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THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

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Govt focuses on durable solution for resettlement of IDPs, camp closures

Union Minister Dr Win Myat Aye, Kachin State Chief Minister Dr Khet Aung and attendees pose for a group photograph at the meeting for the Strategic Plan for Resettling IDPs and Closing Temporary Camps in Myitkyina, Kachin State yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

THE Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement discussed the Strategic Plan for Resettling Internally Displaced Persons-IDPs and Closing IDP Camps with Kachin State Government, local communities and social organizations yesterday.

The Union Minister Dr Win Myat Aye first held talks with Kachin State Chief Minister Dr Khet Aung, his cabinet members and officials at the local government headquarters in Myitkyina.

He explained the ministry's works on social welfares of people, handling man-made disasters and rehabilitation programmes in cooperation with the relevant organizations.

The Chief Minister and senior local officers presented their resettlement works, situations of IDPs, rehabilitation programmes for those who stopped taking illegal drugs and challenges for the local authorities.

The Union Minister, the Deputy Minister and the Directors-General discussed preliminary plans, security issues, financial matters and legal procedures in implementing the strategic plan.

In the afternoon, the Union Minister held a public meeting at Myitkyina City Hall and explained the government's priority on ethnic affairs and ceasefire with armed groups.

SEE PAGE-3

Myanmar Ethnics Culture Festival makes second return

MYANMAR Ethnics Culture Festival is making its second appearance at Kyaikkasan Sports Ground on East Race Course Road, Yangon, from 1 to 7 February, according to a press conference by its organizers yesterday.

Officials from Myanmar Ethnic Entrepreneurs Association, Kayin State Entrepreneurs Association, and Aung Family Festival Organizing Group replied to media during the press conference and explained the schedule of the festival.

The festival will be headed by the two aforementioned associations while under the guidance of the Ministry of Ethnic Affairs, Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, and the governments of Yangon Region and Kayah State.

U Win Maung, head of Aung Family, said they will install a likeness of the 20-feet Tharabar Gate, acknowledged by UNESCO, at the entrance to the festival.

He said they will also install 15-feet tall statues of four ancient famous Myanmar generals – Kyansittha, Nga Htwe Yuu, Nga Lone La Phe, and Nyaung Oo Phee. He said there will be over a thousand stalls showcasing everything from traditional clothing to ethnic cuisine.

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New sub-power station unveiled in Kyauktan Township

Union Minister for Electricity and Energy U Win Khaing and officials pose for a documentary photo at the opening ceremony of the Kamarkalote/Kayinchaung 33/11KV, 5MVA sub-power station in Kyauktan Township, Yangon Region. **PHOTO: MNA**

THE opening ceremony of the Kamarkalote/Kayinchaung 33/11KV, 5MVA sub-power station in Kyauktan Township, Yangon Region, was held yesterday morning. It was implemented by the Yangon Electricity Supply Corporation, Ministry of Electricity and Energy.

First, Union Minister for Electricity and Energy U Win Khaing gave a speech. He said the Union government is working hard for national development and has prioritized safe and smooth transportation and stable and sufficient electricity generation in that endeavor.

The Union Minister said the ministry's aim is to construct sufficient numbers of power stations, transmission lines and sub-power stations to provide sufficient electricity to the public and industries. He said the government has implemented 50 per cent nationwide electrification in December 2019 and has set the target of 55 per cent by 2021, 75 per cent by 2025-2026 financial year, and a hundred per cent by 2030.

The Union Minister said the eleven villages in Kyauktan Township and Tada used of receive electricity from a 15.7 mile long transmission line from the Tada sub-power station while the other six villages in Kyauktan Township received their electricity from a 13.5 mile long transmission line from Kyauktan sub-power station.

He said due to the length of the transmission lines, there were frequent issues with electricity distribution and finding the source of a failure along the long lines which resulted in extended power outages. He said they constructed the sub-power station near Kyauktan Township to reduce inconveniences for the public.

Next, Regional Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein delivered a few remarks on the opening ceremony of the sub-power station and Pyithu Hluttaw representative Daw Aye Mya Mya Myo of Kyauktan Constituency and U Tin Moe Lwin, a townselder, expressed gratitude for opening the sub-power station.

This was followed by Regional Hluttaw Deputy Speaker U Lin Naing Myint, Deputy Minister for Electricity and Energy U Khin Maung Win, Regional Minister for Electricity, Industry, Transportation and Communication Daw Nilar Kyaw, Pyithu Hluttaw representative Daw Aye Mya Mya Myo, Regional Hluttaw representative U Zaw Moe Lwin and Daw Thet Thet Mu cutting ceremonial ribbons to open the archway of the sub-power station.

Next, Union Minister U Win Khaing, Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein, Regional Hluttaw Speaker U Tin Maung Tun and Regional Chief Justice U Hla Aye unveiled the plaque of the station and toured inside it.

K179.69 billion from the Union fund has been used since April 2016 to present, and K32.6 billion from the Yangon Region government fund had been used in 2018-2019 FY to construct seven 33/11KV, 5MVA sub-power stations, 61 miles of 33KV transmission lines, 267 miles of 11KV transmission lines, 302 electricity transformers, and 208 miles of 400V transmission lines. Electricity has been successfully distributed to Kawhmu, Kungyangon, Kyauktan and Twantay townships of South Yangon District and to Hmawby, Taikkyi, Okkan and Aphyauk townships of North Yangon District.

A total of 1,085 villages received electricity in 2016 and 269 more received in 2018-2019 FY, making it 64 per cent electrification. Officials aim to provide electricity to 495 more villages in 2019-2020 FY and bring the number up to 87 per cent.

The ministry has plans to provide 259 remaining villages with electricity in 2020-2021 FY and to achieve 100 per cent electrification for all villages in Yangon Region by December 2020. —MNA ■

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

Union Minister U Win Khaing inspects the Kamarkalote/Kayinchaung 33/11KV, 5MVA sub-power station in Yangon. **PHOTO: MNA**

Issuing identity documents for ethnic minorities discussed in Mogok

UNION Minister for Labour, Immigration and Population is working for issuing identification cards and household registration certifications for Lisu, Nepal (Gurkha), Kholon Lishaw, Kokang and Mone Wun ethnic minorities.

Union Minister U Thein Swe held talks with the locals and officials on this process at the Golden Butterfly Hotel in Mogok Township, Mandalay Region, yesterday morning. At the meeting, the minister said that to some extent his office relaxed some immigration rules for issuing household registration certificates and identification cards for people by checking relevant documents in line with laws, regulations and instructions amidst the doubts of people in the procedures.

The Union Minister asked for coordination of ethnic group leaders in the process to award household registration certificates and national identification cards for the Lisue people.

He also coordinated with the discussions of Lisu Ethnic Affairs Minister U Gu Sar and Patron of Lisu Literature and Culture Group in Mogok U Yaw Set on cooperation with the Union Government and local officials in this process.

The Union Minister later met with chairpersons and members of cultural groups from ethnic communities of Nepal (Gurkha), Kholon Lishaw, Kokang and Mone Wun to hand out family registration certificates and a certain type of identification cards to them in Mogok.

Union Minister U Thein Swe meets with members of cultural groups from ethnic communities of Nepal (Gurkha), Kholon Lishaw, Kokang and Mone Wun for issuing identification cards in Mogok. **PHOTO: MNA**

Union Minister U Thein Swe and party also inspected the Office of Immigration and Population in Phaw Taw Village in Thabeikkyin Township for systematic immigration processes in collaboration with relevant organizations.—MNA ■

(Translated by Aung Khin)

Foreign Head of State sends felicitations to President U Win Myint

From Felipe R
His Majesty the King of Spain
Mr. President,

On the occasion of the celebration of the national day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, I would like to convey to your Excellency, together with the Government and the People of Spain, my highest cordial congratulations.

Please receive, Mr. President, my best wishes of personal well-being for peace and prosperity for the beloved people of Myanmar.

With the testimony of my utmost consideration and esteem.

Foreign Head of State sends felicitations to State Counsellor

From Dr. Lotay Tshering
Prime Minister, Bhutan

Excellency,

On behalf of the Royal Government of Bhutan, I would like to convey our warmest felicitations to the people and the Government of Myanmar on the Independence Day of Myanmar.

Bhutan and Myanmar share good bilateral relations. I am confident that under your leadership, the traditional bonds of friendship and cooperation between our two countries will be further strengthened.

I take this opportunity to convey my best wishes for Your Excellency's personal well-being and happiness.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

■ ■ ■

Int'l conference commemorates YGN University centenary

AN international conference to commemorate Yangon University's centenary was held at the university yesterday and Union Minister for Education Dr Myo Thein Gyi delivered the opening speech.

In his speech, the Union Minister said the Ministry of Education has cooperated with Oxford Sayadaw Prof Dr Dhammasami of Shan State's Buddhist Academy to organize the international conference. The topic focused on Remembering the Past and Ways Forward.

The Union Minister remarked that this highlights the importance of reviewing the past and present capabilities of education reforms to make better projects and policies in the future. He said the ministry's policy is to establish an inclusive education system that doesn't leave anyone behind.

Union Minister Dr Myo Thein Gyi addresses the audience at the International Conference commemorating Yangon University's 100th anniversary. **PHOTO: MNA**

The Union Minister said research and development are the lifeblood of the university and essential to sustainable economic growth and development for the nation. He said this is why they promote research integrity and motivation is important for carrying out research.

He said they began implementing a merit-based promotion system in 2018 and this has increased the inclusion of domestic and foreign research articles every year.

The Union Minister said Yangon University is planning to open course in ethnic literature research and they are encouraging ethnic literature and culture to flourish in all schools and universities.

He said seven universities each in Yangon and Mandalay have been granted autonomous university status. He said they are encouraging teacher and student associations and rectors committees to become more skilled and developed. He said they support constructive thinking and perspectives and to implement the core values of goals. He said youths will be hard pressed to find jobs without these skills in the 21st Century.

