay, Deputy Director of Yangon Region Fisheries Department.

Fishing is strictly banned at the confluence of three rivers, Bago, Yangon and Hline rivers, down to the mouth of the sea. Also, Thanlyin Bridge cannot be used for fishing within a mile on both sides. The illegal fisher-

men will be caught.

"The place is bustling with foreign ships, vulnerable to ship collision. Moreover, we are afraid of any possible damage to the bridge," said U Hla Htay.

In a bid to tackle illegal fishing, the Yangon Region Fisheries Department is negotiating with the respective township administrators and Hluttaw representatives and members of the police force.

The fishing season is closed now. Awareness campaigns are

being conducted for the public.

Simultaneously, legal action is also being taken. Fishermen using illegal fishing methods, such as electrocution, are being arrested, U Hla Htay maintained.

Illegal fishing in Yangon and other regions and states is threatening Myanmar's fisheries sector. Illegal fishing methods also harm fisheries resources, biodiversity and aquaculture, said Daw Toe Nanda Tin, vice president of Myanmar

Fisheries Federation.

To reduce illegal fishing through electrocution in the Yangon Region, the Yangon Region Fisheries Department is holding an awareness campaign against illegal fishing methods among the fishermen. Fisheries export during the last fiscal year earned US\$717.7 million, with the export volume being 568,227 metric tons, according to an announcement of the Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation Ministry. ■

Mini buses to operate in four Dagon Myothit townships

By Nyein Nyein

Authorities are planning to operate mini buses in four Dagon Myothit townships after upgrading the roads in those townships, said Daw Nilar Kyaw, Minister for Electricity, Industry, Transport and Communication.

U Nyi Nyi, Yangon Region Hluttaw representative, raised a question on 18 June on the plan

to operate YBS buses between Yoma Yeiktha-Kyisu in South Dagon Myothit, Theinthayar road-Pearl Yadanar road, Aung Zeya road and South Dagon Myothit township-Dagon university. "We plan to operate the buses in North Dagon Myothit, South Dagon Myothit, East Dagon Myothit and Dagon Myothit Seikkan townships. To operate

the buses in those townships, we have to discuss with the mini bus line because the roads from those townships can run only mini buses because of its condition. We have also planned to upgrade the roads in those townships. The YBS 59 bus line is operating through Min Ye Kaung Bon road in South Dagon Myothit, which has been upgraded

so far," said Daw Nilar Kyaw, replying to the question raised by U Nyi Nyi.

There are 17 bus lines that are operating in South Dagon Myothit Township. Some of the bus lines run up to or through Shwedagon Pagoda, Tamway Township, Ahlon Township, Sule Pagoda, 50th street and Theinbyu Road. ■

Dollar gains against kyat

By May Thet Hnin

The Myanmar kyat has been depreciating against the US dollar in recent days.

Starting from the middle of January, the dollar to kyat interbank exchange rate in Myanmar's currency market dropped to Ks1,322. The exchange rate fluctuated around Ks1,327 from January to April, and the highest rate was recorded at Ks1,331 during that period. The rate went up above Ks1,340 per dollar in May, and it reached above Ks1,350 in mid-June, hitting the highest point of Ks1,356 per dollar on 16 June.

The increase in the dollar exchange rate might be attributed to the global political climate. There is no significant rise in border trade, and the demand for US dollars has decreased. Therefore, the local market cannot be a contributing factor in the increase in the value of the exchange rate, said U Than Lwin, a senior consultant at the Kanbawza bank.

Daw Toe Nanda Tin, vice president of Myanmar Fishery



The Myanmar kyat has been depreciating against the US dollar in recent days. **PHOTO: NYI ZAW MOE**

Products Processor and Exporter Association, said dollar appreciation was good for exporters, but it was a break-even point as the cost of imports also rises. Exports are expected to bring in hard currency earnings, and so, we need to boost exports. If imports outdo exports, the value of foreign cur-

rency increases, she added.

The US exchange rate in 2017 was on the rise compared with previous years, with the highest point being Ks1,380 per dollar.

With the US dollar strengthening against the kyat in the local currency market, the Central Bank of Myanmar

raised the set exchange rate from Ks1,359 on 18 June to Ks1,365 on 19 June.

The inflation rate, interest rate, terms of trade, the country's current account and deficits, political climate and economic performance are the contributing factors to the decrease in the exchange rate. ■

Exports outdo imports in bilateral trade with the Netherlands in April

Exports surpassed imports in Myanmar's bilateral trade with the Netherlands in April, according to the figures of the commerce ministry.

Trade between Myanmar and the Netherlands exceeded US\$23.5 million, with exports being worth \$20.7 million and imports valued at \$2.7 million.

Myanmar exports agro products such as edible oil seeds and vegetable oil, men's and women's shirts, parasols (traditional Patheingyi umbrella) and fishery products, while dairy products, consumer goods and raw industrial materials are imported from the Netherlands.

The bilateral trade value was \$211.5 million in the 2017-2018 FY, \$141 million in the 2016-2017 FY, \$61 million in the 2015-16 FY, \$42 million in the 2014-2015 FY, \$26 million in the 2013-2014 FY, \$9 million in the 2012-2013 FY and \$23 million in the 2011-2012 FY.

The Netherlands is the ninth largest foreign investor in Myanmar, with more than 60 projects approved by the Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC). A capital of \$1.5 billion has been brought into the country since the 1988-1989 FY. Its investment increased during the last FY and stood at the third place with foreign direct investments worth \$533 million during the last FY, according to the statistics of MIC.

Multinational corporations headquartered in the Netherlands, such as Shell, Unilever, Heineken and Phillips, are also doing business in Myanmar.—Htet Myat ■

Automobile market remains cool in local market

By May Thet Hnin

The Yangon automobile market has been cool, as only a few people have bought cars recently.

Although the automobile market saw some sales last May, the Yangon automobile market remained cool because of the beginning of the academic year and incessant rains, said Dr. Soe Tun, managing director of Farmer Auto Car Showroom and chair-

man of Myanmar Automobile Manufacturers and Distributors Association.

Recently, there were a few sales because only a few slip cars were available in the automobile showroom. The automobile brokers have also reported lower sales.

"People are not buying cars even if they have money in hand. Yangon licenced cars are also

scarce. Regional licenced cars do not sell well in the market," said U Aung Than Win, chairman of Myanmar Automobile Purchases and Sale Enterprise (Yangon). Although regional licenced cars saw some sales last April and May, Yangon licenced vehicles, worth some Ks16 million, were sold in the last few days. Other reasons the Yangon automobile market has been cool

are because of parking problems in the Yangon area and high car import tax.

Recently, the slip price was around Ks12 million, while its price for deregistered vehicles was some Ks9 million.

Most of the local people are buying automobiles by paying through installments. However, some people are still buying new, as well as old vehicles. ■

Three Sino-Myanmar border gates show decrease in trade over two months

THE border trade between China and Myanmar from 1 April to 8 June during the six-month interim period for the 2018-2019 financial year exceeded US\$1 billion, despite a slight increase at the three border gates.

However, the Sino-Myanmar border trade value is down by \$28 million compared

to \$1.12 billion during the same period in the 2017-2018 FY.

Myanmar trades with China through the Muse, Lweijel, Chinshwehaw, Kanpikete and Kengtung gates.

The first three gates mentioned—Muse, Lweijel and Chinshwehaw—also showed a slight decrease in border trade.

The Sino-Myanmar border trade values were worth \$924 million at Muse, \$42 million at Lweijel, \$62 million at Chinshwehaw, \$66.6 million at Kanpikete and \$0.42 million at Kengtung.

Myanmar's rice, sugar, pulses, sesame seeds, corn, dried tea leaves, fishery prod-

ucts, minerals and animal products are exported to China, while capital, intermediate and consumer goods flowed into the country.

