

NATIONAL

Union Minister discusses education issues in US

PAGE-3



NATIONAL

Movie schools, studios vital for film industry development: Union Minister

PAGE-3

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Legal aid

Legal aid for people who cannot afford legal representation has been established. Legal aid is given to citizens who are poor and unable to defend for themselves, such as children, women, the elderly, disabled, and people suffering from communicable diseases.

(Excerpt from the report on the current work of the Union Government, delivered at the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw on 19 September 2018)

Reekhorda-Zokhawthar border gate hopeful of developing trade, tourism



Vice President U Henry Van Thio inspecting the current status of Surbon airport project in Falam. PHOTO: MNA

“AS the Reekhorda-Zokhawthar border gate has become an international level facility it will help develop tourism as well as trade,” said Vice President U Henry Van Thio during his inspection of the freight handling yard there yesterday.

After examining the newly-built cargo inspection stands,

the Vice President stressed the introduction of appropriate upgrading programs and facilities through modern designs that are suitable to the country.

The border checkpoint between Reekhorda town and Zokhawthar village in Mizoram State of India is located in Chin State in the northwest of Myanmar.

Accompanied by Chief Minister of Chin State Salai Lian Luai, deputy ministers Maj-Gen Than Htut, U Aung Htoo and U Kyaw Lin, and officials, the Vice President visited the border checkpoint where responsible personnel presented reports on the volume of exports and imports and achievements during the period between 2003-2004

fiscal year and 2018, projected export and import amounts for fiscal year 2018-2019, tax revenues, difficulties encountered at the checkpoint, future programs, and the Indian-aided Tiddim-Reekhorda road project. Chief Minister Salai Lian Luai and deputy ministers U Aung Htoo and U Kyaw Lin gave supplementary reports.

In response, Vice President U Henry Van Thio spoke of the need to increase the volume of exports through efforts, to continuously study the market trend of India and to allow chemical fertilizers and pesticides that meet the norms set up by the relevant departments.

SEE PAGE-3

INSIDE TODAY

NATIONAL

US\$100,000 donated by His Holiness Pope Francis handed over to Rakhine State government

PAGE-2



WORLD

Death toll in Indonesia quake-tsunami hits 420

PAGE-12



SCIENCE & TECH

S.African lion cubs conceived artificially in world first

PAGE-15



US\$100,000 donated by His Holiness Pope Francis handed over to Rakhine State government

WITH an aim for harmonious peaceful coexistence among those who enjoy religious freedom and for development in Rakhine State, a ceremony was held to hand over US\$100,000, donated by His Holiness Pope Francis, for Rakhine, Kaman, Khami, Daingnet, Maramagyi, Mro and Thet races, victims of terrorism, at the meeting room of Rakhine State government office yesterday.

Attendance at the ceremony were Thura U Aung Ko, Union Minister for Religious Affairs and Culture, U Nyi Pu, Rakhine State Chief Minister, state level ministers and officials concerned.

Thura U Aung Ko explained



State Chief Minister U Nyi Pu presenting a certificate of appreciation at the donation event. **PHOTO: MNA**

the aim of donation by His Holiness Pope Francis at the ceremony.

U Myint Swe, Chairman of Nyein Chan Metta organization and Bishop U Pyone Cho of Pyay

diocese explained the aim of the donation.

Afterwards, Union Minister

Thura U Aung Ko handed over the US\$100,000, donated by His Holiness Pope Francis, to U Nyi Pu, Rakhine State Chief Minister.

The state chief minister then spoke words of thanks.

Rakhine State government will use the donated cash in the development tasks of Shwezar, Phawkitau, Thetkainyar, Kyainchaung and Ngakhuya villages in Maungtaw Township.

Afterwards, the Union Minister paid homage to the Padana Nayaka Sayadaws of Maniyadana Monastery in Sittway, and supplicated religious matters.

The Union Minister and party arrived at Yangon from Sittway by air yesterday afternoon.—MNA

Pope presents US\$100,000 for Rakhine State



U Nyi Pu.



U Myint Swe.



U Aye Lwin.
PHOTOS: TIN TUN (IPRD)

UNION Minister for Religious Affairs and Culture Thura U Aung Ko transferred the cash donated by His Holiness Pope Francis to Rakhine State government yesterday. "The Pope with his goodwill for the victims of terrorist attacks in Rakhine State, particularly for those of the Maungtaw area, made a donation of US\$100,000 through a representative," said Chief Minister of Rakhine State U Nyi Pu at the ceremony. "We will use this donation in building roads, wells and lakes, which are included in the social needs for the direct and long-term benefit of the victims," he pledged, expressing pleasure for the assistance.

"We are happy that a donation was made for the people who are suffering from hardships,"

he said, explaining the local government's current and long-term efforts for regional peace, stability and progress. "Additionally, assistance provided by the government has also broadened our undertakings," he said.

"I am the chair of the Nyein Chan Metta organization, and on behalf of the Pope, presented the US\$100,000 to the Union Minister, who transferred the cash to Rakhine State government," said U Myint Swe.

U Myint Swe said, "Nyein Chan Metta has over 90 branches worldwide." We have plans to restore peace, reconciliation and progress, especially in the conflict zones of Kachin State and northern Shan State through religious leaders. We are also arranging a conference in Nay Pyi Taw in

which local and international religious leaders, NGOs and diplomats will take part."

U Aye Lwin of Islamic Faith and member of the Nyein Chan Metta said, "The donation is a non-binding assistance for the Rakhine State government which is free to use it in all necessary areas," pledging to bring peace of mind for all the people through love and peace from the religious point of view. He said, "We also have manageable-scale plans for development, and it is just our first step. Many more will come."

"Our group is based on religion, and all-inclusive understanding of love, forgiveness, tolerance and diversity from the religious point of view is the goal of our religious leaders," he said.—Kan Tun (Hantar Myay) ■

Regional development works to be conducted in Ann Township

A DISCUSSION on developmental stages for Ann Township, Kyaukphyu District in Rakhine State, was conducted in Ann Township yesterday. The Rakhine State Hluttaw Deputy Speaker U Myint Than and township level departmental officials, administrators, township development committee members participated in the discussion.

Rakhine State Hluttaw Deputy Speaker U Myint Than

briefed about Pyidaungsu Hluttaw issues, education, health, transportation, dam construction, electrification and works for regional development. Next, township administrator U Ko Ko Myat discussed about the current regional developmental works. The meeting continued with responsible officials discussing on the current issues of the region and developmental processes to be conducted.—

Ann (IPRD) ■



Rakhine State Hluttaw Deputy Speaker U Myint Than discussing issues at a meeting with local people. **PHOTO: ANN (IPRD)**

Two injured as ten fire shots at house in Maungtaw Tsp

TWO people were injured in Maungtaw Township, Rakhine State, as ten people broke open a door of a house and then fired shots at the house and burning it. The house which was shot at was owned by Zaw

Thein (alias) Musar Arli. The ten shot twice with man-made guns and Daw Khalina and U Nyo Tha were injured. Search for the ten suspects is ongoing by the police, it is learnt.—MNA ■

Reekhorda-Zokhawthar border gate hopeful of developing trade, tourism

FROM PAGE-1

During inspection of immigration procedures, including the issuance of temporary visas, the Vice President suggested measures that would facilitate the work process for the convenience of the arrivals and departures.

After visiting the heart-shaped Reed Lake, he met with local people, state, district and township level departmental personnel at Pyidaungsu Hall. He looked into the health and potable water requirements of the locals and made coordinated arrangements for the town hall project.

At the Surbon airport project in Falam, the Vice President heard a report on the work programs, completed portions of the project under the year-wise budgets, design of the retaining wall, water and power supply



Vice President U Henry Van Thio meeting with departmental officials and local people at Pyidaungsu Hall yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

for the airport, quality control procedures and the completion of the first phase of the project in 2020-2021 fiscal year.

The Vice President said the airport must meet the required standard, pointing out the need

to extend the lawn area, to complete the project in time and to take quality control measures in implementing the project, particularly in building the runway. Then he inspected the runway under construction.

In the evening, the Vice President and party met departmental staff at different levels and local elders at Taungzalat Villa in Falam, where they made arrangements for establishing a national park, implementing the

Lithilee Dam project and local electricity distribution through coordinated efforts.

During the meetings, the Vice President said Tamu-Moreh border gate in Sagaing Region and Reekhorda-Zokhawthar in Chin State were upgraded into international level facilities, adding there were only four such international level checkpoints with Thailand in the past. The two border checkpoints with India should be aided with infrastructures of international standard, he noted, expecting greater tourism development, as people from third countries too may come through them.

Not just as a duty, but with full national spirit all should preserve and protect the Reed Lake, which is the symbol of Chin State, he said, promising best efforts to fulfil the regional requirements. — MNA■

Union Minister discusses education issues in US

A DELEGATION led by Union Minister for Education Dr. Myo Thein Gyi attended the second meeting on education undertakings, held by the Education Commission on 27 September in New York.

The Union Minister also met with Vice President and senior officials from Southeast Asia and Pacific Region Headquarters of the World Bank in Washington DC, US.

During the meeting, the title, "Myanmar Education Reforms" was discussed.

Areas to be selected for education reforms, implementation of National Education Strategy Plan (2016-2021), drawing new curricula for better education and increasing national budg-

ets for education along with its quality were mainly focused in the discussion. Each and every student in Myanmar should be able to attend schools, appointing teachers for ethnic students, building infrastructures and providing teaching aids, other facilities and convenience of students in Rakhine State and vocational training schools to be launched in Buthidaung and Maungtau Townships and distance education system were also explained by the Union Minister with audiovisual aids.

The Union Minister then explained the current conditions of universities and colleges in Myanmar and coordinated on the World Bank's assistance. — MNA ■



Union Minister Dr. Myo Thein Gyi and party discussing education issues in United States. **PHOTO: MNA**

Movie schools, studios vital for film industry development: Union Minister

"FILMS can be developed through coordination and sharing of imaginations, ideas and thoughts of artistes and technicians," noted Union Minister for Information Dr Pe Myint in Yangon yesterday.

Speaking at the Film Analysis, the Union Minister said, "The ministry is rendering assistance to the most possible degree for the progress of the movie world, but the main players are its members."

"Movies involve infrastructure, art, technology and economy, all of which need development," he explained. He expressed belief that, movies could be developed through learning, training and coordination. As a film community was arranged under this belief, members should effectively realize this goal.

The Union Minister invited suggestions, promising ardent efforts to realize them. A soon-to-be held paper reading session on the significant historical characters would be helpful for the movie industry, he said. He then dealt with the establishment of movie schools and studios, which are vital for the development of the film industry.

After Dr Aung Min, an expert of the film industry explained the



Union Minister Dr Pe Myint and officials observing the preservation of movies and related paraphernalia at the film preservation centre. **PHOTO: MNA**

Film Analysis, which is a part of Cinematheque Program, Rosetta, a prize-winning movie at Cannes Film Festival was screened. The participants analyzed Rosetta and shared their findings. At the Film Analysis held on 16 September, participants led by Dr Aung Min discussed the film Yi Yi directed by Edward Yang in detail.

