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THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

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2020 New Year Dhamma Ceremony continues second day near Shwedagon

Sayadaw Dr Bhaddanta Nandamala Bhivamsa delivers the sermon at the second day of 2020 New Year Dhamma Ceremony at the People's Park near Shwedagon Pagoda in Yangon yesterday. **PHOTO: HLA MOE**

THE second day of 2020 New Year Dhamma Ceremony took place at the People's Park near Shwedagon Pagoda in Yangon yesterday evening.

Rector of Sitagu World Buddhist University and Abhidhamma University Dr Bhaddanta Nandamala Bhivamsa delivered a sermon on the welfares of nation.

The ceremony was attended by Yangon Region Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein and wife, Regional Hluttaw Speaker U Tin Maung Tun, its Deputy Speaker U Lin Naing Myint, cabinet members, donors and people from the regional townships.

At the ceremony, well-wishers donated foods, and private hospitals and social organizations provided free healthcare services to the congregation.

Yangon Region Government arranged public transportation for the event, and private taxi owners offered their free services.

On the third and last day of ceremony, Chancellor of Sitagu International Buddhist Academies Sayadaw Dr. Ashin Nyanissara will give Dhamma taks to the congregation.— Zaw Gyi

(Translated by Aung Khin)

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Equality of opportunity for all

To be a genuine democracy, it is not enough to be a "government of the people, by the people, for the people". The government must uplift the economic standard of our people to the point where there is equality of opportunity for all. Then only can we go forward towards genuine democracy.

[Extract from the speech given by General Aung San at the Jubilee Hall First Preparatory Conference held on 19 May 1947]

Union Minister U Ohn Win and Deputy Minister Dr Ye Myint Swe check the quality of jade lots at the emporium in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

Gem, jade emporium kicks off in Myanmar currency for local merchants

GEMS and jades are on sale for local merchants in Myanmar kyat during the six-day emporium at Mani Yadana Jade Hall in Nay Pyi Taw from 2 to 7 January.

Union Minister for Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation U Ohn Win, Deputy Minister Dr Ye Myint Swe and officials visited the emporium yesterday morning, and looked around the display of gems and jade lots.

The emporium will sell 286 lots of gems in open tender system on 4 January, and a total of 3,695 jade lots from 5 to 7 January in the same system.

The maximum floor price for gem lot is K180 million, and that of jade lot is K100 million, and the merchants will also need to pay advanced deposit on the deals.—Maw Si (MNA)

(Translated by Aung Khin)

Union Minister Dr Win Myat Aye receives Korean women peace advocacy group

UNION MINISTER for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr Win Myat Aye welcomed the members of International Women's Peace Group (IWPG) from the Republic of Korea at his office in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday afternoon.

The IWPG has opened its offices in over 100 countries, including Myanmar in 2013.

At the meeting, they discussed possible cooperation with the Myanmar National Committee for Women's Affairs, implementation of the National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women (2013-2022), issues on women, peace and security, conducting peace education to promote the role of women in peace-making processes, possible ways of Myanmar women for a side event at the 2020 edition of UN Commission on the Status of Women, which will be held in New York, the United States, in March this year. —MNA

(Translated by Aung Khin)

Union Minister Dr Win Myat Aye meets with a delegation of International Women's Peace Group (IWPG) from the Republic of Korea in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

Myanmar communities abroad donate cash for disaster-affected people at home

Union Minister Dr Win Myat Aye presents certificate of cash donation to Union Minister U Kyaw Tin in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

UNION MINISTER for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr Win Myat Aye received cash and kind for local people in disaster-affected areas from the well-wishers of Myanmar communities in foreign countries through Union Minister for International Cooperation U Kyaw Tin yesterday.

At his office in Nay Pyi Taw, Dr Win Myat Aye, also the Vice Chairman of National Disaster Management Committee, got the funds of US$31,231 of New York-based National Humanitarian Fundraising For Myanmar, $4,775 of well-wishers from Saudi Arabia and $350 of those from the Southern California.—MNA

(Translated by Aung Khin)

Find solution based on discussions and negotiations

Our ethnic brothers and sisters must find a solution based on discussions and negotiations free from mistrust and firm in faith. From there, we can proceed in lasting solidarity for the emergence of a Constitution that is fitting for our country and in accordance with democratic practices and federal principles.

[Extract from Message of Greetings sent by President U Win Myint to the 71st Anniversary of Independence Day ceremony on 4 January 2019]

Union Education Minister attends workshop on matric exam rules

UNION MINISTER for Education Dr Myo Thein Gyi attended the workshop on matric exam rules for the examination supervisors, joint supervisors and students at the No.2 Basic Education High School in Pyinmana Town yesterday.

Speaking the workshop, Union Minister Dr Myo Thein Gyi stressed the importance of a good education system for a nation to develop.

The Union Minister also urged the attendees to cooperate on the implementation of the education system reforming process to establish a quality education system, saying to increase the strengths and minimize the weaknesses of the reform processes after reviewing them.

Union Minister for Education Dr Myo Thein Gyi delivers the speech at the workshop on matric exam rules for the examination supervisors, joint supervisors and students in Pyinmana yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

"The 2020 matriculation examination will be held from 11 to 20 March," he added, saying to cooperate on exam question and answer papers, checking answer sheets and exam results security processes.

The checking of answer papers would be assigned to the high school teachers who are competent in the respective subjects, and the financial matters will also be transparently conducted in accordance with rules and regulations, he added.

Dr Myo Thein Gyi also urged the Region/State education offices and related universities to cooperate on increasing the pass rate of matric exam, saying not to assign the pregnant teachers, aged teachers, ailing teachers and the high school teachers who are not fit for the subjects to check answer papers.

Director-General U Ko Lay Win of Basic Education Department explained the implementing education processes and ongoing processes, followed by Director-General U Myo Nyunt of Myanmar Examinations Department detailing the dos and don'ts for the matriculation examination.

Afterwards, officials from Myanmar Examinations Department discussed the rules to be followed by the matric exam supervisors, joint supervisors and students, and answered the queries raised by attendees.

A total of 739 teachers from Nay Pyi Taw, regions and states attended the workshop. — MNA

(Translated by Kyaw Zin Tun)

Diplomatic, special passport holders allowed to enter Nandaw Gate in Muse from 1 Jan

Travellers seen at the Myanmar-China Border Gate (Nandaw Gate) in Muse. **PHOTO: SALAI VAN ROH HTAN**

CHINESE citizens holding diplomatic passports and special passports have been allowed to enter the Muse border gate (Nandaw Gate) in northern Shan State from 1 January, according to the Immigration and Population Department.

"Today is the day we granted permission for entry of Chinese citizens holding special passports through this gate as part of efforts to promote friendship between the two countries. We are delighted with the two countries. We want the citizens of the neighboring countries to enter with confidence. Special passport holders can travel from Muse to Mandalay. With this effort, economic opportunities will increase and the neighboring people can see the beauty of Myanmar, and the move can lead to the development of tourism," said director of the Shan State Immigration and Population Department, U Win Lwin.

Diplomatic and special passports holders are allowed to stay in Myanmar for 30 days, and as they are officially permitted, they can proceed to other nations.

Plans have been made to cope with the expected higher entries of diplomatic and special passport holders from China, according to the Immigration and Population Department.

"With the entry of public servants and businesspersons holding diplomatic and special passports through the Muse border gate, bilateral relations and friendship will be strengthened. To grant special passports to the Chinese people, we would like to urge the Myanmar side to make further cooperation with us," said an official from the Industry and Trade, Science and Technology Department of China in Ruili.

In accordance with the 1997 Myanmar-China Border Management and Cooperation Agreement and the 1998 Mutual Visa Exemption Agreement between China and Myanmar, Myanmar citizens holding diplomatic and special passports can enter China through the border gate from 1 January, 2020.—Salai Van Roh Htan

(Translated by Kyaw Zin Lin)

Chinese film crew shoots Yangon lifestyles in New Year period

A CHINESE film crew of Hainan TV Station took the lifestyles of the people in Yangon near Kandawgyi Nature Park and Myitta Nyunt Railway Station on Wednesday.

They also filmed the New Year's Eve holiday of people going on pilgrimage to the Shwedagon pagoda and cooking together and eating together Myanmar traditional foods, celebrating the event.

The documented videos will be broadcast on One Belt One Road programme of Sansha Satellite TV (SSTV) Channel of Hainan Broadcasting Group- Hainan TV Station in Hainan Province in China in early February.—Ni Ni Win (FDC)

(Translated by Kyaw Zin Tun)

A Chinese film crew shoots New Year's Eve holiday of the people at the Shwedagon Pagoda in Yangon. **PHOTO: NI NI WIN (FDC)**

Japanese documentary film-makers conduct shooting in Bagan, Mt. Popa

Japanese film crew from Tokyo Broadcasting System-TBS film the scenic view of Mount Popa from Popa Resort yesterday. **PHOTO: KYAW SWAR THEIN (FDC)**

A JAPANESE film crew of Tokyo Broadcasting System-TBS took the scenes of Bagan Archeological Museum and Tharabar Gate in Bagan Archaeological Zone and scenic Mount Popa from Popa Resort yesterday.

