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THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

Vol. VI, No. 266, 14th Waxing of Pyatho 1381 ME www.globalnewlightofmyanmar.com Wednesday, 8 January 2020

State Counsellor receives Ghanaian Ambassador

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi meets with Ambassador of the Republic of Ghana Ms Akua Sekyiwa Ahenkora in Nay Pyi Taw, on 7 January 2020. **PHOTO: MNA**

DAW Aung San Suu Kyi, State Counsellor and Union Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, received Ms Akua Sekyiwa Ahenkora, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Ghana to the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nay Pyi Taw, on 7 January 2020.

During the meeting, they cordially exchanged views on matters relating to promoting bilateral relations, expanding bilateral cooperation including trade and investment, people-to-people exchanges, education, and vocational training between Myanmar and Ghana.—MNA

3,491 jade lots worth K59 bln, 9 gem lots worth K36 mln sold

A SIX-DAY gems and jade sale in the local currency concluded yesterday in Nay Pyi Taw, fetching over K17 billion from the sale of 1,141 jade lots.

"We were satisfied with the sales under the open tender system. The floor price was set at K1 million, but the sale of jade lots saw a high price, like the sale in euros," said Ko Yan Aung, a gems merchant.

In the evening, officials from the Myanma Gems Enterprise held a press conference.

More than 2,000 gems merchants attended the sale.

A total of 3,695 jade lots and 286 gems lots were put on sale.

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Foreign Heads of State send felicitation to President U Win Myint

From Mrs. Bidya Devi Bhandari
President of Nepal
Excellency,

On the happy occasion of 72nd Independence Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, I extend to Your Excellency cordial felicitations and best wishes for Your Excellency's personal health and happiness and for the progress and prosperity of the people of Myanmar.

From Recep Tayyip Erdoğan
President of the Republic of Turkey
Excellency,

On behalf of my nation and on my own behalf, I would like to congratulate Your Excellency with my heartfelt wishes on the occasion of the Independence Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

I believe that the relations between Turkey and Myanmar will develop further in the period ahead. In this regard, I would like to underline that Turkey will continue to support Myanmar's efforts to strengthen its democracy, advance its national harmony and enhance the well-being of its people.

I avail myself of this opportunity to reiterate my best wishes for Your Excellency's well-being and happiness as well as for the welfare of the people of Myanmar.

■

Foreign Heads of State send felicitation to State Counsellor

From K.P. Sharma Oli
Prime Minister of Nepal
Excellency,

On the happy occasion of 72nd Independence Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, on behalf of the Government and people of Nepal, and on my own, I extend to Your Excellency, and through you to the people of Myanmar, my sincere congratulations.

I wish Your Excellency's good health and happiness as well as progress and prosperity of the people of Myanmar.

I am confident that the friendly relations existing between our two countries will grow further in the years ahead.

From Imran Khan
Islamic Republic of Pakistan
Excellency,

On behalf of the people and Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and my own behalf, I have the honour to convey to Your Excellency, the Government and people of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, our heartfelt greetings and warm congratulations on the auspicious occasion of Independence Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

Pakistan values its relations with Myanmar and both countries have a long history of friendship and cooperation. I am confident that the existing ties between Pakistan and Myanmar will further grow in the days ahead.

I avail myself of this opportunity to express my best wishes for Your Excellency's good health and for the continued progress and prosperity of the people of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

Please accept Excellency the assurances of my highest consideration.

576th donation ceremony held at Shwedagon Pagoda

SHWEDAGON Pagoda's Board of Trustee conducted the 576th ceremony at the pray hall of ancient Buddha images near the southern stairway of Yangon's landmark pagoda yesterday.

At the ceremony, 72 well-wishers donated 97 gold plates, and others contributed cash for 15,733 paving slabs, together with 38 cash donors.

The total amount of donations at the ceremony valued over K494 million.

The Trustee Board's rotating chair and members returned certificates of honours to the donors.

After the donations, the well-wishers and Trustee Board members took Five Precepts from Trustee Board Ovadacariya Agga Maha Pandita Agga Maha Ganthavacaka Pandita, Yangon Region, Bahan Township Nyaungdon Pali Takkatho Monastery Sayadaw Bhaddanta Pawara Bhivamsa, shared merit, listened to a sermon and concluded the ceremony. —MNA

(Translated by TTN)

Donor family hands over cash donations to a member of Shwedagon Pagoda's Board of Trustees. **PHOTO: MNA**

Standard operating procedures discussed to assist victims of trafficking

Deputy Minister U Soe Aung and attendees pose for a documentary photo at the coordination meeting to finalize a national-level standard operating procedure to reaccept, reintegrate and rehabilitate victims of trafficking yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

THE Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement organized a coordination meeting yesterday to finalize a national-level standard operating procedure to reaccept, reintegrate and rehabilitate victims of trafficking.

The meeting at the Mingalar Thiri Hotel in Nay Pyi Taw was chaired by Deputy Minister U Soe Aung and emphasized requirements for coordination of relevant ministries and organizations in assisting trafficked persons.

The ministry has headed the works in reaccepting, reintegrating and rehabilitating victims of trafficking overseas since 1992.

The Deputy Minister added the standard operating procedures should follow existing laws and ministerial rules and procedures, as well as the 2019 Child Rights Law, with the participations of State/Region governments and international experts.

The IOM (Myanmar) is providing technical assistance for standard operating procedures.—MNA

(Translated by Aung Khin)

Union Ministers discuss sustainable tourism industry in Taninthayi Region

Union Ministers U Thaung Tun and U Ohn Maung attend the meeting on sustainable tourism industry in Taninthayi Region at the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism. **PHOTO: MNA**

UNION Minister for Investments and Foreign Economic Relations U Thaung Tun and Union Minister for Hotels and Tourism U Ohn Maung attended a meeting on sustainable tourism industry in Taninthayi Region.

The meeting held at the Sapphire Hall of Hotels and Tourism Ministry in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday was also attended by Taninthayi Region Chief Minister U Myint Maung, Deputy Minister for Hotels and Tourism U Tin Latt and officials. At the meeting, Union Minister U Ohn Maung said as there are many pleasant islands off the coast of Taninthayi Region, and that the investors of tourism industry are to avoid possible damages of these natural resources. He also called for promoting traditional cultures of local Salon people in the area.

Union Minister U Thaung Tun also discussed conservation of natural heritages such as coral reefs, biodiversity and marine lives, together with socially responsible investing based on desire, knowledge and skills not to damage the environment.

He also advised to develop master plans for the trips to islands and for Myeik Archipelago, with reviewing the existing development projects.

The Chief Minister of Taninthayi Region briefed on development programmes in the region and employments for local people and pearl-breeding projects.

The Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment Conservation explained the works of their ministry.

The meeting also discussed construction of only one hotel on each island and systematic conservation plans for the tourism industry of the region.—MNA

(Translated by Aung Khin)

Coordination meeting held to organize 73rd Union Day

THE Management Committee for Organizing 73rd Union Day held the second coordination meeting at the meeting hall of Nay Pyi Taw Development Committee yesterday morning.

Mayor Dr Myo Aung, the Chairman of Management Committee and Nay Pyi Taw Council, clarified principles and instructions of the Central Committee for the event.

Colonel Min Naung, the Secretary of Management Committee, updated the officials on the works in cooperation with the Central Committee and sub-committees.

The Mayor concluded the meeting with discussions on the reports of respective committees.—MNA

(Translated by Aung Khin)

Management Committee Chairman Dr Myo Aung delivers the speech at the the second coordination meeting for organizing 73rd Union Day in Nay Pyi Taw. **PHOTO: MNA**

Correction

Please read the headline of the story on Page 2 of the 7th January issue of *the Global New Light of the Myanmar* as "Issuing identity documents for minorities discussed in Mogok" . The GNLM regrets it.—Ed

Union Ministers hold discussion on high education affairs

Union Minister for Education Dr Myo Thein Gyi addresses the meeting concerning higher education at the Ministry of Education in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

Union Minister for Education Dr Myo Thein Gyi held a meeting at his office in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday on the matters related to higher education.

At the meeting, the Union Minister discussed the KG+12 basic education system from 2016 to 2022 and preparations for developing university curricula that are compatible with this system.

He also suggested implementing digital technology at the universities, conducting four-year teacher training courses beginning December this year, post-graduation courses, diploma courses, teaching-learning methods, research works, anti-narcotic campaigns and generating qualified teachers. Union Minister for Health and Sports Dr Myint Htwe made suggestions on importance of education for the development of country, supports to state-owned and private universities, research development of universities, improving exam systems and effective use of libraries by the students. Chairman of National Education Policy Commission, Dr Myo Kywal discussed higher education affairs, followed by presentations of rectors on academic and administrative affairs at their respective institutions.

