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Union Minister for Education Dr. Myo Thein Gyi, Yangon Region Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein and Pyithu Hluttaw MP Daw Su Su Lwin unveiling the statue of Sayagyi Dr. Myo Myint (left). **PHOTO: MNA**

Sayagyi Dr. Myo Myint's statue unveiled

He was a key figure in developing English-language studies in Myanmar

THE statue of Sayagyi Dr. Myo Myint was unveiled at a ceremony held at the University of Yangon's Panglong Hall in Yangon yesterday morning.

First, former Head Professor of the English Department at the University of Education, Yangon, Sayagyi U Thiha (ret'd), former Head Professor of the English Department at the University of Yangon Daw Khin Lay Myint (ret'd), and Dr. Lwin Lwin Soe, a member of the National Curriculum Committee, cut the ribbon to open the ceremony.

Next, Union Minister for Education Dr. Myo Thein Gyi, Yangon Region Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein, and Thongwa Township Pyithu Hluttaw MP Daw Su Su Lwin unveiled the

statue of Sayagyi Dr. Myo Myint with an electronic switch.

Union Minister Dr. Myo Thein Gyi then delivered the keynote speech. He said Sayagyi Dr. Myo Myint's statue was erected to commemorate him as a role model for others to be as disciplined, outstanding and accountable as he was.

He said Sayagyi's statue was erected in Panglong Hall because he was a key figure in developing English-language studies in Myanmar and Panglong Hall is where students pursue English education and is a training centre for teachers and administrators.

Sayagyi Dr. Myo Myint not only helped the development of English in Myanmar; he also accomplished his responsibilities in every role he took on at

the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, becoming a person the country could depend on, said the union minister.

The union minister said Sayagyi was an exemplary student for students, an exemplary teacher for teachers, an exemplary professor for professors, an exemplary head professor for head professors, and a priceless, exemplary leader for the Ministry of Education.

The union minister said he felt delighted that Sayagyi's statue could be erected and unveiled with an elaborate ceremony in respect and admiration for his honesty, hardworking attitude, steadfast demeanor, good instructions and accomplishments.

He said Sayagyi was not

only a teacher but also a writer, a poet and a philosopher, so his statue would stand as a lasting example.

The union minister expressed his gratitude, on behalf of the Ministry of Education, to everyone who helped in sculpting Sayagyi's statue and erecting it in Panglong Hall, the Statue Accomplishment Committee, the organisers of the statue unveiling ceremony, Sayagyi's colleagues, pupils, teachers and students who provided financial support and manpower, and Tampawadi U Aung Kyaw Tun, who sculpted the statue.

The union minister said Sayagyi's influence, spirit and the rules, regulations, path and procedures he set would lead to the emergence of a new generation that would lead national

development operations.

Next, Sayagyi U Thiha (ret'd) and Pyithu Hluttaw MP Daw Su Su Lwin delivered commemorative speeches for Sayagyi Dr. Myo Myint.

Next, Dr. Lwin Lwin Soe read Sayagyi Dr. Myo Myint's autobiography and a documentary was shown to the audience.

Dr. Zaw Tun, Head of the English Department of the Mandalay University of Foreign Languages, read a poem written in honour of Sayagyi Dr. Myo Myint.

Sayagyi Dr. Myo Myint served as the deputy minister for foreign affairs, the deputy minister for education, the rector of Yangon University of Foreign Languages and Chairman of the National Education Policy Commission.—Myanmar News Agency ■

Office of C-in-C (Army, Navy and Air) offers Waso robes

THE Waso robe offering ceremony of families of the Office of Commander-in-Chief (Army, Navy and Air) for 2018 took place at Anawrahta Hall of the Office of the Commander-in-Chief (Army) yesterday morning, attended by Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and wife Daw Kyu Kyu Hla.

The ceremony was attended by member Sayadaws of the State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee, led by Chairman Sayadaw Presiding Nayaka of Bhamo Monastery of Mandalay Abhidhaja Maha Rattha Guru Abhidhaja Agga Maha Saddhammajotika Dr Bhaddanta Kumarabhivamsa, Tipitakadhara Tipitakakovida Sayadaws, Ovadacariya Sayadaws of Uppatasanti Pagoda and invited members of the Sangha. Also present at the ceremony together with Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and wife Daw Kyu Kyu Hla were Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services



Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and wife donate offertories to the Nayaka Sayadaw of Bhamo Monastery.

PHOTO: MNA

Commander-in-Chief (Army) Vice-Senior General Soe Win and wife Daw Than Than Nwe, Union Ministers and their wives, senior military officers from the Office of the Commander-in-Chief

and their wives, the commander of Nay Pyi Taw Command and wife, and officers, other ranks and families of the offices and departments from the Office of the Commander-in-Chief (Army,

Navy and Air).

They also listened to the recitation of Metta Sutta by members of the Sangha. Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and wife Daw Kyu Kyu Hla offered Waso robes

and alms to the Bhamo Sayadaw.

Vice-Senior General Soe Win and wife Daw Than Than Nwe donated Waso robes and offertories to Secretary of the State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee Presiding Nayaka of Minkyaung Pahtamapyan Monastery of Thanlyin in Yangon Region Agga Maha Pandita Bhaddanta Candimabhivamsa.

Afterwards, the Union Ministers and their wives, the Chief of the General Staff (Army, Navy and Air) and wife, the Commander-in-Chief (Navy) and wife, the Commander-in-Chief (Air) and wife, and senior military officers and their wives presented Waso robes and provisions to members of the Sangha.

Thanlyin Minkyaung Sayadaw delivered a sermon, and the congregation shared the merits gained. Later, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, wife Daw Kyu Kyu Hla and those present offered day meals to members of the Sangha.—MNA ■



Photo shows new reinforced concrete bridge to be opened on Yangon-Sittway Road in December. **PHOTO: MYINT MAUNG SOE**

New reinforced concrete bridge to be opened

THE Ministry of Construction will open a reinforced concrete bridge on a road in northern Rakhine State, linking its capital Sittway and Yangon, in December this year.

In a report presented to Chief Minister of Rakhine State U Nyi Pu and cabinet members, during their inspection of the 360-foot-long Teinnyo bridge on Thari creek near the border of Mrauk U and Kyauktaw townships, deputy director U Myint Naing Oo of the ministry said that the facility will be commissioned in December this year, after the project started

in May 2017.

Built under the union budget at a cost of Ks2,280 million, the 30-foot-wide bridge, flanked by three-foot pedestrian lanes, can bear up to 60-tonnes of load. Its clearance area is 86 feet.

As the bridge lies on the Yangon-Sittway road, it will facilitate transport between the two destinations, apart from ensuring convenience to people of the townships, including Sittway, Ponnagyun, Kyauktaw, Mrauk U and Minbya in northern Rakhine.—Myint Maung Soe ■

Scouts can act as peace diplomats: MSF chair

THE capital Nay Pyi Taw yesterday played host to the Dialogue for Peace Facilitator's Training, a gathering aimed at fostering international friendship and holding talks about values that can be sought and shared among the youth. Jointly sponsored by the Myanmar Scout Federation (MSF) and the Asia-Pacific Scout Region of the World Organisation of the Scout Movement (WOSM), the training is set to cover a wide array of subjects, ranging from the nature and understanding of conflicts, peace building, individual and diverse views in dialogues, support for dialogues, and transparency in holding talks and negotiations for peace processes.

Professor Peter Bletch of the WOSM delivered an address at the opening ceremony of the training, which also aims to promote essential values for a better world and global peace by helping increase the number of talks on religion, culture, generations, and gender; building respect for humanity regardless of faith, race, gender, and age through constructive dialogues, disseminating knowledge and individual values, and promoting knowledge about the global peace process.



Dialogue for Peace Facilitator's Training in progress in Nay Pyi Taw. **PHOTO: MNA**

"We have opened this training to build peace amidst a diversity of languages, cultures and situations," said Dr. Tin Nyo, Chairman of the MSF. "Experts at the training will give lectures to scouts from the Asia-Pacific Region. The young ones, aged between 18 and 26, will join hands with peacemakers in the peace process." "Scouts can act as peace diplomats," he noted, adding that he believed the trainees will help the country by imparting their knowledge through the peace talks.

Mr. J. Rizal C. Pangilinan, director of the Asia-Pacific Scout Region, talked about the involvement of WOSM in global peace processes during the opening ceremony held at the Mawlamy-

ine Hall of the Gold Camp, Myanmar's main sports training centre in the capital city.

Chief instructor Mr. Annas Alabbadi and Dr. Tin Nyo of the MSF said the purpose of the training was to organise talks on the hopes and statements of dialogues, the adoption of dialogue rules and principles, as well as country-wide and Asia-Pacific region-level talks. "This is the first of its kind in Asia," said Dr. Tin Nyo about the training, which was attended by 51 trainees, of which 16 were scouts from the Asia-Pacific Region, 25 were from Myanmar, and 10 were scouting enthusiasts. The Dialogue for Peace Facilitator's Training will run for four days, until 25 July.—Myanmar News Agency ■

Union minister urges railroad staff to offer best services to passengers

UNION Minister for Transport and Communications U Thant Sin Maung travelled by an RBE

train along the Nay Pyi Taw-Bago railway section on 21 July and inspected the train stations, bridges

and railway sections undergoing upgradation.

The union minister and



Union Minister U Thant Sin Maung gives instructions to the railroad station staff. **PHOTO: MNA**

his entourage first arrived at the Pyi Win Station and Tharweihti Station and observed the passenger and cargo transportation systems, the staff organisation and checking out whether there were enough staff members and whether the staff residences required renovation to withstand the rainy season. The union minister and his entourage then passed through Yayni, Myo Hla, Swar, Kone Gyi, Kyaytaw and Toungoo stations. There, they met with station officials and staff members and inspected the piles of stones to be used for paving roads and their size and quality. The union minister instructed officials to ensure there was no wastage of stones used in paving the road and that the staff were properly sheltered from the rain.

