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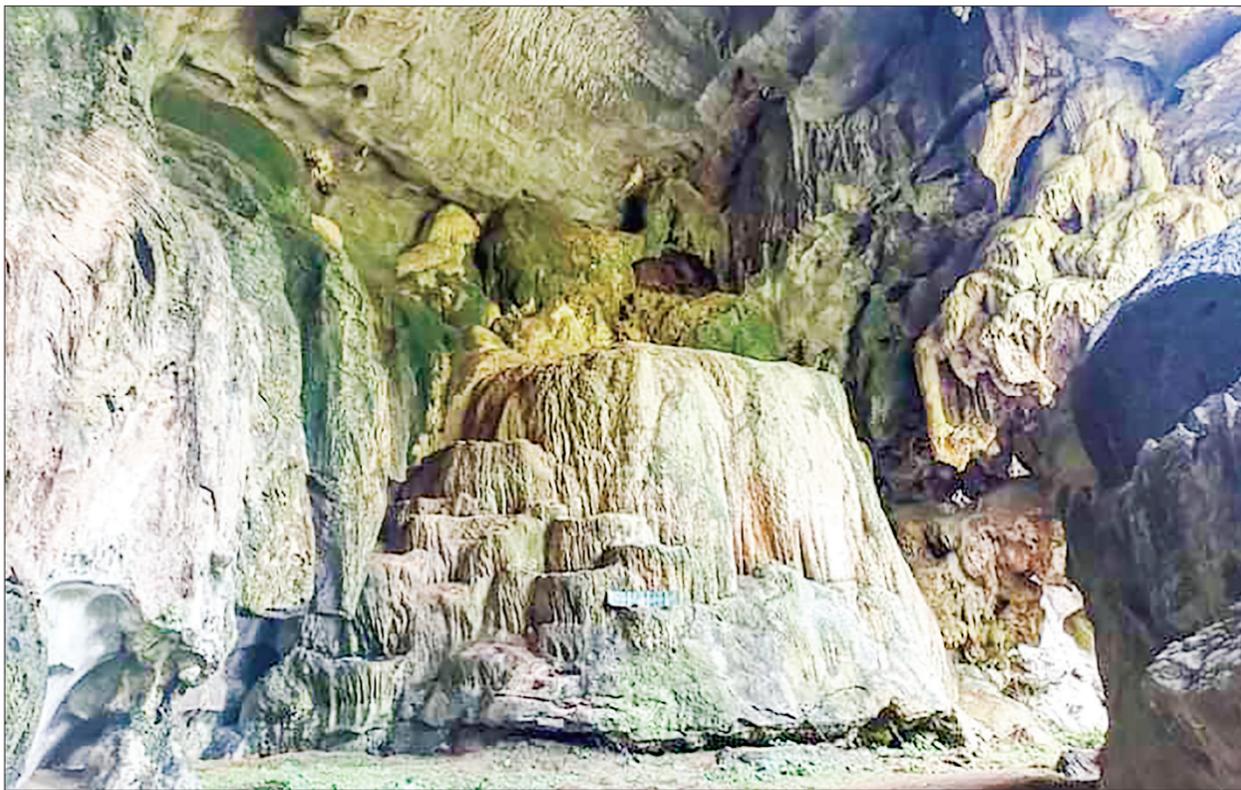
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Trip to natural stone cave in Bokpyin Township



The cave is located near Yadanabon Village in Bokpyin Township and about 7 miles from the border areas with Thailand.

Nature-based tourism becomes the most attractive tourism industry to world travellers. The people chose such nature vacations for their natural phenomenon and ability to offer satisfaction. There are many nature-based attractions in Myanmar. A natural cave located in Bokpyin Township of Taninthayi Region attracts tourists.

The cave is located near Yadanabon Village in Bokpyin Township and about 7 miles from the border areas with Thailand. After a one-hour drive from Yadanabon junction on Myeik-Kawthoung road section, the visitors can see

a signboard bearing the name of the natural cave, Phaya Htan Cave. About a further 30-minute drive, it will reach that natural cave. It would be a one-hour walk to the cave. Both of the walking and car drive are OK.

Travellers who love walking can enjoy the natural beauty of its surrounding in person. The notable thing is that the mountains, flora, geographical features and climate of Bokpyin Township in the Taninthayi Region are different from others. In the rainy season, travellers can make a bike ride or a trek, and they will be pleased along the road.

There are also many wild animals like Asiatic Black Bear,

Rhinoceros, Wild Buffalo, Sambhur, Serow, Goral, Wild dogs, Tapir, Pangolins, Golden Cat and monkeys on the way to Phaya Htan cave. The visitors can see the mountainous views of the Taninthayi Region and the highest mountain in Bokpyin Township measures 1,419 feet above sea level.

The Yadanabon Village is such a quiet and peaceful place for its dense forest with low population density. The existence of such a natural cave is so interesting with its geography facts. There are many high rocks in the vicinity area of that stone cave.

SEE PAGE-3

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.

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Sales Department-PH:-09-699027085,09-428055169
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 Mandalay-PH:09-661702244,09-661702255,09-661702277
 Yangon-PH:09-30860180,09-263147385,09-67144355509-662443555

State Administration Council Information Team to hold press conference 7/2021

THE Information Team of the State Administration Council will hold a press conference on 7/2021 at the assembly hall of the Ministry of Information in Nay Pyi Taw at 10:00 am on 12 July. Local and foreign media personnel are invited to the press conference. — MNA

Press Conference 7/2021 of Information Team to be broadcast live

THE press conference 7/2021 of the Information Team of the State Administration Council will be broadcast live on MRTV, MITV, MOI Website and MOI YouTube and aired live on Myanmar Radio starting from 10:00 am on 12 July, at the assembly hall of the Ministry of Information. — MNA

Announcement

1. China on its part temporarily closed Muse-Kyinsankyawt and Muse-Wamting border trade gates on 8 July 2021 because of finding the COVID-19 virus.
2. China also temporarily closed the Laukkai-Ranlonkeng border trade gate on 7 April 2021 due to repairing Ranlonkeng Bridge in the Laukkai region and the Chinshwehaw border trade post on 18 April 2021 because of finding the COVID-19 virus.
3. At a time when border trade gates are temporarily closed, relevant departments will give a helping hand to those from cargo trucks to return home and unloading of commodities at the warehouses at their arriving sites.
4. During the period when land border trade in Muse, Laukkai and Chinshwehaw are temporarily closed, cargo trucks from Mandalay 16th-mile gate to the border gates in Lashio-Muse, Lashio-Chinshwehaw, Lashio-Laukkai regions to export goods to China will be scrutinized and barred as of 7 am on 11 July 2021 to order them to return to the original areas with the aim of easing the traffic congestion of cargo trucks leading to China.
5. As such, those from highway cargo trucks are urged not to leave their base areas. The 16th-mile checkpoint will scrutinize and allow them to do domestic trade.
6. If merchants and businesspersons can seek help from the Ministry of Commerce by dialling 09-420703616, 09-8301856 and 067-3409671/672 for their difficulties.

Ministry of Commerce

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.

Daily Newspapers available online

FOR those who would like to read the Myanmar Alinn, the Kyemon and the Global New Light of Myanmar, published daily by the Ministry of Information, please visit <https://www.moi.gov.mm/mal>, <https://www.moi.gov.mm/km> and <https://www.moi.gov.mm/nlm>.

News and Periodicals Enterprise

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.

Only working in unison can benefit all



If you wish for the country to be developed and prosperous, all of the country's resources – financial, natural and human – have to be used together for the equal development of all races.

If the Bamar does what it wants, if the Kachin does what it wants, if the Shan, Kachin and Chin do not all cooperate, there will be no benefits for anyone. Only when you try working in unison will you know its benefits.

(Excerpt from the speech made by Bogyoke Aung San at the Panglong Dinner on 11 February 1947)

Trip to natural stone cave in Bokpyin Township

FROM PAGE-1

In the summer, it is possible to reach the front of the cave by car and so the transportation is convenient. Moreover, it is easy to study the inner parts of the cave. It is hard to enter the cave as it is humidity inside and the poisonous creatures can be seen inside the cave during the rainy season. Moreover, the travellers should notice that the wild animals can be there in the rainy season.

The stalactites in different shapes can be also seen inside

the cave. Although the Phaya Htan cave hosts only a few visitors, it is mostly crowded in the dry season. Moreover, there is a missionary Monk in front of the cave and the Buddha images are placed on the walls of the rock and cave by the Monk now.

There is a firm wooden staircase to make going up or down easier in the cave. It is not easy for the elderly persons to pay homage to the Buddha images on the wall closely. The Buddha statues are carved into different shapes like some

are sitting Buddha images and some are standing Buddha images.

The natural designs of stalactites are seemed to be curved by a skilled mason. It is so interesting that the rocks with Buddha statues on them are naturally emerging. If we look at the rocks from the outside of the cave, they are in white colour and seemed to be man-made stalactites.

Moreover, there are further five natural caves near it. The unusual thing is that the trees grow up on the walls of

the rocks.

King Alaung Phaya, U Aung Zeya once temporarily made a camp in the cave while he was marching to Ayutthaya. Some of his warriors stayed near the cave for many days, according to the local residents. The travellers to the cave can see the commemorative materials of Alaung Phaya in the cave. There are many Edible bird nests on the rocks and the hunters of bird nests come there, said the locals. The demand for natural bird nests is high in the market and

the prices are also hiking.

The trip to the natural caves during the dry season is a must for travellers. The natural stone caves of the Taninthayi Region is strange and a supportive location to promote the local tourism industry.