The crew also documented the travellers at the Shwezigon Pagoda, Htilominlo Pagoda, Sulamani Pagoda, Ananda Pagoda and Thabyinnyu Pagoda in Bagan and the Yangon International Airport in Yangon.

On 3 and 4 January, they will shoot the Mount Popa Nats Festival and pagodas in Bagan.

The documented videos will be broadcast on TBS Channel in Japan under the title "Beautiful Cultural Zone" in February. —Kyaw Swar Thein (FDC)

(Translated by Kyaw Zin Tun)

Notice

THE Independence Day Flag Hoisting Ceremony – a full dress rehearsal on 2 January and a ceremony on 4 January – will be held at the Square of Nay Pyi Taw City Hall in Nay Pyi Taw.

Therefore, the Pyinmana-Taungnyo Road section between the Municipal Guest House Traffic Light and Thapyaygone Market Junction Traffic Light will be closed or diverted for six hours from 2 am to 8 am on the two days.

The road users on the days could divert the ways from Municipal Guest House Traffic Light to Shwe Kyar Traffic Light taking the Taw Win Yadana Road and from Thapyaygone Market Junction Traffic Light to Ayeyawady Road taking Padauk Road.

Nay Pyi Taw Traffic Rules Enforcement Supervisory Committee

FDC to analyze FIPRESCI prize-winning film 'Goodbye Dragon Inn'

THE Film Development Center will screen 'Goodbye Dragon Inn' film for analysis in its 33rd event of the Cinematheque Programme at its office No. 50, Shwe Taung Kyar Road (Golden Valley Road), Bahan Township, at 12 noon on 5 January.

The Taiwanese drama film was created by Director Tsai Ming-liang in 2003, and the film won several awards, including the FIPRESCI Prize at the 60th Venice International Film Festival, It was also one of the 10 greatest films of 2012 Sight & Sound Directors' Poll.

The event will be led by Dr Aung Min, a member of FDC management board. – Thein Htike Thu (FDC)

(Translated by Aung Khin)

3 women sentenced to prisons, labour camps in human trafficking cases

COURTS passed sentences on three women criminals who committed separate cases of trafficking in persons in Ayeyawady delta and Shan State last month.

Police filed lawsuits under the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Law against Ma Naing, 52, and Ma Su Hlaing,49, in Kyaunggon Town of Ayeyawady Region, for their plot to sell the two women in their 25s and 30s living in the same town as the wives for Chinese men after taking them along Yangon-Muse road to Ruili or Shwe Li although the two victims were enticed with jobs for K200,000 per month at a textile shop in Yangon.

Pathein District Court handed down sentences of 20 year in prisons and labour each on the two human smugglers on 23 December.

A 26-year old woman, identified as Ma Na Phue, from Mongpyan Town in Special Region 2, Shan State, persuaded the two girls in their 20s in Kenglat Town in Tachileik Township to marry men in neighbouring China in exchange of cash for their parents.

Police from Kenglat Town filed a lawsuit under the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Law against Ma Na Phue, and the Tachileik District Court pronounced the verdict of 10-year prison and labour on 23 December.—MNA

(Translated by Aung Khin)

3rd Yangon International Gems & Jewellery Fair 2020 to be held at Lotte Hotel on 10-13 Jan

By Nyein Nyein

A press conference for the third Yangon International Gems and Jewellery Fair 2020 from 10 to 13 January held in Yangon. **PHOTO: SUPPLIED**

THE third Yangon International Gems and Jewellery Fair 2020 will take place from 10 to 13 January at the Lotte Hotel.

The jewellery fair is being organized by the Gems and Jewellery Entrepreneurs Association of Yangon, with the support of the Myanma Gems Enterprise and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation.

According to the organizers, the fair is aimed at improving Myanmar's gems and jewellery market, boosting gems and jewellery production, attaining good prices in the global market, bringing together all the stakeholders in the supply chain, producing value-added gems and jewellery rather than focusing on rough stones sales, creating job opportunities, organizing seminars and business matching, disseminating gems and jewellery research news, and advertising the latest designs and high value gems to interested buyers through social media platforms.

The Gems and Jewellery Entrepreneurs Association of Yangon has formed 11 committees to organize the events, including sealed-bid auction committee, design competition implementation committee, lucky draw competition committee, seminar programme implementation committee, fair catalogue distribution committee, and gem quality appraising lab committee.

Sales will be made using the direct payment method after prices are negotiated through a sealed-bid auction.

According to the Yangon Gems and Jewellery Entrepreneurs Association, the sealed-bid auction will be a highlight at the fair.

According to the organizers, the fair will help create a market for finished jewellery; generate opportunities for heavy, medium, and small enterprises engaged in the gem industry and related businesses; promote Myanmar gems and jewellery to foreign buyers; help eliminate the illegal gems market; and, raise tax revenue.

More than 1,000 gems companies from 45 countries, Myanmar commercial attachés, and gems associations from China, Hong Kong, and China (Taipei) have been invited to the fair. Invites have also been issued to local gems and jewellery traders and interested buyers through social media platforms.

The expo will include 128 stalls with digital banking services such as Visa, Master card, MPU, and JCB cards. To ensure the quality of gems and jewellery, the fair will also feature a gem appraising laboratory with lab experts.

The fair will be open to all gems and jewellery importers, wholesalers, traders, and retail shop owners. Visitors will have to register in advance online on yangongemsjewelryfair.com, the fair's official Facebook page, or via email.

The event will also feature a lucky draw and a jewellery design contest aimed at encouraging talented designers and recognizing the designs of traditional gem producers. Winners of the contest will be awarded.

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Coffee association estimates 1,000-ton shipment

MYANMAR'S coffee production is likely to reach 2,000-2,500 tons at harvest time this year, and about 1,000 tons of coffee is expected to be shipped to external markets, according to the Myanmar Coffee Association.

"The production is estimated around 2,000-2,500 tons. We aim to export 800-1,000 tons of coffee this year. The rest will be distributed in the local and border market," said U Myo Aye, chair of the Myanmar Coffee Association.

The association will work to link with international buyers, he said.

"Myanmar primarily produces Arabica coffee. Specialty coffee fetches as much as US$4,500-10,000 per ton. Myanmar's specialty coffee beans are highly demanded due to their high quality and organic production. If we cannot maintain good agricultural practices, coffee will not get a high price," said U Myo Aye.

Coffee beans are harvested between December and February. Then, the beans are introduced to foreign buyers. At present, Myanmar coffee is mostly exported to the US market, according to the Agriculture Department.

"Myanmar's coffee has already earned a good reputation. It has penetrated markets in Asia such as Hong Kong and Singapore, European countries, and the US, and it has a good potential in the global market," said an official from the Agriculture Department.

Myanmar's coffee has grabbed a market share in the US, with the support of USAID and WinRock International NGO. Efforts are being made to penetrate markets in Japan, the Republic of Korea, and Canada.

"Myanmar, being rich in land resources, can grow both Arabica, or highland coffee, which grows best above 2,500 feet, and Robusta, or lowland coffee. The country still has untouched land suitable for coffee plantation. Coffee bean is a profitable cash crop and so, expansion of coffee plantations can be a promising source of revenue generation for the country. However, growers have limited access to loans. So, government-backed loans might help develop the coffee sector," said a coffee producer.

There are 40,000 acres of highland coffee plantations and about 10,000 acres under lowland coffee in Myanmar, totaling 50,000 acres. Shan State is the main producer of coffee beans. Myanmar's coffee beans fetch $1,000-8,000 and more in the market. – GNLM

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Trade Mark Ads Call Thin Thin May, 09251022355,09974424848

Public sector mineral exports up $454 mln in current fiscal

MYANMAR'S mineral exports were registered at US$737.36 million between 1 October and 20 December in the 2019-2020 financial year, showing a remarkable increase of $453.96 million compared with the year-ago period, according to data from the Ministry of Commerce.

Last year, public sector mineral exports were worth less than a million dollars.

Both the private and public sector mineral exports witnessed an increase in the current fiscal year, with the private sector mineral exports pegged at $283.36 million. The total mineral export figure rose by $464 million from $273.3 million in the year-ago period.

Of the seven export groups, exports of agriculture, minerals, fishery, and finished industrial goods showed an increase, while the exports of livestock, forest products, and other goods declined.

Export values stood at $805.79 million for agricultural products, $49.65 million for livestock, $232.09 million for fishery products, $737.36 million for minerals, $39 million for forest products, over $2.15 billion for manufactured goods, and $79.6 million for other goods.

The country's export sector relies more on the agriculture and manufacturing sectors. While export earnings from the CMP (cut, make, and pack) garment businesses are rising, the country's reliance on natural resources such as natural gas and jade has been lessening.