The union minister and his entourage then passed through Pyu, Tawkywe Inn, Penwegone

and Nyaungpinthar stations and met with staff members. He encouraged them to work harder in upgrading the Yangon-Toungoo railway section. He instructed them to ensure the concrete sleepers, stones for paving the road and the railway tracks arrived on time so that laying/upgrading the railways, concrete sleepers and train signals would be duly completed. He told the staff to be cautious so that there were no delays in the railway schedule, as there would be changes to the schedule during the upgrading process. He also told them to offer the best services to passengers and respond to any issues.

Once the Yangon-Toungoo railway upgradation is completed, trains will be able to travel at 100 km/h, enabling passengers to reach their destinations in a shorter amount of time. —Myanmar News Agency ■

Stanford involvement to uplift country's emergency treatment system

MYANMAR'S emergency medical treatment and research could reach an international level through the involvement of one of the world's leading institutions of higher learning, said a union-level official at a meeting, jointly organised by the country's medical universities and the US-based Stanford University, held in Yangon.

In his address, Union Minister for Health and Sports Dr Myint Htwe said, "The involvement of Stanford University will surely enhance the capabilities of the medical staff, including doctors and nurses, in cases of emergency, which can save the lives of patients who are in a critical condition."

"Aside from short-term plans, long-term plans should also be set up in adopting a system for upgrading knowledge about emergency treatment," said the union minister, who also expressed belief that the country's medical treatment sector would see substantial progress with the collective involvement of experts of various medical professions and international experts.



Union Minister Dr. Myint Htwe takes part at a meeting for Myanmar's emergency medical treatment and research. **PHOTO: MNA**

The meeting at the University of Medicine 1 also saw the participation of its rector Dr Zaw Wai Soe, Professor Dr Daw Maw Maw Oo of the emergency treatment department, specialist physician Dr Than Latt Aung of a 1000-bed hospital in Nay Pyi Taw and Dr Thida Khin of the University of Nursing in Yangon.

Professor SV Mahadevan of Stanford University School of Medicine gave suggestions on upgrading Myanmar's emergency treatment curriculum, in accordance with its needs,

giving lectures on emergency treatment for pre-graduate and post-graduate course students through the social media network and conducting advanced courses and research and innovation programmes under the ministry's coordination.

The union minister praised the specialists of the emergency treatment sector for their relentless efforts, hoping for big developments through the use of the online teaching system that can cover many parts of the country.—Myanmar News Agency ■

Union minister inspects iodine salt grinding mills, plantations

UNION Minister for Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation U Ohn Win visited iodine salt grinding mills in Patheingyi Township yesterday.

During his visit, the union minister inspected how the salt grinders worked step-by-step on the iodine salt-production processes, while their market and export processes were explained by the technicians present there. The union minister then gave instructions, as required. Later, the union minister also inspected 350 acres of the Pyinkado plantation near milepost (17/0) on the Patheingyi-Ngwehsaung Road, and officials explained procedures about plantations, followed by the union minister's instructions, which included regular growth of

the plantations along with preservation of the wild elephants around the area, incorporated with the government and the public. Next, the union minister and party arrived at Uyin Khone Thit Seik in Tha Paung Township, and officials explained the timber production plans for the 2018-2019 fiscal year, followed by the union minister's instructions over the requirement of data collection and keeping a regular check on the timber plantations; he also inspected the timber, which has already been sold out under the tender processes. Then, the union minister inspected an acre of bamboo plantation in Thit Seik area and also provided instructions over the requirements. —Myanmar News Agency ■



Union Minister U Ohn Win observes elephants, conserved at Ngwehsaung area. **PHOTO: MNA**

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WHO to provide medical aid for outbreak of snail fever

By Nyein Nyein

THE World Health Organization (WHO) will provide medical supplies and technical aid to prevent the outbreak of snail fever, which is an acute and chronic disease caused by parasitic worms released by freshwater snails.

In the meeting hall of the National Health Laboratory in Yangon on 21 July, Dr. Stephan Paul Jost, country representative of World Health Organization in Myanmar, and his delegation spoke about snail fever and made a pledge to provide medical aid at a negotiation meeting over its outbreak in the Inle area of Shan and Rakhine states.

The disease is prevalent in contaminated dams, lakes, fields, and creeks, which have freshwater snails infesting the water.

Schistosomiasis or bile-harzia, commonly known as snail fever, is an acute and chronic parasitic disease caused by blood flukes (trematode worms) of the genus schistosoma. People get infected when larval forms of the parasite cercariae released by freshwater snails penetrate the skin during con-



Minister for Health and Sports Dr Myint Htwe attends a meeting during which WHO pledged to provide medical supplies and technical aid to prevent the outbreak of snail fever. **PHOTO: SUPPLIED**

tact with infested water. Transmission occurs when people suffering from schistosomiasis contaminate freshwater sources with their excreta containing parasite eggs, which hatch in water.

Symptoms of schistosomiasis include a rash, abdominal pain, diarrhoea, fever, headache, cough and body sores.

Haematuria (blood in urine), fibrosis of the bladder and ureter, and liver and kidney failure are diagnosed in advanced cases.

Detection by the polymerase chain reaction of schistosoma mansoni DNA in human serum

and faeces can be made. No vaccine is available yet, but treatment with praziquantel is known to be effective.

As a prevention measure, people need to avoid swimming in lakes or creeks, which are vulnerable to infection. It can be prevented when people live in a hygienic environment, with adequate sanitation. Those engaged in agricultural activities, which expose them to infested water, should wear agricultural gloves and farming footwear, according to the Ministry of Health and Sports.

According to WHO's worldwide survey, schistosomiasis occurs in 78 countries. Experts from WHO headquarters, Southeast Asia WHO office and China Centers for Disease Control will conduct research over the outbreak of schistosomiasis. The prevention measures will be coordinated with related departments.

The Union Minister for Health and Sports and officials from Health and Sports Ministry and WHO representatives and delegation attended this meeting. ■

Dialogue and roundtable talk held on rural development in Kyauktaga

A ROUNDTABLE talk, titled, "From rural area development to a new nation", was held in Alekhin Village, Khin Gyi Village Tract in Kyauktaga Township on Saturday.

During the talk, procedures, duties, laws and ethics were discussed by Pyithu Hluttaw representative, Rural Area Development Department, Department of Agriculture Land Management and Statistics, Agricultural Mechanization Department, Cooperative Department, Agricultural Development Bank, and the Rural Road Development Department.

Later, Deputy Township Administrator and departmental officials responded to questions raised by the villagers who



Dialogue and roundtable talk being held in Kyauktaga Township. **PHOTO: MAUNG SHWE WIN (PYAY)**

attended the talk.

The officials suggested that villagers get more loans for their agricultural work. They explained that they could get loans for over 10 acres of farmland. They also

spoke about ensuring smooth rural roads, along with access to these roads, electricity access, building a new school for the village and solving the land and farm issues of the villagers.— 017■

Storm victims furnished with relief supplies in Chauk

A CEREMONY to present relief items and cash to storm victims was held at a Basic Education Middle School in Ywama Village, Chauk Township in Magway Region yesterday evening.

First, regional lawmakers Daw San San Win and U Soe Win gave words of encouragement to the storm victims before Township Administrator U Kyaw Swe Win fulfilled the requirements. Afterwards, an official from the Department of Disaster Management handed over relief supplies and cash to the township administrator.

The regional parliamentarians, township administrator, and departmental officials provided 271 storm victims from 58 households with humanitarian aid. This contribution to the storm victims was valued at Ks. 2,749,100.— Kyaw Moe (IPRD/MDN)■

Mandalay sees 4,244 traffic violations within a week



File photos show a traffic violation being recorded in Mandalay, the second largest city in Myanmar. **PHOTO: THUREIN LIN**

WITHIN a week, from 15 to 21 July, 4,244 vehicles were caught violating traffic rules in Mandalay, the second largest commercial city in the central part of Myanmar.

The installation of a 24-hour monitoring system at traffic lights has exposed a large number of traffic rule violations within a week in Mandalay, also known as the cultural city for its ancient heritage.

With regard to the Sydney Coordinated Adaptive Traffic System (SCATS) software, Mandalay Mayor Dr Ye Lwin

said, "As the system can document every traffic rule violator, whether it is a motorcycle or a car, after automatically taking three or four photos, aside from video recording the whole incident at all times, there is no place for violators to hide."

The system can track the route of a violator until they reach their destination, the mayor wrote on his Facebook page.

Each of the 32 traffic lights of the cultural city now have a SCATS, which is equipped with

a 360-degree dome surveillance camera that has a zoom-in capacity of 20 yards.

"SCATS is a useful system both for traffic rules enforcement and security, as it can immediately report an accident," said an official of the Mandalay City Development Committee.

Over 130 CCTVs, including 11 speed dome, 21 red-light and 117 licence plate recognition cameras, have been installed at a separate post near the SCATS-equipped traffic lights as a tracking device. —Thurein Lin/MDN ■

Mandalay IWUMD to ensure irrigated water for over 80,000 acres of monsoon paddy fields

THE Mandalay Irrigation Water Utilisation Management Department (IWUMD) will implement an irrigation water project to cover 82,423 acres of monsoon paddy fields in Mandalay and PyinOoLwin districts through the dam and diversion weir of Mandalay Region during the 2018-2019 fiscal year, said U Than Oo, Assistant Director of IWUMD.

Sedawgyi dam provides irrigation water for 41,952 acres of paddy fields in Madaya, 22,322 acres in Patheingyi and 10,653 acres in Amarapura townships.

Similarly, 485 acres in Patheingyi Township and 880 acres in Amarapura Township get irrigation water from the

Sedawlay dam. The Kyaukse dam distributes irrigation water to 376 acres in Madaya Township, while Marlenattaung dam provides water 5,755 acres in Singu Township.

