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THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

Vol. VIII, No. 71, 5th Waning of Nayon 1383 ME

www.gnlm.com.mm

Tuesday, 29 June 2021

Mon State rural people enjoy upgraded roads and bridges for improvement of socio-economic status



ON 3 June 2020, a day in late summer, the car headed to the north from the south, along the Thanlwin River Road in Hpa-an, to Mon State. When reached the Hpa-an Bridge approach road just after Zwekapin hotel, the signboard to Mawlamyine, Mon State, was followed at the intersection.

The Hpa-an-Mawlamyine road is very straight and has been built for many years, but it is still in good condition due to good maintenance. After crossing two cable-suspension

bridges, including the Attaran Bridge, I arrived in Mawlamyine, the capital of Mon State.

There are 2 districts, 10 townships, 19 towns, 106 wards, 368 village-tracts and 1,143 villages with over 2,235,162 population-848,983 people living in towns and 1,541,465 people living in villages in Mon State.

For the rural people in 733 villages, which make up more than 70 per cent of the total population in the state, the Mon State Department of Rural Development built non-seasonal asphalt/

concrete roads in 538 villages in the 2019-2020 Fiscal Year. In addition, efforts are being made to make rural roads accessible in all seasons.

Of the total 960/4.4 miles of rural roads in the whole state, there are 110/0 miles of concrete roads; 323/0 mile of asphalt road, 40/1.3 miles of gravel road; 85/3.1 mile of laterite road, 402/0 miles of earthen road in the 2019-2020 financial year.

It is reported that the earthen roads will be upgraded to asphalt roads, concrete roads,

The road is a useful one for the residents and gardeners living in Thanbyuzayat and Ye townships for many circumstances including education, economy, social and health issues

gravel roads, laterite roads and the wooden and bamboo bridges will be upgraded to natural disaster-resistant reinforced concrete

bridges with a budget for each year for more than 1.5 million rural people living in Mon State.

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Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council Nine Objectives

1. Political affairs

- (a) To build a Union based on democracy and federalism, through a disciplined and genuine multiparty democratic system that is fair and just.
- (b) To emphasize the achievement of enduring peace for the entire nation in line with the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA).
- (c) To continue implementing the principle of peaceful co-existence among countries through an independent, active and non-aligned foreign policy.

2. Economic affairs

- (a) To enhance production based on agriculture and livestock through modern techniques and strengthen all-round development in other sectors of the economy.

- (b) To develop a stable market economy and promote international investment in order to enhance the economic development of the entire National people.
- (c) To promote and support local businesses to create employment opportunities and increase domestic production.

3. Social affairs

- (a) To ensure a strong and dynamic Union spirit, the genuine spirit of patriotism.
- (b) To respect and promote the customs and traditions of all National peoples and preserve and safeguard their cultural heritage and national characteristics.
- (c) To enhance the health, fitness and education quality of the entire nation.

Mon State rural people enjoy upgraded roads ...

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The State Rural Road Development Department constructed 35/6.119 miles of concrete roads, asphalt road (111/0.648) miles, asphalt paving (17/6.46 miles), gravel road (14/0.76 miles), earthen road (39/2.61 miles), totally of 218/0.597 miles of roads were completed for the rural people, with a total of 123 bridges including 54 concrete bridges and 68 box culverts from the financial year 2017-2018 to the budget year 2019-2020.

In addition, in the fiscal year 2020-2021, 5/6.7 miles of asphalt road, asphalt layer (1/0 mile), land expansion (5/5.5 miles), a total of (12/4.2) miles and a concrete bridge are under construction with the Union fund K2013.526 million. A total of 96/1.15 miles of rural roads, 40 concrete bridges and 21 box culverts are being constructed with K16,683.2341 million from the state fund.

The construction of concrete roads (0/3.7 miles), asphalt road (1/4.6) miles, a total of 2/0.4 miles and a box culvert and other operations are underway with

K273.7185 million in the financial year 2020-2021 and the pilot project work is being carried out on rural roads that connect to main roads and cities for the benefits of the state's rural people.

As a pilot project of the State Rural Road Development Department, a total of K4,403.296 million has been spent on upgrading works of the Thanbyuzayat-Panga-Karuppi-Wekalaung-Ankhe-Kawle-Htinshu-Kyaungywa-Anin village road (26/5) miles from 2017-2018 to 2020-2021.

In 2020-2021FY, the officials conducted operations for (3/4) miles of tar road, (3/0) miles of land area expansion and 130ft long bridge over Thabyay creek. Currently, 95 per cent of construction works are completed. The remaining projects to construct six bridges will be implemented in the coming 2021-2022 FY.

The Thanbyuzayat-Pa Nga-Karuppi-Wekalaung-Ankhe-Kaw Lay-Htin Shu-Kyaung Ywar-Anin inter-district road is connected with Hnit Kayin junction to a deep seaport in Than-



byuzayat and Ye townships. It was such a rough dirt road to pass in previous years.

Therefore, the officials constructed a tar road for the local people to facilitate their transportation. The road is a useful one for the residents and gardeners living in Thanbyuzayat and Ye townships for many circumstances including education, economy, social and health issues.

The Panga salt area mainly uses that road and it (the road) also provides the trade flow for a total of 109,447 people of 18,381 households in 28 villages. The road is connected with Myeik road.

The Kyonehaw-Yama Seik bridge in Paung Township of Thaton District in Mon State bears Class (A) road and is located on Phyuba-Thae Gone-Nyaung Gone Gyi-Mya Lay Chaung-Yin Nyein (north) road section. The

place was once just a jetty.

The Kyonehaw-Yama Seik truss bridge is located at (18/4) miles of Phyuba-Thae Gone-Nyaung Gone Gyi-Mya Lay Chaung-Yin Nyein (north) road section and linked with the Yagon-Mawlamyine road section.

The state Rural Road Development Department rebuilt the bridge using K1422.000million of Union/state budget in 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 budget years.

A total of 16,144 people of 16,144 households from 15 villages can use that bridge to transport their farming products.

The Mon State DRRD utilized K3395.553 million of Union/state budget in 2017-2018FY while K2250.055million in 2018-2019 (6months) FY, K13852.836 million in 2018-2019 (12-month) FY, K1565.629 million of Union road budget in 2019-2020FY, K1118.200 million of bridge

budget (Union) in 2019-2020FY, K13564.1255 million of road budget (state) in 2019-2020FY, K2717.170 million of bridge budget (state) in 2019-2020FY, K1593.526 million of road budget (Union) in 2020-2021FY, K420.000 million of bridge budget (Union) in 2020-2021FY, K13710.4721million of road budget (state) in 2020-2021FY and K2972.762 million of bridge budget (state) in 2020-2021FY.

The Mon State DRRD makes concerted efforts to meet the strategic goal of the department like to construct rural roads for 80 per cent of villages and 90 per cent of rural people across the nation in 2030, and for the villages with 1,000 people and above in 2020, 95 per cent of villages with 500 people and above, and 50 per cent of villages with 250 people and below in 2025. — Chan Myae Maung/GNLM



To restore the rule of law

IN line with the motto: “National discipline starts at schools”, it is necessary to initiate the disciplines for the nationals, and students need to abide by school disciplines. The students should pay attention to learning. Disciplines must be realized in respective arenas. Suppose anyone does not follow the law in a democracy. In that case, it is impossible to restore the rule of law and to implement free, fair and clean democracy.

(Excerpt from the speech to the State Administration Council meeting made by the Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council Chairman Senior General Min Aung Hlaing on 25 May 2021)

Union Minister Lt-Gen Yar Pyae joins virtual ASEAN-Russian Federation Summit on Security Affairs

THE ASEAN-Russian Federation Summit on Security Affairs was virtually held yesterday and Union Minister for the Union Government Office Lt-Gen Yar Pyae joined the meeting.

During the meeting, the Secretary of the Security Council of the Russian Federation Nikolai Patrushev and Acting Deputy for Foreign Policy Coordination, Coordinating Ministry for Political, Legal and Security Affairs Dr Pribadi Sutino of Indonesia respectively made an opening speech. Then, the officials discussed the political and security affairs of the ASEAN-Pacific regions.

Union Minister Lt-Gen Yar Pyae also discussed the establishment of proper bilateral relations with ASEAN members countries, their partner countries including Russian Federation after the country became a member of ASEAN in 1997, reliable and strategic partner of Russian Federation, acceleration of political and security cooperation relations between Myanmar and Russian Federation and the united goals for political policies and security affairs in Asia-Pacific region.

The Union Minister then talked about the importance of bilateral relations with the Russian Federation for security challenges, maritime security, energy, terrorism, drugs, illegal migration, human security and



The ASEAN-Russian Federation Summit on Security Affairs was virtually held yesterday and Union Minister for the Union Government Office Lt-Gen Yar Pyae joined the meeting.

food security, the draft of the 2008 Constitution, holding of the free and fair general election in 2010 and transfer of power to the election-winning party.

He also said the 2015 General Election winning party banned the rights of democracy including media freedom and Myanmar kyat prices declined and the community prices were high due to their wrong economic policies.

Moreover, there were election frauds in the 2020 General Election for the winning of one party by using any illegal methods. There was no trust in democracy and the election system for such electoral fraud. However, the winning party recognized the election results and tried to convene Hluttaw. There-

fore, Tatmadaw inevitably took power on 1 February and the State Administration Council maintained the state stability.

He then highlighted the acts of terrorism conducted by the insurgents starting 28 February, the illegal formation of CRPH led by the 2020 election-winning party to do anti-government activities, the establishment of parallel government NUG by CRPH to communicate the international countries and ASEAN to affect the diplomatic relations of SAC and occur the recession.

He also explained the five-point road map of SAC which includes the fact “Upon accomplishing the provisions of the state of emergency, free and fair multiparty democratic elections

will be held in line with the 2008 Constitution, and further work will be undertaken to hand over State duties to the winning party as per democratic standards.”

