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Shwedagon security system to be upgraded



Union Minister for Religious Affairs and Culture Thura U Aung Ko addresses a meeting to upgrade the security system of the Shwedagon Pagoda and its compound. **PHOTO: MNA**

SECURITY system of the Shwedagon Pagoda and its compound will be upgraded as part of the security measures of the whole Yangon Region.

Yesterday morning at a chamber of the pagoda in Yangon, officials held discussions

on the topic, after an opening speech delivered by Union Minister for Religious Affairs and Culture Thura U Aung Ko.

Chief Minister of Yangon Region U Phyo Min Thein and Security and Border Affairs Minister Col. Aung Soe Moe of the region discussed security

measures being taken in the whole region.

Officials of FISCA Enterprise and Huawei Technologies explained advanced security technologies and alternate chair of the Pagoda Broad of Trustees U Nyo Win and member U Thaung Htike

dealt with matters relating to security advancement of the Shwedagon and its compound, an important project which will be linked with other security programs in the region.

Deputy Minister for Construction U Kyaw Lin and other participants including

region cabinet members, departmental heads and members of the board of trustees joined in the general round of discussions.

The meeting ended with concluding remarks by the Union Minister. —Myanmar News Agency ■

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WHO's field visit reports over 400 schistosomiasis cases in Rakhine State

A HEALTH technical team, comprising experts from the World Health Organization and officials from the Ministry of Health and Sports, conducted a field visit for schistosomiasis outbreak investigation, reporting 828 suspected patients and 428 patients diagnosed with the disease, as of 20 August.

Schistosomiasis is an acute and chronic disease caused by parasitic worms, released by freshwater snails.

On 31 August, Union Minister for Health and Sports Dr. Myint Htwe attended a review meeting in Nay Pyi Taw on schistosomiasis outbreak in MraukU and Sittway townships in Rakhine State.

At this review meeting, Dr. Jiagang Guo, technical officer of WHO headquarters, discussed his field trip, his visit to Sittway General Hospital where he investigated outbreak of schisto-

somiasis and laboratory tests and met with specialists and patients. Then, he suggested strategies to eliminate the disease, depending on the outbreak.

The Union Minister expressed his appreciation on the survey and suggestions on preventive measures, and the ministry will implement preventive measures based on suggestions. It will also form a schistosomiasis control team to implement preventive measures and awareness campaigns of the disease and carry out laboratory tests, treatment and research in an effective way.

Additionally, mapping of freshwater snail habitats which are vulnerable to infections, formulating plans and suitable strategy, outbreak report in villages and townships in Rakhine State, detection of other places which are prone to schistosomiasis disease, mapping of disease



A review meeting on schistosomiasis outbreak in MraukU and Sittway townships in Rakhine State being held in Nay Pyi Taw on 31 August. **PHOTO: MNA**

outbreak and awareness campaigns as preventive measures are required, he continued.

To disseminate health information to the students, school health activities should be carried out. Preventive and elimination activities are required to be jointly conducted by the public health staff, technical officers, technicians from national laboratory and related region and state governments, with the support of WHO and China CDC, he maintained.

Present at the meeting were

director general of Ministry of Health and Sports, deputy directors general, directors and officials concerned from related health departments, experts and technical officers from WHO headquarters and South East Asia WHO office.

Schistosomiasis or Snail Fever is an acute and chronic parasitic disease caused by blood flukes (trematode worms) of the genus *Schistosoma*. People become infected when larval forms of the parasite *Cercariae*, released by freshwater snails

penetrate the skin during contact with infested water. Transmission occurs when people suffering from schistosomiasis contaminate freshwater sources with their excreta containing parasite eggs, which hatch in water.

The World Health Organization has provided pharmaceuticals and technical aids regarding the outbreak of schistosomiasis and the Ministry of Health and Sports is effectively providing treatment to the patients. —Myanmar News Agency ■

Singapore-Myanmar health project targets 30,000 trauma patients in Yangon

THE three-year Comprehensive Trauma Rehabilitation Care Project was officially launched on 31 August, targeting 30,000 patients in Yangon within three years.

To improve the overall quality of trauma rehabilitation care in Myanmar, this is the first time cooperation among three partners—Yangon General Hospital (YGH), Singapore International Foundation (SIF) and Singapore Health Services (SingHealth).

The collaboration is in response to heavy demand for trauma care from traffic accidents, falls, and work-related injuries, which make up a sizeable portion of hospital admissions in the country.

The three-year project will adopt a train-the-trainer methodology to address the care system, process issues and knowledge in trauma rehabilitation care. Training goals are to establish a core of well-trained personnel across disciplines for trauma rehabilitation and to develop trauma rehabilitation protocols and service integration. The programme will include clinical training-of-trainers, management workshops, a study visit to Singapore and professional



Specialist team of Singapore International Volunteers, seen together with Myanmar healthcare professionals. **PHOTO: SUPPLIED**

sharing through two symposiums held in Yangon.

Under the project, a specialist team of Singapore International Volunteers will work closely with Myanmar healthcare professionals from the YGH and other participating hospitals to develop a skills-upgrading programme as well as a comprehensive system for trauma rehabilitation care. The team will train up to 180 healthcare professionals in Myanmar. Professor Dr Khin Myo Hla, Head of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, Yangon General Hospital, said, "We are delighted to partner with SIF and SingHealth in advancing the quality of trauma care in

Myanmar. We know that trauma injuries can be highly debilitating and even potentially fatal. We look forward to fresh perspectives and learnings our medical team can share with our Singaporean counterparts. We also look forward to building stronger professional and personal ties with the Singaporean team over the course of the next three years." The SIF's Executive Director Jean Tan said, "Acute trauma patients are an underserved population and we're privileged to work alongside our Myanmar friends to improve the delivery of comprehensive trauma rehabilitation to benefit 30,000 patients in Yangon." —GNLM ■

Political parties' campaigns to be broadcast on MRTV and state-owned newspapers

The 2018 by-election will be held on 3 November.

Campaigns by political parties will be broadcasted on Myanmar Radio and Television (MRTV), MRTV- Hluttaw Channel and Myanma Radio

from 3 to 26 September for the first time, and 9 October to 1 November for the second time, and covered by state-owned newspapers from 4 to 27 September, it is learnt. —Myanmar News Agency ■

57 dams, reservoirs overflow through spillways

THE water level in some dams and reservoirs in regions and states exceeded the full tank levels, due to torrential rains and overflowed through their spillways.

A total of 57 dams and res-

ervoirs, including Pyu Chaung Dam from Pyu Town, Taungoo District, and Kyethet Dam from Minbya Town, MraukU District, are currently overflowing, said the department. —Myanmar News Agency ■

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Union Information Minister visits Gyeongbokgung Palace



Union Minister Dr Pe Myint and delegation visit Gyeongbokgung Palace in Seoul, the capital of the Republic of Korea. **PHOTO:MNA**

UNION MINISTER for Information Dr Pe Myint and delegation visited Kyobo Library, Starfield Library and Gyeongbokgung Palace in Seoul, the Republic of Korea, yesterday.

In the morning, the Union Minister and delegation viewed round ROK's largest, 11,900 square-meter Kyobo Library. Afterwards, they went to Starfield Library. The 2,800 square-meter

Starfield Library was erected at the centre of Starfield COEX Mall, the largest shopping centre in Seoul. The library decorated with modern architectural designs is 13 meters high.

The library has over 50,000 books in Korean language and international magazines, and kept in reader-friendly arrangements for every one visiting the building for recreation

or knowledge.

In the evening, they visited the Gyeongbokgung Palace. The palace was built by Joseon Dynasty (1392-1910) in 1395.

It was one of the main royal palaces built during the Joseon Dynasty. It was destroyed two times—one in 1592 and the other during 1910-1945. It was renovated in 1990. — Myanmar News Agency ■

Chairperson of the Constitutional Tribunal departs for Republic of Korea



PHOTO:MNA

A DELEGATION led by Chairperson of the Constitutional Tribunal U Myo Nyunt departed for the Republic of Korea yesterday to attend the International Conference and Commemoration of the 30th Anniversary of the Constitutional Court of Korea to be held in Seoul, Republic of Korea, from 2 to 5 September.

Chairperson of the Con-

stitutional Tribunal U Myo Nyunt and party were seen off by Director General of the Constitutional Tribunal and responsible officials at the Yangon International Airport. Member of the Constitutional Tribunal U Kyaw San and Director U Nyi Nyi Lwin also accompanied the chairperson, it is learnt.— Myanmar News Agency ■

Myanmar Police Force Chief departs for Brunei

A DELEGATION led by Chief of Myanmar Police Force Lt-Gen Aung Win Oo departed for Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei, yesterday to attend the 38th ASEAN Chiefs of Police Conference.

The delegation was seen off by senior police officers at the Yangon International Airport. The conference will be held from 3 to 5 September at Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei, it is learnt. — MNA ■

Union Minister attends 50th ASEAN Economic Ministers' Meeting, Related Meetings

UNION Minister for Planning and Finance U Soe Win arrived back to Myanmar yesterday afternoon after attending the 50th ASEAN Economic Ministers' Meeting and Related Meetings at the Shangri-La Hotel in Singapore from 28 August to 1 September.

After paying a courtesy

call on Prime Minister of Singapore Mr Lee Hsien Loong at the Shangri-La Hotel on 29 August morning, Union Minister U Soe Win and his ASEAN counterparts attended the opening ceremony of the 50th ASEAN Economic Ministers' Meeting and Related Meetings.

The Union Minister took

part in the 17th ASEAN-China, the 24th ASEAN-Japan, the 15th ASEAN-Republic of Korea, the 21st ASEAN+3 (China, Japan, ROK), the ASEAN-US, the 23rd ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand, the 6th East Asia, the 15th ASEAN-India, the 7th ASEAN-Canada, and the 7th ASEAN-Russia economic ministers' meetings



50th ASEAN Economic Ministers' Meeting being convened in Singapore. **PHOTO:MNA**



Union Minister for Planning and Finance U Soe Win and officials pose for a documentary photo at the 50th ASEAN Economic Ministers' Meeting at Shangri-La Hotel in Singapore yesterday. **PHOTO:MNA**

and the 6th Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Ministerial Meeting and also co-chaired the 10th Mekong-Japan Economic Ministers' Meeting on 30 August and 1 September.

At the meetings, implementation of the ASEAN Community 2025, latest developments of the priority economic tasks being carried out under the chairmanship of Singapore, realization of the ASEAN+1 Free Trade Area, economic cooperation, ongoing discussions on regional comprehensive economic partnership

and future programs were discussed.

The Union Minister also held talks with US Deputy Trade Representative Jeffery D Gerish and the ASEAN-US Business Council led by its President Alexander C Feldman.

The ASEAN economic ministers signed the First Protocol to Amend the ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement and the 10th package of commitments for the ASEAN Framework Agreement on Services (AFAS) at the meeting. — Myanmar News Agency ■

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Myanma Economic Bank provides SME loans worth Ks10 billion within 7 months

MYANMA Economic Bank (MEB) provided Ks10 billion Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) loans as of July, said U Aung Myo Tun, Assistant General Manager from Myanma Economic Bank (Yangon Region).

