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THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

Vol. VIII, No. 81, 1st Waxing of Waso 1383 ME

www.gnlm.com.mm

Friday, 9 July 2021

Republic of the Union of Myanmar Request information of Central Committee for Prevention, Control and Treatment of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

14th Waning of Nayon 1383 ME
8 July 2021

1. As the variant COVID-19 is spreading across Myanmar at present, number of infected persons is on the rise day by day.
2. As such, the information was released that basic education schools (including private schools and monastic education schools) opened across Myanmar will be closed temporarily from 9-7-2021 to 23-7-2021 in order to control and prevent the spreading of COVID-19 infection in time.

Five-Point Road Map of the State Administration Council

1. The Union Election Commission will be reconstituted and its mandated tasks, including the scrutiny of voter lists, shall be implemented in accordance with the law.
2. Effective measures will be taken with added momentum to prevent and manage the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. Actions will be taken to ensure the speedy recovery of businesses from the impact of COVID-19.
4. Emphasis will be placed on achieving enduring peace for the entire nation in line with the agreements set out in the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement.
5. 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 in accordance with democratic standards.

Archers for XXXI SEA Games practising qualified archery event



State Administration Council member Jeng Phang Naw Taung watches qualifiers of archery event.

THE prize-awarding ceremony in conjunction with the final matches for qualifiers of archery sport took place at the Gold Camp this afternoon in Nay Pyi Taw where archers are under training to take part in the XXXI SEA Games, attended by Member of the State Administration Council Jeng Phang Naw Taung.

The Council member and

spectators watched Compound individual, mix team, Recurve individual and mixed team events at the final stage.

After the final matches, Deputy Director-General U Kyaw Oo presented prizes to the winners in the Compound individual event, Deputy Director-General U Kyaw Hsan, the winners in the women's Recurve singles event,

Director-General U Tun Myint, the winners in the men's Recurve singles event and Deputy Minister U Myo Hlaing, the winners in the Recurve Mixed Team event.

Member of the State Administration Council Jeng Phang Naw Taung presented the award to the best player of the competition to archer Nay Lin Oo. —MNA

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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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Ministry of Electricity and Energy Public Request

14th Waning of Nayon 1383 ME
8 July 2021

1. The Ministry of Electricity and Energy had exempted 150 units of electricity per month from the cost of electricity during the COVID-19 disease prevention period between April 2020 and March 2021. In addition to the monthly exemption of electricity charges, the latest monthly electric bill deadlines have been postponed and fine for late payment has been exempted.
2. In order to provide electricity to the people, the State-owned power plants are generating electricity, and electricity is also being purchased from the private power plants and distributed. Therefore, the Ministry will be able to generate and distribute electricity continuously only if the people pay their electricity bills regularly.
3. It has been a regular process for people to pay their monthly electricity bills for years. At present, the Anti-Fascist Task Force is working to stop the public from paying electricity bills and stop collecting electricity bills. Problems can arise if there is no income for generating cost, the purchase of natural gas and (LNG) electricity. It is considered that the aim is to make the people have less electricity and it might be harmful to the socio-economic life of the people.
4. Therefore, we would like to request you to work for the interests of the people as a whole by paying regular monthly electricity bills.

Ministry of Electricity and Energy

Announcement

1. It is found that some foreign correspondents based in Myanmar express the current government of the State Administration Council as military council or military junta or junta in their news stories and exaggerate their news quoting rootless sources and false news related to Myanmar.
2. The State Administration Council just controls various State duties in line with the provisions of the state of emergency under the Constitution (2008) of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, and it has been clearly announced that the government is not a coup d'état government.
3. The United Nations and global countries have recognized the State Administration Council as the legal government of Myanmar.
4. Especially, some foreign news agencies need to express news in line with news media ethics instead of quoting and exaggerating inaccurate and uncertain news and undermining the country by disseminating false news to global people.
5. The government emphasizes the holding of press conferences and the correct and quick replies to queries so as to ensure the correct and swift flow of information.
6. The announcement was hereby issued that some foreign news agencies were warned not to further apply the usage of military council/military junta/junta for the government in the future and not to quote and exaggerate the false news, and action will be taken against them under the existing laws if they apply wrong usages, quote and exaggerate fake news and disseminate false information.

Ministry of Information

NATIONAL PEOPLES SHOULD BE DISCIPLINED IN UNISON

All our national peoples should be disciplined in unison and harmony without any racial hatred. Anyone who are adamantly trying to instigate others to do wrongdoings should work for the country.

(Excerpt from the broadcasting speech made by Bogyoke Aung San to the national peoples at 7:40 pm on 1 January 1947)



MoHS discusses COVID-19 disease prevention and control activities

THE Ministry of Health and Sports held the coordination meeting with the COVID-19 pandemic Advisory Board on the COVID-19 disease prevention and control activities yesterday morning in Nay Pyi Taw.

Union Minister for Health and Sports Dr Thet Khaing Win said the hospital bed management and oxygen requirements are being given special priority since the outbreak of COVID-19 is on the rise, adding the human resource is currently the main challenge as the healthcare is being provided to the people with 60 per cent of the Ministry's staff.

Arrangements are being made to open the Thuwunna COVID-19 centre and accept patients in South Okkalapa Hospital and Phaung Gyi COVID-19 treatment centre. Phaung Gyi COVID-19 centre is being prepared to receive 200 patients at present. The arrangement will

be made to accept up to 700 or 800 patients.

The Union Minister said efforts are being made to maximize oxygen production, to regularly operate oxygen generators in hospitals and to prevent oxygen shortage. Liquid oxygen is being used in Yangon and Mandalay and installation has started in Nay Pyi Taw. The Ministry is also coordinating with companies to import the required liquid oxygen through borders.

He said restrictions have been imposed in the country to reduce the spread of the disease under the law. The vaccination will continue by the priority groups to achieve 50% nationwide immunization coverage by the end of this year. He urged donors, volunteers and experts to work together in the COVID-19 prevention and control activities. The Union Minister stressed



that the Department must take strict measures to increase the capacity of the relevant township health department heads while efforts are being made to provide

immediate treatment if the disease is affected and to improve COVID-19 diagnosis.

The patrons of the Advisory Board participated in the dis-

cussion and the Union Minister and the Deputy Minister discussed the short-term and long-term priorities to be followed. —MNA

Myanmar attends 54th ASEAN tourism authority meeting and related meetings



THE 54th ASEAN Tourism Authority Meeting and relevant meetings, the 39th ASEAN+

China, Japan, Korea Tourism Authority Meeting and the 26th ASEAN-India Tourism Authority

Meeting were chaired by Indonesia on 7 and 8 July via video-conferencing.

The meetings discussed matters in connexion with the implementation of the ASEAN Tourism Strategic Plan (2016-2025) during and the post-COVID-19 period, the undertaking of the Tourism Marketing Strategy (2021-2025), tourism promotion activities of the ASEAN Centres — ASEAN-China Centre, ASEAN-Japan Centre and ASEAN-Korea Centre.

Representatives of the ASEAN Tourism Association

(ASEANTA), ASEAN Tourism Research Association (ARTA), US-ASEAN Business Council (US-ABC), United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) and the Pacific-Asia Tourism Association discussed the resumption of international travel and tourism during the COVID-19 period.

The second-day meeting discussed matters pertaining to the progress of the tourism cooperation among the ASEAN+3 nations, the progress of its work plan (2021-2025), support of Chi-

na, Japan and South Korea in the process of rehabilitating ASEAN tourism, the status of developing and implementing the ASEAN+ India Tourism Cooperation Work Plan (2021-2022) according to the ASEAN-India Tourism Cooperation Agreement, human resources development for tourism and hospitality between ASEAN and India, ASEAN+ India emergency communications, information exchange on tourism strategies and investment opportunities, and international tourist arrivals in member countries. —MNA

Announcement of Union Election Commission

8 July 2021

1. The Union Election Commission published the voter list scrutiny of 315 townships where the 2020 Multi-party Democracy General Election was held on 8 November 2020, a summary of findings on the scrutiny of Pyithu Hluttaw ballot papers by townships, regions/states and the Union Territory from 16-2-2021 to 7-7-2021.
2. Voter lists in 315 townships where the 2020 Multi-party Democracy Election was held revealed that a large number of voter registration errors were reported in every township and polling station, and this was not an accidental mistake but a premeditated one.
3. According to the township, state/region and nationwide cross-check of those who were on the voter list without a citizenship card, those who were on the voter lists three or more times with the same citizenship scrutiny card, those who were on the voter lists two times with the same citizenship scrutiny card, the total number of voter fraud cases was 11,305,390. The list of duplicate voter lists, voters over the age of 100 and under 18 by region/state and Union Territory was as follows;

Findings in voter lists which occurred rigging of votes

Sr	Region/State	Findings in voter lists of UEC						Total
		No CSC	More than three times	Two times	Crosschecking in regions and states	More than 100 years old	Under 18 years	
1	Kachin	92,452	7,633	102,876	60,590	679	497	264,727
2	Kayah	5,552	930	16,680	5,912	238	44	29,356
3	Kayin	241,953	15,258	128,230	15,294	917	822	402,474
4	Chin	15,580	2,981	34,248	1,954	366	185	55,314
5	Sagaing	337,484	39,220	460,916	71,872	1,897	1,466	912,855
6	Thaninthayi	193,991	8,120	112,756	28,958	708	366	344,899
7	Bago	858,611	37,162	382,058	61,008	1,985	877	1,341,701
8	Magway	172,976	33,956	397,504	45,242	1,567	650	651,895
9	Mandalay	388,282	38,090	516,776	217,668	3,151	1,239	1,165,206
10	Mon	305,987	13,002	174,268	26,828	902	485	521,472
11	Rakhine	77,573	4,101	47,712	3,598	341	223	133,548
12	Yangon	747,138	11,070	269,412	405,366	2,222	1,909	1,437,117
13	Shan	616,531	22,697	309,248	69,054	2,597	1,996	1,022,123
14	Ayeyawady	706,984	54,285	567,300	39,742	2,707	3,339	1,374,357
15	Union Territorial Area	108,333	6,900	76,222	38,690	289	314	230,748
	Total	4,869,427	295,405	3,596,206	1,091,776	20,566	14,412	9,887,792
	Nationwide cross-checking result				1,417,598			1,417,598
	Total	4,869,427	295,405	3,596,206	2,509,374	20,566	14,412	1,1305,390