The discussions were also taken part by the Union Attorney General, the Deputy Minister for Planning, Finance and Industry and the officials.—MNA

(Translated by Aung Khin)

Chinese CCTV to make Myanmar cultural documentary programme

CREW of China Central Television (CCTV) are shooting the scenes of significant places in Yangon, Mandalay and ancient cultural city Bagan beginning 5 January.

The documentary programme is to mark the 70th anniversary of diplomatic establishment between Myanmar and China.

They filmed Shwedagon, Sule and Botahtaung pagodas, Yangon City Hall and Independence Monument in Maha Bandula Park on 5 January before they take the scenes in Hotel Zone (1) of Nay Pyi Taw in the following day.

The programme for CCTV will also include ancient cultural temples and pagodas in Bagan, Mt Popa, Mandalay Palace and Mandalay Hill.— Aung Naing Oo (FDC)

(Translated by Aung Khin)

China Central Television (CCTV) crew shoot the scenes of downtown Yangon near Sule Pagoda on 5 January. **PHOTO: MNA**

Children's Literary Festival organized in delta township Labutta

An opening ceremony of Children's Literary Festival held at No.2 Basic Education High School in Labutta Township yesterday. **PHOTO: LABUTTA IPRD**

THE Ayeyawady Region Government is organizing the two-day Children's Literary Festival in Labutta Township.

The opening ceremony of the festival at No.2 Basic Education High School yesterday was attended by Chief Minister U Hla Moe Aung, Regional High Court Chief Judge U Than Tun, Minister for Agriculture, Livestock, Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation U Tin Aung Win, Minister for Development Affairs U Kyaw Myint, Head of Regional General Administration Department U Than Swe Win, officials, Hluttaw MPs, outstanding students and town elders to cut the ceremonial ribbon.

The session of opening ceremony was started with the speech of Chief Minister U Hla Moe Aung, asking for developing decent citizens of new generations for the country.

The booths of education, outstanding natives, Myanmar Police Force, Red Cross Society, Government Technology Institute, Township Development Committee are shown at the festival, together with literary and artistic performances of the children.— Labutta IPRD

(Translated by Aung Khin)

3,491 jade lots worth K59 bln, 9 gem lots worth K36 mln sold

FROM PAGE-1

During the six-day sale, a total of 3,491 jade lots, worth over K59 billion, and nine gems lots, worth over K36 million, were sold.

Jade lot no. 1469, weighing 580 kg, fetched the highest price of K580 million at the January sale.—MNA

Myanma Gems Enterprise officials hold a press conference in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

Jade merchants viewing jade lots at the Gems Emporium in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: KYAW ZIN HTIKE**

Local gold prices bounce back on strong global cues; exceed K1.2 mln

By Nyein Nyein

Gold jewellery displayed at a shop in Yangon. **PHOTO: PHOE KHWAR**

WITH gold prices increasing in the global market, the price of the yellow metal in the domestic market has risen again to above K1.2 million per tical (0.578 ounces, or 0.016 kilograms) in the domestic market, according to gold traders.

On the afternoon of 7 January, pure gold fetched K1,218,000 per tical in the domestic market, while the price of gold was pegged at US$1,569 per ounce in the global market, as per market data.

The domestic gold price is positively related to the global gold price, which is currently experiencing some volatility. Global gold prices were pegged at over $1,477 per ounce on 21 December and two weeks later, they climbed to $1,569 per ounce, registering an increase of more than $90.

Despite a strong global gold market, the US dollar is weakening against the local currency. The US dollar exchange rate stood at K1,505 on 21 December and it has extended its drop to K1,473, registering a decline of K30, according to the gold market.

With global gold prices on the uptick, the domestic price hit fresh highs last year, reaching K1,000,000 per tical between 17 January and 21 February, crossing K1,100,000 (22 June to 7 August), climbing to 1,200,000 (7 August-4 September), and then reaching a fresh peak of K1,300,000 on 5 September.

According to gold traders, the lowest price for gold in June, 2019 was K1,223,800 (14 September) and the highest was K1,307,000 (5 September). In October, the gold price touched the lowest level of K1,211,500 on 1 October and the highest level of K1,229,000 on 10 October. In November, the price moved in the range of 1,219,400 (2 November) and K1,173,000 (28 November), and last month, it reached the lowest level of K1,170,800 (3 December) and the highest level of K1,197,800 (28 December), according to gold traders.

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Trade at Muse up $554.7 mln as of 27 Dec

THE value of Sino-Myanmar border trade through the Muse gate jumped to US$1.47 billion between 1 October and 27 December in the current financial year, an increase of $554.7 million compared to the corresponding period of the previous fiscal, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

Exports through the Muse gate rose considerably to $1 billion, while imports were valued at $461 million. Both exports and imports have climbed over the past two months of the current fiscal.

Muse is an important border gate in Myanmar and handles the largest volume of trade. But at times, it has experienced a sharp drop in trade on account of China clamping down on illegal goods, resulting in a halt in trade of agricultural products.

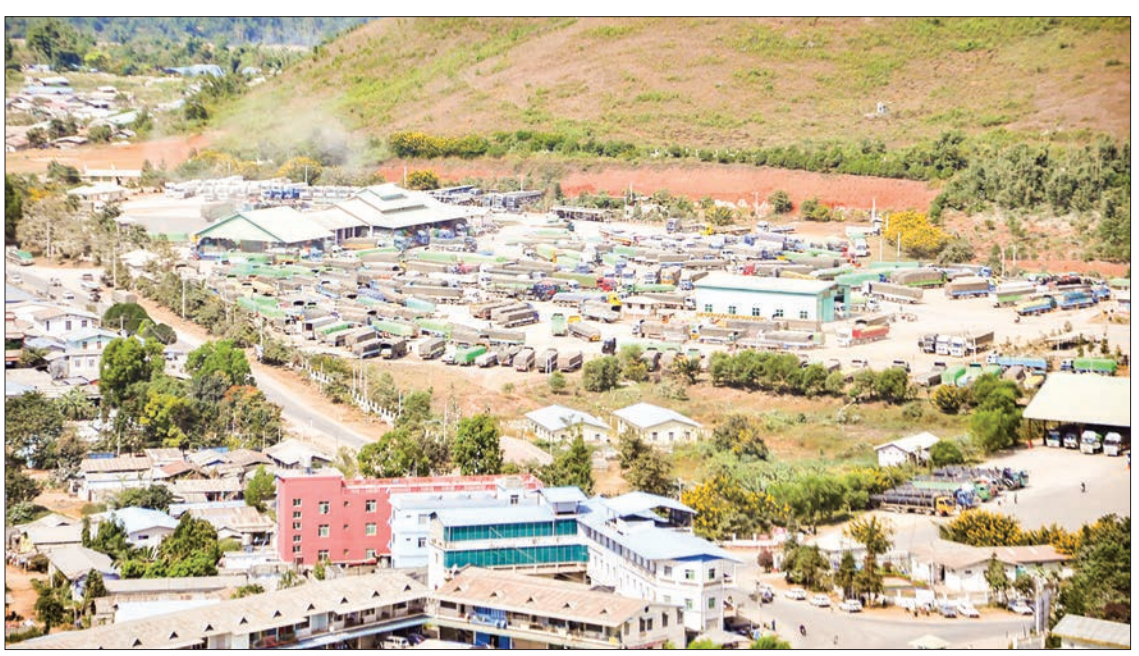
Myanmar merchants find it difficult to export goods to China through the legitimate channels as they find the tax levied by the neighboring country too high. Therefore, rice confiscation and price manipulation often occur in border trade.

To resolve this, Myanmar needs to convert the government-to-government (G2G) agreement into a sustainable pact, according to trade bodies. Myanmar requires G2G or business-to-business (B2B) agreements for the trade of pulses and beans, corn, sesame, fish, and shrimp, to grab a share of the Chinese market, they said.

The government and the private sector also need to move forward through public private partnerships (PPP), according to the Myanmar Rice Federation.

Myanmar exports rice, sugar, pulses, sesame seeds, corn, dried tea leaves, fishery products, minerals, and animal products to China, while it imports agricultural machinery, electrical appliances, iron and steel-related materials, raw industrial goods, and consumer goods from the neighboring country. — GNLM

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)



Truks seen at 105-mile trade zone Muse, northern Shan State. **PHOTO : PHOE KHWAR**

New quick access loans to drive business growth for agents, merchants: KBZPay

KBZPay has launched Quick Access Loan, a new short-term financing product, to help its agents and merchants improve their cash flow so they can better serve customers and grow their businesses.

With the aim of driving financial inclusion, Quick Access Loans have been made available to all KBZPay Partners, who can access instant credit of K300,000 without collateral, guarantors, or application fees. There is further potential for KBZPay Partners to increase their credit limit up to K2,500,000, according to KBZPay.

