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State Counsellor: Cooperation between Hluttaw representatives and administrative sector important

STATE Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi left Yangon for Kawhmu by car yesterday morning and met with region, District and township level departmental officials at the Township General Administration Department office.

Present at the meeting were Peace Commission Chairman Dr. Tin Myo Win, Yangon Region Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein, Deputy Minister U Min Thu from the Office of the President, Yangon Region Ministers, Chief of Myanmar Police Force Police Lt-Gen Aung Win Oo, along with region, district and township level departmental officials.

In her opening address, State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi said the roles of Hluttaw representatives and administrative sectors are not the same, though they need to work together. Hluttaw representatives are the bridge connecting the administration and the public. There will be oppor-



State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi meets with trainees at Hospitality and Catering Training Academy in Magyikan Village, Kawhmu Township yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**



The Daw Khin Kyi Foundation mobile library. **PHOTO: MNA**

tunities to do good things, but if responsibility is not taken it will affect the administration. The administrative sector will not fully know the situation and views of the people if the Hluttaw representatives do not relay them to the administrative sector. It is important to have mutual respect, understanding and the assuming of responsibilities. At the same time, despite the submission of the Hluttaw representatives, there will be prob-

lems if the administrative sector does not carry out the necessary implementation. Cooperation is important, she stressed. In her meetings with people throughout the country, residents asked for sufficient supplies of water, as well as for proper roads. Without all-season-roads, communities will suffer in many areas, including education, the local economy and health care.

Roads in Kawhmu were found to be properly main-

tained. A standard was set and systematic inspections were conducted. On electrification, not all requests were fulfilled, but road links have been improved. Officials were able to fulfill the request of the people from Kawhmu for water supplies and road links, and said they would like to know what has been done on electrification and education, according to the State Counsellor.

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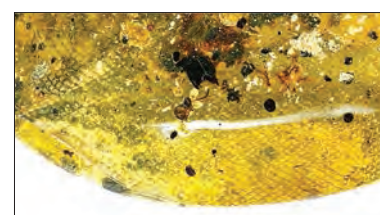
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7th State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee urges strict rules enforcement in regions, states



Bhamo Sayadaw Dr Bhaddanta Kumara Bhivamsa delivers an Ovadaakahta at the meeting of the 47-member leading committee of the State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee. **PHOTO: MNA**

THE 17th meeting of the 47-member leading committee of the 7th State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee began at the Wizaya Mingalar Dhammathabin Hall on Kaba Aye Hill in Yangon yesterday.

In his opening address at the meeting, which is held every four months, Abhidhaja Maharahta Guru Abhidhaja Agga Maha Saddhamma Jotika Bhamo Sayadaw Dr. Bhaddanta Kumara Bhivamsa, chairman of the State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee, urged the regulatory bodies of the Sangha in regions and states to carry out their tasks effectively in attempts to prevent some monks and novices

who have been acting against the religious rules of the Theravada Buddhism.

“The sub-committees of Sangha Nayaka in regions and states are to carry out their duties in accordance with the manual and directives of the central committee to solve the disputes among monks and between monks and laypersons, illegal construction of monasteries and issues caused by disunity of the local Sangha,” said Dr. Kumara Bhivamsa.

Following the opening address, Union Minister for Religious Affairs and Culture Thura U Aung Ko supplicated matters on religious affairs, underlin-

ing the weaknesses in solving issues by the sub-committees of the Sangha in regions and states

“At present, it is found that there is a weak enforcement of rules for monks and novices, difficulties for solving issues related with members of the Sangha due to lack of skills, issues like protests due to wrong decisions by juries of monks, and these are undermining the purification of the Theravada Buddhism,” said Thura U Aung Ko.

According to the senior Sayadaws in regions and states, malpractice is also occurring in selecting members of the regional Sangha Nayaka Com-

mittees and in deciding how to solve issues in the religious education sector, said the Union Minister.

Thura U Aung Ko also asked the State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee to implement the suggestions made by Chairman Sayadaw Kumara Bhivamsa at the 20 February meeting to hold gatherings between the senior and junior members of the Sanghas as part of efforts for strengthening friendships among the Sangha committees in regions and states.

The Union Minister for Religious Affairs and Culture also suggested the country’s highest Buddhist regulatory committee

to take action against unruly monks and novices doing things such as not following the Codes of Conduct of a Buddhist monk in crowded places.

At yesterday’s meeting, the members of the 7th State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee heard a brief report on the accomplishment of work done by the committee and discussed religious and educational issues.

There are about 500,000 members of the Sangha in Myanmar. Nearly 90 per cent of Myanmar’s population practices Theravada Buddhism, the more conservative of the two major branches of the religion. —Myanmar News Agency ■

Workshop held to promote Public Private Partnership

ECONOMY and peace are related to each other and only peace can help in the development of the Union, said Union Minister for Ethnic Affairs Nai Thet Lwin.

A workshop to promote peace through a Public Private Partnership (PPP) was held at the National Reconciliation and Peace Centre in Yangon yesterday afternoon.

At the workshop, Union Minister for Ethnic Affairs Nai Thet Lwin, Vice Chairman of the Arakan Liberation Party U Khaing Soe Naing and UMFCCI President U Zaw Min Win delivered the opening speeches.

Next, member of the Peace Commission Prof. Dr Aung Tun Thet explained the aim of holding the workshop and also discussed the B4P and PPP arrangements.

Later, Union Minister Nai Thet Lwin said that Myanmar is rich in natural resources and is located in a comparably good geographical location. He also discussed the requirements of peace and human resources, without which it would be difficult for the Union to become well-developed.

Following this, member of the Union Peace Commission Prof. Dr Aung Tun Thet said that political discussions are essential in a peace process. He also spoke about groups that had signed the NCA, establishing companies, doing business in their peaceful region and tasting the fruits of peace.

He added that PPP programmes are part of the business programmes for peace, and peace and development are related to each other and cannot be



Union Minister Nai Thet Lwin poses for a photo together with attendees at the workshop to promote Public Private Partnership (PPP) in Yangon. **PHOTO: MNA**

separated. Slow or no development will create more crises and the Union Peace Commission is thus implementing the B4P plan, he said.

Later, Chairman of the PaO National Liberation Organisation Khun Myint Tun said that the six EAOs-PNLO, CNF, ALP,

ABSDF, DKBA and KNU/KNLA (PC) are engaged to cooperate in doing business and the workshop is aimed at setting up future plans and a practical way to fulfill their regions’ socioeconomic development, along with establishing a Democratic Federal Union with the cooperation of

the communities of the regions.

Next, Deputy Director General of the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA) discussed a topic titled, ‘The role of DICA’ and Dr. Aung Tun Thet conducted a concluding review.—Myanmar News Agency ■

State Counsellor: Cooperation between Hluttaw representatives and administrative sector important

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The township Education Department needs to evaluate and improve the passing rate of those taking matriculation examinations. The education system needs to be reformed, and cease relying upon (private) tuition and guide systems to assure complete education is offered in the classroom. Parents relying on tuition and guides are not a good indication for improving the education system. All need to work together to change this. Peoples' help is required in enabling teachers to live with dignity.

In the health sector, the nutritional levels of children in Kawhmu as well as in the entire country is not satisfactory. Body growth is still at a minimum. Symptoms of nutritional deficiencies can be seen in children, upon reaching two years in age. Although there is no damage to their intelligence, it was seen to affect their body growth. Studies need to be conducted on local food products that can provide sufficient nutrition for children.

The government has placed special importance on being an honest, dutiful and responsible government. A dutiful and responsible government need not only be honest, but must be free from suspicion from the people.

In the government, there are fewer than 30 ministers. But at the grassroots level, there are many administrative personnel who are in contact with the people. Only when the administrative personnel are honest and the public has no suspicion of corruption, can the country be a dignified and developed country. It is easy to take action against



State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi arrives at Patope Basic Education Post Primary School in Kawhmu yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

the members of the government, but difficult to do so against the many grassroot level administrators and personnel. As such, they need to maintain personal control of themselves.

"I don't believe 'piti' (bliss, delight, elation) is a sufficient substitute for a full stomach. Public servants are to be provided with sufficient salaries and provisions. Even if it could not be done in a short time, this will be fulfilled step by step. I can promise one thing to the people of Kawhmu, if public servants do things for the betterment of the people, our country will develop quickly. Also, the lives of public servants will be bet-

ter if the country develops, so all are urged to cooperate and work together" said the State Counsellor.

Next, Kawhmu Township administrator U Zeya Myat Thu explained about the township government operations.

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi coordinated the meeting and delivered a closing speech. Earlier in the morning, State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and party visited a monastic education school and youth development center in Aungzabu Pariyatti Monastery, Sinchan Village, Kawhmu Township, and paid homage, provided donations and took Five

Precepts from Sayadaw Maha Saddhama Jotika Daja Bhaddanta Kaytumala, and shared merits for donations made. Afterwards, the State Counsellor enquired about the teachers of the monastic education school, asking about the teaching situation and offered some advice.

From there the State Counsellor went to HCTA (Hospitality and Catering Training Academy) in Magyikan Village, established by the Daw Khin Kyi Foundation, where she inspected the training classes and organic crops planted in the school compound. She also met with the trainees and provided advice and guidance.

The school was opened on

25 October 2014, and provides training in hospitality and catering for youths seeking to create job opportunities.

In the afternoon, she went to Patope Basic Education Post Primary School in Kawhmu and met with students reading books from the Daw Khin Kyi Foundation mobile library, as well as the local residents.

Later, the State Counsellor continued to Kawhmu Township, Magyikan Village and inspected the organic rice planted by the Daw Khin Kyi Foundation on 4.98 acres of farmland. She returned to Yangon later in the afternoon.—Myanmar News Agency ■

Gold, gems central market slated to open at Time City

By May Thet Hnin

THE gold and gems central market is slated to open on the sixth floor of Time City, Yangon.