In a bid to promote bilateral trade, the commerce ministry is reported to have signed a memorandum of understanding with the Yunnan Provincial

government this month. This agreement will include the export of rice, sugar, corn and other agro products to China. In turn, agriculture machinery, electrical appliances, iron and steel-related materials having an equivalent value to the exported goods will be imported.—Mon Mon ■

360 pearl lots, 336 gem lots, 6,795 jade lots on sale at 55th Myanmar Gems Emporium

MYANMAR Gems Emporium Central Committee Chairman Union Minister for Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation U Ohn Win visited and inspected the gem merchants registration building in Mani Yadana Jade Hall, Nay Pyi Taw, yesterday morning, where the matter of providing entry into the gems emporium to local and foreign gem merchants attending the 55th Myanmar Gems emporium was discussed.

The emporium central committee secretary, Myanmar Gems Enterprise Managing Director U Aung Nyunt Thein, and committee members, work committees and officials from Myanmar Gems and Jewellery Entrepreneurs Association explained the sector-wise preparations being conducted.

The union minister spoke about ensuring coordination



Union Minister U Ohn Win inspects the gem merchants registration at 55th Myanmar Gems Emporium in Nay Pyi Taw. **PHOTO: MNA**

among the relevant committees for providing entry to local and foreign merchants into the emporium expeditiously, greeted the gem merchants discussing the matter and provided the necessary information on emporium works and related matters. The 55th Myanmar Gems Emporium will be held from 20

to 29 June in Mani Yadana Jade Hall, in Nay Pyi Taw and 360 pearl lots, 336 gem lots and 6,795 jade lots will be sold under an open tender system. A total of 3,110 gem merchants from four foreign countries and 923 local gem merchants have registered to attend the gems emporium. — Myanmar News Agency ■

UCSB Chairman Dr. Win Thein receives JICA chief representative

UNION Civil Service Board (UCSB) Chairman Dr. Win Thein received Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Chief Representative Mr. Masayuki Karasawa and delegation at the UCSB guest hall in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday afternoon.

At the meeting, administrative and management matters

related to the construction of Nay Pyi Taw Civil Service Academy Training Centre in the UCSB compound and technical cooperation for short- and long-term international and local training courses to be conducted in the Civil Service Academy, once completed, were discussed. — Myanmar News Agency ■



UCSB Chairman Dr. Win Thein holds talks with Japan International Cooperation Agency delegation in Nay Pyi Taw. **PHOTO: MNA**



Union Minister U Kyaw Tin meets with Mr. Pierre Amilhat from European Commission in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

Union Minister U Kyaw Tin receives European Commission delegation

UNION Minister for International Cooperation U Kyaw Tin received a delegation led by Mr. Pierre Amilhat, Director for Asia, Central Asia, the Middle East and the Pacific of the Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development of the European Commission, at 10.30 a.m. on 19 June and hosted a lunch for the delegation at 1 p.m. at M-Gallery Hotel in Nay Pyi Taw.

During the meeting, they

exchanged views on matters related to ASEAN-EU relations, holding of an ASEM Summit in Brussels and enhancing cooperation and trade relations between Myanmar and the EU. They also discussed the EU's ongoing Multi-annual Indicative Programme for Myanmar. The lunch was also attended by U Sett Aung, Deputy Minister for Planning and Finance, and senior officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. — Myanmar News Agency ■

Refresher course for journalists from Mekong Sub-Region countries concludes in Kunming

THE first refresher course for media officials and journalists from Mekong Sub-Region countries concluded yesterday morning at the Yunnan Daily Press Group in Kunming, Yunnan Province of China.

At the ceremony, the participants comprising media officials and journalists from different countries presented their travel experiences using new media, during the tour.

Later, all the representatives from Myanmar, Cambodia

and Laos shared their experiences.

Yang Run, Chief Editor of Yunnan Daily Press Group, expressed his greetings and gave away certificates of completion to the 15 participants of the refresher course from the Mekong Sub-region countries.

During the training session, participants had given lectures on the role of media development in the Mekong Sub-region countries, new media development in China and

application of new media technology, conducted by officials from the Yunnan Daily Press Group.

The participants visited the Kunming Underground Railway Station and bullet train, landmark places in Kunming, construction of the Lincang-Chinshwehaw expressway, Lingchong border economic zone and a paper-making workshop in Menghun village.—A One Soe and Myo Thu Hein ■

Correction

In the story titled "Aquaculture production survey slated to end in April 2019" on Page 4 of the 19 June, 2018 issue of the Global New Light of Myanmar, there was an editing error. The name of National Consultant of FAO should be "U Aung Htay Oo", not "U Aung Kyaw Htay". The GNLM regrets the error.

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Meeting held to prepare for 21st-Century Panglong Peace Conference's third session

THE Union Government, the Hluttaw and the Tatmadaw met at Nay Pyi Taw National Reconciliation and Peace Centre in preparation for the third session of the Union Peace Conference-21st Century Panglong yesterday morning. The meeting was attended by Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee (UPDJC) secretaries U Khin Zaw Oo, U Hla Maung Shwe, U Zaw Htay, U Aung Soe and UPDJC members, representatives from the Government, Hluttaw and the Tamadaw groups, and representatives of ethnic nationals and other groups.

At the meeting, UPDJC secretary U Khin Zaw Oo said the third session of the Union Peace Conference-21st Century Panglong was scheduled to be held in the second week of July.

At the second session, there were many matters that had to be combined in each sector. A total of 19 points remained to be discussed in the political



Meeting held to prepare for holding 3rd session of Union Peace Conference-21st Century Panglong. PHOTO:MNA

work committee. Some points remained in the economic, social and land sectors.

Each work committee also had much to discuss. The New Mon State Party's national-level political dialogue and the CSO forum will have more points to submit, and once these are com-

bined with the remaining points, it is expected the third session will be quite complete. There are some weaknesses in the titles of the political sector on federalism in the conference.

U Khin Zaw Oo said if the discussion titles in the economic, social and land sectors highlight-

ed the federal policy, the outcome of the third session would be very valuable. In the security sector, points that reflect the federal form are still weak. Emphasis should be made towards discussing titles in the economic, social and land sectors that could create a federal shape, said U

Khin Zaw Oo.

Next, UPDJC secretary U Hla Maung Shwe explained about the NCA (Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement) the framework, ToR (Terms of Reference) and SOP (Standard Operating Procedures) documents. Following this, UPDJC secretary U Zaw Htay explained the agendas, discussion format and the latest situation of the peace process.

Later, sector-wise discussions were held in designated places of the centre, and UPDJC secretaries U Khin Zaw Oo, U Hla Maung Shwe, U Zaw Htay, UPDJC member Brig-Gen Sein Tun Hla, UPDJC secretary U Aung Soe led the political, economic, social, security, land and the environmental sector discussions with representatives of the Government, Hluttaw and the Tatmadaw groups, representatives of ethnic nationals and other representatives.

The meetings will continue until 21 June. — Myo Myint ■

State Counsellor's 73rd birthday celebrated nationwide



State Counsellor's 73rd birthday celebration holds at the National League for Democracy headquarters in Yangon. PHOTO: YE HTUT

The 73rd birthday of State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was celebrated in Yangon and across the country with religious ceremonies, charity food donations, tree plantings and blood donations.

Members of the National League for Democracy donated provisions to 200 members of the Sangha and nuns outside the party's headquarters in Bahan Township at 6.30 am yesterday and donated food to needy people to mark the State Counsellor's birthday.

The ceremony was attended U Tin Oo, Patron of the NLD, Yangon Region Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein, Speaker of

Yangon Region Hluttaw U Tin Maung Tun, Deputy Speaker U Lin Naing Myint, Yangon Mayor U Maung Maung Soe, Yangon Region Social Affairs Minister U Naing Ngan Lin, members of the party, lawmakers, wives and donors.

The second session of the celebration took place at 9 am with the cutting of a birthday cake and best wishes from members of the party for their leader.