The Union Minister said peace is instrumental to national development and crucial for the success of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and the NESP 2021-2030. He urged everyone to cooperate to make Yangon University a flagship academic institution of the nation as it heads towards its 100th anniversary on 1 December 2020. Next, three domestic and foreign sayadaws read documents. The international conference began yesterday and continues toady and will feature 6 documents being read by professor sayadaws and experts.—MNA

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

Govt focuses on durable solution for resettlement of IDPs, camp closures

FROM PAGE-1

He affirmed the Strategic Plan for Resettling IDPs and Closing Temporary Camps was developed to meet existing laws of the country and international standards as security, dignity, self-independence and durable solutions are crucial for the resettlement of displaced persons.

The Union Minister suggested to carry out demining works with relevant ministries, and to develop appropriate implementation programmes of the strategic plan with local contexts in Kachin, Shan, Kayin and Rakhine states.

He finally called for participation of ethnic people in making lasting peace while the government is focusing on the emergence of a suitable State Constitution that can ensure rule of law, socioeconomic development, national reconciliation, internal peace and a Federal Democratic Union.

Director-General Dr Ko Ko Naing explained the background of strategic plan and future processes, followed by the replies of officials to discussions of representatives from the Hluttaw and IDP camps.—MNA

(Translated by Aung Khin)

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Rakhine IDPs receive relief aid of Disaster Management Department

INTERNALLY displaced persons who are taking shelters at the three monasteries in Sittway Township got relief aid of Department of Disaster Management under the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement through Rakhine State Government yesterday.

Chief Minister U Nyi Pu, State Security and Border Affairs Minister Colonel Min Than, State Social Affairs Minister Dr Chan Thar and officials first arrived at Dhamma Rama Pariyatti Monastery. They paid respect to the presiding monk of the monastery, and met with 359 IDPs—135 men and 224 women— from 99 households. The Chief Minister and party comforted the people who are receiving healthcare services of Public Health Department of Sittway Township. Chief Minister U Nyi Pu offered assistance to the IDPs for foods, medicines and education for the children of displaced families and explained the government's efforts on restoring peace and stability.

Rakhine State Government gave 109 sacks of rice and relief items to the IDPs there.

The Chief Minister proceeded to Vibhajja Vadi(Parahita) Monastery where 65 displaced persons from 16 households are taking shelter, and presented 14 sacks of rice and relief aid.

At the next stop of Buddhomaw Monastery, the Chief Minister and party donated 17 rice bags to 36 IDPs from 8 households.

These displaced persons left their homes in Yathedaung Township for temporary shelters in Sittway.—Tin Tun (IPRD)

Rakhine State Chief Minister U Nyi Pu meets with IDPs at a monastery in Sittway, Rakhine State.
PHOTO: TIN TUN

Jade sales draw K23.56 bln on 5th day of gems emporium

Traders evaluate jade stones at the Gems emporium in Nay Pyi Taw.
PHOTO: KYAW ZIN HTIKE

GEMS emporium in Nay Pyi Taw sold 1,158 jade lots for K23,561.403 million on the fifth day through open tender system at the Mani Yadana Jade Hall in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

The sale for remaining 1,195 jade lots will continue till 7 January at the emporium which registered over 2,000 local gems merchants. A total of 9 gems jots have been sold at K36.918 million, and 2,350 jade lots at K42,386.12 million at the event since it started on 2 January. — Myo Thu Hein (MNA)

(Translated by Aung Khin)

Bago hospital provided over 11,600 doses of rabies vaccines in 2019

THE Bago People's Hospital administered 11,676 doses of rabies vaccines in 2019, according to information released by the hospital.

In 2018, a total of 10,129 doses were given to patients, with 5,807 new patients being bitten by dogs and more than 20,000 patients getting vaccinations.

According to the information, the number of dog bite cases decreased in 2019.

There were 1,527 dog bite cases and 4,942 people were vaccinated at the hospital in November and December, 2018. The number decreased to 1,252 dog bite cases while 3,926 people were vaccinated for rabies during the same period in 2019.

The year 2019 saw a decrease in the number of dog bites as a result of cooperation between the departments concerned and local people in controlling stray dogs in the city.

After the number of people who received a vaccination for rabies rose in 2018, the Ministry of Health and Sports, the Bago Region Government, and local well-wishers made arrangements to supply adequate stock of vaccines to the hospital, according to the medical superintendent of the hospital Dr Yan Naing Maung. — Tin Soe (Bago)

(Translated by TTN)

Myanmar Ethnics Culture Festival makes second return

FROM PAGE-1

U Win Maung said over 800,000 people visited the festival last year and this year they expect to receive around 1.2 million visitors. In addition, there will be photo booths to take pictures in traditional ethnic settings and visitors can visit the homes and landmarks of ethnic races through an augmented reality booth. —Myint Maung

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

Myanmar Traditional cultural booths displayed at Ethnics Culture Festival which will be held from 1 to 7 February in Yangon. **PHOTO: MYINT MAUNG**

Foreign buyers prefer raw gemstones to finished products: association

By Nyein Nyein

Jade merchants viewing pieces of jade on the 4th day of Gems Emporium in Nay Pyi Taw. **PHOTO: MNA**

THERE is greater demand for raw gemstones than finished products among foreign buyers, said Daw Myint Thet Naing, vice chair 4 of the Gems and Jewellery Entrepreneurs Association (Yangon).

Even though foreign buyers purchase finished gem products, they are more interested in raw gemstones than in finished products, she said.

"Rather than finished gem products, raw gemstones garner more attention at gems emporiums held by the government or any federation or association. Also, trade of raw stones is strong," said Daw Myint Thet Naing.

The public sector is striving to develop finished gem products.

The third edition of the Yangon International Gems and Jewellery Fair 2020, which is being organized by the Gems and Jewellery Entrepreneurs Association of Yangon, will take place from 10 to 13 January at the Lotte Hotel. The expo is being held with a view to improve Myanmar's gems and jewellery market, boost gems and jewellery production, get good prices in the global market, bring together all the stakeholders in the supply chain, encourage production of value-added gems and jewellery rather than focusing on rough stones sales, create job opportunities, and organize seminars and business matching.

To attract foreign buyers to the fair, they have been exempted from paying commercial tax on purchases, said Daw Nyunt Nyunt Khaing from the association.

"To attract international buyers, they are being exempted from paying the 5-per cent commercial tax at the fair. Only the tax on gems and jewellery sales will be levied," she said.

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

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Myanmar to export 8,000-10,000 metric tons of semi-processed mangoes to China

MYANMAR will export 8,000-10,000 metric tons of semi-processed mangoes to China between 2020 and May, 2023, according to news released online by the Ministry of Commerce.

The Myanmar Golden Produce Co Ltd and China's Gangxi Bao Sauce Garden Food Co Ltd signed a Memorandum of Understanding on the purchase of semi-processed mangoes on 12 December.

The two companies will continue discussing matters related to production technology, price, and quality standards.

The semi-processed mangoes will be shipped in cold storage containers to China's Quinzhou Port through Yangon port.

At present, Myanmar mangoes can be exported to China through the border trade channel. Myanmar's economic attaché in Nanning will help facilitate the shipment of mangoes through the maritime route.

Myanmar's related departments will assist in the export of fruits listed with China's Customs via sea trade.

According to the Myanmar Mango Market and Technology Development Association, mango processors in Mandalay have been exporting value-added products to foreign markets.

Value-added mango products such as mango paste, frozen mango, preserved mango slices, wine, and dried mango are being increasingly processed and sent to countries that have signed an MoU with Myanmar — mainly Russia, Singapore and China.

"Adding value to mango is helping us move beyond the domestic market and penetrate foreign markets. Mangoes from Paleik area were purchased and sent to a processing factory in Nay Pyi Taw. Value-added mango products were shipped to foreign countries by the Myanmar GP Company. Mango paste is used in making ice-cream, ice-pops, and juice," said an official from the association.

Mango plantations cover 250,000 acres of land across Myanmar, and if the yield per acre is estimated at 3.5 tons, 200,000 acres can yield 700,000 tons of mangoes. Myanmar's mangoes are primarily shipped to China, and also to India, Bangladesh, Thailand, the Republic of Korea, Singapore, and Japan.

Mango farm-owners need to follow Good Agricultural Practices (GAP). They also need to obtain GAP certification. The Agriculture Department has been instituting criteria for long-term organic farming.

In the 2017-2018 fiscal year, Myanmar exported 50,000 tons of Seintalone (Diamond Solitaire) mangoes. The country aims to raise the export volume of Seintalone to 100,000 tons in 2020, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

– Mon Mon (Translated by EMM)

Imports up $270 mln as of 20 Dec, MOC reports

THE value of Myanmar's imports between 1 October and 20 December in the current financial year stood at US$4.27 billion, an increase of $270 million from $4 billion registered in the year-ago period, according to data released by the Ministry of Commerce.

The value of imports in the consumer, capital, intermediate goods, and CMP businesses groups rose significantly in the current fiscal. Over the past two months, capital goods, such as auto parts, vehicles, machines, steel, and airplane parts were brought into the country. Their import value was estimated at $1.4 billion. The figure was $143 million higher compared to the same period in the previous FY.

Meanwhile, Myanmar imported consumer products worth $799 million, including pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, and palm oil. The imports of consumer products showed a rise of $45.6 million compared with the same period in the previous FY.

Intermediate goods make up a large share of Myanmar's imports, with petroleum products and plastic raw materials being the main import items. In the current fiscal, imports of raw materials jumped to $1.53 billion from $1.49 billion registered during the year-ago period.

During the same period, raw materials worth $531.4 million were also imported for the Cut-Make-Pack (CMP) garment sector. — GNLM

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Car production up over 29% in 2019

PRODUCTION of brand new cars in Myanmar showed an increase of 29.3 per cent in the 11 months from January to November in 2019, as per statistics released by the ASEAN Automotive Federation.