The Union Minister also added that Myanmar is a country with various ethnic groups and so SAC is making efforts to achieve a Union based on the democracy and federation system that all the people want in addition to the development of political affairs, economy and social status. Moreover, Tatmadaw has still a responsibility to ensure democracy and not to lead to one-party dictatorships. So, it concludes the NCA with the ethnic armed groups and holds the political discussions.

As one of the partner countries of the world countries, My-

anmar is still cooperating with other countries for political and security measures in Asia-Pacific region. The current situations of the country are controlled under the law and it will not affect the security of ASEAN and Asia-Pacific region.

The Union Ministry finally pledged that the country is ready to cooperate in conducting political and security measures in ASEAN regions.

The meeting came to an end with the concluding remarks of Secretary of the Security Council of the Russian Federation, Nikolai Patrushev and Acting Deputy for Foreign Policy Coordination, Coordinating Ministry for Political, Legal and Security Affairs, Dr Pribadi Sutino. —MNA

1,225 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 28 June, total figure rises to 154,385

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to 154,385 after 1,225 new cases were reported on 28 June 2021 according to the Ministry of Health and Sports. Among these confirmed cases, 135,703 have been discharged from hospitals. Death toll stands at 3,309 after 12 died.—MNA

Coordination meeting on national tourism development central committee's first meeting held

UNION Minister for Hotels and Tourism U Maung Maung Ohn attended the coordination meeting on the successful holding of the National Tourism Development Central Committee's first meeting yesterday morning in Nay Pyi Taw.

At the meeting, the Union Minister said the need to follow the COVID-19 rules and regulations set by the Ministry of Health and Sports as the COVID-19 prevention measures are required to be paid special attention.

The Union Minister added the implementations on the tourism development in the country with three steps: Opening of the hotels and tourism as the first step; Promoting domestic tourism as the second; Resumption of



inbound tourism as the third step. As for the first and the second,

hotels and tourism businesses were able to reopen successfully in respective tourist destinations

and plans are underway to develop pilot projects in tour sites. He added the need to coordinate

between the Government and the private sector in the resumption of inbound tourism by inviting the Chinese, Thai and Korean tourists.

He said it is necessary to supervise to ensure that there is no gap in the work of the sub-committees to successfully hold the first meeting of the National Tourism Development Central Committee and he called for a wide-ranging discussion of the ideas and plans and a focus on developing practical action plans at the national-level meeting.

Afterwards, Directors General and officials discussed the ongoing works in the respective sectors and the Union Minister coordinated the meeting.—MNA

Information Team of State Administration Council replies to MRTV telephone inquiries

CAPTAIN Daw Aye Thazin Myint from the Information Team of the State Administration Council clarified the telephone interviews from MRTV as follows:

Q: According to the Khit Thit media report, three military vehicles with 50 soldiers were ambushed by Kalay PDF

on the way from Gangaw to Kalay on 27 June, killing three soldiers. Can you confirm that?

A: There was a clash between the armed terrorists and the security forces near Nat Chaung village, Kalay Township, on Kalay-Gangaw road at around 2:30 pm on 27 June and the armed terrorists retreated in the west after disrupting about 10 minutes. The report of Khit Thit Media that 9 soldiers were killed in an ambush by PDF was fake news.

Q: After a bomb blast in the back of the Immigration Office in No (1) ward, Thamaing, near Bayintnaung bridge, Mayangon Township, Tatmadaw opened fire in the ward, according to the report of Khit Thit Media.



We would like to know the truth.

A: According to the reports of a homemade bomb blast in the corner of Bogyoke Road and 12th road in No (1) ward, Mayangon Township, at around 2:30 pm on 27 June, security forces went to the scene and another homemade bomb exploded near the vehicle of the security forces on the way. The bomb

was dropped from a white colour Honda Fit car on Bogyoke Road and detonated by remote control. Due to the explosion, one member of the security forces and one civilian were injured and the security forces were blocking the roads and searching for the car and there was no shooting in the ward.—MNA



Health and Sports Ministry opens COVID-19 call centre

THE Ministry of Health and Sports opens the COVID-19 call centre at its office in Nay Pyi Taw as of 8 am on 22 June for the reply to queries on health awareness about COVID-19 and facts for abiding by the restrictions to the people on time.

The people can dial the following telephone numbers from 8 am to 9 pm on a daily basis for facts about the COVID-19 disease.

Contact numbers: (1) 067-3411508 (2) 067-3411509

(3) 067-3411144 (4) 09-882557991

(5) 09-882557992 (6) 09-882557993

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ADVERTISING & MARKETING

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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.

gnlmnews@gmail.com www.gnlm.com.mm www.globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

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

State Administration Council

Press Release

Re-invitation to Myanmar citizens who reside in various regions for many reasons

1. Some student youths, State service personnel and citizens, with worries, have evaded to areas of EAOs and foreign countries due to the incitements and intimidation of NLD members, extremist followers, unlawful associations and terrorist groups such as CRPH and NUG, stimulation of CDM, and persons and organizations at home and abroad not wishing to restore peace and stability of the State since Tatmadaw assumed the State responsibilities on 1 February 2021.
2. They are further worried about the dictatorship statement and speeches of unlawful association and terrorist group CRPH and NUG, and some relevant persons. As they face no security guarantee and difficulties in socio-economic life in those areas, they wish to return to their native lands.
3. **The State Administration Council will specifically ease restrictions for service personnel, intellectuals and intelligentsia, and persons from various arenas and citizens who, with worries, absconded from the country except for persons who committed murders, robberies, setting fires, mine explosions and intentional attacks on security troops, those who crowded to attack public service personnel and some people, those who destroyed government and private-owned buildings and those who are highly involved in the CDM activities by providing monetary assistance and other means.**
4. As those who evade their native areas are also citizens, the State Administration Council will arrange their returns from the evaded areas to various parts of Myanmar.
5. As such, the information was released that if those who evaded to various areas, except for persons who committed any kinds of crime, wish to return to their native lands in Myanmar of their own accord due to multiple worries, the citizens abroad can contact nearby ward, village, township and district administration bodies and relevant embassies, military attaché offices and consulates in accord with the easing restrictions under the law.

Information Team
State Administration Council

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SSPP/SSA (Wamhing) group attacks local ethnic people with small arms, grenades in peaceful procession in Namhkam



LOCAL ethnic people from Namhkam and the environs of Shan State (North) staged protests in peaceful procession in their area with no wish to SSPP/SSA (Wamhing) yesterday afternoon. Meanwhile, SSPP/SSA (Wamhing) group attacked the people

with grenades, leaving innocent people dead and injured.

With regard to the event, local ethnic people from Namhkam and environs staged a peaceful procession of protest in Panpwe ground of Ward 5 yesterday afternoon with no

desire to SSPP/SSA (Wamhing) in their area. On arrival at Myoma market, two men from SSPP/SSA (Wamhing) group by motorcycle fired three shots at the crowds with the use of a pistol and attacked them with grenades.

In the incident, two men from the protest were dead and five women were injured with bomb splinters.

The security troops rushed to the scene and performed necessary security measures. In searching there, they seized

one Glock pistol, one magazine, 12 rounds of ammunition and four grenades.

The injured were sent to Namhkam Hospital for treatment, and security troops are conducting the security measures of the area.—MNA

Hundreds imprisoned for unlawful violence in Kayin state

THE Hpa-an Township Court sentenced 126 arrested persons between 4 and 17 June for participating in unlawful violence in Kayin State.

Among them, 60 culprits

were sentenced to two years in prison with labour under Section 505 (A) of the Penal Code; one culprit was sentenced to three months in prison with labour under Section 505 (A)

of the Penal Code; two culprits month each in prison under Section 188 of the Penal Code for violating the curfew; 14 culprits were sentenced to 7 days in prison under Section

47 of the Police Act for rioting on 10 May; 49 culprits were sentenced to one month each in prison under Section 188 of the Penal Code.

It is reported that the

State Administration Council is working for the rule of law under the law to ensure peace and security of the people in the country.—MNA

Myanmar goods trade deficit with Singapore estimated at \$1.38 bln this FY



The Myanmar Customs Department reported that imports surpassed exports in trade with Singapore, with exports reaching over \$117.78 million and imports valued at over \$1.5 billion.

MYANMAR trade deficit in goods with Singapore was estimated at US\$1.38 billion in the past seven months (Oct-Apr) of the current financial year 2020-2021, Myanmar Customs Department's statistics indicated.

The value of Myanmar's bilateral trade with Singapore in maritime trade and border trade topped \$1.624 billion in the past seven months.

The Myanmar Customs Department reported that imports surpassed exports in trade with Singapore, with exports reaching over \$117.78 million and imports valued at over \$1.5 billion.

Singapore is Myanmar's second-largest trading partner in the region, after Thailand. It

accounted for 10.56 pc of total trade in FY2016-2017 with an estimated trade value of \$3.4 billion, 11.59 pc in FY2017-2018 with a trade value of \$4.15 billion, 9.98 pc in the FY2018-2019 with \$3.5 billion and over 12 pc in the FY2019-2020 with \$3.8 billion respectively.

Myanmar exports agricultural products such as broken rice, pulses, sesame seeds, onion, footwear, textile and clothing, minerals, and other products to Singapore, while it imports plastic, fuel oil, edible oil, transport equipment, chemical elements and compounds, wheat flour, pharmaceutical products, dairy product and consumer product. — KK/GNLM

Myanmar pharmaceutical imports top \$303 mln in seven months

THE import value of Myanmar pharmaceutical products was estimated at US\$303.5 million in the seven months (Oct-Apr) of the current financial year 2020-2021, according to Myanmar Customs Department.