Afterwards, the Union Minister inspected the work of preserving the Myanmar movies, plans to set up a film museum and storing of equipment at the

film preservation centre of the Information and Public Relations Department in Bahan.

Set up in 1981, the centre, which is also called Film Pitakat Taik, has accelerated its functions since 2017 under the cooperation of Save Myanmar Film.

The centre has preserved 11 Myanmar movies, 51 colour movies, 100 units of documentaries till now. Moreover, it is collecting, recording, protecting and carrying out research on old films and movie advertisements and posters. — MNA ■

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Regional government, Seedstars to construct Yangon Innovation Center

By Nyein Nyein

YANGON Region government will sign an agreement with Switzerland-based Seedstars Company, which provides tech entrepreneurs in emerging markets, to construct Yangon Innovation Center, said Naw Pan Thinzar Myo, Yangon Region Minister for Kayin Ethnic Affairs. She was responding to a question raised by Daw Mya Hla San, Hluttaw

representative from Kyauktada Township constituency 2 at Yangon Region Hluttaw meeting held on Friday, on when Yangon Innovation Center project will be implemented, what qualifications young people need and whether start-ups will get technical assistance.

"Under the guidance of Yangon Region Chief Minister, Yangon Region government decided to set up Yangon Inno-

vation Center to support young entrepreneurs. This project was initiated on 5 January. Of six companies which bid for the project, Switzerland-based Seedstars won the tender. Seedstars is a global platform which launches ideas, grow start-ups and build companies, covering 85 countries. A contract draft had been sent to the Union Chief Justice office", said the minister.

To implement Yangon Innovation Center project, a contract draft between Yangon Region government and Seedstars had been submitted to get legal advice. Yangon Region government has implemented this project to develop innovative ideas and start-ups, and to enhance the socio-economy of young entrepreneurs, linking up with graduates, businesspersons and technical experts. ■

High-quality food production course concludes in Mudon

UNDER the supervision of Small-Scale Industries Department, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation, a high quality food production course concluded in Mudon, Mon State, yesterday afternoon.

During the closing ceremony, Deputy Director of the Mon State Small-Scale Industries Department Daw

Nwe Nwe Wah briefed about the aim of the course, which represented systematic use of chemicals in food production and to encourage family-type small-scale food production, which can promote the country's socio-economic development to some extent.

The course was attended by 25 attendees and trainers Daw Hnin Nanda Hlaing and

Various kinds of food produced at the course. **PHOTO: SHWE WIN**

Daw Thu Thu San.

The course included 23 kinds of food production, such

as juice, wine, sauce, cookies and other snacks.—Shwe Win (Pyay) ■

Yoma Bank, Myanmar CP Livestock ink loan agreement

YOMA Bank, one of Myanmar's largest commercial banks, signed a loan agreement with authorized dealers of Myanmar CP Livestock (MCPL), a leading agro-industry and food business in Myanmar, on Friday, according to a press release issued by the bank. The joint agribusiness finance programme aims to facilitate livestock dealers and farmers with working capital to buy animal feed from the Myanmar CP Livestock, which is currently operating four feed mills in Yangon, Taunggyi and Mandalay,

with a total capacity of around 750,000 tons per year.

This is Yoma Bank's new innovative financing for the development of local small- and medium-enterprises. With this program, individual farmers and dealers will have access to a formal financial system to grow their livestock businesses. Under the new loan system, applicants are not required to put up any physical collateral, typically requested by banks in Myanmar, but rather earn unsecured bank credit, based on their

positive track record. "Working with MCPL has allowed us together to provide credit using a credit scoring system. Small-holder farmers are supported through our Agribusiness Finance Program, as we renew our commitment to improving financial inclusion and access to credit for those who are seldomly served by Myanmar's financial institutions," said Mr. Hal Boshier, Special Advisor to the Chairman and CEO of the Yoma Bank.

"This program not only

helps us to boost our sales target as a new strategy, but also enables our customers to get working capital to expand their business with high purchasing power," said Mr. Uthai Tantipimolphun, Vice Chairman of Myanmar CP Livestock Co. The agribusiness finance program ensures to develop the country's poultry sector by providing this need-based financing program for local farmers and other stakeholders, who might currently be excluded from the formal financial system.—GNLM ■

The suspects together with the seized drugs. **PHOTO: SUPPLIED**

Four arrested for dealing in drugs in Katha Township

FOUR men have been charged with drug dealing, after they were found in possession of a cache of yaba pills, white opium powder and related materials, on Saturday morning in Katha Township, Sagaing Region, according to a police report.

Acting on a tip-off, police raided the home of a suspect, named Hein Min Latt of Indarant Village, at around 10 am on 29 September, where he lives with his wife Thida Aye (also

known as Ju Hlaing) and other two people. Police found 140 WY brand yaba pills, white opium powder, weighing 0.1 gram and 83 disposable syringes hidden in the house. The township police have filed charges against the four suspects under the existing Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law, carrying out further investigations to apprehend others connected with the drug trafficking case.—Lu Aung (Katha) ■

Watermelon season opens with profits for growers

WATERMELON and muskmelon grown during monsoon season and sent to border gates are bringing profits to growers this year, said U Soe Lwin, chair of Sagaing Region Watermelon and Muskmelon Growers and Exporters Association.

“Muse market has started to receive China’s demand. This year, the melon season started with a good price. It is profitable market for growers”, said U Soe Lwin.

Monsoon crop cannot keep up with winter’s. A watermelon and muskmelon farm owner who grows about 100 acres in winter, works fewer number of farmlands in monsoon season, just creating a livelihood for their workers. Winter season begins in late October.

“Watermelon fetches 2 yuan

per kilogram and 2,000 yuan per ton on a minimum. Prices range from 1,500 to 1,800 yuan depending on quality of the fruits”, said a watermelon grower from ChaungU area.

Despite a good price in melon market, growers have to purchase input at current dollar exchange rate. If the prices of watermelons and muskmelons remain on high side, high input cost will not affect the growers.

“Over 20 trucks loaded with watermelons are daily entering the Muse 105th Mile market. Currently, about 10 trucks from ChaungU area are leaving for border gates every day. Monsoon muskmelons are sent to Yangon and Mandalay market”, said U Soe Lwin. —Myo Win Tun (Monywa) ■



Farmers collecting melons in a field in Muse. **PHOTO: SUPPLIED**

Second-hand car sales centers likely to close down by 2019

ALL second-hand car sales centers are possible to close down by 2019, said Dr. Soe Tun, president of Myanmar Automobile Manufacturers and Distributors Association.

“Of a rough estimate of 200 sales centers, one-third of them are already closed. The remainder still survive, as their lease contracts have not expired yet. All sales centers are likely to close down”, he said.

Under new car import policy, right-hand vehicles are not allowed, starting from 1 January, which hiked up the prices of second-hand cars with

right-hand drive, Dr. Soe Tun continued.

At present, new auto market is booming and vehicles imported on a system of vehicle assembly, known as Completely Knock-down (CKD)/ Semi Knockdown (SKD), are on the upward trend with the US dollar exchange rate appreciation and Myanmar currency depreciation.

Cars installed locally will possibly get more market shares in 2019. Eighteen companies have been permitted for locally produced cars under CKD/SKD system. — SMW ■



Cars displayed at a sales center. **PHOTO: PHOE KHWAR**

Border trade with Bangladesh increases by nearly \$60 million

MYANMAR-Bangladesh border trade exceeded US\$68 million in the present six-month interim fiscal period, up by \$59.5 million from this time last year, the Ministry of Commerce reported.

At the same period last year, bilateral border trade was valued at \$8.738 million only, covering \$8.7 million in exports and \$0.043 million in imports.

Between 1 April and 21 September this year, Myanmar exported \$10.4 million worth of domestic products to Bangladesh and imported goods amounting to \$57.813 million from the South Asian country.

Usually, Myanmar’s ex-

ports to Bangladesh surplus its imports in bilateral border trade. However, this year saw a significant increase in border imports from Bangladesh, by \$57.7 million.

The Myanmar-Bangladesh border trade is conducted mainly through Sittway and Maungtao borders. Over the 174 days of the present six-month fiscal period, trade from the Sittway gate was \$63.5 million, including \$5.6 million in exports and \$57.8 million in imports, whereas trade from the Maungtao gate totalled \$4.8 million and no commodities were imported from this gate.

At the Myanmar-Bangladesh borders, market-

able goods include bamboos, ginger, peanuts, saltwater prawns and fish, dried plums, garlic, rice, mung beans, blankets, candy, plum jams, footwear, frozen foods, chemicals, leather, jute products, tobacco, plastics, wood, knitwear and beverages.

According to the ministry, the total border trade with Bangladesh was over \$29 million in the 2017-2018 FY. According to the annual statistical report of the ministry, the bilateral border trade was \$3.83 million in FY2012-2013, \$22.8 million in FY2013-2014, \$14.3 million in FY2014-2015, \$11.5 million in FY2015-2016, and \$1.6 million in FY2016-2017. — Swe Nyein ■

Real estate market drops by 30 per cent

MYANMAR’S real estate market significantly fell by 30 per cent, said U Nay Min Thu, managing director of property web portal imyanmarhouse.com.

“Prices of property were down by 25 to 30 per cent. Property transaction as well as rent market plunged by 30 per cent”, he added.

Real estate market this year

dropped by 25 to 30 per cent, compared to 2013, and so did the rent market.

In 2013, not only market demand but also property prices peaked. Thereafter, they gradually dropped year by year. According to the Union Tax and Revenue Law, when buying real estate, a 30 per cent tax is imposed upon property worth

above Ks100 million, causing a heavy burden on buyers.

Realtors want tax deductions, relief and credit for the recovery of market.

Businesses from other Asian countries, such as South Korea, Malaysia, Indonesia, Japan and China have invested in the local real estate market. — Nyein Chan/ Ko Htet ■

Doomsayers begin to see cracks in healthy world economy

WASHINGTON (United States) — Over the last decade, the world's major economies floated themselves out of recession on oceans of easy money and low, or even negative, interest rates.

For the moment, policymakers and analysts talk of a "Goldilocks economy" in the United States, which is enjoying low unemployment, brisk growth, improved household finances and a strengthened banking system.

But with much of the pain having subsided and US interest rates steadily rising, prominent investors and economists are shining a light on the issues that could trigger the next recession.

They point not to risky subprime mortgage lending, which sparked the last crisis 10 years ago, but instead to voracious

borrowing by corporations and emerging market economies.

Martin Feldstein, chief economic adviser to President Ronald Reagan, paints a grim picture where rising interest rates could pop a debt-fueled Wall Street bubble, gutting investment portfolios and consumer confidence, and causing "another long, deep downturn."

He offered some eye-watering numbers in a column in *The Wall Street Journal* on Thursday, warning that a drop in stock prices back to their historical averages from current dizzying heights would eliminate \$10 trillion of US household wealth, slashing consumer spending by about \$400 billion, and cutting two percentage points off GDP growth.

"Add in the effects on busi-



Freshly printed, bundled and packaged money sits ready for shipment to the US Federal Reserve, as prominent investors and economists warn of voracious borrowing by corporations and emerging market economies. **PHOTO: AFP**

ness investment, and this spending crunch would push the economy into recession," Feldstein wrote.