4. The previous Union Election Commission announced that 38,271,447 were eligible to vote in the 2020 Multi-party Democracy General Election and according to the scrutiny of the voter lists, the number of fraudulent ballots was 11,305,390 (29.54%) as follows:

(a) Number of people who were on the voter lists without a citizenship scrutiny card	4,869,427
(b) Number of people who were on the voter lists three times and more	295,405
(c) Number of people who were on the voter list two times with a citizenship scrutiny card	3,596,206
(d) Cross-check by the township in regions/states	1,091,776
(e) Number of voters over the age of 100	20,566
(f) Number of people under the age of 18 on the election day	14,412
(g) Nationwide cross-check	1,417,598
(h) Total of voter frauds	11,305,390

Union Election Commission

4,132 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 8 July, total figure rises to 180,055

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to **180,055** after **4,132 new cases** were reported on 8 July 2021 according to the Ministry of Health and Sports. Among these confirmed cases, **142,309** have been discharged from hospitals. Death toll stands at **3,621** after **51** died. —MNA

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

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Development of the State

IT is necessary to have sufficiency of electricity, good transport, good communication system and human resources for proper health and education systems in order to ensure development of a country. Health and education sectors must be encouraged for having good human resources. Hence, the education sector must be encouraged to be able to turn out the educated new generations for emergence of human resources.

(Excerpt from the speech of Chairman of the State Administration Council Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing at the meeting with Mandalay Region Administration Council members and departmental personnel on 17-5-2021)

Union Minister for Health and Sports attends WADA virtual meeting

UNION Minister for Health and Sports Dr Thet Khaing Win yesterday attended a virtual meeting hosted by the President of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA).

The Deputy Minister of Health and Sports, U Myo Hlaing and officials from the sports and medical sectors also joined the meeting.

President of the World Anti-Doping Agency Mr Witold Banka, Vice-President Ms Yang Yang, officials from the WADA and Sports ministers from East Asia South and Southeast Asia, exchanged views on drugs during the meeting.

Firstly, Mr Witold Banka, President of the World Anti-Doping Agency, discussed the current situation of the World Anti-Doping Agency, conditions encountered during an epidemic and issues of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA).

In addition to the federations, there is a need to build a clean sports world with the participation of the private sector. The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) provides support to the Regional Anti-Doping Organi-

zation (RADO) and the Myanmar Anti-Doping Organization (MADO), the WADA president continued.

Next, Ms Yang Yang, Vice-Chairwoman of the World Anti-Doping Agency, said that from the beginning of an athlete's life, effective drug education activities can help build a clean sports world. An e-Learning Programme has been successfully set up on the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) website and issues of inclusive learning are being discussed.

After that, Union Minister Dr Thet Khaing Win said that the Anti-Doping Committee in Myanmar was reconstituted in 2019 and consequently the Myanmar Anti-Doping Organization (MADO) website was launched earlier this year.

Athlete support information is being disseminated to anti-doping professionals.

Plans are underway to translate the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA Code) into the Myanmar language and establish a drug law.

MADO, with the support of the World Anti-Doping Agency's



The Union Minister chairs the meeting.

anti-doping agency, conducts annual doping tests outside of the Games and sends them to a laboratory in Qatar accredited by the World Anti-Doping Agency in collaboration with the South East Asia Anti-Doping Agency.

Inspections are being made to control drug use in domestic sports competitions," the Union Minister added.

The Union Minister called on the Myanmar Anti-Doping Organization (MADO) to work with the Southeast Asian Anti-Doping Agency and the World Anti-Doping Agency to provide technical support for drug research and development in Myanmar.

Afterwards, sports ministers from various countries briefed on the anti-doping activ-

ities of the respective countries and difficulties encountered in the operation of illicit drugs.

Next, Japan's sports minister discussed anti-doping measures at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

Representatives from each of the countries concerned shared their experiences as well and concluded the meeting. —MNA

COVID-19 treatment centre (Thuwunna) provides treatment for confirmed patients starting from 8 July

THE COVID-19 treatment centre (Thuwunna) is providing treatment for confirmed patients starting from 8 July, according to the Ministry of Health and Sports.

Besides, the Yoma Yeiktha COVID-19 centre will accept 1,000 quarantined patients and 576 confirmed patients while the MCC COVID-19 centre will accept 250 confirmed patients. Patients started receiving treatment at the MCC centre on 26 June. Yangon General Hospital and Yangon new general hospital are also providing treatment for COVID-19 patients. Inya Lake COVID-19 centre (Mayangon) was also opened as a treatment centre and about 24 confirmed patients have started receiving medical treatment, it is learnt.

Inya Lake COVID-19 centre (Mayangon) can accommodate about 500 patients. Adequate oxygen supply is being arranged to provide the patients, according to the Ministry.

The medical treatment teams from across the country have to update their guidelines and projects to provide systematic treatment to patients depending on the severity of the disease. It must be prepared in consultation with medical volunteers and relevant authorities, said the Union Minister for the Ministry of Health and Sports.

He also instructed the health officials to offer proper medical services, follow the medical ethics and infection control procedures.

Under the Ministry of Health and Sports' guide-

lines, the Tatmadaw medical teams, medical staff from the public health and treatment department and volunteer staff are monitoring the disease daily and providing necessary treatment to the patients in the areas where the COVID-19 virus has been found in large numbers.

People may be required to stay in isolation if they have fever, cough, sudden loss of odour and difficult breathing and had close contact with a COVID-19 confirmed patient in the last 14 days. Those people must wear masks and inform the concerned health in charge and nearest health department.

Myanmar was hit by the third wave of COVID-19 on 27 May. — Aye Maung/GNLM

Sesame seeds export tops US\$287.75 mln in seven months



Sesame is cultivated in the country throughout the year. Magway Region, which has gained a reputation as the oil pot of Myanmar, is the main producer of sesame seeds.

MYANMAR'S sesame seeds export has earned US\$287.75 million in the seven months (October-April) of the current financial year 2020-2021, according to data released by Myanmar Customs Department.

Chinese buyers hesitate to buy sesame amid transportation difficulties triggered by the COVID-19 resurgence. The price is on the bear market in July, said an exporter.

The export price of sesa-

me seeds dipped to K130,000-148,000 per bag on 8 July owing to Kyat weakening against the dollar in the local forex market, whereas it fetched about K135,000-160,000 in the last week of June, according to

Mandalay commodity depot.

Normally, Myanmar exports about 80 per cent of sesame production to foreign markets. China is the main buyer of Myanmar sesame, which was also shipped to markets in Japan, South Korea, China (Taipei), the UK, Germany, the Netherlands, Greece, and Poland among the EU countries.

The EU markets prefer organic-farming sesame seeds from Myanmar. Japan prefers Myanmar black sesame seeds, cultivated under good agricultural practices (GAP), and purchases them after a quality assessment. Black sesame seeds from Myanmar were previously exported to South Korea and Japan.

China usually purchases various coloured sesame seeds from the country, yet, the trade is quite sluggish for now. This year, Japan has not purchased Myanmar's sesame yet.

Sesame is cultivated in the country throughout the year.

Magway Region, which has gained a reputation as the oil pot of Myanmar, is the main producer of sesame seeds. The seeds are also grown in Mandalay and Sagaing regions.

Of the cooking oil crops grown in Myanmar, the acreage under sesame seed is the highest, accounting for 51.3 per cent of the overall oil crop plantation.

The volume of sesame exports was registered at over 96,000 metric tons, worth \$130 million, in the financial year 2015-2016; \$100,000 tonnes, worth \$145 million, in the 2016-2017FY; 120,000 tonnes, worth \$147 million, in the 2017-2018FY; 33,900 tonnes valued \$43.8 million in the 2018 mini-budget period, 125,800 tonnes, worth \$212.5 million in the 2018-2019FY and over 150,000 tonnes of sesame, worth \$240 million in the previous 2019-2020FY, the trade data of Central Statistical Organization indicated. – KK/GNLM

MRIC endorses seven domestic projects as of 1 July

THE Mandalay Region Investment Committee (MRIC) has endorsed seven wholly domestic projects so far in the current financial year 2020-2021, according to the DICA's monthly update on endorsement investment.

The domestic projects brought in the capital of K17.7 billion, mostly into the manufacturing and hotel sectors, as per the DICA's statistics.

These projects will create 537 job opportunities for Myanmar citizens.

Under the Myanmar Investment Law which was enacted in 2017, the Myanmar Investment Commission has delegated the power to endorse investment projects to the region and state authorities to promote the investment business. The Mandalay Region Investment Committee was formed to allow local and foreign investors to invest in the region.

According to the statistics released by the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration, Yangon Region absorbs 60 per cent of all investments in Myanmar, Mandalay attracts 30 per cent, while the other regions and states get only a small share of investments.