In order to have full irrigation water access for paddy fields, Sedawgyi dam has a water level of 411.6 feet, with a capacity of 307,330 feet. The water level of the Marlenattaung dam is 435.7 feet, with a capacity of 36,526 feet. For the maintenance of the dam, 36 sluice gates have been installed. Sixty timber gates in a Thaphankine flume were replaced by an iron gate to prevent water leakage, at a cost of Ks200 million.—Min Htet Aung (Mandalay Sub-printing House)■

Authorities to issue IDs to civil servants in Bago's elephant camp

EFFORTS are being made to issue household registration certificates to civil servants at the Pasonseik Elephant Camp in Bago Yoma Mountain Range by next month, said U Kyaw Kyaw Khine, an immigration officer at the Gyobingauk Township Population and Immigration Department. There are 68 staff-families at the remote elephant camp in the Zeegon timber production area, located in the Yonechaung Village-tract in Gyobingauk Township.

U Kyaw Kyaw Khine said the lack of IDs has caused members of the staff to lose some of their citizenship rights, in-

cluding the right to vote during elections. Some staff members were not eligible to vote in the previous elections as they did not possess any NRC cards.

Members of the immigration department plan to go on a field trip to the target area in August. As part of its services, a mobile team composed of seven police and members of the Gyobingauk Township Population and Immigration Department visited the area on 20 July to issue household registration certificates. The department issued the certificates to 52 families there.—Zeyatu (Magway) ■

CRIME NEWS

Stimulant tablets and raw opium seized in Kalaw

A COMBINED team, including police from Kalaw, raided a house owned by Kyaw Oo in Pahtama Village, Taunggye Village-tract, Kalaw Township, Shan State (South), on 21 July and seized 8,980 stimulant tablets from a box in the bedroom, 0.2 kilos of raw opium from the box and 1.3 kilos of raw opium from the sound box. The police have filed charges against the suspect under the Anti-Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Sub-



Kyaw Oo together with the seized narcotic drugs. **PHOTO:MNA** stances Law.—Myanmar News Agency ■

Two women arrested for human trafficking

POLICE arrested two women on Sunday after two young female victims of human trafficking were rescued in operations at checkpoints along the Myanmar-China border.

Daw Ywe Nu, 37, was held at the Seinlon checkpoint in Momauk Township, where a 17-year-old victim was rescued. According to investigators, the suspect planned to sell the girl to a Chinese man for marriage in exchange for Ks4 million. The suspect and the victim both reside in Momauk Township.

The suspect then told investigators that she was working with a partner named Daw Ja



Daw Ja Nhang.

Nhang, also known as Khaung Ya, who was subsequently held at Lweje at the Myanmar-China border. The two suspects confessed to the police that they had trafficked a 24-year-old woman to a Chinese man for 6,600 Chinese yuan in April this year. After the



Daw Ywe Nu.

follow-up investigation, the victim said she managed to escape from the Chinese man after two months. The two suspects were charged with human trafficking, in violation of the existing Anti-Trafficking in Persons Law.—Win Naing (Kachinmyay) ■



Customers viewing jade stones at a gems and jewellery shop in Mandalay. PHOTO: THUREIN

Mandalay to host international gems expo in 2019

AN international gems expo is scheduled to be hosted in Mandalay next year, according to U Thein Win, Secretary of Mandalay Yadanar Mall Gems Entrepreneurs Development Committee.

The aim of the event is to penetrate the international market through the exhibition

of Myanmar's gems. "Our intention is to showcase Myanmar's products to others," he added. The expo will be held at Yadanar Mall in Mandalay in 2019. The finished jade products, pearl, amber and jewellery will be displayed at the expo, the first of its kind in Mandalay.

"Myanmar gems entrepre-

neurs used to take part in gems emporiums held in other countries. They realised how much gems are booming in the international market," said Ma Lun Lun, a gems entrepreneur from Mandalay. The Yadanar Mall, consisting of over 380 stalls, was launched on 1 January 2017.—Thurein/MDN ■

Myanmar's export earnings reach \$4.5 billion in current FY

MYANMAR earned a total of US\$4.524 billion from overall exports of domestic products during the first three-and-a-half-month period this fiscal year, according to a report released by the Ministry of Commerce.

The figure represented a \$974 million increase from the same period last fiscal year.

Between 1 April and 13 July this year, public sector exports exceeded \$1 billion, while private sector exports stood at nearly

\$3.5 billion.

The country usually exports six major groups of products to other countries, including manufactured goods, forest-based products, minerals, as well as agricultural, aquaculture, and animal products, and other miscellaneous items.

Data from the ministry showed Myanmar exported \$808 million worth of agricultural products, \$86.927 million animal products, \$173 million marine

products, \$440 million minerals, \$2.495 billion manufactured goods, and other products worth \$466 million.

During the same period, the export value of both agricultural and forest products continued to decline. Compared to the same period last year, the export value of agricultural products decreased by over \$140 million, while forest products declined to \$53.75 million from \$68.017 million.—Swe Nyein ■

Public sector imports of consumer goods drop by half

IMPORTS of consumer products by the public sector in three and a half months of the current fiscal year dropped by half against the same period last year, the Ministry of Commerce reported.

Between April and mid-July this year, the government's import of consumer goods was US\$13.610 million, which saw a decrease by \$13.829 million from this time last year, when the sec-

tor's imports reached \$27.439 million. Despite the decrease in consumer goods by the public sector, private sector imports of the same products exceeded \$1.2 billion, an increase in value by \$61.651 million over the same period last year. Myanmar imports three major groups of products, including capital goods, intermediate goods and consumer goods from foreign trade partners.

The ministry's latest statistical report shows that the country's total imports of the three groups of products was valued at \$5.641 billion, consisting of capital goods worth \$2.022 billion, intermediate goods \$2.315 billion and consumer goods \$1.302 billion. When compared with the same time last year, the total import figures went up by \$427 million.—Swe Nyein ■

India-Myanmar border trade increases by over \$27 million

BORDER trade between Myanmar and India, in the current financial year, topped nearly US\$47.6 million, an increase in value by \$27.8 million over this time last year, according to a report from the Ministry of Commerce.

During the same period last year, India-Myanmar bilateral trade was \$19.728 million, in total.

Myanmar's exports to the Republic of India are greater than its imports.

Having the world's second largest population, India imported a wide variety of marketable products, worth \$42.069 million, from Myanmar over the first 104 days of this fiscal year. Its exports to Myanmar were valued at \$5.521 million during the period.

The two countries use the Tamu and Reed border trade camps to deliver goods commercially. During the period, the bilateral trade value through the Tamu gate totalled \$37.138 million, whereas the Reed station handled goods amounting to \$10.452 million.

From 1 April through 13 July this year, the trade value from all borders reached \$2.3 billion, increasing by \$298 million from this time last year.

A wide variety of goods, covering human hair, medicines, oil cakes, electronic devices, motorbikes, cotton yarn, non-alloy steel, areca nuts, ginger, saffron, turmeric, bay leaves and other herbal plants, fruits and vegetables are marketable at borders.—Chan Nyein ■

Over \$1.1 billion in trade deficit reported this FY

MYANMAR'S overseas trade value for the current financial year topped US\$10.165 billion, with a trade deficit of \$1.1 billion, according to the Ministry of Commerce's weekly statistical report issued this Friday.

Between 1 April and 13 July this year, the country's imports were \$4.524 billion and exports were \$5.641 billion, resulting in a trade deficit of over \$1 billion.

The current trade value included \$2.285 billion from border trade and nearly \$7.9 billion from non-border trade. Roughly, 80 per cent of the country's international trade is conducted mainly through sea ports. The country's marketable products, including agricultural, animal, miner-

als, marine and forest raw materials and manufactured goods are exported to foreign nations monthly, from both the cross-border and the maritime routes.

At this time last year, the export sector was worth \$3.549 billion, while the import sector was valued at \$5.213 billion, resulting in a trade deficit of \$1.663 billion in total.

The country suffered a total trade deficit of \$3.97 billion in the 2017-2018 FY, a decrease by over \$1.4 billion over that of the 2016-2017 FY. The country's import value is always greater than its exports, causing a trade deficit. Efforts are being made by trade authorities to seek the best available solutions to reduce the trade gap.—Shwe Khine ■

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Promoting digital literacy and combatting fake news

THANKS to modern technology, virtually everyone has access to information free of charge. The number of people who use digital platforms has also increased. But due to a lack of digital literacy, the number people who properly take advantage of the digital platform for information is still low.

During the period from the beginning of the transition to digital literacy to date, we deliberately carried news and articles in our state-owned media about risks from improper use of digital technology and have educated the people.

To educate the people on digital literacy and to promote proper use of digital technology, talks have been held nationwide. Awareness about digital literacy has been raised to educate everyone, from schoolchildren to adults.

What is happening daily in the world today is that with improper understanding about digital literacy, fake news is spreading for personal interest and harming the interests of others.

To avoid fake news which targets youths with low rationalization power due to weaknesses in reading, the state-run media has covered crimes caused by fake news in the world. Talks on digital literacy are being conducted by the township Information and Public Relations departments of the Ministry of Information at schools nationwide. Knowledge on digital literacy is posted online on the website and Facebook page of the Ministry of Information.

Social media is regarded as a major source of fake news. Many people tend to share fake news without proper vetting.

The Rakhine issue can be considered an issue made with fake news. Thus, authorities concerned made attempts to disseminate true news to invited media personnel from local and foreign agencies.

Starting from 19 December, 2016, the State Government granted permission to media personnel, including local and foreign journalists, to gather news in Rakhine State freely. Up to now, there are 18 local media agencies and 35 international news agencies that have collected news in Rakhine state a total of 16 times. They could meet locals and freely question the people from the IDP camps.

Cooperation is needed to prevent cross-border crimes and the spread of fake news, which can lead to conflicts. The Ministry of Information has made concerted efforts to share true news and avoid online fake news by creating the www.moi.gov.mm website, the MOI Web portal Myanmar on Facebook and Myanmar Digital News on Facebook, in Myanmar and English versions.