"The place is over 10,000 square feet wide. Jewellery stalls will be set up near the planned area on the ground floor. The place is likely to be teeming with shoppers. It is also the central hub of the city," said U Ohn Myaing, secretary of Myanmar Gold Entrepreneurs Association (MGEA).

The central market will prioritise the exchange of gold. Creating a gold trading point will facilitate trading, he continued.

This central market is scheduled to begin in early 2019.

"The detailed plans are still confidential. We still need to hold a discussion with all the shareholders concerned as some information is related with the law," said U Ohn Myaing.

Officials from the Central

Bank of Myanmar, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation, the Ministry of Commerce, the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of Planning and Finance and experts from the MGEA, Myanmar Gold Development Public Co. Ltd., Gems and Jewellery Entrepreneurs Association, Gems Public Company, Myanmar Federation of Mining Association and other experts are cooperating to implement the central market.

The gold and gems central market implementation committee, including representatives and officials from the mentioned department, has developed a draft of the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP), in which the rules and regulations of the market will be incorporated. Upon approval of this draft, a pilot project will be launched, said U Khin Maung Han, secretary of the association.

"After completing the draft, the pilot project will be

implemented for three to five months. Then, the master plan will be disclosed," he maintained.

The implementation of a gold exchange point will bring about stability in the currency exchange market. This will help govern hard currency earnings, money laundering, price manipulation and illegal money circulation. It will bring about a platform with public engagement and participation, said U Kyaw Win, MGEA chair. ■

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Earthquake hazard map for Bagan region to be drawn up by Micro-Tremor Method

SEISMOLOGISTS will conduct detailed measurements for Bagan region, using the Micro-Tremor Method, for one year beginning from August in order to draw up an earthquake hazard map and to support the renovation process and ensure pagodas and religious buildings are earthquake resistant.

The Archaeology and National Museum Department will implement the one-year project in cooperation with the Bagan Technical Expert Team, comprising local and Singapore seismologists.

The project was started on 15 and 16 July, said Prof. Dr. Tun Naing, head of Engineering Geology Department of Yangon Technological University.

"We will conduct a detailed measurement not only of the pagodas damaged during last year's earthquake in Bagan region but also free spaces between the pagoda and the field. When we conduct a detailed measurement, the results will show whether the pagodas were damaged because of the resonance effect or decomposing of materials used in the construction.

We will issue the earthquake hazard map in order to support maintenance and ensure protection against earthquakes," he added.

Through the Micro-Trem-



A file photo shows a temple in Bagan, one of the most famous tourist attractions in Myanmar. **PHOTO: PHOE KHWAR**

or Method measurement, the composition of the soil, hardness, softness, resonance frequency of the ground, as well as the structure on it will be known and when there is an earthquake, the ability of a structure to withstand it can be estimated.

If the Fundamental Frequency and Resonance Frequency of the ground and the structure match, there will be the largest oscillation that causes the greatest damage.

"We have to think about how to maintain our pagodas from damage when an earthquake occurs in the future, especially the part of the pagoda that will be affected most from vibration. When the results of the detailed measurement is known, we will undertake renovation and maintenance of that part of the pagoda in order to make it stronger.

The authorities will draw a seismic risk assessment map and seismic hazard map after

conducting a detailed measurement of the ground information.

The one-year project will also include necessary methods to strengthen the ancient building.

Around 389 pagodas were affected by an earthquake of 6.8 magnitude on 24 August 2016. Recently, the authorities have already repaired over 3,000 pagodas and still need to repair over 50 remaining pagodas.— Khine Set Wai ■

Customs duties not paid for goods worth over Ks1,600 million seized in June

THE Customs Department recorded 351 cases of unpaid customs duties for goods worth Ks1,620.728 million from 1 to 30 June, when the department began checking for illegal goods on the border, sea and air routes.

The Customs Department checks illegal goods, which do not come with any legal documents at airport, ports, special patrol gates and Yaypu checkpoint, as well as through checkpoints elsewhere.

"Some traders do not hand over legal documents for the

goods with the driver. If the goods do not have legal documents, the department gives the trader a date to come back and show the documents. If the documents are legal, the department will give back their goods. If the traders do not come and collect their goods, the department will auction and destroy some of the goods," said an official from Mandalay Region Customs Department.

The Customs Department seized illegal goods worth Ks5.510 million from the Yangon International Airport, worth

Ks7.3 million from the Yangon Airport store, worth Ks317.4 million from the Yangon port, worth Ks147.91 million from the Mandalay Customs Department, worth Ks63.990 million from the Bago Region Customs Department, worth Ks278.846 million from the Yaypu checkpoint and worth Ks441.7 from the Mayanchaung checkpoint.

Moreover, township customs departments also seized illegal goods worth Ks1620.728 million in 351 cases.

The Customs Department

seized six cases of illegal goods worth Ks165.380 million in Muse, two cases worth Ks1.748 million in Myitkyina, five cases worth Ks56.511 million in Myawady, two cases worth Ks17.7 million in Taunggyi, two cases worth Ks6.785 million in Dawei, two cases of worth Ks2.034 million in Lwejel, 15 cases worth Ks86.783 million in Muse, and one case worth Ks21.54 million in Nay Pyi Taw, according to the Customs Department statistics.— Khine Set Wai ■

Local gold price sees small decline due to high exchange rate

By May Thet Hnin

WITH a stronger US exchange rate, Myanmar's gold price showed a small dip compared with the global gold market, which showed a significant decline, according to the Myanmar Gold Entrepreneurs Association (MGEA).

"Previously, the domestic gold price used to be proportionately related to the global gold price. However, the local gold price has not fallen as much as it was expected to. The US dollar appreciating against the kyat might be the reason for a small dip in the local gold market," said U Ohn Myaing from MGEA. The global gold price was recorded at US\$1,255 per ounce last week and it fell to \$1,227 per ounce on 18 July. Meanwhile, the domestic gold price was recorded at its highest rate of Ks948,500 per tical (16.4 gm) last week and the price dropped to Ks945,500 per



Gold jewellery displayed at a shop in downtown Yangon. PHOTO: PHOE KHWAR

tical on 18 July. "The US Federal Reserve has a plan to hike the interest rate, according to recent reports. The gold price plunged in the international market when the US dollar was appreciating.

Nevertheless, that does not remarkably affect the local gold price, as the US exchange rate is increasing in value against the local currency. There is no bumpy ride in Myanmar's gold market,"

said U Kyaw Win, MGEA chair and owner of U Htone Goldsmith and Jewellery shop.

The US dollar exchange rate to the kyat is gradually increasing in value from Ks1,340 to the

highest rate of Ks1,426 on 18 July. The local gold market is slow, with instability in the local gold price and the US dollar exchange rate.

Some gold mining businesses have suspended their operations this year. This being so, gold supply was lower than it was in the previous years. However, there is no steep rise in gold price due to low demand in the local market, U Kyaw Win maintained.

Gold trading is usually slow between June and September every year, he continued.

Last year, the global gold price fluctuated on account of instability in the global political climate and the appreciating of the US dollar price. However, the domestic gold price remained on the high side. In September 2017, the global gold price hit \$1,348 per ounce and the local gold price also hit a record high of Ks958,000 per tical, triggering a drastic drop in the trading of gold. ■

Maize exports to China fall during six-month interim period

MYANMAR'S maize exports to its main buyer China showed a steep drop in volume as well as price, said Muse merchants.

The export price falls when China cleans their stockpile and there is self-sufficiency in China. Maize is highly in demand in December and is exported in the other months. Sometimes, maize from Europe is imported into China.

At present, maize is being grown in some regions and it will be harvested three months later. So, some growers do not get affected from the low price, said U Moe Win, a trader.

A total of 60 trucks loaded with maize weighing over 1,600 tons daily enter the Muse 105th mile. A ton of maize fetches a minimum of Ks380,000 and a maximum of Ks450,000. The current market price has decreased compared with last year's price.

Ninety per cent of maize exports go to the China market, while the remaining is shipped to Thailand, Viet Nam, the Philippines and Singapore through the normal trade route. Around 200,000 tons of maize are exported to Thailand through the border gate. It has already got a market share in the international market, said U Sai Kyaw Zaw, a merchant trading in the

Taunggyi and Muse market.

The General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine (AQSIQ) of the People's Republic of China examines import quality and safety. China imposes a quota on maize and it is regarded as an illegal goods when it exceeds the quota. The small and medium enterprises from Yunnan, Sichuan and Quanzhou provinces purchase maize for snack production and feed stuff processing. The maize is highly purchased between October and December every year.

There are 1.17 million acres of maize plantations in Myanmar, producing over 71 million baskets (1.78 million metric tons). Eighty-eight per cent of maize is grown in the monsoon season,

whereas 12 per cent of maize is for the winter season, according to the statistics of the agriculture department.

Myanmar produces maize beyond self-sufficiency. It is the second largest exporter among the ASEAN countries. The biggest maize importing countries are South Korea, Japan, Mexico, Czech, Egypt, Viet Nam, Spain, China, the Netherlands and Colombia, according to the statistics of the commerce ministry.

Maize export was registered at 1.1 million tons worth over US\$300 million in the 2015-2016 fiscal year, 1.2 million tons worth \$250 million in the 2016-2017 FY, 900,000 tons worth \$287 million in the 2013-2014 FY and 600,000 tons worth \$200 million in the 2012-2013 FY. — Zar Lin Thu (AMIA) ■



Maize growers in Pobbathiri Township. PHOTO: SHWE YE YINT

Sino-Myanmar trade value reaches \$1.7 billion since April

THE border trade between China and Myanmar from 1 April to 6 July, during the six-month interim period for the 2018-2019 financial year, was valued at US\$1.7 billion, up by \$176 million, compared with the same period in the 2017-2018 FY, according to the commerce ministry.

The Sino-Myanmar trade in the same period last FY was valued at \$1.5 billion. Myanmar trades with China through the Muse, Lweijel, Chinshwehaw, Kanpaikti and Kengtung gates.

Muse is a major border trade gate in Myanmar, conducting the largest volume of trade.

It saw an increase of nearly \$220 million over the past three months against that of last FY.