The MRIC has endorsed about 80 foreign projects from more than 16 countries and over 180 domestic proposals since its establishment until early July 2021.

The foreign projects pulled in a capital of over US\$4.43 billion, which flowed mostly into manufacturing, power, and other services sectors, while domestic businesses pumped in more than K5,255.96 billion, especially in infrastructure building, manufacturing, hotel services and other services sectors, the DICA's statistics showed.

To simplify the verification of investment projects, the Myanmar Investment Law allows the Region and State Investment Committees to grant permissions for local and foreign proposals, where the initial investment does not exceed K6 billion, or \$5 million. – Htet Myat/GNLM

Rubber price stays on rise, hit over K900 per pound

RUBBER prices constantly rose and jumped to over K900 per pound, Mawlamyine Commodity Depot data indicated.

Natural quality rubber was priced at K710 per pound while the ribbed smoked sheet (RSS) hit K720 per pound in late January 2021. But it soared to K930 per pound for natural quality rubber and K940 per pound for RSS currently.

According to National Enlightenment Institute (NEI) last year's Myanmar rubber analysis data, the price of rubber has risen as rubber production has declined in the off-season in June, July and August.

This is the reason why the rubber prices are likely to rise this year's rubber off-season.

Further, another reason for the increase in rubber prices this year is raising demand for rubber from international countries to produce rubber gloves needed to prevent COVID-19 disease.

Presently, there is steady demand for rubber from China and Thailand.

Mon State has the largest sown acreage of rubber in Myanmar with the production of over 240 million pounds of



Rubber is primarily cultivated in Mon and Kayin states and Taninthayi, Bago, and Yangon regions in Myanmar. As per 2018-2019 rubber season's data, there are over 1.628 million acres of rubber plantations in Myanmar with Mon State amounting to for 497,153 acres, followed by Taninthayi Region 348,344 acres and Kayin State with 270,760 acres.

rubber, according to the 2020 official statistics of Mon State Agricultural Department.

Rubber is primarily cultivated in Mon and Kayin states and Taninthayi, Bago, and Yangon regions in Myanmar.

As per 2018-2019 rubber season's data, there are over 1.628 million acres of rubber plantations in Myanmar with Mon State amounting to 497,153 acres, followed by Taninthayi Region 348,344 acres and Kayin State with 270,760 acres, according to the MRPPA.

Besides, about 300,000 tonnes of rubber is produced annually across the country. Seventy per cent of rubber made in Myanmar goes to China.

It is also shipped to Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, Viet Nam, the Republic of Korea, India, Japan, and other countries, according to the MRPPA.

Myanmar annually exports over 200,000 tonnes of raw rubber to foreign countries generating over \$200 million.—NN/GNLM

Police arrest suspects who shot security member in Tamway

THE terrorist groups intentionally sent the youths to the ethnic armed groups for military training and committed the bombing and arson attacks to the schools, mine planting and murder cases against the Tatmadaw members and police.

On 29 June, the terrorists from the white Toyota Wish (unlicensed) shot the security members conducting a patrol near Ayeyawady Bank in Myitta Nyunt Ward of Tamway Township and ran away. The police seized a pistol, bullets and a driving licence in the car.

The security forces conducted an investigation and arrested three suspects – Khant Si Thu including his father U Maung Maung Lwin and Saw Htoo Aung Myint (aka) Y2K in Htani Village in Maubin Township of Ayeyawady Region on 6 July.

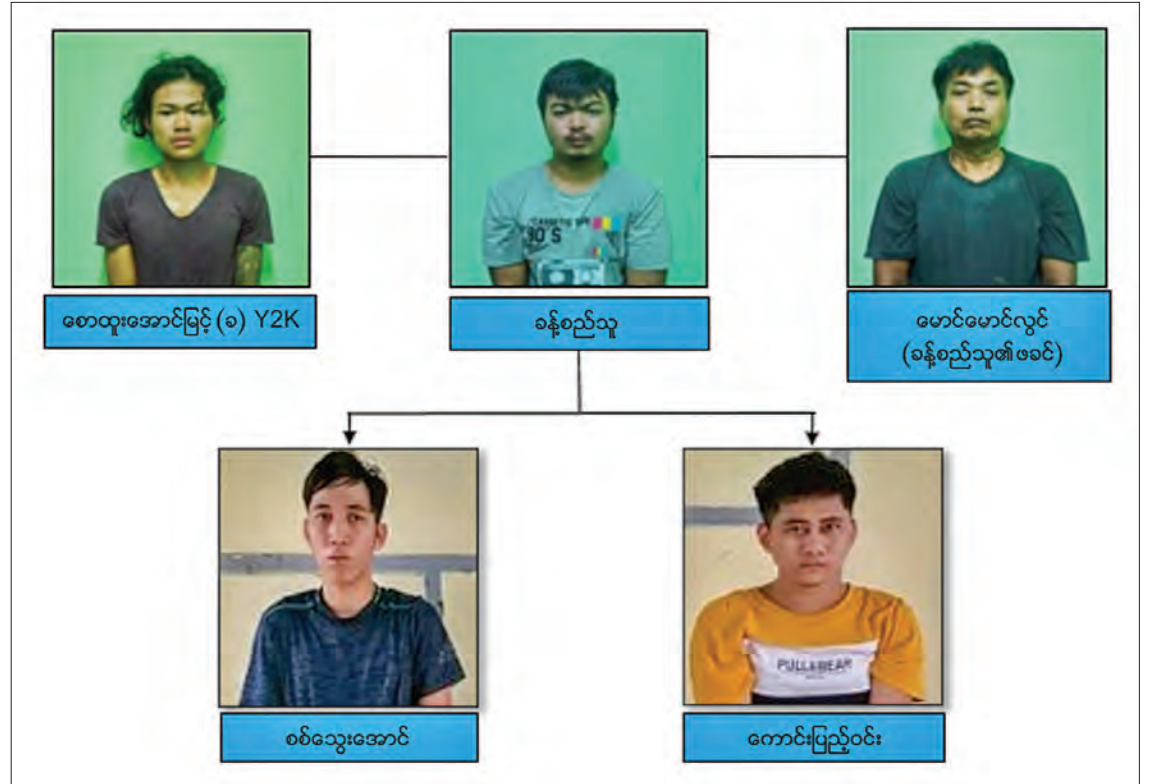
The police also arrested another suspect Sitt Thway Aung together with homemade bombs and other explosives in Thiri Khay Mar Ward of Sangyoung Township and Kaung Pyae Win together with Honda Insight at Kyaikkasan Housing in East Horse Race Course Road of

Tamway Township on 7 July according to the confession of the suspect Khant Si Thu.

According to the words of suspects, Ko Khun contacted Khin Kyaw (UNRA) for Khant Si Thu, Sitt Thway Aung, Kaung Pyae Win and Saw Htoo Aung Myint (aka) Y2K to join the explosive training and they joined the training from 20 to 27 April. When they completed the course, they joined the Union of Myanmar Civil Defence (UMCD) organized by Ko Khun. They were ordered to commit bomb attacks.

Suspect Khant Si Thu attempted to commit a bomb attack at Tamway Township's Ward Administration Office on 26 June and the bomb did not explode. On 29 June, Khant Si Thu shot the security member in Myitta Nyunt Ward of Tamway Township together with Sitt Thway Aung and Saw Tayoke.

Therefore, the five suspects arrested with their explosives will face legal actions under the law and the people are urged to inform the officials secretly if they know the hiding places or movement of insurgents. —MNA



Terrorist assassin arrested with pistol in Dagon Myothit (East)



TWO terrorists, named Aung Myo Min and Thant Zin, who opened fire at an innocent civilian and one of them was arrested with one 9MM pistol and 8 rounds of ammunition by the security forces patrolling the area on 7 July in Dagon Myothit (East) Township, Yangon Region.

Two men and two women were arrested together with 3 homemade gas guns, 2 wooden cross-bows and other necessary materials in the house on Anaw-



ma road, Thakayta Township, following the confession of Aung Myo Min.

It is reported a team led by Thauk Kyar was provided weapons by NUG to assassinate informers and to carry out destructive activities and violence in Thakayta and Dawbon Townships. Aung Myo Min was reportedly trying to assassinate the innocent civilian with the weapon given by Thauk Kyar for 200,000 kyats.

He came to the place with five other men, named Thant Zin, Roman, Sett Paing, Zwe Nyi and Ar Kar Lay, by two cars and one motorbike to commit the assassination and the others escaped by the time the security forces arrived at the scene.

People are urged to cooperate in the safety and security of the townships and villages by reporting the places and information of the terrorists to the relevant authorities. — MNA

Two armed men shot dead in Dawei Township



TWO armed men shot dead for attacking school security forces yesterday in Dawei Township, Taninthayi Region.

At 4:30 am on 8 July, ten people, led by the village administrator, provided security at the basic education high school branch in Raungmaw village, Dawei Township.

While providing the security, about 20 armed men, known as the Dawei Defence Team (DDT), arrived on motorcycles and opened fire outside the school fence.

School security forces retaliated with gunfire, and the DDT

group retreated about 50 meters from the school. Then, the DDT retreated to the northeast of the school and two-gun men from the group were shot dead by security forces.

Consequently, a leader of the DDT, named Tin Naing (alias) Ko James (alias) James Bond, 48 and other man were arrested together with one gun, two 22-point rifles; two 22-point pistols, three hand grenades, 15 bullets and four motorcycles.