Others celebrated the birthday of the State Counsellor at Maha Bandoora Park in downtown Yangon yesterday by donating food to needy people and reciting poems dedicated to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.



People enjoy charity food at a ceremony to mark the 73rd Birthday of State Counsellor in Yangon. PHOTO: YE HTUT

At the Shwedagon Pagoda yesterday evening, 7,300 candles were lit in honour of the State Counsellor's birthday.

In addition, charity food donation ceremonies were held in wards across Yangon to celebrate the day.

Nationwide, tree planting ceremonies were held yesterday.

The activities, which also raised awareness of environmental conservation, were held in Kyonpyaw in Ayeyawady Region, Kyaikmayaw in Mon State, Kani in Sagaing Region, Hsihseng Township in Pao Self-administered Zone in Shan State (South), Paung Township, Butalin Township, Thaton Town-

ship, Yenanchaung in Magway Region, Ngathayauk in Nyaung-U District, Wuntho and Mawlaik in Sagaing Region, Bogalay Township, Maubin Township, Taunggyi, Yinmarbin Township, Bamauk in Sagain Region, Htigyaing Township, Myinmu, Phekon Township, KhinU Township in Shwebo District in Sagaing Region, Minhla Township, Kyaikto Township, Madaya Township, Hsipaw Township in Shan State (North), Thanbyuzayat Township, Pwintbyu Township in Magway Region, Natmauk Township, Ye Township, Pintaya in Danu Self-administered Zone in southern Shan State and Thanlyin in Yangon Region.— Zaw Gyi\MNA

Emergency operation centre opened in Sittway

An Emergency Operation Centre-EOC was formally opened at the Rakhine Disasters Management Office in Sittway, Rakhine State, yesterday morning.

It was attended by Head of Rakhine State Disasters Management Department and Director of Rakhine State General Administration Department U Kyaw Sein, Head of the State Meteorology and Hydrology Department U Tun Aye Kyaw, staff from ADPC, IOM and others.

Speaking on the occasion, U Kyaw Sein said that the opening of the EOC will enable the people in townships to have an access to weather reports in real time so that they could take preventive measures in reducing disaster risks. In cooperation with the EOC, disaster drills will be conducted in Sittway, Pauktaw, Myebon and Minbya townships, he added.— Win Min Soe (IPRD) ■

Develop SMEs to reduce trade deficit

MYANMAR'S trade volume was US\$30.5 billion from April to February of the 2017-2018 Fiscal Year, with a total export volume of US\$13.5 billion and a total import volume of US\$17 billion in the same period.

As the export volume is lower than the import volume, the trade balance showed a deficit of US\$3.5 billion. The trade volume saw an increase of about 16.9 per cent compared to the same period of last year.

Myanmar's local production cannot satisfy the local demand and neighbouring countries' products produced using modern technology has influenced the local market, which has resulted in a persistent deficit in the country.

Imports from neighbouring countries are still dominating local markets because of their quality, reasonable price and efficient supply to meet the internal demands. Myanmar exports mostly raw materials.

The trade deficit could be reduced through development of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to meet the local demand, which is currently relying on imports. The Government should increase its support for local SMEs.

Myanmar is trying to develop the private sector by nurturing human resources and improving laws and regulations.

According to the statistics of the department of SMEs under the Ministry of Industry, 90 per cent of the country's economy is in the private sector, 99 per cent are SMEs and over 90 per cent of job opportunities come from SMEs.

In other word, SMEs play an important role in the national economy, being the major driving force for national development.

The SMEs in Myanmar include farmers, agro-industry businessmen, manufacturers and producers, retail and wholesale sellers, logistics businesses and those who run service industries of delivering goods to customers in some way.

goods to customers in some way.

The growth of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is estimated to have increased to 6.4 per cent in 2017/18 from 5.9 per cent in 2016/17. This growth was driven by a recovery in agriculture and especially crop production, improved manufacturing performance, and strong services growth despite a slight slowdown likely due to tourism and banking sector uncertainties, according to the World Bank's Myanmar Economic Monitor released this month.

The government is also finalizing its Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan, which we hope will serve as a platform to accelerate economic reforms, modernize the financial sector and make progress in resolving conflicts that jeopardize inclusive and sustained growth.

The plight of the toddy-palm trees in upper Myanmar

By Phyo Thiha Cho (Myanmar Now)

IT has been learnt that toddy palm tree cultivators from upper Myanmar have recently cut down many of their trees for the wood to be used in various erosion programmes and for construction, which has resulted in a significant drop in the economy of the villagers, who have relied on the trees for generations, according to toddy palm dealers.

The decrease in the number of trees in order to sell the wood has resulted in a lower number of tree climbers, who climb the trees and gather sap that is later made into wine, juice and other beverages. Now a large amount of palm trees are transported to sawmills, which cut the trees into small timber planks for use in construction, flooring and erosion efforts. Palm tree wood works well in tropical climates and in water because it does not warp easily.

Because many palm tree cultivators from upper Myanmar have cut down their trees indiscriminately, this has resulted not only in a significant drop in the number of trees and toddy climbers, but also in the price for toddy in the market. It has become a common sight to see the felled trees scattered in pieces on the ground in upper Myanmar. Toddy palm tree lovers are now making an effort to preserve the toddy palm trees as much as possible.

Buyers of Toddy Palm trees

U Thin Khaing, the owner of a Larban furniture store, said that he purchased about 700 palm trees in order to open his factory in 2014. The palm trees eventually absorb the soil fertility. That's why toddy palm plantation owners want to cut down the trees and sell them at Ks6,000 or Ks7,000. The toddy palm trees are widely used in rural areas by those who cannot afford expensive wood. But this has resulted in deforestation in Upper Myanmar and could upset the ecological balance of the area. But U Thin Khaing said they do not worry about the extinction of toddy palm trees because they utilise only the old toddy trees in the process of making floors.

A local resident of Kyaukpadaung Ko Phoe Nge, alias Ko Kyaw Zin, said that he has already cut down about one-fifth of the 2,500 toddy palm trees on his farm. All these trees had to be used for a disaster management programme, including river bank erosion and bank slides along the Ayeyawady River. He was glad to save the riverbank erosion of the Ayeyawady River.

There is a dam built of toddy palm trees which is about 1,000 feet away from the Lawkananda Pagoda. The dam was built in order to change the course of the waterway. He won't cut down any more toddy palm trees in order to protect them from extinction. Starting from 2017, a total of 3,500 toddy palm trees have been cut down to prevent river bank slides and erosion, and the wood is very useful to use in deep water. There are many more projects to improve resources and the course of the waterway.



A tapper climbing a palm tree.
PHOTO: PHOE KHWAR

Selling Toddy Palm Trees

The number of toddy climbers has dropped significantly over the past decade. This is due in part to the long working hours, meager income, and scarcity of alternative job opportunities. The significant decline in the numbers of toddy palm tree climbers can be seen in Kyaukpadaung, where they cannot earn a livable wage from this business. Some local businessmen such as U Min Thu are waiting to close down his warehouse that specialises in the toddy palm trade. He said that the toddy business has been in decline, and consequently few toddy tree climbers come to him. Last year alone, he handled over 1,000 viss of toddy product every day. He said that number has declined by about 50 per cent this year.

U Khin Maung, who has sold only about 100 toddy palm trees this year, said; "the business is not good due to the scarcity of toddy tree climbers, and he still has more than 400 trees to sell. Up to now, there are only about 130 trees sold at Ks5,000 per tree. There are only three climbers in the village. Other reasons for a decline in business are insect pests, which can destroy the plantations. U Moe Aung, who plants grapevines, said that his plantation failed because the taller palm trees cast shadows on his grapevines. Thus he decided to cut down the palm trees. Another toddy palm tree owner, U Thein Myint, said that he has sold a total of 20 plants from his farms. It was learnt that the new generation is leaving the toddy farming business and looking for steady-income jobs in foreign countries. The increasing numbers of youths going overseas have led to the shortage of workers in these areas.

