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THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

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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.

No restriction is adopted for spending fund on prevention, control and treatment of COVID-19: Senior General



State Administration Council Chairman Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing chairs the prevention, control and treatment of COVID-19 coordination meeting yesterday.

At present, prevention of COVID-19 is important for the State, said Chairman of the State Administration

Council Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing at the coordination meeting on prevention, con-

trol and treatment of COVID-19 at the meeting hall of the Commander-in-Chief (Army) in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday afternoon.

In his address, the Senior General said the outbreak of COVID-19 started in some countries in late December 2019 and

early 2020 and in Myanmar on 23 March 2020. The infectious rate of the disease in the third wave

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Republic of the Union of Myanmar
State Administration Council
Order No 143/2021
1st Waning of Waso 1383 ME
9 July 2021

Substitution and appointment of member of
Magway Region Administration Council

THE State Administration Council appointed BC 28707 Colonel Kyaw Kyaw Lin in the placement of BC 20825 Colonel Min Oo assigned as a member of Magway Region Administration Council entrusted the authority and responsibilities of Region or State Security and Border Affairs Minister stipulated by Section 419 of the Constitution.

By Order,
Aung Lin Dwe
Lieutenant - General
Secretary
State Administration Council

Personal preventive
practices against
COVID-19 infection

- (1) Wear the mask systematically when going out in public.
- (2) Keep a proper physical distance.
- (3) Avoid the crowd.
- (4) Wash your hands for 20 seconds frequently.
- (5) Avoid entering unventilated closed spaces as much as possible.

Press Statement

Myanmar rejects Interactive Dialogues in the absence of country concerned as well as one-sided remarks without verification

THE Interactive Dialogues with the High Commissioner of Human Rights and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of Human Rights in Myanmar, followed by their oral reports were conducted in the absence of the representatives of the country concerned, Myanmar, during the 47th Session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva on 6 and 7 July 2021, respectively.

Since the participation of the country concerned in the Interactive Dialogues of the Human Rights Council can reflect the actual situation on the ground, it is therefore crucial. The Interactive Dialogues held in the absence of the country concerned has deviated from the principles and objectives of the Human Rights Council, i.e., promoting and protecting of human rights through all-inclusive dialogues. Accordingly, Myanmar rejects such dialogues held without the participation of the country concerned.

Furthermore, the remarks made by the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms Michelle Bachelet,

tended to pave the way for the legitimacy of the so-called National Unity Government (NUG) which was declared as an unlawful association and a terrorist group. Myanmar categorically rejects such coercive remarks on a member state by the High Commissioner representing the United Nations.

Similarly, Myanmar rejects the calls, made by the Special Rapporteur, Mr Thomas Andrews, which interfere the internal affairs of a sovereign state. Myanmar has consistently opposed the country-specific resolutions and has never accepted the mandates of a Human Rights Special Rapporteur which was created by such resolutions. Against this backdrop, Myanmar has not accepted Mr Thomas Andrew as the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar and has never permitted him to enter Myanmar.

Therefore, Myanmar strongly rejects not only one-sided remarks based on inaccurate and unverified information but also all forms of intimidation which

threatened the sovereignty of the State. Such remarks and intimidation differ from the actual situation on the ground and ignore the Government's endeavours in the midst of its delicate transition towards democratization in line with the provisions of State Constitution 2008 of Myanmar.

The Human Rights Council is advised to follow its Rules of Procedures; to refrain from the practices of double standards and politicization and to respect all-inclusiveness, impartiality, objectivity and non-selectivity. Likewise, the High Commissioner is called to perform her duties in an impartial, objective and constructive manner as stipulated in the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Nay Pyi Taw
Dated. 9 July 2021.

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

It is concerned with the whole country

It is necessary to understand the Burma Defence Army is concerned not only with Tatmadaw members but also the entire Bamar nationals and the whole country. Actually, there is no comprehensive independence camp because no encouragement is given to soldiers of the Burma Defence Army. It is important for defending the country in the establishment of a new era. All should not work for just Myanmar but take lessons from other countries and nearby countries.

(Excerpt from the speech delivered by War Minister Colonel Aung San at the special meeting of Burma Defence Army held in Yangon on 2 December 1942)



No restriction is adopted for spending fund on prevention, control and treatment of COVID-19: Senior General

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was higher than the first and second waves. Hence, it is necessary to continue the prevention of the disease. The infection of the disease covers 296 townships among 330 townships in Myanmar. If necessary, restrictions should be tightened for the people to strictly follow the orders related to COVID-19. Likewise, people need to have high immune against the disease. Schools are temporarily closed not to cause crowds. At present, the prevention of COVID-19 is important for the State.

With regard to the production of the COVID-19 vaccine and acceleration vaccination, the Senior General said: "We bought vaccines for prevention and treatment of the disease. The previous government also purchased the vaccines. We bought 30 million units of vaccine from India. After the arrivals of the first two million units of the vaccine in the first batch, India suspended sending of vaccines to us due to various reasons. Especially, India was difficult to give vaccines to us because it restricted infection of the pandemic. We have paid cash in advance for 30 million units of the vaccine. We have paid US\$75 million. After arriving of 2 million units of vaccine, no more arrives here. During the period, China provided vaccines to us. And, some donors presented a small number of vaccines to us. On my arrival in Russia, I met with the Minister of Defense of Russia and the Secretary-General of the Security Council of Russia and demanded the vaccines. They immediately fulfilled my needs. When I asked for them

Schools are temporarily closed not to cause crowds. At present, the prevention of COVID-19 is important for the State.

to demand 2 million units of vaccine, they gave me a promise to give the vaccine. As difficulties, they did not have much capacity for the production of vaccines. It is because they distribute the vaccines to the world. So they could not supply the whole vaccine. They deliver vaccines in batches to us. It is sure to get the vaccine. They gave the promise to start sending vaccines to us this month but they could not predict how they can export the stocks to us but they can announce the amount when they start exportation. They said the number of vaccines would be tens of thousands of units. So also, China provided medical aid and vaccines to us and sold five more million vaccine units to us. Then, we allowed private hospitals and companies to import COVID-19 vaccines. So, it would not be enough for the vaccine. Myanmar's population reaches 55 million. The directive mentions vaccines must be given to those more than 18 years old. But, those under 18 are humans. So, it will be effective. If the

vaccine saves for the people, we will arrange vaccination for those people. Now, it was not decided the age for vaccination yet. We will do vaccination depending on the declaration of the countries which produce vaccines. As we buy not too many vaccines, we arrange for the Myanmar Pharmaceutical Industry to manufacture the vaccines if it has capacity. In this regard, Russia has agreed on it in principle. They agreed to cooperate with us in the production of vaccines.

Meanwhile, it is necessary to focus on the down grading of the State economy. All people must work in concert for the prevention of the disease under disciplines for securing success.

But they requested us to visit the factory to decide things how to run the production. So, we invited them to pay visits to us this month as quickly as possible. Not only Russians but also those from the field of cooperation measure will come to us. But I'd like to note that as the current infection in Myanmar is serious, they are urged to consider their trip. So, I mention matters related to the vaccine. And, we need to vaccinate the people with the use of bought ones as soon as possible. It is necessary to vaccinate the people on course without remaining vaccines in hand."

With regard to the treatment sector, the Senior General said: "For managing the treatment sector, all the hospitals are making preparations since last month. As I was doubt about it, I ordered all to prepare the hospitals. These tasks have been undertaken. We do not suspend it. Moreover, we urged all to do so. Responsible persons must give reports on preparations to us. And one more point, we

find health staff face some difficulties in some places depending on the political trend. Whatever it may be, we will deploy that personnel to suitable places if possible. Many health personnel will be assigned to places where the number of staff is lesser. Otherwise, we will arrange the deployment of medical doctors through the contract system. It will be implemented continuously. And, medical doctors from the Tatmadaw will also be deployed for assignment. It is impossible that all medical doctors cannot be assigned to military hospitals alone. Such a problem is a national concern. As it is a national cause, all medical doctors will be deployed for all. So, it is necessary to calculate the number of health staff as much as possible."

Despite breaking out the COVID-19, manufacturing and factories should not be suspended. Other countries continue the operation of factories for the prevention of the disease. Workers are supervised to wear facemasks in line with the COVID-19 disciplines. Some 185 million people of 7,900 million of the global population were infected. As Myanmar is not involved on the list of high infected countries, it is necessary to take preventive measures without carelessness.

TV, radio, newspapers need to inform the people about restrictions of COVID-19. Meanwhile, it is necessary to focus on the down grading of the State economy. All people must work in concert for the prevention of the disease under disciplines for securing success.

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No restriction is adopted for spending fund on prevention, control and treatment of COVID-19: Senior General

FROM PAGE-3

Those present at the meeting discussed sufficient supply of oxygen for the infected patients, staging campaign in the townships of stay at home programme to abide by COVID-19 rules, admission of infected patients at hospitals, the appointment of outsiders under daily wage for treatment, reduction of travels of people from respective townships, wards and villages, needs of people to wear facemasks, the performance of sharing health knowledge with the people, plan to urge religious sites and Correctional Department not to cause crowds, the priority of vaccinating the older persons and staff from factories, banks and private staff, operating of banks under COVID-19 rules, acceptance of patients at regiments and units, and distri-

bution of oxygen by Tatmadaw plants.

In his concluding speech, the Senior General emphasized prevention of the disease as an important task.