The Dawei Defence Team (DDT), which attacked school security forces, is being prosecuted by the authorities. — MNA

Extend wings of export quality products to international market

AMONG 10 countries that exported the large trade volume to Myanmar within seven months of 2020-21 financial year, China stands top with more than US\$2,950 million worth of export volume, followed by Singapore with more than US\$1,500 million and Thailand with over US\$1,000 million.

During the period from October 2020 to April 2021, Myanmar imported goods worth US\$2,950.78 million from China, US\$1,506.58 million from Singapore, US\$1,021.87 million from Thailand, US\$630.54 million from Indonesia, US\$511.75 million from Malaysia, US\$353.56 million from India, US\$266.04 million from the Republic of Korea, US\$231.88 million from Japan, US\$225.07 million from Vietnam and US\$150.64 million from the United States of America.

Manufacturers and producers as well as local people should take care of increasing the export volume and reducing import items to have a trade surplus as part of practising the thrifty of foreign exchange. It is because the surplus income would flow into the nation-building tasks including the construction of infrastructure and development tasks.

During the seven-month period of the 2020-21 financial year, Myanmar earned income from both border and maritime trade routes. Myanmar businesspersons operate export and import functions with Chinese partners at the border trade camps along the longest borderlines between the two countries. It is one of the most significant points for enabling China to become the top trade partner of Myanmar.

Myanmar shares a border with China along the border in Kachin State, Shan State (North) and Shan State (East). Based on the enhancement of bilateral relations, the trade volume of Myanmar and China also reaches the top with US\$12,126.278 million last financial year. At that time, Myanmar exported US\$5,401.943 million worth of products to China and imported US\$6,724.335 million worth of goods from China.

In fact, Myanmar businesspersons and exporters should not satisfy with their trade situation. They need to seek more and more trade partners to be able to increase the trade volume with them while local businesspersons should emphasize manufacturing of export quality products so as to earn an income of foreign exchange.

Broadening the scope of business around the Southeast Asian region as well as Asian and global countries, Myanmar entrepreneurs need to seek the best trade opportunities for the extension of their wings to the international market.



Let's change mindset to grow saplings for conservation of environment

By Aung Kyaw Thant

NATURALLY, humans should not live alone without relations with the environment. Both living creatures and forests are involved in the ecosystem. In fact, the proper ecosystem benefits both living creatures including humans and forests. Otherwise, the reverse kind of ecosystem will bring danger to both communities, creating degradation of the environment which may cause deforestation, calamities, unfavourable climatic conditions and so on.

Possibility to face calamities

Nowadays, the world always faces at least one of the above-mentioned calamities and impacts in environmental degradation. The root causes of these plights are generally based on the undisciplined acts of humans. In Myanmar, greedy businesspersons across the nation logged the forests focusing on the interests in recent decades, without considering the impacts of deforestation for the posterity. Consequently, Myanmar lost a large area of forests which secured 57 per cent of the total land areas of the nation before 1988. So, the degradation of forest areas made hills barren. Lakes shrunk. Rivers and creeks became silted and then totally disappeared from the maps. Losing sources of the natural environment cannot give adequate basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter to humans. As such, not only human beings but wildlife creatures face difficulties of basic needs for their survival.

Everybody should notice that the temperature of the nation is increasingly rising up yearly. Hence, all living beings including humans are suffering from the impacts of hotter days. Too much hotness of sunray can halt various kinds of operations including businesses. It can be said that the environment punishes living beings. Anyone cannot deny that most of the people did not commit the bad impacts of deforestation but greedy persons committed it. Such a refusal is not enough. Even though any persons do not breach the rules for deforestation

to cause bad impacts, they themselves are participants of human society. They had indirectly enjoyed the results of committing deforestation. So, they must take responsibility for the impacts as participants of the society. On the other hand, any wildlife or any cattle is not responsible for doing so because they are always victims of society.

I would like to note that everybody needs to take responsibility for the impacts of deforestation because such kind of impact was triggered by humans. At this juncture, taking responsibility is not enough for deforestation. All participants from human society should strive for greening the environment to become normalcy.

Golden dreams of golden land

Everybody may remember some expressions in the records and historical books which brought the golden days of the environment to society. Now, it is a dream that all the Myanmar people have dreamt of. Hence, all the people need to grow trees on the barren areas as well as desert-designed areas to have greening scenes that can shape the proper climatic conditions of respective areas.

Myanmar's Forest Department recently stated that it adopted plans to establish forest reserves and protected public forests on more than 700,000 acres of land on a yearly basis so as to meet the target in the forestry sector in line with Myanmar's forestry policies. Such information occupied the applauds of environmentalists and ordinary people residing in the dry areas in the central part of the nation. If the plan is really implemented, anyhow the climatic conditions may change for all. If so, those people from the dry regions will have the chance to enjoy the fruits of favourable climatic conditions.

The Forest Department focuses on the sustainability of forests and the conservation of the ecosystem of the whole nation. To do so, efforts are being made to set up and extend forest reserves, protected public forests and natural areas as well as conserve biodiversity.

Currently, the Myanmar Forestry Policy (1995) and the Nation-



The monsoon tree-planting ceremony of the Myanma Radio and Television (MRTV), the Ministry of Information, was held on 26 June, 2021 in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MNA

al Forest Master Plan 2001-2031 are under implementation with the aim of expanding the forest reserves and protected public forests to have 30 per cent of Myanmar's total land which maybe 50,155,776 acres of land. That is why the Forest Department places emphasis on the expansion of 702,904 acres of forest areas yearly. According to the information, a total of 29,695,249.65 acres of land were formed as 848 forest reserves and 13,119,322.59 acres of land as 442 protected public forests, totalling 42,814,572.24 acres of total lands as forest reserves and protected public forests up to June of 2020-21 financial year. In the mileage system, the forest areas have covered 66,897.769 square miles of areas across the nation, accounting for 25.61 per cent of the total country area.

Individual responsibilities for greening

Only when the forestry areas occupy the barren areas to be greened, will it change the climatic conditions for all. To be able to green the barren areas, we all need to grow trees anyhow. The projects cannot be implemented on paper. Practically, tasks of greening the barren areas must be invested with the labour and sweat of all the citizens. Any plants thriving on the ground can maintain the water aboveground and underground as deposits. Humans can consume these water sources

at an opportune time. Hence, the efforts for greening tasks will benefit the people in the future. That is why everybody should not deny they don't have responsibilities for regrowing trees for improvement of the environment. It is sure that they all did not commit logging of the precious trees such as large and long teak plants, ironwood plants and other valuable hardwood plants along with the mountain ranges such as Bago mountain ranges, Rakhine mountain ranges and others small and large ones. They have to grow trees as a national duty because they are citizens of the country residing in the nation as well as relying on the planet Earth.

Indeed, growing trees is easy but nurturing them is very difficult. Expenditure of growing the trees is too much. The expenditure from the period of gathering the seeds to the growing the saplings is very high. If the tree growing ceremony spends a large sum of money on the cost of saplings, labour charge, transport charge and some amount for inputs used at the ceremony, each ceremony will spend a large expenditure. If the already grown trees die, it means such expenditure loses.

Moreover, there are many steps to nurture the saplings. Whenever the tree planting ceremony has been held, it is noticeable that locals and authorities should not forget the saplings. They have to nurture them. Otherwise, they should assign someone to nurture these plants. In addition, it is necessary to choose the water supply system for the plants. Some persons use the water dropping system to shower the saplings. Such a water-dropping system uses empty plastic bottles in which the water is filled. The bottles must be opened in small holes to drop out the water on the saplings. It is a simple system of watering the saplings. Otherwise, labourers can be assigned to shower the plants.

Among 12 months in the Gregorian calendar, July is the best month to grow trees in Myanmar due to favourable weather of monsoon and soil situation. Hence, everybody needs to apply any ways and means in growing the saplings to have growth. One day, these plants will be free from dependence on the assistance of humans. At that time, they can thrive themselves with the strengths of roots to absorb the underground water. Hence, they can thrive freely. If so, the barren areas can be greened.

How to nurture saplings

At present, everybody knows that tree growing ceremonies are held elsewhere with great aims. But, when the ceremony is completed, anybody does not turn to the plantations. They seem they are dutiful after just growing the saplings at the ceremonies. Similar ceremonies were held yearly.

How to nurture saplings

Whenever the ceremonies were over, the participants forgot the measures of saplings. Nobody considers how to nurture the saplings for their growth in the long run. So, they leave the saplings in their respective blocks.

If they make efforts for nurturing the already grown saplings, the entire nation is filled with greening forests. It may be difficult to search the even plots for residences of humans. Practically, these tree-growing ceremonies waste the fund of the people. These expenditures for the ceremonies had gone with the wind.

To be able to address such weaknesses, we all need to amend ways and means for growing the saplings. If we don't change our behaviours and mindset in the future, even plans of the Forest Department to expand the forest areas across the nation would not meet accomplishment. If the land cannot be greened, those crying aloud for shaping the barren mountain ranges as part of environmental conservation will die on the spot. All the citizens need to emphasize that the expenditure for tree growing ceremonies should be deserved. These costs must be effective. If we grow saplings now, they will be beneficial to posterity in the coming generations.

All in all, we all need to emphasize applying the correct ways and means in tree growing ceremonies without forgetting the aim to green and change the climatic conditions to the favourable weather which can benefit the people. Only when environmental conservation achieves success, will all the people have the chance to enjoy fruitful results from the environment. Whenever living beings including humans cannot be separable from the forests in the environment, we don't have to forget the already planted saplings at the ceremonies and need to always remember the process for taking care of these plants to have proper thriving.

