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State Counsellor, Japanese politicians hold talks over bilateral relations, development programmes



State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi poses for the documentary photo with a delegation led by Upper House MP Mr Yamaguchi Natsuo in Yangon, yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

STATE Counsellor and Union Minister for Foreign Affairs Daw Aung San Suu Kyi received Mr Yamaguchi Natsuo, the Upper House MP and the Chief Representative of Komeito party which is a partner of the current coalition government, at her residence in Bahan Township, Yangon, yesterday afternoon. During the meeting, the delegation, accompanied by Japanese Ambassador to Myanmar Mr Ichiro Maruyama, held talks on promotion of bilateral relations, business and investment, tourism, infrastructure development, future socio-economic development programmes for Myanmar, assistance for peace, national reconciliation and democratic transitions of Myanmar and developments in Rakhine State. — MNA

(Translated by Aung Khin)

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Whatever we do, we must keep in mind the good of our Union

Our country is a union. A union is a nation comprised of many ethnic nationalities. Whatever we do, we must keep in mind the good of our Union. Whatever you do, please think for the good of our Union and the peoples of our Union. Further, please work to bring the peoples of our Union closer together, more bonded, more united.

(Extract from the opening speech given by State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi on 3 August 2018 at Meeting No. 1/2018 of the National Tourism Development Central Committee.)



Rakhine State Peace and Stability Supporting Committee discusses third draft report

THE Rakhine State Peace and Stability Supporting Committee held a coordination meeting to finalize the committee's third report at Hluttaw Building I-20 in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning.

In his opening remark, U Aye Tha Aung, the Chairman of committee, said that the third draft report was edited with the collaboration of Union Minister Dr Pe Myint, Deputy Attorney-General U Win Myint and Deputy Minister U Tin Myint for final discussions at the meeting.

The chairman also called for suggestions and recommendations on the draft report.

Deputy Minister U Tin Myint explained each paragraph of draft report by using projector, and committee members made

discussions before a conclusion remark of the chairman.

Vice Chairman 1 of the committee and Union Minister for Information Dr Pe Myint, Vice Chairman 2 and Rakhine State Chief Minister U Nyi Pu, committee members Deputy Attorney-General U Win Myint, Rakhine State Security and Border Affairs Minister Colonel Min Than, Yangon Region Government's Rakhine Ethnic Affairs Minister U Zaw Aye Maung, Vice Chair of National Education Policy Commission Dr Nyi Hla Nge, Deputy Chief of Myanmar Police Force Police Maj-Gen Aung Naing Thu and Rakhine State Hluttaw Representative U Maung Maung Ohn.—MNA

(Translated by Aung Khin)



Amyotha Hluttaw Deputy Speaker U Aye Tha Aung delivers the speech at the coordination meeting of Rakhine State Peace and Stability Supporting Committee in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. PHOTO: MNA

KUBOTA donates backpacks, stationary for children

JAPAN-BASED KUBOTA company and its sales representatives donated 12,000 sets of backpacks and stationary for schoolchildren, with a total value of K50 million, at a ceremony at the Ministry of Education in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

Union Minister for Education Dr Myo Thein Gyi spoke at the ceremony and said the Japanese company's donation of 16,300 sets of backpacks and stationary from last year was distributed to Yangon, Ayeyawady, Shan, Rakhine,

Kayin, Mon and other regions. He said they also donated it to schools that needed it. He thanked KUBOTA for their donation once again and said they will distribute to the needy students across Myanmar.

Next, KUBOTA Myanmar's Managing Director Mr Kunitomo Sato delivered an address, after which Dr Myo Thein Gyi accepted the donation and took a documentary photo.—MNA

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)



Union Minister Dr Myo Thein Gyi and Japanese KUBOTA company representatives presents backpacks and to students at the ceremony at the Ministry of Education in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. PHOTO: MNA

State Counsellor,
Japanese
politicians
hold talks over
bilateral relations,
development
programmes

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi holds talks with Mr Yamaguchi Natsuo, the Upper House MP and the Chief Representative of Komeito party at her residence in Bahan Township, Yangon, yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

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Union Construction Minister inspects Yangon - Pathein Bridge (2)

UNION Minister for Construction U Han Zaw inspected the upgradation process of the Yangon-Pathein road (Yangon Region's side) yesterday morning. Firstly, the Union Minister inspected the section of road from mileposts 5/4 to 17/4 and

observed the road expansion and paving of cement roads by Oriental Highway Co Ltd. He also observed lime stabilized mix design technology being used from mileposts 10/4 to 10/5. Next, the Union Minister inspected the road from mileposts

17/4 to 24/4 and observed road expansions, concrete road paving and listened to officials explain action plans for upgrading the Yangon-Pathein road, future plans, producing road layer designs, and quality maintenance. The Union Minister re-

sponded to the explanations and said the Yangon-Pathein highway is an important road and upgrading it to the standard road design is very important. He said quality maintenance team need to supervise carefully since it is difficult to repair concrete roads when they get damaged.

As such, everything must go right from the beginning of the project and preparations need to be made to prevent public traffic accidents while work is taking place, said the Union Minister.

Next, he inspected the construction zone of Pathein Bridge (2), undertaken by Bridge Special Unit (16) of the Department of Bridges. The Union Minister then listened to officials explain the work process and gave them suggestions in return.

Pathein Bridge (2) passes over Ngawun River and directly links to Pathein and Sein Gon

Ward on the west bank of the river once completed. The bridge will be 2,380 feet long and 28 feet wide for the car lanes with 5 extra feet on either side of the bridge for walkways. The bridge will be high enough for ships to sail underneath, being 60 feet from the surface of the river and having a 416 feet-wide opening underneath the bridge.

The bridge will become an important landmark for Pathein, assist in local regional development and offer a faster route to beaches such as Ngwehsaung, Chaungtha and Shwe Thauung Yan, and to Ayeyawady Region and Rakhine State's coastal roads.

Later in the evening, the Union Minister inspected along the Pathein-Kangon-Myin Kaseit-Myaungmya road. — MNA

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)



Union Minister for Construction U Han Zaw inspects the progress of the Yangon-Pathein road upgrading construction (Yangon Region's side) yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

SWRR Ministry discusses draft Standard
Operation Procedure for emergency response

UNION Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr Win Myat Aye attended the seminar on drafting Standard Operation Procedure (SOP) for the Emergency Operation Centre (EOC) of the Disaster Management Department, held at his ministry in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. Firstly, the Director-General of the Disaster Management

Department explained the SOP draft for the EOC and a center member explained normal daily activities, emergency response strategies and situations, scale of losses, and the number of people who have to resettle after a disaster strikes, how this all affects planning and action on the part of the EOC, designating them to different levels and standards for managing infor-

mation. Next, the Union Minister and Deputy Minister U Soe Aung responded to the explanations observed the daily operations of the EOC. Once the SOP has been drafted, it will be put on a trial run during the third week of January 2020. —MNA (Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)



Union Minister Dr Win Myat Aye observes the operations of the Emergency Operation Centre (EOC) in Nay Pyi Taw. **PHOTO: MNA**

Hmawbi Officer Training School (Army) holds 6th woman army cadets graduation



Senior General Min Aung Hlaing inspects graduation parade of the cadets of 6th Intake of the female army cadets at the Officer Training School (Army) in Hmawbi, Yangon Region. **PHOTO: OFFICE OF THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF DEFENCE SERVICES**

THE 6th graduation ceremony of woman army cadets took place at the Officer Training School (Army) in Hmawbi, Yangon Region, yesterday, where the Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, delivered a speech.

Before giving his speech, the Senior General received the salute of the cadets on the parade grounds and observed their military parade. He then conferred an award to the most outstanding graduate of the 6th intake, Cadet Yamin Inzali.

In his speech, the Senior General said they opened the woman army cadet training course in order to offer inclusive opportunities for women to serve in defending the nation. He said female soldiers are trained to have equal duties and positions with male soldiers in serving the nation, all part of modernizing the

Tatmadaw.

The Senior General said women have always played important roles in successive generations and have caught up with men to shine in such fields as social affairs, business, politics and even astrophysics. He urged the cadets to uphold traditions and dutifully fulfill tasks assigned for the Tatmadaw and the nation. He also urged them to continually improve themselves and become a source of strength for the Tatmadaw and country.

Next, the Senior General received the salute of the graduating company of cadets and left the parade grounds. He then met outstanding cadet Yamin Inzali, best marksman cadet Aye Htet Htet Hlaing and their parents and congratulated them.

Later in the evening, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and wife Daw Kyu Kyu Hla attended

the dinner honouring the 6th graduation of woman army cadets at the Union Hall of the same training school.

Present at the ceremony

were the Senior General's wife Daw Kyu Kyu Hla, Union Minister for Defence Lt-Gen Sein Win and wife, C-in-C of Navy Admiral Tin Aung San and wife, C-in-C of

Air Force General Maung Maung Kyaw and wife, Tatmadaw officials from C-in-C of Defence Services Office and their wives, the Commander of Yangon Command, the commandant of the training school, officials from Yangon cantonment, invited guests, and the families and relatives of the graduating cadets. Earlier in the afternoon, the Senior General delivered a speech at the opening ceremony of a three-storey building for Yangon Tatmadaw hospital's advanced diagnostic and cancer treatment department.