MEB has provided Ks10 billion SME loans to 246 enterprises and the loans were made from public savings beginning from 1 January. Of this, ten businesses in Yangon Region were provided with a Ks 253 million loan. Most of the loans were for the manufacturing sectors, he added.

"There was no loan request from Chin State and Taninthayi Region," said U Aung Myo Tun.

In providing the loans, MEB gave priority to manufacturing production, export sectors, import substitution, recycling, energy saving sector, technology-based manufacturing and services.

"More loans will be provided to remote areas. Kayah State does not have much of a manufacturing sector, and the bank provided a loan to a hotel even though this sector is not included in MEB's criteria, because the bank wants tourism development in Kayah State," said U Aung Myo Tun. MEB will provide collateral loans to SMEs up to the amount of Ks 300 million. If collateral could not be provided, credit guarantee insurance (CGI) loan up to Ks 20 million is provided with recommendation from Myanmar Insurance. Annual interest rate is 9 percent and the loan period three years.

Borrowers need to submit business plan, tax receipts, state/region government recommendations and details when applying for SME loan from the bank.

U Aung Myo Tun cautioned borrowers not to rely on brokers

because some of them are making fake tax receipts to obtain SME loans from the bank.

Businesses should not believe in brokers and other loan services offered on social media. Businesses should discuss with bank managers from relevant bank branches as the loan process is quite easy and simple, he added. Once the total loan amount reaches Ks 250 billion, MEB will stop making more loans, it is learnt.

Over 90 per cent of businesses in Myanmar are SMEs and most of them are facing difficulties in raising capital, acquiring technology and access to the market.

Some businesses complained that bank loans are difficult to acquire if SME businesses does not have collateral as businesses then need to submit many documents to the bank.

U Ngwe Tun of Genius Coffee who had obtained a CGI loan said that loans need to be acquired more easily, but SME businesses also need to keep records of income, expenses, and tax receipts. The most important thing is business plan, he said. Bank loans are easy to obtain if you have full supporting documents but businesses also need to note that the banks may not lend the full amount you want, so you have to search for other financing options, added U Ngwe Tun.

According to SME Department, over 67,000 SMEs have already registered in Myanmar, but there remain many SMEs that have not registered yet.

Besides SME loans, MEB is planning to provide two-step loans from Japan International Cooperation Agency.—May Thet Hnin ■

DICA targets foreign investments worth \$5.8 billion in 2018-2019 FY

DIRECTORATE of Investment and Company Administration (DICA) is targeting US\$5.8 billion in foreign direct investments (FDI) for 2018-2019 Fiscal Year (FY), said U Than Aung Kyaw, Deputy Director-General of DICA. "We expect to have \$5.8 billion FDI next fiscal year," said U Than Aung Kyaw. Although with Rakhine conflict, unstable US dollar exchange rate and China-US trade conflict affecting foreign investment,

Asian countries are still interested to invest in the country, he added. Although Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC) is targeting \$3 billion in FDI for the interim six-month period between April 1 and September 30, FDI flow into the country in five months between April 1 and August 31 amounted to only \$1.4 billion, according to the MIC. "This six-month interim period, we targeted \$3 billion, but we will not meet the target in

September. However, we have already received \$1.5 billion, so we can say we achieved 50 per cent of our target," said U Than Aung Kyaw. MIC permits and endorsements were approved for a total of 65 foreign enterprises, making investment of \$770 million in the five months. A total of \$1.3 billion foreign direct investments, including increase in investment value, flowed into the country so far.

Additionally, more than

\$170 million investment flow into Thilawa Special Economic Zone over the five months, according to MIC. A total of 49 countries invested in Myanmar with China topping the list, followed by Singapore and Thailand.

According to statistics, the country attracted \$5.7 billion FDI in 2017-2018 FY, \$6.6 billion in 2016-2017 FY and \$9.4 billion in 2015-2016 FY.—Nyein Nyein ■

Electrical fire guts five homes in Mandalay's Chanmyathazi Township

AN electrical fire broke out on early Sunday morning in Chanmyathazi Township, Mandalay Region, destroying five homes, according to a police report.

At around 4 am on 2 September, a fire started in the upper floor of the home of U Khin Maung Thein, located in Myothit Ward-4, Chanmyathazi Township, owing to overheated electrical appliances. The blaze quickly spread to four neighbouring houses, but no persons were hurt in the fire. The loss

due to the fire is estimated to reach approximately Ks2.3 million. Led by U Than Zaw Oo, head of Mandalay Region Fire Services Department, 110 firefighters plus 180 members of a reserved fire brigade completely extinguished the flames within 20 minutes, using 42 fire engines. The case is being investigated and charges have been filed against the home owner for fire-related negligence and recklessness.—Maung Pyi Thu (Mandalay)



Houses damaged by a fire in Chanmyathazi Township in Mandalay yesterday. **PHOTO: MAUNG PYI THU (MANDALAY)**

Daewoo Bus Myanmar to produce passenger vehicles with \$5 million capital

By Nyein Nyein

DAEWOO Bus Myanmar Company will produce passenger vehicles using semi-knocked down SKD2 system, with a capital of US\$5 million, said U Soe Myint Aung, director of the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA). “They will bring in a capital of \$5 million to manufacture city bus and mini-buses”, said U Soe Myint Aung. Daewoo Bus Myanmar Company is registered as a joint venture between Myanmar Trade Centre and Zyle Daewoo Commercial Vehicle Company. Myanmar Trade Center controls 75 per cent of shares while 25 per cent is owned by Zyle Daewoo Commercial Vehicle Company. Daewoo Bus Myanmar Co.,



Buses manufactured by Daewoo automotive company seen in Yangon. PHOTO: SUPPLIED

Ltd. will execute assembling, manufacturing and sales of buses and repair service on the land leased by No.1 Heavy Industries Enterprise (Htaukkyant) in Min-

galadon Township, according to the Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC).

This assembling, manufacturing and sales of buses and

repair service is likely to start its operations in 2020, creating over 200 job opportunities for local people, according to MIC.

“It is expected to start busi-

ness in 2020. As they will be working on the land leased by the Ministry of Industry, there are already buildings and they do not need to construct new ones. Therefore, at the soonest, the business is possibly operational in six months or one year after installation of equipment”, U Soe Myint Aung maintained. Nissan, Suzuki, Daewoo, KIA, Ford are currently conducting assembling, manufacturing and sales of motor vehicles. Toyota Company is also likely to make local operations, said U Than Aung Kyaw, deputy director-general of the DICA.

There are eight approved businesses for manufacturing vehicles in Myanmar: Japan, China, South Korea and Singapore are the investors. ■

Customs Department releases notification on commercial tax-exempted medical devices

ACCORDING to 2018 Union Tax Law's chapter 6, section 14, medical devices are exempted from commercial tax, said a notification on commercial tax-exempted goods, released by the Customs Department on 29 August. U Zaw Moe Khaing, chair of Myanmar Pharmaceuticals and Medical Equipment Entrepreneurs Association, requested the director general and officials from the Ministry of Planning and Finance, director general of the Customs Department and the director general of the Directorate of Investment and Company

Administration to discuss matters regarding commercial tax exemption on imported medical equipment by the Customs Department, on 24 August.

Director general of the Internal Revenue Department responded to the request that some medical devices are commercial tax-exempted goods, according to 2018 Union Tax Law and those who paid tax after the effective date 1 April of the law can even apply for tax refund. As a meeting outcome, under 2018 Union Tax Law, medical cotton, cloth, bandages, dressings, disposable

masks used in hospitals, surgical caps, surgical gloves, hospital outfits, masks used for the prevention of flu are commercial tax-exempted goods. Additionally, X-ray film, X-ray paraphernalia, and other medical equipment prescribed by the Health Department are also exempted from commercial tax.

This is the second notification of commercial tax exemption after the first notification that FDA approved and registered pharmaceuticals are exempted from commercial tax was released on 25 July. — GNLM ■

Myanmar-UK trade exceeds \$130 million in three months

FROM April through June this year, trade between Myanmar and the United Kingdom topped US\$130.3 million, up by \$46.9 million compared with the same period in the last year, the Ministry of Commerce reported.

At this time last year, the total bilateral trade with the UK was \$80.3 million, with exports worth \$68.3 million and imports worth \$14.97 million.

The current trade figures include \$106 million in exports and \$24 million in imports. Myanmar's exports to the UK continuously surplus its imports in bilateral trade. When compared with this time last year, the exports between the two

countries rose by \$37.7 million, whereas the bilateral imports increased by \$9 million. The bilateral trade reached its peak of \$360 million in the last financial year 2017-2018. The trade between the two countries was \$167 million in FY2016-2017, \$50 million in FY2015-2016, \$82 million in FY2014-2015, \$73 million in FY2013-2014, \$41 million in FY2012-2013 and \$43 million in FY2011-2012. According to the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration, UK's investment in Myanmar this year reached \$10.6 million. The country made investments worth \$211 million in the last 2017-2018 fiscal year. — Swe Nyein ■

Exports of animal products up by \$128 million

MYANMAR'S export of animal products in nearly five months totalled US\$134 million, which saw a significant increase in value by over \$128 million, as against this time last year, when the exports of the same was \$5.8 million only, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

There was no export of animal products by the public sector this year.

The country exports animal products to neighbouring countries, including China, India and Thailand.

The ministry's statistical report shows that between 1 April and 24 August this year, the country earned \$6.643 billion from the export of seven groups of products—agricultural, animal, forest and aquaculture products, minerals, manufactured goods and other marketable items.

During the period, the public sector exported \$1.54 billion worth of products, with minerals worth \$300 million, forest products worth \$6.2 million, manufactured goods worth \$1.2 billion and other

miscellaneous products worth \$23.5 million.

Within the same period, private exporters sold seven groups of domestic products amounting to over \$5.1 billion in total, which includes \$1 billion worth of agro products, \$134 million worth of animal products, \$228 million worth of aquaculture products, \$69 million worth of forest products, \$450 million worth of minerals, \$2.35 billion worth of manufactured goods and other marketable items valued at \$789 million. — Shwe Khine ■

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Chinese company Yuhuang's methanol project in southern US enters key phase

NEW ORLEANS (United States) — Yuhuang's methanol project, the largest green field investment in methanol by a Chinese company in southern US state of Louisiana, has made breakthrough in its construction, according to Chinese Yuhuang Chemical Industries Inc. (YCI) on Friday.

"The installation of our first major equipment on foundation this week signified our project has entered above-ground construction phase, a new breakthrough in building our facility here," Charlie Yao, CEO of YCI Methanol One, told Xinhua.

"We will gradually place in the majority of the large equipment on foundation, stepping into the construction assembly stage," Yao added.

YCI, a wholly owned subsidiary of Shandong Yuhuang Chemical Company, is construct-

ing a 1.85-billion-dollar methanol production facility in St. James Parish, Louisiana.

The methanol production facility began in January 2017, while commercial production of methanol is expected to begin in mid-2020.

It is estimated to provide about 2,000 jobs at the peak of its construction phase, and during the operation phase, the plant is expected to add at least 100 permanent jobs, said Yao.