Extraction of natural resources has been limited and so, exports of forest products and minerals dropped significantly in the previous year. Permits for mining blocks were suspended in 2016, but after a period of two years, Myanmar's mining sector is now open to local and foreign investors, according to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation. – GNLM

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR
www.globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

ACTING CHIEF EDITOR
Aye Min Soe
dce@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

SENIOR EDITORIAL CONSULTANT
Kyaw Myaing

SENIOR TRANSLATORS
Zaw Min
Zaw Htet Oo
Aung Khin
INTERNATIONAL NEWS EDITOR
Ye Htut Tin,
editor1@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

LOCAL NEWS EDITORS
Tun Tun Naing (Editor),
intlnews@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com
Nwe Nwe Tun (Sub-editor),
nwenwe9131@gmail.com

TRANSLATORS
Hay Mar Tin Win,
Ei Myat Mon
Kyaw Zin Lin
Kyaw Zin Tun

REPORTER
Nyein Nyein Ei,
reporter1@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

PHOTOGRAPHER
Kyaw Zeya Win @ Phoe Khwar
Kyaw Zeya

COMPUTER TEAM
Thein Ngwe, Zaw Zaw Aung,
Hnin Pwint, Kay Khaing Win,
Sanda Hnin, Thein Htwe,
Nyi Lin Thu

EDITORIAL SECTION
(+95) (01)8604529,
Fax – (+95) (01) 8604305

CIRCULATION & DISTRIBUTION
San Lwin, (+95) (01) 8604532,
Hotline - 09 974424114

ADVERTISING & MARKETING
(+95) (01) 8604530,
Hotline - 09 974424848
marketing@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com
subscription@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

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gnlmdaily@gmail.com
www.globalnewlightofmyanmar.com
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Due to limitation of space we are only able to publish **"Letter to the Editor"** that do not exceed 500 words. Should you submit a text longer than 500 words please be aware that your letter will be edited.

Bagan water vessel owners profit as number of travellers increases

WITH more local and foreign travellers visiting famous pagodas in the Bagan area, water vessel owners at the Ayeyawady jetty, near the Bupaya pagoda, are earning a good income by transporting travellers to and from the Tantkyitaung pagoda, said a local water vessel owner.

Local and foreign travellers are interested in visiting Bagan because it has several pagodas that are listed as world cultural heritage sites. They are visiting the pagodas in Bagan area using their own vehicles, express vehicles, three-wheeled motorbikes, bicycles, and horse carts. Some visitors are even opting to take in the scenic views of Bagan area from a hot-air balloon.

"Local and foreign travellers visited Bagan region during the New Year holidays. Some travellers came to Bagan to pay a visit to the four ancient pagodas, namely Shwezigon pagoda, Lawkananda pagoda, Tuyin Taung pagoda, and Tantkyitaung pagoda, located across the Ayeyawady River in Pakokku District. So, water vessel owners transported the pilgrims and earned a good income during the holidays. The fare of water vessels ranged from a minimum of K20,000 to a maximum of K35,000. There are over 200 water vessels at the Ayeyawady jetty," said Ko Htet, a water vessel owner at the jetty.

Travellers visit Shwezigon Pagoda in Bagan during the New Year holidays. **PHOTO: YE WIN NAING (NYAUNG-U)**

In order to ensure safe travel in Bagan area during the New Year holiday, the Nyaung-U traffic police and the pagodas' boards of trustees are conducting traffic clearance and providing assistance to travellers.—Ye Win Naing (Nyaung-U)

(Translated by Hay Mar)

Islands near Kawthoung attract local, foreign holidaymakers

WITH the development of the tourism industry in Taninthayi Region, local and foreign travellers, who entered Myanmar through Thailand, visited Islands of the Andaman Sea near Kawthoung during the international holiday period.

Most of the local travellers were from Yangon, Mandalay, and the upper towns of Myanmar, while foreign tourists visiting Kawthoung had entered the country through Thailand, in accordance with the procedures laid down by the Directorate of Hotels and Tourism. They visited Victoria point (also known as Bayintnaung cape), the King Bayintnaung 's statue, Pyitawaye pagoda, 555 mountain view point, Malewan natural waterfall, hot spring, and some of the islands near Kawthoung.—Kyaw Soe (Kawthoung)

(Translated by Hay Mar)

Visitors seen at the Kawthoung Myoma Jetty during their holidays. **PHOTO: KYAW SOE (KAWTHOUNG)**

Commemorative stamps to be issued for 72nd Independence Day

THE Myanmar Post of the Ministry of Transport and Communications will issue three kinds of special commemorative postages stamps of K 200 denomination on the occasion of the 72nd anniversary Independence Day.

The sales of the stamps will be launched at post offices in states and regions on 4 January, 2020 (10th Waxing of Pyatho 1381 ME).

As a special programme, Nay Pyi Taw Central Post Office, Yangon General Post Office and Mandalay General Post Office will stamp post mark and date on the commemorative stamps and First Day Covers bought on 4 January 2020. —MNA

(Translated by Kyaw Zin Tun)

Mother and daughters investigated over German zoo fire

BERLIN (Germany)— A mother and her two daughters have turned themselves in to police over a blaze which killed dozens of monkeys at a zoo in Germany on New Year's Eve, police confirmed Thursday.

The three women are being investigated for setting off banned flying lanterns to celebrate the New Year, Gerd Hoppmann, head of the Krefeld criminal police, said at a press conference.

The 60-year-old mother and her two adult daughters handed themselves in to police on Wednesday after hearing of the fire on local radio, Hoppmann said.

He said they "seemed like sensible and responsible people" who had shown "courage" in coming forward.

Local prosecutors are now investigating the women for negligent arson, a crime which can be punished with up to five years in prison.

The fire, which claimed the lives of 30 primates including eight great apes, broke out shortly before midnight on New Year's Eve at Krefeld Zoo in North Rhine-Westphalia.

The zoo in Krefeld, western Germany, remains closed after the fire. **PHOTO: AFP**

The enclosure housed gorillas, orangutans, chimpanzees and marmosets. Only two chimpanzees survived, as well as a family of gorillas in a nearby building.

In a statement on Thursday, the zoo said that it was a "miracle" that the two chimpanzees, named Bally and Limbo, had survived the blaze.

"Both suffered only light injuries. They have been moved to the gorilla enclosure and are being looked after by several zoo vets," said the zoo, which remained closed on Thursday.

Police believe the fire was caused by one of the illegal lanterns which landed on the roof of the monkey enclosure.

Hoppmann said investigators had accounted for four lanterns but that one, believed to be the one responsible for the blaze, was "missing".

Flying lanterns have been forbidden in Germany for 10 years, but Hoppmann said the women were unaware of the ban when they bought theirs on the internet.

The case has intensified an already blazing debate over the widespread use of fireworks by private individuals on New Year's Eve.

Setting off fireworks in public is a long-standing New Year's tradition in Germany, but it has faced increasing criticism from environmental and animal protection groups in recent years.

On Wednesday, the German animal protection association called for all kinds of fireworks to be banned near zoos, farms and kennels.

The tragedy has also sparked an outpouring of sympathy, with tearful visitors lighting candles and leaving flowers and soft toys at the entrance fo the zoo.

Krefeld zoo is home to around 1,000 animals and attracts some 400,000 visitors a year. — AFP

Dwarf T-rex dinosaurs probably did not exist: study

WASHINGTON (United States) — For three decades, paleontologists the world over have been split over a provocative finding: did a dwarf species of Tyrannosaurus rex really once exist?

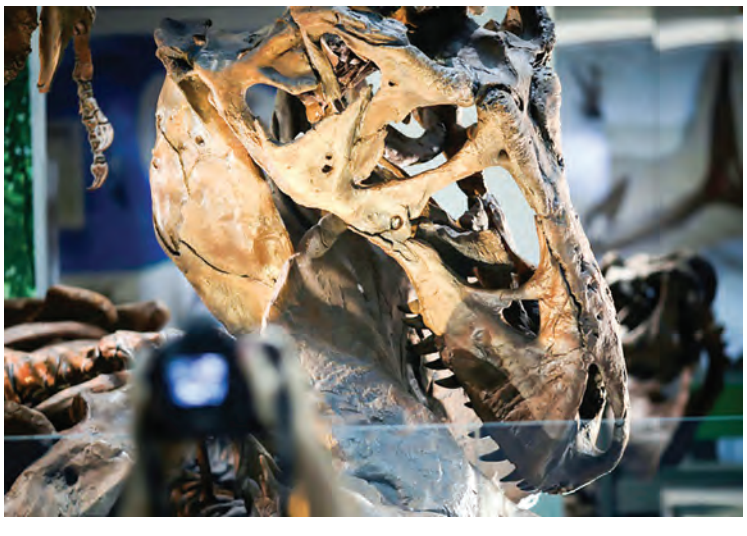
In 1988, paleontologist Robert Bakker and his colleagues at the Cleveland (Ohio) Museum of Natural History reclassified a specimen first discovered in 1942 and displayed at the museum.

It was, they said, the first known member of a small new species they baptized as the Nanotyrannus.

Then, in 2001, another team discovered the nearly complete skeleton of a small Tyrannosaurus near the town of Ekalaka in Montana, in the rich and intensively studied fossil formation known as Hell Creek.

They named the creature — barely bigger than a draft horse — Jane and soon classified it as a juvenile Tyrannosaurus rex.

But a minority of specialists continued to insist that it was part of the newly classified Nanotyrannus species. They pointed to the morphology of its skull and bones, which they said differed from T-rex adults.