The production of cars in January-November rose to 14,042 units from 10,863 units registered in the year-ago period.

Meanwhile, the sales of brand new cars rose 25.4 per cent during the period compared against 2018. A total of 19,274 cars were sold between January and November as against 15,365 cars in the previous year, according to the ASEAN Automotive Federation.

Purchase of brand new cars on installment plans is popular among people. At present, the new auto market is booming and some buyers have shown interest in purchasing vehicles assembled under the Semi Knockdown (SKD) system. Eighteen companies have been permitted to assemble cars using the SKD system at local plants.

Under the 2020 vehicle import policy, only vehicles with a left-hand drive can be imported into the country. Additionally, 2017 will be the oldest model year for private cars for which import permits will be issued for non-commercial purposes under the consignment system, according to news released by the Commerce Ministry.

When vehicles with engines under 1,350 CC are individually imported, the model year must be 2018 and later. Passenger vehicles such as mini-buses, city buses, express buses, and commercial trucks manufactured in 2016 and later can be imported. – Ko Htet

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

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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.

Truck veers off cliff in Shan State, 3 dead

THREE men died and four were injured when a 12 wheeler's brakes failed and tumbled down a cliff near milepost 165/3 of the Loilem-Mongpawn Highway in Loilem Township, Shan State, around 4:30 pm on 5 January. The four survivors suffered non-fatal injuries and were rescued by the Loilem District Fire Brigade. Myitta Chone Hlwar humanitarian society and White Youth philanthropic organization assisted in moving the injured and the dead to Loilem People's Hospital. — Pwint Thitsar

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

Loilem District firefighters rescue victims at the scene. **PHOTO: PWINT THITSAR**

Superfast 5G on the slow road at gadget gala

LAS VEGAS (United States)— It will be revolutionary when superfast 5G mobile networks come to our gadgets, cars and digital lives.

But the road to 5G remains agonizingly slow at the massive Consumer Electronics Show opening this week in Las Vegas, where ultrafast products are expected to be few and far between.

Backers of 5G tout a cornucopia of potential applications, but networks are still nascent, as are the devices capable of accessing them.

"5G networks are still in their infancy around the world," said Steven Koenig, vice president of market research at the Consumer Technology Association, which organizes the show.

"There are 50 different carriers running 5G over the world but it's still pretty limited in scope and coverage."

The annual Las Vegas gathering opens Tuesday with more than 4,500 exhibitors bringing out about 175,000 attendees searching for innovations of the future.

Since smartphones are on the front line when it comes to mobile data networks, consumer electronics firms competing in that market are taking their time rolling out the devices.

"The smartphone will still be a prime-time device for 5G," said Accenture global communications industry analyst Jefferson Wang.

With 5G, backers say, self-driving vehicles will think and react faster than human drivers, with the added benefit of knowing what cars or trucks around them have in mind. People will interact with insightful holograms. Jewelry will track a wearer's health.

Entertain me

About 20 countries have deployed 5G networks, according to Qualcomm. The US mobile chip giant estimates that 2.4 billion people could now theoretically use 5G, depending on where they are and whether they have a suitable phone.

"Many 5G smartphones will be unveiled at CES, as well as laptops and tablets," said Gartner analyst Mikako Kitagawa.

"But people may have to wait until spring or summer for them to be available."

Video game and television streaming fans are expected to be among the first to reap the bounty of 5G, accessing seamless rich virtual worlds to play in or downloading ultra-high definition films in seconds.

"In the long-term 5G can create holograms that are more interactive," Wang said.

"Use cases like in South Korea, where you can go on a virtual date with a K-pop star, for example."

No more nausea

5G network technology is entering a commercial phase, with compatability being built into devices such as augmented reality eyeglasses, according to Steve Koenig of the Consumer Technology Association, which runs CES.

Augmented reality overlays virtual images on real surroundings viewed through smartphone cameras or special eyewear. Like virtual reality, in which headgear immerses wearers completely in faux environments, AR is data bandwidth hungry.

VR is slowing gaining traction, with Facebook-owned Oculus leading the way, but has yet to offer an irresistible wires-free experiences.

Lags in VR graphics that are so slight people don't consciously notice can make some users nauseous. Superfast 5G networks could eliminate data lag woes, and let VR headsets be used anywhere mobile connections are available.

Post-smartphone era?

5G could help usher in the long-promised era of "ambient computing," in which machine smarts are ever waiting to be beckoned, perhaps with a word or a gesture, or even anticipate desires.

City streets, buildings, traffic signals and even parking meters could be made smart, communicating with vehicles that collaborate with each other for efficiency.

SK Telecom of South Korea plans to show off at CES a mapping service that analyzes traffic in real time, gathering information from car sensors.—AFP

The road to 5G remains agonizingly slow at the massive Consumer Electronics Show opening this week in Las Vegas, where ultrafast products are expected to be few and far between. **PHOTO: AFP**

Only 40% of dams in Japan can mitigate flood risks: survey

OSAKA— Only 40 percent of dams in Japan can pre-emptively release their reservoirs' water prior to heavy rains to mitigate flood risks, a Kyodo News survey showed Monday.

The lack of the "pre-release" function has forced some dam operators to enact emergency discharge only after water levels approached their limit in recent typhoons and other rain disasters. Some people died due to swollen rivers caused by such a release in the 2018 torrential rain in western Japan.

The government has been calling for dam operators to prepare the function for strategic release and actively manage water levels. But improvement work will likely cause various challenges including costs.

The survey, conducted last month, found that 246 out of 559 dams operated by 57 organizations throughout the country are able to pre-release water prior to forecast rainfall.

Forty-five bodies saying they have difficulty doing so cited reasons including the structures of existing dams, such as lacking discharge gates or having discharge conduits with weak drainage capacity.

One of the respondents said that if they pre-release water but have no rain, the resulting water shortage entails risks to farmers and water utility companies and negatively impacts society at large.— Kyodo News

File photo taken on 9 July 2018, shows a dam in Ozu, Ehime Prefecture. – **PHOTO: KYODO NEWS**

Ancient wine measuring table unearthed in Jerusalem

JERUSALEM — Israeli archaeologists unveiled an ancient table Monday used to measure wine and olive oil, which they said helps prove a market once stood at the site in occupied east Jerusalem.

The Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA) said the 2,000-year-old table was unearthed in the City of David National Park, between the Old City and the flashpoint Palestinian neighbourhood of Silwan.

Only the third artifact of its kind to be found so far in Jerusalem, the table could be filled with liquid to give a unified measure, according to the IAA.

Archaeologist of the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA) Ari Levi holds a rare 2000-year-old measuring table used for liquids such as wine and olive oil, in Jerusalem on 6 January 2020. **PHOTO: AFP**

"When shopkeepers wanted to make sure they were working with the same standard, they used to see... the manager of the market" who owned the table, archaeologist Ari Levy said.

The find provides evidence of trade in the area, which lies south of Jerusalem's Old City, the archaeologist told AFP.

The City of David excavations have been criticised by Palestinians, who see them as another attempt by Israel to cement its control over the area.

The archaeological park is run by hardline settler organisation Elad, which seeks to bolster the Jewish presence in mainly Palestinian east Jerusalem.

Israel occupied east Jerusalem in the 1967 Six-Day War and later annexed it in a move never recognised by the international community. — AFP

Five killed in Angola landmine blast

LUANDA (Angola)— At least five people were killed in Angola after a vehicle drove over a landmine in the northeast, the government said on Monday.

More than one million landmines were planted during Angola's 27-year war, which started after the southwest African country's independence from Portugal in 1975.

After the war, Angola pledged to eradicate landmines by 2025.

But more than 1,200 minefields remain to be cleared and hidden explosives continue to claim lives.

The latest incident took place in the province of Lunda Sul late on Sunday, when a land cruiser carrying 13 men struck a landmine between the towns of Cacolo and Alto Chicapa.

"(The vehicle) set off a suspected antitank mine, leaving five people dead at the scene and eight seriously injured," said the interior ministry in a statement.

The wounded were rushed to the provincial hospital, 145 kilometres (90 miles) away from the explosion.

Driver Antonio Perreira said he was confused about how a landmine had remained hidden on a such a well-travelled route.

"Many cars drive along this road," Perreira said from his hospital bed. "I do not know how it happened. We set off the mine and a lot of people died."

Landmines in Angola have injured between 40,000 and 60,000 people, according to government estimates.

The last deadly blast recorded before Sunday's incident took place in the southern Cunene province, where five people were killed in October 2019.

Angola's landmines drew international attention in the late 1990s, after Britain's late Princess Diana famously walked across a cleared minefield near the central city of Huambo.

Diana's son Prince Harry returned to the area in September last year as part of an official visit to the region -- echoing his mother's calls for action.

But Angola's government has since complained about lack of funding for mine-clearing work and warned that meeting its 2025 target would be "difficult". —AFP

UAE launches multi-entry tourist visas for all

DUBAI (United Arab Emirates) — The United Arab Emirates on Monday introduced a multiple-entry visa scheme valid for five years for all nationalities, with the aim of turning the Gulf state into a tourism hub.

"#UAE Cabinet chaired by @HHShkMohd, approves new amendment for tourist visas in #UAE," the government of Dubai Media Office tweeted, referring to Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the UAE prime minister and ruler of Dubai.

"The new tourist visa will be valid for 5 years and can be used for multiple entries and is open for all nationalities," the Dubai Media Office wrote.

Sheikh Maktoum said on Twitter that the UAE currently attracts 21 million tourists a year.

Travellers from Africa, some South American countries, Arab states outside the Gulf, and European states from outside the European Union and former Soviet Union previously needed visas.

In October, Dubai is to host Expo 2020, a big-budget global trade fair. — AFP

7 JANUARY 2020
THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

An education system for society

"WE have to open more craft schools. We must encourage vocational skills and general handicraft skills. We must hold it in our minds to translate important books for the public and useful books for mass production. We must open a translation department. We must send scholars to study abroad."