Koch Methanol, an affiliate of Koch Industries, has agreed to buy into the new facility, according to a joint agreement by Koch Methanol and YCI last week.

As part of its investment, affiliates of Koch Methanol will receive the exclusive methanol offtake rights from the new facility, as well as construct, own and operate the methanol terminal assets for the outbound flow of



Photo taken on 30 August 2018 shows a major equipment to be installed in Chinese company Yuhuang's methanol plant in St. James Parish, the United States. **PHOTO: XINHUA**

methanol.

"The progress Yuhuang's methanol project has made amid challenges these days indicates that China and the United States are highly complementary in economic structure and trade,"

said Xu Chen, chairman of the China General Chamber of Commerce-USA (CGCC), which represents more than 1,500 Chinese and US companies.

Yuhuang's methanol production facility will be capable

of producing approximately 1.7 million metric tons of methanol per year. Methanol is used in the manufacturing of countless everyday products, including plywood, carpet, fuels and plastics. — Xinhua ■

Japanese distributors to stop Iranian oil imports after US demands

TOKYO — Japan's major oil distributors, taking heed of US demands, are preparing to suspend crude imports from Iran and switch to other producers in the Middle East, sources with knowledge of the plans said Saturday.

As Iranian oil is cheaper than that from other countries, the halt would increase costs for distributors and could lead to higher gasoline prices in Japan.

President Donald Trump has pulled the United States out of a 2015 international nuclear deal between Tehran and other major powers, and reinstated part of its sanctions against Iran.

The US administration has been calling for a halt to oil imports from Iran by Nov. 4.

Japan has been asking for a waiver during negotiations with its ally the United States, saying imports of Iranian oil have been recently falling.

But as prospects are dim for Japan to secure an exemption, major oil distributors are

making arrangements for transportation and payments before they can secure oil from other countries to make up for the loss of Iranian supply, the sources said. Industry leader JXTG Nippon Oil & Energy Corp. and other distributors need to decide by early September whether to continue importing Iranian oil in time to make necessary arrangements.

The latest move also comes as major Japanese banks are planning to stop transactions linked to Iran, which will make it difficult for distributors to process payments even if they seek to continue buying Iranian oil.

Energy-scarce Japan relies heavily on energy imports. In recent years, some 80 per cent of its oil imports come from the Middle East.

Saudi Arabia was the largest exporter of crude oil to Japan in fiscal 2017, accounting for 39 per cent, while Iran ranked sixth at around 5 per cent, according to the Japanese government. —Kyodo News ■

India's high economic growth brings cheers ahead of general elections

NEW DELHI — India regaining its world's fastest-growing economy status, with its gross domestic product (GDP) zooming to 8.2 per cent in the first quarter of this fiscal, has sent a wave of cheers among policy-makers and common man alike.

The data released by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) showed that between April and June this year, the economy was powered by a strong performance of the manufacturing and farm sectors and gained further strength from consumer spending. The Indian government's reform policies increased the boost, the CSO report added.

The 8.2-per cent growth has been the fastest expansion of the economy since the January-March quarter of 2016. In the previous quarter, the growth figure stood at 7.7 per cent while in the same quarter last year, growth was registered at 5.6 per cent.

At the same time, the manufacturing sector grew at an annual rate of 13.5 per cent while the farm sector, which registered a decline of 3 per cent in first quar-

ter of 2017-18, grew 5.3 per cent.

This is despite the fact that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) had trimmed India's growth projection for 2018-19 by 10 basis points to 7.3 per cent in its World Economic Outlook released last month, citing negative effects of higher crude oil prices on domestic demand and faster-than-anticipated monetary policy tightening because of higher-than-expected inflation.

According to a Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) recent report on demonetization, invalidation of higher value currencies in November 2016 had indicated that Prime Minister Narendra Modi government's move to deal a blow to black money did not work as desired.

Experts pointed to structural reforms and policies of the government behind this positive growth rate. —Xinhua ■



According to a Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) recent report on demonetization, invalidation of higher value currencies in November 2016 had indicated that Prime Minister Narendra Modi government's move to deal a blow to black money did not work as desired. **PHOTO: XINHUA**

Chicago wheat futures rise over 1 pct weekly over global weather concern, weak export demand

CHICAGO — Chicago Board of Trade (CBOT) agricultural commodities closed mixed over the trading week which ended 31 August, with wheat futures rising over 1 per cent amid ongoing concerns about major wheat exporter Russia's production and global weather worries.

The most active corn contract for December delivery rose 2.25 cents weekly, or 0.62 per cent, to 3.65 US dollars per bushel. December wheat delivery added 9 cents, or 1.68 per cent, to 5.455 dollars per bushel. November soybeans dropped 11.75 cents, or 1.37 per cent, to 8.435 dollars.

CBOT corn futures ended the week a bit higher, and like last year rallied sharply ahead of the first notice day against September contracts expiration.

Since 2016 there's been a

strong seasonal trend for lasting bottoms to be scored on the final day of August. Excess on-farm supplies have been liquidated ahead of harvest and recall that the old crop US corn balance sheet remains somewhat loose.

Analysts maintain a bullish outlook, with a strong demand-driven recovery to unfold in the next 90 days. There's evidence that final US corn yield will be below 178 bushel per acre.

Weakness in Argentina's peso has produced better near-term farmer selling, but the Argentine producer will now shut off sales as a hedge against incredible inflation.

And otherwise, the US Gulf market will have a near monopoly on corn exports during the autumn months.

Wheat futures rallied

modestly this week, and analysts suggest that a seasonal bottom has formed. Rallies failed in August, but intermediate lows tend to be posted by early September.

The trade will be on high alert for Russian government interference following news this week, and a planned meeting with exporters there on Monday. Whether Russia moves to legislate a cap on exports in the near term is unknown but recall this is just one symptom of a very tight world wheat balance sheet.

Seasonal trends in both futures and cash markets move higher into late year. US wheat export demand, while lacking currently, will be robust in late 2018/19.

Soybeans fell back to test the July lows and closed the week lower. US soybean cash markets



An early wheat crop in the Central Valley in Davis, California, US on 1 May 2017. PHOTO: XINHUA

remain exceptionally weak with Midwest cash basis bids falling to historic levels as winding down of old crop marketing programs have put large supplies on the market.

Additionally, several private

crop estimates put the US soybean yield at more than 53 bushel per acre, and the US Department of Agriculture is expected to follow through with a similar yield in the September Crop Report, to be released in two weeks.—Xinhua ■

Fragile Argentina placing faith in IMF meeting

BUENOS AIRES — Argentina's Economy Minister Nicolas Dujovne heads to Washington on Monday to thrash out a hastily revised loan deal with the International Monetary Fund to help revive South America's second-largest economy.

Dujovne will need to outline a convincing austerity program to restore investor confidence that has plummeted along with the nation's currency, analysts say. The minister said at the weekend his mission was to "continue to progress" talks with the IMF "on additional disbursements in 2019."

The talks scheduled for Tuesday follow a surprise announcement by President Mauricio Macri last week that Argentina would seek faster disbursement of its \$50 billion credit line with the IMF.

That set off alarm bells among investors, concerned Argentina will default on government borrowing, and triggered a run on the peso, which plunged 20 per cent in two days before recovering slightly by Friday's close. The currency has lost half its value against the dollar since January.

A first \$15 billion tranche of the loan has largely gone to propping up the peso in recent months.

Argentina's Central Bank

hiked its baseline interest rate to 60 per cent last week in a further bid to stabilize the currency.

Low investor confidence -

Ratings agency S&P said Macri's government must now show clear steps to improve low investor confidence.

"Exchange rate volatility, as shown by recent pressure on the Argentine currency, could jeopardize the effective implementation of economic adjustment measures, absent further steps to boost investor confidence," it said in a statement on Friday.

S&P sees hope in Macri's austerity measures however, which has seen his government slash energy subsidies and shed 95,000 public service jobs since

January.

It suggested that IMF help, coupled with continued austerity measures, could help gradually reduce inflation, which despite being a government priority, is still running at more than 20 per cent.

The IMF said its goal was to "rapidly conclude these talks and submit the revised economic plan to the Executive Board."

'Strong commitment'

Spokesman Gerry Rice said the Washington-based lender was "confident that the strong commitment and determination of the Argentine authorities will help the country overcome the current difficulties."

However, analysts at Capital

Economics warned in a report that "investor confidence is fragile," adding that failure to deliver a convincing austerity plan on Monday would trigger further turmoil.

The market's response exposed the magnitude of the crisis of confidence in the Argentine government and its ability to pay off borrowing.

Dujovne is expected to provide details of the new proposals on Monday before heading to Washington for Tuesday's meeting with IMF officials.

Macri will be hoping to ride out a domestic storm from a public sector incensed at his austerity drive to maintain Argentina's access to capital markets, which it was excluded from for over a decade.

However, Argentines point to increasing food, transport and energy prices, saying they are paying an unacceptable price under Macri's austerity program.

A recent poll by the Center for the Study of Work and Development showed that one in two employed people fear losing their job.

Argentina has a bitter history with the IMF, which it last called on in 2001. Many Argentines view the tough conditions imposed by the crisis lender then as having made the crisis all the harder to bear.—AFP ■

Brazil's GDP up 0.2 pct in Q2

RIO DE JANEIRO — Brazil's gross domestic product (GDP) increased by 0.2 per cent in the second quarter of 2018 compared to the first, reaching 1.693 trillion reais (416 billion US dollars), governmental statistics agency IBGE announced Friday. The figures indicate a very slow recovery of the Brazilian economy, which remained stable in the fourth quarter of 2017 and grew only 0.1 per cent in the first quarter of 2018. According to IBGE, the agriculture sector remained stable in the second quarter, while the industrial sector shrank 0.6 per cent and the services sector expanded 0.3 per cent in the period. Family consumption and governmental consumption rose 0.1 and 0.5 per cent respectively, compared to the first quarter of 2018. Investments were up 1.8 per cent. Exports fell 5.5 per cent in the period, while imports fell 2.1 per cent against the first quarter.

Compared to the second quarter of 2017, Brazil's GDP expanded one per cent. Though it was the fifth consecutive rise year-on-year, the rise has been gradually smaller over the past two quarters.—Xinhua ■



Currency exchange values are displayed on the window of a currency exchange in Buenos Aires. PHOTO: AFP

Reducing hazardous child labour

Every year the World Day Against Child Labour reminds us how far behind we still are when it comes to eradicating child labour. In Myanmar, the labour law states that children aged between 14 and 18 can be recruited for employment, with some exceptions, and labels a number of sectors as hazardous for children. For example, working hours per day for them should not be more than 4 hours. They should be employed with recommendations of a doctor and no children should work in hazardous conditions.

Child labour issue is one of the challenges of Myanmar.

Youth and children who support the production resources are used in most of the developing countries, especially in a developing country like Myanmar, which is connected to poverty and can be seen employing child labour.

“

To reduce hazardous child labour, not only the government but also the CSOs, labour organizations and business institutions have a responsibility to carry out the task.