Therefore, the domestic and foreign travellers should not miss the Phaya Htan cave located in Bokpyin Township for its interesting facts in the post-COVID-19 period. – La Yaung Wai/GNLM

YRTC to distribute over 250,000 face masks to public in Yangon



THE Yangon Region Private Transport Committee (YRTC) will distribute more than 250,000 surgical masks free of charge in Yangon to prevent the spread of the virus during

the third wave of the COVID-19 epidemic, said YRTC officials.

Free Distribution

“YRTC is distributing awareness leaflets and masks

free of charge to prevent YBS passengers in Yangon during the third wave of the COVID-19.

People are promoting mask-wearing to protect them-

selves. In fact, everyone should wear a mask.

“Some people forget to wear masks. To raise awareness about this, we are distributing both pamphlets and masks free of charge.

Now the virus infection is increasing. I want people to know that “Prevention is better than cure,” said Yangon Region Transport Committee (YRTC) Joint Secretary U Lian Qingman.

Donors' Cooperation

(YRTC) will be distributing pandemic awareness leaflets and face masks to those who have to travel in Yangon on weekends.

With the cooperation of donors, a total of more than 250,000 masks will be distributed, the YRTC Joint Secretary said.

Masks are being bought at exorbitant prices

“During the pandemic period, the prices of whatever you buy are skyrocketing. I am glad that know that YRTA is distributing masks and thank you very much for that.

Now we have to pay around 2,000 to 3,000 kyats to buy a box of masks. For those who have money, it does not hurt, but for ordinary people like us, that money is really a burden. Therefore, the public is very happy that YRTC is distributing the masks for free,” said a YBS passenger.

The Yangon Region Transport Committee (YRTC) distributed COVID-19 epidemiological awareness leaflets and masks free of charge around Sule Pagoda and near Sanpya Market in Thingangyun Township, Yangon yesterday.

Depending on the donors, masks and hand sanitizers will be distributed in the coming holidays, said YRTA officials. — Myint Mho/ GNLM

Announcement of Union Election Commission

8 July 2021

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

Findings in voter lists which occurred rigging of votes

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

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

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

Union Election Commission

4,377 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 10 July, total figure rises to 188,752

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to **188,752** after **4,377 new cases** were reported on 10 July 2021 according to the Ministry of Health and Sports. Among these confirmed cases, **144,809** have been discharged from hospitals. Death toll stands at **3,756** after **71** 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.

All must place emphasis on ecosystem restoration

INCLUDING the Covid-19 global pandemic. With the continued outbreak of the pandemic this year, all must place emphasis on ecosystem restoration as a priority to solve the problems of depleting natural resources, environmental pollution and climate change.

(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 6 June 2021)

Tatmadaw gives healthcare to the public in different regions, states

MILITARY doctors and nurses are providing necessary health care to the public in district hospitals across the country said Tatmadaw officials.

Tatmadaw has sent medical teams to provide medical care to local people suffering

from various diseases at Thazi Township Hospital, Hanzar District Hospital, Yinmarpin District Hospital, Nyaungyan District Hospital, Tagaung District Hospital, Sint Kaing People's Hospital of Kyaukse Township, Madara Township

People's Hospital, Yin Taw District Hospital, Kume District Hospital, Shwe Nyaung Phu District Hospital, Pintale District Hospital, Myittha Township People's Hospital, Welaung District Hospital, Kyauk Padaung Township

People's Hospital and Nyaung Oo District People's Hospital respectively.

Tatmadaw physicians provided medical check-ups, treatment plus surgeries to patients suffering from Dental and Oral diseases; Osteopo-

rosis, Gastric or peptic ulcer, Surgical diseases, Eye diseases, Ears, nose, and throat diseases, Obstetrics and gynaecology, Hypertension and Heart diseases respectively. — GNLM

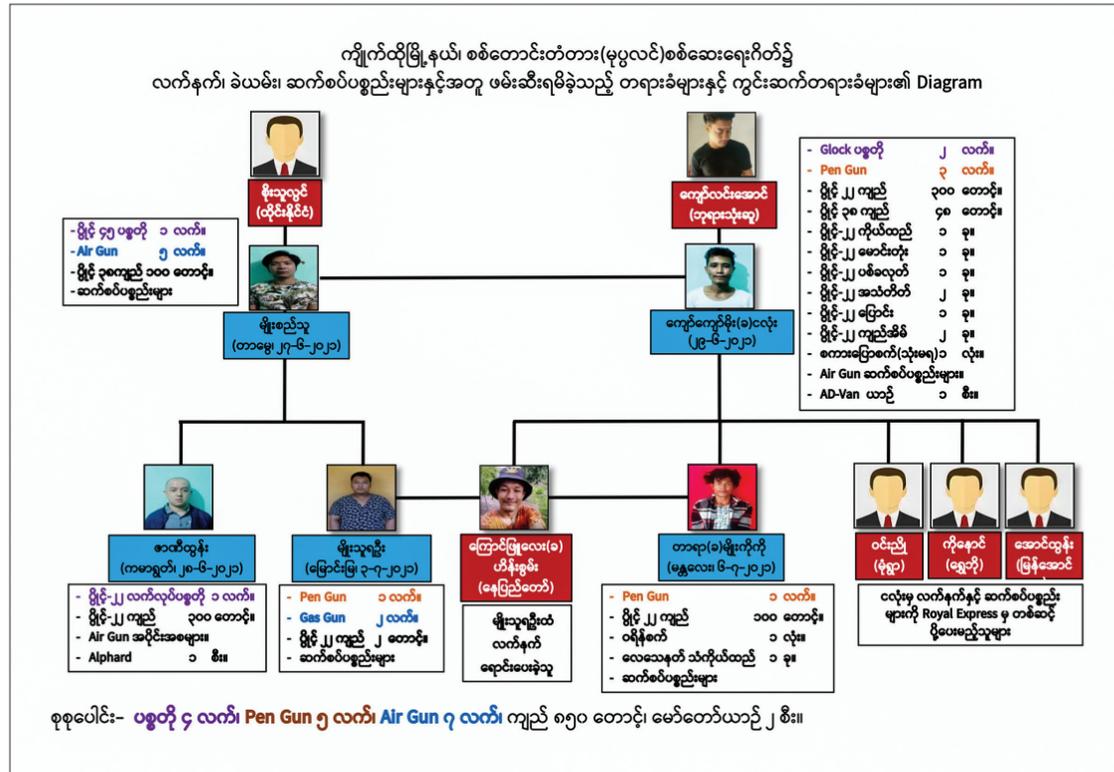
Police arrest gun distributors, dealers

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. Moreover, they gather the terrorist groups and PDF to launch attacks in some cities and villages.

On 27 June, the security forces stopped the passenger bus driven by Zaw Zaw Aung, from Insein Township, leading from Myawady to Yangon carrying Kyaw Lwin and examined the bus during their operation at new Sittaung Bridge in Thaton District of Mon State. Then, they seized a box with the label of Si Thu containing a pistol, 100 bullets, four Air Guns and other materials.

The police investigated the owner of the box "Si Thu" and arrested the suspect Myo Si Thu at Tamway Township of Yangon Region together with Air Gun and other materials in the same night.

According to the confession of Myo Si Thu, the police arrest-



The suspect Kyaw Kyaw Moe (aka) Moe Thae admitted that the firearms and magazines sent by Kyaw Lin Aung from Phaya Thonesu Township were kept at the Royal Express office in South Okkalapa Township.

ed Zarni Tun in Kamayut Township together with firearms on 28 June and Kyaw Kyaw Moe (aka) Moe Thae (aka) Ng from Dagon Myothit (Seikkan) Township on 29 June together with the firearms including Glock pistol and Pen Gun.

The suspect Kyaw Kyaw Moe (aka) Moe Thae admitted that the firearms and magazines sent by Kyaw Lin Aung from Phaya Thonesu Township were kept at the Royal Express office in South Okkalapa Township. Therefore, the combined secu-

rity team raided that place and seized three parcels containing guns and bullets with the names of Ko Win Nyo from Monywa, Ko Naung from Shwebo and Ko Aung Tun from Myanaung.

According to the confession of Myo Si Thu, Myo Thura

Oo, miller of Chit Sein Oo rice mill from Mya Sandar Ward of Myaungmya Township ordered a gun. Then, the police arrested him near Su Mon freight transportation point on 3 July and seized guns and bullets at his house.

Based on the words of the suspects, the police arrested weapon traders Tar Yar (aka) Myo Ko Ko (aka) Myo Zaw at San Pya teashop in Pyigyitagun Township on 6 July and raided his house located between 61st and 128x129 streets in Pyigyitagun Township on 7 July and seized various materials used in making firearms.

The security forces also inspected the Aung Yadana bus terminal in east Thiri Malar Ward of Aungmyethazan Township as the suspect Tar Yar (aka) Myo Ko Ko (aka) Myo Zaw testified that the firearms would be transported to YeU Township with the name of Sithu Aung Myint.

The suspects arrested together with firearms, magazines and explosives will face legal action under the existing law. — MNA

Health and Sports Ministry opens COVID-19 call centre

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

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

- Contact numbers:
- (1) 067-3411508
 - (2) 067-3411509
 - (3) 067-3411144

- (4) 09-882557991
- (5) 09-882557992
- (6) 09-882557993

YGEA submit CBM to allow payment by telegraph transfer system for gold export and import transaction

YANGON Region Gold Entrepreneurs Association (YGEA) submitted a proposal to the Central Bank of Myanmar (CBM) to allow payment by telegraph transfer (TT) system for gold and jewellery export and import transaction, said U Myo Myint, chairman of YGEA.

Regarding this matter, the CBM and YGEA's executive committee had a meeting online on 9 July.