Myanmar has potential to be Asia's maritime hub

By Khin Maung Myint

THE geographic location of Myanmar places her in a very strategic position. Many centuries ago, this fact was recognised and proven to be correct. If one would bother to study the world atlas, they are bound to realise that our country is right at the centre of the Asian continent. It is bordered by two of the most populous and fastest developing countries — China and India — and the well-developed country of Thailand. If properly managed, we could develop our country into an important gateway connecting East Asia and Southeast Asia to South Asia and farther afield, which will be much beneficial to our economic and geopolitical status.

Looking back in time, it can be found that since the early 18th century, the British East India Company, the trading powerhouse of those days, was very interested in creating a trading route through Burma to the landlocked Chinese province of Yunnan. They sought the permission of the Burmese King to explore a possible land route through Burma to Yunnan. Their endeavour met failure as the members of that expedition were massacred by the rebels in Yunnan.

During the British colonial days in 1937, just before the war between the British and the Japanese broke out, a strategic motorway — the world renowned Burma Road — was constructed between Burma and China. That road served as the main lifeline for the Chinese Nationalist Army, which was resisting the Japanese occupation during the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945). Military equipment, arms, ammunition, vehicles and other supplies needed for the war effort were transported via that road by the United States of America to aid the Chinese Nationalist Army.

When Burma was occupied by the Japanese, the allied military authorities decided to build another supply route, which led to the birth of the famous Ledo Road, originating from a place called Ledo in northeastern India, cutting through the mountainous and densely forested Hukong Valley in northern Burma to link up with the existing Burma Road inside China. Since then, Burma was widely recognised as the backdoor to China.

Here it would be interesting to learn the experts' and analysts' views on the interconnection of Bangladesh, Myanmar and Yunnan. According to them, these three regions' interconnection has a long history in both human and environmental terms. The variety and complexity of pathways, corridors, and networks of livelihood-making, commerce, religions, political systems, and ethno-linguistic families have become ever highlighted in colonial encounters, changing political systems, inter-ethnic flows of natural resources and human labour, and academic research. The works of scholars and analysts all attest to the deep entanglement of the three regions and their wider connectivity with the eastern Himalayas, Southwest China, Southeast Asia, and South Asia. The transregionality and bordered connectivity of each of the three regions have simultaneously taken place in the modern era since its advent in the 18th century.

Today, with China rapidly developing, their demand for oil from the Middle East and gas from our offshore gas fields are becoming increasingly high. They had already established a deep seaport at Kyaukpyu and gas and fuel pipelines were already in place. These facilities will aid in the smooth flow of their exports and imports of fuel and other necessary commodities from the Middle East and Western countries. India too has intentions of utilizing Sittway as their seaport of convenience for export and import businesses of her landlocked northeastern provinces. Thus Myanmar is becoming more valuable for those two countries.

If we can exploit the present situations and opportunities open to us, I'm confident that our country could become one of the important maritime hubs in the region as stated in the title of this article. It may seem too ambitious or very wishful thinking, but I have concrete reasons to believe thus.

The deductions which I'm about to make are based on the past and present or prevailing situations. Since the 17th century, the Strait of Malacca has been the main shipping channel between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean. The strait provides a thoroughfare for ships plying between the Americas and the Oceania

to the east and the Middle East and Europe to the west and plays an important role as the main trading route between the East and West until today. However, with the ever increasing volumes of traffic passing through and the ships getting larger in size, the capacity that the strait can handle is nearing the saturation point. As the ships get bigger in size, their draughts have also increased significantly. Their deeper draughts are becoming restrictions for some large oil tankers and container ships, as there are shallow places along the strait obstructing their passage. This necessitates detours to avoid passing through the strait, which extends their voyages by over a thousand nautical miles. That is costing the shipping industries much more and wasting time. Also, the piracy inside the strait is of great concern to shipping.

For that reason, some large maritime nations to the east, namely China and Japan, are finding alternative means to solve those problems. China wanted to revive the old dream of digging a canal across the Kra Isthmus in Southern Thailand. Japan wants to construct a pipeline to transfer oil brought by their large tankers from the Middle East — to be pumped from the Andaman Sea on the western side, to the empty tankers waiting in the Gulf of Thailand on the eastern side of the Kra Isthmus. These are to avoid passing through the Malacca Strait, which would save them time, money and also safe from the pirates, who terrorize ships passing through that strait.



Of the two ideas mentioned above, I'm of the very strong opinion that the digging of a canal has the least chance of being implemented. My reasoning is: the idea of digging a canal across that isthmus originated in 17th century Siam, about two centuries before the Suez Canal came into being. It was the brainchild of the then King of Siam, who approached a French engineer, who visited there, with his idea. The French engineer convinced him that it wouldn't be possible, as the engineering technology wasn't very much advanced in those days. In the 18th century another Siamese prince came up with that idea again, but it never materialised. Then in the 19th century, after the British annexed Burma, the British East India Company planned to implement that project, but later dropped it to avoid undermining Singapore, which they had already developed into a flourishing seaport.

After such long delays in the past since the idea was first conceived, it can be deduced that it has no chance of being implemented now. The reason must be the cons outweigh the pros for constructing such a canal there. Although the residents of that area wanted the canal proposed by China as part of their Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) to be built, the government of Thailand is reluctant to comply for security reasons. They are wary of the fact that the canal would cut off those restive provinces from the rest of the country and would be difficult to keep control over those cut away provinces and would

also further the divide between the local populace.

The maritime nations to the east will try to find other alternatives to bypass the Malacca Strait to transport their exports and imports safely and efficiently. At such a time, we should try to exploit this opportune situation. We should try to upgrade our existing port facilities and construct more modern seaports that would be capable of handling large volumes of cargo flows through our country to their respective country of destination. In doing so, the pending Dawei Deep Seaport Project would be the best candidate for development. Taking into consideration the fact that Japan and India had teamed up to counter the Chinese initiative, the BRI, and are giving priority to the construction of the Asian Highways, serious studies should be made, how we could cash in on that project. As one of them will start from Viet Nam passing through Laos, Cambodia, Thailand and Myanmar to India and thence up to Turkey and another route will be from Indonesia through Singapore, Malaysia and link up with the first one inside Thailand, the Asian Highway would benefit the Dawei Seaport greatly. The cargoes bound for or out of the Far East and the ASEAN neighbours would be more rapidly transported through that seaport by the overland route that would reach up to Danang Seaport in Viet Nam.

At this juncture, I would like to highlight the importance of the Dawei Deep Seaport. As the large merchant ships will want to

avoid passing through the Malacca Strait, and with the impending completion of the Asian Highway, the Dawei Seaport will be an alternative they are looking for. It will get the lion's share of the cargo bound to and fro between the Far East — Japan, Korea, Hong Kong and Chinese Taipei — and also some of our ASEAN neighbours and the European and Middle Eastern countries to transit through Dawei Seaport. To my knowledge, Thailand has already constructed many miles of road that would serve as part of the Asian Highways. At present a new motorway is under construction to link Bangkok and the Kanchanaburi Province, which borders with Myanmar and is not far from the Dawei Seaport. As I had recently stayed at one of the construction sites of that motorway, I noticed the importance and priority they placed on the construction of that road, which I presume was intended to be linked to the future Dawei Seaport.

In conclusion, I would like to suggest that we should study the prospects of taking advantage of the prevailing situations discussed above. Based on those findings, we should make plans to implement projects to upgrade our existing seaports and build new modern port facilities to cope with the volume of shipping that would definitely be diverted to us, away from the Malacca Strait, in the near future.

The most immediate action to be taken will be to find ways and means to expedite the implementation of the Dawei Deep Seaport and the Special Economic Zone Project, which would surely be a success. These facilities would create job opportunities for our citizens, generate tariffs, duties, taxes and incomes that would boost our economy and set our country on course for rapid and robust developments.

The plan to install an oil pipeline across the Kra Isthmus will not have much impact on the Dawei Seaport, but if the Kra Canal should become a reality it could have certain extent or effect on it. However, I'm skeptical that it would ever materialise. With the Kyaukpyu Seaport operated by the Chinese certain to be included in the BRI, we stand to benefit from that too. Thus, I'm quite confident our country has great potential to become the maritime hub of Asia. ■

Flood Bulletin

(Issued at 14:00 hrs MST on 22-7-2018)
Flood condition of Thanlwin River

According to the 13:30 hrs MST observation today, the water level of Thanlwin River has exceeded by about (1½) feet at Hpaan, above its danger level. It may continue to rise about (1½) feet during the next (1) day and may remain above its danger level.

Advisory

It is especially advised to the people who settle near the river banks and low lying areas in Hpa-an Township, to take precaution measure.

Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 7:00 pm Sunday, 22nd July, 2018)

BAY INFERENCE: Monsoon is strong over the Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal.

SPECIAL FEATURES: According to the observations at (18:30) MST today, the tropical depression over the South China Sea (Gulf of Tonkin) almost stationary and it is centered at about (210)miles South of Nanning(China). It is forecast to move slowly to Eastwards.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL AFTERNOON OF THE 23rd JULY, 2018: Rain or thundershowers will be scattered in Magway Region and Northern Shan State and fairly widespread in Lower Sagaing and Mandalay regions and widespread in the remaining Regions and States with regionally heavy falls in Kayin State and isolated heavy falls in Bago and Yangon Regions, Rakhine and Mon States. Degree of certainty is (100%).