In addition, the Senior General received the Upper House MP and the Chief Representative of Komeito party of Japan Mr Yamaguchi Natsuo at the Zayathiri Beikman in Yangon, according to news released by the Office of the Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services. —MNA

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)



Senior General Min Aung Hlaing meets with the Upper House MP and the Chief Representative of Komeito party of Japan Mr Yamaguchi Natsuo at Zayathiri Beikman in Yangon. **PHOTO: OFFICE OF THE C-IN-C OF DEFENCE SERVICES**

Development programmes discussed for substitutions of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances

A MANAGEMENT team for implementing development programmes in poppy cultivation areas held a coordination meeting at the Ministry of Border Affairs in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday afternoon.

The team under the Central Committee for Drugs Abuse Control, Substitution Development Management Committee is implementing pilot substitution development programmes in the four village-tracts of Naungtayar Town of Pinlaung Township of PaO Self-Administered Zone

till 2019-2020 financial year.

Chairman of the team Major General Than Htut said at the meeting to review the previous programmes and coordinated discussions of the members of the team and representatives of local government.

The substitution programmes are being carried out in Pawin, Mwepyin, Pinkhin and Lwemaw village-tracts, for infrastructural developments in roads, bridges, electrification, education, health, agriculture, livestock, loan



Major General Than Htut addresses the coordination meeting for implementing substitution development programmes in poppy cultivation areas in Nay Pyi Taw. **PHOTO: MNA**

programme of Exim Bank and basic motorcycle repair course by using K1,992.2762 million in 2017-2018 financial

year, K466.4105 million in the first six months of 2018-2019 financial year, K2,126.284 million in the second six months of

the same fiscal and it has been planned to use K3,235.308 million for 2019-2020 fiscal.—MNA

(Translated by Aung Khin)

Local growers profit as India raises import quota for mung beans

WITH India increasing the quota for mung beans imports for next year and pre-purchasing Myanmar mung beans, local growers are reaping a profit, according to the Mandalay Depot.

“Myanmar has exported 150,000 tons of mung beans as of October, 2019. India has increased the import quota for mung beans to fulfill its domestic demand. India will import up to 250,000 tons of mung beans from Myanmar by the end of March. We expect that there will be only around 40,000 or 50,000 tons of mung beans in the local market. India is pre-purchasing mung beans which will yield in March, 2020. Mung beans are grown mostly in the lower parts of the country. Local farmers from Ayeyawady and Bago regions are happy with the handsome profit as India has increased the mung bean quota,” said U Myo Swe, vice chairman

of Mandalay Depot.

“In 2016, India stopped purchasing mung beans and pigeon peas (red gram). Later, it began importing a small



Merchants evaluate quality of pulses at the Mandalay wholesale market. PHOTO: TIN ZAR HLAING

volume of beans, depending on the demand. On account of the climate change in India, its import requirement for mung beans and green grams has increased. India is importing a larger volume of green grams from other countries compared with Myanmar. However, it is importing mung beans mainly through Myanmar. This year, the local mung bean growers are happy with the handsome profit. Mung beans are grown

mainly in upper and lower regions of the country, he added.

With the increase in India’s mung bean quota, the price of mung beans has increased to K110,000 per ton.

In the 2018-2019 financial year, Myanmar exported over 1.64 million tons of beans and pulses, including over 600,000 tons of mung beans, and earned more than US\$1 billion.—Tin Zar Hlaing (Translated by Hay Mar)

Fuel oil imports up 120,000 tons in current fiscal

MYANMAR imported about one million tons of diesel and petrol worth nearly US\$600 million over the past two months of the current financial year, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

In the year-ago period, the country had imported about 870,000 tons of fuel worth \$607 million, according to the ministry.

As of 6 December, the import volume was up 120,000 tons, but the import value plunged by \$8 million compared to the corresponding period of the previous fiscal owing to lower prices.

In the current financial year, Myanmar imported 600,000 tons of diesel and 390,000 tons of petrol, as per data provided by the Commerce Ministry.

Yesterday, the price of Brent crude oil ranged at \$65 per barrel, while WTI crude was priced around \$60 a barrel, according to global oil markets.

The price of Octane 92 was pegged at K830-885, Octane 95 at K940-975, diesel at K910-965, and premium diesel at K920-975 yesterday in the domestic retail market, according to local fuel oil market.

As oil prices extended their drop in the global market following the escalating US-China trade war, domestic fuel oil price has seen a gradual decline since early June. On 10 October, 2018, on account of an increase in global crude oil prices and the Kyat weakening against the US dollar, oil prices had hit a high of K1,065 per liter for Octane

92, K1,115 for Octane 95, K1,085 for diesel, and K1,105 for premium diesel.

On 1 January, domestic fuel oil touched a low of K695 for Octane 92, K760 for Octane 95, K870 for diesel, and K875 for premium diesel. By April, the price surged to above K1,000 per liter and then plunged below K1,000 in June, according to local oil market.

Ninety per cent of fuel oil in Myanmar is imported from abroad, while 10 per cent is locally produced.

Myanmar imports fuel oil primarily through Singapore, with monthly imports of gasoline touching 200,000 tons and diesel 400,000 tons. There are 2,000 fuel stations and 50 oil importers in Myanmar. —GNLM (Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Korean firm invests \$35 mln in electricity distribution project

By Nyein Nyein

MCM Power Company from the Republic of Korea has invested over US\$35 million on a power generation, supply, and sale project, said U Thant Sin Lwin, Director-General of the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA).

The MCM Power Company will execute a project to generate 40MW of electricity from a gas engine and its supply and sale on an IPP (BOT) basis at the Shwe Taung Power Plant, located in Shwe Taung Village, Pyay Township, Bago Region.

“The power sector is increasingly attracting foreign investments. The latest investment in the sector is in the project for

generating 40MW of electricity from a gas engine. More projects are expected to enter the power sector,” said U Thant Sin Lwin.

Foreign companies are interested in Myanmar’s power sector, especially those from Hong Kong, Singapore, and China, he said.

“Hong Kong, Singapore, and China-based companies will replace the existing 20MW gas turbines with advanced engines to boost production,” said U Thant Sin Lwin.

In early December, a Hong Kong-based company was permitted to invest \$500 million to execute electricity generation, supply, and sale projects in Yangon and Kyaukpau cities, according to the DICA.

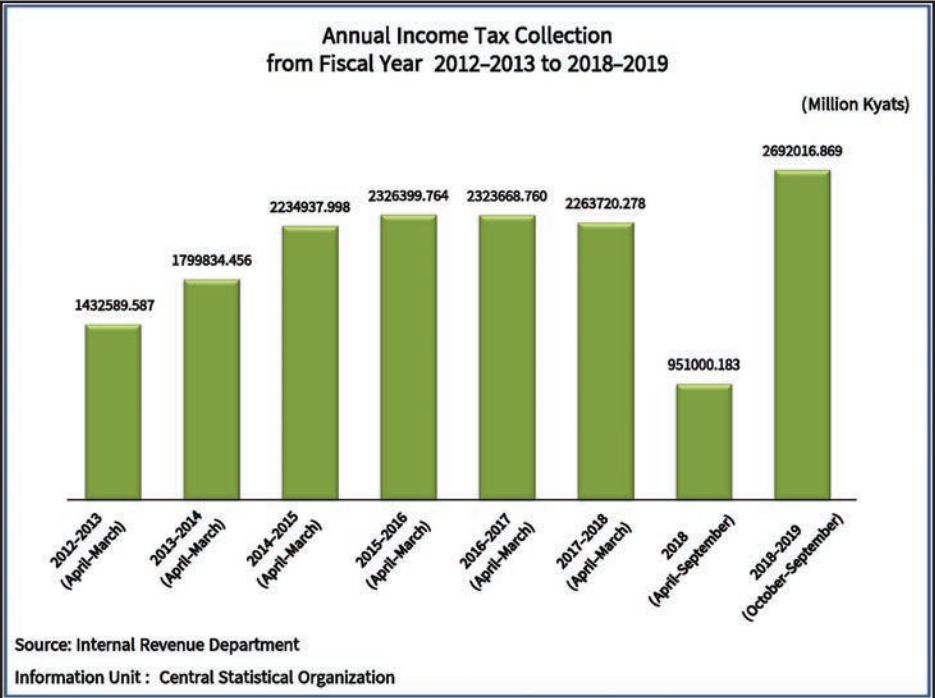
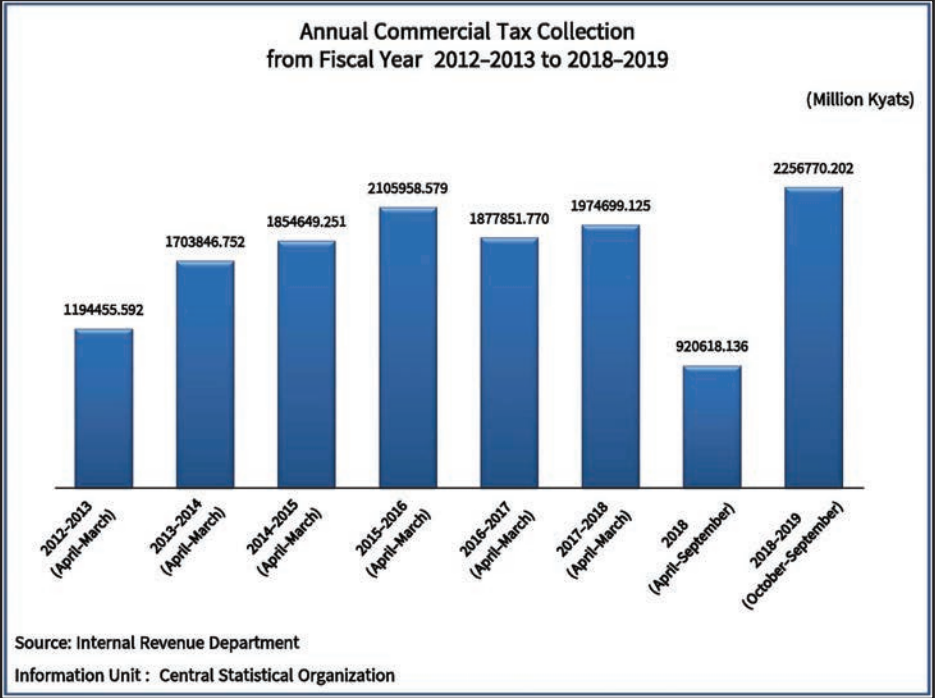
Hong Kong-listed CN-

TIC Vpower Company will invest \$363.070 million in the generation of 400MW of electricity from LNG, and its supply and sale on an IPP (BOO) basis at the Thakayta power plant in Yangon Region.