The Sino-Myanmar border trade was worth \$1.5 billion at Muse, \$60 million at Lweijel, \$86.9 million at Chinshwehaw, \$73.9 million at Kanpaikti and \$0.64 million at Kengtung.

Myanmar's rice, sugar,

pulses, sesame seeds, corn, dried tea leaves, fishery products, minerals and animal products are exported to China, while capital goods, intermediate goods and consumer goods flowed into the country.

In a bid to promote bilateral trade, Myanmar's trade department, under the Ministry of Commerce, negotiated with the Kunming government to sign a memorandum of understanding, according to the Republic of the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry.

This agreement will cover the export of rice, sugar, corn and other agro products to China.

In turn, agriculture machinery, electrical appliances, iron and steel-related materials of the same value will be imported.

At present, a central committee for implementation of the China-Myanmar Border Economic Cooperation Zone has been formed. — Mon Mon ■

Meeting held to ensure speedy publishing, distribution of 100 Myanmar Classics series



Union Minister Dr. Pe Myint attends the meeting for publishing and distribution of the 100 Myanmar Classics series in Sarpay Beikman, Yangon yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

UNION Minister for Information Dr. Pe Myint attended a meeting in Sarpay Beikman, Yangon, yesterday morning to discuss the speedy publishing and distribution of the 100 Myanmar Classics series.

The 100 Myanmar Classics Publishing Committee Patron, Union Minister for Information Dr. Pe Myint, committee Vice Chairman U Tin Hlaing (Ledwintha Saw Chit), committee members, literature experts and

officials attended the meeting.

At the meeting, matters relating to committee members collectively compiling the 100 Myanmar Classics series with novels, short stories, poems, plays, essays; inclusion of specific novels in series (1) and (2); publishing of series (1) and (2) in September; series (3) around October-end; and the book design and layout of the 100 Myanmar Classics series were discussed.

Next, the union minister co-

ordinated and discussed with persons responsible on reviewing the first draft that had been prepared.

Later in the afternoon, the union minister met with officials from the "Myanmar Affairs" study group in the meeting hall of the Central Press and remarked on the development and progress of the research work, to have pride in one's own work and to complete work enthusiastically. — Myanmar News Agency ■

Union Minister Dr. Aung Thu inspects usage of combined harvester and thresher

UNION Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation Dr. Aung Thu, accompanied by Department of Agriculture and Agricultural Mechanisation Department Directors General, conducted a field visit to farmer U Aung's farmland in Tegvikone Village, Zabuthiri Township, Nay Pyi Taw, where rice planted under the SRI (System of Rice Intensification) was being reaped, threshed and winnowed by a combined harvester and thresher and dried using a mobile dryer.

During a meeting with local farmers and departmental officials at the farmland, the union minister discussed the requirements of officials in providing systematic assistance and guidance to overcome challenges,

including weather, for realistically raising the socio-economic life of farmers through the use of good quality pedigree seeds, a proper agriculture system and good inputs, as well as reducing waste through the entire chain of reaping, threshing, winnowing, storage and sale at the market.

Later, the union minister received United States Department of Agriculture Under-Secretary Mr. McKinney and party at the union minister's meeting hall and discussed matters relating to information on assessing and calculating the danger of pests in trading plants and plant products and increasing the exports of Myanmar agriculture products.—Myanmar News Agency ■



Union Minister Dr. Aung Thu and officers inspect harvesting paddy in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

Supreme Court Bar Council meeting 1/2018 held

THE Bar Council of the Supreme Court held its meeting 1/2018 in the meeting hall of the Union Attorney-General's Office yesterday morning.

In his speech at the meeting, Bar Council of the Supreme Court's Chairman Union Attorney-General U Tun Tun Oo said the State was placing emphasis on the rule of law, judicial sector reform and provision of legal support in criminal case matters and stressed that the role of advocates was very important.

As such, the Bar Council Act is being drawn up to make it more appropriate to the times. According to the new bill, the role of advocates will be expanded. In order to support the drawing up of the new bill, the current Bar Council Act was translated and announced on



Union Attorney-General U Tun Tun Oo delivers the speech at the meeting of Supreme Court Bar Council yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

27 June 2018. At the meeting, 610 applications to register as Supreme Court lawyers, 44 complaints about the ethics of Supreme Court advocates and 11 complaints over the ethics of higher grade pleaders were received and transferred to the Supreme Court of the Union for further investigation. Advocates

need to strive towards improving their expertise, raising and valuing their ethics and obtaining the trust of the public, said the Union Attorney General.

The meeting was attended by Bar Council of the Supreme Court chairman, vice chairman, vice chairman and seven members.—Myanmar News Agency

Deputy Minister U Aung Hla Tun meets GNLM officials and personnel

DEPUTY Minister for Information U Aung Hla Tun met and discussed with the *Global New Light of Myanmar* (GNLM) newspaper officials, the editorial team and personnel working at the GNLM newspaper office, located on Nga Htat Kyee Pagoda Road, Bahan Township, Yangon.

First, officials from GNLM explained the works conducted

and Deputy Minister U Aung Hla Tun spoke about raising the quality of the newspaper, ensuring a flawless edition and other work requirements.

Next, GNLM officials, the editorial team and staff discussed the requirements and the deputy minister coordinated over the discussion.—Myanmar News Agency ■



Deputy Minister U Aung Hla Tun meets with GNLM officials in Bahan Township, Yangon yesterday. **PHOTO: PHOE KHWAH**



Senior General Min Aung Hlaing greets veterans in the Hmawbi cantonment hall, Yangon Command, yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

E-bike motorised wheelchairs, apartments presented to veterans

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF of Defense Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing attended and delivered a speech at a ceremony in Yangon Command, Hmawbi cantonment hall, to present to veterans e-bike motorised wheelchairs and apartments at the veterans' housing (Yangon-1/2) Myaingthaya and Kyet Phyu Kan.

First, the senior general delivered an opening speech, saying the ceremony was held to present the required apart-

ments to veterans and their families and e-bike motorised wheelchairs for veterans who risked their lives in serving their country.

Housing has been constructed for the convenience of veterans, and successive governments have done their best for the convenience of veterans, even though there still remain requirements to be fulfilled. To this moment, we are doing the best we can for the veterans, added the Senior General.

Later, the senior general presented e-bike motorised wheelchairs to veterans who needed to use them.

Next, Lt-Gen Myo Zaw Thein presented foodstuff, Lt-Gen San Oo presented residential permits and keys and Lt-Gen Nyo Saw presented tea mix packets to the veterans and their family members.

Following this, the Senior General and party cordially greeted the veterans and their family members, it is learnt.— Myanmar News Agency ■

Children Rights Forum held in Yangon

WITH the cooperation of World Vision Myanmar and Yangon Region Social Welfare Department, a children's forum was held at Summit Parkview Hotel in Yangon yesterday morning.

The forum was held to create opportunities for children to reveal their feelings and rights.

The forum was attended by officials from Yangon Region's Social Welfare Department and other departments, non-governmental organisations and children from across Yangon.

Attendees discussed current matters of the children, including education, health, future professions and relation-



Officials from Yangon Region Social Welfare Department and World Vision Myanmar hold Yangon Zone Children Forum in Yangon. **PHOTO: HEIN HTET**

ships between parents and children. During the meeting children discussed some re-

quirements at schools, clinics, hospitals and training courses.— Yamanya ■

66th National Day of Egypt celebrated in Yangon

A CEREMONY in commemoration of the 66th National Day of the Arab Republic of Egypt was held at 7pm at Chatrium Hotel in Yangon with the attendance of Union Minister for Commerce Dr. Than Myint and wife Daw Khin Htay.

The ceremony commenced with the playing of the national anthems of Myanmar and Egypt.

Ambassador of Egypt to Myanmar Mr. Khaled Mohamed Abdelrahman Abdelsalam and

Union Minister for Commerce Dr. Than Myint then delivered speeches of greetings.

Later, the ambassador and the union minister posed for documentary photos together with the attendees.

The ambassador then hosted a dinner for the attendees.

Present at the event were ambassadors and persons responsible from embassies in Yangon, United Nations representatives and invited guests. —Myanmar News Agency ■



Union Minister Dr Than Myint delivers the speech at the 66th National Day of Egypt reception in Yangon yesterday. **PHOTO: ZAW MIN LATT**

Inflation rate in June shows slight increase against May

THE inflation rate in Myanmar based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI) was recorded at 4.58 per cent in June, a small increase compared with last month's rate of 4.29 per cent, according to an announcement released by the Central Statistical Organisation (CSO), under the Ministry of Planning and Finance.

The year-on-year inflation rate was 6.45 per cent in June 2017 versus June 2016.

In June, Mandalay city recorded the highest inflation rate at 9.21 per cent, followed by Rakhine State at 8.44 per cent and Ayeyarwady Region at 5.70 per cent.

The year-on-year inflation rate fluctuated, with a maximum rate of 12.22 per cent in Mandalay and a minimum rate of 2.44 per cent in Kayah State.

Previously, the inflation

rate was calculated based on a 2006 survey and later, the base year was changed to 2012. The CSO conducted a Household Income and Expenditure Survey in 82 townships in November 2012.

Kayah and Rakhine states and Mandalay Region registered a slight decrease of CPI in June 2018, while other regions and states showed an increase in the CPI.

The inflation rate rose in the first five-year plan from the 2011-2012 FY to the 2015-2016 FY.

In an attempt to reduce the inflation rate, the authorities concerned made efforts on the basis of the policies of finance, currency, trade and foreign currency control, according to the second five-year National Development Plan. — Htet Myat ■

Pay heed to weather warnings to prevent loss of life and property

THE Meteorology and Hydrology Department has warned that a low-pressure weather system forming over the northwest portion of the Bay of Bengal is persisting, which could trigger a major storm over the Andaman Sea and the Bay of Bengal.

The weather bureau advised the people who live near the riverbank and low-lying areas at Thabaung Township to take precautionary measures, as the water level of the Ngawun River in the Ayeyawady delta is expected to reach its danger level over the next two days.