Finding the solutions

Many trees including toddy palm trees and tamarind trees are chopped down in upper Myanmar, which causes the destruction of toddy tree plantations. The main reasons for this are production of joss stick and raw wood materials. National Literacy Award Winner Win Chit warned that upper Myanmar will become deserts if we do nothing to prevent cutting down the trees indiscriminately.

Some toddy tree lovers based in Kyaukpadaung said that the trees became traditional resources and are widely cultivated in Upper Myanmar and the whole plant including their fruits, fronds, branches, stems and roots are economically useful in one way or another. Chairman of the Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation Committee of Mandalay Hluttaw U Aye Khaine remarked that it will be hard to promote the living standard of the toddy palm climbers and to preserve the natural environment at the same time. As for the authority concerned, efforts should be made to provide loans and share the technology assistance to the cultivators which can enhance their socio-economic lives. He had made an attempt to set up a business plans for sugar production based on toddy juice, but this will take time and money to succeed. He firmly believes that the best way to promote the lives of these villagers is to get higher demands in the market. There are many groups aiming to conduct training courses for the toddy palm tree growers in Kyaukpadaung. More and more toddy palm trees lovers have educated the local residents to save the plants. As for Tagargyee villager Ko Aung San, he performs his daily activities as usual. He doesn't have any idea of selling out his toddy palm trees, and isn't fear of falling into poverty for his children. He thinks that to climb the toddy palm trees is highly dangerous, and has a strong desire for his children to find another job to make a better living.

(This article in Myanmar is originally appeared in Myanmar Now and the Mirror Daily. We translated and published it with the permission from the Myanmar Now)

Translated by Win Ko Ko Aung

My Birthday Wish

The Flowers of Victory her people offer
Ever the Crown in her hair.

Aung San Suu Kyi, the Brave Heart of Burma,
has won the millions of hearts of her people.

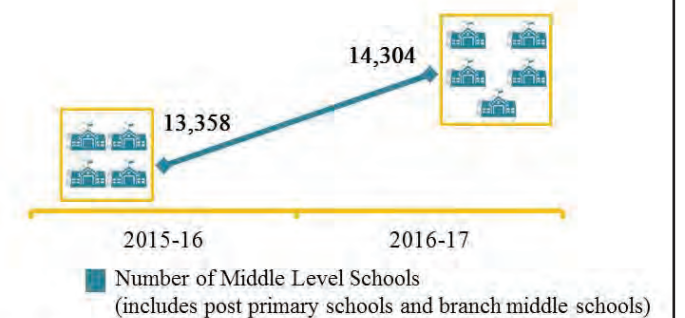
Today, on her birthday,
we all pray for her happiness and good health—
our living force, our beloved leader.

May the song of the young
Peacock resonate in the air—
This is the noble wish of all and everyone.

By Min Thu Wun
19-6-1990

Trs. by Zaw Tun
19-6-2018

Number of Middle Level Schools in Myanmar



Source: Ministry of Education
Information Unit: Central Statistical Organization

Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 7:00 pm Tuesday 19th June, 2018)

BAY INFERENCE: Monsoon is vigorous over the Andaman Sea and South Bay and weak to moderate elsewhere over the Bay of Bengal.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL AFTERNOON OF THE 20th JUNE, 2018: Rain or thundershowers will be scattered in Nay Pyi Taw, Sagaing and Magway regions, Rakhine State, fairly widespread in Mandalay, Bago, Yangon and Ayeyawady regions, (Nothern and Southern) Shan and Chin states and widespread in the remaining Regions and States with isolated heavy falls in Yangon and Taninthayi regions, Kachin State. Degree of certainty is (100%).

STATE OF THE SEA: Squalls with rough sea are likely at times Deltaic, Gulf of Mottama, off and along Mon-Tanin-thayi Coasts. Surface wind speed in squalls may reach (40) m.p.h. Sea will be slight to moderate elsewhere in Myanmar waters. Wave height will be about (9 - 12) feet in Deltaic, Gulf of Mottama and off and along Mon-Tanin-thayi Coasts and about (4 - 7) feet in off and along Rakhine Coasts.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Likelihood of increase of rain in Kachin and Shan states.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 20th JUNE, 2018: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing inspects Kyaikthanlan Pagoda in Mawlamyine

Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, accompanied by Mon State Chief Minister Dr. Aye Zan, inspected the Kyaikthanlan Pagoda in Mawlamyine yesterday.

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing inspected landslide damage from the western gateway of the Kyaikthanlan Pagoda, clearance of debris conducted by servicemen of the Tatmadaw, firefighters, Red Cross members and members of the civil society.

Then Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and party paid respects to member of State Sangha Maha Nayaka Com-

mittee Zawtikaryon Monastery Sayadaw Agga Mahagandawasaka Pandita Agga Maha Saddhammajotika Bhaddanta Chandobasa and donated offertories to the monks.

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing donated cash and 1,000 bags of cement for the repair of the Kyaikthanlan Pagoda through a member of the board of trustees of the pagoda. Afterwards, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing received cash donation amount of Ks8 millions received from the donors.

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and party proceeded to the temporary relief camp set up at the Chanayeikthar mon-

astery in Thirimying Ward, met with flood victims, gave words of encouragement and provided food supplies.

The Senior General, together with Mon State Chief Minister Dr. Aye Zan, went to the temporary relief camps set up at the stadium, and encouraged the flood victims.

The Senior General provided food and Ks 4 millions to 400 students, delivering Ks10,000 to each student.

The Senior General then went to the Military Hospital in Mawlamyine, inspected the flood-hit areas and attended to the requirements of the flooded area. — Myanmar News Agency



Senior General Min Aung Hlaing donates cash to a member of the board of pagoda trustees in Mawlamyine yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

Suspects in drug haul apprehended, others sought

THE Myanmar Police Force continues to investigate the record drug bust involving the transfer of a huge amount of drugs to Malaysia that was seized by Kuala Lumpur authorities last month.

Questioning of suspects has revealed details of the massive drug haul that was seized by Malaysian authorities on 28 May.

Police first apprehended Min Naing on 2 June, and interrogation led to the arrest of the main suspect, Maung Maung, also known as Yassin, on 5 June in Patheingyi Township in Mandalay Region.

During questioning by police, it was learnt that Maung Maung came to know Chin Kya Mu, also known as Ma Kya Wei and Hnin Oo Lwin, of Tachilek, and arranged with her to transport an estimated 1.2 tons of crystal methamphetamine through Myanmar to Malaysia using several vehicles, police said. She is still at large, police said.

The drugs were transported to Nice Guy drinking water factory in Hlegu Township owned by Min Naing. Another suspect, Hussein, also known as Mohamed Hussein, who is still at large, transported the drugs in a Mazda Bongo Box vehicle from the water factory to a warehouse owned by Maung Maung on Lower Pazundaung Road in Yangon.

From there, Min Naing put the drugs into a container mixed with Myanmar tra-



Dawei Gyi @ Aung Lwin



Hussein @ Mohamed Hussein



Chin Kya Mu @ Ma Kya Wei @ Hnin Oo Lwin.



Chin Kya Mu @ Ma Kya Wei @ Hnin Oo Lwin and Akogyi @ Kadone.

ditional foods and exported the container to Malaysia with the assistance of the Nice Guy Clearance Service Agency.

When the drugs reached Malaysia via the ocean route, Maung Maung's brother-in-law Zeya Hein, who lived in Malaysia and had opened a store, accepted the drugs through various contacts and passed on the narcotics to the husband of Chin Kya Mu. Akogyi, also known as Kadone,

lives in Malaysia and is still under investigation for drugs distribution. Zeya Hein was apprehended in Yangon on 9 June when he returned to extend the expiry date of his passport.