There are some 152 million children between 5 and 17 years in the world, of which 7.4 per cent live in the Asia-Pacific region, and some 70.9 per cent work in the agricultural sector. Of these, some 73 million are working in dangerous places.

Some 85 per cent of the world's youth are in developing countries, and 60 per cent are in the Asian region. Youth and children's development sectors are important in determining the future of a country and are valuable resources for the country.

Everyone knows that the government is reforming with increased momentum the development of the political, economic and social sectors, while prioritising the achievement of countrywide peace.

Similar to other regional ASEAN countries, Myanmar ratified the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention 182 on the worst forms of child labour and can be seen cooperating with ILO and the UNICEF.

To reduce hazardous child labour, not only the government but also the CSOs, labour organizations and business institutions have a responsibility to carry out the task.

All are urged to actively cooperate with each other against hazardous child labour in Myanmar.

Evergreen grasslands of Rakhine State

By Maung Maung Kyaw

On our planet, cultural diversity is much more common in this century; however, due to extreme greed and negative outlook of people in some areas, conflicts have flared up. The divergence has spread into many forms of war, terrorism, and human rights abuses, turning the atmosphere into ugly images.

In Rakhine State, Rakhine nationals are staying side by side with Mro, Thet, Khami, Bamar, Dainet, Chin, Kaman and Marma Gyi ethnic nationalities, including people of other faiths. Last year, the Maungdaw area became shattered and the diverse culture collapsed. Ugly images have popped up.

With the long background and complex history of Rakhine State, blatant breach of national security and daring terrorist attack on sovereignty have occurred over the years in the area. However, only fake allegations of human rights abuses and lopsided pressure over the exodus surfaced.

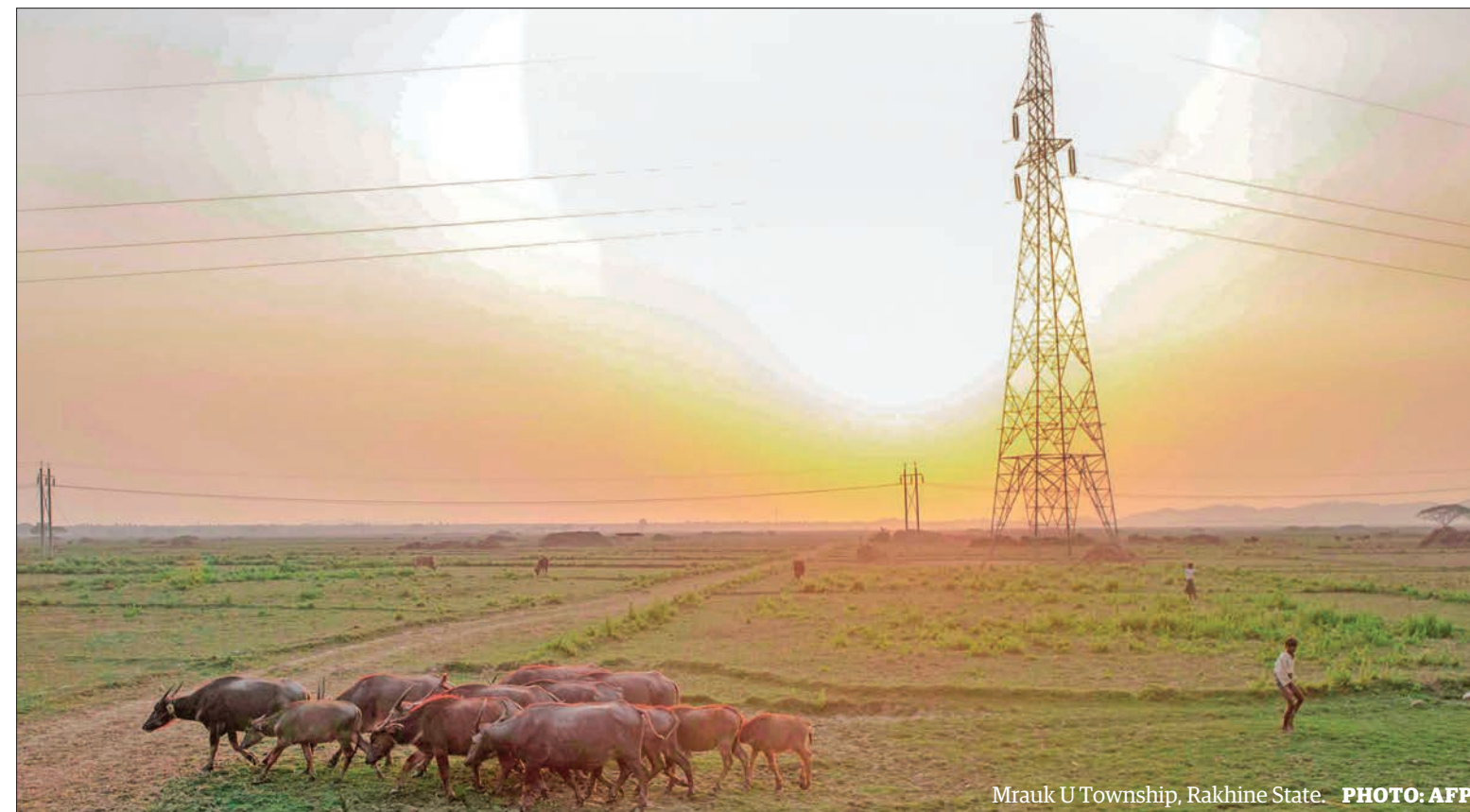
When people of other religious faiths made mass departure from Rakhine State, people across the globe took interest in the matter and put pressure without solid reasons. In addressing the complicated problems, there is a need of persons with wisdom who have knowledge on the root cause of the conflicts.

Root cause of conflict

The root cause started to conceive many decades back. The ground reality is that the Rakhine ethnic nationals have been residing peacefully in Rakhine State in the western part of Myanmar since many decades, and they are the nationals of the Union of Myanmar.

The core cause and the problem started after 1824 when British colonized Myanmar at the end of the Anglo-Myanmar War. The Rakhine area was subjugated along with East Bengal area under the British Administration.

When the Suez Canal was commissioned in 1869, the global rice trade was booming, and the colonialists eyed the Rakhine area for rice cultivation. Agricultural workers from Bengal area were called into Rakhine area to grow paddy. Beginning from that particular period, workers from that area moved into Rakhine State, from time to time until recent



Mrauk U Township, Rakhine State. PHOTO: AFP

years.

The root cause of the problem was the import of alien workers into Rakhine area by the colonialists for their own interests. With the complex and intricate migrant labors for many decades, the security of Rakhine State and the survival of Rakhine nationals have been threatened and have encountered enormous challenges, which need sustainable solution.

At the end of Second World War in 1942, the British retreated from Myanmar. It was an uncertain time and a fluid political situation when resistance against the Fascists was needed. With that backdrop and setting, the people in that area were equipped with arms as needed for that moment, which later turned out as armed conflicts in Rakhine State.

Before and after independence of Myanmar, illegal migration surged, and later, the sovereignty of the nation has been attacked. This is a summary of the root cause of the recent conflicts and problems in Maungdaw area in Rakhine State.

Geography and extreme activities

The Rakhine State and Rakhine nationals have a long history, and their chronicle should be carefully studied in detail. Currently, in the northern tips of Rakhine State, only five percent of Rakhine nationals exist. All good things and ground realities of the past about Rakhine have faded away.

In the north of Rakhine State, the nation of Bangladesh nation is situated, with a population of 170

million. The three rivers, namely, Mayu, Kaladan and Lay Myo are flowing in that area, creating a delta region with fertile land for good cultivation and fine fishery breeding grounds.

“The whole landscape of Rakhine State, the national brethrens of the land, and other communities residing there are the most valuable natural beauties of the country.

The area is connected with Chin State, Magway, Bago and Ayeyawady regions, and moreover, has a long coastal line with the Bay of Bengal. Such connectivity has brought a good legacy of attractive businesses, such as fisheries, off-shore oil and gas exploration, animal breeding, and ancient artifacts for the tourism industry. However, the golden opportunities could not be reaped due to various challenges and difficulties cropping up from geographical condition.

The successive governments have had to deal with immigration matters, in addition to illegal migrants, terrorist attacks, and blatant provocations to the country's sovereignty. With changing of times and political situation, the Maungdaw area in Rakhine State experienced the fading away of aboveground antagonism, which transformed into underground

movements.

At a time when extremists are terrorizing the world, the underground elements in Rakhine State received illegal foreign aid and underwent secret terrorist

the humanitarian crisis in Myanmar, due to the challenges of terrorist attacks, that needed a proper sustainable solution to avoid violence between the two communities, which could possibly become a threat to the region.

Task of the government

In the past, conflicts had occurred only among local people in Maungdaw area, but the recent severe conflicts involved the aid and abetment of foreign extremists using local people, resulting in a security breach of the nation as well as its sovereignty being provoked.

Formation of commissions

To probe into the background situations that led to violent attacks that occurred on 9 October and 12-13 of November 2016 in Maungdaw, Rakhine State, and the truth about the incidents, and to investigate whether existing laws, rules and regulations were observed in taking measures to avoid similar incidents in the future before making recommendations, the Investigation Committee was formed on 1 December 2016 and headed by Vice President U Myint Swe.

The Investigation Committee submitted 48 point-recommendations, while the Advisory Commission headed by Dr. Kofi Annan submitted 88 point-recommendation on 24 August 2017.

The government is implementing the recommendations based on the ground reality for the safety and development of the areas.

Currently, it could be said that the Rakhine State is in stable and peaceful condition. For resettlement and rehabilitation, the Myanmar government has signed agreements with the UNDP and the UNHCR, in line with the recommendations.

Ending the cycle of misery

Myanmar and Bangladesh have signed a memorandum of understanding on the return of people who fled from the Rakhine State. UN officials were allowed access to 23 villages, and 5 more villages have been designated as repatriation transit camps.

Moreover, the Union Enterprise for Humanitarian Assistance Resettlement and Development in Rakhine (UEHRD) has been formed. The duties of UEHRD are to carry out effective provision of humanitarian aid, to coordinate the resettlement and rehabilitation efforts and to carry out regional development and work towards durable peace.

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi has lauded the recommendations of the Advisory Commission headed by Dr. Kofi Annan.

Despite all positive endeavors, some elements have sinister intention to grab Rakhine State through violence acts.

Implementation to be carried out

For harmony and peaceful coexistence between the two communities in Rakhine State, the recommendations of Dr. Kofi Annan are sure to be implemented. In this regard, it is believed that the ASEAN countries and friendly nations would surely lend their hands in the endeavors of Myanmar.

The most vital ingredient is the cooperation on the part of Bangladesh.

The author of the article believes that the government could lay down a solid foundation for peace and stability. The whole landscape of Rakhine State, the national brethrens of the land, and other communities residing there are the most valuable natural beauties of the country. Despite the tough and rough weather of challenges on the road ahead, we will be able to step on the journey into happiness in the right direction in the evergreen grasslands of Rakhine State.