This is also alerting us that we are now in the monsoon season, which often brings disasters such as flooding, lightning strikes, and landslides, which are not new to our country. The monsoon-related disasters cause loss of lives and properties, and wreak havoc to our infrastructure of roads, bridges and irrigation facilities.

People, on their part, are urged to keep a close watch on weather updates and warnings during the rainy season. It pays to be prepared.

The disaster management committees in regions and states are carrying out prevention work in terms of infrastructure development and public awareness.

The Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement has adopted a policy to assist the people in withstanding natural disasters, and cooperation is very important in making this a reality.

Although the ministry is low in manpower with limited financial resources, the entire ministry is ready to respond quickly to disasters and its efforts to minimise casualties in monsoon-related disasters is highly appreciated. It is true that we cannot completely predict disasters, but early preparedness can help mitigate the damage.

The weather bureau has been providing weather updates to the public in a timely manner through state-run radio, television and newspapers.

People, on their part, are urged to keep a close watch on weather updates and warnings during the rainy season. It pays to be prepared. ■

Preliminary measures to mitigate risk of natural disasters

By Su Thet Hmu
(Mayangon)

EVERY country in the globe is projected to experience the effects of climate change, with some countries expected to be harder hit than others.

Myanmar is one of those countries that may be more adversely affected.

According to meteorologists, Myanmar is the second-most-vulnerable country in the world to the effects of climate change. The first adverse effect is that farmers and other cultivators have experienced altered growing seasons due to climate change. Secondly, Myanmar has experienced a scarcity of drinking water. The third effect is the changes in rainfall patterns and the abundance of this rainfall, which can result in flash flooding during the monsoon season.

In 2018, Myanmar will face flash floods which can cause damage in several parts of the country. People who live in the delta area of the Ayeyawady Region suffer from severe floods every year.

Cyclone Nargis devastated Myanmar in May 2008, with an estimated death toll of about 138,737, together with Ks10.7 trillion in losses. Nargis was the worst natural disaster in the re-



corded history of Myanmar.

The effects of flooding have continued since Cyclone Nargis.

According to a report released by the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation, some 1,400,000 acres of farmland destroyed due to flooding in July and August 2015. Out of these, at least 140,000 acres of rice fields, rice being a staple food in Myanmar, were affected by the floods. Out of the 14 states

and regions in Myanmar, severe flooding regularly affects 12 of them, often resulting in severe damage. The seasonal floods in July and August last year affected 153,535 people in Magway Region, which is regarded as the worst impacted area in Myanmar. Out of 79 townships, seven people were killed and a total of 318,120 households were transferred to temporary relief camps, according to the Min-



Overtaken trees litter a street in Yangon on 4 May, 2008 after tropical cyclone Nargis tore through swathes of the country, battering buildings, sinking boats and causing unknown casualties. PHOTO: AFP

istry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement. There was a red-alert cyclone which entered Rakhine State on 29 May. Heavy rain and subsequent flooding occurred in the coastland through the town of An, in Rakhine State, and throughout upper and lower Myanmar.

Heavy rain poured down in Mon State without interruption from 16 June, causing floodwaters to flow into the wards. The water rose to nearly six feet. As water quickly flowed into the wards, 42 relief camps had to be opened for 8,263 people. Flooding occurred in Rakhine State, southern Shan State, Magway, Sagaing, Bago and Ayeyawady regions, while landslides occurred in Mogok, northern Shan State and Chin State.

At least 10 people were killed on 22 June after monsoon rains caused flooding and landslides in Phakant Township, Kachin State.

According to the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, there were about 44,000 people who were affected by flooding, and at least 18 people from across the country died as a result of the flooding.

Flood-hit country

Myanmar is among the 15 most flood-hit countries in the world due to the effects of climate change.

All the people have to face the menace of flooding, landslides and other disasters. This results in loss of property, health hazards, loss of farmlands and emotional problems.

How can Myanmar mitigate the impact of natural disasters? "We can tackle these problems by dividing it into two sectors: rural and urban. If we do it in the rural area, it would be easier due to the lack of major infrastructure. It is easy for us to dig ditches in order to increase water flow along the way.

As for urban areas, they need to improve the drainage system, with the cooperation of residents in the area. That can also be called a master plan. Another point is that people themselves have to change their behaviours so that the water can flow freely into the drain. People should have enough knowledge to know how to avoid blocking the water flow in the drainage ditches.

When we construct new

satellite towns, it is of great importance to take into consideration urban design in accordance with geographical features and climate conditions," said meteorologist U Chit Kyaw.

Why does flooding occur?

Regarding the occurrences of flooding, we can see that there are three main causes of flooding: (1) the growth of urban population, (2) careless farming methods, and (3) deforestation. One of the main causes is that soil cannot properly absorb water on the ground. By dint of incorrect cultivation methods, flooding can occur and deforestation can lead to flooding. There is also concern that climate change will increase the frequency and intensity of weather-related disasters.

For the past six decades, people have had to suffer devastation and casualties caused by deforestation and natural disasters such as cyclones, flooding, landslides, and droughts. It's time for us to take preliminary measures in order to mitigate the impending natural disasters and climate change, which can happen regardless of place, time and class of people in the world. These natural hazards can pose a threat to our society. The risk from natural disasters, while it cannot be eliminated, can, in some cases, be understood in such a way that we can minimise the hazard to humans, and thus minimise the risks. It is of vital importance to disseminate educative talks on natural disasters, and to carry out the risk mitigation measures among the public so that we can create a society that can respond to natural disasters as quickly as possible. ■

Translated by
Win Ko Ko Aung

Technical Working Group to implement the Memorandum of Understanding convened its second meeting

AS a follow up to the first meeting held on 11 July 2018, the Technical Working Group (TWG), comprising representatives from the Ministry of the Office of the State Counsellor, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement and the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Manpower and representatives from the UNDP and UNHCR Yangon Offices, met in Nay Pyi Taw on 18 July 2018. The Technical Working Group deliberated on its initial visit to Butheetaung and Maungtaung Township in Rakhine State.

During the first meeting, both sides exchanged views on the proposed Work Plan initiated by the UNDP and UNHCR as well as the visit of the Technical Working Group to the region in order to select the pilot village tracts from the proposed 31 village tracts under Butheetaung, Maungtaung and Rathetaung Townships in Northern Rakhine State.

In line with the proposed Work Plan, both sides will effectively implement the MoU based on the 3 month and 6 month programmes. The Work Plan includes, among others, initiatives to promote sustained socio-economic development, health, education and to create conducive environment to further enhance harmony and coexistence among the communities in northern Rakhine State.

Myanmar welcomed the visits of Mr. Indrika Ratwatte, Director, Regional Bureau for Asia and Pacific, UNHCR to Myanmar in early July and Mr. Haoliang Xu, Assistant Secretary-General and UNDP Assistant Administrator and Director of the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific recently. Myanmar side also discussed with them on the implementation of the MoU.

The Technical Working Group will visit the northern Rakhine State from 21 to 23 July 2018.—MNA



Rainfall to increase in Rakhine coastal area, says weather bureau

RAINFALL is expected to increase in Rakhine coastal areas in the next two days, as the low pressure area over the North-west Bay of Bengal still persists and it may further intensify into a depression during the next 48 hours, according to the Myanmar Daily Weather Report issued by the Department of Meteorology and Hydrology (DMH) yesterday.

The monsoon is vigorous over the Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal.

According to the DMH's observation yesterday, the water level of Ngawun River at Thabaung is observed at some half a foot below the danger level and may

reach the danger level during the next two days.

The weather bureau has warned people who live near the riverbank and low-lying areas at Thabaung Township to take precautionary measures.

There will be rain or thunder-showers in Nay Pyi Taw, Yangon, Mandalay and neighboring areas. The degree of certainty is 100 per cent.

Occasional squalls with rough seas will be experienced off and along the Myanmar coast. Surface wind speed in squalls may reach 40 mph. The wave's height will be some 9-14 feet off and along the Myanmar coast.—GNLM ■

Interview with CBM official on the exchange rate

Interviewed by Shin Min
PHOTO: SHWE KO LAY

HAVING an exchange rate that is in accordance with the economic situation of Myanmar is important for the country. An interview with the Central Bank of Myanmar Monetary Policy Affairs and Financial Regulation Department Director General Daw Tin Moe Moe on the current status of the foreign exchange rate and work conducted to stabilise the rate:

Q. Let us know about the current status of foreign exchange rate.

A. In exchanging with US dollar, the Myanmar Kyat had depreciated since mid-June 2018. Other currencies also depreciated against US\$.

The following table shows the depreciation of various currencies against US\$.

Currency	12-6-2018	12-7-2018	Depreciation (%)
Myanmar Kyat	1354	1406	3.70
Euro	0.8512	0.8565	0.62
Singapore Dollar	1.3369	1.3648	2.04
Pound Sterling	0.7490	0.7577	1.15
Japanese Yen	110.425	112.085	1.48
Yuan	6.4018	6.6812	4.18
Korea Won	1077.5	1129.4	4.59
Malaysia Ringgit	3.9905	4.0455	1.36
Thai Baht	32.07	33.33	3.78

Source: CBM

Q. What is the reason for this currency depreciation?

A. According to theory, short-term changes in the exchange rate depend on a country's economic development rate, inflation, interest rate, ordinary account balance, capital account balance, changes in the world's commodity prices and policy changes in major economic powers of the world, and these affect the local economy.

Long-term changes in the exchange rate depend on the stage of a country's

economic development, competitiveness in exports, foreign debt amount, the government's budget deficit, investment inflow and local and foreign market prices. It also depends on a country's political status and stability as well as encountering natural disasters.

The depreciation of the Myanmar kyat as well as other currencies against the US dollar is due to attempting to correct the trade imbalance from long-term trade deficit in US trade with China, the mutual taxation that reduces the world's export value and other external factors.