Presently, the gold export has stopped after the international remittance for a gold transaction was changed from TT system to Letter of Credit (LC), he added.

"When we export gold and jewellery, we used to offer both TT and LC systems. Later, the authorities allowed only the LC system for gold export. It took about 1 month to send the goods. Then, the money will be transferred by LC system when the goods arrived there. Further, the



Besides, more than 10,000 domestic goldsmiths have lost their jobs due to the suspension of the gold exports.

prices will not be steady as well. The traders are convenient with the TT system because there is no delay. So, we have requested the CBM for the resumption of the previous payment system (TT), said U Myo Myint.

The Trade Department, the Ministry of Commerce issued the notification on 12 August 2020 that the transaction for gold and jewellery export and import can be done only with the LC system.

Myanmar is placed on the

Grey List by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). This inter-governmental body sets anti-money laundering standards. Therefore, the country needs to monitor the gold and jewellery exports and imports in order to

ensure there is no illegal income. Thus, the payment method was changed to LC as per the notification of the trade department.

With the use of LC, payment can take about two months, cost banking service changes by two sides, and increase the charges for security matters in transportation. Consequently, gold trading in the international market has halted due to the unstable international gold prices daily, said U Myo Myint.

Besides, more than 10,000 domestic goldsmiths have lost their jobs due to the suspension of the gold exports, he added.

The domestic gold market might recover if the continuation of the TT system is allowed.

Gold and other pieces of jewellery are primarily purchased by Japan and the Republic of Korea, and other tourists also buy them, according to the association. — NN/GNLM

Improved Taiwan papaya production brings happiness through increased income to farmers



TAIWAN papaya farmers in Pwintphyu township are very happy due to a bumper yield and good prices this year, according to the Taiwan papaya growers from Daydayae village, Pwintphyu township.

The local farmers are growing Taiwan papaya on their farmland on a commercial scale. Taiwan papaya from that village is in great demand across the country for their taste.

If Taiwan papayas are grown systematically, they could produce nearly 100 fruits per tree. Now, the growers are happy for earning a good price by selling both green papaya and ripe papaya. It can be cultivated in any weather. The Taiwan papayas seeds are put into plastic bags together with compost and grown in the shade place. One-month-old nursery plant should be set at least six or eight feet apart. After three months, the fruits begin to bear and are yielded when the fruit is ripe, said a local papaya grower from Daydayae village, Pwintphyu township.

There are more than 50 Taiwan papayas growers in Pwintphyu township. Taiwan papayas cultivation succeeded with abundant yield. The papaya from Pwintphyu township is distributed to Minbu, Magway and other regions.

The Taiwan papayas price is ranging K800-K1000 per fruit depending upon the size in the market. —Ye Win Naing (IPRD)/GNLM

Myanmar pharmaceutical imports top \$303.53 mln in seven months

THE import value of Myanmar pharmaceutical products was estimated at US\$303.53 million in the seven months (Oct-Apr) of the current financial year 2020-2021, according to Myanmar Customs Department.

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

India is the main supplier for Myanmar. Also, it is imported by Bangladesh, China, Germany, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, China (Taipei), Thailand, US and Viet Nam.

Trade has returned to normalcy after panic buying during the coronavirus pandemic. Most commonly prescribed drugs are available in the market. Only some are out of stock for now. At present, pharmaceutical import

is regularly flowing. However, the prices of pharmaceuticals were up by 5 to 10 per cent owing to the dollar gains. The COVID-19 related medical devices including surgical masks and pulse oximeters are highly demanded in the country amid the COVID-19 surging cases.

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

Muse reports over 250 new COVID-19 cases, five deaths in two months

MORE than 250 people have tested positive for COVID-19 in Muse within two months, bringing five deaths in toto, it is learnt.

Muse is one of the main border checkpoints between Myanmar and China and it is located in Northern Shan State.

"We conducted the COVID-19 test daily to 100 people using the antigen rapid test in Muse within two months in June and July. Someday, we run the COVID-19 test on 200 people. Then, about 255 people were found infected with the COVID-19 virus as of yesterday night. A 55-year-old woman, who was hospitalized in Muse public hospital, was found dead with COVID-19 virus this morning. About five COVID-19 deaths were reported from 2020 to as of today," said an offi-

cial from the Muse Committee on Prevention, Control and Treatment of COVID-19.

Due to the rising number of COVID-19 confirmed patients in Muse district public hospital, the township public hospital, Chinese language schools and relevant staff housing were opened as quarantine centres and the patients received medical treatment there. Besides, there are also insufficient medical staff and volunteers due to the increasing number of patients.

After more COVID-19 cases have reported in border areas, Chinese authorities have halted completely two crossings — Kyinsankyawt and Pansai (Wanding) starting from 8 July at noon, according to the traders and truck drivers. — Aye Maung/GNLM

Let it be Known and Heard with Evidence

CONTINUED FROM YESTERDAY

DESPITE superficial activities of EAOs on anti-narcotic drugs, in reality, according to the evidence of seizures, they have largely involved in drugs production and distribution behind the curtain.

Although the EAOs heavily depended on the opium cultivation and heroin production in the past, there appears a shift toward synthetic drugs, which unlike opium crops do not require labor-intensive cultivation and time and also easier to be produced and generate money. Especially, they largely dealt in crystal meth like amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS) and ICE.

Such manufacturing places of illicit drugs are found in the areas of EAOs with strict security guards where common civilians are not allowed to enter. In other words, EAOs have dealt in the illicit drugs in various means in their areas of freedom where the government administration cannot reach.

Tatmadaw and Myanmar Police Force have made many raids on such drug manufacturing places as operations after gathering information. It is also observed that the EAOs primarily produce narcotic drugs in their areas and smuggle them to different places using local ethnic people and members of people militia. Moreover, they also carry out trading the illicit drugs with arms, money laundering, investing the money generated from drug economy in legal businesses by contacting with international crime groups. Therefore, the narcotic drugs pose as a serious challenge to the peace process of the Nation since it largely contribute to lingering survival of EAOs and the internal conflicts.

Thus, in light of eradicating narcotic drugs the danger of entire mankind and the end of internal armed conflicts, the Tatmadaw has continuously emphasized on combating the illicit drugs with the effective cooperation of Myanmar Police Force.

Some confiscation cases

Among the measures, I would like to highlight some cases of confiscated drugs trafficked from the areas of EAOs during the term of State Administration Council.

In April 2021, 7,600,000 WY-inscribed stimulant tablets (estimated worth of K 11.4 billions) carrying from Mong Nai town to Myawadi town were confiscated at (7) Mile security check point at Taungoo town.



The seizure of 7,600,000 WY-inscribed stimulant tablets (estimated worth of K 11.4 billions) at (7) Mile security check point at Taungoo town.

On 9 May 2021, 6.9 million WY-inscribed stimulant tablets (estimated worth of K 10.35 billions) carrying from Kyauktalone township of Shan state hiding in the onion/garlic/green tea bags, were confiscated at combined security check point near Leik Tho town of Thandangyi township.

On 8 June 2021, 1554 blocks of heroin (893.9 kg), 650 grams of heroin, 1.832 millions of stimulant tablets and 1.6 kg of ICE stimulant drugs, total estimated worth of K 14.36 billions were confiscated along with small arms in Parsat ward of Tarchileik town.

Moreover, on 18 June 2021, 1710 kg of ICE stimulant drugs (estimated worth of K 34.2 billions) were



The seizure of heroin, stimulant tablets, IEC total estimated worth of K 14.36 billions along with small arms in Parsat ward of Tarchileik town.

also confiscated along with small arms on the Tarchileik-Keng Tung road near Tarkyauk village. It was found out that Aik San, member of UWSA provided money to buy a Dump Truck (4x2 wheeler) for carrying the drugs. Drugs were reportedly carried from a place 13 miles away from KengTung town.

There was also a case of seizure on 20 June. 1580 kg of QING SHAN-inscribed ICE stimulant drugs (estimated worth of K 39.5 billions) were confiscated between Mayanchaung village and Inngapu village of Kyaikto town.

On 27 June 2021, Naval Vassal (BaYintNaung)



The seizure of 1580 kg of QING SHAN-inscribed ICE stimulant drugs (estimated worth of K 39.5 billions) between Mayanchaung village and Inngapu village of Kyaikto town.

seized 1500 kg of ICE stimulant drugs wrapped in packages (1kg per each) with the label of 'GUAN YIN WANG' and 'Refined Chinese Tea' (estimated worth of K 37.5 billions) from a boat named "Thu Kha San" in Myanmar waters near Myanmar-India maritime border along with seven offenders.

The seizures show that the synthetic drugs were manufactured in the ethnic areas dominated by EAOs. In reality, as the danger of narcotic drugs is the challenge not only concerned with Myanmar but also for all mankind, the State Administration Council is conscientiously combating against the illicit drugs in offensive manner as frontline force.



The seizure of 1500 kg of ICE stimulant drugs from a boat in Myanmar waters near Myanmar-India maritime border.

Cooperation of Myanmar with international communities

Since the danger of drug is the common enemy of all mankind, the need of all countries to cooperate in eradicating the drug trafficking is the ultimate truth. In this regard, Myanmar is actively cooperating with international communities in com-

bating the illicit drugs. United Nations Fund for Drug Abuse Control (UNFDAC) has opened at Yangon Since 1976 and cooperated with Central Committee for Drugs Abuse Control (CCDAC). Also, Myanmar has cooperated with UNODC for the development projects in "Wa" autonomous region since 1994.