According to Maung Maung and Zeya Hein, it was learnt that they got to know Dawei Gyi, also known as Aung Lwin of Dawei, Malaysia and they contacted Chin Kya Mu and transported drugs to Ma-

laysia. On 12 June, Dawei Gyi was arrested at Mahlwetaung gate. From his home in Dawei, 10 gm of ICE was confiscated.

According to Dawei Gyi, Maung Maung, Chin Kya Mu and her husband Akogyi with the help of Min Naing shipped the drugs to Malaysia.

According to an initial investigation, Maung Maung was found to be in possession of about Ks7,000 million, Dawei Gyi @ Aung Lwin about Ks2,700 million, Zeya Hein about Ks400 million, Chin Kya Mu about Ks8,000 million and Hussein about Ks 500 million in bank accounts, vehicles, gold and properties (land and houses) which were suspected to be proceeds from the drug trade.

The money and properties were detained and cases opened under anti-money laundering law.

Anyone who knows or sees Chin Kya Mu @ Ma Kya Wei @ Hnin Oo Lwin (father U Sai Maung), about 45 years, holding 13/ta ka na (Naing) 128866 who had lived in No. 1/6(56) Phaya Phyu Road, Zone 1, Pantin Junction, Taunggyi and Hussein @ Mohamed Hussein (father Gola Mahmet) holding 10/ma la na (Naing) 150812 who had lived in No. 81/F, First Floor, 55 Street, No. 2 Ward, Pazundaung township are to report to the nearest Myanmar Police Force, according to an announcement made by police. — Myanmar News Agency ■

Over 29,000 trees cultivated on 24 acres in Meiktila for firewood

The Township Forestry Department has cultivated over 29,000 trees to be used as firewood on 24 acres of Taung Hlaw Kan forest reserve No. 10 in Meiktila Township.

The department cultivated some 29,040 eucalyptus trees (Jukali) at the forest reserve with the aim of using them as firewood for nearby villages from Thanbo village-tract.

The department has implemented the project by spending from the 2018-2019 fiscal year regional government's budget. After five years, the department will distribute the trees for free to be used as firewood in the mentioned villages, said U Soe Lwin Thu, a township Forestry Department officer.

The department held a monsoon tree planting festival at Lein Taw forest near Lein Taw village, which is 12 miles away from Meiktila Town, on 19 June.

The department has plans to plant 30 Mhin Wah (dendrocalamus strictus), 50 Phauk Seik (holoptelea integrifolia), 50 Bael, 50 Rin and 50 Dahat (tectona hamiltoniana) trees.— Chan Tha (Meiktila) ■

France's Le Pen must repay 300,000 euros to European Parliament: court

LUXEMBOURG — French far-right leader Marine Le Pen must repay nearly 300,000 euros to the European Parliament for funds paid incorrectly to an assistant, a top EU court ruled on Tuesday.

The General Court of the European Union, the bloc's second-highest tribunal, rejected a bid by Le Pen to overturn a ruling that she had wrongly used parliamentary funds to pay an aide who was based at her party's headquarters in Paris.

The Luxembourg-based court said in a statement that it "confirms the decision of the European Parliament to recover from Marine Le Pen MEP almost 300,000 euros (\$347,000) for the employment of a parliamentary assistant, on the ground that she did not prove the effectiveness of that assistant's work".

Le Pen, who lost the 2016 French presidential election in a run-off with Emmanuel Macron, provided no evidence "of any activity whatsoever on the part of the parliamentary assistant that comes under parliamenta-



Marine Le Pen. PHOTO: AFP

ry assistance, which she moreover acknowledged during the hearing," the court said.

Le Pen, who served as an MEP from 2009 to 2017, swiftly announced her intention to take the case to the Court of Justice of the European Union, the bloc's highest court.

"This ruling is based not on the substance of the case but on a procedural aspect. We are going to appeal against this decision," she told AFP.

Le Pen's National Rally party — known until a recent name change as the National Front — criticised the court's ruling.

"When you don't submit evidence the General Court says there was no parliamentary work. When you submit evidence it says it's in the wrong form.

Then when you submit the evidence in the right form, it says it's too late," the party said

in a statement.

In December 2016, the parliament ruled that 298,500 euros had been "unduly" paid to Le Pen over a five-year period for parliamentary assistance provided by her aide Catherine Griset, who was based in Paris and not at parliament, which meets in both Brussels and Strasbourg, eastern France.

The parliament began withholding part of Le Pen's allowances as an MEP to recover the money — a move that she unsuccessfully challenged in the EU court last year.

A source at the European Parliament told AFP that it managed to recover around 60,000 euros from Le Pen before she quit the assembly in 2017.

Le Pen is not the only member of the former National Front to run foul of rules on payments to parliamentary aides.

Her father Jean-Marie Le Pen, the founder of the National Front, was ordered to repay 320,000 euros in 2016, while parliament has demanded a total of nearly 400,000 from three other MEPs.—AFP ■

Ex-CIA officer charged over damaging leak to WikiLeaks

WASHINGTON — A former employee in the CIA's cyber-spying operation was indicted on Monday on charges of leaking hacking tools to WikiLeaks in one of the most damaging of the agency's breaches in recent years.

Joshua Schulte, 29, was charged with leaking unspecified information on the Central Intelligence Agency's intelligence-gathering capabilities to a group identified only as "Organization-1", which then released the information on the internet.

While the indictment gave no other details, in earlier filings Schulte's lawyer indicated the investigation involved the leak to WikiLeaks of the "Vault 7" collection of hacking tools, malware, viruses, trojans, and "zero day" exploits which comprised the CIA's most valuable tools for tapping into adversaries' computers.

WikiLeaks began releasing the 8,761 documents from Vault 7 in March 2017, embarrassing

the agency and providing professional and amateur hackers around the world with the same tools that US spies used.

"The source wishes to initiate a public debate about the security, creation, use, proliferation and democratic control of cyberweapons," WikiLeaks said at the time.

It was arguably the worst of a series of leaks of some of the most closely held secrets of the US intelligence community, alarming the government's top security officials.

US officials have since said that the Vault 7 release, combined with the release of private communications of Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton during the 2016 election, showed WikiLeaks to be a stateless hostile foreign intelligence service.

Schulte was an early suspect but was only quietly charged in September 2017 with having a large cache of child pornography on his computer.—AFP ■

Yemen government forces enter Hodeida airport: UAE

ABU DHABI — Yemeni government forces, backed by the United Arab Emirates, entered Hodeida airport on Tuesday, the UAE said, as the fight for control of the rebel-held port city intensifies. "With the participation and support of the Emirati armed forces, the joint Yemeni resistance (army) entered Hodeida airport," the UAE state news agency WAM tweeted. A Yemeni military source confirmed the report to AFP. Troops from the UAE and neighbouring Saudi Arabia are

the mainstay of an Arab coalition that has been fighting the Huthi Shiite rebels in support of the Yemeni government since 2015.

The coalition launched a major offensive on Wednesday to drive the rebels out of Hodeida, a Red Sea port which is the entry point for some three-quarters of Yemen's imports. Saudi Arabia accuses its regional arch rival Iran of smuggling arms to the rebels through the port, a charge Tehran denies.

Riyadh and its allies imposed

a blockade of the port earlier this year in response to a series of rebel missile attacks on Saudi territory. It sparked an outcry from relief organisations who warned of the risk of famine if aid shipments and commercial food imports were not fully restored. The United Nations has described the conflict as the world's largest single humanitarian catastrophe. Around 22 million people are in need of aid, with 8.4 million of them on the brink of starvation, according to the UN.—AFP ■



Yemeni pro-government forces backed by United Arab Emirates troops gather on the outskirts of the rebel-held port city of Hodeida on 18 June, 2018 in readiness to advance into the city's battleground airport. PHOTO: AFP

S Korea, US suspend major August military drill

SEOUL — South Korea said on Tuesday it has agreed with the United States to suspend a major joint military exercise held every August as their tensions with North Korea have significantly subsided following historic summits.