A team of researchers have discovered new information about the Tyrannosaurus Rex aging process after determining that a pair of skeletons were adolescent T-rex, not a different species altogether. **PHOTO: AFP**

Answers in the bones

In a study published Wednesday in the journal Science Advances, researchers led by Holly Woodward of Oklahoma State University performed a microscopic analysis on samples from the interior of Jane's tibia and femur bones, as well as from a less complete set of bones from an animal dubbed Petey.

This technique, known as paleohistology, confirmed that the two were immature individuals — not adults, the scientists said.

By extension, the study's authors said, the existence of the Nanotyrannus seems very unlikely.

"The really cool thing about fossil bones is that a whole bone fossilizes even down to the microscopic size," Woodward told AFP.

"We can infer growth rate, age (and) maturity level."

The researchers took extremely fine slices from the bone samples — so thin that light could pass through them — and then studied them under powerful microscopes.—AFP

Thai retailers ban single-use plastic bags

BANGKOK (Thailand)—Thai retailers kicked off 2020 with a ban on single-use plastic bags, joining the battle against throwaway carriers in the Southeast Asian nation where citizens go through an average of eight every day.

The move, taken on Wednesday by several major mall operators and the ubiquitous 7/11 convenience stores, will see customers instead paying a small fee for a reusable bag made of a cloth-like fabric.

Thailand is one of the largest contributors to ocean pollution, with plastic bags recently turning up in the stomachs of dead marine mammals like dugongs and green turtles and prompting national soul-searching.

A government campaign to eliminate their use by 2022 has seen television channels pixelating plastic bags onscreen -- alongside other no-gos like nudity, smoking cigarettes, alcohol use and violent crime.

While Greenpeace's Pichmol Rugrod said the move by the retailers was a good start, she added it was "not enough to solve the plastic crisis."

"We should stop the 'throwaway' culture in Thailand," she said. The country will continue to produce plastic packaging and lacks a proper waste management policy, she added, while reusable bags are typically made out of a fabric spun from micro-plastic.

"Micro-plastic will then create another problem... it affects the environment in terms of when it's in the soil because it has chemicals," she said.

And some shoppers like Viroj Sinchairokekul were unimpressed at having to pay for the new bags.

"Instead, I will go to the local markets because they still give us plastic bags," the 63-year-old said, at a Bangkok mall.

The European Commission estimates some 70 percent of plastic waste clogs the world's oceans, killing a range of species from turtles, seals, whales and seabirds to fish and shellfish.

Malawi banned the production, distribution and import of single-use plastics in 2015, and last November Slovakia banned single-use plastics from 2021.—AFP

3 JANUARY 2020
THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

Cooperation with neighboring nations, key to fighting human trafficking

A court in Kyaunggon, Ayeyawady Region, sentenced two women to 20 years in prison last week for trafficking two local women to China. In another case, a woman charged with human trafficking in Taunggyi, Shan State, was given a prison sentence of 80 years by a local court in October.

Similar cases are being witnessed nationwide, highlighting how many women in search of jobs have fallen prey to traffickers.

> Lack of job opportunities and development in the country, as well as natural disasters and inequality, have led to a high incidence of human trafficking in Myanmar.

Lack of job opportunities and development in the country, as well as natural disasters and inequality, have led to a high incidence of human trafficking in Myanmar.

The forms of human trafficking have changed, but cases have not declined significantly year by year. It has also been found that the number of cases can be reduced by creating employment opportunities and by giving reasonable wages through discussions with employers and the relevant associations.

The five major forms of human trafficking seen in Myanmar include forced marriages, forced prostitution, forced labour, trafficking in children, and debt bondage. Of the total trafficking cases in Myanmar in 2018, 75.24 per cent involved forced marriages, 13.59 per cent involved forced prostitution, 8.74 per cent forced labour, 1.94 per cent surrogacy, and 0.49 per cent illegal adoption. In terms of countries by destination, 79.61 per cent of trafficking victims were sent to China, 1.46 per cent to Thailand, and 18.93 per cent were trafficked within Myanmar.

The main reasons for human trafficking in Myanmar included socio-economic conditions, natural disasters, and internal armed conflicts, while legal or illegal migrants to foreign countries were also trafficked. Myanmar has been taking several measures against trafficking in persons, as a national duty. It has drawn up a five-year plan which includes four sectors, in cooperation with the relevant ministries, UN bodies, international organizations, INGOs, and social communities. Prevention and protection activities including legal proceedings have also been carried out.

Educational talks on human trafficking in schools are an important and right step towards eradicating this scourge from Myanmar. Thanks to preventive measures in the form of a public awareness campaigns, human trafficking has become more recognized.

To meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking, we need to make significant efforts in cooperation with neighboring, regional, and international countries in fighting the transnational crime of human trafficking.

■■■

Continuing Vocational Training for Workers

By Lokethar

WITH the rapid changes of technology in "Industry" (in the context of the broader meaning of the term) the skills sets needed of the workforce are undergoing change as well. Hence there is a continuing need for up-skilling the workforce to manage and utilize the production facilities for optimal performance. More so if the production facilities relate to high value–added high tech industries such as production of electronic or electromechanical components, chip making, precision instruments making, jewellery making, food and beverage processing, mineral and metal processing, construction, furniture making and so on. This calls for employers to provide continuing "up-skilling" training for the professionals, technicians and skilled operatives. From the experience of developed countries, not only do these employees need continuing training to upgrade their technical skills but also, depending on the nature of their occupations, training in "soft skills" such as communication, teamwork, public relations and so on. Hence continuing skills training of the workforce by the employers is becoming more necessary than ever.

However, according to a recent report (2019) on TVET System review in Myanmar "Unlike most countries in the region, very few firms in Myanmar provide formal training to upgrade the skills of their workers". Employers in Myanmar are not inclined to provide training to their workers, either within the Enterprise or by outside training providers as many of them hold the view that once trained the worker would look elsewhere for employment paying higher wages. This may happen when the demand for a particular type of skilled worker in the labour market is high. But with more such workers being trained the demand will stabilize, and there will be less "job-hopping".

Trainees working on a machine at the Industrial Training Center (Thagaya). **PHOTO: GNLM**

It is an accepted fact in all countries that employers should finance the skills development of their employees as they benefit from such training which, when conducted systematically, helps to increase the competency of the workforce and hence it's efficiency and productivity. In Myanmar, the Employment and Skills Development Law of 2013, calls for Industries and Establishments covered by the law, to undertake training of their workers, and especially skilled workers, in accordance with the policies of the National Skills Standards Authority (NSSA), the organisation formed under the ESD Law. The intent of the law is to promote skills training of workers, whether within the enterprise or by sending the workers to training programs conducted by private training providers.

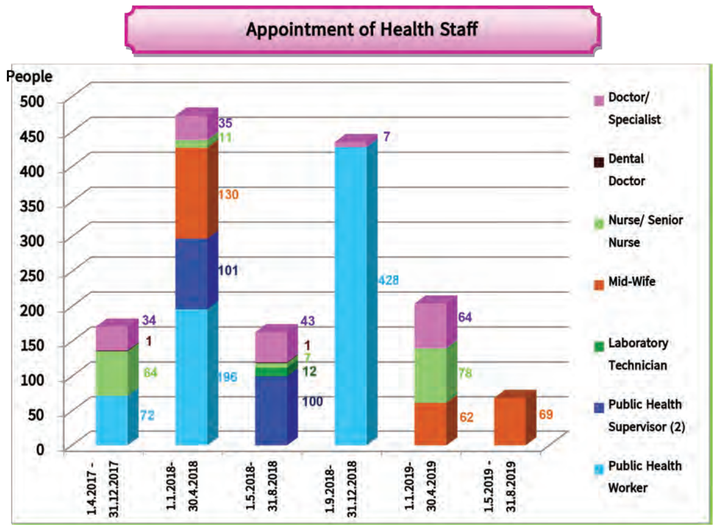
> In Myanmar, the Employment and Skills Development Law of 2013, calls for Industries and Establishments covered by the law, to undertake training of their workers, and especially skilled workers...

Embedded in the law is a system of financing skills training of workers practiced in many countries around the world. It involves imposing a "levy" on the employers by which a "Skills Development Fund" would be set up by the agency/body concerned to finance systematic training of workers. The Employer who conducts systematic training of workers may seek reimbursement of the expenses incurred from the Skills Development Fund.

The "levy" has been fixed in the relevant sections of the Employment and Skills Development Law as being not less than 0.5% of the monthly wage bill of the workers under the level of "Supervisors", payable monthly to the account of the SDF. A provision in the law, however, allows employers who are covered by the law but who can provide sound reasons, to be exempted from paying the "levy". As for example, if the workers of the employer concerned need to be trained in certain job specific skills which cannot be provided by any external training provider in existence. If an employer is so exempted from paying in to the SDF he cannot avail himself of the privileges granted by the Fund.

Under the ESDLaw coverage of Industries and Establishments liable to pay the "levy" to the SDF is to be announced by Orders issued in progressive stages according to the regions and size of the industrial undertakings and establishments. For example the Industries and Establishments located in the Industrial Zones in the Yangon and Mandalay Regions could be covered first to start with, and the "coverage" be extended step by step to other regions.

■■■



Distribution of Pharmaceuticals and Medical Supplies

- The additional allocation of Kyat 600 million in funds was utilized to purchase pharmaceuticals and medical supplies in August for distribution to townships.