The loan applications would be processed at KBZ Bank branches and would take a few minutes, according to KBZPay. Using the Quick Access Loan function in the KBZPay Partner App, successful applicants will be able to drawdown funds from the line of credit according to their requirements.

Since the pilot launch of the Quick Access Loan feature in May, 2019, close to 2,917 KBZPay agents and merchants have received loans totaling K1.66 billion, according to KBZPay. As a result, they have seen their revenues grow due to the increase in KBZPay transactions they were able to facilitate for customers. KBZPay agents and merchants are increasing their revenues as they earn a fee for facilitating phone top-ups, domestic remittances, along with cash in and cash out transactions.

"Many of our 270,000 KBZPay agents and merchants across Myanmar run businesses which need short-term financing that is quickly available. With our Quick Access Loan function, we offer our partners a 'financial cushion' for growth and working capital management. We are seeing an increase in KBZPay agents and merchants applying for Quick Access Loans, and we hope to help thousands of our partners to run their businesses smoothly and to serve their customers in the best possible way. As they increase their KBZPay transaction volumes, our partners not only earn more transaction fees, but they also become eligible to borrow larger amounts so they can scale their growth. After all, the success of our partners' businesses is also our success," said U Soe Ko Ko, head of agent banking, KBZPay.—GNLM

(Translated by Hay Mar)

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Printed and published at the **Global New Light of Myanmar Printing Factory** at No.150, Nga Htat Kyee Pagoda Road, Bahan Township, Yangon, by the **Global New Light of Myanmar Daily** under Printing Permit No. 00510 and Publishing Permit No. 00629.

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Ayeyawady dolphin found dead in Mandalay

Dolphin Conservationists carry the carcass of the dead dolphin. **PHOTO: AUNG THANT KHAING**

THE carcass of Ayeyawady dolphin, an endangered species, was found yesterday floating in the Ayeyawady River in Madaya Township of Mandalay Region.

The dolphin was the biggest one to be found dead in the river, said U Kyaw Hla Thein, a dolphin conservationist with the Wildlife Conservation Society.

The dolphin measured over 7 feet in length and was aged between 30 and 50, according to conservationists.

"We checked its stomach. There are no suspects for its death. The dolphin is believed to have died of old age," said U Kyaw Hla Thein.

The conservationists found and inspected the carcass after travellers from a watercraft informed them about a dolphin floating in the river.

The carcass was buried near the beach. Its skeleton will be displayed at the dolphin museum.

This was the first dolphin death recorded in 2020.

A survey conducted in 2019 had recorded 26 dolphins between the Mandalay-Kyaukmyaing Conservation Area and about 76 dolphins between Mandalay and Bhamo. —Aung Thant Khaing

(Translated by TTN)

Over 150,000 tourists visited Sagaing, Monywa, Yinmabin Townships in 2019

A total of 150,231 foreign travellers visited places of tourist interest in Sagaing, Monywa, Yinmabin, and Wetlet townships in 2019, said U Aung Thu Oo, head of Sagaing Region's Directorate of Hotels and Tourism.

Tourists travelled to Sagaing Region this year to see its well-known destinations, beautiful scenery, and the diverse range of cultures and traditions of local tribes in the townships.

"The number of tourists visiting the significant places in those townships has increased because we have upgraded some places and things of tourist interest to ensure a peaceful visit. The tourists visited those places through the local tour services companies. There are many significant places in the region. Tourists visiting those places can create jobs for local people. We also plan to create more tourist destinations," said U Aung Thu Oo.

Of the total number of tourists who visited Sagaing, Monywa, Yinmabin, and Wetlet townships in 2019, 135,376 tourists visited Mingun in Sagaing township, 4,820 tourists visited the Mohnyin Sambuddhe pagoda in Monywa township, 7,242 tourists went to Phowintaung, 2,410 tourists paid a visit to Shwebataung in Yinmabin township, 258 tourists headed to the Hanlin ancient city in Wetlet township, and 125 tourists visited Shwebo Nandawgyi in Shwebo Town.—Win Oo (Zayyartine)

(Translated by Hay Mar)

Padaung Township forest reserve to extract about 4,000 tons of teak in current fiscal

ABOUt 4,000 tons of teak will be extracted from the Rakhine Yoma forest reserve, Padaung Township, Pyay District, Bago Region in the 2019-2020 financial year.

"We are logging teak systematically. We don't log every tree without any discrimination whatsoever. We are logging with the permission of the Forest Department. We are logging the trees by viewing forest points. To cover the logging of trees, we will plant trees at the same time," said an official from Padaung Township involved in timber extraction.

"In accordance with negotiations with the Myanma Timber Enterprise this year, we plan to produce 4,000 tons of hardwood. We have informed we will mark 3,334 trees. We will mark trees at the No 47 and No 48 farms in the Buyoe forest reserve this year. We marked trees on the No 47 farm and the trees were logged as targeted. So, we left No 48 for timber extraction," said an official from the Padaung Township Forest Department.

Timber extraction was resumed from this year with the help 100 labourers, 43 logging elephants, six vehicles from the forest department, six hired vehicles, four logging vehicles, three bulldozers, and one grader. Although timber extraction was stopped in the 2016-2017FY, about 5,000 tons of teak were produced in the 2018-2019FY. This year, only 4,000 tons of teak will be produced, said officials. —Myat Thu

(Translated by Hay Mar)

Write for us

We appreciate your feedback and contributions. If you have any comments or would like to submit editorials, analyses or reports please email **ce@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com** with your name and title.

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.

4th coordination meeting held for drafting NCRPD annual report

THE annual report writing team of the National Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities held its fourth coordination meeting yesterday at the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement in Nay Pyi Taw.

Speaking at the meeting, U Aung Hla Tun, the Deputy Minister for Information, in his capacity as the chairman of the annual report writing committee, said the team, in previous meetings, deliberated on the size of the book and the deadline for the release of the report.

Deputy Minister for Information U Aung Hla Tun delivers the speech at the meeting for drafting annual report of National Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (NCRPD) in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

He added that the team also decided to release the report in Myanmar language first and in English later.

The team held its first meeting on 9 October, 2019, the second meeting on 8 November, and the third on 28 November.

The deputy minister said the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, the focal ministry responsible for drafting the report, has to check facts and figures forwarded by ministries, regional and state governments, and organizations. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Information will take the responsibility for the editorial section and the layout design, and check the protocol in the book.

Afterwards, Member of the Annual Report Producing Committee Director General of the Rehabilitation Department U Win Naing Tun reported on progress of implementation of decisions made at the third meeting, information, facts and figures collected for the annual report and tasks to be carried out in collaboration with other ministries.

Departmental officials who were also attending the meeting took part in the discussion and gave suggestions for producing the annual report.

The meeting came to an end with concluding remarks by Deputy Minister U Aung Hla Tun.— MNA

(Translated by Tun Tun Naing)

Portuguese team films cultural heritage sites in Yangon

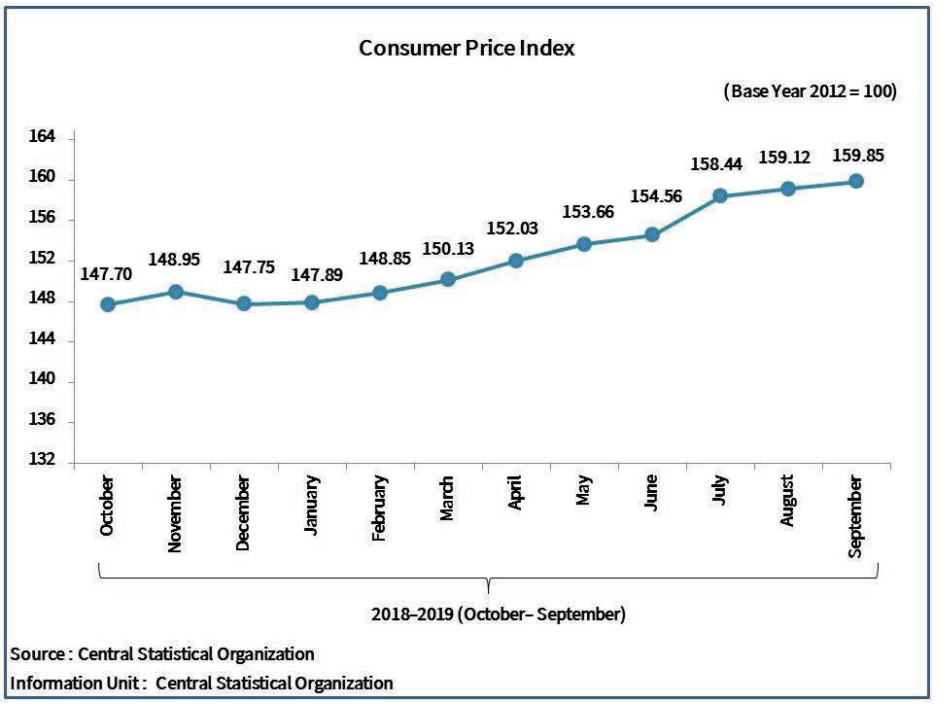
PORTUGAL-BASED Vende-se Films shot scenes in Yangon, including at cultural heritage buildings, and also captured the traditional culture of Myanmar from 4 to 6 January for a documentary film.