STATE OF THE SEA: Squalls with moderate to rough seas are likely at times off and along Myanmar Coasts. Surface wind speed in squalls may reach (35-40)mph Wave height will be about (8 -13)feet off and along Myanmar Coasts.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Strong monsoon over the Andaman Sea and South Bay of Bengal.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 23rd JULY, 2018: One or two rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 23rd JULY, 2018: Some rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 23rd JULY, 2018: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

Invitation to young writers for Sunday section

The Global New Light of Myanmar is accepting submissions of poetry, opinion, articles, essays and short stories from young people for its weekly Sunday Next Generation Platform. Interested candidates can send their work to the **Global New Light of Myanmar** at No. 150, Nga Htat Kyee Pagoda Road, Bahan Township, Yangon or by email to dce@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com with the following information: (1) Sector you wish to be included in (poetry, opinion, etc.), (2) Own name and (if different) your penname, (3) Your level of education, (4) Name of your School/ College/University, (5) A written note of declaration that the submitted piece is your original work and has not been submitted to any other news or magazine publishing houses, (6) A color photo of the submitter, (7) Copy of your NRC card, (8) Contact information (email address, mobile number, etc.). — **Editorial Department, The Global New Light of Myanmar news office**

Trade accords on Xi's agenda during Senegal swing

DAKAR (SENEGAL) — China's President Xi Jinping inked a clutch of trade accords Saturday on the first visit by a Chinese leader to Senegal in almost a decade.

Senegalese President Macky Sall welcomed his counterpart to Dakar for afternoon talks before Xi continues a tour of the region Sunday, heading to Rwanda, then South Africa on Tuesday ahead of a BRICS summit of developing nations starting Wednesday.

Although details of the accords signed were not immediately forthcoming, Sall told reporters both leaders held talks on "bilateral cooperation, Sino-African relations and international current affairs", hailing China as "one of the great economies of the modern era."

He said China's progress along the development path was a "message of hope" showing that "under-development is not fatal and the battle for progress is above all won by (having) a combative spirit."

Xi responded in kind, telling Sall: "Every time I come to Africa I can measure the great dynamism of this continent."

He added he had great faith in the future of Beijing's cooperation with its African partners as it becomes a primary investor on the continent.

A report last year by Ernst and Young named China the single largest contributor of foreign directive investment with 293 projects embarked upon since 2005 for an outlay of \$66.4 billion.

One piece of Xi's business Saturday involved the formal



Young Senegalese wave flags to mark the arrival of President Xi on a state visit. With China the west African nation's second biggest trading partner behind France, its firms have embarked on a slew of major infrastructure projects. **PHOTO: AFP**

handover to his host of the keys to a Chinese-built wrestling venue, the sport being hugely popular in the west African nation.

China is already Senegal's second-biggest trading partner behind France, with bilateral trade surpassing \$2 billion in 2016, according to official data.

The country's main exports to China are nuts as well as the metals, zirconium and titanium.

Chinese imports are steadily gaining ground meanwhile, rising from 227 billion CFA francs (some 350 million euros/\$410 million) in 2013 to 367 billion last year, construction materials leading the way as Chinese companies increasingly work on state projects.

Chinese firms have built a major slice of recent Senegalese infrastructure including sports stadia in Dakar, roads, a theatre, a national wrestling arena and a museum of black civilisation.

Since diplomatic relations were restored in 2005 Chinese investments in Senegal have surpassed 1.8 billion euros. — **AFP ■**

Gaza truce holds after Israeli strikes over soldier death

GAZA CITY — A ceasefire announced by Hamas largely held Saturday after a wave of deadly strikes across the Palestinian enclave sparked by the death of an Israeli soldier shot near the border.

Israel did not confirm the deal announced by Gaza's Islamist rulers Hamas, which went into effect around midnight Friday.

Since then there have been no reports of Israeli air strikes on the blockaded enclave or of mortar fire from Gaza toward Israel.

"With Egyptian and UN efforts, we reached (an agreement) to return to the previous state of calm between the (Israeli) occupation and the Palestinian factions," Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhoum said in a statement.

He gave no details of the deal.

Israel's army and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office declined to confirm a truce was reached.

"All we can say is that there have been no incidents or Israeli attacks in the Gaza Strip since the last wave of airstrikes on Friday night," a military spokes-

woman told AFP.

On Friday, three Hamas militants were killed as air raids sent fireballs exploding into the sky over Gaza, while Israel said rockets had been fired back at its territory. A fourth Palestinian was shot dead in protests near the border.

The United Nations urged all sides to step "back from the brink" after months of increasing tensions.

The soldier, shot dead along the border in southern Gaza, was the first to be killed in and around the Palestinian enclave since a 2014 war between Israel and Hamas.

Friday's flare-up is the latest as demonstrations and clashes on the frontier since March have seen at least 149 Palestinians killed.

The Israeli army said they struck 60 Hamas sites including weapon manufacturing sites, a drone warehouse and a military operations room.

The ceasefire is the second since in a week.

Last weekend saw the most severe exchange of fire between Israel and Palestinian militants in Gaza since the 2014 war. — **AFP ■**

Morocco's litter-strewn beaches kick up a stink

RABAT (MOROCCO) — Blessed with a coastline that stretches for hundreds of kilometres across flat sandy expanses and rugged coves, Morocco's beaches should be a magnet — but a litter crisis risks repelling sun seekers, citizens say.

On a small beach in the capital Rabat the words "Keep your city clean" are daubed across largely empty bins, seemingly mocked by the detritus on the ground.

The litter "spoils the pleasure", says 22-year-old Said, who has come to Oudayas beach for a dip with friends to cool off on a hot day.

"Unfortunately, people don't realise the importance of keeping beaches clean," he laments, surrounded by cigarette butts and other trash, just a few steps from the edge of the old city.

Some feel they are fighting a losing battle.

"Rubbish collectors clean the beach from top to bottom every morning, but in the evening, bathers leave it even dirtier," says a local official.

'Megaphones should be used'

"Perhaps megaphones should be used to sensitise the

people and embarrass the polluters," the official adds.

The state of this small beach in the capital is far from unique.

Every summer, Morocco's media publish reports lambasting the condition of sands stretching from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic.

A nationwide ban on plastic bags imposed in 2016 appears to have done little to stem the tide of rubbish piling up on beaches, despite authorities strictly enforcing the measure.

The problem is in part generated outside Morocco — Greenpeace estimates that the equivalent of a truckload of plastic enters the world's seas

every 60 seconds.

And the activist group said in June it had found microplastics in samples collected in Antarctic waters.

But volunteers who take part in beach clean-ups say far too many Moroccans dump refuse without a second thought.

"In recent years we've seen water pollution increase due to a lack of awareness," says 45-year-old Mohammed el Machkour, president of the Al Marjane sporting association.

Only 21 out of 40 beaches nominated nationwide for the coveted international "Blue Flag" status have met criteria, due to litter, poor water quality and other issues. — **AFP ■**



A child plays on a beach in Morocco's capital Rabat on 12 July 2018. **PHOTO: AFP**

Mnuchin pushes for EU, China concessions amid trade stalemate

WASHINGTON — The United States and its European Union allies were locked in a trade stalemate on Saturday after Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin refused to budge on demands for concessions.

In his opening salvo at the Group of 20 summit in Buenos Aires, Mnuchin urged China and the EU to respect “free, fair and reciprocal trade” amid talk of an escalating global trade conflict, but his French counterpart fired back that the US must “return to reason.”

Mnuchin was inflexible in his approach to the EU following a series of tit-for-tat measures that began with US President Donald Trump’s decision to slap tariffs on steel and aluminum imports.

“My message is pretty clear, it’s the same message the president delivered at the G7: if Europe believes in free trade, we’re ready to sign a free trade agreement with no tariffs, no non-tariff barriers and no subsidies. It has to be all three,” said Mnuchin.

US must ‘de-escalate’

That brought a firm response from French finance and economy minister Bruno Le Maire at the G20 meeting, which brings together finance ministers and central bank governors from the world’s 20 leading economies.

“We refuse to negotiate with a gun to the head,” he said.

“It must be the US that takes the first step to de-escalate.”

He said he expected “a



US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin says he wants a better “balance” in trade relations with China and the EU. PHOTO: AFP

change of attitude” from Trump, otherwise “there will be no choice other than to retaliate.”

International Monetary Fund chief Christine Lagarde opened the summit by reiterating her fears that increasing trade restrictions would hurt global GDP.

Lagarde said that taking into account “current announced and in process measures,” an IMF simulation indicates that in a worst-case scenario, a half point would be cut from global GDP, amounting to some \$430 billion.

But Mnuchin showed no signs of a US willingness to back down.

Asked about Trump’s threat to hammer China with punitive tariffs on the entirety of the \$500 billion in goods it exports to the US, Mnuchin said: “It is definitely a realistic pos-

sibility, so I wouldn’t minimize the possibility.”

He added: “We share a desire to have a more balanced relationship and the balanced relationship is by us selling more goods (to China).”

Mnuchin said China must “open up their markets so we can compete fairly,” although he insisted that to do so would be “a tremendous opportunity for us and a tremendous opportunity for China.”

The brewing global trade conflict was always expected to dominate talks in the Argentine capital and Brazilian finance minister Eduardo Guardia said many delegates had spoken of “threats on the economic horizon” that “impact on economies, particularly emerging ones.”

“Global trade cannot be based on survival of the fittest,” Le Maire told AFP.—AFP ■

Argentina making progress in monetary policy, says IMF chief

BUENOS AIRES — Argentina is making progress in monetary policy aimed at improving its economic indicators, International Monetary Fund (IMF) chief Christine Lagarde said Saturday.

Measures taken by the central bank of Argentina have reestablished and generated a much better situation, with less volatility and more transparency, Lagarde said at a press conference in Buenos Aires.

Argentine President Mauricio Macri requested a loan in May amid a rapid devaluation of the Argentine peso. The IMF agreed to a loan of 50 billion

US dollars.

Under the agreement, Argentina has pledged to pursue several unpopular measures, including curbs on government spending to lower the public deficit, which have sparked protests by working-class groups.

In support of those measures, Lagarde said the joint program “has clearly had results,” adding that she has confidence Argentina would reach the target fiscal deficit of 2.7 per cent GDP for 2018 and 1.3 percent for 2019, with the deficit eliminated by 2020.

High inflation remains a

concern, reaching a year-on-year rate of 29.5 per cent at the end of June, according to Finance Minister Nicolas Dujoyne on Thursday.

The government aims at a lower inflation rate next year, falling 10 points compared with this year.