Vaccination in IDP camps in Pauk Taw Township

(No. of people)

No. of IDP camps	BCG	OPV	IPV	DPT	PCV	MR	JE	TT
8	274	162	127	609	609	561	380	359

- From 2 to 4 April 2019, arm circumference measurement, administration of vitamin A supplements, distribution of micronutrients, administration of deworming tablets for 1,760 under-5 children and the provision of micronutrient tablets and distribution of health awareness pamphlets for pregnant women at 8 relief camps in Pauk Taw Township.

72nd Independence Day National Objectives

1. All National Ethnic Races to defend and protect with "collective strength" to ensure Non-disintegration of the Union, Non-disintegration of the Unity of National Ethnic Races and Perpetuation of National Sovereignty.
2. To give priority and work for transformation of the rule of law and justice sector which is important for stability, peace and development of the State.
3. To work on amendment of the Constitution, which is the basic foundation for building a Democratic Federal Union.
4. To build and create conducive environments for Union citizens which can elevate their sense of duty and improve their capabilities while the Democratic Federal Union is being built.
5. Emergence of a peaceful and prosperous Democratic Federal Union by implementing the Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan.

72nd Independence Day to be broadcast live

THE flag hoisting and saluting ceremony to mark the 72nd anniversary of Independence Day will be held in front of the City Hall in Nay Pyi Taw starting from 7 am on 4 January.

The ceremony will be broadcast live on MRTV, MITV, Up to Date, Channel 9, MNTV, MRTV-4, MWD and aired live on Myanma Radio starting from 6:40 am on that day.

The live stream is available everywhere to watch the ceremony on the Ministry of Information Facebook Page, MRTV Facebook Page and Myanmar Digital News Facebook Page.—MNA *(Translated by Kyaw Zin Lin)*

Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 7:00 pm Thursday 2nd January, 2020)

BAY INFERENCE: Weather is a few cloud over the Andaman Sea and South Bay and partly cloudy to cloudy elsewhere over the Bay of Bengal.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL NOON OF THE 3rd January, 2020: Rain or thundershowers will be widespread in Upper Sagaing Region, Kachin, Northern Shan and Chin States, fairly widespread in Lower Sagaing Region and Southern Shan State, scattered in Mandalay Region, Eastern Shan and Rakhine States and isolated in Nay Pyi Taw, Magway and Taninthayi Regions. Degree of certainty is (100%). Weather will be partly cloudy in the remaining Regions and States.

STATE OF THE SEA: Sea will be moderate in Myanmar waters. Wave height will be about (5 – 7) feet off and along Myanmar Coasts.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Continuation of scattered to fairly widespread rain or thundershowers in Sagaing, Mandalay and Magway Regions, Kachin, Shan, Chin and Rakhine States.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 3rd January, 2020: Likelihood of isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (60%).

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 3rd January, 2020: Partly cloudy.

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 3rd January, 2020: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

Israeli PM Netanyahu asks for parliamentary immunity amid corruption charges

TEL AVIV — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Wednesday requested speaker of the Knesset -- country's parliament-- to grant parliamentary immunity for three criminal cases against him.

"I would like to lead the government of Israel for many years. According to the law, immunity is always temporary. Immunity gives the people's representatives temporary protection from the judiciary. It lasts until the current convocation of the Knesset [Israeli parliament] stops functioning," he said, as quoted by The Times of Israel. In November last year, Israel's Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit indicted Netanyahu for bribery, fraud and breach of trust.

Netanyahu has denied all the allegations, saying they are part of a politically orchestrated "witch-hunt" to oust him from office.

In a swift response to Netanyahu's request, Avigdor Liberman, his political rival of the Yisrael Beytenu opposed the immunity request in a social media post.

On his plea for immunity, he further said, "I would like to lead the government of Israel for many years. According to the law, immunity is always temporary. Immunity gives the people's representatives temporary protection from the judiciary."

The Israeli PM has been the subject of multiple corruption investigations and cases of impropriety, including, advancing a law that would benefit one of Israel's major newspapers, and supporting looser regulation of telecommunication company Bezeq in return for positive coverage. — ANI ■

Netanyahu denies the allegations and accuses prosecutors and the media of a witch hunt . **PHOTO: AFP**

Austria's unlikely coalition to unveil govt programme

VIENNA — Austria's conservatives and their Green partners were set to present the government programme of their unprecedented coalition, a plan with right-wing leader Sebastian Kurz's clear imprimatur that could set a European precedent.

The two parties announced late Wednesday that they had agreed to govern together after key election gains in September following a corruption scandal that broke apart 33-year-old Kurz's ruling coalition with the far right.

Kurz — who has styled himself as a tough anti-immigration fighter — said his People's Party (OeVP) and the Greens had "succeeded in uniting the best of both worlds" in protracted negotiations aimed at "protecting the climate and borders".

Kurz, shown here arriving for the last round of coalition talks on Wednesday, said the two parties would 'protect the climate and borders'. **PHOTO: AFP**

'Daring experiment'

"Historic accord fixed" ran the Kurier daily's main headline Thursday, while a column in the left-leaning Standard described the coalition as a "daring experiment" and a "political adventure". Papers said the pact bore the conservatives' stamp, with tabloid Oesterreich billing the OeVP as "powerful as never before". It is the Greens' first entry into the Austrian government at a national level — and that in the unlikely marriage of conservatives and ecologists.

Observers say Germany and others may follow suit as parties seek to cater to voters' increasingly populist sentiments as well as worries about climate change amid massive demonstrations by students and others following calls by young activist Greta Thunberg. In Austria's September polls, the environment replaced immigration as voters' top concern, giving the Greens their best-ever result with 13.9 per cent. The OeVP got 37.5 per cent as disappointed voters of the scandal-tainted far-right Freedom Party (FPOe) flocked to Kurz's party. Greens chief Werner Kogler, 58, said the parties had managed to "build bridges" to form a government for "the future of Austria", which would seek to become a frontrunner in terms of fighting climate change in Europe.—AFP ■

Sri Lanka orders bus operators to turn down the music

COLOMBO — Sri Lanka's government on Thursday gave bus operators two weeks to turn down the notoriously loud music in their vehicles following complaints from passengers.

Transport minister Mahinda Amaraweera has given bus operators until January 15 to voluntarily turn down the volume or he would bring in legislation, said ministry spokesman Dharma Wanninayake said.

There are an estimated 20,000 private buses plying Sri Lankan roads, notorious for playing loud Sinhala, Tamil and Hindi songs, mainly from low-budget movies. Long-distance buses also frequently play high-decibel music videos.

Wanninayake said there had been frequent complaints from long-suffering passengers. Many on social media have called for a complete ban on music in buses.

The National Transport Commission (NTC), the private bus regulator, was also offering a playlist of 1,000 Sinhala, Tamil and Hindi songs free of charge to be played in buses — at a reasonable level. The list is not compulsory, however.—AFP ■

Sri Lanka's long-distance buses are notorious for playing loud music or videos. **PHOTO: AFP**

Australia fires: State of emergency declared in New South Wales, evacuation ordered

SYDNEY — Authorities in New South Wales have declared a state of emergency and are planning to carry out forced evacuations from fire-affected area.

The NSW Rural Fire Service has set up a tourist level zone from NSW coastal town of Batemans Bay down to the Victoria border and has urged all visitors to evacuate before Saturday, CNN reported. Seven people have died from the fires in the last 24 hours. Evacuation in several areas is becoming difficult as several communities are cut off. There are 24 such isolated communities.— ANI ■

Google AI to make breast cancer diagnosis more accurate

WASHINGTON — The IT giant Google is now putting Artificial Intelligence at work to identify breast cancer with greater accuracy, according to a study published in the 'Nature.'

The new AI-based system scans through mammogram images to spot cancer growth, and till now has been proven to cut down false negatives by 9.5 per cent. This comes as a significant improvement upon the present accuracy of the tests which fail to detect breast cancer 20 per cent of the time. Shravya Shetty, a researcher at Google and co-author of this the study, told The Verge

"Mammograms are very effective but there's still a significant problem with false negatives and false positives", he stated.

In this research, which is funded by Google, scientists took anonymous mammogram images of 25,000 women from the UK and 3,000 from the US.

The samples were fed to the AI, which was trained to scan X-ray images. The system scanned for signs of malignancy through all the 28,000 pictures, after which its findings were matched against the actual cancer status of the women.

The Verge reported that, in the US, false-negative diagnoses went down by 9.4 per cent and false positives by 5.7 per cent. False negatives and false positives went down by 2.7 and 1.2 per cent respectively in the UK where the mammograms are cross-checked by two radiologists.

The system didn't function with spot-on accuracy all the time, as there were cases where the AI flunked in spotting cancer which was later pointed out by doctors.— ANI ■

Breast scans are recommended for women above 50 who exhibit no signs of cancer. **PHOTO: AFP**

Death toll in Jakarta's worst flood in over decade rises to 30

JAKARTA — The death toll in the worst flooding to hit Indonesia's capital Jakarta in over a decade has increased to 30, with almost 36,000 people displaced, the country's disaster agency said Thursday.