Translated by
UMT (HK)

■ ■ ■



Central Body for Suppression of Trafficking in Persons



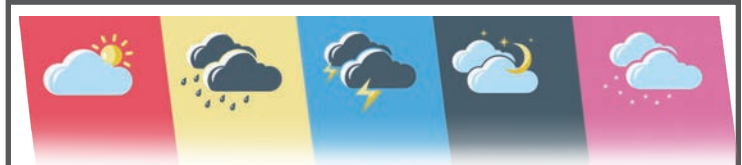
Myanmar Anti-Trafficking in Persons Day

13th September

The entire public needs to participate,
Trafficking in persons to eliminate...

2018 Anti-Trafficking in Persons Day's Objectives

- ❖ To mobilize the participation of all citizens in combating human trafficking as a national duty;
- ❖ To have the public instilled with awareness about and knowledge of trafficking in persons;
- ❖ To protect and care trafficked victims with empathy; and
- ❖ To strengthen cooperation and coordination among all counter trafficking stakeholders – government agencies, civil society organizations, UN agencies, international organizations and general public.



Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 7:00 pm Sunday 2nd September, 2018)

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

FORECAST VALID UNTIL AFTERNOON OF THE 3rd September, 2018: Rain or thundershowers will be scattered in Lower Sagaing, Mandalay and Magway Regions, fairly widespread in Naypyitaw, Yangon, Ayeyarwady and Taninthayi Regions, (Northern and Southern) Shan, Rakhine and Kayah States and widespread in the remaining Regions and States. Degree of certainty is (100%).

STATE OF THE SEA: Sea will be moderate in Myanmar waters. Wave height will be about (5 - 8) feet in off and along Myanmar Coasts.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Likelihood of increase of rain in Taninthayi Region, Rakhine, Kayin and Mon States.

EARTHQUAKE NEWS

A slight earthquake of magnitude (4.8) Richter Scale with its epicenter inside Myanmar (about (27) miles southeast of Homalin), latitude 24.77°N, longitude 95.33°E, depth (143) kilometers about (75) miles northeast of Tamu seismological observatory was recorded at (01)hr (49)min (46)sec M.S.T on 2nd September, 2018.

Flood Bulletin

Flood condition of Sittoung River

According to the (13:30) hrs M.S.T observation today, the water level of Sittoung River has exceeded by about (4) feet at Madauk above its danger level. It may fall about (½) foot from the present water level during the next (2) days and may remain above its danger level.

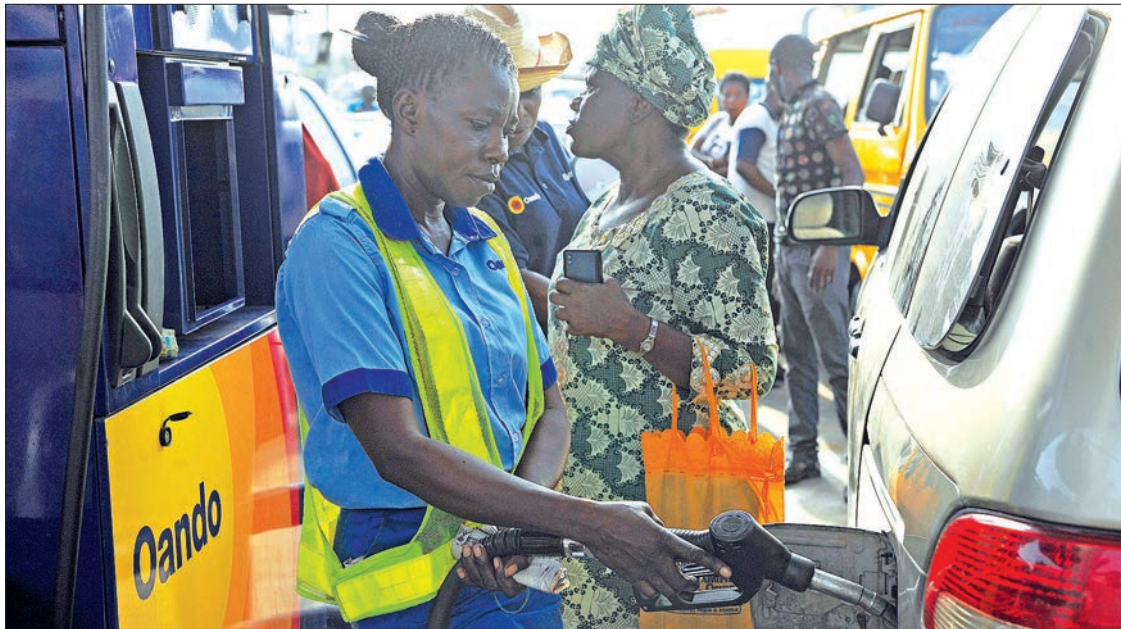
Flood condition of Thanlwin River

According to the (13:30) hrs M.S.T observation today, the water level of Thanlwin River has exceeded by about (4) feet at Hpaan above its danger level. It may fall about (½) foot from the present water level during the next (2) days 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 Madauk and Hpaan Township, to take precaution measure.

MTN affair casts shadow over Nigeria economy: analysts



An employee fills a vehicle tank at a filling station in Lagos, on 9 March 2016. PHOTO: AFP

ABUJA—Nigeria's decision to order South African telecoms giant MTN to repay billions of dollars that it had allegedly illegally repatriated over a period of eight years could sour investor sentiment towards the country as it still struggles to recover from a deep recession two years ago, analysts say. In a shock announcement last Wednesday, the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) ordered MTN to repay \$8.13 billion because it had not obtained the necessary permission to repatriate the funds between 2007 and 2015.

The four banks involved in transferring the funds from

MTN's bank accounts in Nigeria to those in South Africa were fined a combined 5.87 billion nairas (\$16.2 million, 14 million euros).

With the economy still fragile after a deep recession in 2016 and elections looming early next year, many private sector players in Nigeria believe the move could dent investor sentiment at an already difficult time for foreign investment in the country, analysts said.

"Anything of that magnitude, particularly given the timing ahead of an election... is certainly going to raise suspicions from international investors," said Alastair Jones, analyst at Lon-

don-based New Street Research.

For Peter Takaendesa, Cape Town-based portfolio manager at Mergence Investment Managers, the situation was untenable.

"Investors want certainty in terms of laws. There's no way MTN will find \$8 billion to put in Nigeria. There has to be a resolution," Takaendesa said.

For the time being, MTN does not appear to have any intention of reviewing its presence in Nigeria, which is by far its biggest individual market and makes up a huge chunk -- 27 percent -- of its revenues. —AFP ■

Sino-Africa technology cooperation boosts African development

WUHAN—If not for the arrival of Chinese scientists, Meshack Mutevu would still be living in a house with a metal roof and mud walls like his forefathers, subsisting on a few mango trees and raising goats.

The life of the 44-year-old Kenyan began to change when scientists from the Sino-Africa Joint Research Center (SA-JOREC) with the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) discovered that the local moringa was rich in selenium and had great market potential due to its health benefits after a farm produce investigation in 2015.

In partnership with SA-JOREC, Botanic Diamond, a Kenya-based company run by Chinese, offered free seeds and technical guidance to local residents and procured the moringa after it was harvested.

Mutevu planted over 200 moringa trees, which earned him an annual income of more than 10,000 U.S. dollars, and enabled him to build a 400-square-meter villa in just two years.

"Sino-Africa cooperation should not stay in laboratories and academic papers," said Wang Qingfeng, director of SAJOREC. "The fundamental

research should be integrated into local situations."

Wang said the center has transformed a number of Kenyan plants, including baobab and toothbrush trees, into medicinal teas, essential oils, and toothpaste, adding that many Kenyan farmers can lift themselves out of poverty by planting these plants.

"The combination of the CAS's advantages in technology and private companies' grasp of the market will benefit more ordinary Kenyan households," said Cui Chaojie, chairman of Botanic Diamond, which has developed 15 products out of 11 Kenyan plants.

Cui said he plans to visit Shanghai in November to attend the China International Import Expo, trying to tap the lucrative Chinese market with quality African products.

Since its establishment in 2013, SAJOREC has put forward more than 45 joint research programs focusing on biodiversity investigation, pathogenic microorganism detection, geographic science and remote sensing, high-yield crop cultivation demonstration as well as land and water resources management. —Xinhua ■

Syria denies foreign attack on airbase west of Damascus

DAMASCUS — The Syrian army denied reports that an Israeli missile attack targeted a Syrian airbase west of Damascus early Sunday, saying a short circuit caused an explosion in an arms depot near the airbase, according to the state TV.

The statement of the Syrian army comes less than an hour after at least two explosions were heard at the Mazzeah airbase in the Mazzeah neighborhood west of Damascus. The explosions reverberated across the capital of Damascus.

Pan-Arab al-Mayadeen TV and some pro-government activists in Syria said the explosions were the result of a missile attack by Israel on the airbase, which has been previously targeted by Israel. —Xinhua ■



Photo taken on 2 September 2018 shows the fire and smoke rising from the Mazzeah airbase in the Damascus' western Mazzeah neighborhood, Syria. The Syrian army denied reports that an Israeli missile attack targeted a Syrian airbase west of Damascus early Sunday, saying a short circuit caused an explosion in an arms depot near the airbase, according to the state TV. PHOTO: XINHUA

Saudi-led coalition admits wrongdoing in Saada attack

RIYADH—Saudi-led coalition involved in a Yemen war Saturday admitted the wrongdoing in an airstrike that targeted Yemeni city Saada, pledging to hold those responsible accountable, Al Arabiya local news reported.

The coalition accepted the findings of the Joint Incidents Assessment Team (JIAT) on the attack that took place on Aug. 9 in Saada, including the mistakes in compliance with the Rules of Engagement regarding the strike.

The Joint Forces Command of the Coalition expressed regret over the mistakes, extended its sympathies, condolences and solidarity to the families of the victims, and announced its acceptance of the results and findings of the JIAT. —Xinhua ■

Surge in Tory members sparks fears of right-wing takeover

LONDON — As internal divisions over Brexit plague Britain's ruling Conservative Party, a recent surge in membership has left some fearing the new recruits have ulterior motives.

The Tories have seen thousands of new members apply to join its ranks this summer, according to lawmakers and reports.

But this newfound popularity has not been welcomed by all within the centre-right bastion of British politics.

"There clearly is a movement of people joining the Conservative Party but for exactly what purpose it's impossible to say," Dominic Grieve, a pro-European MP, told AFP.

In his constituency in southeast England it has grown by around 100 people to 1,200 members in recent months — alongside his suspicions.

"I'm sure there's a deselection agenda by some members of my association towards me," he added.

"The Conservative Party's always been a broad church and tolerant of difference. But I'm afraid at the moment we're going through a political crisis which is reducing tolerance."

MPs who back remaining in the European Union — so-called Remainers — suspect hardcore Brexit supporters from the right-wing UK Inde-



In this file photo taken on 12 June 2018 Brexit campaign donor and businessman Arron Banks (r) and spin doctor Andy Wigmore leave Portcullis House after giving evidence to Parliament's Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) Committee. **PHOTO: AFP**

pendence Party (UKIP) are joining the Tories to remake its leadership.