Regarding the prevention, control and treatment of the disease, the Senior General said: **“Primarily, preventive measure is the most important. If the preventive measure cannot meet success, the treatment sector will be heavy. Preventive measure is the most important. I’d like to emphasize the priority on preventive measures will be better. So, the people should deeply abide by the prescribed disciplines. Moreover, we all need to do the tasks through cooperation and coordination. It is impossible to be disunity. It is important that we should emphasize**

health for every human. We must provide necessary treatment to anyone. Responsible persons should not deny it. With regard to human resources, we have medical corporals and medical sergeants as well as medical assistants. We can deploy them. At least, they have passed the third grade of medical courses. At least, they have the skill to inject vaccines into people. I immediately urged you for this measure because we would forget it. So, some people have attended similar courses. So, you must issue an announcement for it to urge them to join voluntary teams. The State needs to issue the announcement for those who have attended any health courses to contact nearby township administration bodies and hospitals. It

will be more effective. A large number of volunteers would be recruited. Myanmar has a volunteer spirit. Our country is different from other countries because of having a social welfare spirit. Many people will come out to give a helping hand to others. So, we have to do so without fail. I’d like to emphasize undertakings of preventive measures and cooperation of the people with consciousness for overcoming the challenges of the disease.”

The Senior General continued to say that it is necessary to manage not the emergence of crowds on public days such as full moon day of Waso, Eid al-Adha Day and Martyr’s Day. **No restriction is adopted for spending the fund on prevention, control and treatment of COVID-19. Relevant ministries**

need to effectively, correctly and quickly spend the fund in taking these measures of the disease. Arrangements have been made to operate oxygen plants and fulfil and produce liquid oxygen in full swing for the supply of oxygen to needy persons. Industrial oxygen plants can be used. Oxygen plants from Myanmar Economic Corporation will meet the oxygen demand. Regiments and units are ordered to accommodate the quarantined persons. If necessary, the Tatmadaw will use aeroplanes and helicopters for the transport of patients. As vaccines of China will arrive here in a few days, vaccination will be undertaken effectively. Only when the leading body knows correct information from the whole nation, will it take preventive measures with preparations. —MNA

Myanmar celebrates World Population Day in Nay Pyi Taw

THE Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population held the commemoration ceremony to mark the 32nd World Population Day that will fall on 11 July this year, yesterday morning in Nay Pyi Taw.

The ceremony was attended by Union Minister U Myint Kyaing, Deputy Minister U Htay Hlaing, Permanent Secretary U Aung Kyaw Soe and officials from the respective ministries and invitees.

Union Minister U Myint Kyaing explained the celebration of World Population Day. The world has a population of about 7,900 million, today, and is projected to reach about 8,500 million by 2030. Most developing countries are facing many subsequent challenges due to the rapid



growth of the population and the World Population Day celebrations have been held annually since 1990 in various parts of the world to draw special attention to the issues related to the population that must be addressed as a

matter of priority.

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has set the theme for World Population Day based on the current population and health needs, and Myanmar has set this year’s theme as “Pro-

moting Reproductive Health for a Better World”, aiming to promote reproductive health education and services and ensure the full health and rights of all citizens, including women and girls.

The Union Minister said My-

anmar has a population of over 55 million and is projected to reach 60 million by 2030. He continued the need to effectively use the power of the youth in the development projects of the country and to prepare for the strengthening of the social security system for the elderly in the future, urging all human beings to respond systematically to COVID-19 and to promote reproductive health for the betterment of the planet.

Afterwards, the Director-General of the Population Department presented the implementation in relation to the theme of World Population Day and the Union Minister and those present at the ceremony watched the video clip in commemoration of World Population Day. —MNA

4,320 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 9 July, total figure rises to 184,375

MYANMAR’S COVID-19 positive cases rose to **184,375 after 4,320 new cases** were reported on 9 July 2021 according to the Ministry of Health and Sports. Among these confirmed cases, **143,460** have been discharged from hospitals. Death toll stands at **3,685** after **64** died. —MNA



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

Politicians and media should not commit incitements and spread fake news

POLITICIANS and media should not commit incitements and spread fake news. The peacemaking process goes on as it is necessary to cease armed conflicts among the ethnic nationals for restoring peace and stability based on security measures.

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

Myanmar, China discuss agricultural trade promotion between two countries

UNION Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation U Tin Htut Oo met with Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Myanmar Mr Chan Hai yesterday evening by Online Virtual and cordially discussed matters related to agricultural trade promotion between the two countries.

The meeting focused on matters pertaining to ongoing projects and projects that need

to be signed between the Ministry and GACC of China as per pest control agreements required in the trade of livestock and fisheries products and plants, animal and fish, issues of the full implementation of the economic and technological cooperation projects signed between the two governments and cooperation in agriculture and livestock. — MNA



Information released for taxpayers to submit quarterly declaration of commercial tax and quarterly special commodity tax through E-filing Management System

1. Those who have earned proceeds or income of services from sale deserved to be levied for commercial tax within a year need to submit the quarterly declaration to relevant heads of Township Internal Revenue Department within a month after respective quarterly periods. Local manufacturers of special commodities or exporters must submit the quarterly declaration to relevant heads of the Township Internal Revenue Department within a month after respective quarterly periods for manufacturing and selling or exporting the special commodities.
2. If they cannot submit the tax declaration during the fixed date, they have a chance to apply for extending the further fixed date for submitting the tax declaration to relevant internal revenue offices under Section 24 of the Tax Management Law.
3. The Internal Revenue Department has arranged the E-filing Management System with the aim of enabling taxpayers to have an easy and rapid process in submitting the tax declaration.
4. Taxpayer companies that have received taxpayer-identification number-TIN from large taxpayer office and medium taxpayer office No 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 may apply the E-filing Management System to submit the quarterly special commercial tax declaration, the quarterly commercial tax declaration, the profit declaration from goods, the annual commercial tax declaration and the income tax declaration to respective tax offices.
5. If they wish to submit the declarations through the e-filing system, they have to visit the link of www.ird.gov.mm via e-filing service login here for taking registration for applying the system. User guide video files for the processes of submitting the tax declaration can be observed on the [www.ird.gov.mm](https://www.ird.gov.mm/my/content/video) media menu (<https://www.ird.gov.mm/my/content/video> of the Internal Revenue Department).
6. If the declaration is sent through the e-filing system, the department will assume the date of accepting the declaration through e-filing as the submission date. If the submission date falls on the public office holidays, the office day after the submission will be assumed as the accepting day.
7. In applying the e-filing system for submission, the original signature of taxpayers must be sent to the relevant departments via postal service or appropriate ways in line with the directives for ensuring correct and accuracy of the filled facts.
8. Taxpayers do not need to contact relevant revenue offices in person and can submit the declaration at any time if they submit the tax declaration through the e-filing system, and they will have the fruit results of cutting time and cost, reducing direct contact with revenue offices and doing necessary tasks quickly.
9. As such, the taxpayer companies which have TIN from large taxpayer office and medium taxpayer office No 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 are urged to submit the quarterly commercial tax declaration which needs to be submitted not later than 2 August 2021 and the quarterly special commodity tax declaration not later than 12 July 2021 through the e-filing system.
10. For further information, contact 067-3430533 and 067-3430522 of the information team and 01-8379021 of the e-service section and the taxpayer affairs section of the relevant revenue offices.

*Internal Revenue Department
Ministry of Planning and Finance*

MoI discusses cybersecurity issues



THE Ministry of Information organized a meeting over cybersecurity affairs as per the COVID-19 health rules yesterday.

During the meeting, Deputy Minister U Ye Tint said cyberattacks are on the rise in the IT era. The cyber crimes and misuses are also increasing day by day when office-related matters, education, economy, COVID-19 educating programmes and statements are widely conducted online during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The cybersecurity knowl-

edge and cybersecurity career paths are also needed for the youths and the development of human resources.

He then highlighted the aims of the meeting to provide certain knowledge for the staff to protect from cyberattacks against the Web Portal, computers and mobile phones of departments under the Ministry of Information.

Directors U Kyaw Swa Min of United Info-Sec Co., Ltd discussed the matters related to cybersecurity and cyber-attacks. —MNA

COVID-19: start ourselves to take preventive measures

ALL people are urged to abide by the following ways of prevention against COVID-19 without fail in line with the motto: "COVID-19: start ourselves to take preventive measures" not to violently infect COVID-19 as next wave and not to be infected of variant COVID-19 virus.

- (1) Systematically wear masks whenever go outside and also wear face shields whenever associate with many people.
- (2) Take adequate distance from each other as much as they can.
- (3) Avoid the crowds.
- (4) Take 20 seconds to systematically washing hands many times.
- (5) Avoid the visits to the closed chambers, air-conditioned rooms and the lesser ventilated rooms as much as possible.
- (6) Those who need to go outside houses should avoid acts close to and eat meals together with older persons above 60 years and those with chronic diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, and heart diseases.
- (7) Fully cooperate in quarantine processes.
- (8) Don't buy something from the vendors who do not wear masks.
- (9) Exchange information to each other.
- (10) Cooperate in vaccination of COVID-19 pandemic. Continuously follow the preventive measures although they have received the vaccinations.
- (11) Strictly follow the work guidelines for preventing the COVID-19 pandemic issued for the respective industries.
- (12) If somebody suffers from symptoms of COVID-19, they need to immediately contact nearby health units to receive medical treatment.
- (13) If those who do not wear the masks when they go outside, and if those who conduct mass gatherings will face legal actions under the existing laws.