Let's grow saplings to recover the forests in the nation! Let's nurture the saplings for thriving until they can stand tall on their own roots! If so, it is sure for the existence of trees to benefit all the people of the country.



Thabyay Radio to launch broadcast on 11 July



A NEW radio broadcasting programme namely Thabyay Radio will be launched in central Myanmar with MW 711 KHz and Yangon and surrounding areas with FM 99.6 MHz as of 11 July.

The Myanma Radio and Television under the Ministry of Information will arrange broadcasting programmes of Thabyay Radio comprising the true information sector to rebut fake and false news, feature programmes and talks, the youth sector, the general knowledge sector, the questions for thoughts, questions for health knowledge, beautiful Myanmar, knowledge from books, the digest sector, sweet songs of Thabyay Radio, modern songs and songs for patriotic spirit from 7 am to 12 noon and from 4 pm to 9 pm daily. — MNA



Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 4:00 pm Thursday 8 July, 2021)

BAY INFERENCE: Monsoon is moderate to strong over the Andaman Sea and South Bay and weak elsewhere over the Bay of Bengal.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL MORNING OF THE 9 July, 2021: Rain or thundershowers will be fairly widespread in Sagaing, Magway Regions and Northern Shan State and widespread in the remaining Regions and States with likelihood of regionally heavyfalls in Taninthayi Region and Kayin, Mon States and isolated heavyfalls in Nay Pyi Taw, Mandalay, Bago, Yangon, Ayeyawady Regions and Southern Shan, Kayah States. Degree of certainty is (100%).

STATE OF THE SEA: Sea will be moderate in Myanmar waters. Wave height will be about (6-8) feet off and along Myanmar Coasts.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Continuations of increase of rain in Taninthayi Region and Kayin, Mon States.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 9 July, 2021: One or two rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 9 July, 2021: Some rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 9 July, 2021: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (80%).

World Insights: Miracle, Inspiration – CPC leadership, Chinese path in eyes of world party leaders

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the Communist Party of China (CPC). Over the 100 years since its founding, the CPC has navigated China, the world's most populous country, towards a path of rapid development, having achieved admirable success that has earned global respect.

Party leaders and senior officials of different countries recently expressed appreciation for China's achievements, noting that China's success, a result of the CPC's strong leadership and a right development path, offers significant inspiration for other countries in pursuit of their own development.

STRONG LEADERSHIP INDISPENSABLE

"The whole world might not imagine that a huge country like China would develop into the world's second largest economy in just over 40 years. This is a very remarkable achievement," said Somsavat Lengsavad, former Lao deputy prime minister and former politburo member of the Central Committee of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party.

The wise and strong leadership of the CPC is the decisive factor for the achievements, he said.

"In my opinion, the Chinese miracle is mainly due to the leadership of the CPC because they found a model of development in this dynamic world," which is socialism with Chinese characteristics, said Alexandar Paunov, first secretary of the Bulgarian Communist Party, when commenting on "the Chinese miracle".

"The path of socialism with Chinese

characteristics that the Communist Party of China follows is original and responds to the demands of today's world, as well as to the conditions of China," said Alberto Moreno, president of the Communist Party of Peru (Red Fatherland).

Raed Fahmi, secretary of the Central Committee of the Iraqi Communist Party, said that socialism with Chinese characteristics is a huge historical experience, which his party is keen to study and follow up.

In each stage of the CPC's history, "there have been capable leaders, taking the lead from the party to drive each stage and accomplish goals," said Hector Aleman, secretary of international relations of Panama's ruling Democratic Revolutionary Party.

DEVELOPMENT BENEFITS PEOPLE

Najm al-Deen al-Kharit, secretary-general of the Unified Syrian Communist Party, said that he had visited China twice, and was impressed by China's development, especially the construction of buildings and the improvement in people's livelihood.

Al-Kharit is not the only one who has been impressed by how China has brought tangible benefits to its people with rapid development.

"The secret behind China's ability to control the pandemic lies in putting people's health first," said Adham Sayed, member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Lebanon, highlighting the CPC's dedication to the well-being of the Chinese people during the pandemic's darkest hours and beyond.

"If a party wants to survive, it must put the interests of the people first, which is what the CPC has done throughout its march," Sayed said.

Impressed by China's technological achievements, former Hungarian Prime Minister Peter Medgyessy, said, "The quality of life in China has also changed a lot, and this is perhaps even more important than technical progress."

"The success of the party is based on two things, one is that it has represented a stable set of values that can be maintained in the long run, and the other is its very good ability to renew itself," Medgyessy said.

Mahdi Dakhallah, a leading member of Syria's ruling al-Baath party, said that the notion of "putting the people first" has pushed China forward.

INSPIRATION FOR WORLD

Adan Chavez, vice president of the United Socialist Party of Venezuela, visited China four times between 2017 and 2019. He said that the CPC is a pillar of the scientific and technological development made by China, and achievements attained by its people are not only a "role model for the rest of the world, but a symbol of hope."

"We have witnessed how the Chinese people have rendered huge support for their government and the CPC while working together in keeping with principles of socialism with Chinese characteristics," he said.

Referring to the third volume of "Xi Jinping: The Governance of China," the senior Venezuelan party official said the

book portrays steps to be taken to succeed in the construction of socialism and a new vision of the Chinese leadership.

He said that China is an inspiration for nations fighting for freedom and sovereignty, adding that the huge progress made by the Chinese people is a clear proof that socialism is an effective solution "to the problems affecting humanity".

As a century-old party, the CPC has always kept pace with the times and innovated continuously, said Sofia Carvajal, secretary of international affairs of Mexico's Institutional Revolutionary Party, adding that in this regard, her party can learn from the CPC to continuously innovate, develop, and adjust itself to people's changing needs, so as to gain public support.

Medgyessy also noted that China's fast development has created opportunities for markets and investments on a global scale, and China's impact on the world has been "very significant".

China's reform and opening-up is important experience for other countries, including Belarus. "There are a lot of interesting things in the socio-economic development of China, which today I see as very relevant for our country," former Belarusian Deputy Prime Minister Anatoly Tozik said.

"The growth of China's power and its economic strength is not a threat to humanity, but an additional chance for everyone to overcome today's terribly difficult time and terribly difficult period in the life of human civilization," he said.

Source: Xinhua



Japanese drugmaker Shionogi to double COVID vaccine supply to 60 mil.

JAPANESE pharmaceutical firm Shionogi & Co. will provide up to 120 million doses of its COVID-19 vaccine under development annually or enough for 60 million people, doubling its supply plan as it found a lower dosage was still efficacious, according to the company.

The vaccine, which could be the first domestically developed in Japan, can be effective even with half the amount previously deemed necessary, company officials said.

The company is planning to determine the appropriate dosage by expanding clinical tests launched in December last year.

If Shionogi can get the go-ahead under the government's fast-track approval system, it can start providing vaccine doses this year, the officials said.

The Osaka-based firm has said

it would be able to provide vaccine doses for 30 million people a year. Two shots per person are necessary for the Shionogi vaccine to be effective, the same as those made by U.S. pharmaceutical companies Pfizer Inc. and Moderna Inc.

Unigen Inc., a contract drug manufacturer in Gifu Prefecture, plans to set up production lines for the vaccine by the end of the year.

It is becoming difficult to carry out large-scale clinical testing in Japan, posing a major hurdle to developing a vaccine.

Shionogi began a clinical study of its recombinant protein-based vaccine last December, targeting around 200 Japanese people. It will consider carrying out trials in areas hit by rising coronavirus cases such as Southeast Asia and Africa, the officials said.—Kyodo News ■



Undated photo shows a facility of Unigen Inc. to produce COVID-19 vaccine in Gifu Prefecture. PHOTO: UNIGEN INC./KYODO NEWS

Vietnamese students take college entrance exam amid COVID-19 concerns

OVER 993,000 Vietnamese high school students on Wednesday started sitting for the national final exam with strict COVID-19 control measures in place, Vietnam News Agency reported.

The annual exam takes place as Vietnam is still fighting its biggest wave of COVID-19 infection, which started in late April and has spread to more than 50 cities and provinces nationwide.

While the majority of students took the exam on Wednesday and Thursday, nearly 11,600 students who tested positive for

COVID-19 or lived in areas with high risks of the pandemic will sit the exam later, the news agency cited Vietnam's Ministry of Education and Training as reporting.

Localities have been allowed to postpone the exam if necessary to ensure safety and fairness for students, according to the report. In several localities such as the southern epidemic hotspot Ho Chi Minh City, large-scale nucleic acid tests were conducted for all students and personnel serving the exam.

Similar to last year, examinees are requested to have their

body temperature checked and have their hands disinfected before entering the test sites, as well as to wear medical masks during the exam.

More than 1 million students registered for the national exam this year, said the ministry, compared to a little over 900,000 last year. The exam includes four parts, including literature, maths, foreign language, and either a group of three natural science subjects (physics, chemistry and biology) or a group of three social science subjects (history, geography and civics).



High school students leave a test site in southern Vietnam's Ho Chi Minh City, July 7, 2021. Over 993,000 Vietnamese high school students on Wednesday started sitting for the national final exam with strict COVID-19 control measures in place, Vietnam News Agency reported. PHOTO: VNA/XINHUA

Vietnam has integrated its high school graduation exam and university entrance exam into one national exam since 2015, mainly to save time and costs. —Xinhua ■

New York honors pandemic 'heroes' with parade



Hundreds of essential workers in New York marched down the southern stretch of Broadway in Manhattan known as the "Canyon of Heroes". PHOTO: AFP

WITH a ticker-tape parade Wednesday, New York honored its everyday "heroes" who kept the city going through the pandemic and who now hope for recognition that's more than just symbolic.