Myanmar imports 90 per cent of medicine and medical products through foreign markets, the Myanmar Chamber of Commerce for Pharmaceutical & Medical Device (MCCPMD) stated.

India is the main supplier for Myanmar. Also, it is imported by Bangladesh, China, Germany, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, the

Philippines, Singapore, China (Taipei), Thailand, US and Viet Nam.

Trade has returned to normalcy after panic buying during the coronavirus pandemic. Most commonly prescribed drugs are available in the market. Only some are out of stock for now. At present, pharmaceutical import is regularly flowing. However, the prices of pharmaceuticals were up by 5 to 10 per cent owing to the dollar appreciation.

The Ministry of Commerce has cut the red tape for imports of some pharmaceuticals which have been earlier imported.— KK/GNLM

Luffa gourd cultivation in Sinbaungwe township earns extra income for farmers

THE local people from Innma village in Sinbaungwe township in Magway region are growing vegetables every season on a commercial scale using the underground water systematically.

This year, the luffa gourd cultivation succeeded with abundant yield, generating extra income for the local farmers.

The local villagers from Sinbaungwe township are engaged in the business of growing the vegetables. They are growing the vegetables using the underground water from their own wells. Most of the farmers are cultivating the vegetables

and other crops. The farmers are using the mixed farming system instead of growing a single crop, and this has generated more extra income for the farmers.

This year, the vegetable cultivation has been successful with luffa gourd on top on the list. One packet of luffa gourd seeds is sold for K7,000. Its seeds are cultivated in a two foot pit and each plant should be set four feet apart. The luffa gourd sprouts are sold for K250 per 10 sprouts, which could yield once every five days, said U Win Maung, a local farmer from Innma village.— Cho Cho Win (Township Head)/GNLM

Man Wein post possibly to extend shutdown even after three months



During the first wave of the COVID-19, the driver-substitution system was practised in the border area, which helps lessen the impediments to the trade, yet the current restriction exacerbates the border trade, Muse Rice Wholesale Centre stated.

MAN Wein border post is likely to remain closed in light of the COVID-19 consequences, said U Min Thein, vice chair of Muse Rice Wholesale Centre.

In March-end, the coronavirus cases were detected in Shweli (Ruili) and Kyalgaung areas, prompting China to restrict border access from 30 March at the Man Wein checkpoint, which is a major border crossing between Myanmar and China.

Man Wein border closure is possibly to be extended even after three months shutdown, said U Min Thein.

"There is less possibility to reopen the Man Wein bor-

der post as the COVID-19 cases in Myanmar is surging," U Min Thein elaborated.

Additionally, Man Wein border post is not available for now according to the negotiation with Shweli's Foreign Affairs Department. The border post will resume the trade only after drawing up a detailed project report, the Trade Department (Muse 105th mile trade zone) stated.

Following the closure of Man Wein post, the major export items such as rice, broken rice, various pulses, fishery products, onion and chilli are being delivered to China through Kyinsankyawt post,

which is a major crossing for Myanmar's fruit exports, U Min Thein added.

However, shipping via Kyinsankyawt post caused traffic congestion and delay. Consequently, Myanmar is currently shipping rice and broken rice via the Bhamo-Lwejel route.

During the first wave of the COVID-19, the driver-substitution system was practised in the border area, which helps lessen the impediments to the trade, yet the current restriction exacerbates the border trade, Muse Rice Wholesale Centre stated. — NN/GNLM

China's virus response stars at warm-up show for Communist Party 100th

PRESIDENT Xi Jinping led the applause at Beijing's Bird's Nest stadium late Monday for a spectacular celebration of Communist Party history, with China's rebound from the coronavirus given special treatment.

The event, held under tight security and not broadcast live on television, comes before the 1 July centenary of the party that has shaped the modern history of China, guiding the country from war-torn to superpower status.

The extravagant show — replete with tightly choreographed set-pieces of Communist history, big-screen dedications to key leaders from Mao Zedong to Xi, 100 trumpets and a greeting from a group of Chinese astronauts currently in space — omitted uncomfortable chapters of China's turbulent recent history.

Those include famine, the purges of the Cultural Revolution



People gather to watch fireworks in the distance during an art performance being held at the Bird's Nest national stadium to mark the upcoming 100th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party, in Beijing on 28 June 2021. PHOTO: GREG BAKER / AFP

and the crackdown on student protesters in Tiananmen Square and pro-democracy rebellion in

Hong Kong.

Instead, performers triumphantly punched fists in the air,

danced and gave a theatrical retelling of party highlights — from the foundation of the party in a

Shanghai house in 1921 to Mao's Long March.

A special dedication was given to China's "defeat" of Covid-19, with performers in PPE and soldiers wearing masks.

Xi has carefully reframed the pandemic, which emerged in the central Chinese city of Wuhan, as a victory for party organization and Chinese resilience under his watch. The virus has been virtually squashed within China's tightly-controlled borders, and the economy is on the rebound.

That contrasts with the rolling lockdowns, high death rates and economic ruin that have roiled swathes of the world since the outbreak. Fireworks, typically banned in China's capital city, boomed overhead, as thousands crowded for a view outside the venue — which was constructed for the Beijing Olympics in 2008. — AFP ■

Firefighters tackle blaze in south London



Members of the emergency services work inside a cordon set up around the site of a fire at Elephant and Castle in south London on 28 June 2021. Some 100 firefighters were on Monday tackling a blaze at industrial units in south London as thick smoke billowed across the British capital.

PHOTO: TOLGA AKMEN / AFP

SIX people were treated by medics Monday and one hospitalised after a blaze at industrial units in south London sent

thick smoke billowing across the British capital and disrupted transport.

At its height, some 100 fire-

fighters were sent to tackle the fire in three commercial units under railway arches at Elephant and Castle, near the River Thames.

Six cars and a telephone box also caught fire, London Fire Brigade (LFB) said.

London mayor Sadiq Khan said the fire was brought under control, but the ambulance service said it treated six people at the scene including for smoke inhalation, and took one of them to hospital.

"I want to thank our brave emergency services... who acted quickly to ensure both residents and passengers at the nearby station were safely evacuated," Khan said. — AFP ■

US warns Russia not to veto Syria border access

THE United States warned Monday that Russia would put at risk hopes for more constructive relations if it uses its UN veto to shut the sole border crossing for aid into Syria.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken joined Italy in leading talks in Rome of the US-led coalition to defeat the Islamic State group which discussed the Bab al-Hawa crossing into Syria from Turkey.

Blinken told reporters it was crucial to work to "broadening cross-border assistance, which is essential in reaching millions of Syrians who are in dire need of food, medicine, Covid vaccines and other life-saving aid".

The crossing is due to close on 10 July without UN authorisation for another year and Russia — which has already succeeded in reducing the border openings to one — has not ruled out using its veto power to block an extension.

Russia and Iran are the chief supporters of President Bashar al-Assad — who has wrested back control of most of Syria after a brutal decade-old civil war — and say that Damascus as the sovereign power should have sole prerogative

over aid deliveries.

A senior US official who accompanied Blinken said when asked about the Russian position: "Obviously we don't want any permanent UN Security Council member to veto that."

"What's been made clear all the way from the president all the way down to much lower-level officials to the Russians and to others is that we want to have a constructive relationship with Russia on the areas on which we can work together and we think Syria ought to be one of them," the official said.

"But the test is going to be whether or not we can maintain and expand these cross-border mechanisms," he said.

"If we're not able to work together on this basic human need, that would make it very difficult to work on anything else with the Russians with regard to Syria more broadly." President Joe Biden raised the issue when he met on 16 June in Geneva with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin.

Both presidents had voiced hope that the summit would bring more stability to US-Russia relations after months of soaring tensions. — AFP ■

No deal on UN peacekeeping budget, risk of mission freeze: diplomats

THE 193 member states of the United Nations have thus far failed to agree on a peacekeeping budget for the year beginning 1 July, which could lead to "a freeze on all missions" should a deal not soon materialize, diplomats said Monday.

The roadblock stems from China and African countries making multiple last-minute requests, the sources said.

The budget for the UN's global peacekeeping operations amounts to about \$6.5 billion and covers a 12-month period starting each year on 1 July, which is Thursday.

When asked by AFP about the absence of a deal in the UN's General Assembly, UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric said peacekeeping missions had been advised of the situa-

tion, and were asked to make contingency plans should the missions have to be interrupted.

"We await the decision by the member states and hope that they will come to a decision promptly," he said, highlighting that without an agreement, missions would no longer be able to incur any expenditures starting Thursday. — AFP ■

Critical thinking, based on reading and intellectual skills

ONCE, a veteran journalist cum author of Myanmar said: If you have read a lot of fiction and non-fiction books, you should initiate your critical thinking in remaining lifespan. Generally, critical thinking is a skill to calculate the possibilities of everything. The persons with critical thinking would have farsightedness on everything more than others. Due to the accumulation of knowledge from the reading, their subconscious minds are speedier than others. Knowledge from the reading and original intellectual skills will shape those persons as the life of the highest talent persons.

The journalist meant that everybody should not let their lives lost in reading and they should try hard to create critical thinking based on experiences from the reading. They seek opportunities to apply the experiences from reading in the practical field.

General knowledge which is obtained from the reading should not be discarded easily. In fact, the readers need to digest the knowledge obtained from subject-wise books. As such, the readers will have the maturity in solving and overcoming the challenges based on critical thinking. It is because critical thinking is as important as reading.

Reading is a good habit but it cannot be applied to life without partaking in critical thinking. Gradually, readers would have higher and higher intellectual skills. They become sharpening in thinking, consideration and rationality based on intellectual skills which would easily secure the success and thorough accomplishment in all things they do without mistakes. The experienced persons with the abundant general knowledge culture the critical thinking themselves to be able to analyze everything they face to know true and wrong things. It is because the globe is full of sky lie.