"However, they must bring back practical skills that are applicable for rehabilitating the nation. They must choose the education that will serve their best interest in rebuilding our country. The selected students must possess comprehensive capabilities. They require job security when they return from abroad."

> Leaders with foresight know the ins and outs of national and public benefits and planning educational projects is laying the building blocks of the future.

These words were spoken by national hero Bogyoke Aung San at a rehabilitation conference on 7 June, 1947, and are excerpts from a speech he delivered then. These processes detail the importance of education in building a nation and the serious connotations to cultivating in education.

Not just an education system that churns out degree holders or professors but imparts practical skills to people to make them ready to meet demands. There is a need to nurture general industrial and handicraft technicians, medical experts, construction, hotels and travel, cooking, hospitality and many similar sectors. Especially in a time like the present where there is a greater need to address national development and assist it.

At the same time we need technicians, experts and people versed in modern technology to both meet the requirements of the nation and to take the country ahead and meet international standards. These criteria must me remembered when sending scholars abroad.

There is also the need for the opportunity to use the skills learned abroad and apply it upon returning to the nation. This calls for increased job opportunities and planning projects that address the requirements of the nation through responsibility. Such an education system would put forth policies that meet all these criteria.

Leaders with foresight know the ins and outs of national and public benefits and planning educational projects is laying the building blocks of the future.

Education is not an isolated field but one that requires consideration in the context of society. Especially when our nation is just developing, should we not prioritize people equipped with practical skills, vocational skills and general handicraft skills?

Focus on drought mitigation before relief

By Maung Lu Aye

MYANMAR had abundant water resources, holding 16 per cent of water resources among the ten ASEAN countries and 12 per cent of all Asia. However, with diversity in rainfall, increase in population and population density, the rise of industrial zones and economic zones and other changes to social systems means there would be a rapid increase in demands for water supply and new challenges for providing adequate water to every person.

There were still areas where the basic need for safe water was not fulfilled and unproper dumping of wastewater and chemicals into rivers and streams were still causing water pollution. Systematic water management processes need to be implemented to solve these issues and develop the water resource sector. This was one of the reasons behind forming the NWRC in 2013, which was reformed to accommodate ministry reforms in 2016.

A farmer waters onion plants at a field in Seikphyu Township. **PHOTO: SOE LIN NAING**

Meanwhile, Myanmar, which is no stranger to bad weather conditions, is also facing the climate-change induced extreme weather conditions that caused floods, droughts and higher temperatures for the last over 30 years.

Water shortages is common in some parts of Myanmar especially in the country's dry zone in central Myanmar.

Other water issues are pollution and lack of safe drinking water.

Climate change

The drought in early monsoon season of last year affected oil crop farmers in central Myanmar. The about one-month-long drought has spelt ruin for sesame farmers, and groundnut farmers in Magway. The drought also caused shortage of feedstuff for draught cattle and drinking water.

We should keep in mind that Myanmar is the world's second most vulnerable country to climate change, according to the Global Climate Risk Index prepared y research group Germanwatch. Studies have shown that the onset of monsoon is becoming more variable, increasing the risk of drought.

Meanwhile, scarcity of clean water in villages across the country has become common in the summer season, with lakes that once supplied drinking water running dry.

The worst has not yet come. Food security will be at risk if more rice-producing regions experience crop failure, and an energy crisis will be imminent if supply of water at hydropower plants falls short. The chain reaction set off by drought will continue further in the form of inflation as a result of declining rice production.

A farmer looks on as his cattle graze in a field in Mandalay. **PHOTO: AUNG THANT KHAING**

Now is the time for us to teach our farmers about drought tolerant farming techniques to ensure they produce more food and more profit with less water.

In fact, every region has every has different climate change impacts.

Not just Myanmar, the whole Southeast Asia region is faced with intensification and a changing geography of drought, and of disaster risk in Southeast Asia is faced with intensification and a changing geography of drought, and of disaster risk in general, as climate change converges with social, environmental and economic stresses.

Climate change has already happened. Now is the time to adapt instead of fighting it. To be able to adapt to these climate change challenges, policy make the right decisions.

To mitigate the impact, drought risk assessment and early-warning services should be improved through the sharing of data from space-based technologies.

Risk-financing instruments as well as improvement of people's awareness of the effects of drought are also needed.

Economic losses

According to a report jointly produced by ESCAP and ASEAN as part of their disaster-risk reduction efforts, Myanmar is among the regional countries facing the highest average annual loss in the agriculture sector due to climate change. Other countries which are facing the same fate are Cambodia, Laos, Viet Nam and the Philippines.

> According to a report jointly produced by ESCAP and ASEAN as part of their disaster-risk reduction efforts, Myanmar is among the regional countries facing the highest average annual loss in the agriculture sector due to climate change.

According to the Asia-Pacific Disaster Report 2019, annual economic losses in Asia Pacific more than quadruple when slow-onset disasters, most notably drought, are added to the region's disaster risk landscape.

The average annual loss for the region is $675 billion, of which $405 billion, or 60 per cent, is drought-related agricultural losses.

In Southeast Asia, the average annual loss is higher than the Asia-Pacific regional average, reaching $86.5 billion or 3 per cent of the regional GDP.

No Southeast Asian country can afford to ignore drought when trying to mitigate the economic impact of natural disasters, according to experts.

The significance of economic losses due to agricultural drought was consistent across all countries for which data is available.

Disasters continue to erode economic gains. Ultimately this means that disasters will limit the ability of economic growth to eradicate poverty.

Drought can have a devastating cumulative impact, striking hardest at the poor and heightening inequality and degrading land, all of which increases the prospects of conflict.

Managing the country's water resources was an intrinsic part of developing all of our countries and required everyone's participation in implementing the UN's Sustainable Development Goals to keep the endeavour ongoing.

The National Water Resources Committee of Myanmar was continually partnering with relevant ministries, partner countries, and international organizations to conduct observation programs and projects.

Regional cooperation included partnering with ASEAN, the Mekong River Commission, and the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation. Relevant ministries and city development committees were constructing more infrastructure for storing more water. They were conducting programs to reduce wasting water and to increase conservation.

We would like to request partner countries, local and foreign NGOs to continue their cooperation with the Union Government and relevant ministries to develop the water resource sector.

It is always more economical to prepare for something first than deal with its aftermath.

Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 7:00 pm Monday 6th January, 2020)

BAY INFERENCE: Weather is a few cloud over the Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL AFTERNOON OF THE 7th January, 2020: Rain or thundershowers will be isolated in Sagaing, Mandalay and Magway Regions, Kachin, Northern Shan and Chin States. Degree of certainty is (80%). 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: Slight decrease of night temperatures in Upper Sagaing Region and Kachin State.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 7th January, 2020: Partly cloudy.

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 7th January, 2020: Generally fair weather.

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 7th January, 2020: Likelihood of isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (60%).

Invitation to young writers for Sunday Special

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

HONG KONG (China) — Beijing’s new top envoy to Hong Kong said he hoped the protest ravaged city would “return to the right path” as he took up his post on Monday.

Luo Huining replaced Wang Zhimin as head of Beijing’s Liaison Office in Hong Kong -- the most significant personnel change by China since violent pro-democracy protests erupted in the city nearly seven months ago.

The 65-year-old Luo delivered a short statement to reporters in Mandarin — not the city’s lingua franca Cantonese.

He gave little clue as to whether Beijing’s approach towards the city would change as it convulses with popular anger against mainland rule.

“In the past six months, Hong Kong’s situation has made everybody’s heart wrench. Everyone earnestly hopes that Hong Kong can return to the right path,” Luo said, declining to take questions from reporters.

Beijing's new top envoy to Hong Kong Luo Huining gave little clue as to whether Beijing's approach towards the city would change as it convulses with popular anger against mainland rule. **PHOTO: AFP**

Millions have come out on the streets since June last year in a wave of protests sparked by opposition to a now-abandoned proposal to allow extraditions to mainland China.

But they soon morphed into wider demands for greater democratic freedoms and police accountability in the starkest challenge to Beijing since the former British colony was returned to Chinese rule in 1997.

While the huge protest marches have been largely peaceful, smaller groups of hardline protesters have repeatedly battled riot police with more than 6,500 arrested. Luo struck a conciliatory tone in saying Hong Kong had made an “important contribution to (China’s) opening up and modernisation”.

And in a brief reference to the political violence he quoted President Xi Jinping’s New Year speech saying “without a harmonious and stable environment, how can there be a home where people can live and work happily”.

The Liaison Office, whose director is the highest-ranking Chinese political official in Hong Kong, was targeted in July by protesters throwing eggs and graffitiing the building.

Luo previously served as governor of Qinghai province, and was also appointed to senior Communist Party positions in Qinghai and Shanxi provinces, according to state-run China Daily. — AFP ■

‘She smelled expensive’ - Naomi Osaka reveals Beyonce pep talk

Tennis player Naomi Osaka opened up on her meeting with Beyonce and Jay-Z. **PHOTO: AFP**

BRISBANE (Australia) — Japanese sensation Naomi Osaka has revealed her excitement at meeting her idol Beyonce, saying the US singer “smelled expensive” and gave her a morale-boosting pep talk at a low point last year.

The two-time Grand Slam champion, who will be defending her Australian Open title this month, bumped into Beyonce and her husband Jay-Z while still “depressed” after losing in the fourth round at the US Open.

“I met Beyonce and Jay-Z during the off-season. She just smelled expensive and beautiful and she was soft and she hugged me,” Osaka told the WTA website. “I was like, this is what heaven is.”

The meeting came in the aftermath of Osaka’s defeat at Flushing Meadow to Belinda Bencic, which ended her first Grand Slam title defence.

“She was talking to me and she said she was proud of me. I thought, wow, that actually was a really important moment,” said the 22-year-old, who stunned Serena Williams in the 2018 US Open final.