Additionally, the company will invest \$140.47 million in the generation of 150MW of electricity from LNG, and the supply and sale of power on an IPP (BOO) basis in Kyaukpau Township of Rakhine State.

Since the 1988-1989 financial year and as of November-end in the current financial year, 21 enterprises have invested \$15.6 billion in the power sector, according to data provided by the DICA.

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)



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Tourists visit destinations by car

FIVE Swiss and 16 Italian tourists traveled to well-known destinations in Myanmar by cars between 30 November and 9 December. They traveled through Tachilek, Kengtung, Namhsan, Inle, Mandalay, Bagan, Monywa, Kalay and left for India via the Tamu border gate.
The tourists came to Myanmar on board nine cars, under an arrangement with Exotic Myanmar Travels and Tours Co Ltd. Their visit was supervised by the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism.
The number of tourists visiting Myanmar has been on the increase after the authorities have established new destinations and reduced the



Swiss and Italian tourists visit Myanmar on their vehicles by crossing the border gate. PHOTO: MOHT

number of restricted areas.
Tourists are arriving by air, sea, and road. They are also traveling through Myanmar in vehicles, motorbikes, and bicycles to explore well-known destinations, beautiful sceneries, and a diverse range of cultures and traditions of the local tribes in Myanmar.
—GNLM
(Translated by Hay Mar)

Yangon-Bagan special train to run during X'mas holidays

By Nyein Nyein

THE Myanma Railways (MR) will operate a special train between Yangon and Bagan during the Christmas holidays, according to the No.7 Division of MR.
The Yangon-Bagan special train will start from 25 December. The train service will be provided for the convenience of government staff and general public visiting cultural sites in Bagan region or making a pilgrimage to the region.
The Yangon-Bagan special train will leave Yangon Central Railway Station at

2:15 pm on 25 December and arrive in Bagan at 9 am on 26 December.
The special train will have three upper class coaches, five ordinary class coaches, and a brake van.
The Yangon-Bagan special train will halt at Thawady, Letpadan, Minhla, Okkpho, Gyobingauk, Zegon, Nattalin, Paungde, Pategon, Thegon, Hsin Hmee Zwe, Shwedaga, Aunglan, Hsatthwar, Taungdwingyi, Myothit, Natmauk, Tharmyar, Pinchaung, Kyaukpadaung, and Sutae stations.
Sale of tickets for upper class and ordinary class will



A locomotive pulling into Yangon Central Railway Station. PHOTO: PHOE KHWAR

start from 23 December. The tickets will be priced at K12,000 for upper class and K4,500 for ordinary class.
MR will sell three Yangon-Bagan tickets per person, according to the No.7 Division of Myanma Railways.
(Translated by Hay Mar)

Police seize heroin, other illegal drugs

A JOINT-TASK force consisting of officers from Tatkon police station seized 2,402 psychotropic tablets from two men identified as Kyaw Lin Oo and Win Zaw Oo after searching their motorcycle near Godown Village, Tatkon Township, on 22 December.
Earlier on the same day, drug enforcement officers arrested two men named Naing Win and Kyaw Latt near Koe Htaung Village, Homalin Township, after discovering 0.44kg of heroin and 890 psychotropic tablets on their persons.
In another incident near the same village, police inspected a package dropped by a suspicious man who fled and discovered 0.22kg of heroin

and 20,960 psychotropic tablets within. Police also raided a house in the same village, resided by two people named Tun Win and Daw Thaung May, and confiscated 0.699kg of heroin and K1,350,000 inside the house.
On the evening of 22 December, drug enforcement officers arrested a man named Lauk Si on the Muse-Mandalay road near Oriental toll gate, Hsenwi Township, after discovering 0.528kg of heroin inside the car he was driving.
In an unrelated incident on the same day, arrested two men named Lin Htet Aung and Ko Phyto near Palilin junction on the Zale-Ayetharyar road in Taunggyi after discovering



A suspect named Lauk Si seen together with seized drugs. PHOTO: MPF

1,930 psychotropic tablets in their possession.
Police have opened cases against all suspects under relevant sections of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law, according to Myanmar Police Force.—GNLM
(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

NREC Ministry holds first 4 monthly meeting for 2019-2020 FY

THE Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation held the first 4 monthly meeting of 2019-2020 financial year at the Forest Department in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning.

In his opening remark, Union Minister U Ohn Win said the Forest Department distributed 13 million saplings before this monsoon, and called for plantation of these saplings in respective states and regions.

He also said both tree planting and logging are important for the country as 83 per cent of the country's population is relying on the forests. Timber export could increase the country's revenue, and that illegal trade of log must be prevented.

Sagaing Region has possessed the best forest area of



Union Minister U Ohn Win delivers the speech at the first 4 monthly meeting of 2019-2020 financial year at the Forest Department in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

the country, and timber production should be resumed in accordance with the plans in 2019-2020 financial year.

Areas of reserved/natural forests have doubled in four years, compared with those in 28 years ago.

Myanmar has set up 2,065 community forests before the current administration, and 2,866 during the term of this government, totally 4,931 units of these forests.

The Union Minister also explained a US\$200 million

loan from the World Bank, reforestation plans and mining business in line with the article 16 of Forest Law.

He also discussed inspection of sawmills and reforestation plans for dry zones of the country.

The meeting was attended by Deputy Minister, Nay Pyi Taw Council member and natural resources and environmental ministers for Region/State governments.—MNA

(Translated by Aung Khin)

MOI conducts 2nd Media and Information Literacy Course for MRTV staff in Yangon

THE Ministry of Information is organizing the second Media and Information Literacy Course at the Studio (A) of MRTV in Yangon.

Deputy Minister for Information U Aung Hla Tun made an opening remark of the course yesterday morning.

He said the speedy development of digital technologies has promoted lifestyles of people across the world, and common people are searching information and entertainment programmes on mobile phones which have amounted to 120 per cent of the country's population.

The Deputy Minister also emphasized the importance of media and information literacy in scrutinizing fake news, rumours, hate speech and false information, adding that the course is intended to help MRTV staff understand accountability and responsibility in using internets.

The two-day course is attended by a total of 70 MRTV officers and staff members.

The first course of its kind was conducted at MRTV in Tatkon, Nay Pyi Taw, last month.—MNA

(Translated by Aung Khin)



Deputy Minister U Aung Hla Tun delivers the opening speech of the 2nd Media and Information Literacy Course at the MRTV in Yangon. **PHOTO: MNA**

Boeing ousts Muilenburg, names Chair David Calhoun as CEO



Boeing replaced Dennis Muilenburg as CEO amid the protracted 737 MAX crisis. **PHOTO: AFP**

NEW YORK (United States) _ Boeing on Monday replaced its embattled chief executive, Den-

nis Muilenburg, saying a change was necessary as it attempts to restore its reputation amid the

protracted 737 MAX crisis.

Boeing named board Chairman David Calhoun as chief executive and president, saying the company needed to “restore confidence” and “repair relationships with regulators, customers and all other stakeholders.”

The company pledged to “operate with a renewed commitment to full transparency, including effective and proactive communication with the FAA, other global regulators and its customers.”

The aerospace giant's financial picture remains clouded following the global grounding of the MAX in March after two deadly crashes.

The move comes a week after Boeing took the monumental step of temporarily shutting down MAX production because of the crisis, which has pushed the aircraft's return to the skies into 2020.

Muilenburg will exit the company immediately but Calhoun, a former General Electric aviation executive, will not take the CEO post until January 13, 2020, while he exits existing commitments, Boeing said in a news release.

During that period, Chief Financial Officer Greg Smith will serve as interim CEO.

Muilenburg's response to the crisis has been increasingly criticized as the MAX grounding has

dragged on far longer than initially expected as more disturbing details have dribbled out about the certification of the MAX.

He has also been seen as tone deaf and awkward towards families of the 346 people killed in the crashes.

After enduring two withering congressional hearings in the fall, Muilenburg's leadership came under further scrutiny this month when the Federal Aviation Administration called the company out for overly-optimistic timeframe for restoring the MAX that the agency said created the perception that Boeing was trying “to force FAA into taking quicker action.”—AFP

Standardized packaging for tobacco products major health milestone

SMOKING and consumption of tobacco products kill more than 60,000 people every year in Myanmar. Tobacco products, including cigarettes, can cause at least 16 different cancers of the body, including lung cancer, cancers of the mouth, larynx, pharynx, esophagus, bladder, kidney, pancreas, liver, cervix, stomach, colon, and rectum.