Opium cultivation annual report has been released with the cooperation of CCDAC and UNODC since 2001. Drug user survey was conducted in 15 regions/states in 2016. Socio-economic survey was also conducted with the cooperation of CCDAC and UNODC at southern and eastern Shan state in 2019. UNDOC provided financial and technical assistance for the measures.

Myanmar has already signed bilateral cooperation agreements on combating narcotic drugs with US, Russia and Korea and also been cooperating with ASEAN countries.

In the ASEAN framework, Myanmar has actively participated in ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Drug Matters (AMMD), ASEAN Senior Officials on Drug Matters (ASOD), ASEAN Airport Interdiction Task Force (AAITF), ASEAN Seaport Interdiction Task Force (ASITF) and ASEAN Drug Monitoring Network (ADMN). Implementing the ASEAN Work Plan 2016-2025, as the Golden Triangle region remain critical spot for illicit drug production, the five ASEAN member states of Mekong region also implemented the 'ASEAN Cooperation Plan to Tackle Illicit Drug Production and Trafficking in the Golden Triangle (2017-2019)'.

Regarding the measures of anti-narcotic drugs, Myanmar has actively participated in cooperation with BIMSTEC and the countries signing the Mekong Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Drug Control.

Moreover, Myanmar has also actively conducted measures to eradicate anti-narcotic drugs by opening border liaison offices after signing agreements and MoUs on drug control with its neighbours China, India and Thailand.

World countries and international communities should support and encourage the measures of combating illicit drugs regardless of political situations and the government. Instead, propagandizing with fabrications on the illicit drug issue with a political aim, and the instigating to cause civil unrests using social media platforms are the unacceptable acts. I also assume that using the drug issue for propaganda to build up pressures on the political situation of a country by a certain major power via the official Facebook page of its embassy is totally inappropriate.

Eradication of illicit drugs has represented a great challenge to the successive governments of Myanmar. In any case of drug production and smuggling, the State Administrative Council will certainly take strong action against any organization or individual in line with law for the sake of the prestige of the State with no tolerance. Besides the matters of drug production and smuggling, laundering the money generated from such businesses are also regarded as the transnational crimes and effectively being addressed with the cooperation of international organizations. That is the firm policy of the State Administration Council for the eradication illicit drugs.

For effective control of the illicit drug issue in Myanmar, some powerful countries should emphasize on the positive cooperation after rationally considering the politics and security situation of Myanmar rather than exploiting the issue for propaganda. Against the backdrop of this situation, I write this article on the eradication of illicit drugs in Myanmar to let it to be known and heard with evidence.



Improve far-flung areas for life development of ethnic nationalities

THE Republic of the Union of Myanmar is constituted with seven regions and seven states in addition to the Nay Pyi Taw Union Territorial Area.

Capital cities in regions and states are the most developed as they are focal points among other townships. Except for Yangon Region and Nay Pyi Taw Union Territorial Area, some townships in regions and states are facing poor transportation due to the far distance of their locations to the capital cities. Consequently, knowledge of local people and the development of townships lag improvement behind other townships.

Let's adopt a pledge to try to develop all parts of the nation and enhance the capacity of all ethnic nationalities!

Many townships dubbed as far-flung areas can be seen in the farthest distance from the capital cities as well as near the areas sharing a border with other countries. The far-flung areas are encountering requirements in all aspects for many years. Local people residing in these areas are in adaptation for their lives with lesser greed to possess something. Those innocent people are passing their lives simply without any needs. Those people do not have too much knowledge of how to overcome the challenges of their lives.

Whatever it may be, authorities at any different levels are responsible for solving difficulties and challenges of the people from far-flung areas by adopting the master plans while striving for improvement of under-developed areas by building infrastructures in a short time. Mainly, everybody needs to cultural sympathy for those residing in the far-flung areas and consider how to fulfil their needs. It is because only when all the areas of Myanmar develop without exception, can all ethnic nationalities enjoy fruitful results of development undertakings. Like a golden dream, the whole of Myanmar would develop one day no exception for regions and states. This being so, it is necessary to broaden the horizon of the people from far-flung areas to have a wider scope of knowledge on how to spend their lifespans without hindrances. The development of all parts of the nation is an obligation for all ethnic nationalities. Furthermore, they all have to uplift their capacity with utmost efforts for the sake of their families, for their community, for their ethnic nationalities and their nation. Let's adopt a pledge to try to develop all parts of the nation and enhance the capacity of all ethnic nationalities!



COVID-19 mRNA vaccines and Myocarditis: benefits outweigh the risks, says WHO committee

After receiving reports of heart inflammation cases due to myocarditis and pericarditis following vaccination with COVID-19 Pfizer and Moderna shots, World Health Organization (WHO) experts on Friday said that the benefits of the vaccines still outweigh the risks in reducing hospitalizations and deaths due to infection.

MYOCARDITIS is an inflammation of the heart muscle and pericarditis is an inflammation of the lining that surrounds the heart. While serious illness can result, cases are often mild and respond well to "conservative treatment", said the COVID-19 subcommittee of the WHO Global Advisory Committee on Vaccine Safety in a statement.

Causal association

According to the data in the US Vaccine Adverse Events Reporting System, approximately 40.6 cases of myocarditis per million second doses among males, and 4.2 cases per million among females, have been reported as of 11 June 2021 in those 12-29 years



A health worker inoculates a resident with a dose of the AstraZeneca/Oxford COVID-19 vaccine inside a Catholic church turned into a vaccination centre in Manila on May 21, 2021. PHOTO: TEDALJIBE/AFP

of age who received the mRNA COVID-19 vaccines. million second doses, respectively, for males and females.

For persons over 30, the reporting rates were 2.4 and 1.0 per million second doses, respectively. "These cases occurred more often in younger men and after

the second dose of the vaccine, typically within few days after vaccination. Current evidence suggests a likely causal association between myocarditis and the mRNA vaccines", the WHO committee wrote, noting that recently the Pharmacovigilance Risk Assessment Committee of the European Medicines Agency, had confirmed the plausible causal relationship.

According to the experts, more rigorous studies using alternative data sources and more robust study designs are underway, and they will continue to review the situation as more data becomes available.

Guidance for patients and doctors

According to the WHO experts, vaccinated individuals should be instructed to seek immediate medical attention if they develop symptoms indicative of myocarditis or pericarditis such as new onset chest pain, or pain that won't go away, shortness of breath, or palpitations following vaccination.

Clinicians should also be aware of the risk of myocarditis and pericarditis with mRNA vaccines and those most likely to be affected.

They should be alert to any acute chest pain, shortness of breath and palpitations that may be suggestive of myocarditis after vaccination, especially in adolescent or young males. Coronary events are less likely to be the

source of such symptoms among younger people.

"Where possible, suspected cases should be evaluated, provided guidance and be followed up with cardiologist consultation", they noted, adding that it is also important to rule out other potential causes of the conditions, including COVID-19 infection and other causes due to viral infection.

While acknowledging the clear benefits of the mRNA vaccines in reducing deaths and hospitalizations due to COVID-19 infections, the subcommittee encouraged all health professionals to report all events of myocarditis and other adverse events observed with these and other vaccines.

SOURCE: AFP

COVID complexity means business is far from usual in athletes village

Athletes villages at the Olympics and Paralympics are places where competitors can put aside their sporting rivalries to socialize and mix before they celebrate or commiserate when their athletic commitments are over.

AT least, that has been the case until now. But for the Tokyo Games, the competitor accommodation hubs will be starkly different from usual, with athletes required to effectively live in an isolated bubble from which they will have to adhere to strict anti-coronavirus regulations.

The main village in the waterfront Harumi district of Tokyo is set to welcome some 18,000 athletes and team members during the games after it was revamped to cope with the evolving COVID-19 situation.

Satellite athlete villages in existing hotels are also located in Oiso, Kanagawa Prefecture, and Izu, Shizuoka Prefecture, for sailing and cycling teams, respectively.

The most prominent pandemic-related addition at the Harumi village is a new fever clinic set up to provide medical care and polymerase chain reaction tests to residents who suspect

they may have been infected with the coronavirus. Symptoms or not, athletes will be tested daily in the village.

The clinic, set up in May, has been in operation since July 1 in a temporary structure at the center of the 44-hectare main village. It is solely dedicated to diagnosing suspected coronavirus cases and is separate from a polyclinic that offers ordinary medical services.

The village officially opens on July 13, 10 days before the Olympic opening ceremony, and will serve as a base for athletes until three days after the closing ceremony on Aug. 8. The site will formally welcome Paralympic teams between Aug. 17 and Sept. 8.

The complex is surrounded by sea on three sides and has views of Tokyo Bay and the Rainbow Bridge, but residents are expected to enjoy the atmosphere alone with areas to congregate reduced in size. Visitor numbers

have also been slashed and seating areas in dining halls cut by one-third.

Olympic athletes are requested to check-in no more than five days before they compete and para-athletes seven days before. They are then required to vacate the villages within two days of the end of their events.

"We needed to put a lot of restrictions on athletes. I imagine that being asked to put on masks at all times except when eating and in competition will be quite tough for international athletes," said Tokyo 2020 Village Mayor Saburo Kawabuchi.

"We also asked many things, like to leave dining halls as early as possible, even though at previous games athletes were able to mingle," Kawabuchi said.

The entry of families and guests to the Village Plaza, a site in the Harumi complex initially planned as the main social hub, will also be restricted.

"We built a replica room in



Journalists walk around the village plaza near the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Village during a media tour on 20 June, 2021, in Tokyo, Japan. PHOTO: IC/KYODO

the plaza because we heard that at past Olympics families and guests to the village who could not enter athletes' real rooms enjoyed getting a feel for their accommodations," said a representative of real estate giant

Mitsui Fudosan Co., which will sell the residential buildings as apartments after the games.