Neither the Federal Reserve nor Congress are in a position to do much to respond, since there

is little room to cut interest rates, and the government deficit and debt are high.

Outside the United States, liabilities may also lurk under all the accumulated debt.

Billionaire investor Stanley

Druckenmiller warned that dollar-denominated borrowing by emerging markets, like Turkey, Argentina and others, meant they already are facing "a shrinkage of liquidity" as the US central bank raises interest rates.—AFP ■

Money launderers are taking EU to the cleaners, experts say



The EU needs to clean up its anti-money laundering act, experts say. **PHOTO: AFP**

PARIS — European Union nations may boast the world's most stringent anti-money laundering rules, but recent scandals show that criminals are good at exploiting the bloc's Achilles' heel: A patent lack of coordination.

"There are problems relating to coordination at various levels: at the national level, between prudential and anti-money laundering institutions, and between states and the European Union," said Laure Brillaud at Transparency International EU.

Denmark, seen widely as a beacon in the global fight against corruption and fraud, was thrust into the spotlight when an inquiry found that probably many billions of euros were laundered through the Estonian branch of the Scan-

dinavian country's biggest lender, Danske Bank.

'Suspicious'

According to the probe, "a large part" of transactions totaling 200 billion euros (\$235 billion) at that branch were "suspicious".

A big chunk of the allegedly laundered funds came from Russia, while the second-biggest group of non-resident customers were UK corporate entities. Britain has announced a probe into the activities of these companies.

Also this month, Dutch banking giant ING axed its top financial officer following a scandal over the firm's failure to vet clients for potential money laundering activities.

In March, Malta's financial

services watchdog froze the assets of Pilatus Bank after the bank's chairman was arrested for allegedly circumventing US sanctions in Iran.

And in February, US authorities accused Latvia's third-largest lender ABLV of large-scale money laundering with connections to North Korea's nuclear weapons development programme. Other European banking giants, including HSBC, Societe Generale and BNP Paribas have been fined millions of dollars in recent years for failing to put in place sufficient anti-money laundering controls.

"It's a good sign that these cases are coming to light, but it remains a concern that the United States has to flag the problem," said Brillaud at Transparency International EU.

No match

The EU's parliament in August adopted a new anti-money laundering directive, a move the European Commission said would "bring more transparency to improve the fight against money laundering and terrorist financing across the European Union". But experts say the EU's efforts are simply no match for criminals who have seen through the lack of a centralised authority tasked with fighting fraud across

the bloc. Emile Legroux of the Paris-based consulting group Mazars said that while the new EU directive aims to harmonise efforts across the bloc, differences between member states' legal structures mean there are bound to be gaps in implementation.

"Some countries implement the European directive in a very theoretical way... while others like France take a very practical approach," Legroux said.

"The first problem relates to rule implementation; then there is a concern over the EU's follow-up not just of whether the directive has been implemented into law, but also that the law is actually applied," said Brillaud.

Banks need to carry out routine checks to ensure there is no suspicious activity, and they need to immediately inform the authorities of any areas of concern, she recommended.

Earlier this month, the European Commission said that as part of its anti-money laundering efforts it wants to strengthen the European Banking Authority, which is set to move its headquarters from London to Paris because of Brexit.

Concerns remain, however, that the EBA may not be equipped to get the job done.—AFP ■

Tencent announces restructuring, new business groups

BEIJING — Chinese internet giant Tencent Holdings Ltd. on Sunday announced its first restructuring in six years, with two new business groups to be established. The company will integrate its original seven business groups into six, according to a company statement. A new business group on cloud and smart industries will be formed, while the other one is focused on platform and content. The cloud and smart industries group is aimed at helping medical, education, transport, manufacturing, energy and other industries become smarter and digitalized, the statement said. A technology committee will also be established, according to Tencent. It pledged to continue to increase investment into laboratories on AI, robotics and quantum computing. Ma Huateng, chairman and CEO of Tencent, called the restructuring a "strategic upgrading" for the company, adding that Tencent will continue to strengthen research and development of frontier science and technology.—Xinhua ■

Syria transport ministry says trade crossing with Jordan open

DAMASCUS — Syria's transport ministry said Saturday the main border crossing with Jordan had reopened to trade for the first time in three years, although there was no immediate confirmation from Amman.

"The Syrian transport ministry announces the opening of the Nasib border crossing, with trucks and transit vehicles beginning to cross the Syrian-Jordanian border," the ministry announced on its Facebook page.

Government troops retook the Syrian side of the crossing in July under a deal with rebel fighters brokered by Damascus

ally Moscow. It had been sealed completely since rebels overran it in April 2015, choking off one of the most important trade routes for the government.

The crossing was a key link not only for direct trade between the neighbouring countries but also for longer-distance transit trade between Lebanon and the Gulf which was a significant source of revenue.

There was immediate word from Jordan on the reopening of the crossing, which is known there as Jaber. Earlier this week, Syrian Prime Minister Imad Khamis said all necessary steps

had been completed to reopen the crossing, with investment in new infrastructure to be paid for by a sharp hike in duties.

"This crossing will be invested in according to our national interest. The customs fees were amended to achieve the interests of the Syrian state, increased from \$10 to \$62 for a four-tonne truck," Khamis said.

Despite retaking swathes of territory in successive Russian-backed offensives this year, Damascus still controls only half of the 19 crossings along Syria's lengthy borders with Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Turkey.—AFP ■



Syria's transport ministry says the main border crossing with Jordan, seen here being patrolled by Russian military police on August 14, 2018, has reopened to trade for the first time in three years after its recapture in July. **PHOTO: AFP**



The Sri Lankan rupee has lost more than 10 percent of its value against the US dollar. **PHOTO: AFP**

Sri Lanka restricts car imports as currency crashes

COLOMBO — Sri Lanka announced a raft of restrictions Saturday in a bid to slow down imports of cars and luxury goods as the country faces a foreign exchange shortage.

The finance ministry banned the import of vehicles for all state institutions for one year and said public servants will not be allowed to import cars at concessionary duty rates for six months.

Banks were also ordered to restrict credit to finance the purchase of vehicles, air conditioners, perfumes, mobile phones and TV sets, among other luxury consumer goods.

The local currency has lost

more than 10 percent of its value against the US dollar this year.

The dollar, which bought 155 rupees at the start of the year, has appreciated and was buying 170 rupees by Friday.

In August, the government substantially increased taxes on small cars to discourage imports, but officials said there was still pressure on foreign exchange reserves to finance big-ticket imports.

The central bank had warned that car imports had inflated the trade deficit by \$700 million year-on-year to \$4.9 billion for the first five months of 2018.—AFP ■

Libya unity govt under pressure on security, economic reforms

TRIPOLI (Libya) — A month of deadly clashes between armed groups in Tripoli has stepped up pressure on Libya's unity government to end its reliance on militias and to implement economic reforms.

UN envoy Ghassan Salame stressed this week as a ceasefire came into effect that "security cannot remain in the grips of the armed groups but must be in the hands of the state".

"It was the first time that the pro-GNA militias have been described (by the UN) as undesirable and need dismantling," said Jalel Harchaoui, a specialist on Libya at Paris 8 University, referring to the internationally-recognised Government of National Accord.

The GNA was set up under a UN-brokered agreement signed in Morocco in December 2015 that raised hopes of an easing of the chaos that fol-

lowed the 2011 NATO-backed revolution which ousted Libyan dictator Moamer Kadhafi.

But a rival administration based in the country's east and supported by military strongman Khalifa Haftar refuses to recognise the GNA's authority.

Tripoli itself has been at the centre of a battle for influence between armed groups with shifting allegiances, leaving the GNA dependent on the support of militias for its security and that of the capital.

In exchange for their military support, armed groups in the capital have infiltrated both political and military institutions in Tripoli.

After the latest clashes, calm returned to Tripoli on Tuesday following a battle using heavy weapons that killed at least 117 people and injured more than 400 others, accord-

ing to official figures.

GNA relies on them

At the end of August, militias from western Libya entered the capital, sparking the showdown with local groups.

Under the ceasefire terms, the GNA has committed itself to sever links between state institutions and armed groups.

That is a tall order.

"These groups were intelligent enough to penetrate the capital's police and economic institutions... The GNA works with them, depends on them, relies on them," said Harchaoui.

The GNA has set itself the target of eliminating "dys-functions" in the economy and banking sector that are exploited by militias as sources of enrichment.

The main aims are to narrow the gap between the official

foreign currency exchange rate and the market rate, and to lift state subsidies on fuel in the oil-rich country that open the door to traffickers.

Corruption

At the official rate, the US dollar trades at 1.4 Libyan dinars, but because of Libya's cash-starved banking sector, the black market rate is four or five times higher.

The wide discrepancy encourages corruption.

Armed groups with access to dollars at the official rate can make huge profits by then selling the hard currency on the black market.

In a move which amounts to a devaluation, the unity government has imposed a 183 percent "tax" on the sale of foreign currencies.

As a result, the dollar, when it is available in banks, is sold

at the official rate of 3.9 dinars.

But Kamal al-Mansouri, a Libyan economy expert, said the impact would be limited so long as the GNA and the eastern authority each run their own central bank.

All parallel authorities must be abolished, he said.

Ismail al-Sherif, a deputy in Libya's elected parliament based in the east, said that for economic measures to take effect they would have to be accompanied by political and security reforms.

"There'll be no success at the economic level so long as tensions persist and if weapons remain in the hands of armed factions," he said.

Sherif said the way forward was a "restructuring" of the GNA, a delicate process of UN-brokered negotiations between the GNA and its rivals in eastern Libya.—AFP ■

Protecting environment is our obligation

Environment affects humankind in all kinds of ways. It affects our surroundings and social life, impacting living and non-living things. Environment plays a vital role, as things constantly interact with each other and adapt themselves to various conditions in their surroundings.

Since everything is part of the environment of something else, the word ‘environment’ is used to describe many things. Originally, environment used to be beneficial, but now humankind has destroyed it.

Environment is everything that surrounds us, including all living things and natural resources that affect human survival. Humans are to take care of their environment. Otherwise, negative human activities can contribute to climate change.

Yangon’s dump fire, which broke out on 21 April, is a grievous lesson for Yangonites, as it endangered the public health. This incident resulted from unsystematic throwing away of garbage. Similarly, people are affected by natural disasters, impacted by man-made hazards through excessive exploitation of natural resources, such as forests, land and water.

Natural hazards have become non-traditional security challenges around the world. Myanmar has formed a central committee, six working committees and monitoring committees so as



Natural hazards have become non-traditional security challenges around the world. Myanmar has formed a central committee, six working committees and monitoring committees so as to implement environmental conservation in all sectors.

ures taken against environmental deficiencies, generated by overexploitation, and natural disasters are to be carried out as a national duty.

Effective implementation practices are vital, once necessary laws, rules and regulations concerning natural conservation have been developed, related committees have been formed and future work processes have been set. Humankind has a unique responsibility to safeguard natural resources and create a quality life and better living conditions for future generations.

In this regard, cooperation plays a pivotal role, not only for relevant ministries but also for every departmental office to participate in the implementation process, ensuring success of environmental conservation. The whole populace should work hand in hand, linking with international communities which aim to save our environment. The government should also cooperate with international organizations to play a coordinated, efficient and dynamic role in protecting our environment.