Q. What are the ways in which the exchange rate can be stabilised?

A. It is important to have an exchange rate that is in accord with a country's economic situation and stability. Attempting to control this depends on many economic situations. A country that has a possibility of economic development, has sufficient international reserves, has a surplus ordinary account or has a deficit for a short time only and has low foreign debt, such as Singapore, Malaysia, Korea and Thailand, were able to reduce their currencies' depreciation.

When the situation of Myanmar was reviewed, the IMF had estimated 6.8 per cent growth in the economy of Myanmar in 2018-2019, so the country has a good possibility of economic development. Compared to other countries in the region, Myanmar's foreign debt can't be deemed high. But looking at trade, Myanmar was found to be running a deficit continuously.

As the country has limited international reserves, it is better to consider other ways to stabilise the exchange rate. When the Central Bank of Myanmar implements financial policy to stabilise its currency, in addition to interest rate policy, it is adjusting reserve requirements and conducting deposit auction

Q. Explain about the cooperation with ministries on stabilising the foreign exchange rate.

A. The Central Bank of Myanmar is cooperating and working with the Ministry of Planning and Finance and the Ministry of Commerce to stabilise the foreign exchange rate. ■



Director General Daw Tin Moe Moe.

Paper mache elephants at Voices for Momos event sets new world record

WORLD Wildlife Fund for Nature's (WWF-Myanmar) paper elephant sculptures set the new Guinness World Record for being the largest paper mache bamboo-supported sculptures. The record was achieved at a Voices for Momos public event, when the super-sized elephant was created by a talented graffiti artist and a Myanmar traditional paper mache sculptor.

The Voices for Momos campaign called on individuals and organisations to use their voices to drive awareness, education and call for an end of sales of illegal wildlife in Myanmar.

At the public event, the artists created four



People enjoy elephant sculptures displayed at Maha Bandoola Park near Sule Pagoda in downtown Yangon. PHOTO: SUPPLIED

supersized elephants, two small elephants, and one bamboo sculpture. Among the seven sculptures, local young

graffiti artist Arkar Kyaw and Myanmar traditional paper maché sculptor U Myint's (Yote Lone Kabar) supersized bam-

boo-supported paper elephant without its trunk broke the Guinness World Record.

"We created this el-

ephant sculpture to call for an end to elephant poaching and illegal wildlife trading. We are absolutely delighted to break the Guinness World Record and we would like to thank the Voices for Momos campaign for letting us be a part of this significant public awareness event," said graffiti artist Arkar Kyaw.

The Guinness World Record's supersized elephant sculpture is 21 feet long, 7 feet wide and 21 feet tall. The size of the elephant paper sculpture is three times bigger than the average 7 feet to 9 feet elephant.

The Asian elephant was designed with bamboo and newspapers, and donations by the public

through Voices For Momos, covered the sculpture.

W W F - M y a n m a sculpture was displayed at Yangon's Maha Bandoola Park on 3 November as part of the Voices For Momos campaign to raise awareness about elephant hunting and wildlife smuggling.

We have received support from the government, NGOs and influencers since we celebrated Voices For Momos.

The public campaign was hosted in crowded areas to raise awareness about the illegal wildlife trade. The demand for prohibited wildlife is high in Myanmar, as its wild elephants are being killed every week. —GNLM ■

Despite the risks, migration fixates many in Ivory Coast

YAMOOUSSOUKRO (IVORY COAST) — They have a dream: to “cross the water” — the Mediterranean — and reach the Eldorado of Europe.

And yes, they admit, there may be risks but nothing that cannot be overcome with a bit of courage.

“I’m not afraid. I’m ready to head for Italy, to cross the water, I’d do it tonight and I wouldn’t even pack a bag,” says Marcel Zouh, a strapping 30-year-old man.

Standing among a crowd of young people at the bus station in Daloa — the springboard for illegal migration from the West African state of Ivory Coast — Zouh is not shy in enumerating the reasons why he would try his luck in Europe.

“There’s nothing here, there’s no work, there isn’t even any work as a driver,” he said, showing his bus driver’s licence. “I am willing to take a risk with



Ready to go: Marcel Zouh, a bus driver in Daloa, says he would emigrate to Europe at the drop of a hat. **PHOTO: AFP**

my life — if it doesn’t work out, it will be because God wanted it so.”

Adama Soumahoro, a young haulier, adds: “There’s no hope for young people here. We are willing to sell our lives to cross the water.”

Ivory Coast is the fourth biggest source of migrants seeking

to get to Europe, according to the UN’s International Organization for Migration (IOM) — an illegal influx that has caused a political ruckus in European countries.

In 2017, 8,753 Ivorians arrived in Italy, of whom 1,263 were women and 1,474 were unaccompanied minors, according to an Italian NGO called CEVI,

for the Centre for International Volunteering.

Dangers

Yet there is no shortage of evidence about the risks that await them — the danger of being abandoned by traffickers in the scorched wastes of the Sahara in Niger, of being imprisoned or cruelly abused in Libya, of drowning in the Mediterranean.

Thousands of migrants have died or gone missing over the last three years.

“You can boast ‘I’m going to leave’ as much as you want, but they don’t know what it’s like,” says Ibrahim Doumbia, a 31-year-old tailor.

In 2016, he too left for Europe. “I left Daloa with 250,000 CFA francs (325 euros) in my pocket — the smugglers wanted 900,000 francs.”

“When we were going across the desert, I saw stones that had been piled up into burial mounds

— I was told that these were the anonymous graves of migrants,” he said.

“It was when I got to Libya that my hell began — I was thrown in jail for nine months.”

Doumbia was able to get home with the help of the IOM. Over the last three years, more than 3,500 Ivorians “in distress” in Libya have been repatriated, according to Issiaka Konate, who heads a government office to help Ivorians abroad.

“I have had no news of my son, Oumar Fofana, for the three years — the last conversation we had was by phone, in September 2015, when he was getting on a boat in Libya,” his mother, Tenin Sanogo, told AFP, tears in her eyes.

“I have spent more than a million CFA francs on fortune tellers — they have confirmed that he is still alive,” she said, showing a photo of her son. — **AFP ■**

Israel cuts over half of industrial air pollution in a decade

JERUSALEM — Israel invested billions of dollars in reducing the exhaust gas emissions by more than a half, thanks to the Clean Air Law issued a decade ago.

Israeli companies have been investing in the last decade 38 billion new shekels (10.45 billion U.S. dollars) in using the best technology available to reduce air pollution, according to Israeli Ministry of Environment.

Last week, Israeli Minister of Environmental Protection Zeev Elkin said “the Clean Air Law is a milestone in our effort to protect the public and the environment, Israel has made a big leap in reducing air pollution in urban areas, and we will continue to invest in cutting-edge technologies to reduce air pollution.”

Around 2,200 people die in Israel every year due to air pollution, according to a report of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), making the air pollution one of the most dangerous threats to Israelis’ health.

The Clean Air Law included strict regulations to reduce pollution from companies, industrial plants and power stations. A total of 145 polluters have been continuously inspected in the last decade. The regulation focused on



Israel cuts over half of industrial air pollution in a decade. **PHOTO: XINHUA**

emission of “critical pollutants” by the industry, which referred to a group of common contaminants that are sources of energy and transportation.

The critical pollutants included Sulfur Oxide, Particulate Matters, Nitrogen Oxides, Non-Methane Volatile Organic Compounds, Benzene and Ammonia. The substances are among the major causes of deaths around the world and they put at risk the health of children, the elderly, asthma patients and those who often exercise outdoors, according to a report of the Ministry of Environment released last week. Constant examination of air quality showed a decrease in all emissions of primary pollutants. The pollutants concentra-

tion was reduced from 55 percent to 81 percent over the last decade, according to the Ministry of Environment. Dov Khenin, a member of parliament, told Xinhua that the current law are insufficient to regulate the emission of air pollutants. “About 2,000 people still die here every year because of air pollution. It is not a figure you can accept. That is the future challenge for me,” he said.

“The country’s top priority should be to take care of people’s lives and their health. Even if sometimes it costs money and involves a change in the industry. We will continue to reduce air pollution in Israel,” said Khenin who also leads the environmental lobby in the parliament. —Xinhua ■

Idlib possibly Syria’s next target, security risks ahead for Turkey

ISTANBUL — After largely eliminating the terrorist threat in southern Syria, the Syrian army may target rebels in Idlib next, exposing Turkey to a security risk as well as a huge flock of refugees, analysts said.

Turkish troops stationed in Idlib to monitor cessation of hostilities would risk getting caught between two fires in case Idlib is attacked, Cahit Armagan Dilek, a former staff officer, told Xinhua.

Turkey has established 12 observation posts in the Idlib province based on a deal with Russia and Iran last year to prevent armed confrontation between the Syrian forces and the rebels. Idlib, which is on Turkey’s southern border, is the last remaining stronghold for rebels in Syria. Turkey needs to dissuade the rebels from fighting the Syrian army or make them withdraw into areas under Turkish army’s control near Idlib for the security of its troops there, Dilek said. Earlier this year, the Turkish army, backed by the Free Syrian Army (FSA) militia, captured the Afrin area in northern Syria from Kurdish militia, which Ankara sees as terrorists. The Afrin area bor-

ders Idlib on the north.

The Syrian army launched last month a major offensive against rebel groups in the Daraa province in southwestern Syria and took almost complete control of the region earlier this week.

Many believe the rebels in Idlib, for whom Ankara has acted as a sort of patron during the Astana peace process jointly conducted with Moscow and Tehran, will be the next target for the Syrian government forces.

Idlib is estimated to have a population of nearly 2.5 million and in case the clashes begin, the civilians would try to flee to Turkey. Refugees would then become the number one problem for Turkey, posing an even bigger threat than terrorism, stated Dilek who currently heads the Ankara-based 21st Century Turkey Institute.

Turkey has already hosted around 3.5 million Syrians.

Faruk Logoglu, a former senior diplomat, thinks that much of what comes next for Syria, including Idlib, will depend on any agreement Trump and Putin may have reached in their recent meeting in Helsinki. —Xinhua ■

May survives rebel MPs but EU's Brexit judgment looms

LONDON — Prime Minister Theresa May has survived a frenzied fortnight of rebellion that threatened to unseat her, but must now sell her Brexit plan to voters and the European Union.