“The inflation target must be met,” Lagarde said. “The authorities have said so and that is what we have discussed and agreed.”

Lagarde was in the capital to attend a two-day meeting of finance ministers and central bank chief from G20 countries.

— Xinhua ■

Nine family members among 17 dead in US ‘duck boat’ tragedy

CHICAGO — Nine members of one family were among 17 people killed when an amphibious US tourist boat capsized during a sudden storm on a Missouri lake, a tragedy which raised renewed questions on Saturday about the safety of the craft known as “duck” boats.

The hybrid vessels, with wheels allowing them to drive on city roads but which can also travel on water, are popular with tourists in many cities. The accident occurred Thursday night in full view of witnesses, at least one of whom captured video of the vessel bobbing in rough waters on Table Rock Lake near the city of Branson, a vacation destination popular for its theaters and country music. “My heart is very heavy. Out of 11 of us there’s only two that’s surviving, that’s me and my nephew” Tia Coleman, her voice breaking, told Fox59 from her hospital bed.

“I lost all of my children. I lost my husband. I lost my mother-in-law and my father-in-law,” along with other relatives, she told the Indianapolis TV station.

Coleman said the boat’s captain had told passengers earlier in their trip that they “won’t need” life jackets.

“He said it when we were in the water,” she told Fox59. “When it was time to grab them, it was too late and I believe that a lot of people could have been spared.”

She added that the water “didn’t look ominous at the very first.”

‘Let me die’

Coleman told CNN affiliate KOLR of her own near-death by drowning: “I was yelling, I was screaming, and finally I said, ‘Lord, just let me die, let me die.’”

She eventually floated to the surface. Early Saturday, the Stone County Sheriff’s Office confirmed to AFP the identity of the 17 victims — nine of whom had the name Coleman. They ranged in age from one-year-old Arya Coleman to the oldest victim Ervin Coleman, 76. Five of the dead were aged 15 or younger. Police said 31 people were aboard the vessel, which was covered by a canopy and was seen struggling to reach shore against strong winds before it succumbed to the waves and began to sink. The dead included the boat’s driver, according to the sheriff’s office. The other crew member, who survived, was in charge when the craft took to the water, US media reported. Several people were injured.

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) has taken over the investigation, which follows previous fatal accidents involving duck boats. In 2002 the agency recommended that amphibious vehicles provide “reserve buoyancy” such as through watertight compartmentalization, to keep them afloat in the event of flooding.

The advisory followed the 1999 sinking of the Miss Majestic, a former US Army landing vehicle, with the loss of 13 lives in Hot Springs, Arkansas, because of “inadequate maintenance.”

Until reserve buoyancy retrofits were completed, the NTSB urged other safety measures including the removal of canopies, or installation of canopies that would not restrict passenger escape. It also found that, at that time, the US Coast Guard lacked uniform, nationwide inspection policies for duck boats.—AFP ■



Missouri tourist boat accident. PHOTO: AFP

UK to refuse Brexit bill without trade deal

LONDON — Britain will only pay its EU divorce bill if the bloc agrees the framework for a future trade deal, the new Brexit Secretary warned in an interview published Sunday.

Dominic Raab, who replaced David Davis after he quit the role earlier this month in protest over the government's Brexit strategy, said "some conditionality between the two" was needed.

He added that the Article 50 mechanism used to trigger Britain's imminent exit from the European Union provided for new deal details.

"Article 50 requires, as we negotiate the withdrawal agreement, that there's a future framework for our new relationship going forward, so the two are linked," Raab told the *Sunday Telegraph*.

"You can't have one side fulfilling its side of the bargain and the other side not, or going slow, or failing to commit on its side."

"So I think we do need to make sure that there's some conditionality between the two."

The British government has

sent mixed signals so far on the divorce bill. Prime Minister Theresa May agreed in December to a financial settlement totalling £35 to £39 billion (\$46-51 billion, 39-44 billion euros) that ministers said depended on agreeing future trade ties.

But cabinet members have since cast doubt on the position.

Finance minister Philip Hammond said shortly afterwards he found it "inconceivable" Britain would not pay its bill, which he described as "not a credible scenario".

The country is set to leave the bloc on March 30, but the two sides want to strike a divorce agreement by late October in order to give parliament enough time to endorse a deal.

Raab met the EU's top negotiator Michel Barnier for the first time on Friday, where he heard doubts over May's new Brexit blueprint for the future relationship.

But Barnier noted the priority in talks should be on finalising the initial divorce deal.

A hardline stance by the



Britain is set to leave the EU on 30 March 2019 but the two sides want to strike a divorce agreement by late October, 2018 in order to give parliament enough time to endorse a deal. **PHOTO: AFP**

British government on the financial settlement could complicate progress, with Raab insisting on the link with the bill and a future agreement.

"Certainly it needs to go into the arrangements we have at international level with our EU partners," he told the *Telegraph*.

"We need to make it clear that the two are linked."

May's plans formally unveiled in early July envisages a customs partnership for goods

and a common rulebook with the EU. It has faced severe criticism in Britain, including from within her own cabinet and Conservative Party.

Former foreign secretary Boris Johnson and Davis both resigned in opposition.

A new YouGov poll published by the *Sunday Times* showed just 12 per cent of people backed the proposals as "good" for Britain while 43 per cent thought they were "bad".

—AFP ■

Macedonia, Montenegro sign MoC against illegal migration, human trafficking

SKOPJE — Macedonia and Montenegro signed a memorandum of cooperation on Friday between national committees and bodies against illegal migration and human trafficking.

The memorandum of cooperation was signed during the meeting of the two respective interior ministers of Macedonia and Montenegro, Oliver Spasovski and Mevludin Nuhodzic in the city of Ohrid. The meeting between the two ministers focused on the reforms of security services, the enhancement of capacities for financial investigations and property confiscation and the fight against corruption and all forms of crime. Spasovski mentioned the importance of using Montenegro experiences regarding NATO accession talks and the opening of European Union negotiating chapter. Meanwhile, Nuhodzic praised the friendly bilateral ties between the two countries. **Xinhua ■**

In move to right, Spain's conservatives pick Casado to lead party

MADRID — Spain's Popular Party (PP) on Saturday picked arch-conservative Pablo Casado to replace ousted prime minister Mariano Rajoy as leader, in a move seen as a lurch to the right.

The 37-year-old lawmaker inherits the helm of a party dogged by corruption allegations and that has seen its poll numbers plunge in recent years.

"A new era begins today," Casado told party members after the vote in Madrid. "We're going to try to reconquer the hearts of all Spaniards after the difficult weeks we've experienced."

The appointment of Casado, a known conservative who has promised "hope" with a generational revamp of the party, will be seen as a lurch to the right for the party.

He has taken a hardline stance on the Catalan independence crisis, calling for the addition of offences such as illegally calling a referendum to the criminal code to boost Spain's legal response to the secession threat.

"Dialogue doesn't work with those who want to break the law," he said this week.

Casado is also against decriminalising euthanasia as pro-

moted by the Socialist government and wants to lower income and corporation taxes.

He will have to breathe life into a party which lost three million voters between the 2011 general elections, when Rajoy won an absolute majority, and the last polls in 2016.

Many have migrated to Ciudadanos, a centre-right party, angry over the series of corruption scandals that hit the PP in recent years. Casado beat Soraya Saenz de Santamaria, who served as Rajoy's deputy, to become head of Spain's conservatives.

Rajoy's ousting in a no-confidence vote in June was partly seen as a censure for his handling of the Catalan independence crisis, and a perception that he was weak on rooting out graft.

After an acrimonious campaign that saw mystery videos released attacking both candidates, 3,082 delegates cast their ballot for the successor of Rajoy, who spoke for the last time as PP leader on Friday.

In a long, emotional speech, the 63-year-old who had been a major figure of Spanish politics over the past 14 years asked PP members to "be responsible in



Casado acknowledges delegates after being chosen as the next leader of Spain's Popular Party (PP) at the end of a party meeting in Madrid on 21 July 2018. **PHOTO: AFP**

carrying out your duties".

Looming elections

Rajoy, who has long been one of Spain's great political survivors — he even walked away from a 2005 helicopter crash with just a broken finger — oversaw the country's economic recovery, though unemployment has remained stubbornly high during his tenure.

In May, a court announced it had sentenced former PP of-

ficials, businessmen and their spouses to a total of 351 years in jail for their role in a vast bribery scheme known as the Gurtel case. It proved to be one corruption scandal too many for the PP, which has been hit by a series of graft accusations, and Rajoy was gone a week later.

"We're an honest party, there's no room here for a single corrupt individual," Casado said after his election. San-

tamaria, 47, emphasised her experience ahead of the vote, painting herself as the only candidate with sufficient gravitas to defeat current Socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez in 2020 elections.

The PP, which still holds the most seats in parliament even if it lost its absolute majority, will have to rapidly prepare for municipal, regional and European elections in May 2019. —AFP ■

At least 11 dead Saturday as heat wave continues to grip Japan

TOKYO — At least 11 people died Saturday from suspected heat-stroke across Japan as a heat wave continued to grip the country, with a record number of ambulances dispatched in Tokyo after many people fell ill amid scorching temperatures.

On Sunday, the mercury hit 32.0 °C as of 7:30 a.m. in central Tokyo, with the weather agency issuing a warning for high temperatures in most areas of the country.

As of 11 a.m., 601 of the agency's 927 observation spots had recorded 30 C or higher temperatures. Readings surpassing 35 C were taken in 57 locations, including Tottori city, Gunma's Maebashi city and Mie's Kameyama city.

The Tokyo Fire Department said Sunday that 3,091 ambulances were dispatched in the capital the previous day, the largest on a



A family plays on a beach in Tokyo's Odaiba district on 22 July 2018. **PHOTO: KYODO NEWS**

single-day basis since the department started emergency medical operations in 1936.

Ambulance dispatches have been surging in Tokyo since Tuesday, pushed up by requests for transporting people

hit by heat to hospitals, the department said.