"I imagine there will not be many visitors to the replica room," the official said.

It is not prohibited to bring

alcohol into the villages, but residents are asked to drink alone in their rooms, a situation that is more than a little incongruent with the image of the celebrating post-competition medalist.

SOURCE: KYODO NEWS

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I say what I see:

By Oung Moun Moun

I see some are wearing masks, but some don't. It's strange to express how can those 'somes' might not wear masks and go to the public without acknowledging themselves or others otherwise. Everyone knows "Health is a blessing for people". No one should be careless about their health, and now Covid protocols the Ministry of Health and Sports directed since 23 March 2020 when Myanmar saw the first case of the pathogen.

Just a simple rule we all should follow: Wash your hands frequently; Wear masks wherever you go outside or whenever you meet people; Socially distance one another as possible as you have to (6 feet or plus); Never go to the crowded areas like clubs or karaokes in these days because both youths and oldies used to ever hook up with their loved ones, and We should stay at home whatever situations.

India and Thailand vindicated that COVID variant Delter is dangerous to all as you can see the foreign news on that matter. All in all, we shall do all the things that the Ministry of Health and Sports announced to the public to abide by. We all should heed to everything -- true facts to follow -- wash our hands regularly and frequently, wear masks whenever we go outside, maybe more securely wear double masks, and distance each other six feet away. That's it! Simple! Heed them seriously and carefully. Extremely simple! Wash our hands regularly, wear masks, even double, distance your colleagues socially both for yourselves and others.

Myanmar Daily Weather Report
 (Issued at 7:00 pm Saturday 10 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 11 July, 2021: Rain or thundershowers will be scattered in Lower Sagaing, Mandalay, Magway Regions and Northern Shan State, fairly widespread in Nay Pyi Taw, Bago Region and Kachin, (Southern and Eastern) Shan, Rakhine, Kayah States and widespread in the remaining Regions and States with likelihood of isolated heavyfalls in Taninthayi Region and Kayin, Mon States. Degree of certainty is (100%).

STATE OF THE SEA: Squalls with rough seas are likely at times Deltaic, Gulf of Mottama, off and along Mon-Taninthayi Coasts. Surface wind speed in squalls may reach (35) m.p.h. Sea will be moderate elsewhere in Myanmar waters. Wave height will be about (8-10) feet in Deltaic, Gulf of Mottama, off and along Mon-Taninthayi Coasts and (5-7) feet in Deltaic, off and along Rakhine Coasts.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Moderate to strong monsoon over the Andaman Sea and South Bay of Bengal.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 11 July, 2021: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

Billionaires Branson and Bezos bound for space

TWO vessels, two companies, with one goal: blasting their billionaire founders into space.

Richard Branson and Jeff Bezos launched Virgin Galactic and Blue Origin in the early 2000s, and now both men stand on the verge of lift-off themselves, mere days apart.

The result of both an overlap in the companies' development timelines and the pair's fierce rivalry, the launches mark a milestone in the nascent space tourism industry.

While the tycoons are among the first passengers, their ultimate goal is to allow



After lift-off, the capsule, which carries up to six crew members, separates from its booster, then spends four minutes at an altitude exceeding 60 miles (100 kilometers) -- also known as the Karman line, the recognized border of space. **PHOTO: BLUE ORIGIN/AFP/FILE**

hundreds of (wealthy) clients to admire with their own eyes, for a few minutes, the curvature of the Earth.

They won't be the first billionaires in space.

Hungarian-American Charles Simonyi and Guy Laliberte, the Canadian co-founder of Cirque du Soleil, spent several days aboard the International Space Station in 2007 and 2009 respectively, but made the trip on Russian Soyuz rockets.

Bezos and Branson will be the first to hitch a ride with private space companies — which they themselves created.

"It's just an incredible, wonderful coincidence that we're going up in the same month," Britain's Branson told The Washington Post in an interview, adding that his decision to move up his spaceflight to July 11 was "honestly not" intended to best the Amazon founder, whose voyage is slated for July 20.

'Become an astronaut'

Branson's flight takes off Sunday from a base in New Mexico called SpacePort America. The time has not yet been announced, but the company said a livestream will begin at 7:00 am local time (1300 GMT). — AFP ■

Scientists learn how otters stay hotter

SEA otters are a hardy lot. The smallest of all marine mammals with the thickest fur of the animal kingdom, they can hold their breath for up to eight minutes while they dive for prey like clams and crabs, which they're known to crack open using rocks.

An enduring mystery, however, was just how the mustelids manage to stay warm in the chilly waters of their Pacific habitat, bereft of the blubber that insulates seals, whales and walrus. The answer, according to a new paper published in the journal *Science* on Thursday, is a unique energy conversion system whereby their muscle tissue "leak" large amounts of heat throughout their bodies.

That's unlike other mammals, which have to put their muscles to work through exercise, or involuntary shivering, to achieve the same result.

Lead author Traver Wright of Texas A&M University told AFP that while sea otters' dense, water-resistant fur offsets some heat loss, it isn't enough by itself to cope with the frigid waters off Alaska, where most of them

reside. Scientists already knew the sea otters burn a lot of energy — approximately three times greater than predicted for mammals of their size, and to keep up with the demand, they may consume up to 25 percent of their body mass in a day.

It was unclear, though, which tissues were making use of this energy and how it was going towards producing heat. To find out, Wright and colleagues took muscle samples from sea otters that were already dead, or, more happily, had been rehabilitated by the Monterey Bay Aquarium and were being prepared for release. They then used a device to measure oxygen consumption.

'Making heat by being inefficient'

The main function of muscles is generally to be able to move the body, but in the otters, much of the metabolic energy produced by breaking down sugars and fats was lost as heat instead of being used by mitochondria, the powerhouses of cells, to do work such as powering muscle contraction. — AFP ■

Drought-hit California asks residents to cut water use by 15 per cent



A section of a drought-stricken Shasta Lake in California, where drought conditions are worsening. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

CALIFORNIA'S governor called on residents to reduce their water consumption by 15 per cent as he extended a state of drought emergency to nearly half the parched US state's population Thursday.

Governor Gavin Newsom deemed the western state's unusually dry year a "mega drought" and urged Californians to save scarce water resources by reducing activities such as irrigating lawns and by

taking shorter showers.

"We are now two years into a drought, having just come out of a five-year drought that concluded just a few years ago," said Newsom.

"We're hopeful that ... people in the state of California will take that mindset they brought into the last drought and extend that forward with a 15 per cent voluntary reduction, not only on residences, but industrial, commercial operations and ag-

ricultural operations," he said.

After consecutive years with very little rainfall and a dry winter, estimated statewide reservoir storage at the end of May was just two-thirds of normal levels.

According to the state-run Save Our Water website, it is "likely" that runoff levels this year could "end up being drier" than last year's — already the fifth-driest in California's recorded history. — AFP ■

Opel to be 100% electric in Europe by 2028: CEO

GERMAN carmaker Opel said Thursday that it would stop producing cars with internal combustion engines in Europe by 2028, one of the most ambitious greening targets in the accelerating shift to electric vehicles.

Carmakers around the world have started setting timetables to phase out petrol and diesel vehicles in the face of increasingly strict anti-pollution standards put in place to fight climate change.

But among legacy brands only Jaguar has announced a more ambitious timetable than Opel, saying it aims to have 100-per cent electric

vehicle (EV) production by 2025.

Audi says it plans to stop making fossil fuel cars by 2033 while Sweden's Volvo is aiming for 2030. Opel is owned by European carmaker Stellantis, which was born out of the merger this year of Peugeot-Citroen and Fiat Chrysler.

In recent years, the German carmaker has reduced its range to focus on electric vehicles.

At a press conference Thursday, Opel CEO Michael Lohscheller said the firm also planned to launch an EV range in the Chinese market, where Stellantis has so far failed to make inroads. — AFP ■



Canadian sea otters swim on June 5, 2012 in the zoo of Amneville, eastern France. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

French nightclubs can now reopen, but most won't

NIGHTLIFE fans across France can once again crowd into clubs starting Friday, though officials warned they would remain vigilant against any surge in COVID cases in coming days as the more contagious Delta variant of the virus looks set to become the dominant strain in France as soon as this weekend.

While offering relief for nightclub owners after nearly 16 months of closures, capacity remains capped at 75 per cent of normal, and proof of vaccination or a recent negative test will be required for entry.

That has made many clubs reluctant to open, since only 21 per cent of people aged 18 to 29 — the key clubbing demographic — have been fully vaccinated with two doses.

Masks are also recommended but not mandatory, and if a steamy recent viral advert is any indication, most patrons won't want to cover up.

The vaccine campaign poster, released by regional health authorities last weekend, shows a couple engaging in a passionate French kiss under the caption "Yes, vaccination can have desirable side-effects."

For Martin Munier, manager and artistic director of the Sacre club in central Paris, the answer was to team up with a neighbouring pharmacy to set up a testing tent right outside.

"It's a relief to be able to open, even though not fully back at 100 per cent right away," he told AFP.

In the western city of Nantes, a group that owns four clubs in the city is offering free entry to 18 to 25-year-olds who have had at least one COVID jab.

The majority of clubs will stay shut, however, preferring to collect government aid while awaiting more visibility on how the surge in Delta cases will play out.

"It's a reopening for 30 per cent of discotheques because 70 per cent were unable to apply the strict health protocols," Health Minister Olivier Veran told France Inter radio. — AFP ■



A woman walks past the Rex nightclub in Paris. PHOTO: AFP

SKorea to raise Covid-19 restrictions to highest level in capital

SOUTH Korea will raise coronavirus curbs to their highest level in the Seoul metropolitan area, the country's prime minister said Friday, warning a record spike in new cases had reached "maximum crisis level".