Their concerns stem from businessman Arron Banks, the single largest bankroller in the 2016 EU referendum campaign, calling for the roughly 90,000 members of his Leave.EU group and its 1.4 million social media followers to join the Conservatives.

He admits wanting to ensure the party's next leader — and therefore prime minister — is a hardliner if Theresa May is ousted amid fierce opposition

to her plans for a post-Brexit "common rulebook" with the EU.

Under Conservative rules new members are able to vote in leadership contests within three months of joining.

"The best way to secure Brexit and our country's future is via the Conservative Party," Banks wrote in last week's *Sunday Times*, noting "it is in government and, for now, calls the shots."

"A grassroots rebellion in the Tory party is possible. In the right conditions a new lead-

er can be swept to power, and sanity can prevail. Our aim is to unite the right," he added.

'Extremist infiltration'

Conservatives last month rejected Banks' own bid to join, reportedly judging he would likely bring them into disrepute.

"He is not a Conservative and he supports a rival political party," pro-Remain MP Anna Soubry said in welcoming the move.

She urged Tory Chairman Brandon Lewis "to show the courage and determination to

stop the extremist infiltration".

Brexiters lawmakers disagreed and said they welcome the converts, noting Banks was a member as recently as 2013.

Conservative Party headquarters declined to comment on Banks or provide new member numbers.

A party source said: "We have been driving up membership steadily through a recruitment drive."

Insiders added the spike was anticipated due to a new centralised membership system and nationwide campaign managers working to recruit.

Lawmakers like Grieve and Soubry cannot see the national picture, they said.

George Evans, 64, of Wirral in northwest England, is among the new members from UKIP but insisted he is a lifelong Tory voter and "far from being a subversive negative influence".

He briefly left the party "to put pressure on them" to hold the 2016 referendum, and rejoined in August to influence Brexit "if there is a leadership challenge".

Evans said the growing campaign for a second referendum spurred his decision as much as Banks.

"My vision of Brexit is being lost to a Remainer PM (prime minister), Remainer cabinet and majority-Remainer Parliament," he told AFP. —AFP ■

Migrant crisis haunts EU three years after Merkel's fateful call



Migrants approach Eftalou beach, west of the port of Mytilene, on the Greek island of Lesbos after crossing the Aegean sea from Turkey on 21 September 2015. **PHOTO: AFP**

BERLIN — German Chancellor Angela Merkel won accolades for her stunning call on September 4, 2015 to keep open Germany's doors to hundreds of thousands of asylum seekers, many fleeing war-torn Syria or Iraq.

Three years on, scenes of far-right protesters chasing down foreigners in a German city have shocked the world. All of Europe has seen a sea-change since the migration crisis erupted.

Britain is now just months

away from quitting the European Union, the far-right is sharing power in both Italy and Austria, while right-wing extremist group AfD has become the biggest opposition party in Germany's parliament. If there is a common denominator for these upheavals in European politics, it is the migration crisis seized upon by pro-Brexiters and far-right forces across Europe as the public enemy in their campaigns.

Despite her "we can do it" rally cry, Merkel has since agreed to toughening restrictions to curb new arrivals, while the EU as a bloc is seeking to stop migrants landing on its soil. As a result, the influx has slowed considerably. In Germany, which recorded 745,545 asylum applications in 2016, just 93,316 were registered for the first half of this year. —AFP ■

Cuba rejects Brazil's decision to ban Lula's presidential bid

HAVANA — Cuba on Saturday rejected the decision of Brazil's Superior Electoral Court (TSE) to bar former President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva from running for a third term, calling the ruling "political." According to a statement from the Cuban Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the decision deprives Lula of becoming the candidate for Brazil's Workers' Party. "Earlier this year, Lula was imprisoned for political reasons as a maneuver to prevent left-wing forces which carried out social transformations in Brazil to return to power," said the statement.

The island's government reiterated its support and solidarity for Lula, who is serving a controversial 12-year jail sentence for corruption and money laundering in Brazil although he

still has the right to appeal.

On late Friday, the majority of TSE ruled the former head of state can't be a presidential candidate because he no longer has a clear record, under the so-called "Clean Record Law", which rules that people with previous convictions for corruption crimes cannot be elected.

Earlier this month, the United Nations' Human Rights Committee said Lula could not be disqualified as a presidential candidate until all his appeals were judged. However, the majority of the TSE judges decided that the UN's stance was not mandatory in this case.

With the court decision, the new candidate of the Workers' Party will be Fernando Haddad, who was Lula's running mate. —Xinhua ■

Palestinian anger as US ends funding for UN agency

RAMALLAH — Palestinians reacted angrily Saturday to a US decision to end all funding for the UN agency that assists millions of refugees, seeing it as a new policy shift aimed at undermining their cause.

Washington, which until last year was by far the biggest contributor to the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), announced on Friday that it would no longer make any contributions to the “irredeemably flawed operation”.

The move by President Donald Trump’s administration was described as “cruel and irresponsible” by senior Palestinian official Hanan Ashrawi.

“The Palestinian refugees are already the victims who have lost their homes, livelihoods and security as a result of the creation of the state of Israel,” she said. The US has backed Israel in accusing the agency of perpetuating the Middle East conflict by maintaining the idea that many Palestinians are refugees with a right to return to homes in what is now Israel.

But to Palestinians, the right of return for the hundreds of thousands who fled or were expelled during the 1948 war that accompanied Israel’s creation is central to their cause.

Chief Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat said the American administration was invalidating future peace talks by “preempting, prejudging issues reserved for permanent status” negotiations. Palestinian and Israeli “elements that want to achieve peace peacefully, based on a two states solution, are being destroyed,” he told AFP.

‘Destroying’ children’s futures

Israel however welcomed the US move.

“Consolidating the refugee status of Palestinians is one of the problems that perpetuates the conflict,” an official in Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s office said. Trump had already angered Palestinians by his December recognition of the disputed city of Jerusalem as Israel’s capital and axing more than \$200 million in bilateral aid for Gaza and the West Bank.

The new policy on Jerusalem overturned decades of



Palestinians sit in a car after they received aid from a United Nations food distribution centre in Jabalia refugee camp in the northern Gaza Strip on 8 August 2018. The US decided to end all funding for the UN agency that assists millions of refugees, seeing it as a new policy shift aimed at undermining their cause. **PHOTO: AFP**

precedent and prompted the Palestinian leadership to break off relations with the White House.

Palestinian presidential spokesman Nabil Abu Rudeina said Washington’s latest decision “promotes terrorism” and was a violation of UN resolutions.

He said Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas was considering appealing to UN bodies to challenge the US decision.

UNRWA, established in 1949, was already facing financial crisis after Trump announced a \$300 million funding freeze in January. The agency, which helps more than five million registered Palestinian refugees, says it now faces major closures to its network of schools and health centres.

Mahmoud Mubarak, director of committees that run 19 refugee camps in the West Bank which accommodate some 500,000 Palestinians, warned of “very serious repercussions”.

Mubarak said committee representatives would meet Tuesday to discuss their options.

In the impoverished Gaza Strip, where most children attend UNRWA schools, 55-year-old Hisham Saqallah said the US move was “political blackmail” that would raise tensions.

“If they stop aid to schools, this means destroying the futures of a large number of students and throwing them into the street,” he said. “If they stop the aid completely it would have a major effect on our children.”

‘Profound’ consequences

UNRWA spokesman Chris Gunness said the agency would try to close a \$217 million short-

fall.

“If not, some of the most marginalised and vulnerable people on the planet may well suffer,” he told AFP.

“People are going to become more desperate and marginalised,” he said, warning of “dramatic, widespread, profound and unpredictable” consequences.

Jordan, which is one of just two Arab countries to have signed a peace treaty with Israel, has announced plans to organise a fundraising conference on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York next month.

The country’s foreign minister on Saturday voiced disappointment at the US decision, saying Amman had worked hard to convince Washington to keep funding UNRWA. “Any decline in the agency’s services and any attempt to diminish its role under its UN mandate would threaten dangerous consequences,” Ayman Safadi said. “Cutting refugees off from the agency’s services will deepen their feelings of deprivation” and create dangerous tensions, he said.

State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert said the US would “intensify dialogue with the United Nations, host governments and international stakeholders about new models and new approaches” for assisting needy Palestinians. But Hugh Lovatt, an Israeli and Palestinian affairs analyst at the European Council on Foreign Relations, said Washington would find scant support for its push for an alternative aid conduit. He said it was an attempt to “unilaterally take the Palestinian right of return off the table”. —AFP ■

7th FOCAC Ministerial Conference held in Beijing

BEIJING — The 7th Ministerial Conference of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) was held on Sunday in Beijing.

Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi and Chinese Minister of Commerce Zhong Shan co-chaired the meeting with South African Minister of International Relations and Cooperation Lindiwe

Sisulu and South African Minister of Trade and Industry Rob Davies.

Attending the meeting were foreign ministers and ministers or representatives responsible for foreign economic and trade affairs from 53 African members of the FOCAC and senior representatives of the African Union Commission. —Xinhua ■

Singapore trade minister says “broad” deal in sight for RCEP

SINGAPORE — Singapore’s Trade and Industry Minister Chan Chun Sing said Saturday that ministers from the 16 countries negotiating an Asia-wide free trade pact have decided on the key elements of the agreement that they would like to achieve by year-end. “A broad agreement is in sight” for the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership which has been under negotiation for several years, Chan said at a news conference at the end of a weeklong meeting of economic ministers of Association of Southeast Asian Nation member states. It included a two-day RCEP ministerial meeting that ended Friday.

“The ministers who are present are very clear what are those elements and what standards we can expect from each of those elements,” Chan said.

“So now everyone is very clear what the package will look

like at the end of the year that we can aspire towards,” Chan said, referring to a year-end meeting of the leaders of the 16 nations involved in the talks.

Chan said “because they have looked at it collectively as a package, they are able to make the tradeoff between different parts of the package.”

But when asked by reporters, Chan would not be more specific about what was agreed in the latest talks, nor what preciously are the major remaining sticking points.

As for the work that remains to reach a final agreement, Chan said it was too early to say when that will be achieved.

He said only that RCEP is now facing its “most challenging” stage that will require the negotiating countries to secure the necessary political mandates and show flexibility in the negotiations. — Kyodo News ■



Singapore’s Trade and Industry Minister Chan Chun Sing speaks at a news conference following a meeting of trade ministers from the 16 countries negotiating an Asia-wide free trade pact in Singapore on 1 September 2018. **PHOTO: KYODO**

UN begins talks on treaty to protect imperiled high seas

UNITED NATIONS (United states)—United Nations member states on Tuesday kick off long-awaited talks on a 2020 treaty that would regulate the high seas, which cover half the planet yet lack adequate environmental protection.

Four sessions of talks, each lasting two weeks, are planned to take place over two years, with the goal of protecting marine biodiversity and avoiding further pillaging of the oceans.

“The negotiations will relate to spaces beyond national jurisdictions, or areas that belong to no country in particular,” said Julien Rochette of the Paris-based think tank Iddri, or the Institute of Sustainable Development and International Relations.