According to a survey conducted by the World Health Organization in 2014, the prevalence of risk factors for contracting non-communicable diseases was one for 94 per cent of the people and three to five for about 19.6 per cent of the people.

Though we have been trying our best to reduce tobacco use for several years, the number of smokers and tobacco-related diseases are on the rise in Myanmar. There has been an economic cost of smoking — Myanmar has lost about 3.3 per cent of its GDP due to consumption of tobacco products.

If Myanmar fails to control smoking and consumption of tobacco products, the country will face a huge public health problem in five years and that could lead to losses in all sectors, including health and economy.

If Myanmar fails to control smoking and consumption of tobacco products, the country will face a huge public health problem in five years and that could lead to losses in all sectors, including health and economy.

Not only has the figure for tobacco use risen steadily since, it has also been predicted that cancer deaths will increase by over two-thirds by 2030.

Standardized packaging is one strategy that is being used to reduce and end the manufacture, trade, and sale of cigarettes and tobacco. It has been found effective in reducing consumption of tobacco products among youths in other countries. Non-smokers and kids are less likely

to use cigarettes or tobacco products with the implementation of standardized packaging. Therefore, it should be implemented as soon as possible in Myanmar, in accordance with the suggestions made by the Attorney General's Office.

To implement standard packaging, an appropriate strategy and work processes need to be drawn up, and sector-wise duties and responsibilities need to be assigned to ministerial departments and organizations.

That would be a major tobacco control milestone in Myanmar. Standardized packaging with enlarged and graphic health warnings reduces the attractiveness of tobacco products and ensures consumers are not misled on the many harmful effects of tobacco.

Standardized packaging includes a graphic picture of tobacco's ill effects on the body and a logo-free brand name written in plain font. The introduction of standardized (or 'plain') packaging was recommended by the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) guidelines.

This recommendation was based on evidence around tobacco promotion in general and studies which examined the impact of changes in packaging on knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and behavior.

Standardized packaging would a significant step towards helping Myanmar citizens adopt a smoke-free lifestyle.



Downtown Yangon to get national library in 2020

By Maung Hlaing (Sarpay Beikman)

GOOD news must be shared. Grandpa said so while I was in my childhood. This valuable guidance always make me share good news whenever I hear it. Now, a little bird has whispered to me that we are going to have our National Library in Yangon in 2020. Book-worms of Yangon will be everjoyed at the news for sure. It is simply because they are thirsting for having the National Library in the heart of the city to which common people can have easy access.

There is no city (of a country) in the world that is not proud of its own modern and splendid National Library.

No one can deny that wider knowledge is essential for building a nation towards development of race, language and religion. While the government is deeply engaged on political, economic and social reforms, it never loses sight of dissemination of knowledge.

What then is the best way to disseminate knowledge? This is none other than to build libraries in the country. To achieve this and, the government has opened libraries in various townships throughout the states and regions. Objectively, I cannot tell the exact number of public libraries all over the country. (According to the statistics of 2011, a total of 55,755 village libraries have been opened nationwide with the investment of over 11 billion kyats. However, the number remains a puzzle to

me.) We can assume that reading rooms, or libraries the Information and Public Relations Department has already established in rural areas may be called 'Public Libraries'.

According to the World Book Encyclopedia (Vol.12), public libraries range in size from huge city, borough, or country libraries with dozens of branches to small-town Libraries that occupy only one room. No matters what their size or where they are located, all public libraries have the same goal—to be of maximum service to their community.

In this way, public libraries aim to serve all members of a community:—children, young adults, and people from all walks of life. People use public libraries for schoolwork, for their jobs, and for leisure activities. Whatever it may be, such libraries, therefore,

The National Library (Yangon) would benefit the country as it would be widely used by the common people as well as professionals.

stock a variety of books and other materials and provide services for members of the community.

Generally, when we talk about libraries, we cannot skip the role of public libraries among various



PHOTO: ZAW MIN LATT

Guinness World Records—are inviting the people from all walks of life including students, teachers, businessmen, service personnel, scholars and so on.

Among them, the National Library is the one that shows the national prestige value. Nations of the world do show their prestige value of owning their national libraries.

While I was in public service, I had been to national libraries of Thailand, Japan and Pakistan. I saw the librarians, and the service personnel talk pride of working in such libraries and they boastfully

talk about their national libraries.

During my stay in Washington DC. on 2016, I chanced to visit the Library of Congress. According to the pamphlet they gave me, The Library of Congress is the world's largest repository of knowledge and creativity, with a growing collection of more than 162 million items, including books, print materials, sound recordings, photographs, maps, sheet music, motion pictures and manuscripts in more than 470 languages. I was told that the Library of Congress was established in 1800.

When I visited such a big and

grand library of world standard, I could visualize our National Library which was located in Yankin Township where common people hardly visit.

However, it was the Global New Light of Myanmar of 28-11-2019 issue that carried an item of good news on the visit of President U Win Myint to the National Library (Yangon) located on Merchant Street in Pabedan Township. Regarding the reports, the President remarked that the National Library (Yangon) was intended for citizens from all social strata, and that it was relocated to the hub of Yangon City to promote the general knowledge and intellectual capacity of the people and that it would be beneficial to the country. And the President also remarked that the National Library (Yangon) would benefit the country as it would be widely used by the common people as well as professionals.

May I recount the story. In 28 July 2016, a coordination meeting took place at the Presidential Palace in Nay Pyi Taw to discuss the relocation of the National Library to a convenient environment in the commercial hub of Yangon City. The meeting reached an agreement to move the library from Yankin Township to Pabedan Township. Exactly, the new location of the National Library is at No.604/ 608, Merchant Street, Pabedan Township in Yangon.

SEE PAGE-10

2020, 72nd Anniversary Independence Day National Objectives

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

President's Office continues announcement of illegal drug arrests, seizures acting on tip-offs

The Office of the President issued Press Release 47/2019 yesterday, publicly announcing the Ministry of Home Affairs' arrests and seizures in the fight against illicit drug trafficking up till 21 December.

The ministry made the arrests, acting on information, sent to the Drug Activity Special Complaint Department of the Office of the President as of 21 December .

The full text of the press release will be reported in the 25 December issue of The Global New Light of Myanmar. — GNLM

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.).— Editorial Department, The Global New Light of Myanmar

No.	Facility	Receiving health care		Total No.
		National races	Muslims	
1	Sittwe General Hospital	28,236	869	29,105
2	Thet Ke Pyin Hospital	-	9,748	9,748
3	Hospitals in Maungdaw District	63,282	7,676	70,958
4	Mobile Medical Services	44,776	148,148	192,924
	Total	136,294	166,441	302,735

Regular vaccination



Vaccination in Progress in Rakhine State



Japanese encephalitis	BCG	Pentavalent vaccine	Oral Poliovirus Vaccine (OPV)	Inactivated Poliovirus Vaccine (IPV)	Acute Pneumonia	Measles and Rubella	Tetanus	Hepatitis B
32,878	36,937	106,917	106,932	35,615	106,693	62,483	73,619	3,450

Health Training

No.	Health Training	National races	Muslims	Total
1	Six-month auxiliary mid-wife training	103	58	161
2	Auxiliary mid-wife refresher training	277	54	331
3	Volunteer public health worker training	86	-	86
4	Auxiliary mid-wife (freshers) training	15	15	30
	Total	481	127	608

Tehran air pollution forces week-long school closure

TEHRAN (Iran) — Schools in Iran’s Tehran province have been ordered shut until Friday due to severe air pollution, authorities announced, extending their closure to a full week.

Tehran city was cloaked by thick toxic smog for a third successive day on Monday that blanketed out landmarks like Milad Tower and the snow-capped Alborz mountains.

“All of Tehran province’s schools... except Firuzkuh and Damavand counties are closed for the week due to increasing air pollution,” governor Mohsen

Bandpey told reporters.

He added that forecasts indicated stable weather and “increasing pollutant density” across urban areas. Average airborne concentration of the finest and most hazardous particles (PM2.5) was at 147 microgrammes per cubic metre in the 24 hours to midday Monday, according to government website [airtehran.ir](#).

That is close to six times the World Health Organization’s recommended maximum of 25 microgrammes per square metre.

Pollution worsens in Tehran during winter, when cold air and

a lack of wind traps hazardous smog over the capital for days on end, a phenomenon known as thermal inversion. Schools in northern Alborz province were also closed for the week, state news agency IRNA quoted the deputy governor as saying.

The measure aims to stop pollution-belching buses from traversing the city while also keeping vulnerable youngsters indoors. Iranian media and officials have however slammed the school closures as a limited measure to address the problem.