The capital and surrounding areas have been hit by unusually heavy rain since Tuesday. As of Thursday morning, flooding of main roads in the greater Jakarta area had caused serious traffic congestion, while submersion of some railway tracks had also affected commuters.

Among the most affected areas was Bekasi in the suburbs of Jakarta, while the southern and eastern parts of the capital were also affected, according to the National Disaster Mitigation Agency.

Rainfall reached a record high of 377 millimeters in the Halim area of East Jakarta, while northern and western parts of Java Island were also affected, with residents in some areas urged to leave.

Jakarta Gov. Anies Baswedan assigned most of the blame for the current flooding to massive rain and problems with waterway management. —Kyodo News ■

Photo taken 1 January, 2020 shows floods inundating parts of Jakarta. **PHOTOS KYODO NEWS**

NHK's annual "Kohaku" music show sees rating fall to record low

TOKYO — NHK's "Kohaku" song festival on New Year's Eve saw its viewer share fall to a record low despite special appearances by stars including comedian Takeshi Kitano and American rock band Kiss, a survey by a TV research firm showed Thursday.

The average rating for the annual show's second part was 37.3 per cent in Tokyo and other parts of the Kanto region, down from 41.5 percent the previous year, according to Video Research Ltd.

The public broadcaster's "Kohaku Uta Gassen" show, literally "red and white song battle," has been split into two parts since 1989, and the rating for the second part, including the finale, is considered the primary barometer of its popularity.

The show's previous low rating was 39.2 per cent in 2015. This year's viewership was also lower than at any time before the show was split into two parts, according to the TV audience research company.

In its heyday up the 1980s, the music show featuring popular singers in Japan logged huge ratings, peaking at 81.4 percent in 1963.

The show started in 1951 as a New Year radio program and two years later became a year-end TV program. A red group of female singers and white group of male singers battle it out, with judges and the audience voting to decide which group performed better.—Kyodo News ■

NHK headquarters in Tokyo's Shibuya district. **PHOTO: KYODO**

San Francisco reports lowest rate of homicides in 56 years

SAN FRANCISCO — San Francisco witnessed a record low rate of homicides in more than half a century as only 41 killings were reported in the city in 2019, a local newspaper said Wednesday.

The number of killings last year was 11 per cent down from 46 in 2018, the San Francisco Chronicle said.

The number of other violent cases also dropped in 2019, with that of shootings down by 6 per cent and overall violent crimes down by 8 per cent, according to the local daily.

The last time the number of homicides was as low as last year's count was in 1963, when the city had 100,000 fewer residents, the newspaper said.

City officials attributed the improvement in statistics to joint efforts by law enforcement agencies and community groups, including anti-crime organizations, to divert resources to combat crime.

Official data showed about 71 per cent of the murders in the city were resolved last year, much higher than the proportion of 20 percent in the 1990s. However, despite a 3-per cent reduction in car break-ins last year, San Francisco is still troubled by a high number of auto burglaries, which make the city a place with the highest property crime rate across the United States.—Xinhua ■

Stock markets usher in New Year with big gains

LONDON — Global stock markets powered ahead Thursday as investors welcomed 2020 with a raft of strong gains after China's central bank announced fresh stimulus, dealers said.

Asia kicked off the New Year on the front foot, with most rallying out of the blocks Thursday on lingering trade optimism and the stimulus news.

Europe also shone as investors remain upbeat about the global outlook after Washington and Beijing eventually reached a trade agreement to ease tensions between the two.

Brexit uncertainty has meanwhile been removed with Britain set to leave the European Union on 31 January.

"European equities have made a bright start to the New Year with sizable rallies of more than one percent," said XTB analyst David Cheetham.

"2019 was a good year on the whole for stock markets and they seem to be wasting little time in attempting to push higher again with the bourses following the lead of their Asian peers.

"Expectations that a 'Phase One' trade deal between the US and China will be signed in less than two weeks have boosted sentiment but the main driving force appears to be the announcement of a further easing of monetary policy from China's central bank."

FILE PHOTO: Expectations that a 'Phase One' trade deal between the US and China will be signed in less than two weeks have boosted sentiment. US President Donald Trump and Chinese leader Xi Jinping leave a business leaders event at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing in November 2017. **PHOTO: AFP**

However, geopolitical worries resurfaced following a warning from North Korean leader Kim Jong Un that moratoriums on nuclear and intercontinental ballistic missile tests had ended, with talks with the US going nowhere.—AFP ■

Volkswagen in talks to settle German 'dieselgate' mass lawsuit

FRANKFURT AM MAIN —

Car giant Volkswagen said Thursday it would open talks on a possible settlement in a mass lawsuit brought by hundreds of thousands of German diesel car owners over emissions cheating.

"Volkswagen and the Federation of German Consumer Organisations (VZBV) have agreed to enter into discussions regarding a possible settlement," the company said in a statement.

Both VW and the VZBV said while "discussions are at a very early stage, and there is no guarantee" of a settlement, they hoped to find a "pragmatic solution for the benefit of the customer". Around 400,000 diesel owners have joined a mass lawsuit against Volkswagen over the group's 2011 admission to emissions cheating affecting 11 million vehicles worldwide.

VW and subsidiaries built so-called "defeat devices" into engine control software, designed to make them appear less polluting in the lab than in real driving conditions.

The fallout from the so-called "dieselgate" fraud has cost the company over 30 billion euros ($33.6 billion).—AFP ■

Around 400,000 diesel owners have joined a mass lawsuit against Volkswagen over its admission to emissions cheating. **PHOTO: AFP**

No. of Japanese restaurants abroad up 30% in 2 years: survey

TOKYO — The number of Japanese restaurants outside Japan rose 30 percent last year from the 2017 level to about 156,000, with Asia and Africa leading the increase, according to Japanese farm ministry data.

Global familiarity with Japanese cuisine due to an increase in inbound tourism as well as overseas promotional events hosted by government and private organizations are thought to be major drivers of the growth.

The number of Japanese restaurants in Asia jumped 50 percent to about 101,000, while the figure for Africa climbed 50 percent to some 500, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries said.

This was followed by Oceania, which includes Australia and New Zealand, increasing 40 percent to around 3,400, Central and South America up 30 percent to 6,100, and North America up 20 percent to 29,400.

Meanwhile, the number of Japanese restaurants in Europe and the Middle East remained flat at around 12,200 and 1,000, respectively. The number in Russia rose slightly to 2,600 from 2,400. — Kyodo News ■

Photo taken 9 August, 2019 shows a Japanese restaurant at a New Delhi shopping mall in India. **PHOTO: KYODONEWS**

MoU signed between Forum of Indian Food Importers and NEEA to strengthen trade ties

SHILLONG (Meghalaya) — Forum of India Food Importers (FIFI) and North East Entrepreneurs Alliance (NEEA) agreed to build cooperation by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) during recently organized North East Food Show 2019 by the government of Meghalaya and SIAL Paris.

The MoU has been signed with an objective to facilitate food business, food processing, food ingredient sourcing, providing market linkages and knowledge exchange between both the parties.

NEEA aims to work closely with FIFI to curate products from the region which can find the platform at par to the international food and beverage products. With this MoU, NEEA is also looking forward to creating a few geographical product categories, brand them accordingly and generate long term brand equity for them.

The GI tagged commodities remain underutilized and with FIFI, NEEA hopes to leverage the opportunity not only in India, but across the world.

"While FIFI members see great potential in the North-Eastern states and have expressed keen interest to connect the novel products not only with the Indian market but, to eventually see them getting attention across the globe. We are delighted to take this engagement forward," said Pankaj Singhal after signing of the MoU.

The MoU was signed by Amit Lohani and Pankaj Singhal from the FIFI and members of NEEA in the presence of luminous dignitaries like Conrad K Sangma, the Chief Minister of the state of Meghalaya, Prema Khandu, the Chief Minister of the state of Arunachal Pradesh, Kiren Rijiju, Minister of state of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports and Minister of state in the Ministry of Minority Affairs of India, Rameswar Teli, Minister of state in the Ministry of Food Processing Industries, Biplab Kumar Deb, the Chief Minister of the state of Tripura, and Bedu Panth, Minister of Tourism and Civil aviation and Commerce and Industries.—ANI ■

Singapore posts sluggish 0.7% growth in 2019

SINGAPORE — Singapore's economy grew 0.7 per cent in 2019, marking its slowest growth since the global financial crisis a decade earlier, preliminary data showed Thursday.

Though coming within the Ministry of Trade and Industry's projection of between 0.5 per cent and 1 per cent annual growth, it represented a sharp slowdown from the 3.1 per cent expansion in 2018.

Gross domestic product grew 0.1 per cent in 2009.

The city-state's economy grew 0.8 per cent between October and December from a year earlier, while expanding at a slower pace of 0.1 per cent from the July-September period on an annualized basis.

The city-state's economy grew 0.8 per cent between October and December from a year earlier, while expanding at a slower pace of 0.1 per cent from the July-September period on an annualized basis. **PHOTO: AFP**

In his New Year's Eve message, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said a global economic slowdown has already affected Singapore. "Our economy is still growing, but less vigorously than we would like." The ministry last month forecast the economy would grow between 0.5 per cent and 2.5 per cent in 2020, while Irvin Seah, an economist at DBS Group Research, is projecting 1.4 per cent growth. Seah said his projection was below Singapore's potential growth rate of about 2.5 per cent. "Signs of a turnaround are emerging but recovery could be weak," the economist said. — Kyodo News ■

Japan earmarks 1.8 bil. yen to boost promotion of sake

TOKYO — Japan has earmarked a combined 1.78 billion yen ($16 million) in the state budget for boosting promotion of sake and other Japan-made alcoholic beverages abroad, especially when the country hosts the Olympics and Paralympics this year.