Almost all of the 11 victims were senior citizens, including two couples in their 70s who were found dead in their respective homes in Tokyo and Osaka.

Among calls made to emergency services Saturday were those reporting junior high school and senior high school students falling ill while playing sport in Shizuoka and Ibaraki prefectures. — Kyodo News ■

Five dead, hundreds of thousands affected by monsoon rains in Philippines

MANILA — At least five people died and more than 700,000 were affected by days of heavy rains, which have lashed the Philippines since last week, authorities said on Sunday.

The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) said it has received reports that a resident of Luisa Pelew died in a landslide while a resident of Negros Oriental Angelito Jipulan drowned.

The disaster agency said it is verifying reports that one remains missing while another was injured.

Police have also reported at least three more deaths, including a Negros Occidental

resident who reportedly drowned and two children from Antique province whose house was buried by a landslide.

The NDRRMC said the affected population of 158,509 families or 728,003 persons are from 585 villages in the National Capital Region (NCR), and several provinces in the Philippine main Luzon Island, including Ilocos region, Pampanga, Batangas, Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR), Pangasinan, and some provinces in the central Philippines.

“Of which, a total of 53,743 families or 229,240 residents are being served inside and outside evacuation

centers,” the NDRRMC said. Most of the displaced population, 51,326 families or 217,393 residents, are from Central Luzon, the agency said, adding that only 20 families or 76 persons are listed as displaced in NCR, all from Valenzuela City.

The NDRRMC said a total of 334 areas in Ilocos, Central Luzon, Calabarzon, CAR, and NCR were flooded, though many of them have already seen water subside.

At least three tropical cyclones battered the Philippines in recent weeks. The latest cyclone, locally named Josie, is the Philippines' 10th tropical cyclone for 2018.

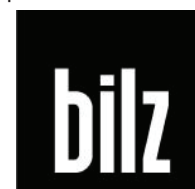
Tropical depression Josie continued to move north-northeastward over Bashi Channel on Sunday afternoon as it began making its way in the Philippines.

But the state weather bureau PAGASA said Josie, which still packs maximum winds of 60 kilometers per hour and gustiness of up to 75 kilometers per hour, continues to enhance the southwest monsoon which is affecting Luzon and the Visayas region in the central Philippines.

Rainy season in the Philippines occurs from June to October. The Philippines is a tropical country and experiences around 20 typhoons every year. —Xinhua ■

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Dated 23 July 2018

MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY HOLIDAY NOTICE

As the wharves, warehouses and chellan Offices of Yangon Port will be closed on the 27th JULY 2018 (FULL MOON DAY OF WASO), Loading, Unloading and delivery for Goods will be received on Payment as Holiday Fees.

CLAIM'S DAY NOTICE

M.V AS SOPHIA VOY. NO. ()

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V AS SOPHIA VOY. NO. () are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 23-7-2018 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of M.I.T./MIP 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.

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Manila's 'Golden Gays' sing for their supper

MANILA — Al Enriquez sheds his threadbare street vendor clothes like dead skin and develops a voguish, winking air once he slips into a gauzy gown and wig of tight blond curls.

He's 82 years old and is one of the stars in a beauty pageant for elderly and poor gay men that's about to start in a banquet hall on a rundown Manila street.

But this is not a rowdy, hooting drag show for tourists — instead it is part of the decades-long work of a collective of men like him to take care of their own.

They call themselves the Golden Gays and they mean it.

"When I'm dressed like this I feel ecstatic and I feel that I don't have any sadness in me," Enriquez told AFP. "I'm gay and I'm not embarrassed that I'm gay."

The Philippines has a reputation of openness toward homosexuality, but experts say legal protections are lacking and the

nation's weak social safety net especially fails older gay people.

That's why the Golden Gays have recruited corporate and private sponsors who pay for their members to get a decent lunch and a few days' worth of groceries after the pageants they hold at least once a month.

"The show is just our way of saying thank you", says the group's 68-year-old organiser Ramon Busa, known as Monique de la Rue once in heels and make-up.

'My mother was angry'

Most of the 48 members are in their 60s and are among the millions of Filipinos who survive on less than five dollars per day.

In real life they are dishwashers, street hawkers or scavengers, but for the afternoon the door will be closed on reality.

Ahead of the performance, the air in the room smells of perfume and the fried food that will be served for lunch. The men



Street vendor and Golden Gays member Al Enriquez, 82, also known as "Carmen Dela Rue", introduces himself to the crowd during the Golden Gays of Manila Beauty Pageant. PHOTO: AFP

tug their dresses into place and scrutinise themselves in hand-held mirrors.

The show starts with music firing at distortion volume from battered speakers as the 18 performers shimmy down the catwalk and strike poses — or land on the laps of the dozen or so friends and supporters in the audience. The shows have been

going on for years, but the Golden Gays' roots are even deeper.

Back in the mid-1970s they got their start in Manila's urban sprawl as the Home for the Golden Gays — a house where homeless or poor older gay men could spend the night.

However, the home belonged to their founder, activist and columnist Justo Justo, and

when he died in 2012 his family evicted the group within days.

This setback did not break up the group, which serves as the family that many of its members don't have. Federico Ramasamy, a long-time Golden Gay, was rejected by his parents once they learned of his sexuality. He made his way to Manila and never looked back.

"I was born in the late 50s, so family values were very high," he said. "My mother was very, very angry at me when she learned that I was a gay. She sent me away."

'Hand to mouth'

The Golden Gays became his family and a refuge from the real life in which he makes about two dollars a day for a 15-hour shift as a dishwasher.

"But I feel good, especially when it comes to what happened today, the Golden Gays. We all get together," said Ramasamy, 60, after the pageant. —AFP ■



Kangana Ranaut. PHOTO: PTI

Now, box office war between Kangana and Hrithik next January

MUMBAI — Actors Kangana Ranaut and Hrithik Roshan, who have been engaged in a public war of words over their alleged affair, will battle it out at the box office as their films are scheduled to hit the cinema houses in January next year.

Kangana's one of the most ambitious projects "Manikarnika: The Queen Of Jhansi" is set to clash with Hrithik's "Super 30" on January 25, 2019.

"Manikarnika" was apparently set to release this year in April and was later pushed to August 15 and then to September.

But today, Zee Studios and the film's producer Kamal Jain

took to Twitter that it would release during the Republic Day weekend.

Directed by Krish, the film will see the "Queen" star in the role of Rani Laxmibai.

Hrithik's "Super 30", helmed by Vikas Bahl, is a biopic on Patna-based mathematician Anand Kumar, who trains a batch of 30 aspiring IIT candidates every year.

The two actors have been at loggerheads since the time Kangana hinted at Hrithik being her "silly ex" in an interview in 2016. Their feud turned nasty after they slapped legal notices on each other. —PTI ■

Warner Bros. superheroes swoop into Comic-Con

SAN DIEGO — Warner Bros. closed the final full day of the Comic-Con International fan-fest on Saturday as the belle of the ball, bringing its roster of superheroes to take a bow in San Diego.

The studio took over the 6,500-seat main arena at the world's largest celebration of fan culture for two star-studded hours, serving up tantalizing teasers for its DC Extended Universe series of comic-book movies.

With Disney-owned Marvel Studios and Lucasfilm both bowing out this year, it was Warner's chance to shine and the studio obliged with a lineup of the world's biggest stars, including Johnny Depp, Chris Pratt, Jude Law, Elizabeth Banks and Eddie Redmayne.

One of the most eagerly-awaited presentations of the week, it was a chance for WB to show it is back on track after poor reviews for its DC Extended Universe movies "Batman vs. Superman: Dawn of Justice," "Suicide Squad" and "Justice League."

The studio set out its stall with extensive looks at James

Wan's upcoming "Aquaman" and "Wonder Woman: 1984," a follow-up to 2017's "Wonder Woman," the DCEU's only unqualified success.

"The way we look at this is not a sequel, it's a new chapter, it's a new story," said Israeli actress Gal Gadot, who was shown as Wonder Woman saving a young girl from gunmen in rough early footage.

Director Patty Jenkins described the era of the sequel — out in November next year — as "mankind at its best and worst."

'Half-naked'

"We're aware of things now that we weren't in the 1980s," she told the crowd. "There were some incredible and beautiful things in the 80s but at the same time... it's us at our most extreme."

The presentation also unveiled the first trailer for "Shazam!" — an altogether more light-hearted entry in the DC universe starring Zachary Levi that is due out in April next year.

But the undoubted star of the show was "Aquaman," which raised the roof as a shirt-

less Jason Momoa appeared onscreen in a new trailer as half-human, half-Atlantean hero Arthur Curry.

"You're in armor or you're half-naked in tattoos and it was a bad choice looking back to wear denim," Momoa recalled of the production, which required him to be wet most days.

"They look like leather pants, but they're not."

There was a second preview for the Christmas release that unveiled Aquaman's nemesis, Black Manta, as well as more underwater action, a rooftop chase and a final view of the Momoa in his superhero threads.

Warner's first exclusive of the session gave Harry Potter fans a look at the legendary battle between Professor Dumbledore and Gellert Grindelwald in "Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald," which hits theaters on November 16.

Troubled star Johnny Depp was a surprise appearance onstage, missing "Aquaman" actress Amber Heard, his wife before last year's acrimonious divorce, by less than an hour. —AFP ■

Aussie researchers identify new dinosaur species

SYDNEY — A new dinosaur species has been discovered and named by Australian researchers, a decade after the fossil was unearthed.

The dinosaur remains belong to “Akainacephalus johnsoni,” a herbivore about 5 meters long with spiked armor, four legs and club-like tail that belongs to the Ankylosaurid family and lived more than 75 million years ago, local media quoted James Cook University researcher Jelle Wiersma as saying on Friday.

The name is derived from Greek, referring to thorn or spike and head. The dinosaur remains were uncovered in Utah in the United States a decade ago and paleontologists have since been

studying the find.