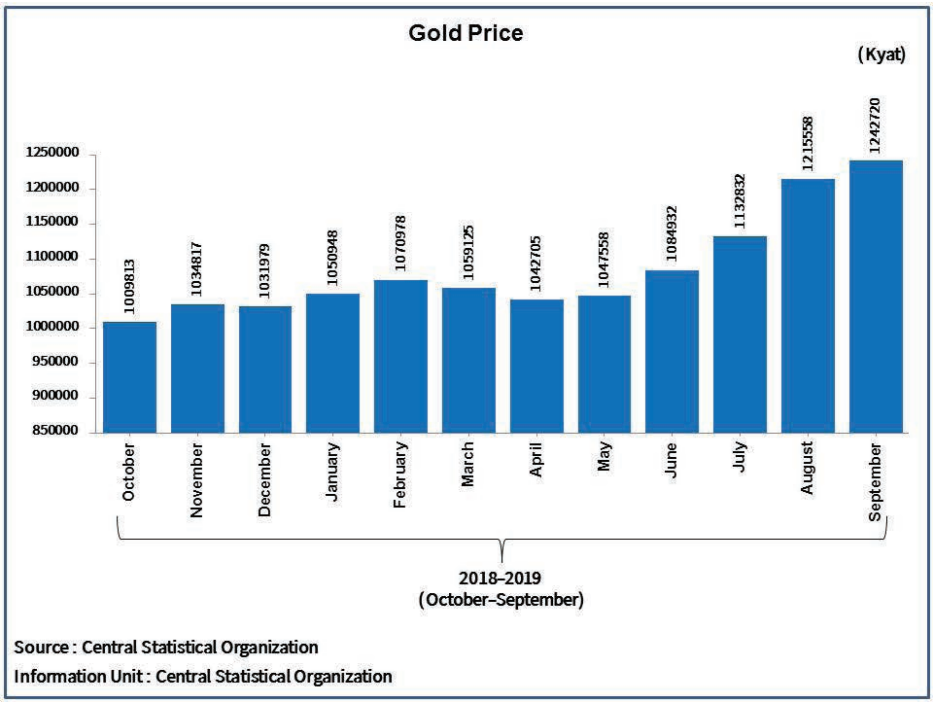
The team captured people participating in sports events held to mark the Independence Day, water transportation in the Yangon River, the Yangon-Dala Jetty, colonial buildings on Pansodan Road, the daily life of the people along the circular rail road, and Myanmar traditional performance at the Karaweik Palace Hotel.

The documentary will be released under the title The Journey. —Tin San (FDC)

(Translated by Kyaw Zin Tun)

Portuguese film crew shoot children participating sports game to mark the Independence Day. **PHOTO: TIN SAN (FDC)**





8 JANUARY 2020
THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

We must act now to protect our forests

WITHIN the 20-year period from 1994 to 2014, the country has lost millions of tons of hardwood due to illegal logging.

The Myanma Timber Enterprise suspended timber export from 2014 to 2016.

In Bago Yoma, which has witnessed the worst rates of deforestation in Myanmar, timber extraction has been suspended for a 10-year period to prevent deforestation.

Media reports have covered the seizure of illegally extracted timber from the country's forests nationwide. This shows that illegal timber extraction still continues in the country.

> The situation shows that there are loopholes though the Myanmar authorities have enforced forest conservation rules and regulations.

According to information released by the Timber Enterprise, about 165,511 tons of timber was seized in 45 months from 2016 to November, 2019, and 23,610 culprits, including 59 foreigners, were arrested. Over 11,000 pieces of machinery were also confiscated during the same period. From October to November last year, over 4,430 tons of timber was seized along with 357 pieces of machinery, and 560 culprits were arrested. More than 20,000 tons out of the total 120,000 tons of timber seized was teak.

According to the reports, most illegal timber extraction areas are in Kayah State and Sagaing Region.

Meanwhile, a foreign media report stated that the Dutch authorities seized teak, which is widely used in luxury yachts, this month. The wood, originating from Myanmar, was sent to the Czech Republic from where it was funneled to the Netherlands.

The European Union controls imports of Myanmar teak tightly because of concerns about illegal extraction and overexploitation of natural forests.

In the past five years, several European companies have been taken to court for importing Myanmar teak without conducting due diligence.

The situation shows that there are loopholes though the Myanmar authorities have enforced forest conservation rules and regulations.

According to the Global Forest Watch Report, we lost 3.38 million hectares (more than 13,000 square miles) of tree cover between 2011 and 2018. In the past five years, almost all of the tree cover loss has occurred within natural forests, the data shows.

The Bago mountain range in south-central Myanmar is known as the "home of teak", but it has, over the years, emerged as a hub for illegal logging. A study covering four reserved forests in the region found that forest area declined by over 40 per cent between 2000 and 2017. Despite a 10-year logging ban in place since 2016, local reports suggest illegal timber extraction continues.

To prevent deforestation and illegal timber extraction, we need to adopt a zero-tolerance approach to smuggling and officers indulging in malpractice and turning a blind eye to unlawful logging.

■ ■ ■

Adopt zero tolerance approach towards poaching and wildlife trade to save the tigers

By Nat Ye Hla

MYANMAR is one of the 13 countries where tigers can be found, which is a matter of pride for the nation. About 7 per cent of Myanmar's total area, or over 12 million acres, serves as a habitat for at least 22 tigers.

Each tiger brings pride and dignity to Myanmar. There are two tiger species in the country: Indian (or Bengal) tigers, and Indo-China tigers. The Htamanthi Wildlife Sanctuary serves as a natural habitat for Indian (or Bengal) tigers.

A team comprising of researchers from the Southeast Asia Biodiversity Research Institute under the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS-SEABRI) and the Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation of Myanmar made a joint field biodiversity survey in northern Myanmar, according to news reports of the CGTN.

The team captured footage of Bengal tigers for the first time since the joint scientific endeavour began five years ago. The report said the scientists also took pictures of large predators like black bears and sun bears, as well as large-and medium-sized mammals including Asian elephants, red deer, and Indian bisons.

Findings of the survey confirmed the Htamanthi Wildlife Sanctuary to be one of the few habitats in Southeast Asia that are home to a large number of big cats.

Now, tigers can be spotted in the northern and upper Chindwin area and the Taninthayi mountain range in southern Myanmar.

Myanmar, which has a rich variety of habitats and ecosystems, including 14 terrestrial eco-regions supporting 233 globally threatened species, has seen more cases involving the trade of elephant parts than other wildlife.

During the survey, collected more than 3,300 specimens of plants and animals during the month-long project in the Htamanthi Wildlife Sanctuary in Myanmar's Sagaing Region.

The photo released by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation (MNREC) at the World Tiger Day in Nay Pyi Taw last year. **PHOTO: SUPPLIED**

The survey, together with eight previous similar field expeditions, has led to the discovery of a total of 53 new species.

The data collected during the survey are valuable references for biodiversity conservation in Myanmar.

At least 22 tigers remain in Myanmar, according a recent survey. The survey covered 8 percent of the tiger habitat in the country.

In accordance with the Conservation of Biodiversity and Protected Areas Law promulgated in May 2018, tigers, along with elephants, leopards and Eld's deer, were included in the list of totally protected species.

Within the 20-year period from 1994 to 2014, the country has lost millions of tons of hardwood due to illegal logging, as well as rare wildlife, such as elephants, bears, tigers, leopards, peacocks, and snakes, on account of poaching.

To save the tigers, we need to adopt a zero tolerance approach towards poaching and wildlife trade — a multi-million dollar industry fuelled by the demand for meat, skin, medicines, and other tiger products.. The number of valuable species in the country is witnessing a rapid decline. If this downward trend continues unchecked, some of our iconic national treasures — elephants, tigers, bears, pangolins, and birds — will become extinct.

■ ■ ■

Act now to end sexually transmitted infections

By Dr Poonam Khetrapal Singh

Action is needed to end sexually transmitted infections as a major public health problem. All stakeholders must refocus attention, resources and energy

THERE are two things everyone should know about sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

First, almost all STIs can be prevented through ready access to and use of a highly effective technology – condoms. The four most common STIs – chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis and trichomonas vaginalis – can be cured by antibiotics.