“I felt really depressed after I lost my match, but I’m thinking about the impact that tennis players — I don’t think we know, I don’t think we’re aware of all the good that we can do.

“That was kind of an eye-opening thing. Even though it was one of my worst points, to lose — I wanted to be a defending champion and I lost early — there’s still something really good that came out of that.

“There are some things that I have to remember are out of my control, especially past events. So I just have to put myself in a position to not regret anything.”

Osaka hired a new coach in the off-season, Wim Fissette, having split with Jermaine Jenkins following the US Open, and said she was raring to go after her 2019 season was abruptly cut short by injury at the WTA Finals in Shenzhen.

She is set to play her first match of the year at the Brisbane International against Maria Sakkari on Tuesday. “I just feel like for me having positive energy and having a clean mental slate is really important, so that’s what I did this entire off-season,” she said. “I mean, I trained, but I wasn’t super pressed on anything. That’s just something I had to learn throughout the entire year.— AFP ■

Ex-TV reporter appeals against ruling in Japan #MeToo case

TOKYO — A former television reporter appealed on Monday a civil court ruling ordering him to pay damages to Japanese #MeToo symbol and journalist Shiori Ito in a high-profile rape case.

Noriyuki Yamaguchi, a former Washington bureau chief for Tokyo Broadcasting System Television Inc. and biographer of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, has denied Ito’s allegation that he had sexual intercourse with her without her consent at a Tokyo hotel in 2015 while she was in a state of intoxication and unconscious.

The Tokyo District Court last month ordered Yamaguchi, 53, to pay 3.3 million yen ($30,500) in damages to the 30-year-old Ito.

The court rejected a counter-lawsuit filed by Yamaguchi seeking 130 million yen in compensation from Ito. He claimed his social reputation has been damaged by her remarks.

Japanese journalist Shiori Ito speaks at the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan in Tokyo on 19 December 2019. **PHOTO: KYODO NEWS**

Ito filed a criminal complaint with police, but prosecutors dropped the case in 2016.

She later filed a complaint with the Committee for the Inquest of Prosecution, but it also judged in 2017 that the prosecutors’ decision was appropriate. — Kyodo News ■

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Crude and gold extend gains, stocks sink on fear of US-Iran war

LONDON (United Kingdom) — Oil prices jumped, gold hit a 6.5-year high and most equities tumbled Monday after the US assassination last week of a top Iranian general continued to fuel fears of a major conflict in the Middle East, dealers said.

The leaders of Germany, France and Britain have agreed to work towards bringing about de-escalation in the Middle East amid heightened tensions following the US drone strike that killed Qasem Soleimani.

US President Donald Trump has however warned of a "major retaliation" against Tehran after it threatened revenge for Friday's killing of the Iranian commander, which sparked a sell-off in stocks and a spike in crude.

Oil extended those gains on Monday and gold shone brightly to touch $1,588.13 per ounce — a level last seen in April 2013 — as investors flocked to the safe-haven precious metal.

Asian and European stock markets meanwhile continued to tank, having wobbled before the weekend as the assassination news flashed across traders' screens.

'Middle Eastern tensions'

"Today's ... losses extend the stock market weakness that began on Friday when a US airstrike killed Iran's top Military Commander Qasem Soleimani," said London Capital Group analyst Jasper Lawler.

"The prospect of Iran avenging the killing of Soleimani and then a retaliation from the US is keeping de-escalation hopes at bay.

"We would expect the impact of these Middle Eastern tensions to be more durable in commodities markets than in equities."

Iran announced on Sunday a further rollback of its commitments to its nuclear accord, while Iraq's parliament demanded the departure of US troops from the country as fallout from the attack spread.

The crisis has jolted investors, who had been in an upbeat mood as China and the US prepare to sign their mini trade deal next week, while data indicates a slight improvement in the global economy.

Donald Trump has dialled up the pressure after last week's assassination, warning Iran of a 'major retaliation' if it tries to get revenge. **PHOTO: AFP**

Both main crude contracts rallied, with Brent topping $70 for the first time since September when attacks on two Saudi Arabian facilities briefly halved output by the world's top producer.

While facing criticism for the action and calls to dial down the tension, the US president was in a combative mood, saying the White House had dozens of sites lined up for strikes in case of retaliation by Iran — adding that he did not need Congressional approval, even for a "disproportionate" hit.

"Geopolitical tensions look like remaining elevated in coming days, so lending support to oil prices and keeping risk asset markets on the defensive," said Ray Attrill at National Australia Bank.

Haven assets popular in times of turmoil were also on the rise, with the Japanese yen also at a three-month high against the dollar.

Energy firms boosted

Equity markets tracked losses on Wall Street, where the three main indexes fell from record highs Friday, while all seven bourses in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states finished sharply down, with some fearing Iranian revenge attacks on US assets or troops.

Some of the GCC members, including Kuwait, Qatar and Bahrain, are home to major US military bases, while there are also hundreds of troops in Saudi Arabia.

While markets were broadly lower, energy firms rallied on the back of higher crude prices which tend to lift their profits and revenues.

Inpex jumped more than four percent in Tokyo while in Hong Kong, PetroChina added four percent and CNOOC surged 3.6 per cent.

Back in London, BP jumped 1.7 per cent in value and Royal Dutch Shell 'A' shares added 1.1 per cent.— AFP ■

German auto output hits 22-year low in 2019: industry group

FRANKFURT AM MAIN (Germany) — Carmakers built just 4.7 million cars in Germany in 2019, industry data showed Monday, squeezing production to its lowest level since 1997 as US-China trade tensions sapped vital foreign markets.

The powerful VDA carmakers' club said output had tumbled nine percent year-on-year, blaming "weaker international demand" for the fall.

The lower appetite from abroad comes on top of demanding technological change and tighter emissions restrictions complicating life for carmakers — long a pillar of Europe's largest economy.

With consumer spending buttressing the domestic market even as economic growth slowed, new registrations of cars on German roads booked an increase of five percent, at 3.6 million.

But auto exports from Germany to the rest of the world fell even more sharply than production, tumbling 13 per cent to 3.5 million.

"The fall in car production means Germany continues to lose significance in the global auto industry," said Ferdinand Dudenhoeffer of the Center Automotive Research.

Around the world, car markets have been battered by the effects of the American trade conflict with China.

Last year saw carmakers complain that falling global demand is eating into their business just as massive investments are needed in research and development.

Companies are pumping cash into high-tech projects like automated driving, and switching focus to hybrid or all-electric vehicles from internal combustion engines as they race to meet new emissions limits. And structural factors threatening the auto firms' pride of place in the German economy are also at work.

Where in 1998 close to 12 percent of all cars sold worldwide were produced in Europe's powerhouse, the share has shrunk to below six percent in 2019, Dudenhoeffer said.

Meanwhile electric motors require less manpower to assemble than their hydrocarbon-burning predecessors, threatening some of the roughly 800,000 car industry jobs in Germany. — AFP

Japan lawmaker admits accepting money in casino scandal

NAHA (Japan) — Japanese lawmaker Mikio Shimoji reversed course Monday and admitted that his office received 1 million yen ($9,250) for 2017 general election campaigning from a Chinese gambling operator linked to a casino bribery scandal.

Speaking at a press conference in the Okinawa prefectural capital Naha, Shimoji, 58, said he would consider whether to resign from the Japan Innovation Party, while the party's leader said he should quit as a lawmaker.

The scandal came to light after lawmaker Tsukasa Akimoto, 48, proponent of the introduction of casino resorts, was arrested in December on suspicion of receiving 3.7 million yen in bribes from 500.com Ltd. in 2017.

Japan recently legalized casinos, with the government planning to choose up to three locations for what it calls "integrated resorts" -- complexes that include casinos along with hotels and conference facilities. They are expected to start operating in mid-2020s.

Shimoji had been questioned by prosecutors after Katsunori Nakazato, 47, who served as an adviser to the company, told investigators he had delivered around 1 million yen each to five lawmakers around September 2017, when he handed 3 million yen in cash to Akimoto, a source close to the matter said earlier.

File photo shows Mikio Shimoji. **PHOTO: KYODO NEWS**

The Tokyo District Public Prosecutors Office is investigating if the lawmakers or their secretaries received money in violation of the political funds control law, which bans donations from foreigners or foreign organizations.

Shimoji previously told Kyodo News that he had never received money from the company. The other lawmakers, including former Defense Minister Takeshi Iwaya, 62, have denied the allegations.

Shimoji admitted that an employee at his office in Naha accepted an envelope with 1 million yen around October 15, 2017, from Masahiko Konno, another adviser to the company.

The money was not declared in campaign or political funds and expenditure reports. Shimoji said, "It is something that I extremely regret." "This was a violation of the political funds control law and he should resign," Ichiro Matsui, who heads the Japan Innovation Party, told reporters in Osaka.

Shimoji, who belonged to a cross-party group of lawmakers promoting integrated resort projects, said he never tried to persuade any government agency to favor the Chinese company.

He also said he will return the money to Konno. — Kyodo News ■

Bosch unveils smart virtual sun visor for cars at tech show

LAS VEGAS (United States) — Bosch Sunday unveiled a virtual visor inspired by LCD televisions which uses AI to block the glare of the sun from a driver's eyes, a major cause of road accidents.

The Virtual Visor uses algorithms and a camera to analyze what the driver is seeing through its liquid crystal display and darkens the section through which the sunlight is hitting their eyes, the German engineering giant said at the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas.

The rest of the display remains transparent, blocking the sun without obscuring a large section of the driver's field of vision.

"You could be driving right toward the sun and you would still be able to see adequately," said Jason Zink, one of the engineers on the project, as the company unveiled the product at the show that hosts around 4,500 exhibitors pitching designs to 175,000 attendees searching for innovations of the future.

Bosch cited studies including one from the US National Highway Traffic Safety Administration indicating sun glare is responsible for thousands of accidents each year.