The country had previously been held up as a model of how to combat the pandemic, with the public largely following social distancing and other rules, but it was slow to start its vaccine rollout due to supply shortages.

On Friday it recorded 1,316 cases, its highest daily rise since the pandemic began, with most new infections in capital Seoul and its surrounding areas, home to almost half the South Korean population.

Cluster infections have surfaced in areas including schools, offices and shopping malls, with people in their 20s and 30s — most of whom are not yet eligible



Masked pedestrians walk through the quiet Myeong-dong shopping district in Seoul on December 23, 2020 as South Korea banned gatherings of more than four people in the capital and surrounding areas PHOTO: JUNG YEON-JE / AFP/FILE

for vaccinations — driving up the numbers, according to health authorities.

Under the new restrictions, set to come into force on Monday and last for two weeks, gatherings of more than two people will be banned after 6 pm and schools will be closed.

Cafes and restaurants are allowed limited seating and dine-in services are prohibited after 10 pm.

Entertainment establishments, including bars and clubs, will be shut, and all public rallies are banned except for one-person protests. — AFP ■

UK readies plan to allow in COVID vaccinated foreigners

THE UK government said on Friday it expected to announce a plan in the next fortnight allowing entry to double-vaccinated foreigners and British expatriates, as it eliminates most coronavirus curbs.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps also defended the government's decision to allow in 1,000 football fans from Italy for Sunday's European Championship final against England, to join some 60,000 other supporters.

Many scientists are worried that the government's plan to lift most curbs in England on July 19, and the green light to a large presence at the football final, will seed new outbreaks of COVID-19.

Shapps said the fans from Italy would be on specially chartered flights, stay in London only 12 hours and have a segregated zone at Wembley Stadium, and return home after the match.

"They aren't able to travel anywhere else," he told Sky News, calling it a "very restricted programme".

The government said Thursday that from July

19, fully vaccinated UK residents and children will no longer have to quarantine on their return to England.

The announcement makes summer travel easier to some of Britons' favourite holiday destinations, including France, Greece and Spain.

But the plan is limited to travellers who received their vaccinations through the UK's health service, excluding British expatriates and foreigners jabbed abroad, triggering criticism from expats in particular.

Shapps said widening the scheme to expats and other travellers from overseas was "something we are very actively working on at the moment".

The minister said he expected "in the next couple of weeks I'll be able to come forward and say more about other locations in the world".

However, he said it was "easier done from some places like the EU where they have a digital app coming along than it is in the United States, where I think they have 50 different systems, one for each state, largely paper-based". — AFP ■

Thailand imposes tougher Covid-19 curbs, including Bangkok curfew

THAI authorities announced a seven-hour night curfew across the capital Bangkok and nine provinces on Friday, along with tougher restrictions to curb the spread of the coronavirus.

The kingdom recorded 9,276 new daily cases and 72 fatalities, as it battles a severe

third wave of infections that kicked off in April.

An official from the government's coronavirus taskforce announced the ramp-up in restrictions following an hours-long meeting on Friday.

A curfew from 9 pm to 4 am will begin Monday and people should work from home.

The announcement affects the capital of more than 10 million people as well as surrounding and southern provinces.

"We apologise for difficulties of people living in areas with maximum restrictions, but this will support disease control efficiently. Thailand will

be victorious," said Apisamai Srirangson, assistant spokeswoman for the taskforce.

"Unnecessary travel will be prohibited." Residents are barred from gathering in groups of more than five people, while public transport networks will shut down from 9 pm each night. Supermarkets,

restaurants, banks, pharmacies and electronics stores can stay open but other shops must close.

Malls must shut by 8 pm. In April last year, the government ordered a nationwide curfew but Thailand spent the bulk of 2020 without much community transmission. — AFP ■

G20 ministers set to green light global tax reform



Security is tight for G20 finance ministers meeting in Venice. PHOTO: AFP

FINANCE ministers from the G20 richest nations are expected to give the green light Saturday to a historic deal to tax multinational companies more fairly.

The framework for reform, including a minimum global corporation tax rate of 15 per-

cent, was agreed upon by 131 countries earlier this month and could be in place by 2023.

Hailed by those involved as “historic”, it aims to stop the race to the bottom as countries compete to offer the lowest tax rates to attract investment, with many multinational companies as a result paying derisory levels of tax.

“This minimum tax on companies must be ambitious,” French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire told AFP on Friday, adding that the meeting of the G20 -- the 19 richest countries and the European Union -- represented a unique opportunity.

The countries representing 85 percent of global wealth were seeking a deal “for the 21st century, which will allow for the fair

taxation of digital giants which largely escape taxation, which nobody can accept”, he said.

‘On the way’

Final agreement on the minimum rate is not expected until the run-up to the G20 leaders’ summit in Rome in October.

But the Venice talks are an opportunity to thrash out further details and exert pressure on those who have not yet signed up to the deal, struck under the auspices of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

The United States, France and Germany are among several countries pressing for a higher rate, while aid agencies including Oxfam also argue that 15 percent is too low. — AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

White House unveils sweeping antitrust push

ARGUING US consumers and workers have been harmed by Washington’s easy acceptance of corporate consolidation, President Joe Biden announced Friday a wide-ranging effort to bolster antitrust enforcement.

Biden plans to sign an executive order promoting competition in the American economy, encompassing everything from rulings on Big Tech mergers to airline ticket pricing and hearing aid purchases, the White House said Friday. “For decades, corporate consolidation has been accelerating,” according to a fact sheet released by the White House that described the initiative as “a whole-of-government effort to promote competition in the American economy.”

The document cited earlier moments in US history when presidents confronted corporate power, such as the trust busting push by President Theodore Roosevelt in the early 20th century that gave “the little guy a fighting chance.” The order outlines 72 initiatives across the federal government and announces the creation of a White House Competition council to monitor progress. — AFP ■

China’s automobiles sales drop amid shortage of car chips

CHINA is witnessing a slump in its car sales even as demand for semiconductors and prices of raw materials have been increasing, straining the country’s economic recovery and weighing on global trade. Sales of passenger cars in June were down 5.1 per cent from a year earlier to 1.58 million vehicles, The Wall Street Journal reported quoting China Passenger Car Association.

April-June sales were up 2.3 per cent from the same period last year, when the market began to recover from a nationwide pandemic lockdown. Much of the June decline could be attributed to supply constraints that have emerged in recent months, the association said. The historic chip shortage has crimped production for automakers around the world, including some in China, the group said.

Japanese carmakers were among the hardest hit by the chip shortage last month. Nissan Motor Co.’s China sales were down 16 per cent in June from a year earlier, while Honda Motor Co.’s were off 17 per cent. Honda cited component shortages. The car association said it expects supply constraints to ease in the second half of the year, the WSJ reported further. — AFP ■

Japan retracts controversial policy over alcohol-serving restaurants

THE government said Friday it will retract its plan to ask financial institutions to ensure restaurants follow the ban on serving alcohol during the latest state of emergency, only a day after it put forward the initiative as a way to strengthen its anti-coronavirus response.

Yasutoshi Nishimura, the minister in charge of Japan’s coronavirus response, unveiled the controversial policy the previous day, drawing criticism that the government was attempting to use lenders to pressure such establishments.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Katsunobu Kato, who received complaints about Nishimura’s remarks from senior members of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, told reporters the govern-



The government said Friday it will retract its plan to ask financial institutions to ensure restaurants follow the ban on serving alcohol during the latest state of emergency, only a day after it put forward the initiative as a way to strengthen its anti-coronavirus response. PHOTO: KYODO

ment no longer intends to seek the support of financial institutions. Nishimura told him he will retract the policy as it had failed to secure the understanding of the public, Kato said.

Earlier Friday, Nishimura

told reporters that the government would try to “fix the unfairness” felt between establishments that are earnestly obeying the government’s request not to serve alcohol and those that are not. — AFP ■

Spanish govt in rib-eye rumble as minister attacks meat industry

MEAT-LOVING Spaniards were outraged this week when a member of the government took aim at the industry over environmental and health concerns, prompting the prime minister to declare himself unable to resist a perfectly cooked steak.

In a nation where the average person tucks into around 50 kilogrammes (110 pounds) of meat per year, a backlash may have been inevitable when

Consumer Affairs Minister Alberto Garzon served up a Twitter roast under a hashtag translating to “#LessMeatMoreLife”.

“The amount of water needed to get a piece of meat onto a plate is worrying,” said Garzon, a politician from radical left party Podemos, in a six-minute video laden with infographics and figures.

“The water animals drink, that’s needed to produce their

feed, to transport and pack the food, all of that contributes to exhausting the resources of the planet,” he added.

“One kilo of meat means 15,000 litres (4,000 gallons) of water”.

The comments sparked a beef with others from across the political spectrum, including fellow ministers in the left-wing government headed by Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez. — AFP ■

China antitrust regulator blocks Tencent gaming site merger

CHINA'S financial regulator has blocked a merger of the nation's two largest video game live-streaming sites planned by tech giant Tencent over antitrust concerns, it said Saturday.

Beijing has launched a major crackdown on the biggest players in its tech sector after years of runaway growth and lax regulation, partly due to fears over their growing influence and the security of troves of sensitive consumer data.

Analysts have estimated the planned merger of live streaming services Huya and Douyu could have brought the combined platforms' domestic market share to between 80 to 90 per cent.

"If Huya and Douyu merged,



Plans for the merger of China's two largest video game live-streaming sites were initially announced by Tencent last October. PHOTO: AFP

that would... further strengthen Tencent's dominant position in the video game live-streaming

market," Beijing's State Administration for Market Regulation (SAMR) said in an online state-

ment.