— AFP ■



An Iranian woman covers her face as a blanket of smog covers the city as heavy pollution hit the Iranian capital on 15 December 2019. **PHOTO: AFP**

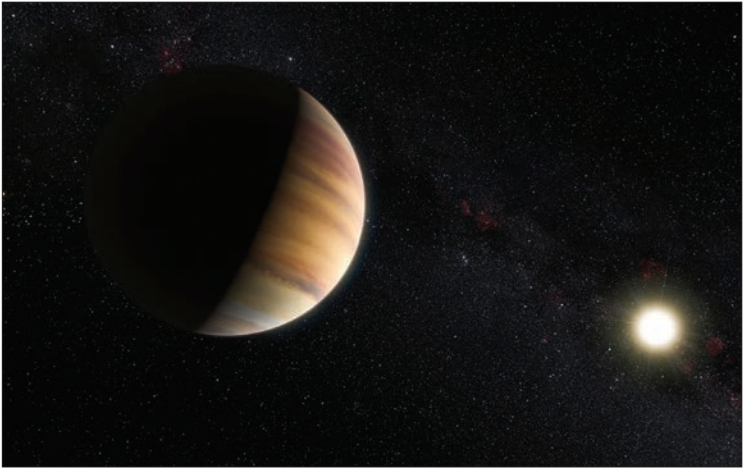
Beijing attacks US for ‘weaponisation’ of outer space

BEIJING (China) — Beijing warned Monday that the US was turning the cosmos into a “battlefield”, after Washington announced a new military arm called the Space Force.

Following concerns that China and Russia are challenging its position in space, US President Donald Trump signed the 2020 National Defense Authorization Act on Friday — which created a new branch of the US military.

Beijing responded by accusing the US of “pursuing the weaponisation of outer space”.

“These actions from the US strongly violate the international consensus of the peaceful use of outer space.... posing a direct threat to outer space, peace, and



Beijing has accused the US of ‘pursuing the weaponisation of outer space. **PHOTO: AFP**

security,” said foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang at a regular press briefing.

Geng called for the interna-

Deadly ‘superbugs’ destroyed by molecular drills: Study

WASHINGTON DC (United States) — Molecular drills have gained the ability to target and destroy deadly bacteria that have evolved resistance to nearly all antibiotics. In some cases, the drills make the antibiotics effective once again.

Researchers at Rice University, Texas A and M University, Biola University and Durham (U.K.) University showed that motorized molecules developed in the Rice lab of chemist James Tour are effective at killing antibiotic-resistant microbes within minutes. According to researchers, “These superbugs could kill 10 million people a year by 2050, way over-

taking cancer,” Tour said. “These are nightmare bacteria; they don’t respond to anything.”

The motors target the bacteria and, once activated with light, burrow through their exteriors. The researchers reported their results in the American Chemical Society journal ACS Nano.

Tour and Robert Pal, a Royal Society University Research Fellow at Durham and co-author of the new paper, introduced the molecular drills for boring through cells in 2017. The drills are paddlelike molecules that can be prompted to spin at 3 million rotations per second when activated with light. — ANI ■

Downtown Yangon to get national library in 2020

FROM PAGE-9

The National Library, indeed, has a long history.

The Bernard Free Library (1883) was handed over to the Ministry of Culture in 1952 and renamed State Library, which was opened at the Jubilee Hall in Yangon on 1st June, the same year. After being renamed National Library, the facility was moved to a building in Pansodan Street and then to Yangon City Hall.

Due to the ups-and-downs of life, the library was moved to former six-storey building before setting in Tamway Township. Then it was moved to Tamway building where it suffered some damages from the Cyclone Nargis in 2008. As a result, the National Library was moved to the old building that belonged to the Office of the Ministry of Forestry



PHOTO: ZAW MIN LATT

at 85 (a), Thiri Mingala Street on Kaba-aye Pagoda Road. As the location was rather far from downtown Yangon, common people except scholars and professionals hardly visit the National Library.

We can be proud of the National Library (Nay Pyi Taw) which is located near the ku-

mudra Circle in Ottra Thiri Township, Nay Pyi Taw. The foundation was laid down in 2010 and the library was open to the public in 2013.

The National Library of Myanmar is one of the national level institutions of the country under the auspices of the Ministry of Re-

ligious Affairs and Culture. The Library provides the services of reference, reading room, periodicals, children corner, photocopying, library and the Internet.

Although Nay Pyi Taw, the capital city of Myanmar, can possess the national image, I have been longing for a grand and impressive one in Yangon. Nay Pyi Taw is Nay Pyi Taw. But as for me, Yangon is Yangon which is known to the reading public and the world as well.

According to the news, some 42,383 rare publications, 38,083 books and 2,467 sets of palm leaves inscribed with ancient literature have been moved to the library and remaining literary items are being located.

Furniture and equipment have been placed. Library management system is undergoing a

detail inspection, together with data entry and linking e-book files with the system.

A library is regarded as one of the best institutions for knowledge, spreading of civilization and uplift of the people.

The new building of National Library which is opposite the Maha Bandoora Park is now waiting for you.

Books and reading materials on various subjects are now inviting you. Why don’t you come and invest your energy in the National Library? It will surely refresh you.

EurekaOur National Library (Yangon) at last!!

Ref:

1. **The Global New Light of Myanmar, 28-11-2019**
2. **The Mirror Daily, 19-12-2019**

Markets wobble as traders wind down for Christmas

LONDON (United Kingdom) — Traders' screens twinkled red and green on Monday as global stock markets wobbled on Monday in a muted start to a holiday-shortened trading week, with many investors already away from Christmas.

Asian equities fluctuated Monday with activity thinning out, while confidence remains buoyed by relief at the China-US trade deal, analysts said.

In Europe, London stocks pushed higher while Frankfurt and Paris appeared to run out of fizz.

"It's been a strong run up to Christmas for the stock markets and it seems traders are taking a little breather in this shortened trading week," said analyst Craig Erlam at trading firm Oanda.

"It's been a good few weeks for investors, spurred primarily by the de-escalation in the trade war, with Trump ... claiming it will be signed very shortly."

Global equities have enjoyed a flourish as they head towards the end of the year, having been on a roller-coaster ride for 12 months owing to the long-running trade row and Brexit.

And observers say that with those two major issues cleared up for now, 2020 could see a healthy run-up in prices, boosted by looser central bank monetary policy as well as signs of improvement in economies around the world.

Traders were still breathing a sign of relief after Britain's freshly-elected parliament approved Prime Minister Boris Johnson's divorce deal with the European Union.

"The passing of Boris' Brexit withdrawal bill on Friday means MPs in the UK can finally relax and enjoy all of the festivities that this time of year brings," added Erlam.

Wall Street provided yet another record-breaking lead on

Friday after data confirmed the US economy enjoyed reasonable growth in the third quarter, while other reports showed personal income and consumer confidence improving.

The New York gains lent some support to Asian markets but dealers there struggled to build any momentum.

Hong Kong finished up 0.1 percent and Tokyo was barely moved, while Shanghai sank more than one percent.

With very little by way of market-moving events on the horizon, analysts are expecting a quiet week.

"It has been a quiet morning in Europe as dealers are winding down for Christmas," noted CMC Markets analyst David Madden.

"As it is Christmas week, market volatility is low, and trading ranges are small, so it is possible today's movements are not a true reflection of market sentiment." —AFP ■



File photo taken on 26 April 2019, shows Japan's Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry in Tokyo. **PHOTO: KYODO NEWS**

Gov't mulls method of releasing Fukushima's radioactive water

TOKYO — The industry ministry on Monday proposed measures for discharging radioactive water from the Fukushima nuclear complex that involve releasing it into the sea, vaporizing it, or a combination of both, citing limited risks to human health.

The proposals were submitted to a government subcommittee, more than eight years after the nuclear crisis in 2011 triggered by a major earthquake and tsunami, as space for storing water, which has been treated but is still contaminated with low-toxicity radioactive tritium, at the crippled nuclear plant is fast running out.

The government has been unable to dispose of the water, as local fishermen and residents have expressed concerns about its potential impact on food and the environment.

Widespread concerns remain as well, with 22 countries and regions still restricting imports of Japanese agricultural and fishery products in the wake of the disaster as of September.

The subcommittee had studied other options, including discharging the water into the soil, using electrolysis to hydrogenate tritium, as well as encasing and burying it. But the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry suggested narrowing down the proposals to "realistic" options to accelerate discussions.

The methods of the three options selected have been tested and proven both domestically and abroad. Still, some subcommittee members said there was a "lack of consideration" for possible societal repercussions and reputational damage.

Water used to cool the cores that suffered meltdowns in the

nuclear disaster and groundwater near the plant are currently being collected and stored in tanks on the plant grounds after being treated. More than 1 million tons are already being stored, with the amount increasing daily.

The tanks storing the water are expected to fill up by the summer of 2022, plant operator Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings Inc. has said.

Discharging all the radioactive water, whether into the Pacific Ocean or the atmosphere by vaporization, over the course of a year would only amount to one-1,600th to one-40,000th of the annual rate of radiation that humans are naturally exposed to, according to the ministry.

The third option of combining release into the ocean with vaporization comes as the government seeks to mitigate potential reputational damage to local fishermen, the ministry said.

Still, more discussions are likely to be needed to finalize how to cope with the water.

"I don't think there were objections from a technical perspective on releasing the water into the ocean, or vaporization," a ministry official said after discussions at the meeting.

"But overall, to use the two options as a decision-making base is questionable."

On March 11, 2011, a tsunami inundated the six-reactor plant, located on ground 10 meters above sea level, and flooded power supply facilities. Reactor cooling systems were crippled, and the Nos. 1 to 3 reactors suffered core meltdowns in the world's worst nuclear catastrophe since the 1986 Chernobyl disaster. — Kyodo News ■

Google, Facebook to start locally booking ad revenue in Japan



File photo shows tech giants' logos: (clockwise from top R) Google LLC, Amazon.com Inc. and Facebook Inc. **PHOTO: KYODO NEWS**

TOKYO — Google LLC and Facebook Inc. plan to start locally booking advertising revenue from Japanese operations that was previously posted in other countries with lower corporate tax rates, sources close to the matter said Monday.