Hundreds of essential workers marched down the southern stretch of Broadway in Manhattan known as the "Canyon of Heroes," where parades honoring astronauts, heads of state and sports champions have occurred

since the 19th century.

Leading the way in the back of a limousine was nurse Sandra Lindsay, who became the first person in the United States to receive a vaccine shot against Covid-19 in mid-December.

Between marching bands and under confetti, groups of doctors, caregivers, delivery men, public transport workers and food bank employees and others marched as onlookers

cheered and held placards that read "Thank you."

In the crowd, Brooklyn resident Sara Cavolo relished the celebration, which comes as New York emerges from the pandemic following an aggressive vaccination drive that saw all restrictions lifted recently. "It's a trauma we've all kind of gone through," said the 38-year-old, who works in marketing. "It really hits home the fact that now we're coming back out of this and reemerging, we've made it. It feels just very good to celebrate," she told AFP.

America's economic and cultural capital paid a heavy price in the pandemic, losing 33,000 residents. Cavolo, who lives near a hospital, still remembers "the trucks that were mobile morgues" in spring 2020, when New York was the epicenter of the country's outbreak. "It was very heavy for a lot of us," she recalled.

Many residents of a city still traumatized turned out to show their gratitude to those that kept the Big Apple running through one of its darkest times.—AFP ■

Delta variant circulating in Sao Paulo: health official

THE highly contagious coronavirus Delta variant "is already circulating" in Brazil's most populated state, Sao Paulo, said authorities Wednesday in the country with the world's second-highest death toll. The variant, which has boosted infection numbers even in countries

with high vaccination rates, "is already indigenous, that is to say, it is already circulating in our environment in people who have not travelled or have had contact with someone who had been, for example, in India," said Sao Paulo's health secretary Jean Gorinchteyn. Brazil, where more

than half a million people are recorded to have died of Covid-19, a toll second only to that of the United States, had until last week recorded just over a dozen isolated cases of Delta infections -- all in people returning from India, or who had been in contact with people who had been there.—AFP ■

Vaccines rushed to Sydney as outbreak spirals

AUSTRALIA'S prime minister announced 300,000 coronavirus vaccine doses will be rushed to Sydney Thursday, as the country's largest city struggled to bring a Delta outbreak under control.

As a citywide lockdown entered its third week, there were signs of the outbreak spiralling, with a record increase of 38 new cases in the last 24 hours.

Scott Morrison said the situation in the city was "very serious" and urged five million Sydneysiders not to give in to fatigue and obey stay-at-home orders.

The outbreak has nearly reached 400 cases, and is spreading quickly across the largely unvaccinated city, putting Australia's Covid-zero status at serious risk.

"We have come so far over

these last 18 months, and now's the time to keep pressing forward. Now is not the time to give in to that frustration," Morrison told reporters in Sydney.

Police announced they would be bolstering patrols in the city's southwest to enforce lockdown rules as case numbers rise.

Despite several outbreaks, Australia has managed to avoid the worst of the pandemic through snap lockdowns, intensive contact tracing, and effectively shutting its borders to the rest of the world.

After a top New South Wales health official suggested it might be impossible to bring the outbreak under control, regional leaders threatened to cut Sydney off from the rest of the country.—AFP ■



Sydneysiders wait in a queue outside a COVID-19 vaccination centre in the Homebush suburb of Sydney on July 7, as the city extends a coronavirus lockdown for at least another week. PHOTO: SAEED KHAN/AFP

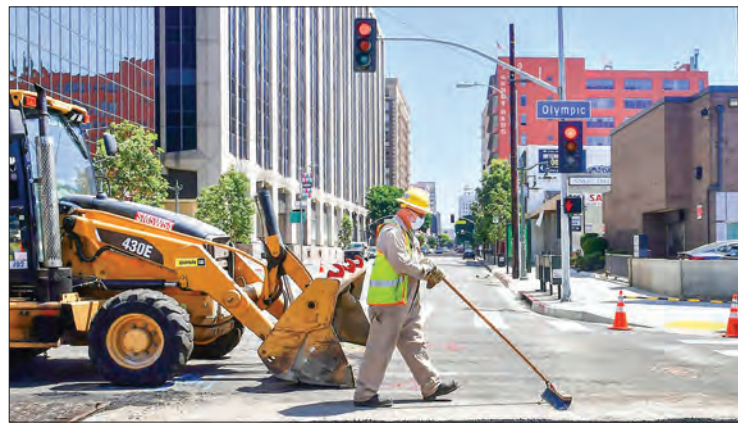
Biden pushes giant infrastructure spending for ‘American century’

PRESIDENT Joe Biden pushed his giant infrastructure spending plans Wednesday in a speech urging the country to modernize and create “an American century.”

“We have to think bigger, we have to act bolder and we have to build back better,” he said in a speech in Crystal Lake, Illinois.

Referring to Ronald Reagan’s famous assertion in 1984 that the booming economy brought “morning in America,” Biden said his plans promised “an American century.”

The Democrat, who has been criss-crossing electorally important states to showcase his project, promoted the two plans currently being negotiated in a



President Joe Biden pushed his giant infrastructure spending plans Wednesday in a speech urging the country to modernize and create “an American century.” **PHOTO: AFP**

heavily divided Congress.

The first, worth around \$1 trillion, has some chance of bipartisan support and would fund

massive rebuilding of roads and bridges, as well as removing harmful lead pipes from water systems, and expanding high-

speed internet. The second, potentially far larger bill would expand public education, child-care and other costly areas of what Biden calls “human infrastructure.” This has no Republican support but, if Democrats remain united, could squeak through Congress with a rarely used parliamentary procedure.

Biden expressed confidence on the first plan, saying “I believe we’re going to get done.” Success there would be a remarkable victory for Biden in a capital where the two parties rarely agree on anything. This so-called “hard infrastructure” would lay “the foundation for a strong and durable and sustainable, competitive

economy,” Biden said.

However, he focused on the even more ambitious Democratic wish list for a second package, saying that a better educated nation was vital “to truly win the 21st century and once again lead the world.” “We need to invest in our people,” he said, detailing plans for universal free pre-school and two years of free post-school community college, making a total of 14 years of state-funded education instead of 12.

“Does anybody think in the 21st century, with the change that’s taking place in technology and across the board, that 12 years’ education is enough?” Biden asked.—AFP ■

Oil on troubled waters: Row shows Gulf powers on diverging paths

A startling public row between Saudi Arabia and brash neighbour the UAE has exposed the steadily diverging paths of once inseparable allies who are competing to profit from what may be the world’s last oil boom.

Wrinkles in relationships between the Gulf monarchies are usually resolved behind palace walls, but a fiery debate over the future of global oil production burst into the open this week.

The United Arab Emirates

has bitterly opposed a proposed deal by the OPEC+ alliance of oil-producing countries, slamming it as “unjust” and triggering a stalemate that could derail efforts to curb rising crude prices amid a fragile post-pandemic recovery.

That is a rare challenge to Saudi Arabia, the world’s number-one oil exporter—as well as the Arab world’s largest economy and custodian of Islam’s holiest sites.

But the fault lines were drawn before this week’s virtual talks. And while observers say a full rupture is unlikely, the new competitive spirit will only intensify.

Saudi Arabia’s ambitious de facto ruler Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and the UAE’s strongman Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed have long been seen as the region’s power couple, known by their matching initials—MBS and MBZ.



The United Arab Emirates has used its oil wealth both for vast construction projects and to become a major regional power. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

While MBZ was once seen as a mentor to the younger leader, their lack of joint appearances

of late has triggered speculation that the relationship has cooled considerably.—AFP ■

China hints at cutting bank reserve requirement to spur economy

CHINA indicated Wednesday that the country’s central bank will cut the amount of cash that banks must hold as reserves, in an attempt to ease credit and shore up the economy hit by rises in global material prices, state-media reported.

The reduction of the reserve requirement ratio by the People’s Bank of China would be aimed at prompting financial institutions to lend more money to companies and other entities to boost consumption and domestic investment.

China will increase the financial support for the real economy, especially the micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, a State Council executive meeting chaired by Premier Li Keqiang decided, according to the official Xinhua News Agency.

To that end, the country will



A staff member (R) hands over a stack of renminbi banknotes to a customer at an Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC) branch in Beijing, Aug. 30, 2019. **PHOTO: XINHUA/CHEN YEHUA**

adopt monetary tools such as cuts in the reserve requirement ratio at an appropriate time, the meeting said. Xinhua reported it also said such measures are expected to mitigate the impact

of commodity price hikes on the operation of companies, adding China will refrain from mass stimulus, maintain the stability of monetary policy and enhance its effectiveness.—Kyodo News ■

German consumers file ‘dieselgate’ suit against Daimler

GERMAN consumer lawyers said on Wednesday they had filed a lawsuit against car giant Daimler over the “dieselgate” emissions cheating scandal, following similar proceedings against Volkswagen.

The VZBV federation of German consumer associations said the suit before the superior regional court in Stuttgart would help owners of Mercedes vehicles also claim damages.

“Despite official recalls, Daimler still denies that it intentionally manipulated emissions data for its vehicles,” VZBV head Klaus Mueller said in a statement. “The superior regional court should now give its judgment, then many consumers will finally have legal certainty.” Duped diesel drivers filed a suit in 2018 against Volkswagen, accusing the 12-brand group of deliberately harming clients by installing software to make cars appear less polluting than they really were. Germany doesn’t have the possibility for individuals to join together in a class-action lawsuit, but VZBV led collective legal action on behalf of car owners. The move was made possible by legislation enacted in 2018 that was hurried through to beat a statute of limitations for claims against VW.