10 suspects arrested together with firearms, explosives in Myingyan Township

THE NUG and CRPH, declared as terrorist groups by the government, commit bomb attacks on schools, educational buildings and township electric offices and accuse the innocent civilians of informers in order to affect the state stability and threaten the public.

On 7 July, the security forces raided the house of U Sein Win in Jokpin Village in Myingyan Township and arrested Sein Win, Han Zaw Htike, Mann Lin, Win Ko, Kyaw Sein Oo, Naing Linn, Chan Min Hein, Arkar Kyaw, Naing Min Ko and Chit San Maung together with the bombs and other explosives.

According to the confession of Sein Win, the police seized oth-

er firearms including homemade mines, jingalis and gas protective suits in his house compound.

Of these 10 suspects, Han Zaw Htike (aka) Pa Thine from Hta Naung Taing Village and Chan Min Hein from Lint Gyi (northern village) of Myingyan Township attended the military course conducted by the PDF near Nyaung Kan Village in Taungtha Township. Chan Min Hein is one of the members of ZERO-3 in Ywarsi Village and other detainees are gathered to form PDF.

The former NLD MP of Myingyan Township (2015) Aung Myo Latt who was charged under section 505 (a), NLD member Kyaw San Oo and NLD supporter

Dr Win Naing Phone supported them to collect guns and join the military training. They bought the homemade bombs and 9MM bullets for them and Shine Htet Aung (Taungtha), Kyaw Zeya (Shwesi Village of Myingyan) and Min Ko (Myingyan) kept these materials to launch the attack in Myingyan Township. They gathered the members and firearms to attack the security forces, according to their confessions.

Therefore, the suspects who conducted destructive elements will face legal actions under the law and the people are urged to inform the officials secretly if they know the hiding places and activities of insurgents. —MNA



Myanmar-China border trade halts amid Coronavirus outbreak

MYANMAR-CHINA border trade has halted amid a recent surge in cases of COVID-19 infection, said U Min Thein, the vice-chairman of the Muse Rice Wholesale Centre.

Two remaining border checkpoints in Muse, Kyinsankyawt and Pangsai (Wamting), which is one of the main border trading gates for Myanmar – China border trade, were closed starting from 8 July at 1:30 pm. Consequently, the bilateral border trade between Myanmar and China has stopped completely.

“Kyinsankyawt checkpoint is a gateway from Myanmar to China. The Pangsai (Wamting) is the checkpoint to Myanmar after loading the cargo in China. It means the Kyinsankyawt checkpoint is the entrance crossing and Pangsai checkpoint is the exit crossing. The People’s Republic of China has halted both checkpoints starting from 8 July at 1:30 pm (3 pm in China). The



Currently, over 1,300 trucks are stranded in Wamting checkpoint to load the cargos in China to come back to Myanmar.

reason why both checkpoints closed is the number of COVID-19 confirmed cases that have been raised in Myanmar. The COVID-19 cases were also found in China. Then, Chinese authorities

locked down the city of Ruili, Yungang, Wamting on 7 July at midnight. After lockdown in some cities of China, the remaining checkpoints were closed in and out of the checkpoint unlimitedly

starting from 8 July. Due to the closure, both entry and exit have been completely stopped 100 per cent,” said U Min Thein.

Currently, over 1,300 trucks are stranded in Wamting check-

point to load the cargos in China to come back to Myanmar, he added.

Besides, as a result of the complete closure of the Myanmar-China border, about 5,000 loaded and unloaded labourers from Myanmar are now unemployed. Now, about 50 or 60 buses operating between Muse and China are facing losses. Likewise, the merchants in Muse, who are trading with China are facing the loss as well.

The Muse border, which is the mainstay of Myanmar-China border trade, is connected with Nandaw, Hsinphyu, Man Wein, Kyinsankyawt-Wamting and Pangsai-Wamting checkpoints.

Out of those border checkpoints, Nandaw and Hsinphyu checkpoints are closed starting from 1 April while the Man Wein checkpoint was halted on 30 March due to the outbreak of COVID-19. — NN/GNLM

Strong domestic demand drives chickpea price up



More than 23,675 tonnes of chickpeas were exported to foreign markets between 1 October and 25 June of the current financial year 2020-2021, with an estimated value of US\$13.9 million, the Commerce Ministry’s data indicated.

THE price of chickpea is in the bull market on the back of strong domestic demand in July and the price surged to K100,000 per bag, according to Bayintnaung Wholesale Market.

At present, the price moved in the range of K92,000-100,000 per bag depending on the different varieties, whereas the chickpea was priced at K93,000 per bag in the maximum last month.

The chickpea growers are fetching a good price amidst the low production this year.

At present, the domestic bean market is positively related to the law of supply and demand.

“The prices usually fluctuate depending on supply and demand. When the peas are loaded on the ship, the prices also climb up,” said a trader from Mandalay

who shared his opinion.

Myanmar exported chickpeas to India, Pakistan, UAE, Turkey and other foreign markets last year.

The chickpeas are cultivated in Yangon, Mandalay, Bago, Sagaing and Ayeyawady regions and Nay Pyi Taw. There are 890,000 acres of chickpeas across the country.

The peas are cultivated in October and November and they are harvested in the January-April period.

More than 23,675 tonnes of chickpeas were exported to foreign markets between 1 October and 25 June of the current financial year 2020-2021, with an estimated value of US\$13.9 million, the Commerce Ministry’s data indicated. — KK/GNLM

Imports of petroleum products exceed \$1.56 bln in seven months

MYANMAR imported more than US\$1.56 billion worth of petroleum products during the first half (Oct-Apr) of the current financial year 2020-2021, as per the Myanmar Customs Department.

The figures indicated a sharp drop of over \$650 million compared to the corresponding period of last year.

Normally, a monthly oil import is estimated at \$400 million, yet the oil importers are facing the pandemic induced container shortage problem in maritime trade and the banking restriction. Nevertheless, oil importers via land border can use informal payment Hundi system instead, said an importer.

At present, the domestic fuel oil price has now risen above 30 per cent per litre in three months, as the heightened coronavirus restriction sparked oil demand concerns, coupled with Kyat depreciation.

The fuel oil was pegged at around K620 per litre for Octane 92, K750 for Octane 95, K660 for diesel and K670 for premium diesel in early

February 2021 in the domestic retail market.

On 9 July, it rallied to the highest of K1,060 for Octane 92, K1,080 for Octane 95, K1,025 for diesel and K1,030 for premium diesel, according to the local fuel oil market.

Domestic oil price is positively related to the global market and the dollar value. The soaring demand drives up the oil prices to rally higher, with WTI climbing above \$73.21 per barrel.

Additionally, the foreign exchange rate also affects the petroleum price. Kyat is weakening in the local forex market, with around K1,650 per dollar on 9 July. In mid-February, a dollar was worth only K1,430.

Normally, Myanmar imports fuel oil primarily from Singapore, with monthly volumes touching 200,000 tonnes for gasoline and 400,000 tonnes for diesel. There are about 2,000 fuel stations and over 50 oil importer companies in Myanmar, Myanmar Petroleum Trade Association stated.

In early June 2021, the

Ministry of Electricity and Energy notified the private sector of keeping the oil storage above 35 per cent of the storage capacity of the tanks to avoid the possible discrepancy between demand and supply.

Last year, the domestic oil prices have declined to start from January owing to a fall in global oil prices. On 8 January 2020, oil prices were pegged at around K905 per litre for Octane 92, K995 for Octane 95, and K985 for diesel and premium diesel. Following the global market crashing, the domestic oil price plunged to more than 50 per cent in April against January’s prices.

In late April 2020, the oil prices touched the lowest of K290-330 per litre for Octane 92, K430-455 for Octane 95, K435-465 for diesel, and K445-475 for premium diesel, according to the domestic oil market.

Ninety per cent of fuel oil in Myanmar is imported, while the remaining 10 per cent is produced locally. — KH/GNLM

Serve inborn duty for the preservation of cultural heritage

THE UNESCO, one of the United Nation's agencies, defines the tangible cultural heritages as physical artefacts produced, maintained and transmitted inter-generationally in society and the intangible cultural heritages as practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills of playing instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces.

People from every country adore their tangible and intangible heritages. So, they are trying to flourish the heritages with firmed plans to take recognition from the UNESCO over their tangible and intangible culture. The objects of tangible cultural heritages include artistic creations, buildings and monuments, and other physical or tangible products of human

creativity that are invested with cultural significance in society.

Meanwhile, intangible cultural heritages comprise the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills as well as the instruments, oral traditions, performing arts, local knowledge, and traditional skills. Various intangible objects and events are being preserved in respective countries, for example, traditional banking in Vanuatu, oral poetry in Yemen, Tham Roc puppetry in Vietnam, and Cocolo dancing in the Dominican Republic.

Nowadays, both kinds of heritages can be seen and found across Myanmar. Tangible cultural heritages such as religion-related monuments, ancient city-states, more than 100 years old buildings and structures and so on can be seen across the nation.

Officials concerned collected 1,800 items of intangible cultural heritage which are 78 items of oral traditions, 461 items for performing arts, 561 festivals for social practices and rituals, 104 for knowledge for nature and universe and 596 items for traditional craftsmanship including 393 items from the Shan State.