Second, STIs don't always show symptoms, despite the health impacts they can have. Untreated gonorrhea and chlamydia can cause infertility. Syphilis in a pregnant woman can cause fetal and neonatal illness and death. Human papillomavirus (HPV) can cause cervical cancer.

Dr Poonam Khetrapal Singh.

The key takeaways are simple. When access to appropriate products and services is provided, they are greatly empowering: Practice safe sex, get tested and, where necessary, use effective treatment.

By working to ensure all people can access the products and services needed to prevent, detect and treat STIs, Member States of the WHO South-East Asia Region have made significant progress against them.

In the mid-90s the Region accounted for more than a third of all new STI infections globally. By 2012 it accounted for an estimated 11%. In 2016 Thailand eliminated mother-to-child transmission of syphilis and HIV. In 2019 Maldives and Sri Lanka achieved the same. From Bangladesh to Indonesia and on to Myanmar, the Region's Member States have rolled out innovative policies to tackle STIs. India in particular has made significant inroads against them, with strong success at the sub-national level.

The Region's battle against STIs continues. New challenges have emerged. As a recent WHO report outlines, several gaps and constraints – including inattention and a lack of resources – are undermining STI control and causing STIs to increase in specific areas and among specific communities. This cannot continue. As health authorities and donors increasingly promote HIV services, as they should, it is imperative that STIs are given the attention, resources and energy required to sustain and accelerate the Region's advances and promote health for all.

Our goals are clear. By 2030 we must reduce the incidence of syphilis and gonorrhea by 90% based on 2018 levels. Congenital syphilis should amount to no more than 50 cases per 100 000 live births. All countries should achieve and sustain 90% coverage of the HPV vaccine. To make the necessary progress, which will help end STIs as a major public health problem, several areas should be of focus.

To start with, STI control should be repositioned as a public health priority. Resources, staffing and planning should be allocated independent of HIV programmes. Public awareness, engagement and participation should be promoted. The common ground and potential synergies in STI and HIV control efforts should be better grasped and, where appropriate, programmes should be integrated. A clear line should be drawn from where each country is to where they need to be.

To help do that, we must share and learn from Member State successes. All countries in the Region have implemented successful policies aimed at a range of outcomes, from eliminating mother-to-child transmission of syphilis and HIV to increasing STI testing among key populations. Each country has much to offer. Together we must leverage Member State expertise to overcome barriers and drive down the STI burden.

Crucially, all gaps in STI data must be filled. To that end, basic STI surveillance must be carried out, with all pregnant women and patients from key populations screened for STIs as a matter of routine. Standard case reporting procedures should be developed and followed, allowing authorities to track the efficacy of interventions and recalibrate them as and where needed. To protect against HPV, which is the most common STI, and which is a cause of cervical cancer in women, two doses of the HPV vaccine should reach all girls between the ages of nine and 14. To date, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Maldives have introduced the vaccine nationally, while India's Sikkim State has made the vaccine part of its routine schedule. Bangladesh, Indonesia, Nepal and several Indian states have conducted pilot projects.

We must closely guard the Region's progress against STIs. We cannot afford for it to be reversed. As together we strive to reduce the incidence of syphilis and gonorrhea by 90% by 2030 and achieve and sustain 90% coverage of the HPV vaccine, all stakeholders must refocus their attention, resources and energy on the task at hand. WHO will continue to support Member States in their efforts to do that, and to ensure all people are empowered to practice safe sex, get tested and, where necessary, use effective treatment. The end of STIs as a major public health problem is possible. Together we must act.

(Dr Poonam Khetrapal Singh is the WHO Regional Director for South-East Asia.)

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Myanmar Daily Weather Report

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

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

FORECAST VALID UNTIL AFTERNOON OF THE 8th January, 2020: Weather will be partly cloudy to cloudy in Sagaing and Taninthayi regions, Kachin State and generally fair 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: Likelihood of slight decrease of night temperatures in Upper Sagaing Region, Kachin, Northern Shan and Chin states.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 8th January, 2020: Generally fair weather.

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 8th January, 2020: Generally fair weather.

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 8th January, 2020: Generally fair weather.

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Stampede at Iran general's funeral leaves over 30 dead

KERMAN (Iran) — A stampede broke out Tuesday at the funeral of a top Iranian general killed in a US drone strike, leaving more than 30 people dead as huge crowds of mourners packed his hometown.

The crush in the southeastern city of Kerman came as Iran prepared to bury Revolutionary Guards commander QasemSoleimani, a hugely popular figure in the Islamic republic.

"Unfortunately because of overcrowding 32 of our citizens lost their lives in the procession... and 190 were injured," the head of the country's emergency services, PirhosseinKoolivand, told state television.

The injured were immediately transferred to hospital, he added. AFP correspondents in Kerman said the streets were packed with mourners, while others took refuge on hillsides around the city.

Soleimani, the head of the Guards' Quds Force foreign operations arm, was assassinated on Friday in a US strike near Baghdad international airport, an operation that shocked Iran.

Huge crowds flock to Iranian general QasemSoleimani's home town Kerman where he is to be buried after his killing in a US air strike in Baghdad on Friday. **PHOTO: AFP**

"The enemy killed him unjustly," the Revolutionary Guards' top commander, Major General Hossein Salami said, adding the process of "expelling the United States from the region has begun".

"Our will is firm. We also tell our enemies that we will take revenge, and that if they (strike again) we will set fire to what they love," he told the sea of black-clad mourners. "They themselves know well what places I am talking about."

Schoolgirls joined chants of "Death to Trump" from the crowd, an AFP correspondent reported.

Tuesday's funeral comes after days of processions through the southwestern city of Ahvaz and the shrine cities of Qom and Mashhad as well as the capital Tehran.

The assassination of Soleimani set off an escalating war of words between Iran and the United States.

In Tehran, President Hassan Rouhani on Monday warned Trump to "never threaten" Iran, after the US leader issued a US strike list of 52 targets in the Islamic republic.

On Tuesday, Iranian lawmakers voted to designate all US forces around the world "terrorists" over Soleimani's killing.

Parliament also agreed to bolster the coffers of the Quds Force, which Soleimani led, by $244 million (200 million euros). — AFP ■

French pension talks resume as govt seeks to end standoff

PARIS (France) — French officials prepared to restart talks with unions Tuesday over a pension overhaul that has sparked the country's longest transport strikes in decades, which labour leaders say could force millions of people to retire later than they thought.

Public support appears to be shifting in the government's favour, with just 44 percent backing the strike in an Ifop poll released Sunday, down seven points from the previous survey on December 19-20.

The reform would eliminate 42 separate pension schemes that offer early retirement and other advantages, mainly to public-sector workers, in favour of a single system.

It would also create a "pivot age" of 64 to benefit from a full pension, penalising those who stop working at the official retirement age of 62 — one of the lowest in Europe.

The government insists the measure is necessary for ensuring sufficient financing for the deficit-plagued system.

Yet officials have seized on an offer by France's largest union, the moderate CFDT, to hold separate talks on how to finance the plan later, in order to end the impasse over the pivot age.

"That's a very good idea," Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire said Monday. "Never has a compromise seemed so close."

But the hard-line CGT and Force Ouvriere unions have vowed to derail the plan, urging a new day of mass walkouts against the reform on Thursday, which could see schools shut and public transport even more impacted than usual. Train operator SNCF says it has lost more than 600 million euros ($670 million) in ticket sales since the strike began on December 5, and Paris commutes have been headaches for millions who rely on the RATP's metro, bus and suburban rail lines.

French unions have called for blockades of refineries and fuel depots starting Tuesday, when talks resume on the government's pension overhaul. **PHOTO: AFP**

'We have to hold out'

The CGT has stepped up its protest with a four-day blockade of refineries and fuel depots starting Tuesday, raising the prospect of petrol shortages.

Nurses, physiotherapists and lawyers, among dozens of professions with their own advantageous pension regimes, have also voted for strike actions this week. But the number of striking rail and metro workers tapered off over the holidays, and the lost pay could make it hard to keep up the protest. "It's going to be hard but we have to hold out at least until Friday," Mounir, an RATP employee, said Monday as drivers voted to prolong the strike.

Unions say they are relying on reserve funds and donations to limit the financial hit for strikers, in what has been France's longest continuous train strike since the national rail service was created in the 1930s.— AFP ■

US ties with Iraq, allies take hit after drone strike

BAGHDAD (Iraq) — A deadly US drone strike in Baghdad has rocked America's ties with allies on the ground, left diplomats scrambling to contain the fallout and Iraqi officials outraged at the airspace violation.

The strike on the outskirts of Baghdad's airport early Friday killed Iranian General Qasem-Soleimani and top Iraqi commander Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, among others.