"This has the effect of eliminating or restricting competition, is not conducive to fair market competition ... and is not conducive to the healthy and sustainable development of the online gaming and video game livestreaming market."

The blocked merger comes shortly after regulators abruptly announced a cybersecurity review into ride-hailing app Didi Chuxing on the heels of a US IPO that raised \$4.4 billion.

Plans for the deal were initially announced by Tencent last October, but SAMR said it would undertake an antitrust review into the merger in December. — AFP ■

80% of university seniors in Japan secure job offers



Job seekers head to an information fair in Chiba, east of Tokyo, on March 1, 2021. PHOTO: KYODO

A total of 80.5 per cent of university seniors in Japan who are scheduled to graduate next March have secured job offers as of July 1, an improvement from last year when job-hunting was affected by the coronavirus pandemic, according to a survey.

The online survey by Recruit Co., the operator of the Rikunabi job information website, showed the figure was 7.3 percentage points higher than the 73.2 per cent in the same period in 2020, when the selection process was delayed due to the spread of virus infections.

However, the rate was slightly lower than the 85.1 per cent in the same period in 2019 before the virus outbreak, as more students especially those living in rural areas aim to become civil servants, perceived as a stable job amid the

pandemic, Recruit said.

The selection process for civil servants often begins after the summer and the poll was conducted earlier this month, with 1,045 university students responding, according to the Tokyo-based company.

Recruit said the rate of students in the Kanto region centering on Tokyo who want to work as public servants was 8.6 per cent, almost unchanged from the figure for 2020 graduates.

On the other hand, in rural areas away from major cities of Tokyo, Osaka in the Kinki region and Nagoya in the Chubu region, 18.8 per cent of university seniors said they aim to become civil servants, up 8.6 percentage points from the figure for students who graduated in the spring of 2020. — Kyodo News ■

Japan to ask tax-free stores to report visitors breaking quarantine

THE government will ask duty-free stores to check the date of entry to Japan in customers' passports and report if they were shopping in violation of the required 14-day quarantine period, sources close to the matter said Friday.

The government will also ask the stores to provide digital purchase records of violators to the National Tax Agency to ensure travelers follow the quarantine rule, as Tokyo grapples with a resurgence of COVID-19 just two weeks before the Tokyo Olympics open, the sources said.

All travelers to Japan are

currently required to make a pledge to self-isolate for 14 days after entering the country, even when they test negative for the coronavirus upon arrival. Travelers from certain countries where highly contagious variants have spread are asked to stay in hotels or other accommodation for several days and take further tests as part of their 14-day quarantine.

Entrants associated with the Olympics are exempt from the usual border controls but are still required to take precautions, such as observing a three-day quarantine period after entering the country. — Kyodo News ■



The government will ask duty-free stores to check the date of entry to Japan in customers' passports and report if they were shopping in violation of the required 14-day quarantine period, sources close to the matter said Friday. PHOTO: ANA/KYODO

NEWS IN BRIEF

Square making real-world wallet for bitcoin

FINANCIAL payments startup Square was at work Friday on a real-world wallet for safely pocketing bitcoin cryptocurrency.

Square founder and chief Jack Dorsey, who is also the top executive at Twitter, had tweeted last month asking for feedback on the notion.

"This community's response to our thread about this project has been awesome -- encouraging, generous, collaborative and inspiring," Jesse Dorogusker of the Square hardware team tweeted on Thursday.

"We have decided to build a hardware wallet and service to make bitcoin custody more mainstream."

Dorsey endorsed Dorogusker's post with a tweet of "We're doing it #bitcoin."

Hardware wallets can be used to store digital currency offline, synching with applications for transactions on the internet as needed. — AFP ■

U.S.-listed Chinese firms trade mostly higher

U.S.-LISTED Chinese companies traded mostly higher on Friday with eight of the top 10 stocks by weight in the S&P U.S. Listed China 50 index ending the day on an upbeat note.

Shares of Bilibili and JD.com rose 6.53 per cent and 3.77 per cent, respectively, leading the gainers in the top 10 stocks in the index.

Shares of NIO and Yum China Holdings slipped 0.15 per cent and 0.05 per cent, respectively, the only two decliners in the top 10 stocks.

U.S. stocks finished noticeably higher on Friday, as the financials and materials sectors surged, contributing to the overall market rally.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 448.23 points, or 1.30 per cent, to 34,870.16. The S&P 500 was up 48.73 points, or 1.13 per cent, to 4,369.55.

The Nasdaq Composite Index increased 142.13 points, or 0.98 per cent, to 14,701.92. — Xinhua ■

Afghanistan to rush troops to border as Taliban extend gains



Afghan security personnel stand guard along a road in Kandahar during fighting between Afghan security forces and Taliban fighters. **PHOTO: AFP**

THE Taliban claimed to be in control of 85 percent of Afghanistan as authorities Saturday prepared to retake a key border crossing seized by the insurgents in a sweeping offensive launched

as US troops pull out of the war-torn nation.

Hours after President Joe Biden issued a staunch defence of the US withdrawal on Thursday, the Taliban said its fighters had seized two crossings in western Afghanistan -- completing an arc of territory from the Iranian border to the frontier with China.

In Moscow, a delegation of Taliban officials said they controlled about 250 of Afghanistan's nearly 400 districts -- a claim impossible to independently verify, and disputed by the government.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid separately told AFP their fighters had captured the border town of Islam Qala on the

Iranian frontier and the Torghundi crossing with Turkmenistan.

Herat governor spokesman Jilani Farhad said the authorities were preparing to deploy new troops to retake Islam Qala port, the biggest trade crossing between Iran and Afghanistan.

"Reinforcements have not been sent to Islam Qala yet. They will be sent there soon," he told AFP. The Afghan government has repeatedly dismissed the Taliban's gains as having little strategic value, but the seizure of multiple border crossings along with mineral-rich areas will likely fill the group's coffers with several sources of new revenue. — AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Moldova holds elections set to weaken Russia's grip

VOTERS in Moldova head to the polls Sunday in a snap parliamentary election called by new President Maia Sandu to strengthen her position against pro-Russia forces.

Sandu, who wants to bring Moldova into the European Union, in November defeated Kremlin-backed incumbent Igor Dodon on a pledge to root out graft in one of Europe's poorest countries.

Wedged between Ukraine and EU member Romania -- with which it shares a common language -- Moldova has long been divided over closer ties with Brussels or maintaining Soviet-era relations with Moscow.

But Sandu's hands have been tied because of a parliament loyal to Dodon. After a protracted power struggle with lawmakers, Sandu at the end of April succeeded in dissolving parliament and scheduling the polls. — AFP ■

Mercenaries: the sinister export from Colombia's conflict

SOME fight in Yemen or Afghanistan, others guard oil pipelines in the United Arab Emirates; and yet more turned up in Haiti this week, where they are accused of assassinating the president.

Hardened by more than half a century of conflict back home, retired Colombian soldiers and illegal combatants feed the sinister market of mercenaries around the world.

Some 26 Colombians have been accused of taking part in the pre-dawn murder of president Jovenel Moise on Wednesday that also left his wife Martine wounded.

Colombia said on Friday that at least 17 ex-soldiers are believed to have been involved in the attack at Moise's home. Some were killed by Haitian police and the majority were captured.

But the participation of Colombian mercenaries highlights the lucrative transnational mercenary market. "There is great

experience in terms of irregular war... the Colombian soldier is trained, has combat experience and on top of that is cheap

labor," Jorge Mantilla, a criminal phenomenon researcher at the University of Illinois in Chicago, told AFP. — AFP ■



Colombia's conflict has fed a sinister market of mercenaries around the world. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

India's poor can't afford to beat the heat

BEATING the merciless heat is hard in the Indian desert city of Sri Ganganagar, a reality facing millions across the vast country as the climate changes in the coming decades.

While people in richer nations can find some respite from a warming planet with air conditioners and other modern luxuries, many here -- and elsewhere in India -- don't even have running water.

Sri Ganganagar, in the desert state of Rajasthan near the Pakistan border, is regularly India's hottest place and tempera-



Animals also need some respite from the intense heat in the desert city of Sri Ganganagar in Rajasthan where temperatures of 50 degrees Celsius (122 degrees Fahrenheit) are nothing out of the ordinary. **PHOTO: AFP**

tures of 50 degrees Celsius (122 degrees Fahrenheit) are nothing out of the ordinary.

So the district's two million people -- equivalent to the population of Slovenia -- get up early during the long summer months.

By late morning the sun is already ferocious and the temperature a brutal 42 Celsius, and everyone soon retreats to their homes until early evening. "By noon only those who can't avoid it are outside. We just sit under this," said fruit vendor Dinesh Kumar Shah, gesturing to his large black umbrella. — AFP ■

New probe launched into 1994 MS Estonia ferry disaster

SWEDEN and Estonia on Friday opened a fresh investigation into the 1994 sinking of the ferry MS Estonia in the Baltic Sea and the loss of 852 lives, accident authorities said.

Only 137 people survived the disaster of the Tallinn to Stockholm ferry which went down in the early hours of September 28, 1994. Finland joined both countries in agreeing in 1995 to designate the wreck a final resting place and make it illegal to disturb the site. But legislation was recently amended to allow a re-examination of the sinking after a documentary cast doubt on the findings of the official investigation.