All ethnic nations have to preserve their own tangible and intangible cultural heritages and hand over them to posterity. They need to hand over the practices and techniques of operating the heritage to new generations. Moreover, no matter how UNESCO recognizes the cultural heritages as tangible and intangible ones, the people should join hands with the government to preserve the tangible cultural heritage. It is because these heritages were left as fine traditions by forefathers of ethnic nationals.

As the preservation of cultural heritage means serving the national duty, all the ethnic nationals are responsible for the preservation of the heritage to ensure the perpetual existence of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.



Child mental health crisis 'magnified' by COVID, warns UN chief

Half of the world's children experience violence on and offline in some form every year, with "devastating and life-long consequences" for their mental health, the UN chief warned a symposium on the issue on Thursday.

In a video address to an event organized within the on-going High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), on mental health and wellbeing, he said that mental health services have long suffered from neglect and underinvestment, with "too few children" accessing the services they need. **Services cut** "The COVID-19 pandemic has magnified the problem. Millions of children are out of school, increasing their vulnerability to violence and mental stress, while services have been cut or moved online.

"As we consider investing in a strong recovery, support for children's mental wellbeing must be a priority", said Secretary-General António Guterres.

"I also urge governments to take a preventive approach by addressing the determinants of mental well-being through robust social protection for children and families", he added, saying that mental health and psychosocial support, together with community-based approaches to care, are "integral to universal health

coverage. They cannot be its forgotten part."

Child's view paramount He also urged authorities everywhere to take the views and lived-experiences of children themselves, exposed to increasing on and offline threats, into account when formulating policies and protection strategies. "Children play an important role in supporting each other's mental wellbeing. They must be empowered as part of the solution. Let's work together for sustainable, people-centred, resilient societies, where all children live free from violence and with the highest standards of mental health", he concluded.

Children contribute The meeting co-organized with the Permanent Mission of Belgium to the United Nations, and the Group of Friends on mental health and wellbeing, featured a video with contributions from children from 19 countries who took action to support one another.

UN Special Representative on Violence Against Children, Maalla M'jid, highlighted the

devastating impact of violence on the mental health of children: "Exposure to violence and other adverse childhood experiences can evoke toxic responses to stress that cause both immediate and long-term physiological and psychological damage. "In addition to the human cost, the economic cost of mental illness is significant", she added.

Opportunity for change The recovery phase of the pandemic, provides an opportunity for countries to invest in this field, she said, emphasizing that "we cannot go back to normal. Because what was 'normal' before the pandemic was not good enough, with countries spending on average only 2% of their health budgets on mental health.

"In addition to more investment, we need to change our approach to mental health. Building on the lessons of the pandemic, mental health and child protection services must be recognized as life-saving and essential. "They must be incorporated into both emergency preparedness and longer-term planning and chil-



On 26 March 2020, children in the town of Binnish, Syria, watch a member of the Syrian Civil Defence disinfect a former school building, now inhabited by displaced families, as part of measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19. PHOTO: HAJ KADOUR/AFP

dren must also shape the design, delivery and evaluation of responses", she added. The meeting contributed to raising awareness of the impact of violence on the mental health of children, both before and during

the COVID-19 pandemic. Examples were shared of effective approaches to supporting children's mental health from different regions and in different settings; to identify what steps are needed to embed mental health

best practices; put child protection and social protection services into action to build back better after the pandemic, while also supporting the Decade of Action to deliver the SDGs by 2030. Source : AFP

Pfizer: Third Shot Needed To Combat Delta



A health worker administers a dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 coronavirus vaccine to a pregnant woman at Clalit Health Services, in Israel's Mediterranean coastal city of Tel Aviv on January 23, 2021. PHOTO: JACK GUEZ/AFP

Pfizer and BioNTech announced they would seek authorization for a third dose of their COVID-19 vaccine to boost its efficacy, as the Delta variant drove devastating outbreaks in Asia and

Africa and cases rose again in Europe and the United States (US). With the pandemic once again wreaking havoc, Japan has banned fans from most Olympic events and placed Tokyo under a virus state of emergency throughout the Games just two weeks before the opening ceremony. Delta is the most infectious strain of the virus since the start of the global pandemic early last year. Originally detected in India, it has quickly spread and is accelerating outbreaks even in countries with high vaccination rates, leading the World Health Organization (WHO) to warn this week that the world was at a "perilous point" as the official global death toll passed four million. Pfizer and BioNTech said

Thursday they expected that a third dose will perform well against the strain, and that they would be seeking authorization in the US, Europe and other regions in coming weeks. Initial data from an ongoing trial showed a third shot pushed antibody levels five to 10 times higher against the original coronavirus strain and the Beta variant, first found in South Africa, compared with the first two doses alone, according to a statement. The companies said they expected similar results for Delta - but added they were also developing a vaccine specifically tailored to fight the deadly strain. The news came after Japan, where the variant currently accounts for around 30 per cent of cases, said it would ban spectators

from almost all Olympic venues in light of a new state of emergency imposed on the capital. The Olympic flame arrived in the Japanese capital Friday, in a muted finish to a nationwide torch relay that was supposed to stoke excitement about the Games but which has been taken off public roads or otherwise altered because of virus concerns. 'Do Not Leave Your Home' Elsewhere in Asia, Vietnam's Ho Chi Minh City went into a two-week lockdown, with residents now barred from gathering in groups larger than pairs in public, and people are only allowed to leave home to buy food, medicine and in case of emergencies. Police have also set up checkpoints at city borders and only those with negative test results

can get in. In Indonesia, desperately needed supplies of oxygen and protective equipment arrived from neighbouring Singapore. Indonesia has become a global COVID-19 hotspot, with a fierce outbreak leaving hospitals struggling to cope - many are now refusing new patients, leaving scores to die at home, while desperate relatives hunt for oxygen tanks to treat the sick. Indonesia, with a population of 270 million, now has a record caseload of over 2.4 million - but testing rates are low and experts believe the true figure is far higher. The virus is also returning to many places once held up as models in combating the pandemic. Source : AFP

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 Myanmar 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

Advertisement for Myanmar Daily Weather Report. Text includes: "ကမ္ဘာ့ပူပိုင်းလေငံနဲ့", "ကမ္ဘာ့ပူပိုင်းလေငံနဲ့", "ကမ္ဘာ့ပူပိုင်းလေငံနဲ့", "ကမ္ဘာ့ပူပိုင်းလေငံနဲ့".

Myanmar Daily Weather Report. Issued at 7:00 pm Friday 9 July, 2021. BAY INFERENCE: Monsoon is strong over the Andaman Sea and South Bay and weak elsewhere over the Bay of Bengal. FORECAST VALID UNTIL AFTERNOON OF THE 10 July, 2021: Rain or thundershowers will be scattered in Nay Pyi Taw, Magway Region and Kayah State, fairly widespread in Lower Sagaing, Mandalay Regions and Northern Shan, Rakhine States and widespread in the remaining Regions and States with likelihood of isolated heavyfalls in Sagaing, Ayeyawady, Taninthayi Regions and Chin, Rakhine, Kayin, Mon States. Degree of certainty is (100%). STATE OF THE SEA: Squalls with moderate to rough seas are likely at times Deltaic, Gulf of Mottama, off and along Mon-Taninthayi Coasts. Surface wind speed in squalls may reach (30-35) m.p.h. Sea will be moderate elsewhere in Myanmar waters. Wave height will be about (7-9) feet in Deltaic, Gulf of Mottama, off and along Mon-Taninthayi Coasts and (5-7) feet off and along Rakhine Coasts. OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Strong monsoon over the Andaman Sea and South Bay of Bengal. FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 10 July, 2021: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%). Source : AFP

Let it be Known and Heard with Evidence

By Aung Shinn

Local media outlets surviving with foreign supports and the external media agencies with pessimistic views are describing fake news and misinformation on the current political developments in Myanmar. It is also seen that some western diplomatic communities and UN agencies are one-sided statements based on such fake news reports.

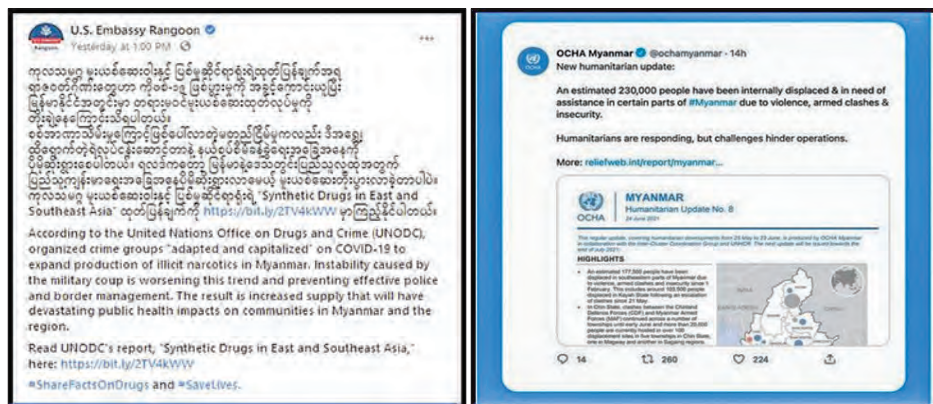
It is obvious that most of their statements with political intention are to disrupt the current situation of Myanmar breaching the media ethics and diplomatic ethics without taking referencing the news reports and information released by State government and relevant departments.