The US has hailed it as a win for "peace and stability" in the region, in contrast to Western diplomats and US military officials in Baghdad.

None had received prior warning of the pre-dawn strike and learned of it when they woke up, sending them into crisis talks to salvage ties with Iraqi officials.

"The strike was such a surprise to all of us," one Western diplomat said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

"Speaking to the Americans now is extremely complex. We're talking a lot together as the European Union but the Americans have their own problems now," the diplomat said.— AFP ■

South Korea's Moon seeks Kim Jong Un visit to Seoul

SEOUL (South Korea) — South Korean President Moon Jae-in on Tuesday called for better relations with the North so leader Kim Jong Un can visit Seoul, despite Pyongyang's abandonment of its nuclear and missile test moratoriums.

Moon's appeal came after Kim threatened a demonstration of a "new strategic weapon" at a four-day ruling party meeting last week, where he never mentioned South Korea.

Since the breakdown of Kim's summit with US President Donald Trump in Hanoi last year -- which left nuclear negotiations largely deadlocked -- Pyongyang has repeatedly lashed out at the South, saying it has "nothing to talk" about any more with Seoul.

One senior official has gone as far as describing the South's presidency as a "shy dog barking more wildly".

Moon Jae-in has tried to keep paths of communication open between North and South Korea, despite Kim Jong Un's announcement of an end to his nuclear and missile test moratoriums. **PHOTO: AFP**

But Moon, who has long favoured engagement with the nuclear-armed North, doubled down on his dovish approach.

"I hope South and North Korea can make efforts together so that the conditions for Chairman Kim Jong Un's reciprocal visit can be arranged at an early date," Moon said in his annual New Year address. The invitation for Kim to visit Seoul dates from the two leaders' last summit, in Pyongyang in September 2018, when the peninsula was basking in a diplomatic rapprochement. Analysts suggested Moon's call was now unrealistic. "I'm willing to meet repeatedly and talk ceaselessly" with the North, Moon said in his half-hour speech, which was broadcast live. He also suggested Pyongyang and Seoul should consult on fielding a unified team at the Tokyo Olympics in July, which would march together at the opening ceremony.

The two Koreas' athletes took part together at the opening and closing ceremonies of the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics in the South two years ago, and subsequently formed a series of joint teams in other events.

A possible joint bid for Seoul and Pyongyang to co-host the 2032 Summer Games has even been mooted, with Moon on Tuesday calling the prospect "a golden opportunity for the South and North to show to the world that we are one people".

But the two capitals have held no discussions on the candidacy, and sporting ties have since entered a deep freeze — North Korea gave up any prospect of its women's football team playing in Tokyo rather than take part in a qualifying competition in the South next month. Pyongyang has also demanded the demolition of South Korean-built tourism facilities at Mount Kumgang in the North, saying it will operate tours there itself, and rejected discussions with Seoul on the issue. But Moon said he would push for the resumption of South Korean visits to the peak, along with the re-opening of the Kaesong Industrial Complex where Southern firms employed Northern workers. Both projects would currently violate the international sanctions imposed on Pyongyang over its nuclear and ballistic missile programmes. — AFP ■

Japan provides loan to rebuild Indonesia quake-damaged province

JAKARTA — Japan has agreed to provide a nearly 28 billion yen ($250 million) loan to Indonesia to rebuild infrastructure in Central Sulawesi Province, which was devastated by a major earthquake and tsunami in 2018.

The agreement was signed by Japanese Ambassador to Indonesia Masafumi Ishii and Desra Percaya, director general for Asia-Pacific and African Affairs at the Indonesian Foreign Ministry.

According to an embassy press statement, the loan will be used for infrastructure that needs urgent reconstruction, including roads, bridges, dams and irrigation systems. Funds will also be used to improve river-related facilities, liquefaction countermeasures and public facilities.

The statement said the reconstruction will be based on the "build back better," or BBB concept, which aims to rebuild areas to be more resilient against disasters, to better prepare for future ones and is "expected to contribute to the rehabilitation and development of livelihood in Central Sulawesi."

Under the agreement, the loan, with an "untied procurement condition," can be paid back within 40 years with a 10-year grace period at 0.01 per cent interest.

Late last year, Japan also pledged 5.09 billion yen in grants to Indonesia to support reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts in the province. The grants will be used to finance three projects, including the rebuilding of a large bridge in the Central Sulawesi capital of Palu, which collapsed during the quake, and to strengthen disaster management information systems so that people can receive information related to disasters immediately. — Kyodo News ■

Photo taken on 28 October 2018, shows a woman standing by graves in Palu on the Indonesian island of Sulawesi for victims of a powerful earthquake and tsunami that struck the region on 28 September. **PHOTO: KYODO NEWS**

Tokyo prosecutors obtain arrest warrant for Ghosn's wife

TOKYO — Tokyo prosecutors obtained an arrest warrant Tuesday for the wife of former Nissan Motor Co. Chairman Carlos Ghosn for alleged perjury when she appeared in court last year in connection with her husband's suspected misuse of the company's funds.

Ghosn's wife Carole, 53, is now believed to be in Lebanon with her husband, who violated his bail conditions by fleeing Japan late last month.

The likelihood of Carole Ghosn being arrested is slim, given that Japan has no extradition treaty with Lebanon.

But the prosecutors' special investigation squad is considering whether it would be possible to detain her with the help of the International Criminal Police Organization.

The squad suspects that during an examination of a witness last April at the Tokyo District Court, she denied knowing one of Ghosn's acquaintances whom she had previously contacted.

Carlos Ghosn is accused of causing damage to Nissan by having the automaker's subsidiary in the United Arab Emirates pay a total of $10 million to Omani distributor Suhail Bahwan Automobiles LLC between July 2017 and July 2018, and having around $5 million of it transferred to an investment firm that he effectively owned.

File photo taken in March 2019 shows former Nissan Motor Co. Chairman Carlos Ghosn and his wife Carole in Tokyo, just days after he was released on bail for the first time. **PHOTO: KYODO NEWS**

The special investigation team said Carole Ghosn met with the acquaintance who sent money to the Lebanese firm, Good Faith Investments, and they also exchanged many messages after her husband was arrested on 19 November, 2018.

But it said that in the witness examination on 11 April, 2019, Carole Ghosn said she did not know the acquaintance, who was an executive of the Omani distributor. — Kyodo News ■

Power-starved Ethiopia rallies around Nile dam as Egypt dispute simmers

The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam will become the largest hydropower plant in Africa. **PHOTO: AFP**

METEKEL(Ethiopia) — Cell phone batteries constantly dying, health centres bereft of modern equipment, a dependence on flashlights after sundown -- KafuleYigzaw experienced all these struggles and more growing up without electricity in rural Ethiopia.

So five years ago, he leapt at the chance to work on a project designed to light up his country and the wider Horn of Africa region: the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, a 145-metre-high, 1.8-kilometre-long concrete colossus that is set to become the largest hydropower plant in Africa.

"Our country has a huge problem with electricity," Kafule, 22, told AFP recently while taking a break from reinforcing steel pipes that will funnel water from the Blue Nile River to one of the dam's 13 turbines.

"This is about the existence of our nation and, in my opinion, it will help us break free from the bondage of poverty."

The dam is expected to begin producing energy by the end of this year.

Across Ethiopia, poor farmers and rich businessmen eagerly await the more than 6,000 megawatts of electricity officials say it will ultimately provide. Yet as thousands of workers toil day and night to finish the project, Ethiopian negotiators remain locked in talks over how the dam will affect downstream neighbours, principally Egypt.

The next round of negotiations starts Thursday in Ethiopia's capital, Addis Ababa, and is likely to renew focus on Cairo's fears that the dam could bring water and food insecurity for millions of Egyptians.

Ethiopians at the dam site say they are doing their best to focus on the task at hand, though they bristle at suggestions that their country is overstepping in its bid to harness the Blue Nile for its development.

"When we do projects here it's not to harm the downstream countries," said deputy project manager EphremWoldekidan. "There is no reason that the downstream countries should complain (about) it because this is our resource also."—AFP ■

UK teen gets suspended jail term for 'false' Cyprus rape claim

PARALIMNI (Cyprus) — A Cypriot court on Tuesday handed a British teenager a four-month suspended prison sentence after convicting her of falsely accusing a dozen Israeli tourists of gang rape.

The 19-year-old, who could have faced up to a year in jail, smiled and hugged family at the end of a trial that sparked protests in Britain and calls for a boycott of the Mediterranean resort island.

Defence lawyers and activists say the case was littered with investigatory and legal mistakes and issues, including repeated refusals by the judge to consider whether she was raped.