The move is apparently in response to global pressure over the tax-saving measures of IT giants, with Google posting its Japanese operations' revenue in Singapore and Facebook transferring income to Ireland.

Amazon.com Inc. has already stopped booking revenue from its Japanese businesses

in the United States and begun declaring income locally, other sources said recently.

Corporate finance experts have said the amount of taxes paid by Google and Facebook in Japan has been too small given the size of their operations in the country.

The two IT giants, which account for over half of the global digital advertising market, are believed to command a similar share of the internet advertising market in Japan, estimated at 1.45 trillion yen (\$13 billion), according to an industry group of internet business firms in Japan.

Google has booked advertising revenue derived from businesses in Japan as that earned through contracts made by its Singapore unit. Since April this year, a Japanese unit of Google has been directly making business contracts with Japanese clients, the sources said.

The shift in Google's practice also coincides with its plan to build a data center in Chiba Prefecture in eastern Japan. Having permanent facilities is a key factor in Japanese authorities' taxation policy for foreign companies.

The Japan unit of Facebook, meanwhile, currently books its advertising revenue from Japanese clients at a unit in Ireland. Its Tokyo-based unit is expected to start declaring locally generated income from next year, the sources said. According to a source close to the National Tax Agency, Facebook units located abroad have covered the expenses of Japanese operations.

The effective corporate tax rates in Ireland and Singapore are 12.5 per cent and 17 per cent, respectively, compared to around 30 per cent in Japan. — Kyodo News ■

Australian PM dismisses 'reckless' calls to curb coal

SYDNEY (Australia) — Under-fire Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison on Monday rejected calls for “reckless” and “job-destroying” cuts to the country’s vast coal industry in the face of a deadly climate-fuelled bush-fire crisis.

Morrison’s conservative government has fiercely defended the lucrative coal industry in Australia, which produces a third of global coal exports and provides work in key swing electoral districts.

“I am not going to write off the jobs of thousands of Australians by walking away from traditional industries,” Morrison told the Seven Network, in one of several morning interviews rejecting calls for further action.

“What we won’t do is engage in reckless and job-destroying and economy-crunching targets which are being sought,” he told Channel 9, responding to calls for more climate-friendly policies.

Morrison’s media blitz came as he sought to limit the political fallout from a much-criticised Hawaiian holiday — taken as bushfires destroyed an area the size of Belgium and unleashed toxic smoke into Australia’s major cities.

Holiday plans have been hit, with national parks closing camp sites and the main coastal road linking Sydney with southeastern beach towns again shuttered due to the impact of fires.

Conditions eased markedly on Monday, but authorities said in the last few days almost 200 homes have been damaged by fires in South Australia and New South Wales. Authorities said little was left of the small town of Balmoral, southwest of Sydney, where 67-year-old artist Steve Harrison told public broadcaster ABC he had been forced to weather the fire from a make-shift kiln. —AFP ■



Fires have destroyed most of the town of Balmoral. PHOTO: AFP

Iraqis step up protests as deadline for new PM looms



Iraqi demonstrators gather afresh in Tahrir Square in the capital Baghdad on Sunday, as the latest deadline for the appointment of a new premier looms. PHOTO: AFP

BAGHDAD (Iraq) — Thousands took to the streets in Iraq’s capital and across the south Sunday to protest against Iran’s kingmaking influence, as the latest deadline for choosing a new prime minister loomed.

Anti-government rallies have rocked Baghdad and the Shiite-majority south since October 1, with demonstrators calling for a complete overhaul of a regime they deem corrupt, inefficient and overly beholden to Tehran. “The revolution continues!” shouted one demonstrator at a protest encampment in central Diwaniyah.

Protesters blocked off public buildings one by one in the southern Iraqi city and put up banners reading, “The country is under construction — please excuse the disruption”. As the clock ticked

closer toward Sunday’s midnight deadline for choosing a new premier, the demonstrators stepped up their protests, blocking highways and roads across the south of Iraq with burning tyres.

The deadline for parliament to choose a new prime minister to replace Adel Abdel Mahdi, who quit last month, has already been pushed back twice by President Barham Saleh. Officials say Iran wants to install Qusay al-Suhail, who served as higher education minister in the government of Abdel Mahdi.

“This is exactly what we oppose — Iranian control over our country,” said 24-year-old student Houeida, speaking to AFP in Baghdad’s Tahrir Square, the epicentre of the protests.

The demonstrators cate-

gorically reject Suhail’s candidacy, along with anyone from the wider political establishment that has been in place since dictator Saddam Hussein was deposed in 2003.

“Hundreds of martyrs have fallen and they are still not listening to our claims”, said 21-year-old student Mouataz, in Tahrir Square. “We want a prime minister with integrity, but they bring back a corrupt man in their image whom they will allow to continue robbing us,” he added.

Parliament speaker Mohammed al-Halbussi on Sunday travelled to Arbil, capital of the Kurdish autonomous region in northern Iraq, to discuss who could become the next premier, the presidency there said. —AFP ■

Croatian president to face leftist ex-PM in run-off

ZAGREB (Croatia) — Croatia’s conservative president narrowly made it to a run-off election against a leftist former premier on Sunday, after a nationalist folk singer won over a large chunk of her camp’s far-right wing.

The hotly contested first round vote signalled the appeal of populism in a Balkan country struggling with an influx of migrants at its borders, an emigration exodus and widespread corruption.

It also leaves Croatia waiting to know who will be head of state as the country takes over the European Union’s rotating presidency in the new year.

With nearly all ballots counted, centre-left former prime

minister Zoran Milanovic took the lead with 29.5 per cent of the vote, according to the electoral commission.

Incumbent President Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic garnered 26.6 per cent, eking out a second place finish just two points ahead of 57-year-old far-right singer Miroslav Skoro. Skoro, whose patriotic folk tunes were a hit in the 1990s, won nearly a quarter of the vote with campaign promises such as pardoning a notorious war criminal and deploying troops to stop migrants at the border. Though Skoro’s nationalist pledges didn’t push him to round two, analysts said the strong showing revealed a clear shift to the right among Croatia’s

electorate. As Grabar-Kitarovic addressed supporters late Sunday, the 51-year-old urged them to

unite for the run-off on January 5.

“Now we have to get together and let’s go for a victory!” she

said, this time describing her opponent Skoro as a “co-candidate on my political spectrum”.

Unite the right

Grabar-Kitarovic became Croatia’s first female president — a largely ceremonial role — in 2015 with the backing of the centre-right HDZ, which has led Croatia for most of the past three decades. She has often wavered between representing moderates and pandering to the nationalist faction. If she fails to unite the two wings of the party in the run-off, analysts say it would spell trouble for HDZ’s moderate Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic when he faces general elections next year. —AFP ■



Incumbent president and candidate of the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) party Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic (c) is congratulated by fellow party members after she made it into the second round of the election to be held on 5 January. PHOTO: AFP

Abe, Xi agree to work to elevate Japan-China ties to new level

BEIJING — Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Chinese President Xi Jinping agreed Monday to work together to elevate bilateral relations to a new level, as Japan prepares for a state visit by the Chinese leader next spring.

Abe and Xi also reaffirmed their cooperation in achieving North Korea's complete denuclearization, a Japanese government source said, with a year-end deadline set by Pyongyang for progress in denuclearization negotiations with the United States looming.

On Xi's planned visit to Japan, Abe told the Chinese president at the outset of their meeting in Beijing, "We want to build a relationship that is suitable for a new era for Japan and China." Xi told Abe, "I am willing to maintain close communication" to raise "Sino-Japanese ties to a new level."

Abe pledged to make Xi's state visit to Japan "meaningful," the Japanese source added.

After their talks, Abe had dinner with Xi before leaving for Chengdu, southwestern China, to attend a trilateral gathering of the Japanese, Chinese and South Korean leaders on Tuesday.

The meeting between Abe and Xi, the first since June on the sidelines of the Group of 20 Osaka summit, was designed to lay the groundwork for Xi's state visit amid a recent thaw in bilateral ties, as Beijing's trade war with Washington has dragged on.

Japan and China have been exploring deeper economic cooperation and increased people-to-people and cultural exchanges, according to Japanese officials. Nonetheless, there are also issues that are of concern to Tokyo, including the pro-democracy demonstrations in Hong Kong and Beijing's assertiveness near the Japanese-controlled Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea as well as in the South China Sea.

Abe conveyed his anxiety to Xi about the situation in Hong Kong, while calling on China to return detained Japanese nationals "as soon as possible," the Japanese source told reporters.

Some lawmakers from Abe's Liberal Democratic Party have questioned Japan's plan to invite Xi as a state guest without such outstanding issues being addressed. After years of frayed relations over war-time history and territory,



Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (l) and Chinese President Xi Jinping shake hands in Beijing. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

Abe visited China in October last year for the first official visit by a Japanese leader in seven years.

The summit meeting of the Chinese, Japanese and South Korean leaders will take place amid concern that North Korea will conduct an intercontinental ballistic missile test.

Chinese Premier Li Keqiang, Abe and South Korean President Moon Jae In are expected to discuss ways to resolve issues related to the Korean Peninsula. The Japanese leader will likely raise the unresolved issue of Japanese nationals abducted

by Pyongyang in the 1970s and 1980s, according to the Japanese officials.

As its nuclear talks with the United States have stalled, North Korea has threatened to take an unspecified "new path" if Washington does not shift from its hard-line stance by the end of this year.