Fake news and narcotic drugs issue

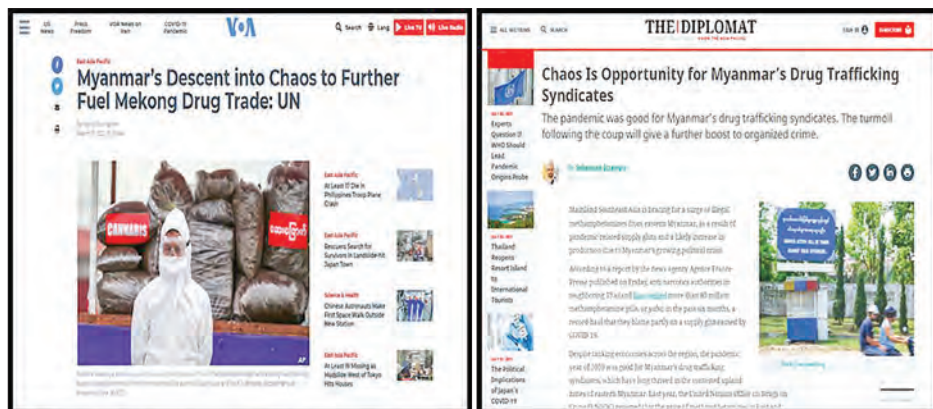
Particularly, the said actors are exerting all-round efforts to pressure the State Administration Council temporarily assuming the State's responsibilities in conformity with law. In this regard, a statement was found on the Facebook page of U.S Embassy Rangoon one-sidedly blamed on the incumbent government of Myanmar by using the apolitical matter of drug issue. The statement portrayed the current political situation of Myanmar as if it worsen the production of illicit narcotics in the country taking reference of the report of United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime-UNODC.

In reality, the report of UNODC described that the drugs trade did not fall despite the COVID-19 pandemic and the crime groups expend their narcotic drug markets in the region. The report is primarily based on the data of 2020 without any description related to the political affairs of Myanmar. It was also found that the report described the anti-narcotic drug measures of Myanmar government and seizures of the drugs with evidence.

Moreover, the photo used in the statement of the U.S Embassy was totally not related to UNODC and just the photo of the post described by United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)-Myanmar on its twitter page. As the post was described by using such misinformation, objection comments of Myanmar people appeared below the post and the photo was later changed. Hence, the statement of the U.S Embassy on its Facebook page was just a one-sided accusation using wrong and inaccurate information by burying their heads in the sand about the anti-narcotic drugs measures of the State Administration Council.



Similarly, some renowned media agencies are also expressing fake news exaggerating and highlighting only what they want by ignoring the government's efforts to eradicate narcotic drugs in the time of the State Administration Council. It is also observed that most of such descriptions have certain intentions to add more complexities in the current political situations, to bring pessimistic altitudes from international communities towards Myanmar. To be frank, they are waging information and media war against Myanmar.



Anti-narcotic drug measures during the term of the State Administration Council

The successive administrations of Myanmar despite practicing various kinds of political systems have combatted against narcotic drugs of common enemy

as a national duty. At present, the State Administration Council also continues the effective anti-narcotic measures. Due to the relentless efforts of the Council, from 1 February 2021 since the Council has assumed the State's responsibilities to 30 June, 1,043.052 kg of heroin, 765.416 kg of raw opium, 103.23 kg of black opium, 28.761 kg of marijuana, 99,474,830 stimulant pills, 6,396.374 kg of ICE and 40,721.566 kg of other related items, total worth of over K317.09 billion (US\$193.1 million). The detailed seizures are shown in the follow table.

Narcotic Drugs Seized from 1 February to 30 June 2021

Sr.	Item	Seizures by the Tatmadaw	Seizures by Myanmar Police Force	Total Seizures
1.	Heroin (kg)	984.447	58.605	1043.052
2.	Raw opium (kg)	587.116	178.3	765.416
3.	Black opium (kg)	103.23		103.23
4.	Marijuana (kg)	11.443	17.318	28.761
5.	Stimulant pills (tablet)	82,651,111	16,823,719	99,474,830
6.	ICE (kg)	5916.354	480.02	6,396.374
7.	Other related items (kg)	40,642.436	79.13	40,721.566
Worth (MMK)		28,258,741,550	35,873,121,900	317,095,863,450
Worth (US \$)		171.29 millions	21.847 millions	193.1 millions

The seizures have proved the relentless efforts of the State Administration Council to eradicate narcotic drugs, the common enemy of mankind, which is apolitical. On the other hand, it is sadly found out that some western powerful countries are still not able to see the truth and one-sidedly blaming on the State Administration Council by neglecting its efforts to eradicate the narcotic drugs in its short term.

Regarding the narcotic drugs eradication, a distinct act of the State Administration Council was exposed to the world on 26 June. To mark International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, the Council simultaneously held the ceremonies of burning down the seized narcotic drugs in Yangon, Mandalay and Taunggyi. The drugs burnt down included over 3,870 kg of raw opium, 2,562 kg of heroin, over 224 millions of stimulant tablets, 14,080 kg of ICE, over 739 kg of marijuana, over 289 kg of ketamine, 12.5 tons of caffeine, other illegal drugs and 62 types of chemical substances totalling in K1,068 billion (over US\$ 667 million). The ceremonies were attended not only by the governmental officials but also by international organizations and news reports were also released in timely manner. Although the true news reports have been released to let them be known and heard, such irregular blamings can be deemed as dishonest manners.



Internal armed conflict and illicit drug economy

Regarding the current political situations, the news reports and contents to impose all-round sanctions on Myanmar have appeared again in the global political arena. Looking back the history, it was obvious that such sanctions hindered the economic development of the State and led to only the plights of the common people. All countries and UN have already known that such means did not work for the democratization process of Myanmar and its development as well.

When the economic sanctions add the current armed conflicts and the existence of a number of armed organizations in Myanmar, its implications inflict considerable damages to the socio-economic conditions of border regions. Consequently, businesses of producing synthetic drugs which can generate a lot of money in a short time become primary income sources of Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs) for their survival and arming. The drug-related businesses are one of the reasons for holding their arms.

Hence, one of the root causes of the narcotic drug issue in Myanmar is the direct or indirect involvement of EAOs in producing and distributing narcotic drugs as the important source of their primary incomes for their survival.

TO BE CONTINUED

Vietnam's biggest city enters two-week coronavirus lockdown

VIETNAM'S economic hub Ho Chi Minh City began a two-week lockdown on Friday in the hope to contain the country's worst COVID-19 virus outbreak.

The city of nine million had previously been subjected to travel restrictions for a month but infection rates were steadily rising - with more than 9,400 cases registered.

Before the outbreak kicked off in late April, Vietnam had recorded fewer than 3,000 cases across the entire country.

Vietnamese authorities are not using the term lockdown but are calling the measures "social isolation orders".

Ho Chi Minh City residents are now barred from gathering in groups larger than pairs in public, and people are only allowed to leave home to buy food, medicine and in case of emergencies. Police have set up check-points at city borders and only those with negative test results can get in.

Airlines can carry a maximum of 1,700 passengers to the capital Hanoi per day, aviation authorities said, while trains between Vietnam's two major destinations have been suspended. "Our busy city has become extremely quiet," Tran Phuong, a Saigonese resident told AFP. — AFP ■



Medical workers collecting test samples from residents walk past in Ho Chi Minh City on July 9, 2021, on the first day of the government imposed two-week lockdown as a preventive measure to stop the spread of COVID. PHOTO: AFP

NEWS IN BRIEF

Indonesians ignore warnings in rush to buy anti-parasite drug for Covid

INDONESIANS have ignored health warnings to stock up on a "miracle cure" for Covid-19 backed by leading politicians and social media influencers, as an out-of-control virus surge sweeps the country.

Authorities are reporting hundreds of deaths every day as the world's fourth-most populous nation struggles with its worst outbreak since the pandemic began.

Pharmacies across the country are running out of ivermectin, an oral treatment normally used to treat lice and other parasitic infections, thanks in part to viral social media posts touting its potential as a coronavirus treatment.

"Those who come bring a screenshot showing that ivermectin... could cure Covid," said Yoyon, head of a pharmaceutical sales group at a market in the capital Jakarta, who like many Indonesians goes by one name. — AFP ■

United Kingdom: Economic recovery slows



London sends a message about how to reduce the risk of exposure to the newly detected U.K. variant. PHOTO: TOLGA AKMEN/AFP

BRITAIN'S economy grew for a fourth month running in May on further easing of lockdown

measures but the rate of expansion slowed more than expected, official data showed Friday.

Gross domestic product output was 0.8 per cent in May as restaurants and pubs welcomed customers back indoors for the first time since the end of last year, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) said in a statement.

That was down on April's 2.0-per cent growth rate. The analysts' consensus had been for a slowdown to around 1.5 per cent in May.

"The economy grew for the fourth consecutive month, albeit at a slower pace than seen recently, but remains around three percent below its pre-pandemic peak," said Jonathan Athow, deputy national statistician for economic statistics at the ONS.

"Pubs and restaurants, who

were again able to welcome indoor guests, were responsible for the vast majority of the growth seen in May.

"Hotels also saw a marked recovery as restrictions lifted," Athow added.

Output grew 3.6 per cent in the three months to May thanks also to strong retail sales, the ONS said.