The sentencing took place to loud shouts from protesters outside the court room, including dozens of Israelis — mainly women, but some men -- who travelled to Cyprus to offer moral support to the teenager.

As the judge delivered his sentencing at the Famagusta District Court in Paralimni, shouts of "Cyprus justice, shame on you" were audible in the court, despite police ordering journalists to close windows and blinds.

Other shouts from outside included "Judge, shame on you, don't you have a daughter too?" and "Blaming the victim is a second rape!"

The British teenager covered her face as she arrives at Famagusta District Court in eastern Cyprus for the sentencing. **PHOTO: AFP**

Lawyers for the woman, whom AFP is not naming, say she was raped in the seaside resort of Ayia Napa by 12 Israeli teenagers in their hotel room on 17 July.

She fled in distress to her own hotel and was examined by an in-house doctor, who called the police. A group of Israeli teenagers were arrested and appeared in court, but 10 days after making a complaint of rape she was interviewed again by police and signed a retraction.

The Israelis, aged 15 to 18, were released without charge, allowed to return home and not called as witnesses.—AFP ■

Wedding Announcement

Both parents are pleased to announce the marriage of

WAILIN PHYO

Son of U Thein Han and
Daw Thein Lwin,
401 B ADAMS ST ITHACA,
NY 14850

To

K KHINE WYNN HTUN

Daughter of U Kyaw Sein Htun
and Daw Cho Cho Thing
No 78, Room D (04), Kyaikasan Road,
Bala Higher Estate, Tamwe Township,
Yangon Region.

The couple signed the marriage certificate at the Yangon West District Court on 30th December 2019 and got married.

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV SAGA FREYA

Consignees of cargo carried on MV SAGA FREYA VOY.NO. (19174) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 8-1-2020 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of MITT 4 where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

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MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S GLOBAL MARS SHIPPING
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CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

MV SINAR SOLO VOY.NO. (880N/S)

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

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

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NASA planet hunter finds Earth-sized world in 'Goldilocks zone'

WASHINGTON (United States)— NASA said Monday that its planet hunter satellite TESS had discovered an Earth-sized world within the habitable range of its star, which could allow the presence of liquid water.

The planet, named "TOI 700 d", is relatively close to Earth -- only 100 light years away, NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory announced during the annual American Astronomical Society meeting in Honolulu, Hawaii.

"TESS was designed and launched specifically to find Earth-sized planets orbiting nearby stars," said Paul Hertz, NASA astrophysics division director.

TESS initially misclassified the star, which meant the planets appeared larger and hotter than they actually are. But several amateur astronomers, including high school student Alton Spencer — who works with members of the TESS team — identified the error. "When we corrected the star's parameters, the sizes of its planets dropped, and we realized the outermost one was about the size of Earth and in the habitable zone," said Emily Gilbert, a graduate student at the University of Chicago. The discovery was later confirmed by the Spitzer Space Telescope.

A few other similar planets have been discovered before, notably by the former Kepler Space Telescope, but this is the first discovered by TESS, which was launched in 2018.

TESS stabilizes on one area of the sky to detect whether objects — planets — pass in front of stars, which causes a temporary drop in the stars' luminosity. This allows TESS to infer the presence of a planet, its size and orbit. Star TOI 700 is small, about 40 per cent of our Sun's size and only about half as hot. TESS discovered three planets in orbit, named TOI 700 b, c and d. Only "d" is in the so-called habitable zone, not too far from and not too close to the star, where the temperature could allow the presence of liquid water. —AFP ■

Planet TOI 700 d (shown in an artist's illustration) is the first Earth-sized habitable-zone world discovered by NASA's planet hunter satellite. **PHOTO: AFP**

Amazon revs up auto ambitions with in-car TV, Alexa integration

LAS VEGAS (United States) — Amazon unveiled plans Monday to be a bigger player in the auto sector, announcing partnerships that will put its Fire TV platform in vehicles and offer more services through its Alexa digital assistant.

In an announcement ahead of the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, Amazon said it would allow car owners without built-in Alexa to add the smart assistant to the vehicle through a phone application.

The "Echo Auto" program for the voice assistant will roll out this month in at least 15 countries, Amazon said. Another new feature to be offered this year will allow motorists to fuel up by saying, "Alexa, pay for gas" at some 11,500 Exxon and Mobil stations.

The news comes with Amazon, Google and others battling for supremacy in the market for voice-connected technology for an array of smart devices.

"At Amazon, we believe voice is the easiest, most natural way to interact with technology," the company said in a blog post as it prepared to open its auto booth at the sprawling electronics show on Tuesday. "We've seen so many examples of how Alexa can make life easier and more convenient for customers, and now we're focused on bringing Alexa to places beyond the home — starting with the car."—AFP ■

Embassy of India, Yangon
Invitation: Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Celebrations

9th January is celebrated every year as Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD). It was chosen to mark the return journey of Mahatma Gandhi from South Africa to India in 1915. The Embassy of India, Yangon is celebrating PBD and all Indians and People of Indian Origin are cordially invited.

Venue - Embassy Auditorium
Date - 9 January 2020
Time - 06:00 – 07:30 PM

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE
MV OCEAN GEMSTONE

Consignees of cargo carried on MV OCEAN GEMSTONE VOY.NO. (1901) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 7-1-2020 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of MITT5 where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S BEN LINE AGENCIES SINGAPORE PTE, LTD
Phone No: 2301928

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE
MV KAI XUAN-II

Consignees of cargo carried on MV KAI XUAN-II VOY.NO. (1816) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 7-1-2020 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of MIPL where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S CHUN AN INTERNATIONAL LOGISTICS CO, LTD.
Phone No: 2301928

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE
MV EMIL SELMER

Consignees of cargo carried on MV EMIL SELMER VOY.NO. (JT20191213) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 7-1-2020 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of MITT 3 where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S GLOBAL MARS SHIPPING
Phone No: 2301928

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE
MV IAL 001 VOY.NO. (054 N/S)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV IAL 001 VOY. NO. (054 N/S) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 6-1-2020 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of HPT where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S INTER ASIA LINES
Phone No: 2301185

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE
MV SINAR BANDA VOY.NO. (172 N/S)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV SINAR BANDA VOY.NO. (172 N/S) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 6-1-2020 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of MITT/MIP where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S SAMUDERA SHIPPING LINE
Phone No: 2301185

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE
MV ALVAN VOY.NO. (SPL 1070)

Consignees of cargo carried on MV ALVAN VOY. NO. (SPL 1070) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 7-1-2020 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of MITT where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S LAND AND SEA INTERMODAL LOGISTICS SDN BHD LINE
Phone No: 2301185

Yangon and travel business

By Maung Maung Myint Swe

I WAS observing international visitors/travellers and guests arriving to Yangon International Airport. Some came on their own while some came in a group. Yangon was called the economic capital of Myanmar and was the main gateway for international visitors/travellers to enter either via air or by sea.

PHOTO: YE HTUT TIN (NLM)

Visa restrictions were eased allowing international visitors/travellers to visit the country easily while the Union Government, Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC) and Yangon Region government were working systematically for businesses and investors to enter and invest easily and seamlessly.

Increase in international visitors/travelers

"The majority of international visitors/travellers entering Myanmar by air came through Yangon International Airport. In addition to this, visitors/travellers enter Myanmar by cruise ships at Thilawa Port. Cruise ships with international visitors/travellers embark at Thilawa Port.

"Compared to 2018, Yangon received 26 per cent more international visitors/travellers in 2019," said Directorate of Hotels and Tourism Yangon Region Director U Naing Win.

Yangon had heritage buildings, religious buildings like Shwedagon Pagoda, parks and other interesting place. Due to easing of visa restrictions Yangon International Airport was handling more and more visitors every year. According to figures released by Yangon Aerodrome Company (YACL), Yangon International Airport handled up to 4.6 million passengers during the first nine months of 2019. This was 6.5 per cent more than the 4.32 million passengers handled during the first nine months of 2018. This was due to expanding numbers of flights especially to/from China. Between October 2018 to October 2019, three more airlines and two more destinations were added. As of October 2019, 35 airlines were connecting to 33 cities in 12 Asian and two middle east countries.

The increase in passenger numbers was mainly due to the increase in visitors/travellers from Japan, Thai and China.

Ease in obtaining news and information

"Basic infrastructure for travel business in Yangon need to be upgraded. There must be platforms and walkways in downtown area that visitors/travellers can use conveniently and safely. News and information of locations, places of interest, eateries etc. should be provided. During peak travel season tens of thousands of visitors visit Yangon daily. Percentage increase of restaurants and hotels are quite high compared to the past," said U Thurein Aung, Programme Officer, Yangon Heritage Trust.