The total — of which 1.31 billion yen is in the budget for fiscal 2020 starting in April and the remainder in the supplementary budget for the current fiscal year to March — is seven times larger than similar spending in the initial 2019 budget.

Sake making in Wakayama, western Japan, pictured in November 2018. **PHOTO: KYODO NEWS**

As part of such efforts, the government is preparing to set up an office at the National Tax Agency in July to better assist companies in exporting sake and domestically made wine and beer, according to an agency official.

The office, to have a staff of 18 within the agency's Liquor Tax and Industry Division, will join hands with the Japan External Trade Organization to promote and strengthen the branding of sake and other Japan-made alcoholic drinks.

"The new office will assist companies in exporting alcoholic beverages by understanding their needs and passing on relevant information such as on sales routes, foreign buyers and other issues," said Yui Nagahara, deputy director of the division.

The office will also be tasked with negotiating with foreign counterparts on lowering liquor taxes. Nagahara, who handles issues related to exports of Japanese alcoholic beverages abroad, said the 470 million yen in the fiscal 2019 extra budget will be assigned to the National Research Institute for Brewing for the development of new products matching tastes overseas. — Kyodo News ■

EastMed pipeline deal to be signed in Athens

ATHENS — Greece, Cyprus and Israel were set Thursday to sign an agreement for a huge pipeline project designed to ship gas from the eastern Mediterranean to Europe.

The move comes amid tensions with Turkey over its own activities in the area and a contentious maritime deal with Libya expanding Ankara's claims over a large gas-rich area of the sea.

The 2,000-kilometre (1,200-mile) EastMed pipeline will be able to transfer between nine and 12 billion cubic metres a year from offshore gas reserves between Israel and Cyprus to Greece, and then on to Italy and other southeastern European countries.

The discovery of hydrocarbon reserves in the eastern Mediterranean has sparked a scramble for the energy riches and a row between Cyprus and Turkey, which occupies the north of the Mediterranean island.

Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Cypriot President Nicos Anastasiades were to sign the deal at 1630 GMT.

Turkey already faces European Union sanctions over ships searching for oil and gas off Cyprus, whose government in Nicosia is not recognised by Ankara.

The EastMed project is expected to make Cyprus, Greece and Israel key links in Europe's energy supply chain. It aims to stymie Turkey's effort to extend its control to the eastern Mediterranean.—AFP ■

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV OLYMPIA VOY.NO. (952W)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV OLYMPIA VOY.NO. (952W) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 31-12-2019 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of MITT/MIP where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S MCC TRANSPORT (S'PORE) PTE LTD

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV HAI NAM 86

Consignees of cargo carried on MV HAI NAM 86 VOY.NO. (1901) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 31-12-2019 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of MITT-4 where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S RK SHIPPING & TRADING PTE LTD

Phone No: 2301928

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV LONDON TRADER VOY.NO. (951S)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV LONDON TRADER VOY.NO. (951S) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 3-1-2020 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of MITT/MIP where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S MCC TRANSPORT (S'PORE) PTE LTD

Phone No: 2301185

Taiwan's military chief killed in chopper crash

TAIPEI — Taiwan's military chief was killed in a helicopter crash on Thursday, the defence ministry said, just days before the island goes to polls to elect a new president.

The chief of the general staff, Shen Yi-ming, was among eight senior officers — including three major-generals — who died when their Black Hawk helicopter smashed into mountains near Taipei. The 62-year-old general and his entourage were on a routine mission to visit soldiers in northeast Yilan county for the upcoming Lunar New Year when the incident happened.

Flags at all military units will fly at half-mast for three days as Shen was the highest-ranking military official to die while on official duty, the government said.

Lieutenant-general Tsao Ching-ping, one of five survivors, told rescuers in footage broadcast on local TV: "I am okay... two others are injured and only I can walk." "There is one more person who's more seriously wounded and two or three people in the cabin ... while two more with no signs of life."

President Tsai Ing-wen's office said that she will cancel all campaign activities for three days after the tragedy. The ruling Democratic Progressive Party will also suspend campaigning for three days. Tsai is seeking a second term against Kaohsiung city mayor Han Kuo-yu of the Kuomintang (KMT) party in the 11 January elections when Taiwan will also elect a new parliament.—AFP ■

Rescuers searching for survivors after a military Black Hawk helicopter smashed into mountains in Yilan county near Taipei, killing the island's top military chief, Shen Yi-ming. **PHOTO: AFP**

China's national legislature to launch online petition platform

BEIJING — China's National People's Congress (NPC) will open an official online petition platform to improve petitioning procedures, the general office of the NPC standing committee, China's top legislature, said on Thursday. Aiming to make the online platform a major petitioning channel, the NPC pledges to reply to and handle petition letters online in a timely manner. Petitioning, also known as "letters and calls," is China's administrative system for hearing public complaints and grievances. Petitioners can log on to www.npc.gov.cn to submit their petitions.— Xinhua ■

Five other lawmakers may be involved in casino-bribery scandal

TOKYO — An adviser to a Chinese gambling operator under investigation for allegedly bribing Japanese lawmaker Tsukasa Akimoto over a casino resort project has told investigators that the company also gave cash to another five lawmakers, a source familiar with the matter said Thursday.

Katsunori Nakazato, the adviser to 500.com Ltd., said he handed 1 million yen ($9,200) each to the five lawmakers around September 2017 when 3 million yen was given to Akimoto, who as deputy minister was in charge of overseeing government policy on the introduction of "integrated resorts" comprising of casinos, hotels and conference hall facilities, the source said.

Some of the five belong to a cross-party group of lawmakers dedicated to promoting international tourism, according to the source. Speaking to Kyodo News, one of the five lawmakers admitted to meeting with Nakazato, a former member of the Urasoe city assembly in Okinawa, without knowing he was advising the Chinese company. The lawmaker also denied receiving "even a penny" in cash from the company, adding it did not give donations or buy tickets for political events. —Kyodo News ■

File photo shows a close-up of playing cards on a roulette table in Cardiff, Britain. **PHOTO: KYODO**

Lebanon denies president welcomed fugitive Ghosn

BEIRUT — The Lebanese presidency on Thursday denied reports that President Michel Aoun had welcomed fugitive former Nissan boss Carlos Ghosn upon his arrival in the country.

The French-Lebanese tycoon, who had been under house arrest in Japan over several counts of financial misconduct, escaped in mysterious circumstances and arrived in Beirut on Monday.

Several media outlets reported that he had been greeted by Aoun but a senior presidency official denied the two men had met.

"He was not received at the presidency and did not meet the president," the official told AFP.

Ghosn flew in from Istanbul on a private jet and has since been reunited with friends and family. Ghosn said he would speak to the media next week. One of his lawyers in Lebanon, Carlos Abou Jaoude, said a date for the press conference had yet to be determined.

He entered Lebanon on a French passport, according to airport documents seen by AFP.

The public Japanese broadcaster NHK reported that the court in Tokyo had allowed Ghosn to keep a second French passport so long as it were kept "in a locked case" with the key held by his lawyers.

The exact circumstances of Ghosn's daring escape from Japan, where he had been released on bail in April pending trial after 130 days in prison, remain unclear, though colourful rumours abound.

One claim in the Lebanese media is that the auto mogul, who holds Lebanese, French and Brazilian nationalities, was sprung from his Tokyo residence in a musical instrument case -- a story a source in his entourage denied.

How Ghosn was able to jump bail has led to a Japanese investigation into what is seen as an embarrassing security lapse.

Ghosn stands accused of deferring part of his salary until after his retirement and concealing this from shareholders, as well as syphoning off millions in Nissan cash for his own purposes.—AFP ■

Some Lebanese still see the fugitive former Nissan boss as a symbol of their country's fabled entrepreneurial genius and a proud representative of its vast diaspora . **PHOTO: AFP**

Lightning strikes kill 95 people in Cambodia last year: spokesman

PHNOM PENH — Lightning strikes had claimed 95 lives in Cambodia in 2019, down 14 percent from 110 deaths in a year earlier, a disaster control spokesman said on Thursday.

Besides the fatalities, thunderbolts injured 83 others during the January-December period last year, said Keo Vy, the spokesman for the National Committee for Disaster Management.

He attributed the decline to people's awareness of protecting themselves from being struck by lightning.

"To avoid the dangers of lightning strikes, people, especially those living in rural areas, should stay in houses or shelters when there is storm or rain," he told Xinhua. According to the spokesman, lightning strikes occur often during the rainy season from May to October.