VW eventually settled the case by agreeing to pay €750 million euros in compensation to more than 235,000 car owners, which VZBV called “the biggest amicable settlement in German history”. —AFP ■

China's Huawei scores 4G patent deal for VW cars

HUAWEI has struck a licencing deal that will allow use of its 4G technologies in connected vehicles manufactured by Volkswagen Group, the Chinese tech giant said on Wednesday.

The deal is its largest yet in the automotive industry, it added.

It comes as the company moves aggressively into intelligent vehicles and other new sectors after US sanctions imperilled its traditional network equipment and smartphone business lines.

Huawei did not provide financial terms or identify the VW supplier but it said the agreement included a licence under Huawei's 4G patents which covers Volkswagen vehicles equipped with wireless connectivity.



The agreement included a licence under Huawei's 4G patents which covers Volkswagen vehicles equipped with wireless connectivity. PHOTO: AFP

VW later released a statement which said: "We welcome that a leading ICT (Information Communication Technology) company has granted one of our suppliers a licence to standard-essential mobile communications patents.

"This licencing in the supply chain is a model of how the increasingly close cooperation between the mobility industry and the information and communications industry can succeed."

Branding Huawei a securi-

ty threat, the United States has barred the company from the huge American market, cut it off from global supply chains, and pressured allies to ban or remove Huawei gear from their national telecoms systems.

Huawei has denied the accusation and said no supporting evidence has ever been provided by the United States.

In response the firm, the world's largest supplier of telecom networking gear and formerly a top-three smartphone supplier, has pivoted to other business segments for survival.

Besides supplying technologies to manufacturers of intelligent cars, it has tipped plans to move into the software sector, as well as enterprise and cloud computing.—AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEFS

China's Tencent turns to facial recognition to snag late-night child gamers

CHINESE tech giant Tencent has rolled out a facial recognition "midnight patrol" function to root out children masquerading as adults to get around a government curfew on underage gamers.

China bans people under 18 from playing online games between 10 pm and 8 am, part of a raft of rules introduced to weed out the excesses of gaming culture among the youth, from worsening eyesight to online addiction.

But many young players have navigated the restrictions by using gaming accounts registered by adults.

Online gaming giant Tencent this week moved to close those loopholes by implementing facial verification checks on anyone playing with an adult ID after the curfew.

Tencent also said it would start requiring users to pass a facial recognition test when changing safety settings designed to let parents limit their children's game usage, as "some children have stolen their parents' phones" to modify the settings.—AFP ■

US states accuse Google of app store monopoly



Dozens of US states joined forces in a lawsuit filed Wednesday accusing Google of abusing its power when it comes to getting apps for Android-powered mobile devices. PHOTO: AFP

Dozens of US states joined forces in a lawsuit filed Wednesday accusing Google of abusing its

power when it comes to getting apps for Android-powered mobile devices.

The litigation aimed at the Play Store online shop for apps and other digital content for Android smartphones comes as the power of Big Tech firms is facing increasing pressure from regulators and lawsuits.

"We are filing this lawsuit to end Google's illegal monopoly power and finally give voice to millions of consumers and business owners," said New York attorney-general Letitia James, a leader of the litigation.

"The company has ensured that hundreds of millions of Android users turn to Google, and only Google, for the millions of applications they may choose to download to their phones and tablets."

The lawsuit backed by 37 attorneys-general accuses Google of using anti-competitive tactics to discourage Android apps from being distributed at shops other than its Play store, where its payment system collects commissions on transactions.

Google rejected accusations in the suit as meritless, detailing ways that the Play Store has helped app makers thrive while providing security for Android device users.

"Android and Google Play provide openness and choice that other platforms simply don't," Google senior director of public policy Wilson White said in a post.—AFP ■

M'bishi Electric products without proper checkup sent to 15 nations

MITSUBISHI Electric Corp.'s train-use air conditioners which may not have gone through proper inspection before shipment have been exported to about 15 countries including the United States, Britain and Germany, company officials said Wednesday.

The Japanese electronics conglomerate has exported a total of 15,800 such air conditioners, although there are no problems with their safety or performance, the officials said. The Tokyo-based company admitted last week that about 84,600 air conditioners with falsified inspection data were delivered to some 80 companies between 1985 and 2020, of which some 20 per cent went to clients overseas, either directly or via different Japanese companies, they said.—Kyodo News ■

Buckle up: Palestinian twins turn Boeing 707 into restaurant

PALESTINIAN workers in the Israel-occupied West Bank are putting the final touches on a decommissioned Boeing 707 aircraft to ready it for a new kind of takeoff: as a restaurant.

Its enterprising owners, 60-year-old twin brothers Ata and Khamis al-Sairafi, expect to welcome their first customers within weeks at the site in an isolated mountain area near Nablus.

Inside the old jet's cabin, the seats have been stripped out and the window panes removed. Tables will soon be fitted in the fuselage, which has been painted white with laminate wooden

floors. The brothers plan to call their aviation-themed eatery -- which is decorated with Palestinian and Jordanian flags -- "the Palestinian-Jordanian Airline Restaurant and Coffee Shop Al-Sairafi Nablus".

"We will start by providing hookahs," said Khamis, for people who enjoy smoking tobacco through water pipes, before later expanding the business into an event space. "The cockpit will be a suitable place for any newlyweds who come to us for their wedding ceremony." The Sairafi brothers -- identical twins who were sporting matching yel-



A decommissioned Boeing 707 aircraft from the 1980s has been converted into "The Palestinian-Jordanian Airline Restaurant and Coffee Shop Al-Sairafi Nablus". PHOTO: AFP

low shirts, khaki shorts and red sneakers during AFP's visit -- are

known for their interest in unusual initiatives.—AFP ■

Sweden's parliament reinstates ousted Lofven as PM

SWEDEN'S parliament on Wednesday voted to reinstate Social Democrat party leader Stefan Lofven as prime minister, only weeks after he was ousted in a historic vote of no confidence.

Lofven's nomination was passed with a vote of 116 for, 173 against and 60 abstaining.

Under the Swedish system a prime minister can be confirmed as long as a majority does not vote against them.

"Since less than half of the members of parliament have voted no, the chamber has approved the motion to appoint Stefan Lofven as prime minister," Speaker Andreas Norlen

told parliament.

Lofven later told a press conference he was "shouldering the task with determination and respect".

"Parliament has given me the confidence to continue to lead Sweden," he said.

To get the vote passed, Lofven's Social Democrats secured a deal with the centre-right Centre Party, which agreed to abstain from voting against him, clearing the way for his confirmation.

Still, the margin was razor thin and on Tuesday the Social Democrats even struck a separate deal to secure the support of



Stefan Lofven has been reinstated as Sweden's prime minister just weeks after his ouster. PHOTO: TT NEWS AGENCY/AFP/FILE

individual independent member of parliament Amineh Kakabav-

eh, formerly of the Left Party, as a single vote could have tipped the balance.

Housing row

An "unholy alliance" of parties, from the Left Party to the far-right Sweden Democrats, teamed up to oust Lofven's coalition government -- made up of the Social Democrats and the Greens -- on June 21.

Following the confidence vote, Lofven had the option to either call a snap election or resign, which he chose to do on June 28 -- leaving it up to the speaker of parliament to start looking for a successor.—AFP ■

12 Indian ministers resign in major reshuffle

TWELVE Indian ministers, including the health chief, resigned Wednesday following a catastrophic surge in Covid-19 cases earlier this year.

The resignations form part of a major cabinet reshuffle and expansion by Prime Minister Narendra Modi ahead of seven state elections in 2022.

Health Minister Harsh Vardhan, 66, came in for particular criticism during the spike in infections in April and May blamed on new virus variants and lax restrictions.

The health service was under severe pressure in many areas with hospitals running out of beds, medical oxygen and drugs.

Weeks before Vardhan had said that India was "in the endgame" of the pandemic.

India's official death toll has exploded from 160,000 at the end of March to more than 400,000 now. Many experts suspect the true toll is several times higher.

Elections

Three dozen new faces have been inducted into the new Modi cabinet, taking the number of ministers to 77 up from 52.

More than a dozen ministers are from poll-bound states such as Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat representing different castes and regional communities, a dominant factor in India's electoral politics.

Four members from southern Karnataka state were also added, including millionaire media mogul Rajeev Chandrasekhar and Shobha Karandlaje.—AFP ■



People stand in a queue to register to get a swab test for the COVID-19 coronavirus disease at the Kanaswadi Public Health Centre (PHC) on the outskirts of Bangalore on 7 July, 2021. PHOTO: AFP

EU warns Hungary to fix anti-LGBTQ law or face action

EUROPEAN Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen on Wednesday warned Hungary to reverse course on its controversial LGBTQ law, as pressure mounted on Brussels to cut EU funding to Budapest.

But a government spokesman insisted they would press on in spite of what he said was the Commission's "unprecedented" interference in the country's

internal affairs.

Hungary's strongman Prime Minister Viktor Orban is growing international protest over the law, which is due to take effect on Thursday.

While Orban insists it is a measure to protect children, critics say the law conflates paedophilia with homosexuality and stigmatises support for the LGBTQ community.

Now, Brussels is considering legal action against the EU member state, and may also link payment of post-Covid recovery funds to the law's repeal.

"It is a disgrace this legislation... It is something that flies in the face of the values of the European Union," von der Leyen, who heads the EU executive, told the European Parliament in Strasbourg.—AFP ■

Blaze at Dubai port after loud blast under control

A fire that broke out on a container ship in Dubai's main port following an explosion has been brought under control with no casualties reported, the emirate's media office said Thursday.