Tourists walking around in Yangon. PHOTO: KHIN ZUN ZAR LIN

Hotels and upscale motel/inn rooms play an important and basic role in developing Yangon's travel sector. According to 2019 second quarter market review of Myanmar conducted by Canada-based Myanmar real estate consultancy by the end of 2019, Yangon will have about 5,700 high end hotel, motel and inn rooms. This was estimated to increase to about 7,000 by end 2021.

"For travel business to develop, our services need to improve. Directorate of Hotels and Tourism was systematically working toward improving services of the 447 hotels in Yangon. Maintaining and reporting of guests list was conducted systematically and securely through an online system. Inbound and outbound services of about 2,000 travel and tour companies were systematically overseen. Thousands of guides were systematically managed and administered" said Director U Naing Win.

There were about 189 heritage places in Yangon that attracts visitors and the places were systematically conserved and maintained. At the moment, more than 30 buildings were attached with blue plaques designating

Tourists walk around at the Mahabandoola Park. PHOTO: YE HTUT TIN (NLM)

it as Yangon's cultural heritage. These were priceless heritage of Yangon. Due to this, visitors to Yangon increase 26 per cent in 2019 over the same period in 2018.

Ancient buildings and structures

"Shwedagon Pagoda is a must-visit place. Visitors are not interested in all pagodas. Most visit Shwedagon and Chauk Htat Gyi pagodas. They also observe the life styles of Yangonites. Walking tours of Sule Pagoda and neighbourhood was arranged to study the socio-economic situation of downtown Yangon as well as to study and observe ancient heritage buildings. Arrangements were also made to take a ride along the Yangon circular rail route," said Myanmar Tour Guide Association Chairman U Aung Tun Lin.

Observing the true situation

Rising numbers of visitors observing the true situation in Yangon helps toward countering the fake narratives and negative images about Myanmar that were painted or spread around the world.

More need to be done toward enabling more visitors to come and see Myanmar's social and urban heritages, cultural and religious buildings. Singapore that was near Myanmar received about 18 to 20 million visitors yearly while Myanmar's neighbour Thailand received up to about 38 million visitors annually. As Myanmar was receiving only a little more than 3 million visitors yearly, more need to be done individually or collectively by the people, organizations and departments that were related to or were in the travel sector.

Ms. Greta from Rome, Italy who was visiting Shwedagon Pagoda said "I came to study and experience first-hand a place that was on the other side of the world from where I lived. I want to feel the unique experience and culture of this part of the world. This is my first day in Myanmar. People are friendly and the place is safe so it is a nice big city. Tomorrow, I'll go to Shan State. I believe there'll be more to experience there as well."

(Translated by Handytips)

■■■

Vintcom Technology Myanmar organizes CIO/ CTO Executive Forum

PHOTO: SUPPLIED

CHAIRMAN Mr Narong Intanate of Vintcom Technology and Senior Vice President Mr Chung Heng Han of Oracle Corporation recently visited to Myanmar to express thanks and appreciate their customers in Myanmar. During the trip, Vintcom Technology Myanmar Co, Ltd organized CIO / CTO Executive Forum on 20 December 2019 at the Sky Bristol's 20th Floor on Sakura Tower in downtown Yangon. The Senior Vice President of Oracle explained the future trend of innovation under the title of "The next Frontier for Innovation". Oracle Director of Systems Business Development Mr. Nattapon also presented the strength of Exadata Machine under the title of "Unleashes World's Fastest Database Machine — Exadata X8M". This event made Oracle know knowledge about modernizing IT Infrastructure, and a great opportunity to have the best networking services.—GNLM

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25 youth footballers to be selected for Japan tour from 8 to 11 Jan

SELECTIONS for footballers for the MFF-MNL 'Road to Japan' tour will be held from 8 to 11 January on the artificial turf of the National Football Academy in Yangon, according to the Myanmar Football Federation.

A total of 75 footballers who have been preliminarily selected from MPT U-14 Football Tournament 2019 and MFF 100Plus Cup States and Regions U-14 (Boy's) Football Tournament will be grouped into five teams – Teams A, B, C, D and E. Twenty-five players will be selected from among them.

The selected players will be sent to Japan on a football tour.

The MPT U-14 Football Tournament 2019 was jointly organized by the MFF, MNL, and MPT, in cooperation with the Basic Education Department.

The MFF 100Plus Cup States and Regions U-14 (Boy's) Football Tournament was jointly organized by the MFF and 100Plus.

Officials, team managers and preliminarily selected players pose for a group photo at the press conference ahead of the player selections for the Japan tour at the Thuwunna Stadium in Yangon on 7 Janury. **PHOTO: MFF**

A press conference ahead of the player selections for the Japan tour was held yesterday at the Thuwunna Stadium in Yangon, and it was attended by the preliminarily selected 75 players and team managers.

At the press meet, MNL CEO U Soe Moe Kyaw and officials responsible for selecting players and those who will usher the Japan tour explained matters related to the tour.

The tour will include joint training programs, friendly matches, and watching J-League matches. The media have been invited to cover the player selections. The selections will take place during two time slots every day — 7:30 am to 9 am and 3:30 pm to 4.30 p.m. — Kyaw Khin

Fixtures released for MPT Myanmar National League II 2020

THE MPT Myanmar National League II 2020 Organizing Department released the match fixtures for the tourney yesterday, according to the Myanmar National League's Facebook page.

The MPT Myanmar National League II 2020 will be jointly organized by the Myanmar Football Federation and the Myanmar National League.

Chinland F.C., Mawyawadi F.C., Kachin United F.C., Myawady F.C., Silver Stars F.C., MFF, University F.C. ,and Yaw Myay F.C. will take part in the tourney.

The Week-1 matches have been scheduled for 23 and 24 January. Chinland F.C. will take on Mawyawadi F.C. on 23 January at the Padonmar Stadium, while Kachin United F.C. will face Myawady F.C. the same day at the Salin Stadium.

On 24 January, Silver F.C. will face the MFF team at the Salin Stadium, and University F.C. will fight Yaw Myay F.C. at the University Stadium.

The Week-2 matches will be held on 29 and 30 January, Week-3 on 14 and 15 February, Week-4 on 20 and 21 February, Week-5 on 27 and 28 February, Week-6 on 5 and 6 March, and Week-7 on 14 and 15 March.

The first round of the MPT Myanmar National League II 2020 will end on 15 March, and second seven-week round will be held from 21 May to 17 July.

The venues for the tourney are Sa Lin ground, Padonmar Stadium, University Stadium, M3 Bahan Stadium, and South Dagon Stadium. — Kyaw Khin

Paul Pogba undergoes ankle surgery

LONDON (United Kingdom) — Paul Pogba underwent surgery on his ankle injury on Tuesday, reporting that "everything went well" during the operation in a social media post.

The Manchester United midfielder initially posted a video on Instagram in which he looked groggy and admitted: "I don't even know if I'm OK or if I'm high or if I'm sober, just don't ask me if it went well, I don't know."

He later deleted that post and replaced it with a shorter video.

"Everything went well," Pogba said. "We have to keep the positive energy."

Pogba, 26, is expected to be out for another four weeks after suffering his second ankle injury of the season. The France international, who has been linked with a move away from Old Trafford, has made only eight appearances this season in a campaign blighted by injury. — AFP ■

Female cyclists taking part in the the 2019-2020 region-state cycling competition in Nay Pyi Taw on 7 Janaury. **PHOTO: MNA**

Region, state cycling competitions held in Nay Pyi Taw

WITH the aim of improving sports standards in Myanmar, the Sports and Physical Education Department of the Ministry of Health and Sports, in cooperation with the Myanmar Cycling Federation, organized the 2019-2020 region-state cycling competitions yesterday in front of the Wunna Theikdi Stadium in Nay Pyi Taw.

The competitions included the women's 500-m event, men's 1,000-m event, men's 9-km event, and men's 15-km event.

In the women's 500-m competition, Soe Sanda Win (Taninthayi) won the first prize (43.85 seconds), Hla Hla Nwe (Bago) bagged the second prize (45.09 seconds), and Thin Kalayar Soe (Mandalay) came third (45.25 seconds).

In the men's 1,000-m competition, Kaung Sithu (Bago) won the first prize, Nyi Nyi Aung (Yangon) the second prize, and Thura Kyaw (Magway) the third prize.

In the men's 9-km team competition, the Magway Region team won the first prize, the Ayeyawady Region team the second prize, and the Taninthayi Region team the third prize.

In the men's 15-km team competition, the Magway Region team came first, the Yangon Region team second, and the Mandalay Region team finished third.

The 2019-2020 region-state cycling competitions will be held till 9 January.

A total of 87 cyclists, 59 men and 28 women, with 11 region-state teams, 11 men's teams, and 7 women's teams are taking part in the competitions.

The competitions will start at 7 am every day. — MNA

(Translated by Kyaw Zin Tun)