But "May's weaker-than-expected increase in GDP underlines that the recovery to its pre-Covid levels will be drawn out", forecast Samuel Tombs, chief UK economist at Pantheon Macroeconomics.

He pointed to a "fading of some initial enthusiasm when businesses reopened. — AFP ■

Greece: All clear for vaccinated fans to return

GREECE will allow the return of spectators to professional sporting events providing they have been vaccinated for Covid-19 and must wear masks, the Sports Ministry revealed on Thursday. Fans have been absent for a year following health restrictions to combat coronavirus.

Adult spectators will be obliged to show a vaccination certificate when purchasing an electronic ticket while younger unvaccinated fans must show a negative PCR or rapid test result. Open-air stadiums may seat up to 80 percent of full capacity, but not exceeding 25,000 spectators while closed facilities can seat up to 60 per cent capacity or a maximum of 3,000 fans.

No date was revealed when the regulations will take effect but it is most likely within this month when exhibition football contests will be held. — AFP ■

'No jabs, no job': Fiji to make vaccine compulsory

FIJI has announced plans to make the coronavirus vaccine compulsory for all workers as it battles a runaway outbreak of the Delta variant, with the prime minister issuing a blunt message: "no jabs, no job".

Frank Bainimarama said all public servants in the South Pacific nation of 930,000 must go on leave if they have not had their first injection by August 15 and would be dismissed if they did not receive their second by November 1.

Private sector employees must have their first jab by August 1, with individuals facing hefty fines if they fail to

A police officer directing residents waiting in line for COVID-19 testing in Fiji's capital Suva, amid a worsening outbreak of the Delta variant in the South Pacific nation. PHOTO: AFP



comply and companies threatened with being shut down.

"No jabs, no job - that is

what the science tells us is safest and that is now the policy of the government and enforced

through law," Bainimarama said in a national address late Thursday.

The hardline policy comes amid government frustration at the widespread flouting of virus safety measures such as social distancing and wearing masks, blamed in part for a huge spike in infections.

Until April, Fiji had recorded no community cases for a year but a quarantine breach saw the highly contagious Delta variant, first detected in India, rapidly gain a foothold, with the country now recording 700-plus new cases a day. — AFP ■

Japan's fresh virus emergency to cost economy 1 tril. yen

JAPAN'S latest coronavirus state of emergency covering Tokyo, declared by the government Thursday, could cost the economy around 1 trillion yen (\$9.1 billion), according to economists' estimates.

The government's decision to place the Japanese capital under a fourth state of emergency and extend an emergency in the southern island prefecture of Okinawa will cut private consumption by 1.2 trillion yen, said Toshihiro Nagahama, chief economist at the Dai-ichi Life Research Institute.

"It's inevitable that due to the (latest state of) emergency, there will be more pressure to restrict economic activity," Nagahama said in a report, adding the number of unemployed people is forecast to increase by 55,000 in the next three months.

The latest emergency for Tokyo and the extension for Okina-



The emergency declaration followed a recent spike in coronavirus cases and the lifting on 20 June of the country's third COVID-19 emergency covering Tokyo as well as eight prefectures including Osaka and Kyoto. **PHOTO: KYODO NEWS**

wa will take effect from Monday and last until Aug. 22, which would include the duration of the Olympics set to start on July 23. Under a state of emergency, restaurants and bars are banned,

in principle, from serving alcohol, while dining establishments not offering alcohol are requested to close early.

Nagahama said the projected loss of consumption will

cut gross domestic product by around 1.0 trillion yen, corresponding to around 0.7 per cent in the July-September period, nearly an annualized 3 per cent. The estimate subtracts the value

of imports.

The emergency declaration followed a recent spike in coronavirus cases and the lifting on June 20 of the country's third COVID-19 emergency covering Tokyo as well as eight prefectures including Osaka and Kyoto.

Takahide Kiuchi, executive economist at Nomura Research Institute, gave a similar estimate, putting the potential economic loss at about 1.03 trillion yen.

He projected an additional loss of 146.8 billion yen if the Tokyo Olympics are held without spectators.

Given that a full-scale Olympics was estimated to generate 1.81 trillion yen in economic benefits for the Japanese economy, Kiuchi calculated around 62 per cent of that figure would be cut if the Summer Games are held without spectators and as a result of other virus-related measures. — Kyodo News ■

Rajapaksa family tightens grip on crisis-hit Sri Lanka

A brother of Sri Lanka's President Gotabaya Rajapaksa on Thursday became finance minister, tightening the family's grip on power in the South Asian nation as it confronts growing economic troubles.

Basil Rajapaksa, 70, took over the finance portfolio from another brother, Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa.

The 72-year-old president has put Mahinda in charge of a newly created but lower level economic policies and planning ministry.

Mahinda Rajapaksa, 75, was the country's president for a decade up to 2015, and Basil, who is known as the family's political

strategist, managed the economy then.

Basil takes charge now after the economy recorded a coronavirus-inflicted 3.6 per cent contraction for 2020, the worst since independence from Britain in 1948.

With his entry, the cabinet headed by Gotabaya now has five members of the Rajapaksa family.

Eldest brother Chamal, 78, is minister of irrigation while the prime minister's eldest son Namal, 35, is the youth and sports minister.

Several Rajapaksa family members hold junior minister positions and other key positions

in the administration.

Basil Rajapaksa was described as "Mr Ten Percent" in a 2007 US embassy cable published by the WikiLeaks organisation because of commissions he allegedly took from government contracts.

He has denied any wrongdoing and inquiries failed to find any evidence to back charges he syphoned off millions of dollars from state coffers.

As a dual US-Sri Lankan citizen, Basil was prohibited from standing in the 2020 election, but Gotabaya removed constitutional provisions which prevented his entry to the legislature. — AFP ■

ECB sets new inflation target, eyes climate in strategic overhaul

THE ECB on Thursday set a new inflation target and agreed to integrate climate change considerations into its monetary policy strategy, the first major overhaul of its goals and tools in almost two decades.

The bank will in future take into account companies' environmental credentials when considering whether an asset can qualify as a collateral or be purchased by the Frankfurt institution.

It will also begin carrying out "climate stress tests" to assess the Eurosystem's risk exposure to climate change, as concerns grew over the accelerating warming of the earth.

"The Governing Council acknowledged that climate

change has profound implications for price stability and, accordingly, it has committed to an ambitious climate-related action plan," it said in a statement.

The sea change came after an 18-month strategic review – the first since 2003. Key among things to go is the ECB's old inflation target of "close to, but below" 2.0 per cent, a goal that was agreed in 2003 when rapid price increases were a real concern.

Inflation in the 19-nation eurozone has, however, stayed stubbornly low for years despite unprecedented economic stimulus from the ECB, keeping the target well out of reach and fuelling calls for a rethink. — AFP ■

US, Mexico announce resolution of GM labor dispute under trade deal

THE United States and Mexico on Thursday announced they had reached an agreement under the terms of a recently enacted trade deal to resolve a dispute over alleged wrongdoing in a union vote at a General Motors factory.

Washington had in May requested that Mexico investigate claims of "serious violations" of workers rights during the vote at a GM plant in Silao in the state of Guanajuato.

In their joint statement released by Washington, the countries said they'd agreed to a remediation plan under the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), which came

into effect last year and governs trade between the three nations.

The agreement marked the first use of the USMCA's Rapid Response Labor Mechanism and will see a new union vote held by August 20, the presence of Mexican government inspectors at the plant and the observation of the new vote by the the International Labour Organization and a domestic observer group, the statement said.

Safeguards will also be put in place to respond to complaints from workers about the vote and sanction anyone whose conduct violates laws governing the elections. — AFP ■



The tweak to the inflation target of 2.0%, a goal that had stood since 2003, was described as a "historic shift for the ECB". **PHOTO: AFP**

Buddhist digital amulets mark Thai entry into crypto art craze

KARMIC fortune has arrived to the digital art market, with a kaleidoscopic splash of colours and the face of a revered Thai monk offering portable Buddhist good luck charms to tech-savvy buyers.

Sales of non-fungible tokens (NFTs) -- virtual images of anything from popular internet memes to original artwork -- have swept the art world in recent months, with some fetching millions of dollars at major auction houses.

"CryptoAmulets" is the latest venture to chase the craze, with founder Ekkaphong Khemthong sensing opportunity in

Thailand's widespread practice of collecting talismans blessed by revered monks.

"I am an amulet collector and I was thinking about how I could introduce amulets to foreigners and to the world," he told AFP.

Collecting amulets and other small religious trinkets is a popular pastime in Buddhist-majority Thailand, where the capital Bangkok has a market solely dedicated to the traders of these lucky objects.

Their value can rise thousands of dollars if blessed by a well-respected monk.

Despite being a dig-



The value of Buddhist amulets and other religious trinkets can rise thousands of dollars if blessed by a well-respected monk. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

ital format, Ekkapong wanted CryptoAmulets to have the same traditional ceremony as a physical piece, which

is why he approached Luang Pu Heng, a highly regarded abbot from Thailand's northeast.

"I respect this monk

and I would love the world to know about him -- he is a symbol of good fortune in business," he said. — AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEFS

EU slaps VW, BMW with €875m antitrust fine

THE EU's antitrust authority on Thursday fined German car giants Volkswagen and BMW €875 million for colluding on the development of anti-pollution technology for diesel cars.

Launched after anti-cartel raids in 2017, the case marked yet another blow against the German car-making sector, which was rocked by the devastating "dieselgate" emissions cheating scandal that broke in 2015.