By Bijay Karmacharya

URBANIZATION is a global human phenomenon. We are in a new stage of human history where more than half of the world’s population lives in urban areas. In the early twentieth century, only 20 percent of the global population or only nine hundred million people lived in cities; today more than half of the world’s population lives in cities and predictions for the next 30 years suggest that it will rise to 70 percent. The 3.5 billion people today living in the urban areas will increase to 7 billion by 2050.

Most of the rapid urbanization is taking place in developing nations. In Myanmar, 29 percent of its population lives in urban areas. Yangon city houses 5.2 million followed by 2.1 in Mandalay city and 400,000 in Nay Pyi Taw. Myanmar is at an early stage of urbanization compared to its South East Asian neighbors. As such Myanmar is a late comer in the process of urbanization and can learn from the experiences of other countries.

Urbanization in Myanmar is bound to happen with exponential growth in urban population in the years ahead. The incessant flow of migrants from rural to urban areas is driven by their very human aspirations for better living conditions and working opportunities. Urbanization is unstoppable and irreversible. It is a proven fact that with or without rural development, urbanization continues. Therefore, what is important is to plan for and manage this inevitable urbanization process.

Combating the exploitation and illegal production of natural resources is a fundamental responsibility of humankind to bring about socio-economic development and environmental sustainability. Protection of environment and safeguarding measures taken against environmental deficiencies, generated by overexploitation, and natural disasters are to be carried out as a national duty.

Effective implementation practices are vital, once necessary laws, rules and regulations concerning natural conservation have been developed, related committees have been formed and future work processes have been set. Humankind has a unique responsibility to safeguard natural resources and create a quality life and better living conditions for future generations.

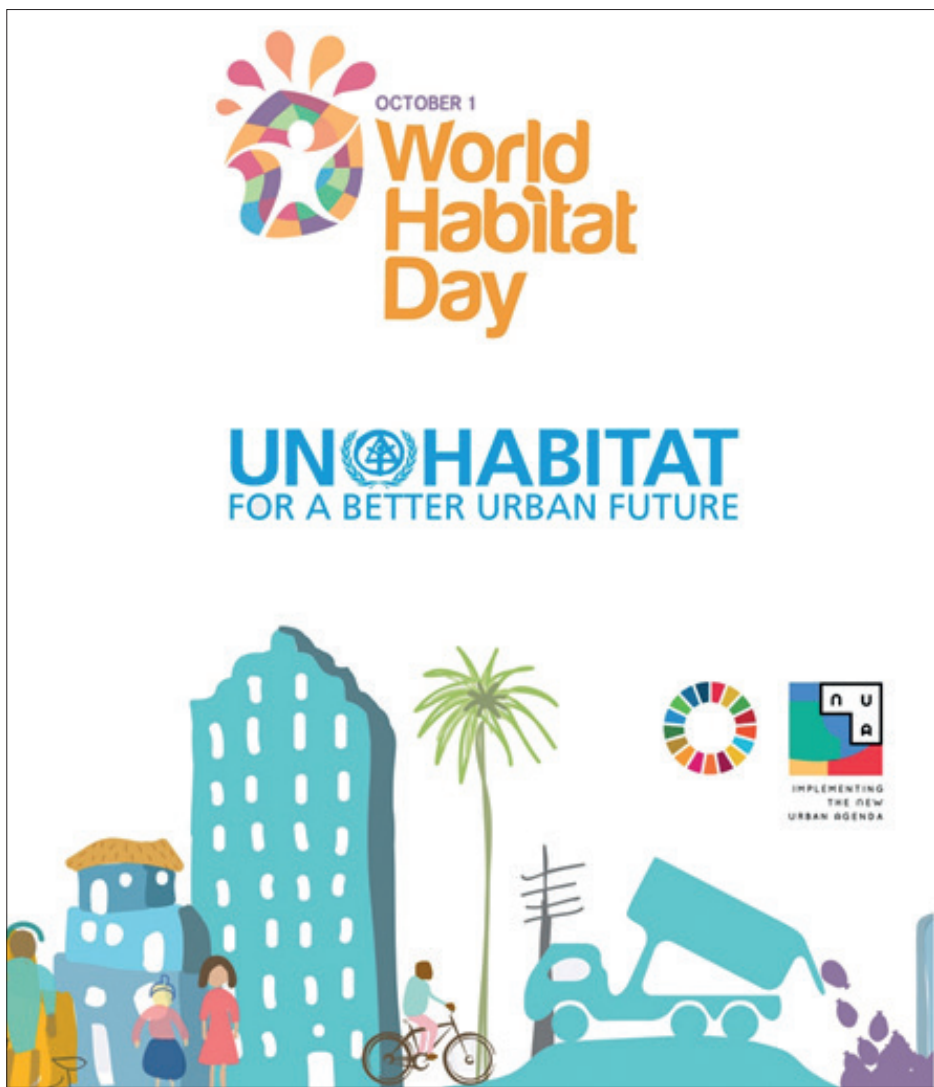
lation growth. This particularly holds true in developing nations such as Myanmar. In many developing countries around the world one could find disproportionate population concentration in their capital cities and some major cities. Some capital cities grow much beyond their carrying capacities resulting in lack of basic urban services, traffic congestion, pollution and environmental degradation, low growth and urban crimes, thereby turning cities into unpleasant place to live. When a city is already overcrowded and its population grows much beyond its carrying capacity, there is very little one can do about remedying the problems in the city. Therefore, planning for a projected population growth is the only option to maintain livability of a city with urban amenities, opportunities and possibilities of economic growth and prosperity for people.

However, it is very much possible to anticipate, plan and design and manage urbanization. This can be through planned city expansion as well as urban infills ahead of a population influx. The advantages of well thought urbanization are enormous, as they can contribute to the solutions to many of the problems the world’s cities are facing today, such as unemployment, poverty, pollution, congestions and social exclusion. Cities, if planned and managed well, are engines of national economic growth, prosperity and environmental sustainability. This is not surprising given that 55 percent of the global population living in urban areas contribute more than 70 percent of world GDP.

The rate of urbanization and economic growth of a nation goes hand in hand. With economic growth countries have seen increased urbanization and vice versa.

With more than half of the world population living in cities and predictable rapid urbanization, the challenges of the sustainable development of the world will also shift to the urban

World Habitat Day



spaces. It is for this reason that the former United Nations Secretary General Mr. Ban Ki Moon said, “the battle for sustainable development of the world will be lost or won in cities”.

Myanmar has seen economic growth of 7.3 percent in 2012 and 8.4, 8.9, 7.3 and 6.5 percent in the year 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016, respectively, since the country initiated economic reform. Therefore, the urbanization rate in Myanmar is bound to increase.

By now, the power of well-planned urbanization is well understood in relation to attainment of global sustainable development goals. There are pre-requisites for a good urbanization to come about. They are: first, adequate laws, rules and regulations; second, better urban design; and third, financing which sustains the function of the cities and funds for its infrastructure plans.

With 70 percent of the world becoming urban by the mid-century, the window of opportunity for the world to fix its urbanization issue is only this 21st century, by which time most of humankind will have lived in urban space.

There is a paradigm shift

in urban planning and design in this century, building on lessons learned from the mistakes of the 20th century.

The 21st Century urban development model is guided by 5 key principles:

- Addressing challenges of urban sprawl by compact city design with optimum density;
- Allocating of enough space for streets, open public space and well-connected grids;
- Planning mixed land use as opposed to zoning;
- Connecting through mass rapid transport to combat traffic congestion;
- Integrating of all segments of society through mixed urban development as opposed to social segregation.

The New Urban agenda of the world puts housing at the center of good urbanization. Indeed, where we live defines our ability to participate in the fabric of our cities. Formation of slums is usually a result of inadequate affordable housing at the places where the poor segment of the people needs it.

It is estimated that 82 percent of Myanmar’s total housing stock is made up of ecosystem-based materials (bamboo, wood, thatch, etc.) and current

backlog of housing units in Myanmar is estimated at 1.9 million units.

Although one could see massive real estate construction ongoing in the city of Yangon, these are mainly targeted at upper middle class and middle-class people, leaving behind the poorest segments of people who are in need of adequate housing at the places where they need it. Yangon city has seen a threefold increase of slum dwellers in the last 8 years. In the absence of housing for the poorest, there is a danger of slum settlements multiplying. Migration data indicate that approximately 100,000 affordable housing units are required in Yangon to accommodate migrant from other states and regions.

Countries must put adequate investment to ensure housing at the center of good urbanization and improve the living conditions of the urban poor.

UN-Habitat in Myanmar is assisting the Government of Myanmar in several normative areas of work including National Urban Policy, National Housing Policy, Myanmar Climate Change Policy, Myanmar National Building Codes as well as in finding workable solutions to the slum issues in Yangon city.

An increasing urban population also brings the problem of cities’ solid waste management. This year’s WHD theme is Municipal Solid Waste Management. Cities often spend a large proportion of their budget on Municipal Solid Waste Management. Therefore, SWM is at the top of the agenda for cities, their inhabitants and city development committees.

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 12 on “Sustainable Production and Consumption” targets among other things, environmentally sound management of all waste through prevention, reduction, recycling, reuse and the reduction of food waste.

Yangon city produces about 2500 tons of waste every day (TPD), at the rate of 0.41 kg per person. The dumpsites of

most big cities face challenges in terms of environmental sanitation, pollution and operations and management of the land fill sites. Htein Bin waste disposal is the largest dumpsite of Yangon waste. On 21 April 2018, a fire outbreak began at the site and spread quickly consuming more than half of the dump. Eight hundred personnel from the Myanmar Fire Services Department (MFS), YCDC and Yangon Military Command were deployed to fight the fire, which was finally brought under control with great effort.

Smoke from the nearly a month-long fire resulted in a noticeable deterioration in air quality in the areas near the landfill. Scores of people were hospitalized with respiratory problems.

UN-Habitat promotes an “Integrated Solid Waste Management Framework” which envisages: good waste collection services; including environmental protection through proper sorting, reuse, recycle, composting, treatment, controlled disposal of residual waste.

Currently, UN-Habitat Myanmar is planning on offering assistance to Yangon City Development Committee to help manage solid waste, by applying the well-known Fukuoka method to reduce future fire hazard and manage the landfill site in a better way within the framework of the Integrated Solid Waste Management Plan of the city.

UN-Habitat has been assisting the Government and people of Myanmar in its normative and thematic areas of i) Participatory Urban Planning and Management; ii) Improving human settlements and rebuilding communities; iii) Environment, Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change; iv) Pro-poor housing, land administration and Management.

UN-Habitat’s hall mark community driven development projects through “peoples process” have helped 1.2 million people by assisting communities in improving their water supply and sanitation, community infrastructures, and in post disaster reconstruction of housing and human settlements.

Bijay Karmacharya is the Country Programme Manager of UN-Habitat, Myanmar.



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Myanmar Ophthalmological Society to hold its 30th Anniversary Conference

UNDER the supervision of Myanmar ophthalmologists, the 30th Anniversary Conference of Myanmar Ophthalmological Society will be held at Novotel Hotel in Yangon, from 15 to 16 October.