At least three residents in the area of the blast, the cause of which remains unknown, reported windows and doors in their homes were shaken as a result of the incident.

"A fire caused by an explosion within a container on board a ship at Jebel Ali Port has been brought under control; no casualties have been reported," the Dubai Media Office wrote on Twitter.

The vessel had been preparing to dock, the office added in another post.

The post was accompanied by video of firefighters tackling the blaze on a large vessel stacked with contain-

ers, identical except for their logos, as the flames scattered detritus over the quayside.

Dubai police said three of the 130 containers on the ship held flammable materials and that there were 14 crew on board.

An AFP correspondent at the scene said there was a helicopter circling overhead as smoke rose from the tightly secured facility.

The port is capable of handling aircraft carriers and was the US Navy's busiest port of call outside of the United States in 2017, according to the US Congressional Research Service.

The port authority said it was "taking all necessary measures to ensure the normal movement of ships in the port continues without any disruption", according to the Dubai Media Office.—AFP ■



A blast, the cause of which remains unknown, at the Jebel Ali Port (pictured 2006) in Dubai sparked a fire. PHOTO: NASSER YOUNES/AFP/FILE

NEWS IN BRIEFS

Haiti police hunt down president's assassins as uncertainty grows

HAITI President Jovenel Moise was assassinated and his wife wounded early Wednesday in a gun attack at their private residence, tipping the impoverished and crisis-hit Caribbean nation into a renewed state of political uncertainty.

Haitian police killed four "mercenaries" they said were behind the assassination of President Jovenel Moise Wednesday and took two more into custody, as the impoverished and crisis-hit Caribbean nation was pitched into uncertainty.

Police did not identify the suspects or say what their motives were for the gun attack on Moise and his wife Martine, who survived, at their private residence in the capital Port-au-Prince early Wednesday.



Haitian President Jovenel Moise (L) and First Lady Martine Moise, shown here in 2018, were attacked in their private residence in an assault which left him dead and her wounded. PHOTO: AFP

Police chief Leon Charles said there were still more members of the hit squad at large. "As I speak, the police are engaged in battle with these assailants," he said late Wednesday. "We are

chasing them so that either in the exchange of fire they will be killed or we will apprehend them." Interim Prime Minister Claude Joseph declared a national "state of siege" and said

he was now in charge.

At the UN Security Council, members unanimously called "for the perpetrators of this abhorrent crime to be swiftly brought to justice," and for "all parties to remain calm, exercise restraint" and avoid "any act that could contribute to further instability." An emergency meeting on the crisis has been set for midday Thursday.

The airport was closed in Port-au-Prince, but witnesses said the city was quiet with the streets deserted and no extra security forces on patrol.

"Four mercenaries were killed, two were intercepted under our control. Three policemen who had been taken hostage have been recovered," said Charles, the head of Haiti's national police. —AFP ■

U.S. can coexist in peace with China, but challenge is huge: Campbell

WHITE House coordinator for the Indo-Pacific Kurt Campbell said Tuesday he believes the United States and China can "coexist in peace," but it poses an immense challenge for Washington.

Asked when U.S. President Joe Biden plans to meet Chinese President Xi Jinping in person for the first time since the former was sworn in on 20 Jan, Campbell, speaking at an online think tank event, said, "My expectation will be that we'll have some sort of engagement before too long."

White House National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan said in June that Biden will seek to engage with Xi in the coming months, possibly on the sidelines of the Group of 20 summit to be held in Italy in late October.

The remarks came after the Biden administration has spent the past months rallying allies and like-minded countries to push back against China's growing military and economic assertiveness, hoping to build what it calls "a position of strength." —Kyodo News ■

Key Malaysian party withdraws support for embattled PM



This photo shows Malaysia's Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin wearing a face mask during the opening ceremony of the third term of the 14th parliamentary session in Kuala Lumpur. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

THE biggest party in Malaysia's ruling coalition said Thursday it was withdrawing support for the embattled prime minister and urged him to step down.

There was no immediate

reaction from Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin, but analysts said he was likely to hold on to power in the short term.

His administration has been racked by instability

for months -- it only has a razor-thin majority in parliament, and is beset by infighting between different factions.

Pressure has mounted since a state of emergency was declared in January to fight the coronavirus under which parliament was suspended, with critics charging Muhyiddin was using the crisis to cling to power.

After a meeting of its top decision-making body that stretched into the early hours of Thursday, the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), the biggest party backing the premier, withdrew its support. "UMNO respectfully urges Muhyiddin Yassin to

step down to allow a new prime minister to be appointed for a limited period," party president Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said in a statement.

The new leader would steer the country through a worsening virus outbreak, before fresh elections can be held, he said.

"This is important to allow a new government that is truly stable and holds the mandate of the people to be formed," he added. The UMNO leader listed a string of what he said were missteps by the government, that included botched handling of the pandemic and failing to provide for those affected by on-off lockdowns. — AFP ■

South Africa's ex-president Zuma starts serving jail term for contempt

FORMER president Jacob Zuma turned himself into prison early Thursday to begin serving a 15-month sentence for contempt of the country's highest court, officials said. Prison authorities confirmed that Zuma "has been admitted to start serving a 15 months sentence at Estcourt Correctional Centre" in his home province of Kwa-

Zulu-Natal. It is the first time a former president has been jailed in post-apartheid South Africa. His turning himself in after days of refusing to do so brought an end to an impasse that had gripped the country, which is also battling a brutal third wave of Covid-19. The sentence handed to Zuma by the Constitutional Court last week



Among friends: Zuma, speaking to supporters who gathered on Sunday outside his rural home in southeastern Kwa-Zulu Natal province. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

for snubbing anti-graft investigators also set a benchmark for the continent, by jailing a

former head of state for refusing to respond to a corruption probe. — AFP ■

Rockets fired at US embassy in Iraq after attacks on bases

THREE rockets were fired at the US embassy in Iraq early Thursday, the Iraqi army said, at the end of a day marked by rocket and drone attacks on bases hosting American forces in Iraq and Syria.

The embassy itself was not hit, the army said, but three nearby places in Baghdad's heavily fortified Green Zone were.

A spate of recent attacks on US military and diplomatic facilities in Iraq has been blamed on pro-Iranian armed groups within a state-sponsored paramilitary force.

US forces, who have 2,500 troops deployed in Iraq as part of an international anti-Islamic State group coalition, have been targeted almost 50 times this year in the country, but the last few days have seen an increase in the frequency of attacks.

On Wednesday, fourteen rockets were fired at an air base hosting American troops in the western province of Anbar, causing minor injuries to two personnel, the coalition said. —AFP ■

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.

MFF appoints Boonlert Charoenwong as Myanmar Futsal team coach



Boonlert Charoenwong (left) receives his contract as he has accepted technical director position for Myanmar's men's Futsal and head coach position for Myanmar women's Futsal team respectively. **PHOTO: MFF**

MYANMAR Football Federation recently appointed Boonlert Charoenwong, Thai coach as Myanmar's men's Futsal technical director and the head coach of Myanmar women's Futsal team to prepare for the upcoming SEA Games to be held in Viet Nam. The newly appointed Myanmar Futsal team head coach is now shaping his main goal to lead the Myanmar women's team

winning a gold medal, pointing out that the Myanmar Football federation is dreaming to develop the Futsal sport in all sectors in the country within one or two years.

"I will try to achieve the goal with a chance to win a medal in the 2021 SEA Games Futsal Tournament in Viet Nam," said head coach Boonlert Charoenwong.

Boonlert Charoenwong, considered as a top-level Futsal coach in Thailand, has been in charge of many teams, both at the club level and the national team, such as the head coach of the Thai women's Futsal national team, the Thai national team, the ASEAN University team, and the Lao national Futsal team coach, as well as being a trainer of the Asian Football Confederation. — GNLM

England dare to dream after setting up Euro 2020 final against Italy



England are through to their first major final since 1966 at Euro 2020. **PHOTO: POOL/AFP**

ENGLAND fans woke up bleary-eyed on Thursday to the reality of a first major tournament final in 55 years after a momentous win against Denmark set up a Euro 2020 showdown with Italy.

Three years on from their defeat to Croatia in the World Cup semi-final, Gareth Southgate's men overcame the Danes 2-1 in extra-time at a rocking Wembley to reach their first European Championship final.

They now stand just one game away from ending their long and painful trophy drought, which dates all the way back to the 1966 World Cup. — AFP ■

Southeast Asian Games in Vietnam postponed over coronavirus

THE Southeast Asian Games, which were due to take place in Vietnam this year, have been postponed because of the pandemic and will most likely be held in 2022, a member of the organising council said Thursday. The regional Olympics were scheduled to be held in Hanoi and 11 other locations from November 21 to December 2. But Vietnam is struggling to contain a new coronavirus outbreak, and many Southeast Asian Games events were planned in provinces hard-hit by the fresh wave of infections.

"Definitely, the 31st SEA games will not (be hosted) this year as scheduled in November," said Varin Tansuphasiri, Games Council member and deputy secretary of the Thai Olympic Committee. "Vietnam wants to postpone the Games until next year, 2022." The postponement was due to the pandemic, he said, with Vietnam proposing to host the Games in April or May next year. The decision comes after Vietnam announced nine million people in Ho Chi Minh City would go into lockdown for two weeks in the early hours of Friday. — AFP ■



The regional Olympics were scheduled to be held in Hanoi and 11 other locations in November and December. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**