To have adequate skills for applying critical thinking, the readers must have general knowledge without leaving any topics of books. Practically, they would be capable of critical thinking to deeply observe everything. If so, they will become well-versed persons. In fact, everybody needs to uplift their capacity to become qualified for their continuous and expended outlooks. They can enjoy their fruits. So, their efforts will uplift their talent to become the highly-qualified scholars.

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“Rare” genetic sequence does not mean COVID-19 engineered: scientists

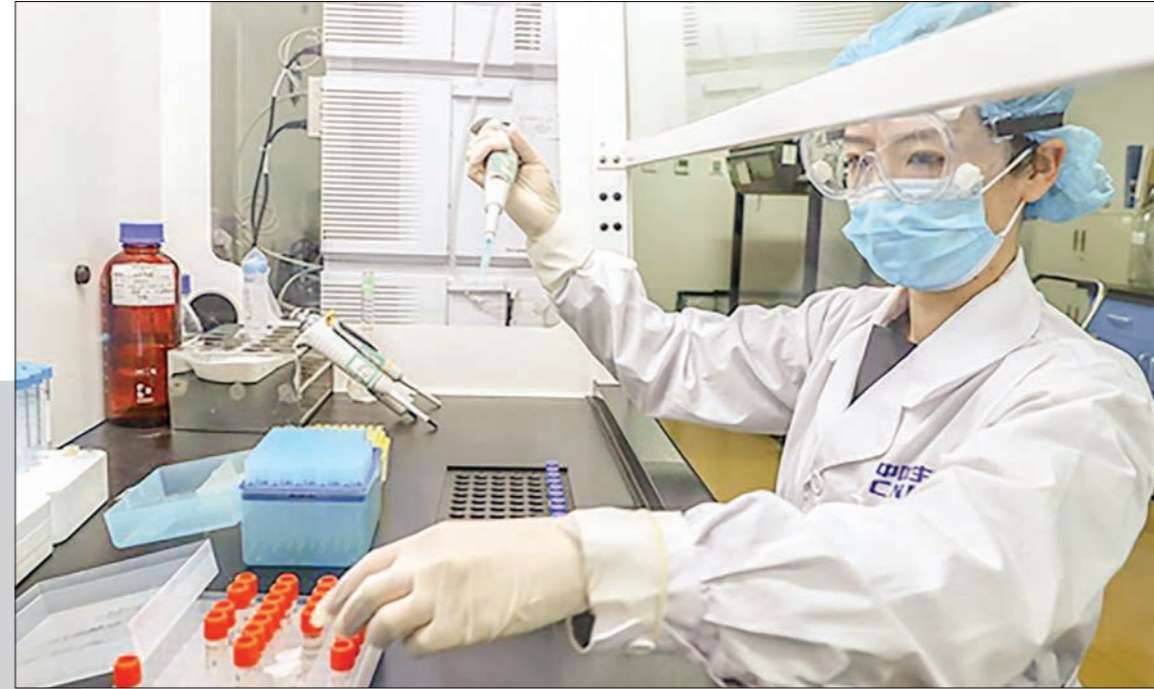
TWO scientists from the University of Leeds have refuted a report by the Wall Street Journal (WSJ) claiming the COVID-19 lab leak theory, saying there is no evidence presented in the WSJ piece that scientifically supports the concept of a lab leak of a genetically engineered virus.

The article, written by Keith Grehan, research fellow of molecular biology, and Natalie Kingston, research fellow of virology, was published on Wednesday on the Conversation, an online media outlet that publishes news stories and articles written by academics and researchers. “The authors of the WSJ article argue that Sars-CoV-2 originated in a lab based on the presence of a ‘CGG-CGG’ sequence. They claim this is a ‘readily available and convenient’ codon pair that scientists prefer to use to produce the amino acid arginine. But to anyone with an understanding of the techniques required for genetic modification, this double-CGG is usually no more difficult or easy to produce than any other pair of codons that encode arginines,” the article said. “Disappointingly, many other media articles appear to have accepted and repeated the claims from the WSJ piece,” read the article.

may remain unresolved, but there is no evidence presented in the WSJ piece that scientifically supports the concept of a lab leak of a genetically engineered virus,” said the article.

SOURCE: Xinhua

A staff member displays a sample of the COVID-19 inactivated vaccine at a vaccine production plant of China National Pharmaceutical Group (Sinopharm) in Beijing, capital of China, 10 April, 2020. PHOTO: XINHUA



After Covid, could the next big killer be heatwaves?

SEARING, unrelenting heat scorches large swathes of the Earth, killing millions who have no means to escape. Shade is useless, and shallow bodies of water are warmer than the blood coursing through people’s veins.

This is a scene from a new sci-fi novel, but the suffocating horror it describes may be closer to science than fiction, according to a draft UN report that warns of dire consequences for billions if global warming continues unchecked.

Earlier climate models suggested it would take nearly another century of unabated carbon pollution to spawn heatwaves exceeding the absolute limit of human tolerance.

But updated projections warn of unprecedented killer heatwaves on the near horizon, according to a 4,000-page Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report, seen exclusively by AFP before its scheduled release in February 2022.

The chilling report by the UN’s climate science advisory panel paints a grim — and deadly — picture for a warming planet. If the world warms by 1.5 degrees Celsius — 0.4 degrees above today’s level — 14 per cent of the population will be exposed to severe heatwaves at least once every five years, “a significant increase in heatwave magnitude”, the report says.

Going up half a degree would add another 1.7 billion people.



In this file photo taken on 23 July, 2019, visitors cool off at the Trocadero Fountains next to the Eiffel Tower in Paris, as a new heatwave hits Europe. PHOTO: AFP

Worst hit will be burgeoning megacities in the developing world that generate additional heat of their own, from Karachi to Kinshasa, Manila to Mumbai, Lagos to Manaus.

It’s not just thermometer readings that make a difference — heat becomes more deadly when combined with high humidity. It is easier, in other words, to survive a high temperature day if the air is bone-dry than it is to survive a lower temperature day with very high humidity.

That steam-bath mix has its own yardstick, known as wet-bulb temperature. Experts say that healthy human adults cannot survive if wet-bulb temperatures (TW) exceed 35 degrees Celsius, even in the shade with an unlimited supply of drinking water.

“When wet-bulb temperatures are extremely high, there is so much moisture in the air that sweating becomes ineffective at removing the body’s excess heat,” said Colin Raymond, lead author of a recent study on heatwaves in the Gulf.

“At some point, perhaps after six or more hours, this will lead to organ failure and death in the absence of access to artificial cooling.”

Heat stroke, heart attacks We’ve already seen the impact of deadly, humid heat at far lower thresholds, especially among the elderly and infirm.

Two heatwaves in India and Pakistan that hit 30 degrees Celsius TW in 2015 left more than 4,000 people dead.

And the 2003 heatwave that killed more than 50,000 people in western Europe registered wet-bulb temperatures

only in the high 20s.

Blistering heatwaves across the northern hemisphere in 2019 — the second warmest year on record for the planet — also caused a large number of excess deaths, but wet-bulb data is still lacking.

Research from the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) reports just over 300,000 heat-related deaths worldwide from all causes in 2019.

Some 37 per cent of heat-related deaths — just over 100,000 — can be blamed on global warming, according to researchers led by Antonio Gasparrini at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine. In half-a-dozen countries — Brazil, Peru, Colombia, the Philippines, Kuwait and Guatemala — the per centage was 60 per cent or more.

Cities at risk

Dangerous spikes above 27 degrees Celsius TW have already more than doubled since 1979, according to Raymond’s findings.

His study predicts wet-bulb temperatures will “regularly exceed” 35 degrees Celsius TW at some locations in the next several decades if the planet warms 2.5 degrees above preindustrial levels.

Human activity has driven global temperatures up 1.1 degrees Celsius so far.

Heatwave ‘hotspot’

Sub-Saharan Africa is especially vulnerable to lethal heatwaves, in large part because it is least prepared to cope with them.

“Both real-world observations and climate modelling show sub-Saharan Africa as a hotspot for heatwave activity,” said Luke Harrington, a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Oxford’s Environmental Change Institute.

In central China and central Asia, meanwhile, “extreme wet-bulb temperatures are expected to approach and possibly exceed physiological thresholds for human adaptability”, the IPCC warns. The Mediterranean is also vulnerable to deadly incursions of hot weather. “In Europe, up to 200 million people will be at high risk of heat stress by mid-century if the world warms up to two degrees Celsius until 2100,” the report says. Crucial to mortality rates is the ability of the population to adapt, explains Jeff Stanaway, a researcher at IHME.

‘Cooling gap’

But as with so many climate change impacts, the effects of heatwaves are not felt evenly by all.

In some developing countries, economic development is not keeping up with the cost of cooling the population, exposing a race between warming and the capacity to adapt to it.

One researcher has dubbed this the “global cooling gap”.

A study of adaptation techniques in the Vietnamese capital Hanoi found that many people don’t use the air conditioners in their bedrooms because they cost too much to run. Some wrap themselves in wet sheets before they go to sleep instead.

SOURCE: AFP

New ambassador of Angola agreed on

THE Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has agreed to the proposed appointment of Mr Agostinho Andre De Carvalho Fernandes as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Angola to the Republic of the Union of Myanmar with residence in Hanoi.

Mr Agostinho Andre De Carvalho Fernandes joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Angola in 1989 and has served in various capacities at home and abroad. From 1995 to 2013, he served as Commercial Representative of Angola in the United States and member countries of NAFTA, Mexico and Canada, and in China and member countries of ASEAN. In 2015, he became Principal Advisor to the Office of Minister of Foreign Affairs, and in 2016, he was nominated as Director of Geopolitical Direction for Asia and Oceania of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Since October 2019, he has been serving as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Angola to the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam.