Registration for the conference should be made at Yangon Ophthalmological Hospital, starting from 12 October, according to a spokesperson of the society.—MNA



Myanmar Daily Weather Report (Issued at 4:00 pm Sunday 30th September, 2018)

BAY INFERENCE: Monsoon is weak over the Andaman Sea and South Bay and weather is partly cloudy elsewhere over the Bay of Bengal.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL MORNING OF THE 1st October, 2018: Rain or thundershowers will be isolated in Sagaing Region and Chin State, scattered in Mandalay, Magway, Yangon and Ayeyarwady Regions, Northern Shan and Rakhine States and fairly widespread in the remaining Regions and States. Degree of certainty is (100%).

STATE OF THE SEA: Sea will be slight to moderate in Myanmar waters. Wave height will be about (2 - 5) feet off and along Myanmar Coasts.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Continuations of thundery conditions in Southern Myanmar areas.

FORECAST FOR NAYPYITAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 1st October, 2018: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 1st October, 2018: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 1st October, 2018: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (80%).

Thousands in first big protest against Burkina leader



People gather during a rally in the Burkinabe capital Ouagadougou in the first large protest by opposition supporters against the current government's policy since the election of President Kabore in November 2015. **PHOTO: AFP**

OUAGADOUGOU (Burkina Faso) — Thousands of opposition supporters took to the

streets of the Burkinabe capital Ouagadougou on Saturday, the first major protest against

the leadership of President Roch Marc Christian Kabore. “No to insecurity, terror-

ism, to corruption, to unemployment,” chanted the protesters in the first such march organised by the opposition since the election of President Kabore in November 2015.

“We are here because the country is in danger,” said opposition leader Zephyrin Diabre, rejoicing in “the very, very strong mobilisation”.

Burkina Faso, which borders Mali and Niger, has been the scene of deadly jihadist attacks since 2015.

The north and east of the country have been the worst hit while central Ouagadougou has been targeted three times in two years, leaving 60 people dead.

Eight soldiers were killed by a blast in northern Burkina Faso on Wednesday, in the latest blow to the poor Sahel country.

On Sunday, three miners — a Burkinabe national, an

Indian and a South African — were seized by armed men between Djibo and a local gold mine.

Hours later, three police officers deployed to help search for the trio were killed in a clash with armed men at Ton-gomael, about 30 kilometres (20 miles) away.

According to official toll figures published in mid-September, the jihadist attacks have cost a total of 117 lives, 70 civilians and 48 members of the security services.

Under former president Blaise Compaore, head of state from 1987-2014, the armed forces had a trained and disciplined unit, his personal guard.

But this unit was gutted by Kabore, leaving the country “without a military culture”, according to a senior official from France, which is anxiously monitoring the situation in Burkina. —AFP ■

Trump, Saudi king discuss oil supply

RIYADH — U.S. President Donald Trump reviewed on Saturday in a phone call with Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud the oil supply for stability of the market, Saudi Press Agency reported.

The two leaders discussed efforts to maintain supplies to ensure the stability of oil market and the growth of global economy.

Oil supply and prices are common interests of the U.S. and Saudi Arabia.

Media reports said that Saudi Arabia would raise oil outputs in the coming months to deal with the drop in Iranian oil production and might limit outputs next year to balance global supply and demand when the US pumps more quantities of crude.

The two leaders also discussed developments in the region and the world. —Xinhua ■

Syria to re-open Nasib Border Crossing with Jordan in October

DAMASCUS — The Syrian Ministry of Transportation declared on Saturday that the logistic preparations have been done for the re-opening of the Nasib Border Crossing with Jordan slated for Oct. 10, state news agency SANA reported.

A ministry statement said the border crossing will begin to receive the movement of trucks and transit to and from Syria next month.

The border crossing was closed in 2015 when the rebels took over the Nasib area and the crossing in the countryside of Daraa Province in southern Syria.

The Syrian army captured Daraa and the border crossing in July after the rebels in the province surrendered to the army and agreed to evacuate to rebel-held areas in northern Syria, mainly the northwestern province of Idlib.

Last week, the Transportation Ministry declared raising the transit crossing fees that should be paid by trucks passing in and out of Syria whether they are loaded or empty.

Ahead of the crisis, the Nasib crossing was the busiest border crossing in Syria as it is situated on the Damascus-Am-

man international highway.

The crossing is also considered one of the most important land crossings in the Middle East as it was the main crossing for Syrian exports to Jordan and the Gulf countries. Lebanon would also benefit from the re-opening of the Nasib crossing as the small Mediterranean country has crossings with Syria only and through Nasib it can do trade business with Arab markets.

The closure of the Nasib border incurred major losses

in Lebanon, as 70 percent of the agricultural exports, 32 percent of the food industry and 22 percent of the total industry exports in the country passed through Nasib ahead of its closure, according to Nabil Itani, chairman and CEO of the Investment Development Authority of Lebanon.

The Lebanese businesses had to resort to sea shipment when Nasib was closed, which is much more expensive and costly compared with the land shipment.

The crossing is also important for Jordan which is suffering from economic problems.

Since the crossing was closed in 2015, the kingdom has suffered heavy losses as 70 percent of its exports and imports went through Syria, according to Nabil Ruman, head of the investor's board of the Jordanian Free Zone.

Reports said the loss of the Jordanian transport sector from the border closure is estimated at around half a billion U.S. dollars. —Xinhua ■



Jordan's Jaber checkpoint near Nasib border crossing between Jordan and Syria, near Mafraq, Jordan. **PHOTO: XINHUA**

Trump says he and Kim Jong Un 'in love'

WASHINGTON—US President Donald Trump said he and North Korea's Kim Jong Un have fallen "in love"—their bromance fuelled by "beautiful letters" he received from the leader of the nuclear-armed state.

Trump on Saturday elevated his recent praise of Kim to new heights, at a West Virginia rally in support of local candidates for his Republican Party.

"And then we fell in love—OK? No really. He wrote me beautiful letters and they're great letters. We fell in love," Trump told the crowd.

On Monday at the United Nations General Assembly Trump lauded the North Korean strongman—who is accused by the UN and others of widespread human rights abuses—as "terrific", one year after Trump eviscerated Kim from the same platform.

Trump followed those comments by saying Wednesday he had received an "extraordinary



US President Donald Trump speaks during a rally in Wheeling, West Virginia, where he said he and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un had fallen "in love". **PHOTO: AFP**

letter" from Kim, and sounded optimistic about prospects for a second summit between the two leaders "fairly quickly."

Trump used his debut address at the UN General Assem-

bly 12 months ago to threaten to "totally destroy" North Korea and belittle its leader as "rocket man," prompting Kim to respond by calling the president a "mentally deranged US dotard."

Those were among a series of playground-type slurs the leaders of the two nuclear-armed states hurled at each other, setting the world on edge.

Last August, after US media

reported Pyongyang had successfully miniaturized a nuclear warhead to fit into a missile, Trump warned Pyongyang not to threaten the United States or it would face "fire and fury like the world has never seen."

Kim had earlier compared comments by Trump to the bark of a "rabid dog," and Trump derided Kim as a "sick puppy"—before the apparent outbreak of puppy love. Trump met Kim in Singapore in June for the first-ever summit between the two countries that have never signed a peace treaty.

The summit led to a warming of ties and a halt in Pyongyang's missile launches, but there has been little concrete progress since.

North Korea's foreign minister Ri Yong Ho on Saturday told the UN there was "no way" that his country would disarm first as long as the US to push for tough enforcement of sanctions against Pyongyang.— **AFP** ■



Macedonia, whose national flag is pictured left, has struggled for recognition of its name since its birth in 1991. **PHOTO: AFP**

Macedonia votes on new name to end Greek row

SKOPJE (Macedonia)—Macedonians will vote Sunday on whether to re-name their country North Macedonia in a bid to settle a long-running row with Greece and unlock its path to NATO and EU membership. Macedonia has struggled for recognition of its name since its birth in 1991 when the landlocked country declared independence from Yugoslavia. Athens protested immediately, accusing Skopje of stealing the name of its own northern province also called Macedonia.

The dispute stretches back nearly three decades, with both countries claiming links to Alexander the Great's ancient empire of Macedon, which spanned the territories. A grandiose "antiquisation" project under Macedonia's former government that plastered Skopje with neo-classical facades and statues of Alexander the Great added fuel to the fire. But in June Macedonia's new premier Zoran Zaev and his Greek counterpart Alexis Tsipras reached a landmark compromise under which Greece would drop its objections to Macedonia joining the EU and NATO in return for the name change. On Sunday, the nation will vote to accept or reject the deal with polls opening at 0500 GMT. Some feel it is embarrassing to change their name at the request of another country. But a desire anchor their future to the West—and the economic prosperity that could bring—is a powerful motivation to accept the deal in one of Europe's poorest countries.— **AFP** ■

Rival rallies as Erdogan opens mega mosque in Cologne

COLOGNE (German)—Thousands of demonstrators hit the streets of Cologne Saturday as Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan opened one of Europe's largest mosques at the end of his visit to Germany, with police out in force to manage rival rallies.

The inauguration capped a controversial three-day state visit aimed at repairing frayed ties with Berlin after two years of tensions. During his stay in Berlin, Erdogan met twice with Angela Merkel for talks, with both leaders signalling their interest in a cautious rapprochement.

But the German chancellor stressed that "deep differences" remained on civil rights and other issues. Before returning home, Erdogan travelled to the western city of Cologne where several thousand critics turned out to protest everything from Turkey's record on human rights and press freedom to its treatment of minority Kurds.

At one of the rallies on the bank of the Rhine, demonstrators waved banners reading: "Erdogan not welcome".

Cansu, a 30-year-old student of Turkish origin, came from Switzerland to join the protest.

"I want to be the voice of people who can't take to the streets in Turkey. Because they have been arrested, killed or otherwise suppressed," she told AFP. "Erdogan thinks anything that differs from his opinion is terrorism."

Thousands of supporters

Erdogan supporters meanwhile gathered near the Cologne Central Mosque, an imposing dome-shaped building commissioned by the shadowy, Turkish-controlled Dittib organisation.

Cologne police cordoned off a large area around the mosque for safety reasons, but thousands

of Erdogan supporters spilled into the side streets, hoping for a glimpse of the Turkish leader.

Many waved Turkey's red and white flag or held up pictures of Erdogan, with crowds cheerfully breaking into regular chants of the president's name or shouting "Who is the greatest? Turkey".

"Erdogan is very popular because he has done a lot for his people," said Yusuf Simsek, 42, a computer technician with Turkish roots. Both Cologne mayor Henriette Reker and the state's premier Armin Laschet declined to attend the mosque ceremony.— **AFP** ■



As well as protesters, wellwishers took to the streets of Cologne holding a huge portrait of the Turkish president as he arrived to open one of Europe's largest mosques. **PHOTO: AFP**



Amid Palu's levelled trees, overturned cars, concertinaed homes and flotsam tossed up to 50 metres inland, residents and rescuers struggled to come to grips with the scale of the disaster. **PHOTO: AFP**

Death toll in Indonesia quake-tsunami hits 420

PALU (Indonesia) — The death toll from a powerful earthquake and tsunami in Indonesia rose to 420 Sunday, as stunned people on the stricken island of Sulawesi struggled to find food and water; looting spread and fears grew that whole towns had still not been heard from.