Another study indicated the risk of a car crash is 16 percent higher when the sun is shining brightly. Bosch said traditional sun visors were inadequate because they blocked a large area from the field of vision to remove glare. "We discovered early in the development that users adjust their traditional sun visors to always cast a shadow on their own eyes," said Zink.

Ryan Todd, another Bosch engineer, said he thought of the idea "while driving east to work one morning" and thinking about television sets which control the brightness of LCD technology.

A Bosch spokesman said the company was in "active discussions" on commercializing the new visor but offered no details. —AFP ■

Bosch's Ryan Todd demonstrates the virtual sun visor which uses artificial intelligence to selectively block the glare of the sun without obscuring the driver's view of the road. **PHOTO: AFP**

Insufficient home care is biggest challenge for patients after release from hospital: Study

WASHINGTON DC (USA) — According to recent research, Patients and caregivers from diverse backgrounds across Ontario consistently prioritized insufficient publicly-funded home care services as the gap in the health system that most needed to be addressed to improve their experience going home from the hospital.

The research was published in the journal BMJ Quality and Safety. It focused on understanding patient and caregiver priorities for improvement during the hospital-to-home transition and is based on input from over 700 participants over the course of 11 months in 2018. The top three gaps in the system identified by patients and caregivers all related to home care services. Patients and caregivers reported not enough home care to meet the need, that home care support was not in place when patients arrived home from the hospital, and that they had to advocate for themselves to get enough home care. Other priorities related to being involved in discharge planning and once home, having a number to call if there was a problem.

"The transition from hospital to home is a tricky time for patients and caregivers, and if the appropriate supports are not in place, patients are at risk of experiencing poor outcomes," said Dr. Tara Kiran, principal investigator of the study, who is also a family physician and an associate scientist with St. Michael's MAP Centre for Urban Health Solutions.

The study was designed to inform the development of a quality standard for the province related to the transition from hospital to home. The work was done in consultation with a community advisory group that included patients and caregivers, as well as representatives from health service and community organizations.

The improvement priorities were consistent across multiple-subgroups in Ontario, including both patients and caregivers, males and females, rural and urban residents, pediatric and adult patients, as well as patients discharged to long-term care and elsewhere in the community.

"The engagement of patients and caregivers across the province over the course of this study was extensive," said Dr. Kiran. "The findings are entirely based on the lived experiences and priorities of Ontario patients and caregivers, including groups we sometimes don't hear from. It's telling that patients and caregivers from such diverse backgrounds all wanted to see more publicly-funded home care"

Dr. Kiran said she hopes this work and the related quality standard can help guide Ontario Health Teams as they choose where to focus their improvement efforts. "Patients and caregivers need to be involved in discharge planning, they need to know who to call when they run into trouble when they get back home, and most importantly, they need sufficient and timely home care supports." —ANI ■

Chile President Sebastian Pinera. **PHOTO: AFP**

Chile president launches health care reform project

SANTIAGO (Chile) — Chile's President Sebastian Pinera launched on Sunday a reform project to create a "universal health plan" following months of protests against social inequality and his leadership.

"This plan is based on what the people have asked us for," said Pinera as he presented the project.

A poor public health system and sky-high private costs were among the main gripes of demonstrators.

Congress sat on Sunday to deal with a number of projects as part of Pinera's "social calendar" aimed at appeasing protesters.

The new health plan would benefit the 14.5 million people who rely on public services as well as the three million using private care.

Congress has tried to rush through social projects to help defuse the protest movement that began on October 18, initially as a reaction to a modest metro fare hike.

Twenty-nine people have died during the worst social unrest to hit Chile since the Augusto Pinochet dictatorship ended 30 years ago.

One of Pinera's main policy changes has been to enact a law allowing the South American country to hold a referendum on changing the Pinochet-era constitution.

His new health plan will include "a guaranteed maximum waiting time (and) a drop in the price of medicines," as well as other changes, Pinera said.

He said the government would subsidize "the 200 main" medicines used for chronic conditions such as hypertension and diabetes, resulting in a 60 per cent reduction in costs.—AFP ■

Chinese doctors perform robot-assisted brain angiography

BEIJING — A team of Chinese doctors have successfully conducted the country's first robot-assisted brain angiography in a Beijing hospital, Science and Technology Daily reported Monday.

The doctors accurately performed a brain angiography surgery on a female patient by remotely commanding "Luban," China's self-developed minimally-invasive vascular interventional surgery robot.

Angiography is an X-ray examining technique that injects contrast media into arteries to dynamically reveal the condition of major blood vessels in the brain, usually exposing medical staff to radiation throughout the surgery. A surgery robot could protect medical staff from radiation risks.

Developed by researchers from the Beijing Tiantan Hospital and Beijing Institute of Technology, the surgery robot will soon be applied in clinical practice, which will ease the shortage of high-quality medical resources in minimally-invasive interventional treatments. With the development of 5G technology, Luban will be able to perform trans-regional surgeries in the future, according to Li Youxiang from Beijing Tiantan Hospital, one of the researchers. — Xinhua

US film director Quentin Tarantino (c), poses with cast and crew of "Once Upon A Time... In Hollywood" including actors Brad Pitt (next to Tarantino) and Leonardo DiCaprio, after the film won three Golden Globes. **PHOTO: AFP**

War film '1917' stuns Golden Globes as Tarantino bags most prizes

LOS ANGELES (United States) — War epic "1917" shocked the Golden Globes on Sunday by claiming the top prize for best drama film, while Quentin Tarantino's "Once Upon a Time... in Hollywood" won the most honors, massively boosting their prospects for next month's Oscars.

"Once Upon a Time..." — an homage to 1960s Tinseltown — won three prizes including best comedy, but Martin Scorsese's much-vaunted Netflix crime saga "The Irishman" went home empty-handed.

The Globes are the first major awards gala of the year, in a packed season that ends with the Academy Awards in just over a month's time, so Sunday's winners will hope to capitalize on some much-needed momentum.

"1917" follows two British soldiers through the trenches in World War I, and is filmed to look like one continuous, two-hour-long shot.

"Goodness me, that is a big surprise," said stunned filmmaker Sam Mendes, who bested Scorsese and Tarantino in the crowded best director category.

Dedicating the film to his grandfather who signed up to fight aged just 17, Mendes added: "I hope he's looking down on us and I fervently hope it never happens again." The film's lead actor George MacKay — a 27-year-old relative unknown in Hollywood — told AFP he was "just thrilled, proper thrilled" when the announcement was made.

"It's a wonderful thing. It's truly just so brilliant for the film and everyone involved. It's the biggest team effort ever."

Tarantino won the best screenplay award, and Brad Pitt took home best supporting actor honors for his role as a loyal stuntman to Leonardo DiCaprio's character in "Once Upon a Time..." "I also have to thank my partner in crime, LDC," said Pitt. "I wouldn't be here without you, man... I would have shared the raft, though," he added, referring to the closing scene of "Titanic."

Phoenix, Zellweger win big

"Rocketman," the Elton John musical biopic, was the other big winner on the night, scooping best actor for TaronEgerton and best original song for John, who was heavily involved in the movie.

"I'm overjoyed -- it's incredible," Egerton told AFP. "It's been the best experience of my life, and winning this is just such a lovely crystallization of all of that."

The top films clearly resonated with the 90-odd members of the Hollywood Foreign Press Association (HFPA), which doles out the prizes, but frontrunners in the acting categories also made their mark.

Joaquin Phoenix cemented his Oscar favorite status by winning the best drama actor prize for his radical turn in "Joker," a dark and controversial take on the comic book super-villain.

He thanked director Todd Phillips, saying: "You convinced me to do this movie and you encouraged me to give everything and to be sincere. And I'm such a pain in the ass."

Like several A-listers, Phoenix also used his speech to address climate change and the Australian wildfires.

Renee Zellweger burnished her Oscar credentials with an expected win for biopic "Judy," portraying Judy Garland in her later years.

South Korean black comedy "Parasite" bagged the award for best foreign language film, as widely expected, while Awkwafina became the first actress of Asian descent to win the best comedy actress prize for "The Farewell."

Oscar nominations voting is already under way, but does not close until Tuesday — meaning the Globes results could be a factor.—AFP ■

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Fire-hit Australia gets $1.4bn recovery fund as troops deployed

SYDNEY (Australia) — Reserve troops fanned out across fire-ravaged regions in three Australian states on Monday after a horror weekend, as the government pledged $1.4 billion over two years to help recover from the devastating months-long crisis.

Catastrophic bushfires have turned swathes of land into smouldering, blackened hellscapes and destroyed an area about the size of the island of Ireland, according to official figures, with authorities warning the disaster still has weeks or months to run.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison, whose government has been criticised for its slow response to the emergency, pledged Aus$2 billion ($1.4 billion) of taxpayer money for a national recovery fund.

"It's a long road ahead and we will be with these communities every step of the way as they rebuild," Morrison said.

Firefighters joined by fresh teams from the US and Canada were taking advantage of rainy and cooler conditions to tackle out-of-control blazes ahead of rising temperatures forecast later this week.

In the biggest-ever call up of reserves, military teams were deployed across eastern Australia to help emergency services assess the damage, restore power and deliver supplies of food, water and fuel to cut-off communities.

For the first time in Australian history the government also deployed its medical assistance team — normally sent to other nations to lend support in the aftermath of their disasters — to help evacuees. "There is no room for complacency, especially as we have over 130 fires burning across (New South Wales) state still," Premier of New South Wales state Gladys Berejiklian said on Monday.—AFP ■

A dog sits amongst ash from bushfires washed up on a beach in Merimbula, in Australia's New South Wales state on 5 January 2020. **PHOTO: AFP**

More than Aus$25 mn raised as Australia reels from bushfire fury

EDEN (Australia)— A global appeal to help Australian firefighters tackling catastrophic bushfires raised more than Aus$25 million on Monday, as swaths of the country suffered extensive damage and the death toll from the long-running crisis hit 24.