With a trip to Northern Ireland this week, May began a tour of Britain to convince voters to back her blueprint for close economic ties with the bloc after Brexit next March.

Her new Brexit minister Dominic Raab — appointed last week after his predecessor quit over the compromise proposal — also held his first talks in Brussels on Thursday where he vowed to “heat up” the withdrawal negotiations.

May still faces significant anger from her Conservative party over her plan to follow EU rules in trade on goods after Brexit, which has been called “Brexit in name only”.

But, while the danger of a leadership challenge remains, she has ridden out the resignation of two cabinet ministers and seen off a threatened parliamentary defeat by pro-Europeans.

“For the first time she’s got a cabinet united around her vision,” said Anand Menon, director of the UK in a Changing Europe think-tank based at King’s College London.

He said the resignations of



EU Chief Brexit Negotiator Michel Barnier (R) and Britain's Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Brexit Minister) Dominic Raab together in Brussels. PHOTO: AFP

Brexit minister David Davis and foreign minister Boris Johnson may actually help in persuading Brussels to take her plan seriously. “It allows her credibly to turn around to the EU and say I’m taking these people on and I need some help,” he told AFP.

“The EU doesn’t like the (plan) but the muted reaction is evidence that they understand the need for sensitivity.”

‘Looked into the abyss’

Britons voted to leave the EU in June 2016 but the government has been divided on what it wants

from the future relationship.

With the clock ticking, May gathered her warring ministers on July 6 and persuaded them to back a new free trade area on goods. It unleashed fury from those who want a clean break with the EU, and a string of junior aides followed Davis and Johnson out the door.

May faced open hostility from her own MPs, with one asking her in the House of Commons if she could explain “at what point it was decided that Brexit means remain?” With an eye on dispersing MPs who may try

to plot against her, May tried to bring forward parliament’s summer holidays, only to abandon the idea due to a lack of support.

However, she survived a crucial vote that would have forced her to try to keep Britain in a customs union with the EU, something she has repeatedly rejected. And at a meeting of her MPs on Wednesday, she won pledges of support, with one even announcing that he was withdrawing his letter of no confidence tabled the week before. Simon Clarke told reporters that he still disliked May’s plan but had been

shocked by the in-fighting. “We have looked into the abyss in the last few days,” he said, adding: “A Conservative party civil war is not where we need to be.”

‘No deal’ planning

It is far from clear however that even if May sticks to her Brexit plan and secures enough support to get it through parliament, it would be acceptable to the EU. Critics have called it unworkable and the EU has repeatedly warned it will not allow Britain to pick and choose which bits of its single market that it wants to follow. Both the European Commission and Britain say they want an agreement, but both are stepping up preparations for the possibility the talks fail.

For some in Britain, the Conservative party in-fighting signals that parliament will never agree on a way forward, and the only ways out are crashing out of the EU with no deal or putting the decision to another vote.

May’s former education minister, Justine Greening, this week became the most senior Conservative to argue for a second referendum. Former Labour prime minister Tony Blair echoed this call, telling AFP: “Once this thing has been started by a referendum it can frankly only be finished by a fresh vote.” —AFP ■

Macron aide who struck protester to be fired

PARIS — The office of French President Emmanuel Macron told AFP on Friday that it has begun dismissal proceedings against a top security aide who violently struck a protester during a demonstration in Paris in May.

A video published this week shows Alexandre Benalla manhandling and striking a demonstrator while wearing a police helmet, even though he is not an officer.

Paris prosecutors also said Benalla has been detained for questioning in the assault inquiry, where he also faces charges of impersonating a police officer.

Macron’s office said the decision to fire Benalla was taken after “new elements” emerged in the case, which has become the most damaging scandal facing the centrist president since his election last year.

A source close to the inquiry



French President Emmanuel Macron's former security aide Alexandre Benalla was shown in a video striking a demonstrator. PHOTO: AFP

said three police officers have also been suspended on suspicion they provided Benalla with surveillance footage of the May 1 demonstration in an attempt to prove his innocence.

“He is suspected of receiving material from the police he was not authorised to have,” the Elysee said.

Lawmakers have also

launched a commission of inquiry as a second video of the incident emerged, in which Benalla is also seen violently wrestling a young woman to the ground.

Benalla was punished with a two-week suspension without pay in May and later transferred to another post, but the incident was not reported to prosecutors. —AFP ■

Ryanair cancels Ireland-UK flights as pilots strike

MADRID — Ryanair pilots unhappy over pay and other work conditions carried out further strike action Friday, unions said, resulting in the cancellation of 24 flights between Ireland and the UK.

“Second 24-hour strike by @IALPA Ryanair members under way,” the Irish pilots’ union tweeted in reference to a first stoppage last week.

Ryanair earlier this week hit out over the latest strike, saying it affected about seven percent of passengers flying between Ireland and the UK.

Friday’s walkout comes ahead of the cancellation of 600 Ryanair flights in Europe due across Wednesday and Thursday owing to strikes by cabin crew staff in Spain, Portugal and Belgium.

The Dublin-based carrier has said that about 100,000 pas-

sengers will be affected by next week’s strikes.

Cabin crew in Italy are also striking but a spokesman for the airline said this was not expected to affect the “Italian-based schedule”.

Unions are asking that Ryanair staff be employed according to the national legislation of the country they operate in, rather than that of Ireland as is currently the case.

They also want the airline to give contractors the same work conditions as its own employees. Ryanair staff are demanding that the airline recognise unions for pilots and cabin crew and that it negotiate with a representative chosen by these unions and not the company.

So far, the airline has only recognised cabin crew and pilots’ unions in Britain and Italy. — AFP ■

South Korea's ex-President Park gets another eight years in prison

SEOUL — A South Korean court on Friday sentenced impeached former President Park Geun Hye to a total of eight years in prison on top of the 24 years she already faces, in a verdict that found her guilty of accepting slush funds from the nation's intelligence agency and interfering in an election.

Separately, prosecutors sought 30 years in prison and a fine of 118.5 billion won (\$104.3 million) for the former president as proceedings in an appeals trial for her graft case concluded the same day.

Friday's Seoul Central District Court ruling consists of six-year imprisonment and 3.3 billion won in penalties over the slush funds from the National



Former South Korean President Park Geun Hye.
PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

Intelligence Service, and two years in prison over election interference.

Prosecutors had sought 12 years in prison for taking slush funds from the intelligence agency.

In April, the Seoul court sentenced Park to

24 years in prison and slapped her with a fine of 18 billion won for bribery and other crimes she was convicted of committing while in office.

Prosecutors, who sought the longer 30-year prison term and larger fine, appealed the ruling to a higher court, while Park, who denied all charges while boycotting her trial since the fall of 2017, did not.

The Seoul High Court will deliver a ruling on the appeals case on Aug. 24.

In April, Park was convicted of conspiring with her longtime confidante Choi Soon Sil to take 7 billion won in bribes from Lotte Group by making the retail giant financially support a foundation effectively controlled by

Choi. The former president was also found guilty of receiving bribes from Samsung Electronics Co., South Korea's largest conglomerate.

Park, 66, was ousted from power in March 2017 as the country's Constitutional Court upheld her impeachment in parliament over a corruption and abuse-of-power scandal, paving the way for her arrest and eventual prosecution.

Park, the daughter of assassinated military ruler Park Chung Hee, was in the final year of her single five-year term as president when she was removed from office. She remains in detention following her arrest in March 2017.—Kyodo News ■

South Korean officials visit DPRK for joint railway inspection

SEOUL — A group of South Korean officials visited the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) Friday for a joint railway inspection to eventually modernize and connect railways across the border, according to local media reports.

The 15-member South Korean inspection team, led by Hwang Sung-gyu, a senior transport ministry official, crossed the military demarcation line (MDL) at about 8:40 a.m. local time (2340 GMT Thursday) via the eastern cross-border route.

During the one-day trip with six DPRK officials, the South Korean team would jointly inspect railways running

from Mount Kumgang to the MDL along the eastern coast of the DPRK.

A separate joint inspection would be conducted on railways from the DPRK's border town of Kaesong to the MDL in the DPRK's western region on July 24.

The inspections would be follow-up measures to the agreement, reached during the working-level talks on June 26 to modernize and eventually connect railways across the inter-Korean border in eastern and western regions. The head of the South Korean inspection team told reporters before leaving for the DPRK that a joint study should be conducted after the inspections.—Xinhua ■

CLAIM'S DAY NOTICE

M.V ALS SUZURAN VOY. NO. (009N/S)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V ALS SUZURAN VOY. NO. (009N/S) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 21-7-2018 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of A.W.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 Claim's Day now declared as the third day after final discharge of cargo from the Vessel.

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

**SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S INTER ASIA LINES**

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIM'S DAY NOTICE

M.V BANI BHUM VOY. NO. ()

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V BANI BHUM VOY. NO. () are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 21-7-2018 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.T.T/AIPT where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

**SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S REGIONAL CONTAINER LINES**

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIM'S DAY NOTICE

M.V EVER ABLE VOY. NO. (0250-484)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V EVER ABLE VOY. NO. (0250-484) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 21-7-2018 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of H.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 Claim's Day now declared as the third day after final discharge of cargo from the Vessel.

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

**SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S EVERGREEN SHIPPING LINE**

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIM'S DAY NOTICE

M.V K RUBY VOY. NO. (18091)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V K RUBY VOY. NO. (18091) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 21-7-2018 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of MITT-3 where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

**SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S GLOBAL MARS SHIPPING & LOGISTICS SERVICES CO, LTD.**

Phone No: 2301185

Marriage Announcement

Both Parents are pleased to announce the marriage of
Mr.Neal Thai Young, only son of
Mr.David Anku Young & Mrs.Brenda Aik Kyain Aye
Ho Young,

2062 32nd AVE. San Francisco, CA 94116, USA.