In addition to the casualties from lightning strikes, Mekong River and flash floods, that hit parts of the country in September, claimed 30 lives, as storms killed eight people and injured 131 others last year, he said. — Xinhua ■

PM al-Mahdi assured safety of US personnel in Iraq: Michael Pompeo

FILE PHOTO: US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo speaks to the media in the briefing room at the State Department, on 26 November, 2019, in Washington, DC. **PHOTO: AFP**

WASHINGTON — Secretary of State Michael Pompeo on Thursday said that Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abd al-Mahdi has assured security of US personnel, amid violent protest outside US embassy in Baghdad.

"Spoke today with Iraqi Prime Minister al-Mahdi, who agreed that Iraq would continue to uphold its responsibility to keep US personnel secure and would move the Iran-backed attackers away from US Embassy in Baghdad. We'll continue cooperation to hold Iran and its proxies responsible," wrote Pompeo in a tweet.

Earlier in the day, US Secretary of State postponed his visit to Ukraine, after its embassy in Iraq was besieged by Shiite protesters after airstrikes in Iraq and Syria.

Pompeo also said that legitimate efforts of Iraqi protesters since October last year against corruption in Iraq should not be confused with "the Iranian regime orchestrated attack, conducted by terrorists against the US embassy in Baghdad."

Moreover, State Department spokesperson Morgan Ortagus apprised about the current development in Iraq, saying, "The situation around embassy in Baghdad has improved," but that effort by Iraqi government security forces "to clear militia members from the area immediately surrounding the embassy continue."

Protesters broke into the US embassy compound in Baghdad, smashed windows, set fire to outbuildings following US airstrikes at five facilities linked to Iranian-backed Kataib Hezbollah militia in Iraq and Syria. — ANI ■

Prince Abdulaziz bin Turki al-Saud, President of Saudi Arabia's General Sports Authority, speaking during a press conference in December about the 2020 Dakar Rally. **PHOTO: AFP**

Saudi uses sports 'soft power' as lever of influence

RIYADH — Saudi Arabia's hosting of the Dakar Rally this month is just the latest international sporting event to take place in the kingdom as part of a multi-billion-dollar push to boost its battered global image.

In recent months the ultra-conservative kingdom — under fire over human rights abuses — has accelerated investment in sports, mirroring a longstanding strategy adopted by regional powers, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar.

Saudi Arabia is seeking to use glitzy sporting extravaganzas as an instrument of soft power in its push for regional supremacy as well as to project a moderate image of a country long seen as an exporter of jihadist ideology.

In 2019 the kingdom hosted a heavyweight boxing rematch between Anthony Joshua and Andy Ruiz, a Formula E motor race and a tennis exhibition tournament.

Women's wrestling, somewhat toned down from its usual razzmatazz, also made its debut in a nation where such events were once unthinkable.

In December, Cristiano Ronaldo and his Juventus teammates took to the pitch at the King Saud University Stadium in Riyadh for the Italian Super Cup.

And in January, a Barcelona side featuring Lionel Messi will appear in the Spanish Super Cup, two months after the Argentine superstar played his first match on Saudi soil in a friendly encounter against Brazil.— AFP ■

Turkey parliament to vote on Libya military deployment

ANKARA — Turkey's parliament was set to pass a bill on Thursday approving a military deployment to Libya, hoping it will shore up the UN-backed government in Tripoli.

The beleaguered Tripoli government has been under sustained attack since April by military strongman General Khalifa Haftar, who is backed by Turkey's regional rivals — Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's office confirmed last Friday that a request for military support had been received from the Tripoli-based Government of National Accord (GNA).

No details have been given on the scale of the potential deployment, and Vice-President Fuat Oktay told state news agency Anadolu on Wednesday that no date had yet been set.

"We are ready. Our armed forces and our defence ministry are ready," he said, adding that parliamentary approval would be valid for a year. He described the parliament motion as a "political signal" aimed at deterring Haftar's army. "After it passes, if the other side changes its attitude and says, 'OK, we are withdrawing, we are abandoning our offensive,' then what should we go there for?"

A UN report in November said several countries were violating the arms embargo on Libya in place since the overthrow of its long-time dictator Moamer Kadhafi in 2011. Jordan and the UAE regularly supply Haftar's forces, it said, while Turkey supports the GNA. — AFP ■

A fighter loyal to the internationally recognised Libyan Government of National Accord. **PHOTO: AFP**

Canadian military police assigned Pokemon Go after fans invade bases

MONTREAL — At least three military police officers were ordered to play Pokemon Go in Canadian bases across the country, after players invaded the facilities in a quest to catch them all.

The interlopers were not foreign agents but fans of the wildly popular Pokemon Go app — launched in 2016 — trying to capture as many of the game's virtual characters as possible and even wandering into restricted army areas.

A surge in the number of suspects being apprehended in the summer after the game's release puzzled the army, according to internal documents obtained by Canadian public television channel CBC.

"Plse advise the Commissionaires that apparently Fort Frontenac is both a PokeGym and a PokeStop," Major Jeff Monaghan at Canadian Forces Base Kingston wrote.

"I will be completely honest in that I have not idea what that is," he said in a message among the nearly 500 pages of military documents obtained by CBC under an access to information request. At least three military police officers, at different bases across the country, were assigned to wander around army facilities with phones and notebooks in hand to search for virtual Pokemon infrastructure and characters.

"We should almost hire a 12-year-old to help us out with this," wrote security expert David Levenick at CFB Borden in Ontario, 100 kilometers (60 miles) northwest of Toronto.— AFP ■

Tunisia's PM-designate submits proposed cabinet to president

TUNIS — Tunisian Prime Minister-designate Habib Jemli said on Wednesday that he had offered the lineup of his new government to President Kais Saied.

"The names of the government ministers will be announced to the public on Thursday," Jemli said during a press conference in the capital city of Tunis.

The government will be submitted to parliament for a vote of confidence.

It has to obtain a majority of 109 out of a total of 217 possible votes. On 23 December, Jemli announced he would form a government of independent ministers who do not represent political parties.—Xinhua

World Lethwei Championship: Battlebones Fight planned in Yangon on 31 Jan

A special event titled 'Battlebones Fight' will be organized as part of the World Lethwei Championship on 31 January at the Theinbyu Indoor Stadium in Yangon.

The event will have men's and women's bouts, featuring Myanma lethwei fighters versus foreign fighters. The competitors will use the fighting style of Myanma traditional lethwei, including various clinching techniques. All the fights will be bare-knuckled, without gloves, with only tape and gauze allowed on the hands of the fighters. In the main event, the men's middleweight class, Myanmar lethwei star Too Too will fight against Naimoin Tuhtaboven of Uzbekistan

In the women's Bantamweight class, Souris Manfredi of France will take on Tran Thi Lua of Viet Nam. In the men's welterweight class, Myanmar's Saw Kaung Htet will face Italian fighter Samuel Toscano. In the men's lightweight event, Hein Tun Aung of Myanmar will fight with Cambodian fighter Em Sothy.

In another men's welterweight event, Myanmar fighter Thar Win Tun will fight with another Myanmar fighter Eh Mwe.

In another lightweight event, Lin Htet Naing of Myanmar will take on Zin Bo of Myanmar. Tickets for the lethwei event will be priced at K10,000, K15,000, and K30,000, and advance tickets will be available for K15,000 and K30,000 only from 13 January and can be booked on the phone number—09-775100100, according to the World Lethwei Championship.—Lynn Thit (Tgi)

Myanmar Futsal League half season concludes with VUC in the lead

A VUC F.C. player attempts to get the ball past a Winner F.C. player during an earlier Myanmar Futsal League match. **PHOTO: MFF FUTSAL**

THE Myanmar Futsal League reached the end of the half season with the conclusion of the Week-11 matches. The Victoria University Futsal Club is currently leading the table with 31 points from 10 wins and one draw out of 11 matches played.

The Myanmar Imperial University (MIU) F.C. is next, with the same points, but a goal difference.

The GV F.C. is in the third position with 27 points from 9 wins and two losses.

On Doctor F.C. is in the fourth place with 22 points from 7 wins, one draw, and three losses, and Winner F.C. is fifth, with one point less than On Doctor F.C.

Twelve teams competed in the first season of the tourney, with the VUC F.C. scoring the most goals in the futsal league half season.

The team has so far netted 99 goals.

The top scorer is Renato from MIU F.C., who has scored 31 goals.—Lynn Thit (Tgi)

Myanmar men's national football team gets new assistant coach

THE Myanmar men's national football team has found a new assistant coach, according to a statement issued by the Myanmar Football Federation. The new assistant coach, U Min Tun Lin, has been signed on a two-year contract.

With team Myanmar scheduled to face Japan on 26 March and Kyrgyzstan on 31 March as part of the 2022 World Cup qualifiers, head coach Antonio Hey had asked the MFF authorities to hire a new assistant coach to help the team shape a good result in the qualifiers, said a source from the MFF.

U Min Tun Lin was found to be the most suitable candidate for the position of assistant coach for the Myanmar national team, said officials from the football federation.

U Min Tun Lin is the former coach of Myanmar National League football club Zwekapin United F.C. and he holds an Asian Football Confederation (AFC) Grade A License.

U Min Tun Lin helped the Zwekapin United claim the third place in the 2018 edition of the Myanmar National League.—Lynn Thit (Tgi)

U Min Tun Lin (L) accepts the contract for assistant coach from MFF general secretary U Ko Ko Thein. **PHOTO: MFF**