East coast seaside towns were plunged into darkness, ash rained down on rural communities and major cities were again cloaked in choking smoke, even as stunned Australians tried to regroup amid a wave of cooler air and light rain.

The weekend marked some of the worst days in the country's deadly bushfire crisis, with hundreds more properties destroyed and the overall death toll climbing to 24, including a man who died Saturday trying to save a friend's home.

Comedian Celeste Barber used her international social media fame to launch a Facebook fundraiser for firefighters that had surpassed its Aus$25 million ($17 million) target in just three days with donations from all over the globe. American pop star Pink said she would donate US$500,000 to the firefighters, a donation matched by Australian actress Nicole Kidman.—AFP ■

Former Nissan boss Carlos Ghosn escaped while awaiting trial in Japan on multiple counts of financial misconduct. **PHOTO: AFP**

Ghosn 'fled by bullet train', Japan vows to bolster borders

TOKYO (Japan) — New reports emerged Monday on how fugitive former Nissan boss Carlos Ghosn jumped bail in Japan, as the country's justice minister said border controls would be bolstered after the escape.

The 65-year-old executive skipped bail nearly a week ago, fleeing Japan where he was awaiting trial on multiple counts of financial misconduct that he denies.

The details of his escape remain spotty, with Japan saying it is still investigating how he slipped past strict security measures imposed as part of his bail conditions.

Citing sources close to the investigation, public broadcaster NHK said Monday that Ghosn left his residence by himself on the afternoon of December 29 and met two men at a Tokyo hotel.

The three then boarded a "shinkansen" bullet train together from Tokyo's Shinagawa station to a station in western Osaka, arriving around 7:30 pm.

The trio then checked in at a hotel near Kansai Airport, but only the two men accompanying Ghosn were caught on security camera leaving the hotel later in the evening, NHK said.

They were carrying "two big boxes" which were not checked by customs staff at the airport, the report added. Ghosn is believed to have taken a private jet from the airport that evening, bound for Istanbul, where he switched planes and continued to Beirut.

But many details of his departure from Japan are still shrouded in mystery.

'Wrongful methods'

The justice ministry said it did not have records of Ghosn departing Japan.

"It is believed that he used some wrongful methods to illegally leave the country," Justice Minister Masako Mori said at a press conference on Monday.

"I have instructed the immigration agency to further tighten the departure process," she added.

The Wall Street Journal has reported that Ghosn was loaded onto the flight from Osaka in a large case for audio equipment, which was later found at the back of the cabin.

The newspaper cited unnamed sources close to the investigation in Turkey as saying that holes had been drilled into the bottom of the container to ensure the businessman could breathe.

Japan's transport ministry told AFP that luggage checks are not mandatory for private jets.

"Operators of private jets decide if luggage checks are necessary or not while airline operators are obliged to conduct security checks under Japan's aviation law," a ministry official told AFP.

"The security checks are carried out to prevent danger such as bombs, and to prevent hijacks," he said, adding such risks are considered less likely for private jets.

Ghosn, who has French, Brazilian and Lebanese nationalities, was able to enter Lebanon on a French passport, according to airport documents seen by AFP.

A court in Tokyo had allowed Ghosn to keep a second French passport as he needed one to travel inside Japan, a source close to the matter has told AFP. —AFP ■

Modi extends New Year greetings to Singapore Min, review bilateral relations

NEW DELHI (India) — Prime Minister NarendraModi on Monday extended New Year greetings to Singapore Minister for Social Policies TharmanShanmugaratnam and expressed satisfaction over the rapid pace of intensifying bilateral ties between the two sides.

In the meeting, the sides also discussed several matters of mutual interest in the sphere of economic cooperation, including infrastructure, skills, India-Singapore Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA), and digital economy. Shanmugaratnam lauded the Prime Minister's leadership in social transformation of India and in encouraging digital economy.

The Prime Minister, on his part, expressed his desire to strengthen further cooperation between India and Singapore in the areas of infrastructure, tourism, digital payment systems, innovation and governance.

Modi also extended greetings Singapore Prime Minister Lee HsienLoong through the visiting dignitary. —ANI ■

Delhi Police arrests 5, including 2 Bangladeshi nationals, for Seemapuri violence

NEW DELHI (India) — The Special Investigation Team (SIT) of Delhi Police Crime Branch has arrested five persons, including two Bangladeshi nationals, in connection with the Seemapuri violence which unfolded during a protest against the Citizenship Amendment Act.

A Delhi Court has sent the five men to 14-day judicial custody. Apart from the five arrested, two juveniles have also been detained and sent to the Juvenile Justice Board, police said.

The accused have been identified as Ghaziabad resident Mohammad Shoiab (19), Pilibhit resident Mohammad Amir (24), Seemapuri resident Yusuf (40), besides the two Bangladeshi nationals Mohammad Azad and Mohammad Subhan.

During the hearing, Police informed the court that all the available CCTV footages were scanned and analysed, however, he CCTV footages were blurry and the faces of rioters were not visible.

The latest technology available with the experts was used to enhance the CCTV footages and based upon the enhanced quality of the footages, the five accused were identified and arrested.

Initially, Delhi Police reviewed the criminal records of around 24 serial offenders to ascertain their involvement in the Seemapuri violence.

Several people have also been arrested in connection with the violence that erupted in Seemapuri, Seelampur, Daryaganj and Jamia Nagar area of the city. Protests have also erupted in various states across the country against the law.—ANI ■

Death toll in Jakarta floods rises to 67

JAKARTA — The death toll in the worst flooding to hit Indonesia's capital and surrounding areas in over a decade has reached 67, the government's disaster agency said Monday.

National Disaster Mitigation Agency spokesman AgusWibowo said almost 36,500 people have been displaced and that one person remains missing.

"People are advised to remain vigilant due to the potential for more heavy rainfall this week," he said.

Jakarta and its suburbs were hit by unusually heavy rain between Tuesday and Wednesday last week.

According to the meteorological agency, the flooding was mainly caused by the high rainfall, the heaviest in the capital since records began in 1866. However, a lack of water-catchment areas, as well as ground subsidence and narrower rivers also contributed to the disaster, it said. —Kyodo News ■

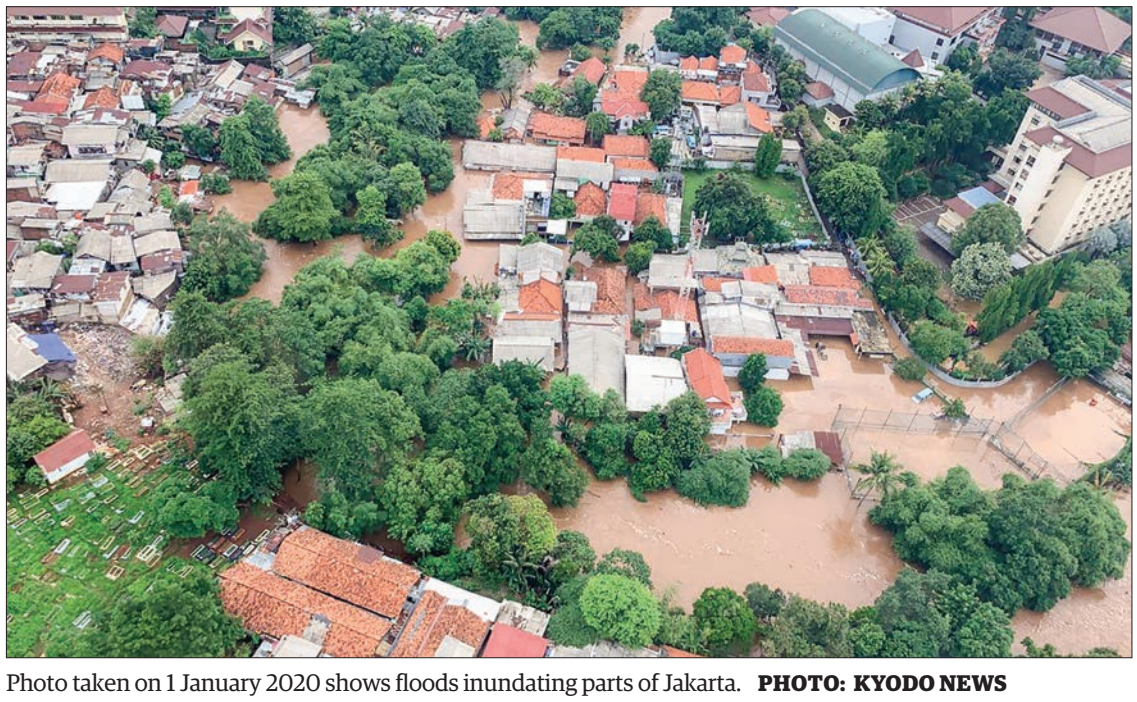

Photo taken on 1 January 2020 shows floods inundating parts of Jakarta. **PHOTO: KYODO NEWS**

Huge crowds in Iran mourn general killed by US drone

TEHRAN (Iran) — A sea of black-clad Iranians on Monday mourned the top commander killed in last week's US drone strike that inflamed tensions across the Middle East, as NATO was set to discuss the spiralling crisis.

Iranians clutching "Down with USA" signs and portraits of their hero QasemSoleimani massed as supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei presided over prayers for the slain head of the Revolutionary Guards' Quds Force.

The targeted killing of 62-year-old Soleimani ordered by US President Donald Trump saw the Islamic republic vow "severe revenge" before Tehran also took a further step back from the already tattered 2015 nuclear accord with world powers.

In an escalating war of words that has heightened international concern and rattled financial markets, Trump threatened yet more "major retaliation" if Tehran hits back, including strikes on Iranian cultural sites.

Iraq's parliament meanwhile demanded the government expel the 5,200 American troops stationed in the country in response to the Baghdad drone attack which also killed top Iraqi military figure Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis.