Advertisement for COOP International Co-operative Alliance. Text: “အပြည်ပြည်ဆိုင်ရာသမဝါယမနေ့ ၂၀၂၁ ခုနှစ်၊ ဇူလိုင်လ (၃) ရက် (စနေနေ့)။ “လူမှုစီးပွားဖွံ့ဖြိုးတိုးတက်ကောင်းမွန်ဖို့ ဝိုင်းဝန်းကြိုးပမ်းတည်ဆောက်ဖို့”။ “Rebuild Better Together”။

Advertisement for the Myanmar National Committee for the 2020 National Election. Text: “မြန်မာအမျိုးသမီးများနေ့ အထိမ်းအမှတ်အခမ်းအနား”။

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NEWS
IN BRIEFTwo dead on
migrant boat
off Spain's
Canary Islands

Two people have been found dead in a migrant boat intercepted overnight off the coast of Spain's Canary Islands, local authorities said on Monday.

The boat, which was carrying 37 people, was intercepted off the southwestern coast of Gran Canaria island after setting off from Africa, emergency services tweeted.

"Two people were found dead and seven men required hospitalisation," they said, adding that the boat was taken to the port of Arguineguin.

Three of the hospitalized were in serious condition. All those aboard were from sub-Saharan Africa.

Migrant arrivals on the Atlantic archipelago have surged since late 2019 after increased patrols along Europe's southern coast dramatically reduced crossings to the continent via the Mediterranean. — AFP ■

BHP to divest from
massive Latin
American coal mine

Australian mining giant BHP said Monday it had reached a deal to sell its stake in a vast Colombian coal mine that is one of Latin America's largest.

The Melbourne-headquartered firm said it had agreed to sell its 33.3 per cent stake in the Cerrejon facility to project partner Glencore.

BHP said the deal was worth US\$294 million and indicated that Glencore was also interested in buying Anglo American's stake in the project, which has been beset by labour strikes.

The mine produces thermal coal — an increasingly undesirable commodity as countries and companies look to shift toward cleaner fuels for electricity generation.

BHP has slashed the estimated value of its coal assets and is trying to unload them as it focuses on other commodities. —AFP ■

Suga visits Haneda airport as Japan
readies Olympics border measures

Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga (C) receives an explanation about a remotely-controlled guide robot at Tokyo's Haneda airport on 28 June 2021, as he inspects the airport to see Japan's anti-coronavirus border control arrangements. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

PRIME Minister Yoshihide Suga visited Tokyo's Haneda airport Monday and was briefed on border measures to prevent COVID-19 from being brought into Japan ahead of the Tokyo Olympics,

set to begin in less than a month. The games will bring tens of thousands of athletes, staff and journalists to the capital, where infections are gradually increasing again just a week after a state

of emergency was lifted.

"We must continue implementing anti-virus measures while remaining highly vigilant," Suga told reporters. "If necessary, we will quickly take additional steps."

Such steps could include declaring another state of emergency or extending restrictions on business activity currently in place under a quasi-emergency, which would likely see fewer, if any, spectators at Olympic and Paralympic venues.

Japan's border measures have been under scrutiny since a member of the Ugandan Olympic delegation tested positive for the coronavirus upon arriving at Narita airport near Tokyo on 19 June. The rest of the team was allowed to travel by chartered bus to Izumisano, Osaka Prefecture, where another member was later found to be infected.

Officials of the Olympics

organizing committee have expressed the need for stricter COVID-19 guidelines in the wake of the incidents.

Athletes and staff will be isolated if they may have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive, taking a separate car to their destination, Chief Cabinet Secretary Katsunobu Kato said at a press conference.

At Haneda, Suga was also shown around a vaccination site set up by All Nippon Airways Co to inoculate pilots, flight attendants and other staff. Such sites were launched at workplaces across the country last week, but the government is no longer accepting applications from companies for more doses as it may not be able to provide enough of the allocated Moderna Inc vaccine. "We will closely examine the situation and ensure as many people as possible are vaccinated," Suga said.—Kyodo News ■

Poland hopes Israel will change view on WWII claims law

POLAND'S deputy foreign minister said Monday he hoped that Israel would change its "approach" to a bill on World War II restitution claims which the Jewish state has condemned as "immoral".

The bill, which passed the lower house of parliament last week, is intended to provide greater legal certainty for property owners against historical

claims dating back to the Nazi occupation.

But critics say it could effectively block Jews from claiming property seized during the Holocaust.

Deputy Foreign Minister Pawel Jablonski spoke after Israel's charge d'affaires in Warsaw, Tal Ben-Ari Yaalon, was summoned to the Polish foreign ministry to be briefed

on the new law.

Jablonski said in a televised briefing after Monday's meeting that Israeli criticism was "inappropriate" and "we hope that the approach of the Israeli side will change".

Jewish claims for property were frozen during the Communist era and, unlike other countries in the region, Poland has never had a comprehensive law

on restitution claims since the fall of Communist rule in 1989.

Some families who lost property have since sought restitution or compensation but the process has been chaotic and long.

In some cases, there have been fraudulent claims for restitutions. The new law sets a cut-off date for some legal challenges of up to 30 years.—AFP ■

UN urges immediate dismantling of systemic racism

THE UN rights chief called Monday for systemic racism against black people to be immediately dismantled around the world to avoid repeating outrages like the killing of George Floyd.

In a report triggered by the death of Floyd, who was murdered by a white US police officer, Michelle Bachelet said the dehumanisation of people of African descent had fed a culture of tolerance for racial discrimination and violence.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights set out a four-point agenda for transformative change on racial justice and equality, and urged states to implement it.

Bachelet's recommendations include reparations for historical racism, as well as funding for groups like Black Lives Matter.

"The status quo is untenable," said the former Chilean president Bachelet, who presented her 23-page report to the UN Human Rights Council.

"Systemic racism needs a systemic response" to dismantle centuries of entrenched discrimination and violence, she said. "We need a transformative approach that tackles the interconnected areas that drive racism, and lead to repeated, wholly avoidable tragedies like the death of George Floyd." —AFP ■



(From L) Chief of the Rule of Law, Equality and Non-Discrimination Branch in the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights Mona Rishmawi, Director of thematic engagement Peggy Hicks and Racial justice team leader Sara Hamood attend the presentation of a report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on racial justice and equality, in the aftermath of the murder of George Floyd, on 28 June 2021 in Geneva. PHOTO:AFP

Coronavirus: Latest global developments

HERE are the latest developments in the coronavirus crisis:

Moscow record deaths

Moscow reports 114 Covid-19 deaths on Sunday, topping the record number of daily fatalities in a Russian city set by Saint Petersburg just one day earlier, as the highly contagious Delta variant rapidly spreads in the country.

Sydney wakes up to lockdown

Millions of residents in Sydney, Australia's largest city, wake up to their first full day of a two-week lockdown to contain their own Delta outbreak.

Restaurants, bars and cafes are shuttered after stay-at-home orders for central neighbourhoods were extended over the weekend across the sprawling

city and to the coastal and mountainous regions surrounding it.

Bangkok tightens restrictions

Thailand, which like Australia has had relative success in keeping infections rates low, will impose new restrictions in Bangkok to try to quash a wave that kicked off in April when a cluster was found in upscale Bangkok clubs typically frequented by the elite.

Indoor dining and gatherings of more than 20 people will be prohibited and construction sites will be closed in the capital and its suburbs from Monday.

Belgium eases measures

Belgium further eases restrictions as its Covid numbers continue to fall, with eight people now allowed at restaurant tables



A man wearing a face mask walks through a shopping mall in Bangkok on 26 June 2021, amid an economy downturn in Thailand due to restrictions to halt the spread of the Covid-19 coronavirus. PHOTO: AFP

and as guests in homes, both up from four.

More than 3.9 million dead

The pandemic has killed at least 3,919,801 people since the virus first emerged in Decem-

ber 2019, according to an AFP compilation of official data at 1000 GMT Sunday.

The United States is the worst-affected country with 603,891 deaths, followed by Brazil with 512,735, India with

395,751 Mexico 232,521 and Peru 191,584. The World Health Organization says up to three times more people have died directly or indirectly due to the pandemic than official figures suggest. —AFP ■

Mask-free and 'low risk', Italy welcomes milestone

ALL of Italy became a mask-free, "low-risk" zone for coronavirus Monday, marking a dramatic milestone for the first European country to be hit by the global pandemic in February 2020.

In a decree that took effect Monday, the health ministry for the first time classified each of Italy's 20 regions as "white", signifying low risk, under the country's colour-coded classification system that evaluates Covid-19 risk.

That means facemasks will no longer be compulsory in outdoor areas — welcome news across the country where an ongoing heatwave is expected to push temperatures past 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit) in some southern areas this week.

Once a symbol of the corona-



People walk along a street on the eve of Italy moving into the 'white zone' when it will not be obligatory to wear the mask outdoors in Rome on 27 June 2021. PHOTO: AFP

virus crisis in the West -- where images of army trucks transporting coffins from the overflowing morgue in the northern city of Bergamo were seen around the world — Italy has seen Covid-19

infections and deaths plummet in recent weeks. A third of Italy's population over the age of 12 has been vaccinated as of Sunday, or 17,572,505 people, according to the government.—AFP ■

Nude Aussie sunbathers rescued, fined after deer run-in

A pair of nude sunbathers who ran into bushland after being "startled" by a deer have been rescued, and promptly fined for breaching coronavirus rules, Australian police said Monday.

Police said the men had been sunbaking on a remote

beach south of Sydney, before they fled into the Royal National Park to escape the animal. Emergency services launched a ground and air search after the lost duo called for help shortly after dark on Sunday.