The decision, also announced by Washington, came a week after US President Donald Trump abruptly said following his summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in Singapore that he wants to halt “war games” with South Korea, calling them “tremendously expensive” and “very provocative.”

All planning activities for the Ulchi Freedom Guardian exercise have been suspended, the defense ministries of the two countries said.

Coupled with Trump’s suggestion of scaling down US forces in South Korea, the suspension could strengthen concerns among Washington’s allies in Asia over whether it would sustain a pivotal role in the region’s security architecture.

“There is no impact on Pacific exercises outside of the Korean Peninsula,” the Pentagon said in a statement as it announced the suspension of the annual exercise. “We are still coordinating additional actions. No decisions on subsequent war games have been made.” Trump said after the Singapore meeting that joint military exercises with South Korea could be halted as long as North Korea continues denuclearization talks in good faith.



US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo (L) and South Korean Foreign Minister Kang Kyung Wha shake hands before their talks in Seoul on 14 June, 2018, two days after the first-ever US-North Korea summit in Singapore. **PHOTO: KYODO NEWS**

North Korea has long denounced military exercises between the two countries as a rehearsal for invasion and tensions around the Korean Peninsula have escalated when they are conducted.

Choi Hyun Soo, a spokesman for South Korea’s Defence Ministry, told reporters that the two countries hope to see some concrete actions from North Korea following their latest decision.

Pentagon spokeswoman Dana White said Defence Secretary Jim Mattis, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and national security adviser John Bolton will meet later this week to discuss

the next moves.

On Monday, Pompeo said he is likely to make yet another visit to North Korea “before too terribly long” to follow up the unprecedented summit on 12 June.

“We still have to flesh out all the things that underlay the commitments that were made that day in Singapore,” Pompeo said at an event in Detroit.

When he met with Trump, Kim also committed to “complete” denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, which he first promised during a summit with South Korean President Moon Jae In in late April.

But the agreement between

the US and North Korean leaders lacked details on how to proceed toward that goal.

Ulchi Freedom Guardian is a largely computer-simulated command post exercise that last year involved 17,500 US service members, with 3,000 coming from outside South Korea. They were joined by some 50,000 South Korean troops and hundreds of thousands of South Korean government personnel all the way up to the Cabinet level.

US-led United Nations Command forces from seven other countries — Australia, Britain, Canada, Colombia, Denmark, New Zealand and the Nether-

lands — also have participated.

Besides that exercise, another large one, Key Resolve, is held each spring, while numerous smaller ones also take place.

South Korea and the United States have claimed that their regular military exercises, such as Max Thunder that ran for two weeks through late last month, are defensive in nature.

Currently, the United States has about 28,000 soldiers in South Korea.

In 1994, the United States and South Korea canceled their long-running military exercise known as Team Spirit on the premise that North Korea would freeze its nuclear development program in return for economic assistance under the Agreed Framework.

Trump’s intention to halt the military exercises was immediately welcomed by China after he announced it during a post-summit press conference in Singapore.

For years, China has said the “root cause” of the North Korean nuclear issue stems from disagreements between Washington and Pyongyang. When tensions were extremely high until this year over North Korea, China advocated the idea of the so-called “double suspension” — simultaneously freezing Pyongyang’s nuclear program and Washington-Seoul military exercises. On Tuesday, China’s official media said that the North Korean leader will make a two-day visit to Beijing.—Kyodo News ■

Shanghai, Hong Kong stocks plunge on trade war fears

SHANGHA — Shanghai and Hong Kong stocks plunge on Tuesday on investors’ fears that the US and China could be heading for a full-blown trade war following tit-for-tat tariff threats.

The plummet follows an announcement on Monday by US President Donald Trump that he planned to hit the world’s second largest economy with 10 percent levies on \$200 billion worth of imports — a move Beijing labelled “blackmail”, threatening to respond in kind.

As the words flew, the benchmark Shanghai Composite Index ended down 3.78 per cent,

or 114.08 points, at 2,907.82 while Hong Kong was 3.12 per cent lower in late afternoon trade.

The Shenzhen Composite Index, which tracks stocks on China’s second exchange, was also down, dropping 5.77 per cent, or 97.60 points, to 1,594.05 on turnover of 232.5 billion yuan.

It is the first time the Shanghai index has dipped below 3,000 since September 2016, according to Bloomberg.

Qian Qimin, an analyst of Shenwan Hongyuan Group, said that the number was a psychological threshold for investors.

“Now the defence line has

been broken. People are panicking and we are seeing some irrational behaviours,” Qian said.

“The market is really weak right now and there is still uncertainty.”

“Investors are worried the US may impose further restrictions on Chinese tech and Internet products and cause greater uncertainty for the domestic economy,” Zhang Gang, Shanghai-based strategist with Central China Securities Co, told Bloomberg News.

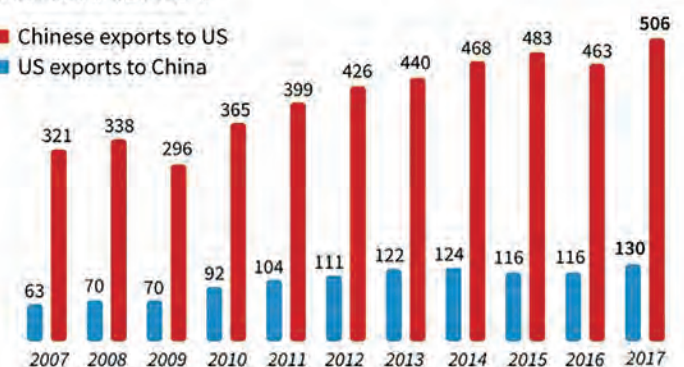
“The Shanghai Composite is unlikely to bottom out any time soon.”—AFP ■

China-US trade in goods

Trade in goods

In billions of US dollars

■ Chinese exports to US
■ US exports to China



Trade highlights 2017

China bought from US

- Boeing jets and other aviation equipment, valued at \$16.3 billion
- Soy beans (\$12.4 billion)
- New and used cars (\$10.5 billion)

US bought from China

- Mobile phones (\$70.4 billion)
- Toys and games (\$26.8 billion)
- Clothing (\$24.1 billion)

Sources: US Census Bureau/US Treasury/Federal Reserve Board /Us-china-tdi.com

© AFP

North Korea's Kim visits China following Trump summit

BEIJING — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un began a two-day visit to Beijing on Tuesday in what analysts believe is a trip to brief his sole major ally on his unprecedented summit with US President Donald Trump and seek consensus on negotiations with Washington.

The North's leader, who is believed to have landed in the Chinese capital Tuesday morning, was expected to head to the Great Hall of the People to meet with Chinese President Xi Jinping, though no official agenda was released. Dozens of security vans, police cars and armoured vehicles lined streets around Beijing's Diaoyutai State Guesthouse — where Kim had stayed in his previous visit.

A motorcade accompanying a black limousine was seen leaving the compound late Tuesday after-



China retains a strong influence in North Korea. PHOTO: AFP

noon as police cleared the way. The visit comes as the United States, which relies on China to enforce sanctions against Pyongyang, stands on the brink of a potential trade war with Beijing, adding an extra layer of uncertainty and a possible pressure point to be exploited by North Korea's powerful ally.

Chinese state broad-

caster CCTV reported that Kim would be in Beijing through Wednesday. "We hope this visit will help deepen the China-DPRK relations and strengthen our strategic communication on major issues to promote regional peace and stability," foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang told a regular press briefing. The visit is the North

Korean autocrat's third to China since March, when he made his inaugural foreign trip as leader.