Iranian mourners carry a picture of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei (r) granting the highest military honour of Iran to General QasemSoleimani. **PHOTO: AFP**

Trump has warned that a forced departure of US troops would prompt sanctions against Iraq that would "make Iranian sanctions look somewhat tame".

NATO ambassadors were to hold an extraordinary meeting at Brussels headquarters to "address the situation in the region," said an official of the alliance, which has been forced to suspend its training mission in Iraq.

'Crucial to de-escalate'

Germany, France and Britain urged Iran to refrain from taking "further violent actions or support for them", or from steps that further weaken the 2015 nuclear deal.

"It is crucial now to de-escalate," German Chancellor Angela Merkel, French President Emmanuel Macron and British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said in a joint statement Sunday.

"We call on all the players involved to show utmost restraint and responsibility."

The nuclear deal had offered Tehran relief from sanctions in return for curbs to prevent it acquiring nuclear weapons — but Trump's withdrawal from it in 2018 dramatically weakened the agreement.

Despite its latest nuclear step back on Sunday, Iran insisted it will continue to fully cooperate with the UN agency overseeing its atomic programme.

The European leaders also pleaded with all parties to not jeopardise the ongoing battle against the Islamic State jihadist group, which has lost its self-proclaimed "caliphate" but whose militants remain active.

Amid the geopolitical tensions in the oil-rich region, crude prices surged and most equities tumbled while the safe-haven commodity gold hit a more than six-year high in early trading Monday.— AFP ■

Guaido and rival both claim to be Venezuela's parliament speaker

CARACAS (Venezuela) — Opposition leader Juan Guaido and a rival lawmaker, Luis Parra, both claimed to be Venezuela's parliament speaker on Sunday following two separate votes and accusations of a "parliamentary coup."

Guaido was re-elected speaker by opposition lawmakers in a session held at a newspaper office after police blocked him from entering the National Assembly legislature.

In his absence, corruption-tainted Parra proclaimed himself speaker after claiming to have been elected with 81 votes in the 167-member chamber.

Guaido, who a year ago declared himself acting president in a challenge to socialist leader Nicolas Maduro, received the votes of around 100 lawmakers, including several forced last year into exile or to take shelter in foreign diplomatic missions due to a regime crackdown.

Guaido vowed to "enforce" the constitution in his dual role as parliament speaker and "acting president."

Venezuelan opposition leader and self-proclaimed acting president Juan Guaido is pushed back by police with riot shields as he tries access the National Assembly compound. **PHOTO: AFP**

But in a televised address, President Maduro gave his backing to Parra as the new speaker, adding that "Guaido was kicked out of the National Assembly by the votes of his own opposition."

Venezuela's opposition denounced Parra's move as a "parliamentary coup." Guaido and around a dozen lawmakers had been prevented from entering the assembly by police claiming to be carrying out a security operation, but deputies from Maduro's party and opposition ones that have rejected Guaido were allowed in.

Guaido, 36, attempted to climb over the railing around the National Assembly premises to gain entry, only to be pushed back by police with riot shields.

Images of Parra declaring himself head of the chamber by megaphone were shown on state television channel VTV. After spending four hours outside parliament, Guaido and allied lawmakers went to the offices of El Nacional newspaper where they held their own session. — AFP ■

Mongolia extends winter vacation of schools in capital due to flu

ULAN BATOR — The Mongolian government on Monday decided to extend winter vacation at all general educational schools in the country's capital by a week due to the prevalence of flu and other respiratory diseases.

"The incidence rate of flu and flu-like illnesses is now up 4 per cent in Ulan Bator compared to the same period last year. The Health Ministry concluded the illnesses might persist when school starts," the country's Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Sports said in a statement.

"That is why the government decided to extend the winter vacation," it said.

Schools in Ulan Bator would now reopen on 20 January, instead of 13 January, according to the ministry.

The winter vacation of the schools across Mongolia started on 23 December. Ulan Bator, the world's coldest capital in winter, suffers one of the world's heaviest levels of air pollution. The city is also home to nearly half of the country's child population, whose lung functions are poorer than those from rural areas. — Xinhua ■

Hospice fire kills 4, injures 22 in Poland

WARSAW — At least four people were killed and nearly two dozen others injured in a fire at a hospice in Poland on Monday, officials said.

"Four people — a woman and three men — were killed. Another 22 people are in various hospitals," Poland's State Fire Service said. The fire broke out at a hospice in the northern Polish city of Chojnice around 3 am local time (0200 GMT), a spokesman for the fire brigade said. When the fire started, staff members and 23 patients were in the building. All the victims were patients. The fire has been put out and rescuers are still working at the scene.— Xinhua

Ayeyawady United sign defender Thiha Htet Aung for half a season

THE Ayeyawady United F.C., as part of their preparation for the 2020 Myanmar National League, have signed defender Thiha Htet Aung for half a season, according to a statement issued yesterday by the football club.

The 23-year old footballer is a native of Sagaing Region and played on the Myanmar national U-16 team in 2011. He also took part in the semifinal of the AFC U-19 Championship hosted by Myanmar.

Thiha Htet Aung was an important player on the U-20 national team in the 2015 FIFA U-20 World Cup in New Zealand.

The defender has also played on the U-23 national team. He played for Yangon United F.C. in 2017 and then Chin United F.C.

He then moved to Zwekapin United F.C. in 2018 before signing with the Ayeyawady United F.C.

After signing the contract, the player said, "I'm very grateful to the head coach and the club owner as they have given me an opportunity. I will try my best. I want to be a champion with Ayeyawady United."

Born on 13 March, 1996, Thiha Htet Aung plays center back, and has also played in the striker position with the Zeyar Shwe Myay. — Kyaw Khin

Defender Thiha Htet Aung. **PHOTO: MNL**

De Villiers wins Dakar second stage, Alonso loses wheel

Toyota Gazoo Racing's driver Fernando Alonso (2nd L) of Spain speaks with staff members at the end of the Stage 2 of the Dakar 2020 between Al Wajh and Neom, Saudi Arabia, on 6 January 2020. **PHOTO: AFP**

NEOM (Saudi Arabia) _ South African driver Giniel De Villiers won the second stage of the Dakar Rally on Monday while former Formula One world champion Fernando Alonso was "glad to be able to continue" after dropping two-and-a-half hours when losing a wheel.

Alonso suffered his first major problem in his maiden Dakar appearance when he ground to a halt when his near front wheel "completely ripped off".

"He said sorry to us, I think he knew it was his fault," Toyota Overdrive boss Jean-Marc Fortin said.

"He had the necessary (equipment) to repair it but he first had to find the wheel because it had careered off into the distance," Fortin reported.

"When they found it, it wasn't round but oval."

The 38-year-old Spaniard had downplayed his prospects of creating history by becoming the first F1 world champion to win the Dakar in the run up to Sunday's start of the 42nd edition. And realistically his chances now of reaching the podium look remote after just two days of the gruelling 7,500 kilometre desert odyssey.

When he finally made it across the finish line Alonso cut a relaxed figure, despite the wheel drama which he put down to being blinded by dust thrown up by cars ahead of him.

"When you come on the Dakar you come for all the hazards it entails, today was one of them. I'm glad to be here and to be able to continue the rally," said the 2005 and 2006 F1 champion.

His Toyota teammate De Villiers, who lost 23 minutes when he finished 14th in Sunday's opening stage, bounced back strongly over the 401 kilometre-route, of which 367km were a special between Al-Wajh and Neom.

Many drivers had navigational problems and De Villiers took advantage of a mistake by long time stage leader Yazeed Al-Rajhi to guide his Toyota home in 3hrs 37mins 20secs.

The 47-year-old crossed the line 3mins 57secs ahead of Orlando Terranova who now heads the overall standings in his Mini.

The Argentinian, who was sixth in the opening stage, is almost five minutes ahead of fellow Mini driver Carlos Sainz.

Defending champion Nasser Al-Attiyah came in fifth on stage two and is six minutes off the lead while 13-time champion Stephane Peterhansel already trails by 13 minutes after a problem with his car's steering column.

On the motorcycles, Ross Branch won his first stage on the Dakar after a perfectly controlled day's riding.

The Botswanan finished 1min 24secs ahead of 2017 winner Sam Sunderland who now leads the bikes category, 1min 18secs ahead of Pablo Quintanilla. On Tuesday, the rally heads out on a 489 km round trip which starts and ends in Neom. —AFP

Solskjaer plans taking shape at Man Utd, says Guardiola

LONDON (United Kingdom) — Pep Guardiola says Manchester United are starting to play the way Ole Gunnar Solskjaer wants them to as he prepares for a blockbuster League Cup semi-final between the two sides.

City head to Old Trafford for the first leg of the last-four encounter on Tuesday, having won the competition for the past two seasons.

Guardiola's side are third in the Premier League, 13 points ahead of fifth-placed United, but lost 2-1 to their rivals last month as Solskjaer's men produced an exhilarating display of counter-attacking football at the Etihad Stadium.

Asked what he had learned from that defeat, the Spaniard added: "How fast they are. How they run on the counter-attack. How solid, how aggressive.

"We conceded a few counter-attacks and in just two or three seconds they were in the box." Speaking about Solskjaer, he said: "I think he is starting to see his team like he wants. The last (league) game against Arsenal they lost, but you see clearly what he wants.

"It was not easy to handle a team at a big, big club, always demanding to be champions in all competitions, but I think every manager needs time.

"I have the feeling United have started to play the way he wants."

With the Premier League title apparently heading to Anfield, Guardiola is forced to focus on the cup competitions after winning a domestic treble last year.

"A third semi-final in a row. It is not the best competition in the world but it is nice to be here again and against our city opponents," said the City boss.

Guardiola will have Nicolas Otamendi available again after an injury but has not yet settled on a starting XI.—AFP

Manchester United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer (left) and Manchester City boss Pep Guardiola. **PHOTO: AFP**