The case found that while the car giants had not formed a formal cartel, they had made illegal agreements to limit the introduction of "AdBlue", or urea, to diesel engine exhaust gases, reducing its effectiveness as a way to produce cleaner emissions. Daimler, which alerted the European Commission to the issue, was spared a fine.

"Today's case is about how legitimate cooperation has gone wrong. Carmakers had developed a very good technology, but decided not to compete to exploit it to its full potential," EU competition chief Margrethe Vestager told reporters. "Instead, they decided to collude by indicating to each other that none of them would aim at cleaning above the minimum standards required by law," Vestager added. — AFP ■



Zomato - whose delivery riders are ubiquitous in Indian cities - is one of the two biggest players in India's food delivery market, which is forecast to explode in the coming years. PHOTO: NARINDER NANU / AFP

Indian food delivery giant Zomato eyes \$1.3bn IPO

INDIAN food delivery giant Zomato announced plans on Thursday to raise 93.75 billion rupees (€1.1bn) via an initial public offering, the latest firm to take advantage of a strong rally in local equities.

Zomato and rival Swiggy - both of whose delivery riders are ubiquitous in Indian cities - are the two biggest players in a food delivery market forecast to explode in the coming years.

But Zomato co-founder Gaurav Gupta said the Indian market was still "highly under-penetrated" with only eight to nine per cent of food consumption from restaurants, compared with 40 to 50 per cent in markets such as China and the United States.

"We are disrupting the Indian habit of home-cooked food and we are very excited about the opportunity ahead of us to drive this kind of behaviour," Gupta told reporters.

Both Zomato and Swiggy are, however, yet to be profitable because of high start-up and marketing costs. In the last financial year, Zomato lost 8.16 billion rupees on revenues of nearly 20 billion rupees. Delivery firms also face a backlash from Indian restaurants, which complain that the platforms' deep discounts erode their profit margins. Zomato has a presence in 525 Indian cities, with more than 32 million Indians visiting its platform every month. It is also active in 23 other countries. — AFP ■

Hong Kong's urban farms sprout gardens in the sky

WITH their heads in the clouds and their hands in the soil, a group of office workers are busy harvesting the fruits of their labour on the roof of a Hong Kong skyscraper.

Invisible to those below, a sprawling garden of radishes, carrots and rhubarb is flourishing at the top of the 150-metre tall Bank of America tower, a stark and colourful contrast to the monotone shades of concrete, steel and glass of the city's financial district.

The farm is among more than 60 that have sprouted across the space-starved city since 2015 - on decommissioned helipads, shopping mall rooftops and public terraces - thanks to initiatives like Rooftop Republic, a local social enterprise which promotes urban farming.

Cofounder Andrew Tsui sees the rooftop farms as a way for people to reconnect with how sustainable food can be produced in what he calls the current "instant-noodle city lifestyle" that sees so much waste.

"What we are looking at is really how to identify underutilised spaces among the city and mobilise the citizens, the people, to learn about food," the 43-year-old told AFP during a blustery site inspection of the skyscraper's garden.

Tsui believes Hong Kongers need to re-establish a relationship with what they eat that has been broken "since we started outsourcing our food and relying so much on industrialised production." — AFP ■

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V HANSA COBURG VOY.NO. (126S)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V HANSA COBURG VOY.NO. (126S)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **10-7-2021** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **MITT/MIP** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

No claims against this vessel will be admitted after the Claims Day.
Phone No: **2301185**

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S SEALAND MAERSK ASIA PTE LTD.

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V MCC KYOTO VOY.NO. (123S)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V MCC KYOTO VOY.NO. (123S)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **10-7-2021** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **MITT/MIP** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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Macron to reassure African leaders on commitment to fighting terror



A source familiar with the plans told AFP that troop levels will fall to around 3,500 over the next year, and to 2,500 by the end of 2023. **PHOTO: AFP**

PRESIDENT Emmanuel Macron will seek to reassure Sahel leaders of his commitment to Africa's anti-terror fight on Friday, at their first talks since he announced a reduction of French

troops in West Africa.

The decision last month to scale back French forces — and hopefully convince EU allies to step up their presence — opens an uncertain phase in the fight

against jihadist insurgents that control wide swathes of West Africa.

Fresh political turmoil in Mali and Chad, where military juntas are now in charge, raises further questions about whether local governments can effectively tackle the Islamist threat. France has not given details on how many of the 5,100 soldiers in its Barkhane counter-terrorism force will remain in the region. Defence Minister Florence Parly said the government would announce the changes “fairly soon”.

She insisted that “this transformation does not mean a departure from the Sahel, nor that we are going to let up our counter-terrorism operations.”

A source familiar with the plans told AFP that troop levels will fall to around 3,500 over the next year, and to 2,500 by the end

of 2023.

Commandos in the “Sabre” task force will remain to hunt down the leaders of jihadist groups linked to Al-Qaeda or the Islamic State, the source said on condition of anonymity.

Because of the Covid-19 pandemic the talks with the presidents of Mali, Chad, Burkina Faso and Mauritania will be held by video, with only Niger's President Mohamed Bazoum travelling to Paris. He and Macron are set to hold a news conference afterwards.

Underlying political issues

Announcing the Barkhane drawdown eight years after French soldiers were first deployed against a jihadist advance in Mali, Macron warned that military force “cannot be a substitute for political stability”. — AFP ■

Dutch politics deadlocked as small parties proliferate

POLITICS are in deadlock in the Netherlands following general elections, with a new government nowhere in sight and a myriad of small parties eating away at traditional power bases.

Incumbent Prime Minister Mark Rutte has had to put off forming the next cabinet until after the summer holidays, leaving the outgoing government to handle routine business.

With no clear winners after the vote in March and more small parties than ever in the 150-seat Lower House, the Dutch “polder model” of consensus politics is in danger of becoming a victim of its own success, experts say.

Ten of the 18 parties now

in parliament hold five seats or fewer — making the political landscape more fragmented than ever and further complicating the fraught process of building the next government.

New parties include the progressive, pro-European Volt and JA21, a split-off from the populist Forum for Democracy, which garnered three seats each.

“The political sphere is withdrawing more-and-more into itself, afraid of one another, afraid of the ideas of others,” said Laurens Dassen, who leads Volt's MPs in parliament.

But he said he believed even three seats, effectively 2.5 per cent of the total vote of more than



A voter casts her vote in Utrecht on 17 March 2021. **PHOTO: ROBIN VAN LONKHUIJSEN/ANP/AFP**

10 million, could shake up things in parliament. “In fact, three is a lot,” he told AFP.

Analysts however said three seats very seldom carry enough weight. — AFP ■

Paris to extend 30 kph speed limit to most streets

PARIS will impose a speed limit of 30 kph (19 mph) on nearly all streets by late August in a bid to reduce accidents and noise pollution while “adapting” the city for the fight against climate change, an official said Thursday. Mayor Anne Hidalgo, a Socialist who is weighing a run for the presidency next year, has pledged to reduce the amount of public space dedicated to cars in one of Europe's densest cities.

Already around 60 per cent of the capital's streets have 30 kph limits, and since Hidalgo took office in 2016 many others



Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo has pledged to reduce the amount of public space dedicated to cars in one of Europe's densest cities. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

have been reduced to single lanes or turned over entirely to pedestrians. After August, only the main ring road surrounding Paris and major boulevards and arteries will allow higher speeds, Greens deputy mayor in charge of transports David Belliard told AFP. “The point is to reduce the space taken by cars, which involves lowering their speeds,” he said, making streets safer cyclists and pedestrians. The move comes as Hidalgo pushes ahead with plans to remove 60,000 of the city's roughly 140,000 street-level parking spaces. — AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Belarus raids independent news sites in media crackdown

BELARUS on Thursday barred access to the country's oldest news organisation and raided the offices of several regional newspapers as President Alexander Lukashenko's regime clamps down on media not under state control.

Authorities in the ex-Soviet country, which is in the throes of a months-long crackdown on dissent, blocked the online publication Nasha Niva over accusations it had published illegal content.

Belarus' KGB security services also raided its offices as well as those of several regional publications across the country.

The media crackdown comes a day after one of Lukashenko's main challengers, Viktor Babaryko, was sentenced to 14 years in prison.

Nasha Niva — founded in 1906 under the Russian Empire — said on social media that raids took place at the homes of four of its editors and that two including its editor-in-chief Yegor Martinovich were detained. — AFP ■

Three killed, 30 injured in Bangladesh factory fire

A massive blaze in a Bangladesh factory killed three people and injured at least 30 with some people jumping from the upper floors to escape the fire, police said.

It was unclear how many people were trapped inside, though distraught relatives outside and other factory workers said they feared that others may have not escaped.

Fires are common in Bangladesh due to lax enforcement of safety rules. In February 2019 70 people died when an inferno ripped through several Dhaka apartment blocks.

Police and witnesses said the fire broke out at Hashem Food and Beverage factory in Rupganj, an industrial town outside Dhaka, about 5:00 pm Thursday (1100 GMT) and was still raging on Friday morning. — AFP ■

Biden says Kabul's fall to Taliban 'not inevitable' as fighting rages



Joe Biden on Thursday defended the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan, saying it was "not inevitable" that the country would fall to the emboldened Taliban, and confirmed the US exit would be completed by 31 August. **PHOTO: AFP**

JOE Biden on Thursday defended the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan, saying it was "not inevitable" that the country would fall to the emboldened Taliban, and confirmed the US exit would be completed by August 31.