"It feels very tense," said 35-year-old mother Risa Kusuma, comforting her feverish baby boy at an evacuation centre in the gutted city of Palu. "Every minute an ambulance brings in bodies. Clean water is scarce. The mini-markets are looted everywhere."

Indonesian vice-president Jusuf Kalla said the toll could reach "a thousand, thousands" based on previous disasters.

State media reported that the death toll had increased to 420 with a further 540 serious injured, but those figures were for Palu alone and relief agencies expressed fears that the number could spike once news started coming in from other affected areas. "Worryingly, the National Disaster Management Agency has said they've received no information from the district of Donggala, which is closer to the epicentre of the earthquake," said Helen Szoke of Oxfam, referring to a region that is home to around 300,000 people.

In the coastal city of Palu on Sunday aid was trickling in, the Indonesian military had been deployed and search-and-rescue workers were doggedly combing the rubble for survivors — looking for as many as 150 people at one upscale hotel alone.

"We managed to pull out a woman alive from the Hotel Roa-Roa last night," Muhammad Syaugi, head of the national search and rescue agency, told AFP. "We even heard people calling for help there yesterday."

"What we now desperately

need is heavy machinery to clear the rubble. I have my staff on the ground, but it's impossible just to rely on their strength alone to clear this."

There were also concerns over the whereabouts of hundreds of people who had been preparing for a beach festival when the 7.5-magnitude quake struck Friday, sparking a tsunami that ripped apart the city's coastline.

Amid the levelled trees, overturned cars, concertinaed homes and flotsam tossed up to 50 metres inland, survivors and rescuers struggled to come to grips with the scale of the disaster.

Indonesian president Joko Widodo was expected to travel to the region to see the devastation for himself on Sunday.

On Saturday evening, residents fashioned makeshift bamboo shelters or slept out on dusty playing fields, fearing powerful aftershocks would topple damaged homes and bring yet more carnage. C-130 military transport aircraft with relief supplies managed to land at the main airport in Palu, which re-opened to humanitarian flights and limited commercial flights, but only to pilots able to land by sight alone.

Satellite imagery provided by regional relief teams showed the severe damage at some of the area's major sea ports, with large ships tossed on land, quays and bridges trashed and shipping containers thrown around.

Hospitals were overwhelmed by the influx of those injured, with many people being treated in the open air. There were widespread power blackouts.

"We all panicked and ran out of the house" when the quake hit, said Anser Bachmid, a 39-year-old Palu resident. "People here need aid — food, drink, clean water."

'I just ran'

Dramatic video footage captured from the top floor of a parking ramp as the tsunami rolled in showed waves bringing down several buildings and inundating a large mosque. "I just ran when I saw the waves hitting homes on the coastline," said Palu resident Rusidanto, who like many Indonesians goes by one name.

About 17,000 people had been evacuated, the government disaster agency said and that number was expected to soar.

"This was a terrifying double disaster," said Jan Gelfand, a Jakarta-based official at the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

"The Indonesian Red Cross is racing to help survivors but we don't know what they'll find there." Images showed a double-arched yellow bridge had collapsed with its two metal arches twisted as cars bobbed in the water below. A key access road had been badly damaged and was partially blocked by landslides, the disaster agency said.

Evening prayers

Friday's tremor was also felt in the far south of the island in its largest city Makassar and on neighbouring Kalimantan, Indonesia's portion of Borneo island.

The initial quake struck as evening prayers were about to begin in the world's biggest Muslim majority country on the holiest day of the week, when mosques are especially busy. Indonesia is one of the most disaster-prone nations on earth. It lies on the Pacific "Ring of Fire", where tectonic plates collide and many of the world's volcanic eruptions and earthquakes occur. Earlier this year, a series of powerful quakes hit Lombok, killing more than 550 people on the holiday island and neighbouring Sumbawa. —AFP ■

Typhoon Trami injures 45, direct hit on Japan mainland expected

TOKYO — A powerful typhoon hurtled toward Japan's mainland Sunday after injuring dozens on southern islands, as weather officials warned that fierce winds and torrential rain could trigger landslides and floods.

Typhoon Trami has already sparked travel disruption in the world's third-biggest economy, with bullet train services in the west of Japan suspended and almost 1,000 flights cancelled due to the closure of a key airport hub.

Television footage showed cars in Okinawa island flipped over by the strength of the wind. Several houses were flooded or damaged and 38 people sustained minor injuries but no one was feared dead, local officials said.

Authorities issued evacuation advisories to some 349,000 residents, while electricity was cut to more than 300,000 houses, according to public broadcaster NHK.

Trami is the latest in a series of extreme natural events in Japan, which has suffered typhoons,

flooding, earthquakes and heat waves in recent months, claiming scores of lives and causing extensive damage.

Packing maximum gusts of 216 kilometres (134 miles) per hour near its centre, Trami was forecast to hit the mainland later Sunday and travel over most of the archipelago, causing extreme weather into Monday, forecasters said. Maintaining its "very strong force," the storm churned near Kagoshima on the western tip of Japan, causing seven minor injuries. "We are strongly urging our residents to stay indoors because it is extremely dangerous to be outside now," Masaaki Tamaki, an official of Kagoshima's disaster management section, told AFP.

The Japanese meteorological agency issued a special warning of landslides and floods in Kagoshima and Chiba, while saying heavy rain seen once in half a century has been monitored in Yakushima island, southern Kagoshima. —AFP ■



The Japanese weather agency has warned of record winds. **PHOTO: AFP**

China's manufacturing activity expands slower in September

BEIJING—China's manufacturing sector expanded at a slower pace in September, official data showed Sunday.

The country's manufacturing purchasing managers' index came in at 50.8 in September, narrowing from 51.3 in August, according to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS).

A reading above 50 indicates expansion, while a reading below reflects contraction.

"Production continued to expand while market demand remained generally stable," said NBS senior statistician Zhao Qinghe. Sub-index for production edged down from 53.3 in August to 53 in September, while

the sub-index for new orders dipped from 52.2 in August to 52 in September.

Sunday's data also showed that China's non-manufacturing sector expanded at a faster pace, with the PMI for the sector standing at 54.9 in September, up from 54.2 in August.

The service sector, which accounts for more than half of the country's GDP, maintained stable growth, with the sub-index measuring business activity in the industry standing at 53.4 in September, flat with August.

Rapid expansion was seen in industries including air, retail and telecommunications, the NBS said. —Xinhua ■



Tourists to the Great Barrier Reef generate revenues of \$4.3 billion (Aus\$5.9 billion) and support 64,000 local jobs. PHOTO: AFP

It's not that bad! Science, tourism clash on Great Barrier Reef

QUEENSLAND (Australia) — A row is raging over Australia's warming-damaged Great Barrier Reef, with firms worried that scientists' apocalyptic warnings are scaring visitors out of the water.

Every year, more than two million snorkel-wielding tourists head to Australia's famed coral ecosystem, generating revenues of \$4.3 billion (Aus\$5.9 billion) and supporting 64,000 local jobs.

But damage done by higher temperatures — which turn patches of the reef ashen white — has threatened to put a break on the number of tourists willing to wrestle their way into a wetsuit.

There was surprise then, when the Reef and Rainforest Research Centre recently published a markedly more optimistic report, heralding "significant signs of recovery" at major dive sites around Cairns and prompting a flurry of upbeat news coverage.

If the report's findings seemed out of kilter with other studies about the reef, that was by design.

It was part of an effort to show that not all of the Great Barrier Reef is an aquatic wasteland, according to Col McKenzie of tourism industry lobby group AMPPTO, which helped carry out the research.

"Overall, are we seeing a drop in visitation

because of the negative press, absolutely we are, there's no doubt about that," McKenzie told AFP.

He suggested visitor numbers to the reef and nearby islands had dropped by 10 percent in 2017 and were on track to plunge by a further 15 percent this year.

Although government data shows that the number of visitors to the broader region has actually increased, those figures are older and don't include coral-viewing activities.

McKenzie said it was vital to get the message out that some areas of the massive ecosystem are still teeming with colour and life.

"What people miss with our reef system is... it's a massive structure," he said.

His comments are the latest salvo in a battle between ecologists and the tourism industry, as they struggle to come to terms with competing interests and new realities on the reef.

Professor Terry Hughes of James Cook University, who leads the surveys of bleached corals, cautioned that while some damaged coral regain their colour within several months, more badly damaged reefs can take a decade to recover.

"It's very early days yet," he told AFP, describing a patchy recovery that makes generalisations difficult.

"Basically we are in year one in the middle of the reef, or year two in the northern reefs, in the decade-long process of recovery."

The government's Australian Institute of Marine Science says coral cover has "continued to decline due to the cumulative impacts of multiple, severe disturbances over the past four years".

The same institute showed that apart from the risk of extreme sea surface temperatures — with some areas more affected, the reef is also grappling with the impacts of farming run-off, development and severe tropical cyclones.

Conflicting interests

Even within government there are conflicting interests at play, as well as rolling debates about how best to respond.

Canberra has — so far successfully — urged UNESCO to hold off listing the reef as an endangered World Heritage site, fearing it would have an adverse economic impact and lead to tougher restrictions on local industry.

It has allocated some \$1.4 billion to protect the site, but at the same time backed a huge coal project nearby by Indian mining giant Adani and moved away from legislating climate targets under the Paris Accord. — AFP ■

UN report confronts nations with tough choices on climate

PARIS — The world's nations will gather at a UN conference in South Korea on Monday to review and approve a 20-page bombshell — distilled from more than 6,000 scientific studies — laying out narrowing options for staving off climate catastrophe.

When the 195 countries who signed off on the Paris Agreement in 2015 requested a report from UN-led scientists on the feasibility of capping global warming at 1.5 degrees Celsius, the gesture seemed to many unnecessary.

The treaty, after all, enjoined the world to block the rise in Earth's surface temperature at "well below" 2°C (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) compared to preindustrial levels, adding a safety buffer to the two degree threshold long seen as the guardrail for a climate-safe world.

Since then, however, a crescendo of deadly heatwaves, floods, wildfires and superstorms

engorged by rising seas — with less than 1°C warming so far — has convinced scientists that the danger cursor needed to be reset.