Previous trips had been kept secret until Kim returned home. It was not clear why Chinese state media broke with the precedent. In addition to discussing last week's summit, Kim is expected to ask China for help in easing

economic sanctions, in return for his pledge to denuclearise, according to Wang Dong, an international relations expert at Peking University. "The Chinese and North Korean leaders are carrying out consultations on how to jointly move the Korean nuclear issue forward." Following the historic US-North Korea summit in Singapore a week ago, China suggested the UN Security Council could consider easing the economic restrictions on its Cold War-era ally. China may not have been at the table for the historic summit in Singapore but it retains strong influence behind the scenes, Dong said. The visit shows that China is "key" to the talks, Wang said. "It reflects that China is indispensable to the entire Korean nuclear issue."

'Differences ahead'

In a joint statement

following the Singapore summit, Kim pledged to "work toward the complete denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula".

Trump hailed this as a concession but critics said the stock phrase long used by Pyongyang stopped short of longstanding US demands for North Korea to give up its atomic arsenal in a "verifiable" and "irreversible" way.

It is now urgent for Xi and Kim to discuss how North Korea will work towards meeting US demands, said Beijing-based international relations commentator Hua Po.

"There may be differences ahead between the DPRK and the US in regards to denuclearisation, because the US wants irreversible and verifiable denuclearisation. It may be difficult for Kim Jong Un to accept," Hua told AFP.

—AFP ■

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'Black Panther' star honours real-life hero at MTV awards

LOS ANGELES — Landmark blockbuster "Black Panther" and nostalgic horror sensation "Stranger Things" shared the spoils on Monday with a real-life hero at the MTV Movie and TV Awards.

Marvel's "Black Panther" racked up four awards, including best movie. Its star, Chadwick Boseman, won best hero and best movie performance while his nemesis Michael B Jordan was named best villain.

Boseman, 40, got his hero statuette from presenters Olivia Munn and Zazie Beetz — and promptly gave it to James Shaw Jr, the man who stopped a mass shooter at a Tennessee Waffle House.

"Receiving an award for playing a superhero is amazing but it's even greater to acknowledge the heroes that we have in real life," Boseman said.

He beckoned the 29-year-old on stage and led the crowd in a standing ovation.

"If you don't know James Shaw Jr, he fought off a gunman in Antioch, Tennessee, at a Waffle House. He saved lives," he said.

Shaw singlehandedly wrestled the AR-15 semi-automatic rifle from the hands of Travis Reinking as he was allegedly reloading in the middle of a shooting rampage in April.

Four people were killed and two others wounded at the Waffle House restaurant in Nashville, America's country music capital.

But Shaw has been credited with saving many more lives. He suffered a graze wound from a



From left to right, actors Finn Wolfhard, Noah Schnapp, Sadie Sink, and Gaten Matarazzo of the series "Stranger Things" attend the MTV Movie & TV awards. PHOTO: AFP

bullet and burns on his right hand from grabbing the hot barrel of the gun.

He was hailed as a hero by the survivors and their family members, but has repeatedly has rejected the label, saying he acted for reasons of self-preservation.

For the second year running, Netflix hit "Stranger Things" took best show and best actor in a show for Millie Bobby Brown. Noah Schnapp picked up best frightened performance.

Tiffany Haddish hosted, capping her night with the award for best comedic performance for "Girls Trip" while

"scene stealer" went to Madeleine Petsch as Cheryl Blossom in The CW's teen drama series "Riverdale."

The MTV Movie and TV Awards have been taking a sideways look at Hollywood since 1992, honoring films and their actors with "golden popcorn" statuettes.

The nominees are decided by producers and MTV executives, while the winners are chosen by the public, who vote online.

As a result, the awards have historically recognized commercial favorites, in contrast to the Oscars and other events based on critical or in-

dustry acclaim.

MTV reverted to pre-recording the show, filmed on Saturday in a cavernous hangar at Santa Monica Airport in southern California, after broadcasting live last year.

For the second year running, the prize-giving dispensed with gender distinctions in the categories, and awarded best kiss to a same-sex embrace.

Nick Robinson and Keynan Lonsdale played two American teenagers struggling with their

sexuality in "Love, Simon," which is also nominated for August's Teen Choice Awards.—AFP ■

Millie Bobby Brown blasts cyber bullies at MTV Awards

LOS ANGELES — "Stranger Things" star Millie Bobby Brown called out online bullies, saying she will never give in to abuse and also urged others to not surrender.

The 14-year-old actor slammed the social media trolls as she accepted the Best Performance in a Show for the Netflix series for a consecutive second year.

"I want you to know how grateful I am to those that support me. Since I know there are many young people watching this, and even to the adults too, they could probably use the reminder that I was taught — that if you don't have anything nice to say, then don't say it.

"There should be no space in this world for bullying, and I'm not going to tolerate it and either should any of you. If you need a reminder of how worthy you are, and to rise above the hate, message me on Instagram," Brown said in a pretaped video message as she could not attend the show due to a broken kneecap.

This is the first time the actor has addressed cyber bullying after she quit social media, barely a week ago.

The actor left the platform after various memes surfaced online depicting her as a homophobe.

In the past, "Star Wars: The Last Jedi" actors Kelly Marie Tran and Daisy Ridley also were subjected to online trolling.—PTI ■

Zayn loves America and might want to run for office

LONDON — British pop star Zayn Malik says he has been startled by the welcoming spirit of the United States and might even consider running for office in his new home.

The former One Direction heartthrob said he was "a bit shocked" at first by the friendliness of Americans and felt that the country was being "misrepresented across the globe."

"No matter what color, what gender, what sexuality, what class — none of that matters here. People genuinely want to know you

for who you are. And that's how America should be represented across the world," the 25-year-old singer told GQ in the fashion magazine's latest issue.

Asked if he would consider running for office himself, he said: "Maybe. It'd be cool. I feel like it's a beautiful place." Zayn, who has gone only by his first name since launching his solo career, is partially of Pakistani descent and is one of the most visible Muslims in Western pop music. After leaving One Direction in 2015, Zayn moved to Los Angeles and more

recently New York as he shifted style sharply from the squeaky clean boy band, singing R&B-infused tracks heavy on sex appeal.

His arrival in the United States coincided with the rise of President Donald Trump, who during his campaign called for a ban on Muslims entering the country. But Zayn said that one effect of the political climate is that Americans are "expressing how they really feel about where they come from and their heritage and their backgrounds." —AFP ■



Zayn Malik (center), at a Tom Ford fashion show in New York City in February 2018. PHOTO: AFP

Sacred snappers: The village where crocodiles are welcome

BAZOULÉ, BURKINA FASO — Crocodiles may be one of the deadliest hunters in the animal kingdom, but in a small village in Burkina Faso it is not unusual to see someone sitting atop one of the fearsome reptiles.

People in Bazoule, around 30 kilometres (20 miles) from the capital Ouagadougou, share their pond with more than 100 of the razor-toothed creatures.

“We got used to the crocodiles when we were young, swimming in the water with them and all that,” said Pierre Kabore, just a few metres (yards) away from a crocodile feasting on chicken provided by the village.

“Now we can always approach them and sit on them — and if you have the courage, you can lie on them too. There’s no problem, they are sacred crocodiles. They don’t do anything to anyone.” According to local legend, the startling relationship with the predators dates back to at least the 15th century.

The village was in the grip of an agonising drought until the crocodiles led women to a hidden pond where the population could slake their thirst. “The villagers organised a party to celebrate and thank the reptiles,” Kabore



A boy leans on the back of a crocodile at a pond in Bazoule in Burkina Faso, a village which happily shares its local pond with ‘sacred’ crocodiles. **PHOTO: AFP**

said.

A celebration known as Koom Lakre is still held every year during which villagers make sacrifices and ask the animals to grant their wishes of health, prosperity and a good harvest.

Far from being considered a threat, the crocodiles are deemed to have a mystical con-

nection with Bazoule.

“Crocodiles are represented as the soul of our ancestors and if one of them dies, they are buried and even given a funeral as if they were human,” said Kabore.

“When a misfortune is about to happen in the village, they cry out. Elders are charged with interpreting the cries,

and then make wishes to ward off bad luck.”