Talk will focus on “the high seas and the international zone of marine waters, or about 46 percent of the planet’s surface,” he added.

In 1982, the UN adopted the Convention on the Law of the Sea, but left the high seas free from restrictions.

“All States enjoy the tradi-



Experts say marine life is suffering from the impact of industrial fishing, climate change and other industries.

PHOTO: AFP

tional freedoms of navigation, overflight, scientific research and fishing on the high seas,” it said.

The convention took effect in 1994, without the participation of the United States.

Since then, shipping routes have expanded considerably, and the resources of the ocean deep

have aroused significant interest, whether by fishing or mineral extraction.

“Marine life is already reeling from the impact of industrial fishing, climate change and other extractive industries. We have a shared responsibility to protect our global oceans before it is too

late,” said Sandra Schoettner, a marine biologist with Greenpeace.

Talks will focus on creating protected areas on the high seas, more sharing of maritime resources and technology, and research on environmental impacts. —AFP ■

Pope urges clean up of plastic waste from oceans

VATICAN CITY—Pope Francis on Saturday issued a call to clear up oceans threatened by plastic waste and underscored the need to provide drinking water to all as a basic right.

“We cannot allow our seas and oceans to be littered by endless fields of floating plastic,” the pontiff said in a message on the fourth World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation.

“Sadly, all too many efforts fail due to the lack of effective regulation and means of control, particularly with regard to the protection of marine areas beyond national confines.”

The pope also said that access “to safe drinkable water is a basic and universal human right” and deplored that for many it was “difficult if not impossible.”

“Our world owes a great social debt towards the poor who lack access to drinking water, because they are denied the right to a life consistent with their inalienable dignity,” he said. —AFP ■

‘Major transformation’ ahead for Earth’s ecosystems: study

TAMPA—The Earth’s forests, deserts, landscapes and vital ecosystems risk a “major transformation” in the next century due to climate change, international scientists warned on Thursday.

Some of these changes are already under way in the southwestern United States, where massive wildfires are destroying pine forests and transforming swaths of territory into shrubland.

In the next 100-150 years, these changes will likely extend to savannas, deserts, and woodlands, upsetting ecosystems and imperiling plant and animal life, particularly in areas like Europe and the United States, researchers warned in the journal *Science*.

“If we allow climate change to go unchecked, the vegetation of this planet is going to look completely different than it does today, and that means a huge risk to the diversity of the planet,” said co-author Jonathan Overpeck,

dean of the School for Environment and Sustainability at the University of Michigan.

The report is based on fossil and temperature records from a period that began 21,000 years ago, when the last Ice Age ended and the planet warmed seven to 13 degrees Fahrenheit (4-7 degrees Celsius).

But experts say their predictions are conservative, since this historical warming, caused by natural variability, took place over a much longer period – from the Last Glacial Maximum 21,000 years ago until the early Holocene, about 10,000 years ago.

But human-caused climate change is different. The burning of fossil fuels like oil and coal emits heat-trapping gases around the planet. The Earth is currently heating up at much quicker pace.

“We’re talking about the same amount of change in 10-to-20 thousand years that’s going to be crammed into a century



Forest fires like this one in La Crescenta, near Los Angeles, California are transforming the landscape by destroying pine forests and transforming the land into shrubland. PHOTO: AFP

or two,” said Stephen Jackson, director of the US Geological Survey’s Southwest Climate Adaptation Center.

“Ecosystems are going to be scrambling to catch up.”

Temperate zones

Researchers described their work as the most comprehensive study to date, based on pollen and plant-fossil records from 594

sites worldwide, dating back to between 21,000 and 14,000 years ago. Every continent except Antarctica was included.

The most significant changes were seen in the mid-to-high latitudes of North America, Europe and southern South America.

These were regions that had been most covered in glaciers, and which warmed up the most

as the climate shifted.

Researchers calculated that if little is done to contain current emissions, “the probability of large-scale vegetation change is greater than 60 percent.”

However, if greenhouse gases are limited to levels targeted in the 2015 Paris Agreement, “the probability of large-scale vegetation change is less than 45 percent.” —AFP ■

Star Johnson needed therapy after horror film 'Suspiria'



Actress Dakota Johnson attends a photocall for the film "Suspiria" presented in competition on 1 September 2018 during the 75th Venice Film Festival at Venice Lido. **PHOTO: AFP**

VENICE — Actress Dakota Johnson admitted Saturday that she had to see a shrink after playing the lead in Oscar-winning director Luca Guadagnino's new horror flick, "Suspiria".

The star of the sado-masochism-tinged "Fifty Shades of

Grey" films made the confession as the movie was premiered at the Venice film festival.

"When you're working sometimes with dark subject matter it can stay with you," she told reporters. "I absorb a lot of people's feelings," Johnson said.

"Then you talk about it with someone very nice afterwards. It is a really nice to (help you) move on from the project and my therapist is a very nice woman," she said.

Johnson, 28, the daughter of actors Melanie Griffiths and Don

Johnson, and the grand-daughter of Hitchcock favourite, Tippi Hedren, plays a young American Amish woman obsessed with a German modern dance group.

After auditioning for them she is drawn into a macabre cult of modern witches as fellow dancers disappear one after the other.

Guadagnino — maker of last year's arthouse hit "Call Me By Your Name" — unleashes his most savagely baroque fantasies onto a stellar female cast that included his regular muse, British actress Tilda Swinton, in one of her best roles in years.

The film, a blood-soaked remake of horror legend Dario Argento's 1977 chiller, is set in a creepy all-female dance school in Cold War Berlin hard by the wall.

Teenage stalker

Guadagnino told reporters that he was so obsessed with horror legend Argento as a teenager that he stalked him.

As a 14-year-old, he even drew his own version of the poster for the original "Suspiria" in his school notebook.

The following year the young Sicilian heard that the director, the father of actress Asia Argento, was in Palermo.

"Somebody called my mum and said 'Dario Argento is in a restaurant in town, tell your son,'" said Guadagnino.

"I went alone and I stood at the window of the restaurant staring at him until he finished his dinner. He was really worried. I think he was paranoid thinking who is that young man looking at me!" "I love Dario," Guadagnino added. "I wouldn't be here without him. I became obsessed by the screen masters and he is one of them."

Johnson said despite the film's tortured psychic atmosphere actually working on it "was the opposite in fact — one of the most joyous you could have."

Distributors across the globe have been snapping up the film at Venice, but critics were divided. Some cheered the film at its preview screening while others sniped that Guadagnino had "invented a new genre, an unscary horror film". —AFP ■

Italian filmmakers should join forces with China: industry professionals

VENICE — Italian filmmakers and producers should join forces with China, where audiences are growing and the market is booming, film industry professionals said at a Sino-Italian Co-Production Forum held Saturday at the Venice Film Festival.

"In a co-production you have to find shared cultural elements, the shared visions and human experiences that makes something work as a great story and as a great movie," said Ellen Eliasoph, producer of Zhang Yimou's Ying (Shadow).

The movie will screen in Venice on Sept. 6.

"Many of the movies that are coming out of China now that are really popular are co-productions, but they are not advertised as such," she added.

The co-production aspect of it lies in the "technical expertise brought in by the partners, behind the camera, in the production design, visual effects, and post-production," she said.

Eliasoph is the CEO of Perfect Village Entertainment, an

American-Chinese joint venture film and TV production company based in Beijing that was launched in 2017.

"We are entering the golden age of Chinese cinema and of co-productions," she said, adding that the Chinese audience is growing exponentially as more and more movie theaters open all over the country, attracting younger and younger audiences," she noted.

These audiences, she said, "are looking for something new and good -- something that will resonate" with them.

"If the movie touches them in some way, Chinese audiences will go to see it at a movie theater," Eliaphson said. "I think the time is right for Italy and China to be working more closely together."

Chen Hongwei, the VP of Tencent Pictures, which produces films based on books, comic books, animated series and video games, agreed that product and producers must get in tune with young audiences. — Xinhua ■

U2 cancels Berlin show after Bono loses his voice

DULBIN (Ireland) — Irish rock group U2 was forced to cut short a concert in Berlin before thousands of fans after performing only a few songs when lead singer Bono lost his voice.

"We're so sorry for tonight's cancellation," the group said in a statement on its website about the Saturday night show.

"Bono was in great form and great voice prior to the show and we were all looking forward to the second night in Berlin, but after a few songs, he suffered a complete loss of voice."

"We don't know what has happened and we're taking medical advice."

It was the second and last concert by the group in the German capital as part of its "Experience + Innocence" tour.

After the first few songs Bono appeared to have a problem with his voice. Several times, the 58-year-old stopped singing to drink from a thermos flask.

He finally announced that he could no longer continue.

The audience will be able to return for another U2 concert at a future date.

"As always, we appreciate our audience's understanding and all our fans' support in Berlin and those who travelled

from afar. We will update you very soon," the statement said.

At the first Berlin show on Friday, Bono condemned the recent far-right violence in the German city of Chemnitz. —AFP ■



U2 were performing in Berlin as part of its "Experience + Innocence" tour. **PHOTO: AFP**

ISS crew to have ‘quiet weekend’ after fixing air leak

MOSCOW — The crew of the International Space Station (ISS) will have a “quiet weekend” after fixing a fracture on the hull of Russia’s Soyuz MS-09 spacecraft, NASA said in its blog on Friday. “The crew plans a quiet weekend before embarking on a busy schedule of research and routine maintenance work next week,” NASA said. Meanwhile, mission control centers in Russia’s Korolev and US Houston keep monitoring the air pressure on the ISS and Soyuz after the leak had been fixed. A pressure drop was registered on the International Space Station overnight to August 30. It was subsequently found that the pressure was dropping due to a

2mm fracture in the hull of the Russian manned Soyuz MS-09 spacecraft docked to the orbital outpost.

Russia’s Mission Control Center instructed Russian cosmonauts Oleg Artemyev and Sergei Prokopyev to plug the hole in the space vehicle with the epoxy-based sealant. The work was accomplished on Thursday evening. After that, the Russian cosmonauts made photos and video records of the hole and monitored its condition and pressure on the space station every hour. On Friday, another layer of sealant was added. According to Roscosmos’s data, pressure on the orbital outpost is holding stable after the repairs. —Tass ■



Mission control centers in Russia’s Korolev and US Houston keep monitoring the air pressure on the ISS. **PHOTO: TASS**

Across China: Robots patrol city pipes to detect defects

HEFEI — A six-wheeled robot travels underground in Hefei, capital of east China’s Anhui Province, to detect warning signs of defects inside the pipeline network.

“It looks like a toy car at first, but it’s much more complicated than that,” said Xu Mao, the robot’s operator.

The pipeline robot, developed by Wuhan Easy-Sight Technology, is composed of four parts — crawler, camera, cable reel, and controller.

A full charge can enable the robot to work for four to five hours, covering a distance between 800 and 1,000 meters in the underground pipeline.

The robot made its debut last month in Shushan District. It will carry out inspections of the underground pipeline network stretching 150 kilometers.