The leaders of the three countries also hope to deepen economic cooperation and promote free trade between them and in Asia under the 16-member Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership that has been negotiated. — Kyodo News ■

Iran's Rouhani calls on Japan to help save nuclear deal

TOKYO — Iranian President Hassan Rouhani on Monday called on Japan to help save the 2015 nuclear deal with practical economic support, welcoming Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's de-escalation initiatives.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran welcomes any efforts and diplomatic initiatives of friendly countries, including Japan, for salvaging the nuclear deal and lifting sanctions (against Iran) as well as de-escalation in the region," Rouhani said in a written reply to questions submitted by

Kyodo News. "Japan can develop its economic and financial ties with Iran in various areas," he said, referring to what Tokyo could do practically to help save the deal that Tehran signed with world powers in 2015 to limit its nuclear activities in return for an end to severe economic sanctions.

The Iranian president also stressed on keeping his country's "good relations" with Japan and welcomed any Japanese initiatives that could promote bilateral economic and financial relations. — Kyodo News ■

Delhi HC seeks report on inclusion of forest under regularized area in national capital

NEW DELHI (India) — The Delhi High Court on Monday asked the chief forest conservator of the forest department to clarify whether any encroached forest is included in recently regularized 1,731 colonies area in the national capital.

A bench by Justices G S Sistani and Anup J Bhambhani asked the forest department to file an affidavit in this regard by January 23, next year. The hearing on the matter will take place the same day. The court was hearing a

public suit initiated by it in 2015 on the issue of poor air quality in the national capital. The court's query came after Amicus Curiae Kailash Vasudev, who was appointed to assist the court in the case, raised apprehension that encroached forest area could get regularized under the Centre's regularization policy. Meanwhile, the chief forest conservator, who was present in the court, said none of the encroached forest areas has been included in the regularization policy. — ANI ■

China denies allegations of forced labour at Shanghai prison

BEIJING (China) — China Monday denied allegations that prisoners were being used for forced labour, after a British newspaper reported that a London schoolgirl found a message in a Christmas

card claiming to be from inmates at Shanghai's Qingpu Prison.

Supermarket giant Tesco said at the weekend it had stopped production at a factory in China after one of its charity cards

was found to contain a cry for help from a prisoner who made it, according to the Sunday Times newspaper.

Beijing has rebuffed the claims, which it said were "made up".

"I can tell you responsibly that, after seeking clarification from relevant departments, Shanghai Qingpu prison does not at all have ... forced labour by foreign convicts," said foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang at a regular press briefing in Beijing. Geng also attacked

former journalist Peter Humphrey who wrote the article — who was himself detained in Qingpu prison until his release in 2015 — and said he had invented a "farce" to "hype himself up".

The note written in the card asked the person who found it to contact Humphrey, who then took the story to the Sunday Times. "We are foreign prisoners in Shanghai Qingpu Prison China," said the message, in a charity card featuring a kitten in a Santa hat. — AFP ■



Supermarket giant Tesco. PHOTO: AFP

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Consignees of cargo carried on MV MADRID TRADER VOY.NO. (951 W) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 24-12-2019 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of MITT/TMT where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S MCC TRANSPORT (S'PORE)
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Force is still with 'Star Wars,' with massive N.America opening

LOS ANGELES (United States)— The force is clearly still with the galactic good guys, as "Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker" opened with a massive estimated take of \$175.5 million in North America, industry watcher Exhibitor Relations reported Sunday.

The Disney film scored the third biggest December debut ever, behind only the two earlier chapters in the "Star Wars" sequel trilogy, "The Force Awakens" and "The Last Jedi," according to Variety.

"Rise of Skywalker," directed by J.J. Abrams and starring Adam Driver, Mark Hamill, Daisy Ridley and Oscar Isaac, blew away the weekend's competition.

Its domestic take was nearly seven times that of the No. 2 movie, Sony's game-inspired "Jumanji: The Next Level," which booked \$26.1 million for the Friday-through-Sunday period. It stars Jack Black, Dwayne ("The Rock") Johnson and Kevin Hart.

In third was another Disney product, "Frozen II," at \$12.3 million. The animated film recounts the return to Arendelle



British actor Daisy Ridley poses with stormtroopers upon arrival for the European premiere of Disney's "Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker" in London on 18 December 2019. PHOTO: AFP

and the magical animated world of Queen Elsa (voiced by Idina Menzel) and the gang.

Fourth place went to Universal's film adaptation of Andrew Lloyd Webber's "Cats," at \$6.5 million. Tom Hooper, critically acclaimed for his work on "The King's Speech" and "The Danish Girl," directed the movie.

But despite an all-star cast including Ian McKellen, Judi Dench, Jennifer Hudson, Idris

Elba and James Corden, the musical has received stunningly bad reviews (the Guardian called it a "dreadful hairball of woe," while for the Wall Street Journal it was "a confusing litter box of intentions").

In fifth spot was Lionsgate's droll murder mystery "Knives Out," at \$6.1 million. Daniel Craig plays a Southern detective hired to unravel the bloody death of a wealthy patriarch.—AFP ■

Museums join to carry forward Yellow River cultural heritage

ZHENGZHOU — A museum alliance was established Monday in Zhengzhou, capital of central China's Henan Province, in a bid to better preserve and carry forward the cultural heritage of the Yellow River.

The alliance, which consists of 45 museums from nine provincial-level regions along the Yellow River, was proposed by Henan Museum, which was elected the first convenor on a two-year term.

A series of exhibition tours will be launched by the alliance, showcasing treasures from the area that reflect the Yellow River civilization.

"The Yellow River basin took the political, economic and cultural center stage for two-thirds of the more than 5,000 years of the Chinese civilization," said Guan Qiang, deputy head of the National Cultural Heritage Administration.

The establishment of the alliance will help build a comprehensive system to protect the cultural value of the Yellow River, Guan noted. Ma Xiaolin, curator of Henan Museum, said the alliance will strengthen academic research and exchanges to further explore the value of cultural heritage along the Yellow River. — Xinhua ■

Elephants in Thailand 'broken' for lucrative animal tourism

BAN TA KLANG (Thailand)— Separated from their mothers, jabbed with metal hooks, and sometimes deprived of food — many Thai elephants are tamed by force before being sold to lucrative tourism sites increasingly advertised as 'sanctuaries' to cruelty-conscious travellers.

Balanced precariously on hind legs, two-year-old Ploy holds a ball in her trunk and flings it towards a hoop, one of many tricks she is learning in Ban Ta Klang, a traditional training village in the east.

Here young elephants are "broken" to interact with tens of millions of tourists who visit Thailand every year, many eager to capture social media-worthy encounters of the kingdom's national animal playing sports, dancing and even painting.

Villagers in Ban Ta Klang who have been working with the large, gentle animals for gener-

ations say taming is necessary for safety reasons and that the force is not excessive.

"We do not raise them to hurt them... if they are not stubborn, we do nothing to them," said mahout Charin, as he stroked Ploy's head affectionately and spoke of her as part of his family.

Charin makes about \$350 a month in a profession that was handed down from his father and grandfather.

"I have always lived with them," he added.

But animal welfare advocates argue the taming technique — where babies are removed from the care of fiercely devoted mothers at the age of two — is cruel and outdated.

It is also little-known, one of many murky aspects of an evolving elephant tourism trade often kept from view of tour operators and travellers.—AFP ■



Winners of the lottery traditionally return to the bureaux where they bought their ticket to celebrate. PHOTO: AFP

Winners of world's richest lottery 'El Gordo' celebrate

MADRID (Spain) — Winners of Spain's "El Gordo" lottery were celebrating Sunday after more than two billion euros were paid out as the lucky numbers were announced live on national television.

"El Gordo", or "The Fat One", is the world's richest lottery, paying out millions of euros every year to multiple winners.

A single lottery office in the resort town of Salou in the north-east Catalan region, shared out 320 million euros (\$354 million), Spanish television station TVE reported. Such are the riches that can be won, Spaniards spent more than 2.9 billion euros on lottery tickets in the hope of getting lucky — three percent more than the previous year, organisers

said. Children sang out the lucky numbers on the televised show. The winners are often members of the same family or work colleagues, who pool together to buy a share of a ticket.

Thus if 10 people buy a share in a ticket which wins the top prize paid out, which is four million euros, then each will receive 400,000 euros.—AFP ■



Young elephants are "broken" to interact with tens of millions of tourists who visit Thailand every year, many eager to capture social media-worthy encounters of the kingdom's national animal playing sports, dancing and even painting. PHOTO: AFP

Prison clashes leave 36 dead in Honduras

TEGUCIGALPA (Honduras) — At least 36 people were killed in weekend clashes in Honduran prisons as the military and police try to regain control after a spate of murders linked to the criminal gangs plaguing the country.

On Sunday afternoon, 18 gang members died in a clash between inmates at El Porvenir prison, 60 kilometers (40 miles) north of the capital Tegucigalpa.

“Firearms, knives and machetes” were used in the brawl, which also left 10 wounded, Lieutenant Jose Coello, a spokesman for the National Inter-Institutional Security Force (Fusina), told local media.

On Friday night, 18 prisoners died and 16 were wounded in a shooting at the prison in the port town of Tela, northwest of the capital.

The killings came shortly after President Juan Orlando

Hernandez — grappling with a wave of prison killings — ordered the army and the police on Tuesday to take control of the country’s 27 prisons, which are badly overcrowded with some 21,000 inmates.