But he also admitted that, nearly 20 years after American forces toppled the Taliban regime in the wake of the 9/11 attacks, it was "highly unlikely" Kabul would be able to control the entire country.

The US military has "achieved" its goals in Afghanistan – killing Osama bin Laden, degrading Al-Qaeda and preventing more attacks on the United States, Biden said in a White House speech.

"We are ending America's

longest war," he said, stating that the withdrawal would be completed by August 31 – earlier than his initial deadline of September 11. The Pentagon has said the exit is already 90 per cent complete.

"The status quo is not an option," Biden said of staying in the country. "I will not send another generation of Americans to war in Afghanistan."

"The United States cannot afford to remain tethered to policies created to respond to a world as it was 20 years ago," he said. "We need to meet the threats where they are today."

Biden said the United States "did not go to Afghanistan to nation-build" and that the Afghan people alone should determine their future. — AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Russia proposes six-month extension of Syria crossing but US seeks year

RUSSIA on Thursday proposed extending by six months a border crossing into Syria in a compromise at the Security Council, UN and diplomatic sources said, but the United States insisted that a full year was vital to save lives.

Russia, which backs President Bashar al-Assad and holds veto power at the Security Council, submitted a draft resolution to the 14 other members after a text by Ireland and Norway that would authorize one more year for the Bab al-Hawa crossing on the Turkish border.

But Russia, which requested that a vote on its draft take place on Friday, suggested a "possible prolongation" after the six months, one source told AFP.

This is the first time Russia has raised the possibility of extending the authorization.

Previously, Moscow had wanted to stop cross-border aid, maintaining that continuing to provide it without Damascus' approval violated Syria's sovereignty. — AFP ■

South Sudan marks tortured decade since independence

SOUTH Sudan marks a decade of independence on Friday but there is little to celebrate in a country crippled by civil war, chronic instability and desperate hunger.

At midnight on July 9, 2011, raucous celebrations erupted as the world's newest nation was born and the people of South Sudan cheered the end of a decades-long struggle for statehood from Sudan. But the revelry was short-lived. Just two years later South Sudan was at war, the task of nation-building forgotten as its liberators tore the country apart, dashing the great expectations of a peaceful and prosperous future.

Close to 400,000 people would die before a ceasefire was declared in 2018 but the country has struggled to heal and is more fragile than ever, confronting looming starvation, political insecurity, economic ruin and natural calamities. "The first 10 years of this young country's history have seen much suffering," said a joint statement from Britain, Norway and the United States.

"We commend the commitment many have shown in working together to build a brighter future, so it is deeply saddening that the promise of peace and prosperity that independence represented remains unfulfilled." — AFP ■

Haiti police blame Colombian, US suspects in president's slaying

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. A 28-member hit squad made up of Americans and Colombians assassinated President Jovenel Moise, Haitian police said Thursday, adding that eight were still at large as the country lurched into political chaos.

One day after Moise was killed and his wife Martine wounded by gunmen in their Port-au-Prince home, the poorest country in the Americas has no president or working parliament and two men claiming to be in charge as prime minister.

Police paraded some of the suspects before the media Thursday, along with Colombian passports and weapons they had



People cheer as a police car drives past at the Petionville Police station where armed men, accused of being involved in the assassination of President Jovenel Moise, are being held in Port-au-Prince on July 8, 2021. **PHOTO: AFP**

seized. The head of the Haiti's National Police, Leon Charles, vowed to track the other eight down. "It was a team of 28 assailants, 26 of whom were Colombian, who carried out the operation to assassinate the president," Charles said at the press conference in Port-au-Prince. "We have

arrested 15 Colombians and the two Americans of Haitian origin. Three Colombians have been killed while eight others are on the loose."

Previously authorities had said four of the suspects had been killed. Charles did not explain the discrepancy. — AFP ■

Bulgaria rocked by corruption claims ahead of vote

FROM kidney transplants for rich foreigners at state hospitals to big companies tapping government loans meant for smaller firms, graft in Bulgaria is outraging citizens afresh, a year on from huge anti-corruption protests.

The scores of examples, revealed in daily press conferences by interim Prime Minister Stefan Yanev's administration, have confirmed most of the allegations from those who took to the streets, with ramifications for Sunday's snap parliamentary election.

Yanev was appointed after an inconclusive April 4 general election that saw three-time premier Boyko Borisov come out first but un-

able to find partners to govern.

Though primarily tasked with organising the new vote, the interim government has also set out to make thorough checks of Borisov's almost 10 years in office.

Yanev says these efforts are a bid to answer protesters' demands for transparency and suspicions about massive graft.

Borisov says they're part of a political witch hunt by his bitter foe, President Rumen Radev, who appointed Yanev's administration.

Either way, the accusations are having an impact as public opinion appears to be shifting away from Borisov's GERB party. — AFP ■

Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council Nine Objectives

1. Political affairs

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

2. Economic affairs

- To enhance production based on agriculture and livestock through modern techniques and strengthen all-round development in other sectors of the economy.
- To develop a stable market economy and promote international investment in order to enhance the economic development of the entire National people.
- To promote and support local businesses to create employment opportunities and increase domestic production.

3. Social affairs

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

ASEAN team to compete in FIFA E-Nations Cup 2021 finals

REPRESENTING ASEAN, the Singapore team will take part in the finals of the FIFA E-Nations Cup 2021 which will take place in Copenhagen, Denmark from 20 to 22 August 2021, said the source with the ASEAN Football Federation.

Amraan Gani and Muhammad Syakir will represent the team for the FIFA E-Nations Cup 2021 title, officials said.

"It feels amazing to qualify for the finals. Personally, I have felt quite a bit of pressure to do well for Singapore, but I took

it positively and just gave my best efforts in every game that I played," Amrran said.

"Considering the success that we achieved from the Stay and Play Cup last year, I wanted to build upon it and I felt that the best way to do so was to qualify for the finals and represent Singapore on an international stage in Denmark. We hope to go as far as possible in Denmark and show everyone that Singapore can perform at the highest. It is going to be fun," he added.

The next player Added

Syakir also said: "This tournament was probably the most nerve-wracking one for me even though I have played in many others before. Knowing that I was playing the game not just for myself but for my partner, my team and my country was a whole new different experience for me. The main thing was that we constantly learned from one another and gave each other advice when we needed help. Our collective confidence and morale grew as we played more games together". —GNLM

Olympic flame arrives in Tokyo after 'heartbreaking' fan ban

THE Olympic flame arrived in Tokyo on Friday with just two weeks until the Games open, as athletes and fans mourned a "heartbreaking" decision to bar spectators from almost all venues over the virus.

In a taste of what is to come for thousands of athletes who will compete at the pandemic-postponed Games, the public was kept away from the arrival of the flame and a welcoming ceremony was attended only by the media and officials. As the final countdown to the July 23 opening ceremony begins, the mood is far from the usual festive Olympic spirit.

Tokyo will be under a virus state of emergency from Sunday



The Olympic flame arrived in Tokyo on Friday with just two weeks until the Games open, as athletes and fans mourned a "heartbreaking" decision to bar spectators from almost all venues over the virus. **PHOTO: AFP**

until August 22, putting a further dampener on an already unusual Olympics. The measures, which mostly limit alcohol sales, restaurant opening hours and

crowd sizes, come as infections rise in the capital and with authorities concerned about the spread of the Delta variant. — AFP ■

Verratti expects 'epic' Euro 2020 final against England

ITALY midfielder Marco Verratti believes Sunday's Euro 2020 final against England will be one for the ages, as the Azzurri look to win the tournament for the first time since 1968.

Having failed to qualify for the last World Cup, Roberto Mancini has defied expectations and led Italy on a national record 33-match unbeaten run, leaving them on the cusp of a second European crown. "We want to win. We will face a very, very tough team who want to win. It's a dream for us to win this European Championship," Verratti told a virtual news conference on Thursday. "There is a lot of enthusiasm around Italy. We



Italy midfielder Marco Verratti believes Sunday's Euro 2020 final against England will be one for the ages, as the Azzurri look to win the tournament for the first time since 1968. **PHOTO: AFP**

weren't given credit abroad but I think Italy are climbing back to where they belong." Italy will

be appearing in their 10th major final, and first since losing 4-0 to Spain at Euro 2012. — AFP ■

Westwood makes strong start at Scottish Open

LEE Westwood made the most of ideal conditions to fire a flawless 65 in pursuit of a second Scottish Open title, 23 years after the first.

Westwood carded six birdies at the Renaissance Club to sit a shot off the leader Jack Senior. American Justin Thomas was also six under for his opening round, with a strong chasing pack including new US Open champion John Rahm, Tommy Fleetwood and Ian Poulter on five under. "I think the longest par putt I holed was two feet, which shows I was never under any stress," said Westwood, who previously won the title at Loch Lomond in 1998.

"I gave myself a lot of birdie chances. I did everything well in fact." Westwood practised at the Renaissance Club in the week before finishing 13th in last year's US Open and had plenty of other experience of the venue to draw upon from the time he lived in Edinburgh. "It always helps if you've played a course a lot, especially if conditions change," the former world number one added.

"Today is not typical of golf here. It was pretty much hit it, find it, hit it again - you didn't have to use your brain too much or get creative. It was a good day for scoring." — AFP ■