“Whether the pipe is leaking, damaged or blocked, we can clearly see its interior situation through high-definition cameras embedded in the robot,” said Qi Chuanshuai from the provincial construction engineering and testing institute, a partner of the pipeline robot project.

The real-time data including video images of the pipe will



A six-wheeled robot by Starship Technologies makes its way to deliver food from restaurant in Tallinn, Estonia on 16 February 2017. A six-wheeled robot travels underground in Hefei, capital of east China’s Anhui Province, to detect warning signs of defects inside the pipeline network. **PHOTO: AFP**

be uploaded and displayed on a computer.

“If we find any problems, we stop the robot and record the flaws,” Xu said. “We report the defects to local government, who will arrange the repair and maintenance as soon as possible.”

With the rapid development of cities, it is becoming increasingly difficult to manage underground pipelines. Among all the difficulties, detecting flaws in the sewage and rainwater pipelines come first. Many other cities such as Wuhan, Nanjing, Shenzhen, and Shanghai are using the robots to patrol their pipelines,

the robot’s developer said.

Equipped with environmental detection sensors, the robots can monitor temperature and humidity, noxious gases, oxygen levels and smoke density, while providing illumination in real time.

“Compared with human workers, robots are able to enter smaller pipes and are immune to poisonous gases in sewage pipes,” said Ge Shengli from Shushan District’s city management company.

“No digging is required and there is no need to interrupt traffic,” Ge added. —Xinhua ■

Mutations cause cancer by blurring growth signals: study

WASHINGTON — A new study published in the latest issue of *Science* showed that genetic mutations in a form of non-small cell lung cancer may drive tumor formation by blurring cells’ perception of key growth signals.

The research, led by University of California San Francisco (UCSF) scientists, could have important implications for understanding and ultimately targeting the defective mechanisms underlying many human cancers.

Healthy cells rely on the central Ras/Erk growth signaling pathway to interpret external cues about how and when to grow, divide, and migrate.

But defects in how these messages are communicated can cause cells to grow out of control and aggressively invade other parts of the body, according to the researchers. Such mutations are found in the majority of human cancers, making treatments for Ras/Erk defects a “holy grail” of cancer research.

Using a high-throughput technique developed at UCSF that

allows scientists to take control of Ras/Erk signaling using pulses of light, and then quickly read out resulting genomic activity, they have made a surprising discovery about this extensively studied pathway. The new research had revealed that some Ras/Erk mutations might trigger cancer by altering the timing, rather than the intensity, of cellular growth signals. The study also showed that this blurring of signal timing might explain why some targeted drugs designed to shut off defective Ras/Erk signaling could paradoxically activate the pathway instead potentially raising the risk of new tumor formation.

“This new technique is like a diagnostic instrument that we hook up to a diseased cell, which lets us stimulate and interrogate the cell with many light-based stimuli to see how it responds,” said UCSF synthetic biologist Wendell Lim, one of the study’s senior authors.

“Using this approach, we were able to identify cancer cells that have certain defects in how

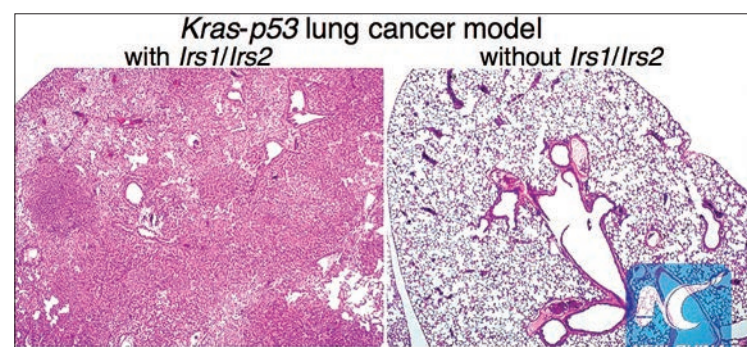
they process signals, behaviors that lead to cell proliferation in response to signals that normally are filtered by the cell circuits.”

The Ras/Erk pathway is complex, but at its core is a cascade of four proteins (Ras, Raf, Mek, and Erk) that activate one another like a chain of falling dominoes in response to growth signals from outside the cell.

Ras sits at the cell membrane and receives incoming signals, then passes them along to Raf and Mek, which process and amplify them, until finally Erk transports the signal into the cell nucleus, where it can activate the appropriate genetic programs.

To track cells’ responses to different patterns of Ras activation, the researchers engineered a system into multiple lines of healthy and cancerous cells, and placed different groups of these cells into an array of small wells in a laboratory dish.

They stimulated hundreds of different experimental groups of cells with a variety of test patterns, and simultaneously read



These two lung samples are Kras-mutant non-small-cell lung cancer. Science showed that genetic mutations in a form of non-small cell lung cancer may drive tumor formation by blurring cells’ perception of key growth signals. **PHOTO: XINHUA**

out their responses under a microscope. These techniques revealed that healthy cells respond selectively to long-lasting growth signals, while ignoring signals that flicker on and off, considering them to be irrelevant “noise.”

In contrast, the researchers found that certain non-small cell lung cancer cell lines appeared to misinterpret these intermittent noisy signals as stronger, sustained signals, triggering excessive growth and tumor formation.

This misreading of signals appeared to occur because a specific type of mutation in the pro-

tein B-Raf corrupted the timing of incoming growth signals, causing short pulses of Ras activation to reverberate for longer within an affected cell. “There may be future diagnostic and therapeutic opportunities that leverage the ability to detect aspects of signal corruption on a functional level that are not apparent by merely sequencing the cancer genome with the descriptive approaches that are currently standard in the field,” said Trevor Bivona, UCSF medical oncologist and cancer biologist and the paper’s co-senior author. —Xinhua ■



Five-time champion Roger Federer. PHOTO: AFP

Federer out-maneuvers Kyrgios as Kerber, Zverev fall at US Open

NEW YORK—Five-time champion Roger Federer found a new way to amaze Saturday as he reached the US Open last 16 with a 6-4, 6-1, 7-5 victory over Nick Kyrgios.

The second-seeded Swiss withstood an early onslaught from the unpredictable Aussie, firing 51 winners that included an unlikely forehand flicked around the net post that Kyrgios couldn't believe. "Definitely a bit of luck and good feet," Federer said of the shot that had Kyrgios wide-eyed at the net.

Federer had the luxury of a two-set lead when the duo's most entertaining exchanges thrilled the Arthur Ashe Stadium crowd.

Things would have been much different if Kyrgios could have con-

verted one of four break points in the seventh game of the opening set. But Federer escaped, breaking Kyrgios to pocket the first set and dominating the second.

"He's an unbelievable front-runner," Kyrgios said. "When he gets in front, there's not much you can do."

Federer will be seeking a 13th appearance in the US Open quarter-finals when he plays Australian John Millman, who reached the last 16 of a major for the first time with a 6-4, 4-6, 6-1, 6-3 victory over Kazakhstan's Mikhail Kukushkin.

If he makes it past Millman, Federer could find Wimbledon champion Novak Djokovic waiting in the last eight. Djokovic, winner of US Open titles in 2011 and 2015, extended his dominance

over Richard Gasquet with a 6-2, 6-3, 6-3 victory in front of a rowdy night crowd on Ashe.

"It was the best match of the week so far without a doubt, and one of the best performances of the hardcourt season after Wimbledon," said Djokovic, who warmed up for Flushing Meadows by beating Federer in the Cincinnati Masters final.

Djokovic saved all five break points he faced to book a meeting with Joao Sousa of Portugal, a 7-6 (7/5), 4-6, 7-6 (7/4), 7-6 (7/5) winner over France's Lucas Pouille.

Kerber can't get it done

The third round was the end of the line for men's and women's fourth seeds from Germany -- Alexander Zverev and Angelique Kerber. — AFP ■

Benzema scoring freely for Real, Atletico crash to Celta

MADRID—Karim Benzema scored twice and Gareth Bale notched another for Real Madrid in a 4-1 thrashing of Leganes on Saturday after Atletico Madrid crashed to defeat in La Liga.

Benzema grabbed a second-half double and might have got his hat-trick had Sergio Ramos passed on the penalty he scored after a foul on Marco Asensio.

Atletico lost more ground on their city neighbours as they sank to a 2-0 defeat at Celta Vigo which coach Diego Simeone described as "a major wake-up call".

At the Santiago Bernabeu, Bale broke the deadlock with a smart half-volley, which was briefly cancelled out by Leganes'

Guido Carrillo, who converted his own spot-kick to ensure Thibaut Courtois' first Madrid contribution was to pick the ball out of his own net.

Rejuvenated under new coach Julen Lopetegui and, perhaps, liberated by Cristiano Ronaldo's departure, Bale and Benzema impressed again. Bale has now scored three times and Benzema four from the first three La Liga games of the season. Together with Asensio, Real may be about to discover a new attacking trio of untouchables, even if Lopetegui rejected the idea afterwards.

"The word untouchable does not exist in football," Lopetegui said. "The goals were down to the whole team."

Real have also taken maxi-



Karim Benzema scored twice to take his tally to four in the young season. PHOTO: AFP

mum points from their opening three fixtures in contrast to the same point last season when they were already five behind Barcelona.

Leganes' underwhelming start under new boss Mauricio Pellegrino continues. They are yet to post a victory.

Courtois debut

Keylor Navas was named last season's best goalkeeper by UEFA on Thursday but was only deemed second choice here by Lopetegui, who handed Courtois his debut after joining from Chelsea earlier this month.

"He has wished me a lot of luck, we get on very well," Courtois said of Navas. "Sometimes people just want to create controversy."

Luka Modric took the place of Isco, in a midfield three with

Casemiro and Toni Kroos. Bale and Asensio supported Benzema up front.

Real's confident start saw Asensio skip in behind but his lifted finish floated just over, before Bale's cross was too quick for the straining head of Benzema at the back post.

The first goal came after Ramos' pass found Dani Carvajal as the furthest man forward and the full-back's clever header back towards the penalty spot wrong-footed everyone except Bale. The Welshman arched his right leg over the bouncing ball, his finish just enough to beat Ivan Cuellar.

Real looked in control but, against the run of play, Leganes earned a lifeline when Casemiro tripped Javier Eraso in the box. Carrillo sidefooted left as Courtois dived right. — AFP ■

Grassroots football coaching course held

UNDER the supervision of the Myanmar Football Federation (MFF), a grassroots football coaching course was held at Southern Myanmar FC Stadium in Mawlamyine yesterday.

The course aims to prepare for the MFF-MPT Grassroots Football Festival 2018, which will be hosted in Mawlamyine today.

A total of 50 young football-enthusiasts from basic education high schools, Sports and Physical Education departments and township football associations in Mawlamyine attended the course.

The course contains basic lessons in theory and practice regarding football coaching, mainly highlighting the grass-



Grassroots football coaching course attendees learning their football skills at Southern Myanmar FC Stadium in Mawlamyine yesterday.

PHOTO: MFF

roots system. The course was conducted by trainer U Bhone Nyunt, according to MFF.

Course attendees will later serve as football coaches for

children in the next football grassroots festivals of MFF, that are planned to be held across Myanmar, said an MFF official. — Lynn Thit (Tgi) ■