The security forces later said they were deploying about 1,200 military and police in 18 facilities classified as “high risk.”

Hernandez announced the crackdown after the killings on 14 December of five members of the feared MS-13 gang by a fellow detainee at the high-security prison in La Tolva, east of Tegucigalpa.

That came just a day after Pedro Idelfonso Armas, the warden of Honduras’s main high security prison in Santa Barbara, El Pozo, was shot dead in the south of the country. The security ministry had suspended Armas shortly before his death, amid an investigation into his presence during



Honduras suffers from one of the highest homicide rates in the world outside areas of armed conflict. PHOTO: AFP

the 26 October murder of Magdaleno Meza, a drug kingpin whose confession and notebooks linked him to the president’s brother, Juan Antonio “Tony” Hernandez.

Meza’s account books were used as evidence in the New York trial of Hernandez, who was subsequently convicted on four counts of drug trafficking.

He faces sentencing — possibly for life — in January.

The president condemned the conviction of his younger brother, saying it was based on “the testimony of confessed assassins.” A video circulating on social media shows the 52-year-old Armas talking with Meza when prison guards opened a

locked gate, allowing a dozen inmates to burst in to stab and fatally shoot him. In statements to the AFP, Meza’s lawyer, Carlos Chajtur, publicly accused the government of having ordered his client to be killed in retaliation for having collaborated with US justice in the trial against Hernandez. — AFP ■

Taliban claim attack that killed US soldier in Afghanistan

KABUL (Afghanistan) — The Taliban claimed responsibility for an attack Monday on American troops that killed one US soldier and, according to the insurgents, wounded several more.

The killing is likely to have consequences for ongoing talks between the US and the Taliban. President Donald Trump in September declared negotiations “dead” after the Taliban killed a US soldier in a Kabul bombing.

Negotiations have since re-

started in Doha, but were earlier this month put on a “pause” following yet another bombing, this time at the Bagram air base north of Kabul.

In a WhatsApp message to AFP, Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said insurgents “blew up an American vehicle in Char Dara district of Kunduz” overnight Sunday-Monday. He said “several” other US and Afghan forces were also wounded.

US Forces-Afghanistan said

one American service member was “killed in action” on Monday.

A US official told AFP that the service member had been inspecting a weapons cache when it exploded.

“This was not the result of an attack as the enemy claims,” the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Kunduz province is in northern Afghanistan and has been the site of repeated insurgent attacks and attempts to seize Kunduz city itself. — AFP ■



US soldiers in Nerkh district of Wardak province. This year has been the deadliest for US forces in Afghanistan since 2015. PHOTO: AFP

Argentina is in ‘virtual default’ says president

BUENOS AIRES (Argentina) — Argentina’s President Alberto Fernandez said Sunday the South American country is in virtual default and compared the situation with the 2001 crisis — the worst in its recent history.

The country is in recession and has suffered 18 months of economic crisis sparked by a currency crash. Its economy is expected to shrink by 3.1 per cent in 2019.

“It is not the same as 2001, but it is similar. At that time poverty was at 57 per cent, today we have 41 per cent poor people; then we had a debt default, today we are in virtual default,” Fernandez said in an interview with TV program La Cornice.

The center-left president came to power on 10 December after defeating liberal Mauricio Macri in the presidential election, and has previously expressed his willingness to pay creditors.

But on Friday the government unilaterally postponed until August paying some 9 billion dollars in maturities, which resulted in the country’s debt being downgraded by rating agencies Fitch and S&P who consider it in selective default.

“This is what we inherited. We cannot face this by paying

the obligations that are falling. We used to have high unemployment, and today we have the same,” Fernandez said, drawing a comparison with the 2001 crisis when Argentina defaulted on \$100 billion.

“What we did not have is the inflationary process that we have now.”

The president obtained political support from Congress on Saturday with the approval of an economic emergency law that will take effect on Monday.

It includes increasing taxes on the upper and middle classes, improving benefits for the most deprived sectors, and imposing a 30 per cent tax on buying and selling currencies.

Fernandez maintained the monthly \$200 limit of buying foreign currency imposed by Macri last August, noting American dollars are now scarce in Argentina — and expensive.

“We have to end this practice of saving in dollars,” he said, referring to the historical habit of Argentines, who buy the dollar as a refuge currency against the country’s inflation.

Argentina has an annual inflation of 55 per cent, and a debt of almost 90 per cent of its GDP. — AFP ■



The attendees of the workshop on MFF-MNL FIFA Connect and AFC Competition Management System and Transfer Matching System pose for a group photo. **PHOTO: MNL**

MFF-MNL FIFA Connect workshop held

A workshop on MFF-MNL FIFA Connect and AFC Competition Management System and Transfer Matching System was held yesterday at the meeting hall of Thuwunna Stadium in Yangon.

The workshop was attended by Myanmar Football Federation general secretary U Ko Ko Thein, CEO of Myanmar National League U Soe Moe Kyaw, in-charge of MFF turf U Kyaw Lin Htwe, MFF TMS manager U Aung Myo Zaw, managers

of clubs in Myanmar National League I and II, TMS-Club Licensing managers, and officials.

The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) has asked the MFF to use the FIFA Connect System and CMS Online System in the 2020 Myanmar National League.

The workshop was held to discuss the FIFA Connect System, which was tested out by officials from football clubs in 2019. — Kyaw Khin

Leclerc extends Ferrari contract until 2024

MILAN (Italy) — Monegasque driver Charles Leclerc has extended his contract with Ferrari by two years until 2024, the Italian team and driver announced on Monday.

“Extremely happy to announce that I will be staying with Scuderia Ferrari for five more years,” the 22-year-old said on Twitter.

Leclerc impressed in his first season alongside four-time world champion Sebastian Vettel, finishing fourth in the 2019 world championship.

He had seven pole positions, nine podium finishes, with wins at Spa-Francorchamps in Belgium and the Italian Grand Prix in Monza.

Leclerc’s original contract with the Italian stable was until 2022. German Vettel’s contract at Ferrari ends after the 2020 season.

“This past season, driving for the most illustrious team in Formula 1 has been a dream year for me,” said Leclerc.

“I cannot wait to enjoy an even deeper relationship with the team after what has been an intense and exciting 2019.

“I’m keen to see what the future holds and I can’t wait to get going again next season.”

Ferrari team principal Mattia Binotto added: “With each passing race this year, our wish to extend our contract with Charles became ever more self-evident and the decision means he will now be with us for the next five seasons.

“It demonstrates that Charles and the Scuderia have a firm future together.

“Charles has been part of our family since 2016 and we are more than proud of the results we are achieving with our Academy.

“We are therefore very pleased to be able to announce that he will be with us for many years to come and I’m sure that together, we will write many new pages in the history of the Prancing Horse.” — AFP ■

Magwe United striker Zin Min Tun joins Yangon United

MAGWE United F.C.’s striker Zin Min Tun signed a two-year contract with Yangon United F.C. yesterday, according to the Yangon United football club’s Facebook page.

Yangon United said the club was delighted to confirm the signing of a two-year contract

with Zin Min Tun.

Meanwhile, Zin Min Tun, a Myanmar national U-23 player, said: “I am here to lift the trophy because I have never held the title in my entire career. Now, I believe my dream will come true with this great team.”

The 22-year-old striker start-

ed out with the youth team of Magwe in 2015 and spent two years with them. Then, in 2017, he made his first team appearance and during the 2019 season, he picked up the ‘Player of the Month’ award.

Zin Min Tun was selected to represent the nation in 2017 with the U-21 team, and debuted on the Myanmar national U-22 team in 2018. He was also on the Myanmar national U-22 team at the 30th SEA Games, which concluded recently in the Philippines.

“I can’t wait to get into the squad and show my performance. And, please support me and I will give my hundred per cent to the team,” said Zin Min Tun.

Zin Min Tun is a member of the Myanmar national football team and made his national team debut on 30 March, 2015 against Indonesia. — Kyaw Khin



Striker Zin Min Tun holds the insignia of Yangon United FC upon his arrival to the team. **PHOTO: MNL**

Lazio return to heroes welcome as Ronaldo loses first final in over five years

ROME (Italy) — Lazio returned to a heroes welcome in Rome on Monday after their thrilling 3-1 Italian Super Cup victory over Juventus in Riyadh which ended Portuguese star Cristiano Ronaldo’s five-year victorious run in finals.

Ronaldo had been on a run of 12 consecutive wins with Portugal, Juventus and Real Madrid going back to the Spanish Super Cup in August 2014.

And the 34-year-old five-time

Ballon d’Or winner’s frustration was obvious as he quickly took the silver medal off his neck and did not wait to see Lazio lift the trophy for a fifth time. Simone Inzaghi’s side have won the Cup twice in the past three years, having also beaten Juventus 3-2 in 2017.

The Roman-based team landed in the early hours at the city’s Fiumicino airport where they were greeted by 1,000 fans, waving the club’s white and blue flags, scarves and banners.

“We’re doing something incredible, between the eight wins in a row (in the league) and this victory in the Cup,” said Luis Alberto, who scored the opening goal. “Lazio have confirmed that they are a great team, with a winning mentality and great players.”

Ronaldo has played two finals since joining Juventus from Real Madrid in 2018, scoring the winner to beat AC Milan 1-0 in the Italian Super Cup in January 2019. — AFP ■



Monegasque driver Charles Leclerc joined the Ferrari Driver Academy in 2016. **PHOTO: AFP**