Estonian icebreaker EVA-316 and Swedish research vessel Electra af Asko set sail Thursday and met up near the site of the wreck in international waters. "The surveys have started," Jonas Backstrand, chair of accident investigations at the Swedish Accident Investigation Authority (SHK), told AFP on Friday. — AFP ■

Biden tells Putin to 'act' against ransomware groups

US President Joe Biden on Friday once again told his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin to "take action" against ransomware hackers operating from Russia, but the Kremlin gave little sign of listening.

The White House said Biden and Putin spoke for about an hour by phone, focusing on the ransomware threat and separately about allowing humanitarian aid into Syria, where Russia is the main supporter of the Assad regime.

Talking to reporters, Biden said he "made it very clear" to Putin that "we expect them to act" against ransomware gangs.

It was the same message Biden delivered in person to Pu-

tin in their first summit meeting in Geneva in June.

The Kremlin sidestepped the issue, however, insisting after Friday's phone call that Washington had not even asked for assistance.

"Despite readiness from the Russian side to jointly clamp down on criminal activity in the informational sphere, over the past month no requests have been received from the relevant US departments," a statement from Putin's office said.

Told of the Kremlin's claim, a senior Biden administration official said there had been "multiple, specific requests for action."

The United States has "been clear to what Russia's responsi-



On May 7, 2021, Colonial Pipeline, an American oil pipeline system that originates in Houston, Texas, and carries gasoline and jet fuel mainly to the Southeastern United States, suffered a ransomware cyberattack that impacted computerized equipment managing the pipeline. **PHOTO: AFP**

bility is," said the official, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Russia shielding hackers?

Ransomware attacks on the

United States and other countries have increased sharply in the past year and have included a high-profile operation that shut

down a major fuel pipeline in the eastern United States.

Other ransomware targets have included city police departments, hospitals and private companies.

US officials say the main geographical source of these attacks, where gangs force victims to pay ransom in exchange for lifting damaging or even crippling cyber intrusions, is Russia.

The US government already blames Russian spy agencies for organizing other huge cyber strikes and meddling in the tense last two presidential elections.

The White House says it does not believe the Kremlin itself is behind the ransomware incidents. — AFP ■

Haiti asks US, UN to send troops as fears of instability grow



Police patrol the streets in Petionville, Haiti on July 9, 2021 as citizens brace for days of turmoil. **PHOTO: AFP**

HAITI has asked Washington and the UN for troops to secure its ports, airport and other strategic sites after the assassination of president Jovenel Moise opened a power vacuum in the crisis-hit

Caribbean nation, an official said Friday.

The United States has already said it will send FBI and other agents to Port-au-Prince, two days after Moise was shot

dead in his home.

In the wake of the slaying "we thought that mercenaries could destroy some infrastructure to create chaos ... During a conversation with the US secretary of state and the UN we made this request," elections minister Mathias Pierre told AFP.

The US State Department and Pentagon both confirmed receiving a request for "security and investigative assistance" and said officials remain in contact with Port-au-Prince, but did not specify whether military troops would be deployed. The UN did not immediately respond to a request for comment. A UN diplomatic source had earlier indicated that a Security Council resolution was needed to do as the Haitians had asked. — AFP ■

US, France expand special forces cooperation

THE US and French defense chiefs signed a new "roadmap" for cooperation between their special operations forces Friday as both seek to build international efforts to counter non-state threats like Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State group.

French Defense Minister Florence Parly signed the pact at the Pentagon with her counterpart Lloyd Austin, on a visit that came as the US pulls out of Afghanistan and France cuts its counter-terror operations in Africa's Sahel region.

"In the face of terrorism, our special forces have developed a true brotherhood of arms. This convention will deepen the exceptional ties that they have forged," Parly said in a tweet after the two met.

Pentagon spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Anton Semelroth called the roadmap "a

statement of intent to broaden cooperation in all areas of special operations."

He said there was no specific regional focus of the agreement. But both countries are said to be looking for ways for allies to continue working together to battle Islamic jihadist groups even as they reduce the presence of their troops in Africa, Iraq and Afghanistan.

President Joe Biden announced Thursday that the near two-decade US military involvement in Afghanistan would end by August 31.

Earlier Friday, French President Emmanuel Macron announced his country would start closing military bases in northern Mali by year-end, as the jihadist threat in the Sahel begins to shift south and exposes more countries in the region to Islamist attacks. — AFP ■

Venezuelan police move in on gang-run Caracas neighborhoods

VENEZUELAN security forces entered four poor neighborhoods of the capital Caracas on Friday seeking to end two days of fighting with armed gangs that have claimed several lives, AFP has witnessed.

"We control the area but there may still be a few snipers," an officer told AFP.

No official toll has been given but local media say a dozen people have lost their lives since fighting broke out between gangsters and police in the

neighborhoods, or "barrios" on Wednesday -- including several bystanders.

On Thursday, the authorities issued search warrants and offered rewards of up to \$500,000 for gang bosses behind the deadly clashes but now on the run.

In sectors controlled by the Cota 905 gang, the ground was littered Friday with bullet casings, evidence of thousands of shots fired in two days, according to images on social media.

"It was like a war. We hid

and waited for it to pass," Jesus Rey, a 40-year-old mechanic who lives in the neighborhood told AFP.

Interior Minister Carmen Melendez tweeted that police have "advanced in the dismantling of the criminal structures that have settled in these territories with the intention of sowing terror."

The government blames the violence on an alleged plot by the opposition to "destabilize" President Nicolas Maduro. — AFP ■



US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin greets French Defense Minister Florence Parly for talks at the Pentagon. **PHOTO: AFP**

AFC cancel Women's Futsal Championship amid pandemic

THE Asian Football Confederation authorities recently made an urgent decision to cancel the AFC Women's Futsal Championship which will be held in Kuwait and the AFC U20 Futsal Asian Cup 2021 respectively.

"The qualifying round of the AFC Futsal Asian Cup Kuwait 2022, which was originally scheduled for 13 to 24 October 2021 has also been rescheduled to a window from 1 to 15 April 2022, with the Final competition

moved from 16 to 27 February to 25 September to 20 October 2022", AFC officials said.

"Additionally, the AFC Executive Committee also noted the preference of host Member Associations to gain valuable international exposure, technical preparation and hosting experience by participating in the qualifying competitions despite receiving an automatic spot in the Finals.

In light of this, and to main-

tain the fairness of the qualifying competitions, the AFC Executive Committee agreed to allow host Member Associations to participate in the qualifiers, which will be considered as friendly matches and have no bearing when calculating the group rankings and best-positioned teams among all the groups in the respective qualifiers", football authorities added.—GNLM

England and Italy counting down to Euro 2020 final

ENGLAND and Italy are holding their collective breath as the clock counts down to Sunday's Euro 2020 final showdown which will be watched by around 65,000 fans at Wembley and millions more on television.

The anticipation is great in England, as the hosts sense that this is their time to end a 55-year wait to add a second major trophy to their 1966 World Cup.

Wembley was the venue for that final and will be again on Sunday as Gareth Southgate's England seek to complete the job after edging out Denmark 2-1 in extra time in front of 64,950 supporters in Wednesday's semi-final. England began the tournament as one of several contenders to lift the trophy but have taken advantage of playing most of their games at home. The final will be their sixth match at



The UEFA European Football Championship trophy is pictured during a presentation at the Gorky Park in Moscow on May 24, 2021. PHOTO: AFP

Wembley out of their seven.

"It's huge, with the final being at Wembley as well it's even more special, something we could have only dreamt of at the start of the tournament," defender John Stones said on Friday. "We've got this far now and we've grown throughout the tournament and not put too

much pressure on ourselves. We've overcome some tough tests over the last few years."

Previous meetings

England have never beaten Italy at a major tournament, although meetings between the nations have been few and far between. — AFP ■

Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council Nine Objectives

1. Political affairs

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

2. Economic affairs

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

3. Social affairs

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

Djokovic into 30th Grand Slam final, faces Berrettini for Wimbledon title

NOVAK Djokovic reached his 30th Grand Slam final on Friday with a straight sets win over Canada's Denis Shapovalov to move one victory away from a sixth Wimbledon title and record-equalling 20th major. The world number one triumphed 7-6 (7/3), 7-5, 7-5 in a tense semi-final in which he crucially saved 10 of 11 break points.

Shapovalov was so distraught that he left Centre Court in tears.

In his seventh Wimbledon final, Djokovic will face Matteo Berrettini after the world number nine became the first Italian to reach a Wimbledon singles final by beating Hubert Hurkacz 6-3, 6-0, 6-7 (3/7), 6-4.

"I don't think the scoreline says enough about the performance or the match. He (Shapovalov) was serving for the first set and was probably the better player," said Djokovic.

"I would like to give him a big round of applause for everything he has done today and also this two weeks. We are going to see a lot of him in the future, he is a great player."

Victory on Sunday will not only take Djokovic level with Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal on 20 Slam wins.— AFP ■

Messi, Neymar to battle in dream Copa final for 1st title



Former Barcelona teammates Lionel Messi and Neymar will line up opposite each other in Saturday's Copa America final looking to end a hoodoo that has also affected some of their countries' greatest players. PHOTO: AFP

FORMER Barcelona teammates Lionel Messi and Neymar will line up opposite each other in Saturday's Copa America final

looking to end a hoodoo that has also affected some of their countries' greatest players.

Like Brazil's Pele and Diego

Maradona of Argentina before them, neither Messi nor Neymar has ever won the Copa. That statistic will change for one of them in the dream final at Rio de Janeiro's iconic Maracana stadium. For six-time Ballon d'Or winner Messi, this will be his fourth Copa final and perhaps his last chance to finish on the winning side. He's been his team's standout performer, as ever, scoring four goals and creating five more — the tournament leader in both categories.

But at 34, this may well be his last Copa and next year's World Cup could be his last major international tournament altogether.— AFP ■