To

Dr.Yi Mon Lin, first daughter of
U Shwin Pyone & Daw Mu Mu San,
278, U Aung Hla Street, Hinthada Township,
Ayeyarwaddy, Myanmar,

in the presence of both parents, relatives and elders
on Tuesday, the 17th of July, 2018,
in Yangon.

*Parents From Both Sides and
Neal Thai Young & Yi Mon*

INVITATION TO OPEN TENDER

Sealed tenders are invited by Department of Medical Services, Ministry of Health and Sports for the supply of Medicine and Consumables in the (2018) (April to September).

Tender documents are available during office hours at the Procurement and Supplying Division, Department of Medical Services office No (4), Ministry of Health and Sports Commencing from (24.7.2018).

Sealed bids are to be submitted to the office, not later than (21-8-2018)15:00 hour, after which no bid will be accepted. No telegraph/telex proposal will be accepted.

For detail information please contact the Phone No.067-3411510, 067-3411544, Procurement and Supply Division Office, Department of Medical Services, Ministry of Health and Sports.

**Procurement and Supply Division
Ministry of Health and Sports**

Jodie Whittaker gives 'Doctor Who' the female touch

LONDON—British actress Jodie Whittaker was unveiled Thursday as the first woman to play "Doctor Who," telling fans of the cult BBC series she felt the weight of history -- but that gender should be irrelevant.

The 36-year-old, who rose to fame in award-winning British drama "Broadchurch", takes over from Scottish actor Peter Capaldi as the 13th incarnation of the Time Lord.

"I knew, obviously, being the first female it was going to have some extra responsibility thrown in," she told 6,500 fans at the annual Comic-Con convention in San Diego, which hosted the cast's first news conference together.

"It's incredibly inclusive and it also feels, knowing that the fans are all over the world, like there's this huge Whovian family that you want to be a part of because it's so supportive and inclusive, and fun."

Fans were treated last year



BBC America's "Doctor Who" At Comic-Con International: San Diego 2018. PHOTO: AFP

to a brief glimpse of Whittaker, walking towards the Tardis in a forest, in a clip shown after the Wimbledon tennis final on BBC television.

At Comic-Con, which attracts 130,000 movie, TV and comics fans from around the world, BBC America dropped the first full trailer which opened with Whittaker's startled expression.

"All of this is new to me," she says, presumably after just regenerating. "New faces, new worlds. New times. So if I asked really, really nicely, would you be my new best friends?"

There were glimpses of the Doctor with her new sonic screwdriver, some impressive-looking shots of alien worlds and the first look at her three new companions.—AFP ■

Rod Stewart sings of regrets as father on new song

LONDON—Pop stalwart Rod Stewart returned Thursday with a wistful song about a child's struggles with drugs as the singer announced a new album.

The 73-year-old father of eight questions his skills as a father on "Didn't I," his famously raspy voice, in the words of the song, "tinged with love and regret." "Didn't I try to tell you that stuff's gonna kill you / Oh, didn't I? / But you thought it was cool / And I'm just an old fool," Stewart sings.

The song is addressed to a daughter although the lyrics would seem to reflect the experience of Stewart's son Sean, who has a history of addiction and legal troubles.

In 2002, Sean Stewart was arrested for assaulting a man outside a Los Angeles-area restaurant in a fight broken up by Superman actor Dean Cain.

More recently, Stewart was

arrested for allegedly riding a luggage carousel into the restricted area of the Miami airport. Rod Stewart sings in "Didn't I" of warning his child about the dangers of the California lifestyle. His son, whose mother is US model Alana Stewart, grew up in Los Angeles and starred on the reality show "Sons of Hollywood."

"Didn't I" is the first single off "Blood Red Roses," Stewart's 30th studio album which will come out on September 28.

"I always think I make albums for a few friends and this record has that intimacy," Stewart said in a statement announcing the album.

"Sincerity and honesty go a long way in life and the same is true in songwriting," he said.

The album comes nearly 50 years after the first album by Stewart, whose best-known hits include "Forever Young."—

AFP ■

Chance the Rapper buys Chicago news site

CHICAGO—Chance the Rapper has entered the news business by buying the Chicagoist website -- and announced the purchase through song Thursday.

Chicagoist was part of a network of city-oriented websites including New York's Gothamist that found a following amid an appetite for a fresher, younger take on local news in the United States. The sites were abruptly closed last year by publisher Joe Ricketts, a conservative mogul who also owns the Chicago Cubs baseball team, after staff voted to unionize.

New York public radio station WNYC later acquired Gothamist and affiliated sites and confirmed Thursday that Chance, the increasingly prominent 25-year-old rapper, had bought the assets of Chicagoist.

"I look forward to relaunching it and bringing the people of Chicago an independent media outlet focused on amplifying diverse voices and content," Chance said in a statement.

The rapper expressed his intentions quite differently when he broke the news in a song, "I Might Need Security."

"I bought the Chicagoist just to run you racist bitches out of business," he rapped on the song, one of four he released

on Thursday.

On the track, whose chorus is a melodious rendering of the F-word, Chance attacks Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel over police brutality. "Rahm, you done! / I'm expectin' resignation / An open investigation on all of these paid vacations for murderers," he said, in apparent reference to police officers who are suspended rather than fired for misconduct. Chance also took a shot at the *Chicago Sun-Times*, one of the city's two daily English-language newspapers, for an unflattering article on his child support payments.

Chance, whose real name is Chancelor Bennett, has achieved striking success over the past two years despite defying industry convention by self-releasing all of his music.

The son of a Democratic political aide who worked for future president Barack Obama in Chicago, Chance has been outspoken about the state of the city. Last year he donated \$1 million for schools in the Midwestern metropolis amid a government funding crisis in a dispute with the Republican governor of Illinois, Bruce Rauner — whom Chance also lambastes in his new song.—

AFP ■

Hollywood composers on making movies sing with blockbuster scores

LOS ANGELES—Award-winning composers lifted the lid on the sounds behind some of Hollywood's biggest blockbusters and hit TV shows as Comic-Con kicked off day one on Thursday.

The "Sounds of Mayhem: Music and Audio in Action Films, TV, and Video Games" panel looked at the work of the experts who set the tone and control the sonic worlds in each of their films and television shows.

Among the movies and TV under discussion was anti-superhero sequel "Deadpool 2," "Cobra Kai," a TV spin-off from the iconic movie franchise, and this year's breakout horror hit "A Quiet Place" -- which is silent for much of its run time.

"For 'A Quiet Place,' survival depends on characters being quiet," said Erik Aadahl, describing the movie's terrifying alien killers, who are blind and hunt by sound.

"There is a scene where the daughter is in the corn field and we used sonic envelopes for the



Composer Leo Birenberg said he had a "ton of fun" working on the soundtrack to "Cobra Kai". PHOTO: AFP

point of view of the creatures and what they hear."

"Cobra Kai" composer Zach Robinson, a master of guitar shredding stadium rock techniques, described diving into the 1980s universe in which the show takes place as "a blast."

"We were able to work with the iconic 'Karate Kid' universe and there was a great opportunity to collaborate with the creators," he added.

"We actually got to score 80s montages that were not meant to be cheesy and made sense for the story universe."

"Cobra Kai," which pre-

miered in May on YouTube Red, is a continuation of the "Karate Kid" story, set 34 years after the original film.

It follows the reopening of the Cobra Kai karate dojo by Johnny Lawrence and the rekindling of his old rivalry with Daniel LaRusso, with Ralph Macchio and William Zabka reprising their roles from the films.

"Cobra Kai" is just pure, unfiltered fun. For this show, we got to go with our deepest impulses when setting the tone and we got to have a ton of fun doing it," said Leo Birenberg, Robinson's co-composer.

"Deadpool 2" composer Mark Stoeckinger discussed the tech and tools he used to create the soundscape of the sequel as well as techniques honed in his other projects.

"You can make an instrument out of anything. As far as making a sound, sometimes it's found and realized. A lot of it is a sense of discovery," he said.—AFP ■

Scientists' discovery of baby snake fossil in amber offers clues on evolution

BEIJING — Scientists have for the first time found a piece of amber containing a snake dating back about 99 million years to the age of dinosaurs.

A group of scientists from China, Canada, the United States and Australia discovered a small baby snake, belonging to a previously unknown species, preserved in a piece of amber from the Hukawng Valley, in north Myanmar's Kachin State.

Their discovery was published in the latest issue of *Science Advances*, a subsidiary of the academic journal, *Science*.

The amber was found in 2016. Scientists spent nearly a year reconstructing the three-dimensional structure of the bones of the snake using micro CT technology. "We found the remaining skeleton in the amber is 4.75 centimetres long. But we infer that some bones are missing. So the total length of the snake might be about 9.5 centimetres," said associate professor Xing Lida from China University of Geosciences.

Scientists concluded that the snake was a previously unknown species. The amber also contained a fragment of snakeskin with thin diamond-shaped scales.

"Compared with other fossilised vertebrates, snake fossils are very rare because the bones of most snakes are not very hard.



The amber also contained a fragment of snakeskin with thin diamond-shaped scales. **PHOTO: XINHUA**

It's not easy for them to become fossils," Prof Xing said.

Most common fossils cannot preserve the soft tissues of ancient animals, but amber, formed by resin, can better conserve soft tissues and bones, said Prof Xing.

In another piece of amber, researchers found a part of snakeskin with circular patterns. They believe this came from a forest predator, probably 60cm to 70cm long. Scientists believe snakes might have evolved from a kind of lizard. The earliest snakes can be traced back to the mid Jurassic Period. Fossils of an ancient snake, *Eophis underwoodi*, dating back 167 million years, have been found, but they are in fragments and can offer little information.

During the early Late Cretaceous from 100 million to 95 million years ago, snakes roamed all over the world. Most snake fossils, uncovered in Southern Europe, Africa, North America, Middle East and South America, had no forelimb, and some had small, useless hind legs, said Prof Xing.

The two pieces of amber also contained insects, remains of plants and invertebrates, indicating the snakes were living in a humid and warm tropical rain forest with a freshwater habitat.

Some marine ostracods, which were small crustaceans, in the amber show that the forest was adjacent to coast.