"There is increasing and very robust evidence of truly severe and catastrophic risks even

at the lower bounds of these temperature targets," said Peter Frumhoff, director of science and policy at the Union of Concerned Scientists, a Washington-based research and advocacy group. — AFP ■



A study from UN-led scientists warns that even capping global warming at an ambitious 1.5 degree Celsius is not enough. PHOTO: AFP

CHANGING THE NAME OF INSECTICIDE TRADING

The foreign manufacturer Makro Chemical will import and distribute the following insecticides registered in Myanmar Pesticide Registration Board changing trading name-

No.	Old Trade Name	New Trade Name	Active Ingredient Name	Registration Type	Registration Number
1	Mikifos 40.8% EC	Mega Fospower	Chlorpyrifos 40.8% EC	Full	F 2016-1303

It is therefore announced to come and reject within two weeks to Joint Secretary, Myanmar Pesticide Registration Board, Plant Protection Division, West Gyogone, Insein in wishing to make any objection in respect of the said changing trading name of insecticide.
Address - Mega Grow International Co., Ltd.
No.216/222, 9 - Floor, B8-C8, Bo Myat Tun Housing, Bahabadoola Road, Pazundaung Township, Yangon Region, Ph.01-292 772

THE REPUBLIC OF THE UNION OF MYANMAR MINISTRY OF ELECTRICITY AND ENERGY MYANMA OIL AND GAS ENTERPRISE (INVITATION FOR OPEN TENDER) (19/ 2018)

1. Open tenders are invited for supply of the following respective items in United States Dollars and Myanmar Kyats.

Sr.No	Tender No	Description	Remark
(a)	IFB-029(18-19)	10" ERW API 5L Grade X-42 MS 3 LPE Coated Steel Line Pipes (32200) MTR	US\$
(b)	IFB-030(18-19)	8" ERW API 5L Grade X-42 MS 3 LPE Coated Steel Line Pipes (16100) MTR	US\$
(c)	IFB-031(18-19)	4" ERW API 5L Grade X-42 MS 3 LPE Coated Steel Line Pipes (16100) MTR	US\$
(d)	IFB-032(18-19)	20" LSAW API 5L Grade X-46 MS 3 LPE Coated Steel Line Pipes (24150) MTR	US\$
(e)	DMP/L-120(18-19)	13 5/8" x 5K Annular BOP Spares (2) Items	Ks
(f)	DMP/L-121(18-19)	Spares for D 3 T2 Drilling Rig Drawwork (4) Items	Ks
(g)	DMP/L-122(18-19)	Spares of Drill String, Reaming String and Break Out Unit of HDD Rig (16) Items	Ks
(h)	DMP/L-123(18-19)	Spares for Caterpillar Excavator (32) Items	Ks
(i)	DMP/L-124(18-19)	Spares for BT 5560/150 Triplex Pump Ex HDD Rig (5) Groups	Ks
(j)	DMP/L-125(18-19)	Electrical Spares for ZJ 50 D SR Rigs (16) Items	Ks

2. The Open Tender forms including Description of Materials / Qty with details specifications and Tender Terms & Conditions can be available free download at the Ministry of Electricity and Energy Website Portal (www.moee.gov.mm) as from 1 October 2018. Tender forms will not be sold.

3. The interested Bidders should submit the **Technical Specifications with Original Bid Bond and Commercial Quotation in each separate sealed envelopes** on which to be addressed to the Managing Director, Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise and should reach in Tender Box of the Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise not later than **14:00 pm on 29 October 2018**.

4. Tender Closing Date & Time- 29-10-2018, 14:00 pm
Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise
Ph. +95 67 - 411206

US museum unveils massive expansion in praise of 'slow art'

POTOMAC (United States) — It may be the greatest art collection you've never heard of — until now.

With a sprawling gallery space opening Thursday in a prosperous exurb of Washington, Glenstone has become one of the world's biggest private art museums.

At a time when museums are courting Instagram-hungry crowds and visitors have to elbow each other to catch a glimpse, Glenstone has carefully choreographed a journey in the opposite direction as part of its \$200 million expansion.

Birdsong and crickets provide the soothing cadence to the 10-minute walk from the parking lot to the new building, along a gravel path carved into rolling hills dotted with wildflowers, sycamore and oak trees.

"Split Rocker," a giant flower-covered sculpture by the equally polarizing and famous Jeff Koons is perched atop a hill gazing toward the 204,000-square-foot (19,000-square-meter) Pavilions complex.

A water court of aquatic plants ringed by walls of glass provides the beating heart of the Thomas Phifer-designed building, flooded with natural light and shaped with individually poured blocks of gray concrete.



Visitors are invited to relax on soft seats as they watch Pipilotti Rist's video 'Ever Is Over All' (1997) featuring playful music while the Swiss artist smashes multiple car windows, a smile on her face. **PHOTO: AFP**

The Pavilions' 11 interconnected structures are embedded into the 230 acres (93 hectares) of this former foxhunting estate.

"It's all very carefully calibrated to allow for that prolonged experience," said director Emily Rales, 42, who co-founded Glenstone with her husband Mitchell, a 62-year-old billionaire industrialist.

In an interview, she spoke of their "personal quest to find those quiet moments where you can re-

ally sit with a work of art and not feel rushed or pressured to move on." The setting provides an experience that changes with the seasons and from dawn to dusk in what remains the Raleses' (tax-exempt) backyard.

Glenstone's collection of post-World War II art is considered to be one of the best, including works by Louise Bourgeois, Roni Horn and Richard Serra, who has two torqued steel sculptures on the grounds.

In a radical departure from most other museums, the walls are barren of explanatory texts and some rooms have just a single work of art.

Gray-uniformed guides, many of them in a young professionals training program, politely engage visitors in discussions about what lies before their eyes.

'Here for you'

Brice Marden's majestic "Moss Sutra with the Seasons"

(2010-2015) — his only commissioned work — stands alone in a space designed in collaboration with the artist.

Lit through clerestory windows, the painting features four monochrome panels inspired by seasonal colors, while a larger one in the center reveals mossy green calligraphic squiggles typical of Marden's later years.

A square, skylit room presents On Kawara's "Moon Landing," three large-scale black canvases each indicating in white script a key date during the July 1969 Apollo 11 lunar landing mission.

"We have made this commitment to artists by saying, look, we know that what you're asking is tremendous and it's difficult to do, but we're here for you and we will do whatever we can to realize that vision for you," explained Emily Rales, who studied art history at prestigious Wellesley College before directing New York's Gladstone Gallery.

"That is very valuable for an artist working today." There were 70 meetings with Robert Gober and his studio about his 1992 "Untitled" installation of large sinks with open taps set against a woodlands wallpaper with barred windows. Newspapers are strewn about the floor. —AFP ■

Fashion's bad boy Gaultier showcases life and work in 'freak' revue



The show opens to the public on 2 October. **PHOTO: AFP**

PARIS — "I was weaned on musicals ... totally transfixed by the plumes and the paste jewels. I told myself that one day I would stage a revue," Jean Paul Gaultier said of a childhood dream that has now taken shape at the Folies Bergeres, a landmark Parisian theatre.

"The Fashion Freak Show", which opens to the public next week, traces the journey of the enfant terrible of French cou-

ture from his humble origins in a Paris suburb to international stardom. The 66-year-old began his career as an assistant with Pierre Cardin and a pathbreaking trail followed that introduced man skirts, older men, fuller women and heavily tattooed models to the runway and the iconic cone bra immortalised by pop diva Madonna.

"I have always loved freaks, strange people, troublemakers,

aesthetics which blend and unexpected encounters like when the boy from the streets consorts with the duchess," Gaultier said.

The spectacle showcases 200 of his creations and begins with "Nana", Gaultier's childhood teddy bear for whom he made a conical bra when he was just five. It shows a young Jean Paul being regularly punished in school for drawing gowns in the classroom and goes on to his stint at Cardin, his first collection and his inspirations and muses, including Kylie Minogue, Madonna and Pedro Almodovar.

Boasting colours screaming Florida and enlivened by energetic disco beats, the revue also showcases the quirky collections of the bad boy of fashion over the years such as his corset dresses and the Perfecto gown. Gaultier's life is laid bare with scenes from a gay cruising club and a moving moment when his lover and business partner Francis Menuge dies of AIDS. —AFP ■

Divisive Polish film skewers Catholic clergy

WARSAW — The Polish film "Kler" (The Clergy) has aroused passionate debate in the deeply religious country, winning awards but also triggering calls for it to be banned.

"Those who hold the homeland in their heart, who love God and Poland, must clearly say 'No' to the destruction of our nation's values," said an association of Catholic journalists that wants the film about child abuse, clerical corruption and burn-out to be pulled from almost 500 movie theatres. Directed by Wojciech Smarzowski and filmed in the Czech Republic, "The Clergy" was shown last week at the Gdynia film festival, where it won prizes from both journalists and the public.

Its release comes as the Catholic Church faces a crisis in several countries owing to charges of sexual abuse of children by clergy and lay members, which the Vatican's chief spokesman

has called "a cultural problem" and "very grave sins".

Film critic Janusz Wroblewski said that "no director has ever dared to present as critical a vision of the Catholic Church in Poland." Smarzowski "denounces all its cardinal sins from paedophilia, payment by the faithful for sacraments, crooked tenders and a generally demoralised hierarchy," the critic added.

'Hard-core propaganda'

The film has nonetheless been attacked since it was shown for the first time to the public Friday. Journalist Jan Bodakowski called it "hard-core anti-clerical propaganda. The priests do nothing but drink, rape choir boys and obsess about money. It is a vision of those who do not know the Church and real priests."

Some cinemas have decided not to show it, while others have run it almost non-stop since its release. —AFP ■

Russia, China agree to go ahead with cooperation in rocket, engine manufacturing

MOSCOW — Russia and China have signed a protocol on cooperation in the space rocket and engine manufacturing, as well as lunar exploration projects, the website of the Roscosmos corporation said on Friday.

The space cooperation sub-commission of the Russia-China commission for preparations for regular meetings of heads of government met in session for the 19th time in Beijing on Friday. “The session ended with

the signing of a protocol in which the two parties agreed to take further steps to seek rapprochement in implementing joint projects for the manufacture of space vehicles and rocket engines, exploring the Moon and deep space, remote sensing of the Earth, satellite navigation, creating a base of electronics components for the space industry, and low orbit mobile communication systems and space debris monitoring,” the report runs. —Tass ■



The respective protocol also envisages exploring the Moon and deep space. **PHOTO: TASS**

China HIV/AIDS cases surge by 14%

BELJING — The number of people living with HIV/AIDS in China has surged by 14 percent, with most cases transmitted through sex rather than blood transfusions, state media said Saturday.

More than 820,000 people had AIDS or were HIV-positive at the end of June, up by 100,000 year-on-year, the official Xinhua news agency said, citing national health officials at an HIV/AIDS conference.

More than 40,000 new HIV/AIDS cases were reported in the second quarter alone, with 93.1 percent having contracted the

virus through sex.

The number of HIV infections caused by blood transfusions has “essentially been reduced to zero”, according to Xinhua.

China has been hit by blood transfusion scandals in the past.

In the 1990s, rural parts of China — particularly the central province of Henan — endured the country’s most debilitating AIDS epidemic.

It stemmed from a tainted government-backed blood donation programme and infected tens of thousands of people, including entire villages. —AFP ■



More than 820,000 people had HIV/AIDS in China at the end of June, up by 100,000 year-on-year. **PHOTO: AFP**



Scientists hope the artificial insemination technique can be used to save other endangered big cats. **PHOTO: AFP**

S.African lion cubs conceived artificially in world first

BRITS — Watching the two little lion cubs boisterously play with each other at a conservation centre outside of South Africa’s capital Pretoria, it’s hard to see anything out of the ordinary.

But these cubs are unique. “These are the first ever lion cubs to be born by means of artificial insemination — the first such pair anywhere in the world,” announced the University of Pretoria, whose scientists are researching the reproductive system of female African lions.

The two cubs, a male and female, born on August 25 are healthy and normal, said Andre Ganswindt, the director of the University of Pretoria’s mammal research institute.