Tourism attraction

The unusual contact between man and croc has drawn disbelieving tourists to the village to see for themselves.

On their arrival, travellers can buy a chicken which is hung

on a stick by a guide and used to entice the crocodiles out of the pond so that visitors can pose with the creatures.

“It was nice to watch from a distance but sitting on one was a bit freaky,” said Thomas Baspin, a young Frenchman who came to visit his grandparents in Burkina Faso.

“I’m glad I did it — but I’m also glad it’s over!” he quipped.

Tourism has become a big money-spinner for the impoverished villagers, but a three-year-old jihadist insurgency in Burkina Faso is taking its toll.

Ouagadougou has come under attack three times, most recently in March, when jihadists attacked the military headquarters and French embassy.

“We could have more than 10,000 visitors per year but at the moment, there’s no more than 4,000 or 5,000,” said Raphael Kabore, one of the guides.

Global warming is also believed to be having an impact. Rainfall levels are down each year, and the famous pond that is the crocodiles’ home is shrinking. When it disappears, will the reptiles once more guide their human friends to a new watery home?—AFP ■

World’s oldest Sumatran orangutan dies aged 62

PERTH — The world’s oldest Sumatran orangutan, which had 11 children and 54 descendants spread across the globe, has died aged 62, Australian zoo officials said Tuesday.

Puan — Indonesian for “lady” — died on Monday at Perth Zoo, where she had lived since being gifted by Malaysia in 1968.

“She did so much for the colony at Perth Zoo and the survival of her species,” said primate supervisor Holly Thompson.

“Apart from being the oldest member of our colony, she was also the founding member of our world-renowned breeding program and leaves an incredible legacy.

“Her genetics count for just under 10 per cent of the global zoological population.”

Puan had 11 children and a total of 54 descendants in the United States, Europe, Australasia and the jungles of Sumatra. Her great grandson Nyaru was the latest individual to be released into the wild.

Born in 1956, she was noted by the Guinness Book of Records as being the oldest verified Sumatran orangutan in the world. Female orangutans rarely live beyond 50 in the wild.

Thompson said she was an aloof and independent individual.

“You always knew where you stood with Puan, and she would actually stamp her foot if she was dissatisfied with something you did.”

She leaves two daughters at the zoo, along with four grandchildren and a great grandson.—AFP ■

Michelin Guides’ quiet American quits

PARIS — The first non-French person to head the Michelin Guides said on Monday that he is leaving the world’s most prestigious restaurant guides.

American Michael Ellis said that he was joining the Dubai-based luxury hotel chain Jumeirah after seven years with the red guides.

The soft-spoken Ellis, who previously worked for the French tyre maker’s motorcycle division, has expanded the guides to 31 editions in 30 countries.

But there has been controversy about Michelin’s decision to allow governments to commission new guides, with new ones for Seoul, Macau, Hong Kong, Bangkok and Singapore all reportedly paid for.

Ellis said he will leave in September when he will become head of gastronomy for Jumeirah, which has hotels in the Gulf,



Ellis has expanded the guides to 31 editions in 30 countries. **PHOTO: AFP**

China and Europe.

“Long live the Michelin guide,” Ellis declared as he announced his departure. “The inspectors are the beating heart... their passion and their expertise are without question and I was very honoured to be with them during these seven years.”

Ellis, who was born in Colorado, made his first trip to France as a teenager and decided he wanted to become a chef. He returned to work in Paris as a commis chef at a Michelin one-star restaurant before realising “that I was probably more cut out to be a client of a restaurant.”—AFP ■

Spain face World Cup date with destiny against Iran

KAZAN (Russia) — Spanish playmaker Isco say on Wednesday's match against Iran will determine their World Cup destiny as they seek to register their first win in Russia following a gripping 3-3 draw against Portugal.

Champions in 2010 and among the favourites this year, Spain's World Cup ambitions were kept in check, almost single-handedly, by a stunning Cristiano Ronaldo hat-trick.

The draw came just two days after Spain's campaign was thrown into disarray by the shock sacking of coach Julen Lopetegui following an untimely announcement by Real Madrid that he would join the 13-times European champions after the tournament.

Fernando Hierro, Spain's sporting director, is now at the helm but barely a week into the tournament La Roja — expected to join Brazil, Germany and France in the latter stages — have endured more drama than they would have wanted or expected.

"It's a crucial match that will determine our World Cup destiny," said Isco. "We want to score from the opening minute,



Spain celebrate a goal in their opening World Cup match against Portugal. PHOTO: AFP

even though that won't be easy.

"We will stick to the style that defines us as a team, but we have to pass the ball around a lot more and maintain possession. If we play quickly across the pitch, the chances will come. I hope we score quickly."

Iran kicked off their campaign with a 1-0 win against

Morocco, thanks to a late own goal by Aziz Bouhaddouz, piling the pressure on Spain at Kazan Arena on Wednesday.

Iran sit top of the pile as the only Group B team with a win so far, an achievement that sparked incredible celebrations in the streets of Tehran and elsewhere throughout the Islamic republic.

Coach Carlos Queiroz concedes Iran now face one of the biggest challenges in their World Cup history, but maintains they can "make the impossible possible".

'Universe Cup final'

"If the game against Morocco was the World Cup final for

us, the game against Spain will be the Universe Cup final," said the former Real Madrid coach.

"It was not a miracle that we won. What can happen once in a while is a group of people, when they are united, can create super stories and super things.

"Our attitude is to try and make the impossible possible."

Yet keeping the Spanish armada at bay to claim the point that would boost hopes of qualifying for the last 16 looks a tall order.

Iran have never beaten a European side at a World Cup — their only previous victory was a 2-1 win over the United States in France in 1998.

Despite the frustration of conceding an 88th-minute equaliser to Ronaldo following two goals from Diego Costa and a stunning strike from Nacho, Isco believes Spain's resolve remains intact. "We had a setback but we stuck together and got on with the job," he said.

"We saw that in the first match. We never gave up, even after conceding a goal in the fourth minute. That shows what this team is all about. We'll never stop fighting."—AFP ■

Ronaldo seeks encore against 'battle-hardened' Morocco

MOSCOW — Cristiano Ronaldo will attempt to follow up his World Cup opening game heroics for Portugal against a Morocco side licking their wounds after a crushing last-gasp defeat.

A hat-trick from the five-time world player of the year snatched a thrilling 3-3 draw for the European champions against Spain in a heavyweight Group B showdown in Sochi.

It was Ronaldo's 51st career hat-trick, and the 51st in the tournament's history, as the Real Madrid star became just the fourth player to score in four World Cups.

"I am very happy, it's a nice personal record to have, one more in my career," said Ronaldo.

"For me the most important thing is to emphasise what the team did against one of the favourites to win this World Cup."



Cristiano Ronaldo doubled his number of World Cup goals with a hat-trick against Spain. PHOTO: AFP

Despite lifting the trophy at Euro 2016, Portugal are not widely viewed as among the favourites in Russia but can take a big step towards the last 16 with victory over Morocco in Moscow on Wednesday.

"I think we are stronger

than Morocco if we compare the two teams, but I'm not saying the game will be easy for us," striker Andre Silva told reporters at Portugal's training base.

"We cannot underestimate them and must have respect for any opponent. Any game at the World Cup is difficult."

It will be just the second meeting between the two countries, after Morocco beat Portugal 3-1 in the group stage at the 1986 finals.

Morocco did not concede a single goal in the final qualifying round as they sealed a return to the World Cup for the first time in 20 years, but their knockout hopes hang by a thread after a 95th-minute own goal by Aziz Bouhaddouz against Iran.—AFP ■

FIFA WORLD CUP RUSSIA 2018		
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Portugal		Morocco
21:30 MST (20.6.2018)		
Uruguay		Saudi Arabia
00:30 MST (21.6.2018)		
IR Iran		Spain
World Cup 2018 Results		
Colombia	1 - 2	Japan
Poland	1 - 2	Senegal