A 30-year-old man "naked

and carrying a backpack" was discovered first on a walking track. A partially clothed 49-year-old was found later. "It's difficult to legislate against idiots," said New South Wales state police commissioner Mick Fuller.—AFP ■

Iran says 'no decision' taken to erase nuclear site tapes

IRAN said Monday it had taken "no decision" to delete footage from surveillance cameras installed at some of its atomic energy facilities by the UN nuclear watchdog the IAEA.

The issue is part of broader talks underway in Vienna aiming to salvage the 2015 Iran nuclear deal that has been hanging by a thread since former president Donald Trump withdrew the US from it three years ago.

"No decision has been taken on the deletion of the data" recorded by the IAEA cameras, said Iranian foreign ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh.

After Trump withdrew from the nuclear deal between Iran and major powers and ramped up punishing sanctions, the Islamic republic has taken steps away from its nuclear commitments.

Late last year, the conservative-dominated parliament passed a law that led Iran to restrict access to some of its nuclear facilities for International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors from February.

Iran's moderate President Hassan Rouhani advised against this step, but the gov-

ernment followed through on the legislature's demand.

Tehran also denied the IAEA access to video recordings from monitoring equipment that the UN agency had installed at its sites to verify its compliance.

The Atomic Energy Organisation of Iran said the cameras would keep running, but that the withheld footage would be deleted if US sanctions were not lifted within three months.

This period was later extended by a month but expired on June 24.

Since then the IAEA has insisted on the "vital importance" that Iran extend the period again and urged Tehran to tell it whether it intends to do so.

But Tehran's response has been slow in coming.

"I insist that no negative or positive decision regarding the cameras and the previous agreement with the agency has been taken," Khatibzadeh said on Monday.

The decision is the responsibility of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, which is not known to have held a meeting on the subject since 24 June. —AFP ■

Ancient aromas aim to lure new crop of tourists to Cyprus

LAVENDER, basil and roses: history and aromatic plants are being cultivated in Cyprus to broaden its sun-and-sea appeal and regain its lofty botanical status dating back to Roman times.

From sunrise in the small mountain village of Agros standing at 1,100 metres (3,600 feet) in the Troodos mountain range, Andria Tsolakis, her younger sister Elena and their mother Maria busy themselves among their rose bushes.

In the crisp morning air, they gather the Damask roses for which Agros and the family are famed. For more than seven decades, the Tsolakis family have cultivated the pink rose of Syrian origin they say first cropped up mysteriously at the foot of the village church, extracting rose water and oils used in cooking and cosmetics.

“We need around 400 roses, flowers, in order to make one kilo (two pounds) of roses (petals). And from that kilo, we will produce two litres of rose water,” said 31-year-old Andria.

When their father, Chris, took



Elena Tsolakis (L) and workers harvest the Damask roses for oil extraction in the small mountain village of Agros standing of the Troodos mountain range on 6 May 2021. Lavender, basil or roses: history and aromatic plants are being grafted in Cyprus to broaden its sun-and-sea appeal and regain its lofty status dating back to Roman times. The Tsolakis family have for more than seven decades cultivated the bright pink rose of Syrian origin they say first cropped up mysteriously at the foot of the village church, extracting rose water and oils used in cooking and cosmetics. **PHOTO: AFP**

over the business, he decided to start up a boutique called “The Rose Factory” and to add Agros on to the eastern Mediterranean

island’s tourist circuit.

In a normal tourist season, before the Covid-19 pandemic that has brought much of the

sector to its knees, “we welcomed up to 10 buses every day”, said Elena. A European project aims to promote tourism in six south-

ern member states — Bosnia, Croatia, Cyprus, France, Italy and Malta — with the lure of their aromatic and medicinal plants.

Partly financed by the European Union, Mappae (Medicinal and Aromatic Plants Pathways Across Europe) says its mission is to “create a multi-sensory, tourist and cultural thematic route, linking European destinations united by a common tradition”.

“We are blessed with more than 800 different herbs, some of them can only be found in Cyprus,” said Yioula Michaelidou Papakyriacou, local coordinator of the project. “Our grandmothers could heal everything with herbs,” she said.

Papakyriacou puts the high quality of the island’s essential oils down to its geology, the formation of the Troodos range, air quality and meteorological conditions. “The climate here is ideal to grow these kind of herbs, because herbs love the heat, they love the strong sun,” said herbalist Miranda Tringis, who runs a botanical park near Ayia Napa, the island’s top beach destination.—AFP ■

Japan court orders gov’t to pay damages for air base noise



Plaintiffs enter the Miyazaki District Court in Miyazaki Prefecture ahead of a ruling over aircraft noise around the Air Self-Defence Force’s Nyutabaru Air Base on 28 June 2021. **PHOTO: KYODO NEWS**

A Japanese court ordered the government on Monday to pay damages to residents near an Air Self-Defence Force base in Miyazaki Prefecture in southwestern Japan over aircraft noise.

While the amount of damages awarded to the plaintiffs is not immediately known, the Miyazaki District Court dismissed their demand to halt flights at Nyutabaru Air Base between 5 pm and 8 am and during the day if the noise level is at 75 or higher on an internationally recognized index for aircraft noises.

A measure of 75 or above on

the Weighted Equivalent Continuous Perceived Noise Level has formed the benchmark when requesting compensation in past lawsuits in Japan. The Miyazaki court also rejected the plaintiffs’ call on the government to compensate for any future health damage due to continued flights at the air base.

In the trial, 178 original plaintiffs demanded a monthly payment of 35,000 yen (\$320) each and their legal fees to be paid, saying many residents experienced deafness, tinnitus and sleep disorders.—Kyodo News ■

Thousands stranded in Bangladesh ahead of sweeping Covid lockdown

THOUSANDS of people were stranded in Bangladesh’s capital on Monday as authorities halted almost all public transport ahead of a sweeping lockdown imposed to combat a deadly resurgence of Covid-19 infections.

The country reported 119 deaths on Sunday, its highest-ever daily death toll from the pandemic, while new infections have been averaging around 5,000 for the past few days.

Officials blame the recent spike in cases on the highly contagious coronavirus Delta variant first identified in neighbouring India.

The majority of the South Asian nation’s 168 million population will be confined to their homes by Thursday as part of the restrictions, with only essential services and some export-facing factories allowed to operate.

The lockdown announcement sparked an exodus of migrant workers from the capital Dhaka to home villages on Sunday, with tens of thousands of people cramming into ferries to cross a major river.

The staggered implementation of the lockdown rules left

thousands of workers in Dhaka forced to walk to their offices on Monday, sometimes for hours, in the sweltering summer heat.

Large columns of people were seen walking on the main roads early Monday. Workplaces will be shut from Wednesday.

Bicycle rickshaws were allowed to operate in a last minute government concession late Sunday, but prices had soared to unaffordable levels, commuters said.

“I started walking at 7 am.

I could not get any bus or any other vehicles. I can’t afford a rickshaw ride,” Shefali Begum, 60, who was going to her daughter’s home in central Dhaka, told AFP. Restrictions on activities and movement were imposed across Bangladesh in mid-April as cases and deaths jumped to their highest levels since the start of the pandemic. Infections declined in May but started to rise again this month, sparking the harsher restrictions.—AFP ■



Migrants and other people leave for their native places after Bangladesh’s authorities ordered a new lockdown to contain the spread of Covid-19 coronavirus in Dhaka on 28 June 2021. **PHOTO: AFP**

Guam launches vacation-and-vax tourism drive



This photo taken on 24 June 2021 shows Tumon Bay in Guam as the US Pacific territory prepares to offer visitors a Covid-19 vaccination with their holiday, in a bid to restart its struggling tourism industry. **PHOTO: AFP**

THE US Pacific territory of Guam will offer visitors a Covid-19 vaccination with their tropical holiday, in a bid to restart its struggling tourism industry.

Dubbed 'Air V&V' — vacation and vaccination — the programme is primarily aimed at US expatriates in the Asia-Pacific region, although other nationalities can participate.

Guam has limited Covid-19 infections and a high vaccination rate among the local population thanks to one of the most effective roll-outs in the region.

And that makes the

island an attractive destination for vaccine tourists, said Visitors Bureau president Carl Gutierrez.

"This programme captures a unique demographic of travellers around the world that are tired of waiting to get vaccinated in this pandemic," he said.

Guam's Governor Lou Leon Guerrero signed off on the initiative last week, and is expected to relax quarantine rules early next month so it can proceed.

Based on health department protocols, travellers will have to undergo

a seven-day quarantine at a self-paid facility upon arrival to Guam.

If they pass a coronavirus test on day six, they will be allowed out the next day to enjoy an unrestricted beachside holiday.

Participants in the programme can choose between the Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson vaccines. Gutierrez said the first charter flight was expected from Taiwan on 6 July and up to 30,000 people were forecast to take advantage of the scheme by the end of the year.—AFP ■

Asian markets mostly down after last week's gains

ASIAN and European stocks were slightly lower Monday as traders took a breather after last week's rally, while they are keeping tabs on Federal Reserve monetary policy plans in light of the positive outlook for the global economy.

The bipartisan agreement between US lawmakers Thursday on a huge infrastructure deal provided an extra boost to already upbeat investors, who have also been calmed by Federal Reserve pledges to maintain record-low interest rates and vast bond-buying for

as long as the recovery needs.

Even a sharp spike in a closely watched gauge of consumer spending for May was taken in stride on trading floors, with much of the surge being attributed to rallying energy costs.

After another record close on Wall Street, Asia struggled to maintain momentum on Monday.

Tokyo, Hong Kong, Wellington, Manila, Mumbai, Bangkok and Jakarta all eased, while Shanghai, Sydney and Seoul were barely moved.

Singapore and Taipei

rose. London, Paris and Frankfurt all fell in early trade.

Observers warned that while the general mood was positive, investors remained on edge as inflation continues to be a worry.