Most of the fossilised snakes

found previously show they lived in water. This is the first discovery of a snake living in a coastal forest of the Mesozoic era, indicating that early snakes lived in a more diversified environment, Prof Xing said. This snake is linked to ancient snakes from Argentina, Africa, India, and Australia, and it might have evolved from an aquatic snake, said Dr Michael Caldwell, a Canadian paleontologist in the research team.

Since 2016, Prof Xing's team has discovered remains of birds, dinosaurs, frogs and other ancient creatures in amber from the Hukawng Valley, offering a glimpse into the era of dinosaurs.

The latest find has been named *Xiaophis myanmarensis*,

which includes the name of the amber's discoverer Jia Xiao, an amber collector.

Most of the amber used in scientific research is bought on market. Ms Jia Xiao acquired the amber at the beginning of 2016. On seeing the animal remains in the amber, she thought it might be a large centipede. But after she put it under a magnifier, she thought it might be an incomplete skeleton of a lizard.

Since she had already collected several pieces of lizard amber, she set it aside for later study. But while travelling with her family, she saw an exquisite artwork of a cobra skeleton at the airport of Hong Kong.

"That skeleton looks just like the bones in the amber," she thought. "Could that lizard actually be a snake?"

She returned home to Kunming, southwest China's Yunnan Province, immediately. She scrutinised the creature under magnifier again, and found that it had no legs, and the remaining skin fragment was different to that of a lizard. With a pounding heart, she told a colleague and then contacted Prof Xing.

"It was a remarkable day," said Prof Xing. "We had only ever seen snakeskin in amber. This was the first time we had seen a snake skeleton." —Xinhua ■

'Dangerous complacency' looms over world AIDS meeting

AMSTERDAM (NETHERLANDS) — Thousands of experts and activists descend on Amsterdam Monday to bolster the battle against AIDS amid warnings that "dangerous complacency" may cause a resurgence of the epidemic that has already killed 35 million people.

Rather than closing in on the goal of "ending" AIDS, new HIV infections have surged in parts of the world as global attention has dwindled and funding levelled off, say leaders of the anti-AIDS movement.

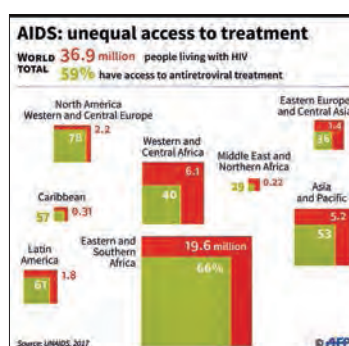
And they lament that too fine a focus on virus-suppressing treatment has overshadowed basic prevention with the result that HIV is still spreading with ease among the most vulnerable people.

"The encouraging reductions in new HIV infections that occurred for about a decade has emboldened some to declare that we are within reach of ending AIDS," said Peter Piot, a veteran virus researcher and founder of the UNAIDS agency.

However, "there is absolutely no evidence to support this conclusion," he insisted, and warned: "the language on ending AIDS has bred a dangerous complacency."

This was evident from declining global and domestic funding for HIV eradication and treatment programmes, Piot said at the launch this week of a report by the International AIDS Society (IAS) and The Lancet medical journal.

The authors of that report,



AIDS: unequal access to treatment. **PHOTO: AFP**

he said, "are extremely concerned that there is a real risk that the world will declare victory long before our fight against AIDS is over."

Rubbing shoulders with celebrity activists such as actress Charlize Theron, Britain's Prince Harry, and singers Elton

John and Conchita, more than 15,000 delegates are expected in the Dutch capital for the conference, opening Monday.

Charlize and Conchita

While high-profile speeches will seek to revive the flagging fight, the five-day event will also present an opportunity for scientists to mull over recent advances and setbacks in the quest for simpler, better anti-HIV drugs.

More than three decades of research have yet to yield a cure or vaccine for the AIDS-causing virus that has infected nearly 80 million people since the epidemic burst onto the world scene in the early 1980s.

A UNAIDS report Wednesday said about 36.9 million people last year were living with the

virus which, thanks to antiretroviral therapy (ART), is no longer a death sentence.

It reported the lowest annual death toll in two decades, and a record number of people on life-saving treatment.

But the report also alerted that new HIV infections are rising in about 50 countries, and have more than doubled in eastern Europe and central Asia.

IAS president Linda-Gail Bekker told AFP that there may have been "a strategic mistake on the part of the AIDS gurus" to prioritise treatment at the expense of preventing HIV infection — the only real way to stop the epidemic. "There is no epidemic that we have treated our way out of," she said, citing Ebola and tuberculosis.—AFP ■



Juan Mata of Manchester United takes photos with fans after their International Champions Cup game against the Club America, at the University of Phoenix Stadium in Glendale, Arizona, on 19 July 2018. **PHOTO: AFP**

Mata salvages draw as Manchester United open North American tour

PHOENIX (UNITED STATES) — Juan Mata grabbed the 78th minute equalizer as Manchester United opened their pre-season with a 1-1 draw against Club America on Thursday in Phoenix, Arizona.

A header from Henry Martin in the 59th minute — past substitute goalkeeper Joel Pereira — had put Mexican outfit America in the lead at University of Phoenix Stadium.

The English Premiership giants pulled level 12 minutes from time after a cross from youngster Tahith Chong found Ander Herrera, whose header hit the post.

The ball rebounded to Mata, whose volley snuck through the legs of substitute goalkeeper Oscar Jimenez.

It was a lively start from both sides despite temperatures of 40 C in Phoenix. Anthony Martial was unlucky not to receive a penalty in the ninth minute after he appeared to be tripped in the area.

Four minutes later the Frenchman fired a curling shot over the crossbar, and United came close again minutes later as Mata loosed a shot that bounced off the upright.

Martial saw another shot tipped around the post, before America threatened at

the other end — where Lee Grant, who started in goal for United, was called on to stop a shot from Club America's Paul Aguilar.

Manchester United were without a host of stars still resting after the World Cup in Russia, including Romelu Lukaku, Jesse Lingard and Marcus Rashford.

David de Gea, Nemanja Matic and new signing Fred are expected to join the team next week, while Chilean Alexis Sanchez was thought to be arriving soon after resolving his visa issues.

"We knew it was going to be difficult because they have been training for more weeks than us, so I think they are in a better condition," Mata said. "Mexican teams are always intense, they press a lot, they are quick and they showed that today. But we managed to get one goal so we are happy with that."

"We are also happy that there were no injuries and we will keep going in our process," he added as United looked toward the next stop on their tour, against Major League Soccer's San Jose Earthquakes on Sunday at Levi's Stadium in Santa Clara, California.—AFP ■

Myanmar women's football team in first stage qualifier for Tokyo Olympics

BECAUSE of Myanmar football's world grade, the Myanmar women's national football team will play from the first stage of the qualifiers starting on 4 November, in which a total of 19 teams including Myanmar are competing for a chance to go to the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo, according to the AFC.

In the second stage of the

qualifiers, a total of 12 teams, including Vietnam (sixth grade) and Uzbekistan (seventh grade) will play for the next stage.

In the third stage qualifiers, only eight teams will play for qualification into the Olympics, including those teams ranked grades 1 to 5: Australia, North Korea, South Korea, China and Thailand. The Japanese women's

football team will automatically qualify for the Olympics because Japan is the host country of the 2020 Olympic Games.

The draw ceremony for the 2020 Olympic Qualification will be held on 2 August at the headquarters of the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia according to the AFC.—Lynn Thit (Tgi) ■

U-19 MNL matches postponed due to flooded pitches

THE matches of the MPT Myanmar National League (U-19) 2018 which were scheduled to be played on 17 March have postponed due to the rain-damaged football fields of the South Dagon Township football stadium in which the tourney was being held.

Some parts of the football pitches were damaged due to

heavy rain, and halfway through one of the contests officials ruled the matches could not be continued on those fields.

Football authorities made the decision not to use this stadium until the end of July, prompting the postponement of two matches.

One of the postponed U-19 matches, Ayeyawady United ver-

sus Hanthawady United, that was scheduled to play on 17 July but will be rescheduled to a later date that will be determined by the Myanmar National League (MNL), said an official.

Another postponed match, Sagaing United and Yadanabon FC, will be shifted to Padonmar Stadium on 6 August, according to the MNL.—Lynn Thit (Tgi) ■

Neymar rules out transfer move, staying at PSG

SAO PAULO — Brazilian superstar Neymar on Thursday sought to quash speculation about his future, insisting he planned to remain with French giants Paris Saint-Germain.

"I'm staying, I'm staying in Paris, I have a contract," Neymar told reporters at an auction to raise money for his charitable foundation in Sao Paulo.

Neymar, who became the world's most expensive footballer last year after moving to PSG from Barcelona in a record 222 million euro (\$264 million) deal, has repeatedly been linked to a move to Real Madrid.

The European champions have issued a series of statements in recent weeks denying they have an interest in signing the 26-year-old striker.

Speculation of a Neymar move to the Bernabeu has intensified in the wake of Cristiano Ronaldo's shock move to Juventus, a development that has left a vacancy at Madrid for an elite, superstar player.

"In the face of the constant reports linking PSG's Neymar



PSG's Brazilian star Neymar arrives to participate in the charity auction of the Neymar Jr. Institute, in Sao Paulo, Brazil, on 19 July 2018. **PHOTO: AFP**

Jr. to our club, Real Madrid C. F. wish to clarify that the club has no intention of making any offer for the player," a Real Madrid statement said last week.

"The two clubs enjoy an excellent relationship and, as such, if Real Madrid were at any stage to consider securing the services of a PSG player, they would approach the club in the first instance."

Although Neymar insisted Thursday he was staying in Par-

is, reports persisted that a move could be on the cards.

British media reports said Thursday PSG were open to the possibility of selling Neymar.

Madrid president Florentino Perez meanwhile said the club was determined to reinforce its squad following Ronaldo's departure.

"Real has a great squad that is going to be reinforced with magnificent players," Perez said earlier this week.—AFP ■