About 76 million years ago, Utah was hot, humid, criss-crossed by slow-moving rivers and streams and swamps, with large cypress-like conifer trees, said Wiersma, who led a report on the new species.

“It had a whole host of plants and animals living on land and in the water that are very different from today’s flora and fauna.”

“We gain more insight into the diversity of life during that time ... and it helps us to better understand modern environments as well.”

The Akainacephalus skeleton is set for display at the Natural History Museum of Utah this week. — Xinhua ■



People visit the Zigong Dinosaur Museum in Zigong, southwest China's Sichuan province on 7 December 2017. PHOTO: XINHUA

Global scientific team creates new method of predicting properties of organic compounds

MOSCOW — An international research team, together with scientists from the Skolkovo Institute of Science and Technology (Skoltech), has created a neural network to predict complex properties of organic substances using a minimal set of input data, Skoltech’s press office reported.

The results of the study were published in the *Journal of Physics: Condensed Matter*.

“Our newly developed method will make it far simpler to predict the environmental impact of any substance. Later on, our development can also be

used to forecast the properties of exotic molecules and principally new compounds for which the existing tools of searching for the structure-property relationship do not work,” the study’s first author, Skoltech PhD Sergey Sosnin stated.

The essence of the method is carrying out a physical-chemical calculation and using this data to define 3D densities of hydrogen and oxygen around a molecule under study. Then an analysis of the obtained information with 3D convolutional neural networks is conducted.

Sosnin also noted that the main achievement of their scientific work is the creation of “a universal way to describe a molecule for further transmission of its ‘image’ to a 3D convolutional neural network.” The convolutional neural network is a special architecture of artificial neural networks aimed at efficient image recognition.

Skoltech is a non-governmental scientific and educational institution established in 2011 under the participation of Massachusetts Institute of Technology. —Tass ■



The newly developed method will make it far simpler to predict the environmental impact of any substance, the study’s first author said. PHOTO: TASS

Long non-coding RNA may play role in fat metabolism

CHICAGO — Researchers at Northwestern University (NU) have identified that thousands of lincRNAs, long non-coding RNA molecules produced by so-called “junk DNA”, may in fact play an important role in fat metabolism.

In a study, the researchers examined the RNA content of fat tissue from 25 healthy and lean participants.

They discovered that thousands of lincRNAs in human fat cells are not found in mice, and that many of these human adipose-specific lincRNAs share features that suggest they play a role in fat metabolism.

The researchers also looked closely at the most prevalent molecule, linc-ADAL, which is not expressed in mice, and found that linc-ADAL plays an important role in how fat cells develop and store fat.

Long intergenic non-coding RNAs (lincRNAs) are transcribed from what was previously known as “junk DNA”, portions of the human genome that do not code for proteins and were originally thought to be non-functional.

“We are still in the early stages of figuring out how lincRNAs function in human disease, but what used to be considered

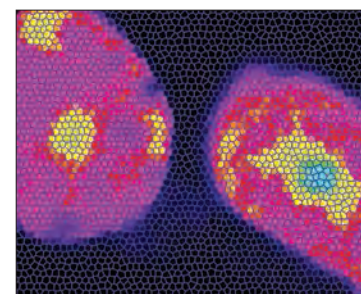


Illustration of thermogenesis in mice beige fat cells in response to acetylcholine stimulation. PHOTO: XINHUA

‘junk’ in the genome may actually point us towards the jackpot of developing effective therapeutic approaches for cardiometabolic diseases,” said Jennie Lin, assistant professor of Medicine in the Division of Nephrology and Hypertension and a co-author of the study. The study demonstrates the importance of taking a human-centric approach to studying pathways relevant to fat metabolism, suggest the clinical significance of lincRNAs and other human-specific molecules that aren’t found in animal models, and could lead to novel treatments for obesity and related diseases in the future.

The findings have been published in *Science Translational Medicine*. — Xinhua ■

Neymar: “I couldn’t look at a football” after the World Cup

PRAIA GRANDE (BRAZIL) — Brazil superstar Neymar admits that after his nation’s quarter-final defeat to Belgium at the World Cup he couldn’t look at a ball and didn’t want to see any of the remaining matches.

“I wouldn’t go as far as to say I didn’t want to play again but, I didn’t want to see a ball, or to see any more football played,” 26-year-old Neymar told AFP in an exclusive interview on Saturday. The Paris Saint Germain forward was talking at his Neymar Praia Grande institute where the Red Bull Neymar Jr 5’s (five-a-side-soccer) tournament was being played.

Dressed in a sleeveless t-shirt, with his six-year-old son Davi Lucca sat upon his knee, the striker was however in a relaxed mood as he explained his post-World Cup blues.

“I was in mourning, I was really sad about it, but sadness passes, I have my son, my family, my friends and they don’t want to see me moping around. I’ve got

more reason to be happy than sad,” said Neymar, reflecting on his team’s 2-1 quarter-final defeat to Belgium. Asked about reports in Spain linking him with a transfer to Real Madrid the forward said “that’s all speculation from the press.” “The guys who come up with these stories seem to know more about my life than I do. I won’t respond to this type of question because nothing happened,” he scoffed. The Brazilian superstar, who moved to PSG for a world record 222 million euros (\$264 million) last year, insists that the burden of expectation on his shoulders — whether with his club or country — does not weigh heavily. “No, all the great players feel pressure,” he said.

“It’s true that when it comes to me, there are double standards. I have been aware of this responsibility, not only for Brazil, but also in club football, since I was 17, 18 years old.

“I have prepared myself to handle this pressure and I know that when the results are not



Neymar, with his son Davi Lucca, in an interview with AFP on 21 July 2018. PHOTO: AFP

what they should be then that pressure increases.”

Neymar has been hit by a barrage of criticism for theatrical rolling around after being fouled at the World Cup, but says he should have been better protected.

‘Criticism of me exaggerated’

“People were faster to criticise the one being fouled than the one doing the fouling,” he insisted. “I went to the World Cup to play, to beat the opposition, not

to get kicked. The criticism of me was exaggerated, but I’m a big boy, I’m used to dealing with this kind of thing

“And I can’t be the referee and play at the same time, but there are times I wish I could,” he said. Earlier this week, Neymar took a swipe at his critics with a tongue-in-cheek video in which he teaches children how to fall to the ground.

“One, two, three, go!” shouts Neymar on the Instagram video

as around a dozen youngsters fall to the ground of a parking lot.

“That’s a free-kick!” screams the Brazilian breaking into fits of laughter. The video was released with a hashtag #ChallengeDA-FALTA, the free-kick challenge in Portuguese.

During the recent World Cup, the player’s antics sparked the “Neymar Challenge” where he was widely mocked.

In Mexico, a football club even organised a competition in which contestants attempted to roll the entire length of the pitch.

Meanwhile, Neymar described PSG’s new coach Thomas Tuchel as a great addition to the club. “He’s a great coach and we’re hoping for a great season,” he said. “I’m really looking forward to it,” Neymar said of his second season in Paris.

“We have signed a football legend (Italian goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon) who will bring with him all his experience and that will be a great help for this coming season.” — AFP ■

Spieth aims to retain British Open title but Woods lurks

CARNOUSTIE (UNITED KINGDOM) — Jordan Spieth is hoping to join the elite group of golfers to have retained the British Open title as he goes into the final round at Carnoustie on Sunday in a share of the lead.

The American star sits level on nine under par alongside compatriots Xander Schauffele and Kevin Kisner as he aims for a repeat of his victory at Royal Birkdale 12 months ago, although there is a large chasing pack ready to pounce, with Tiger Woods right in the mix. Spieth shot a superb six-under-par 65 in benign conditions on Saturday to catapult himself up the leaderboard as he aims to follow in the footsteps of Padraig Harrington, the last player to retain the Claret Jug a decade ago.

There would be a sense of symmetry to the achievement if Spieth does win on Scotland’s North Sea coast — Harrington’s double came at Carnoustie in 2007 and then Birkdale in 2008. “I’ve made a lot of progress over the year that’s been kind of an off year, a building year,” said Spieth, who came third at the Masters in April but then missed the cut at the US Open.



Jordan Spieth reacts after holing his eagle putt on the first on Saturday. PHOTO: AFP

“I feel like my game’s in good shape. It’s progressed nicely. We’ve got pretty much a new tournament tomorrow (Sunday).”

Spieth has his work cut out though, with the leaderboard so closely packed that at least 20 players will start Sunday believing they can win the Claret Jug.

Schauffele and Kisner are both bidding to win a first major,

with the latter hoping to avoid a repeat of last year’s US PGA Championship, when he led going into the final day but finished in a tie for seventh.

With trickier, windy conditions expected for the last round, Kisner feels it could be an unpredictable day, and a harder one. “Judging by the conditions and what’s going to be going on, I would imagine it’s

going to be more of a grind all day,” said Kisner, who has been sharing a house with Spieth and several other American stars in Scotland this week. Kisner will go out with another American, Kevin Chappell, who is seven-under, in the penultimate pairing of the day at 2:35pm (1335 GMT), before Spieth and Schauffele tee off 10 minutes later. —AFP ■

Mawlamyine to host mountain bike race

A COMPETITIVE off-road terrain mountain bike race, under the supervision of the Sports and Physical Education Committee of Mon State, will be held in Mawlamyine on 27 July, according to Bicycle Network Myanmar (BNM). The race, aimed at raising public awareness about biking, will start at Taung Yoe Dan Street in Mawlamyine at 7am and will end some two hours later at the starting point, said an official. The race will feature three categories—an under-20 competition, an over-20 competition, and a professional men’s competition.

The winners in all three categories will be awarded Ks130,000, while Ks100,000 will be awarded to the first runners-up, Ks80,000 to the second, Ks60,000 to the third, and Ks40,000 to the fourth.

A further Ks20,000 will be given out as consolation prize in each of the categories, according to BNM. Those who are interested in taking part in the race can access detailed information through the Bicycle Network Myanmar’s Facebook page, said an official. —Lynn Thit(Tgi) ■