The Fed "are far away from tapering, they are far away from increasing rates, but at some point, if the markets sees the Fed being too far behind the curve you will start to see some adjustment on the long end of the curve", Charles-Henry Monchau, at FlowBank SA, told Bloomberg TV.—AFP ■

Mobile congress opens Spain with tight virus rules

A scaled-back version of the world's biggest mobile fair got underway Monday in Spain under tight virus controls, with top firms avoiding an in-person presence after the pandemic derailed last year's edition.

Spain's King Felipe V and Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez were on hand for the opening of the four-day Mobile World Congress (MWC) in Barcelona, one of the first big technology conferences staged in Europe since the start of the pandemic.

"We are back to business, we are back to Barcelona, we are back together," Mats Granryd, director



Visitors queue to take a Covid-19 test before entering the Mobile World Congress (MWC) fair in Barcelona on 28 June 2021. **PHOTO: AFP**

general of the industry association that stages the congress, the GSMA, said in an opening address.

The event, which is usually held in February, is

taking place this year both in-person at Barcelona's main conference centre as well as digitally, with an on-line appearance by tech billionaire Elon Musk among the highlights.—AFP ■

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V MTT SEMPORNA VOY.NO. (05W/E)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V MTT SEMPORNA VOY.NO. (05W/E)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **29-6-2021** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **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.
Phone No: **2301185**

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S GOLD STAR SHIPPING LINES

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V AEGEAN EXPRESS VOY.NO. (213N/S)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V AEGEAN EXPRESS VOY.NO. (213N/S)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **28-6-2021** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **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.
Phone No: **2301185**

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S CONTINENTAL SHIPPING LINES

Invitation For Open tender No.(3/2021)

1. Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation, Department of Mines invites to submit the tender quotation sale open tender of (5008.574) Metric Tons, (21) Lots of Cathode Copper by United States Dollar as follow,

- | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| a) Cathode Copper (108.574) MT | (1) Lot, Yangon, Eden Warehouse |
| b) Cathode Copper (100) MT | (5) Lots, Yangon, Eden Warehouse |
| c) Cathode Copper (200) MT | (5) Lots, Yangon, Eden Warehouse |
| d) Cathode Copper (200) MT | (7) Lots, Monywa, Mine Site |
| e) Cathode Copper (500) MT | (2) Lots, Monywa, Mine Site |
| f) Cathode Copper (1000) MT | (1) Lot, Monywa, Mine Site |

2. Base price of Cathode Copper (Eden Warehouse, Yangon) shall be based on the London Metal Exchange Copper price on the date of tender opening. The highest proposal amount shall be winning tender.

3. Base price of Monywa, Mine Site Cathode Copper shall be based on the London Metal Exchange Copper price on the date of tender opening. The highest proposal amount (Premium amount added to the LME price and deduction of transportation and handling expenses) shall be winning tender.

4. Tender Closing Date and Time is 21.7.2021 (14:00)PM and Opening Tender is (15:00) PM.

5. Tender documents are available from the Mineral Development Division, Department of Mines, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation, Office Building No.(19), Nay Pyi Taw and details can be asked to (+95) 067 3409378 and 067 3409372 within the Office hours.

Tender Committee
Department of Mines
Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation

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Covid-19 curbs reimposed in Moscow as Asia-Pacific outbreaks flare



Passengers sit in the subway, in Moscow on 27 June, 2021, amid the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. Moscow on 27 June 2021 recorded the worst daily coronavirus death toll so far for a Russian city, as countries across the Asia-Pacific region extended or reimposed restrictions to tackle fresh waves of infections. **PHOTO: AFP**

Work-from-home restrictions were reimposed in Moscow on Monday as Russia tried to con-

tain a deadly coronavirus wave fuelled by the Delta variant, while several Asian nations also tight-

ened curbs to contain growing outbreaks.

While many wealthy coun-

tries have brought down infections through rapid vaccinations, outbreaks are still raging from Bangladesh and Indonesia to South America, including many fuelled by the highly contagious Delta variant that was first detected in India.

Russia has seen an explosion of new cases in the last two weeks because of this variant, and authorities announced fresh restrictions from Monday in the capital as they pushed vaccine-sceptic citizens to get a shot.

“To stop the pandemic, one thing is needed: rapid, large-scale vaccinations,” Moscow mayor Sergei Sobyenin told state TV on Saturday. “Nobody has invented any other solution.”

From Monday, people will have to work from home in Moscow — the epicentre of Russia’s outbreak — with exceptions for vaccinated employees.

They will also have to present a QR code to enter restaurants,

certifying that they are either vaccinated, have had Covid-19 in the last six months, or have a valid negative test.

The outbreak in Russia — already one of the worst-hit nations in the world — has also caused alarm because of the ongoing Euro 2020 football tournament which has seen thousands of fans attend matches in different countries across the continent.

Saint Petersburg has already hosted six matches, and is the venue for one of the quarter-finals on Friday. Spectator numbers have been capped at half-capacity, but still upwards of 26,000 people.

Covid-19 is known to have claimed nearly four million lives worldwide since it first emerged in China in late 2019, and it is still spreading with multiple variants now in circulation. The Delta variant is now in 85 countries and is the most contagious of any identified so far, according to the World Health Organization. —AFP ■

As pandemic eases, fatal gender violence worsens in Europe

AS life gradually returns to normal in Europe, there has been a resurgence of deadly violence against women as abusers experience a “loss of the control” they enjoyed throughout the coronavirus lockdowns.

And their faces are making the headlines. Like Chahinez, a French woman who was burnt alive by her estranged husband, or the five women killed in three weeks in spring in Sweden, whose images haunt TV bulletins there.

In the few European countries where official statistics for 2021 are available, the figures are indisputable: in Spain, for example, since the state of emergency ended in May, one woman has been killed every three days, compared with an average of one a week before. In Belgium, 13 women have died from violence since the end of April compared with 24 in the whole of 2020, while in France, 56 have been killed so far this year compared with 46 for the same period a year earlier, NGO figures show.

“With women gaining more freedom, the aggressors feel as if they’re losing control and react with more extreme violence,” ex-

plained Victoria Rosell, head of the Spanish government’s task-force against gender violence.

“In the case of the increasing numbers we’ve seen in recent months, we’ve seen how easing the restrictions has exposed another underlying pandemic, that of male violence.” In 2004, Spain approved Europe’s first law that specifically cracked down on domestic violence, making the victim’s gender an aggravating factor in cases of assault.

And with the recent rise in deadly violence, Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez has reiterated his desire to put an end to this “misogynist scourge” once and for all.

Throughout Europe, the lockdowns have made it harder to pick up on cases of domestic violence. Forced to stay at home with their abusers, victims could only reach out for help with extreme discretion. During Spain’s three-month lockdown at the start of the pandemic, appeals for help rose by 58 per cent compared to the same period in 2019 with online — or “silent” — appeals soaring by 458 per cent, equality ministry figures show. —AFP ■

US strikes kill Iran-backed fighters on Iraq-Syria border

US air strikes against Iran-backed armed groups on the Syrian-Iraqi border killed at least seven fighters overnight into Monday, sparking immediate calls for revenge and fears of a new escalation between Washington and Tehran.

The second such raid on pro-Iran targets since US President Joe Biden took office, described by the Pentagon as “retaliatory”, came despite faltering efforts to revive a key deal over Iran’s nuclear programme. US defence spokesman John Kirby said in a statement that three military facilities used by Iran-backed militia had been hit — two in Syria and one in Iraq. Kirby said that the targets had been used by “Iran-backed militias that are engaged in unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) attacks against US personnel

and facilities in Iraq.”

Kataeb Hezbollah and Kataeb Sayyid al-Shuhada, two Iraqi armed factions with close ties to Tehran, were among the “several Iran-backed militia groups” that had used the facil-

ities, Kirby said. US interests in Iraq, where 2,500 American troops are deployed as part of an international coalition to fight the jihadist Islamic State group, have been targeted in more than 40 attacks this year. —AFP ■



(FILES) This file photo taken on 26 December 2011 shows the Pentagon building in Washington, DC. The Pentagon announced Sunday it had conducted targeted air strikes against “facilities used by Iran-backed militia groups” on the Iraq-Syria border, which it said were authorized by President Joe Biden following ongoing attacks on US interests. **PHOTO: AFP**

Florida death toll climbs to nine as rescuers race to find survivors

THE death toll after the collapse of a Florida apartment tower rose to nine, officials said Sunday, with more than 150 people still missing and their weary families waiting nearly four days for information as to their fate. The outlook grew

increasingly grim by the hour, however, as the slow rescue operation, involving workers sorting nonstop through the rubble in torrid heat and high humidity, carried on.

Four new bodies and other

human remains were found after rescuers dug an enormous trench — 125 feet long, 20 feet wide and 40 feet deep (38 by 6 by 12 metres) — through the mountain of debris, according to the Miami-Dade County mayor. —AFP

New restrictions as coronavirus cases spread across Australia

NEW coronavirus cases popped up in cities across Australia on Monday, prompting local authorities to impose restrictions in areas not used to living under strict Covid-19 rules.

Australia has been broadly successful in containing virus clusters, but is now battling flare-ups in at least four cities across the vast continent nation.

Brisbane, Darwin, Perth and Sydney have all reported new cases of the highly contagious Delta variant, which first emerged in India and has spread in Australia after escaping from hotels used to quarantine returning travellers.

The largest outbreak is in Sydney, where 130 people have tested positive for Covid-19 since a driver for an international flight crew was diagnosed in mid-June, with the city's residents now under stay-at-home orders for two

weeks.

A 48-hour lockdown of Darwin and surrounding areas — due to end Tuesday — was extended to Friday after a cluster linked to an outback gold mine grew to seven cases.

Northern Territory Chief Minister Michael Gunner said that for the first time during the pandemic there were exposure sites in the city, which is home to a large indigenous population feared to be more vulnerable to Covid-19.