His team’s breakthrough came after 18 months of intensive trials.

“We collected sperm from a healthy lion,” Ganswindt told AFP.

Then when the lioness’ hormone levels were found to be viable, she was inseminated artificially.

“And luckily it was successful,” said Ganswindt, adding that “there were several attempts, but surprisingly it didn’t take too much effort”.

He said the breakthrough could be repeated, with scientists hoping the technique can be used to save other endangered big cats.

Lions are extinct in 26 African countries and numbers in the wild have plummeted

43 percent over the last two decades, with roughly only 20,000 left, according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), which lists the African lion as vulnerable.

“If we are not doing something about it, they will face extinction,” said Ganswindt.

‘Another tool in conservation box’

He said that rather than move the lions for breeding, the new technique would let breeders to simply transport the sperm to receptive females, as is done with the captive elephant population in Northern America and Europe.

The findings are part of research being done by Isabel Callealta, a Spanish veterinarian and PhD student at the University of Pretoria.

Callealta personally trained the lions to lie next to a fence, where they would freely give blood samples to determine hormonal levels and assess the perfect time for insemination.

The research was carried out at the Ukutula Conservation Center, 80 kilometres (50 miles) northwest of Pretoria in South Africa’s North West province.

Imke Lueders, a scientist involved in the study, said “having the first lion cubs ever born from artificial insemination in their natural range country, and not in a zoo overseas, is an important milestone for South

Africa”.

“Assisted reproduction techniques are another tool in our conservation box, of course not a sole solution, but another technology that we can use to protect endangered species,” she said.

Andre Mentz, a prominent lion breeder in South Africa’s Free State province, described the birth of the cubs as “very revolutionary”.

But animal welfare organisations are less enthused.

“The captive lion breeding industry in South Africa is exploitative and profit-driven,” said Mark Jones of the Born Free Foundation.

“It generates its income through interaction activities (lion cub petting and lion walks), canned trophy hunting of lions and the lion skeleton trade, while contributing nothing to lion conservation,” he added.

A group of 18 international and African conservation organisations wrote a letter addressed to the scientists saying they do not support the study, but did acknowledge artificial insemination could help other imperilled wild cats like the cheetah.

However Paul Funston of wild cat conservation organisation Panthera raised fears about “anything new which gives any validity to the captive lion industry”.

After all, he said, “in captivity lions breed like flies — most cats do”. —AFP ■

Myanmar wins Asia Invitational Snooker Championship 2018

KO Htet, representing Myanmar, secured a deserved victory in Asia Invitational Snooker Championship 2018, which was hosted in Malaysia, from 23 to 29 September.

There were a total of 64 players from 10 countries, participating in the Championship tournament.

In the 32 teams play-off stage, Myanmar beat Malaysia by

4-2, while in the 16 teams play-off stage, Myanmar won Thailand by 5-2. In the 8 teams play-off stage, Myanmar surprisingly beat the favored champion Thailand by 5-3 and stepped up to the semifinal.

In the semifinal, Myanmar struck Malaysia by 6-5 and stepped up to the final. In the final, Myanmar also won two-time championship winner, China, by 6-5, and won the championship title deservedly.



Champion Ko Htet (holding award) arriving back at the Yangon International Airport yesterday. **PHOTO: Ye Htut**

Ko Htet was awarded RM10000, the championship winner's prize. Myanmar's champion Ko

Htet arrived back at the Yangon International Airport yesterday morning and was welcomed by

responsible officials from the Myanmar Billiard and Snooker Federation.—MNA ■

Tentative line-up for Myanmar football squad released

MYANMAR chief coach Antonie Hey released a tentative lineup for Myanmar national football team that is going to demonstrate two warm-up matches during October, and the lineup contains 27 players. As part of preparations for participating in the 2018 Suzuki Cup, Myanmar is going to demonstrate two FIFA international warm-up matches against Indonesia national team on October 10 and Bolivia on October 13. Aung Thu (Police Tero), Kaung Set Naing (Samut Sakhon), Than Htet Aung (Zwegabin), Thiha Htet Aung (Zwegabin), Myo Ko Tun (Yadanarbon),

Thein Than Win (Yadanarbon) and Ye Ko Oo (Yadanarbon) were added to the lineup.

"I had to watch many league matches for some months to scout the reliable players. Myanmar played against some international football matches. My tentative lineup was released by assessing current performance of the players and their talents. I believe that the players have what they need for achieving success in the Suzuki Cup. For now, I have paid attention to friendly matches against Indonesia and Bolivia. These warm-up matches are an opportunity for our young national team. Players

can seek much better experience playing first-class teams," said Antonie Hey.

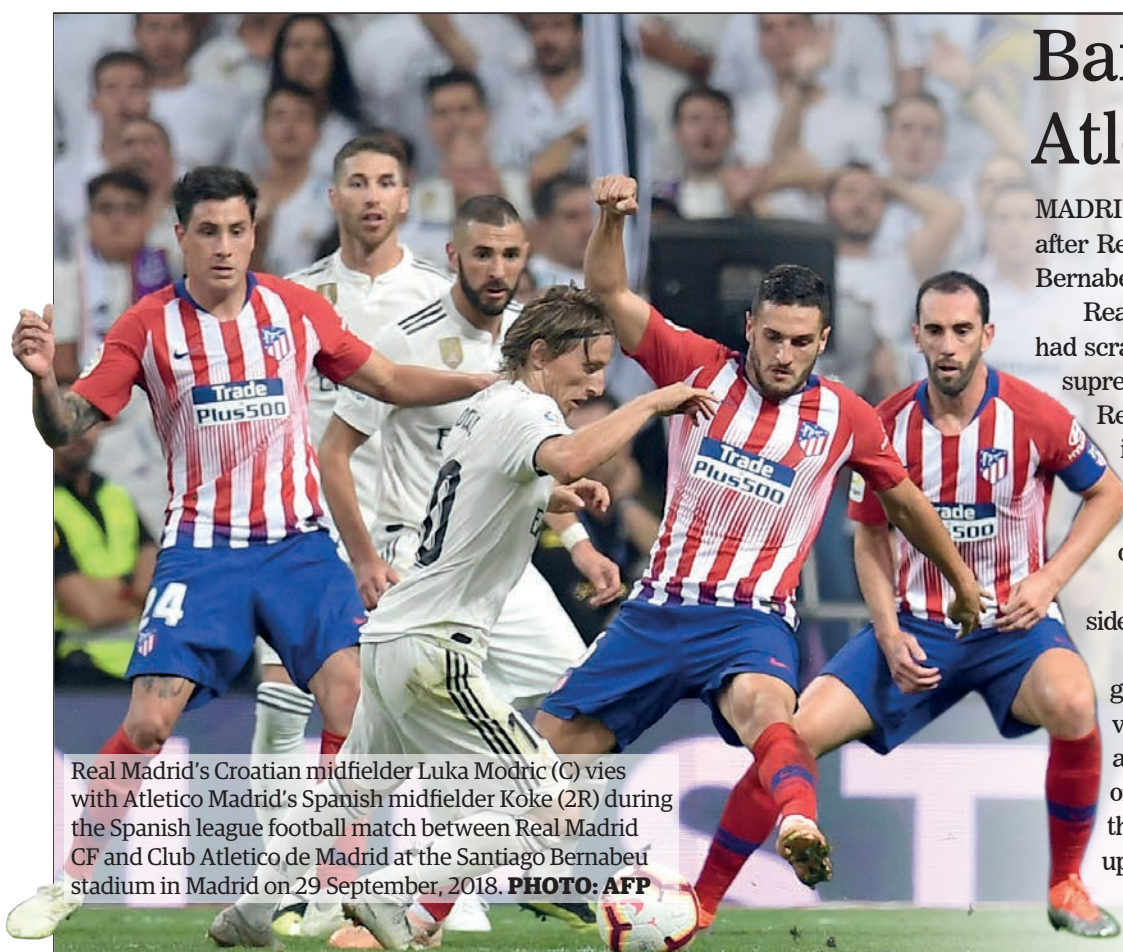
The young players must take up more duty in the current situation. It is the best time for them. It is time for new generation players to have matured experiences and lead the team. Defender Zaw Min Tun had to be set aside. He is not only a good player but also a key one for the national team over the past years. Now is the time for young players to take up responsibility. Zaw Min Tun became a ready player once we needed, said the Myanmar chief coach. —Htut Htut (Twante) ■

NZ beat Argentina to win Rugby Championship

BUENOS AIRES—New Zealand won the Rugby Championship for the sixth time by beating Argentina 35-17 in Buenos Aires on Saturday as they put a stunning home defeat by South Africa behind them. The All Blacks led 21-3 at half-time before a sell-out 50,000 crowd and scored first in the second half through substitute Patrick Tuipulotu. Victory gave New Zealand an uncatchable seven-point advantage over South Africa ahead of their showdown in Pretoria next Saturday. New Zealand have 21 points, South Africa 14, Argentina eight and Australia five with one round remaining in the southern hemisphere championship.—AFP ■

DC United defeat Impact to close in at playoff spot in MLS

WASHINGTON—DC United came closer to the sixth and final Eastern Conference playoff spot with a dominating 5-0 win against the visiting Montreal Impact in the Major League Soccer (MLS) actions on Saturday night. Wayne Rooney scored twice and added an assist, Paul Arriola scored twice, and Luciano Acosta scored once and added three assists. Now United are seventh with 38 points, just two points behind sixth-placed Impact. United have two games in hand.—Xinhua ■



Real Madrid's Croatian midfielder Luka Modric (C) vies with Atletico Madrid's Spanish midfielder Koke (2R) during the Spanish league football match between Real Madrid CF and Club Atletico de Madrid at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium in Madrid on 29 September, 2018. **PHOTO: AFP**

Barca stay top after Real and Atletico share derby spoils

MADRID—Barcelona slipped up for the third time in a week but stay top of La Liga after Real Madrid and Atletico Madrid cancelled each other out at the Santiago Bernabeu on Saturday.

Real and Atletico began a pulsating derby less than three hours after Barca had scrambled to a 1-1 draw at home to Athletic Bilbao, but goalkeepers reigned supreme in the capital to ensure the grudge match finished goalless. It means Real second, level on points with Barcelona, while Atletico are just two behind in fourth. Sevilla are third.

Gareth Bale had to be substituted at half-time with what the club confirmed was a thigh strain and is a doubt for the European champions ahead of their visit to CSKA Moscow on Tuesday. Bale will be assessed on Sunday.

It was a scenario Barcelona boss Ernesto Valverde tried to avoid before his side's visit to Tottenham on Wednesday by resting Lionel Messi at the Camp Nou.

But the Argentine was needed in the second half after Oscar de Marcos gave Bilbao a deserved lead. Munir El Haddadi snatched Barca a point, diverting in Messi's shot with six minutes left. After drawing at home to Girona and being beaten by Leganes, Barcelona head to Wembley to face Spurs short of rhythm and lacking confidence. Barcelona will be without Sergi Roberto for the Champions League Group B clash after it was confirmed he had picked up a thigh strain.

The last time Bilbao took a point at the Camp Nou in 2004, Valverde was sitting in the away team's dugout during his first spell as Bilbao coach. —AFP ■