“The risk to the community has grown in the past 24 hours. We are now in an extremely critical period. We must stay in lockdown while we keep this virus trapped,” he said, urging Aboriginal people living in remote areas not to travel to Darwin.

Authorities in the cities of Perth and Brisbane again tightened local restrictions Monday,



A man sanitizes his hands before entering a quiet shopping mall in the central business district of Sydney on 28 June 2021, during a two-week coronavirus lockdown to contain an outbreak of the highly contagious Delta variant. **PHOTO: AFP**

with masks mandatory and limits on social gatherings imposed on more than two million people in Brisbane and surroundings.

Other regions without confirmed cases have ramped up their rules protectively, with

masks now required indoors in the nation's capital Canberra and sweeping restrictions announced for South Australia.

“We feel, given the nature of the rapid spread of the Delta virus, we have no alternative but to

take pre-emptive action in South Australia to keep our state and our economy strong,” said state Premier Steven Marshall.

Australia has recorded a total of just over 30,000 cases and 910 deaths in a population of about 25 million since the pandemic began.

Officials have been quick to implement restrictions when clusters emerge — almost always after the virus escapes the hotel quarantine system.

But the latest measures are among the most widespread since a nationwide lockdown in the early stages of the pandemic.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison has called a meeting of national leaders late Monday as his government faces a fresh round of criticism for a sluggish vaccine rollout and failing to improve the leaky hotel quarantine system.—AFP ■

Seven dead, 50 hurt in Bangladesh blast likely caused by gas line

AT least seven people were killed and another 50 people were injured after a powerful explosion ripped apart a three-storey building in central Dhaka on Sunday, Bangladeshi officials said, citing a gas pipeline as the

likely cause.

Police said the explosion was so forceful that it broke the windows of at least four moving buses, injuring dozens of passengers on board. Dhaka police chief Shafiqur Rahman



An official from the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) inspects the spot of a suspected gas explosion in Dhaka on 28 June 2021 a day after the incident in which 7 were killed and 50 others were injured. **PHOTO: AFP**

said at least seven people were killed in the explosion, though the fire service offered a lower death toll of three. Police and fire service officials said 50 people were injured. “Fire service officers are at the scene. They will investigate the reason of the explosion. But primarily we believe methane gas accumulated and concentrated in the pipeline and then exploded in the ground floor,” Dhaka Metropolitan Police Joint Commissioner Syed Nurul Islam told AFP. He ruled out foul play, saying the Bangladeshi capital has witnessed several similar explosions in recent years. Witnesses told local media the blast had reduced the building — which houses a restaurant, an electronics shop and several other stores — to rubble. Police said at least two adjacent buildings were also partially damaged.—AFP ■

India probes suspected drone attack at Jammu air base

INVESTIGATORS are probing a suspected drone strike on an air base in India's restive north, officials said Sunday, as experts said such an attack would be a first in the vast country and raised concerns about security at military installations.

“Two low intensity explosions were reported early Sunday morning in the technical area of Jammu Air Force Station. One caused minor damage to the roof of a building while the other exploded in an open area,” the Indian Air Force tweeted.

“There was no damage to any equipment. Investigation is in progress along with civil agencies.”

Jammu and Kashmir's Director General of Police, Dilbagh Singh, said in a statement that a “drone with payload” was suspected to have been used to “drop the explosive material”.

He called the incident a “terror attack” in an interview with the Press Trust of India.

The Indian Express newspaper reported that two people have been arrested so far over the incident, while two people at the air base suffered minor injuries. A team from India's counter-terrorism task force, the National Investigation Agency, has reached Jammu to probe the incident, an official told AFP.—AFP ■



An Indian air force officer (L) gestures as he guards outside the Jammu Air Force Station entry gate where two low intensity explosions were reported early morning, in Jammu on 27 June 2021. **PHOTO: AFP**

Malaysia extends COVID-19 lockdown indefinitely

MALAYSIA'S nationwide lockdown that was scheduled to expire Monday is being extended indefinitely, the government has said as the number of COVID-19 cases sees no sign of abating.

Defence Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob said in a statement released late Sunday

that conditions have not been met for easing the lockdown measures.

Over the past week, the country has on average confirmed over 5,000 new coronavirus cases and double-digits deaths each day, according to authorities. Intensive care unit bed occupancy is almost full

and only 6.4 per cent of the population has completed two doses of the vaccine as of Sunday.

The government has said the lockdown measures will be eased only when daily COVID-19 cases fall below a weekly average of 4,000 and providing other conditions are also cleared.—Kyodo News ■

Dave Leduc shares Myanmar Lethwei memories with American star Bas Rutten

MYANMA Lethwei Champion Dave Leduc shared his Lethwei experiments plus memories with Dutch-American actor Bas Rutten, a retired mixed martial artist, kickboxer and professional wrestler yesterday at Bas Rutten's Gym in California, the United States.

During their meeting, the two fighters made their pieces of training together and also shared their fighting experiences.

Dave Leduc has expressed his cheerfulness after meeting with the American star on his social media.

"I love martial arts for making moments like these happen. I went to see Bas Rutten at his gym in California. He's a real OG of Mixed Martial arts. He finished his career on top like a true champ with 22 fights unbeaten streak," Dave said.

Lethwei icon Dave Leduc also expressed his

great respect for the American actor-cum-fighter.

"You're a fighting, Icon Bas. You'll always have my respect. We have many things in common, we both fought with Bareknuckle in Japan and we love headbutts. Bas told me he would've loved to fight Lethwei if he had the chance back in the days!

"It's a true honour to call you a friend, pick your brain and hear your crazy stories. Train insane or remain the same!

"This is a mental drill I like to do sometimes to build intensity. You feel alive after this! Makes you focus, trains you to not be afraid, and builds mental toughness," Dave Leduc said.

Bas Rutten was also a UFC Heavyweight Champion, a three-time King of Pancrase world champion, and finished his career on a 22 fight unbeaten streak (21 wins, and 1 draw).—GNLM ■



Myanmar Lethwei Champion Dave Leduc (left) and American actor-cum-fighter Bas Rutten (right) perform the Lekha Moun, a symbol and gesture of Myanmar Lethwei. **PHOTO: DAVE LEDUC**

Germany's Gundogan, Ruediger back training before England tie

ANTONIO Ruediger and Ilkay Gundogan returned for Germany's final training session on Monday before their Euro 2020 last-16 clash against England, with coach Joachim Loew expected to make changes to his starting line-up. Chelsea centre-back Ruediger had missed training on Sunday with a cold while Manchester City midfielder Gundogan was sidelined with a head knock.

Both recovered to take part at their Euro 2020 base in Bavaria before the flight to London for Tuesday's fixture with England at Wembley. Thomas Mueller is tipped to replace Leroy Sane, having shaken off a knee injury. His Bayern Munich team-mate

Leon Goretzka, who scored the crucial equaliser against Hungary in Germany's final group-stage match, is expected to take over from Gundogan in midfield. Left-back Robin Gosens described the 31-year-old Mueller as "worth his weight in gold" and said that "he lifts us up a level".

Mueller scored twice against England in the Germans' 4-1 last-16 win at the 2010 World Cup -- the last meeting of the countries at a major tournament. "I want to confirm this threat that the English might feel when a Mueller is on the pitch," Mueller joked on Saturday. "(But) it won't do me any good to tell my opponents about 2010 out on the pitch." — AFP ■

Ronaldo 'proud' of Portugal's efforts after Euro 2020 elimination



Portugal's forward Cristiano Ronaldo reacts to the loss in the UEFA EURO 2020 round of 16 football match between Belgium and Portugal at La Cartuja Stadium in Seville on 27 June 2021. **PHOTO: THANASSIS STAVRAKIS / POOL / AFP**

CAPTAIN Cristiano Ronaldo said on Monday he was "proud" of holders Portugal's efforts despite bowing out of Euro 2020 after the weekend's 1-0 last 16 loss to Belgium.

"We did not get the result we wanted and we leave the competition sooner than expected," the 36-year-old Juventus star and five-time Ballon d'or winner admitted as his side failed to match

their 2016 exploits.

"But we are proud of our showing. We did everything we could to retain the title of European champions and this group proved it could still give the Portuguese people much joy," the former Manchester United and Real Madrid attacker posted on social media after Sunday's loss.

"Congratulations to Belgium and good luck to all the teams left in. As for us, we shall return stronger," vowed the veteran who at least could console himself with having matched the 109 international goals record of Iran's Ali Daei during the tournament.

Ronaldo scored five times during the competition to take his European Championship tally to a record 14, matching Daei's achievement with his goal in the 2-2 group game draw with world champions France. — AFP ■

Djokovic overcomes Wimbledon scare to get record pursuit off to winning start



DEFENDING champion Novak Djokovic overcame an early scare to reach the Wimbledon second round on Monday with a 4-6, 6-1, 6-2, 6-2 win over Britain's 253rd-ranked Jack Draper.

World number one Djokovic is chasing a sixth Wimbledon title and 20th major and is halfway to becoming just the third man in history to complete a calendar Grand Slam.

It's a feat so rare that Rod Laver was the last man to

achieve the sweep back in 1969.

However, as Wimbledon returned after its 2020 cancellation due to the pandemic, the 34-year-old struggled on the slippery Centre Court surface with the roof closed above it due to rain.

Left-handed Draper, playing just his fifth match on the main tour, saved seven of seven break points in the opener as he stunned the top seed.

But Djokovic soon snuffed

out any danger of him becoming only the third defending champion to lose in the first round, by sweeping through the remainder of the tie.

He finished with an impressive 25 aces and 47 winners as his 19-year-old opponent wilted.

Djokovic will face either former runner-up Kevin Anderson or Chilean qualifier Marcelo Tomas Barrios Vera for a place in the last 32. — AFP ■