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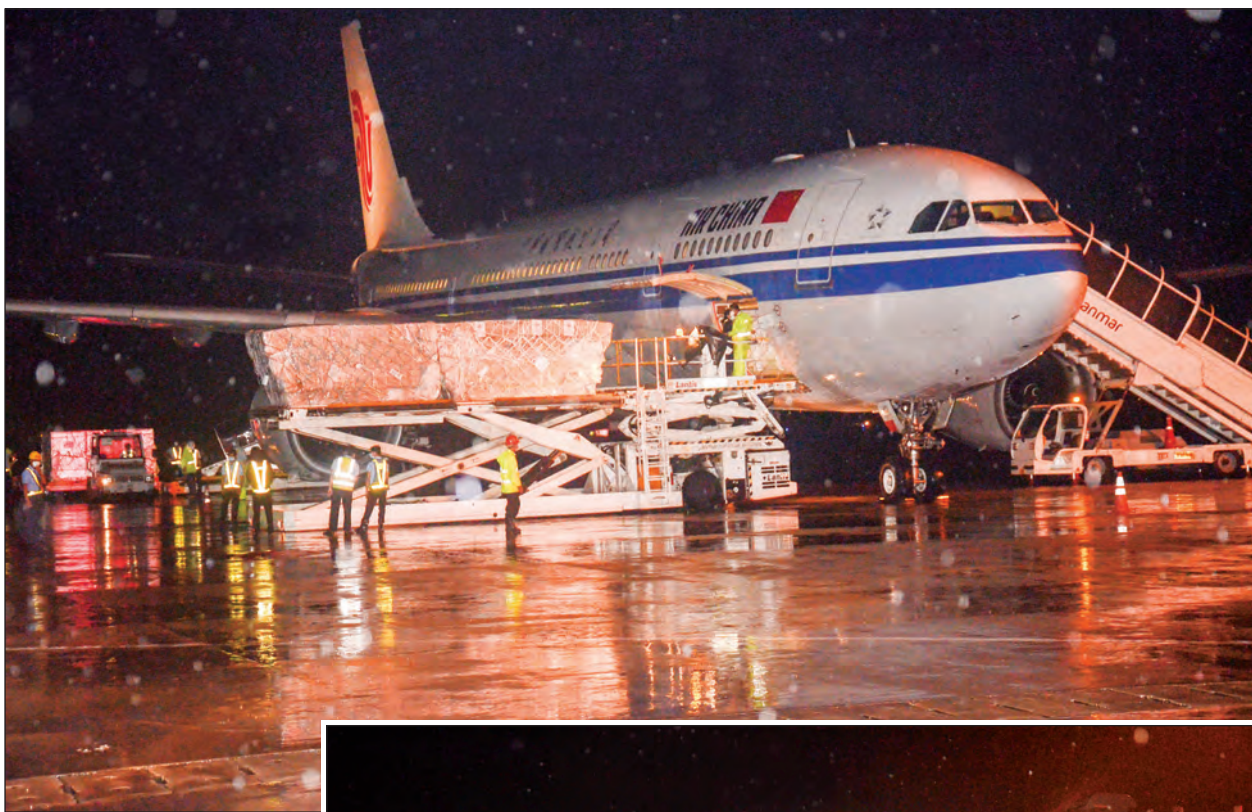
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Sunday, 25 July 2021

Third batch of 2 million COVID-19 vaccines donated by China arrives



AIR CHINA landed at Yangon International Airport yesterday evening, carrying a total of 736,000 Sinopharm COVID-19 vaccines and 848,000 needles.

This is the third batch of 2 million COVID-19 vaccines donated by the Chinese Government to Myanmar and Deputy Minister for Health and Sports Dr Aye Tun and officials received the donation at the airport.

It is reported the vaccination will be carried

Air China carrying the third batch of 2 million vaccines arrives, and cargoes are seen at Yangon International Airport on 24 July 2021.

out in public hospitals and designated vaccination places in regions and states according to the National Development Plan.—MNA

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.

There are 8 colors to choose from, including a "Maroon Color Mask" specially designed for monks.

Sterilized by UV Disinfects masks

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Sale Department
Ph: 09 694027866

To prevent the spread of COVID-19

- Wear a mask
- Clean your hands
- Keep a safe social distancing

Nay Pyi Taw-PH:09-693407494,09-693235737
Yangon-PH:09-30860180,09-263147385,09-671443555
Mandalay-PH:09-661702244,09-661702255,09-661702277

FDA Certificate - 2008 PC 0049

DAGON HANDSANITIZER
SPRAY & GEL

Sale Department
Ph: 01-651177, 01- 652169

Wash Your Hands

State Administration Council Press Release

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

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

Information Team
State Administration Council

The State Administration Council will specifically ease restrictions for service personnel, intellectuals and intelligentsia, and persons from various arenas and citizens who, with worries, absconded from the country except for persons who committed murders, robberies, setting fires, mine explosions and intentional attacks on security troops, those who crowded to attack public service personnel and some people, those who destroyed government and private-owned buildings and those who are highly involved in the CDM activities by providing monetary assistance and other means.

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.

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 | (4) 09-882557991 |
| (2) 067-3411509 | (5) 09-882557992 |
| (3) 067-3411144 | (6) 09-882557993 |

Healthcare centres provide medical services to Covid-19 patients on 24 July

MILITARY hospitals in various areas of the Regional Military Headquarters is setting up to give healthcare services to Covid-19 confirmed patients, according to the Tatmadaw.

Preparations are underway at station training schools, military accommodation camps, and healthcare services are provided at the completed sites.

In addition, quarantine centres are being prepared in relevant townships in collaboration with responsible officials from the Ministry of Health and Sports and other departments and charitable organizations.

Officials from respective Regional Military Headquarters inspected the preparations and provided medical equipment and supplies at the healthcare centres.

Donations of nutritious food and cash assistance were provided as needed, officials said.

Till 7 pm on 24 July (yesterday), 90 men and 63 women had tested positive with Covid-19 at Nay Pyi Taw Interrogation and Accommodation Centre. Next, 17 men and eight women at the station battalion in Ottarathiri Township, and 200 men and 174 women from Hline Township Interrogation and Accommo-

dation Centre, Yangon Region were diagnosed with the virus. At the station battalion in Ye Mon Tat Township on the same day, 52 men and 17 women had tested positive for the virus. Next, 14 men and 14 women were diagnosed with the virus at a station training school in Pathein, Ayeyawady Region. Yesterday, a total of 71 people: 56 male and 15 female have been discharged from respective hospitals. Local medical teams and officials at respective military bases are providing healthcare services and accommodation for the Covid-19 confirmed patients, Tatmadaw stated. — MNA

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 www.moi.gov.mm/mal, www.moi.gov.mm/km, www.moi.gov.mm/nlm and www.gnlm.com.mm/e-paper.

News and Periodicals Enterprise

5,657 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 24 July, total figure rises to 264,527

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to 264,527 after 5,657 new cases were reported on 24 July 2021 according to the Ministry of Health and Sports. Among these confirmed cases, 181,249 have been discharged from hospitals. Death toll reached 6,756 after 297 died. —MNA

Public participation is of crucial significance

WE should carry out the COVID-19 preventive measures without any impacts. Public participation plays a key role. Nothing can stop the disease as we cannot see or hear or smell it. During this situation, all should cooperate with us.

(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 18 July 2021)

MoC holds meeting on facilitating import of medicines

THE Ministry of Commerce held an online coordination meeting on facilitating the import of medicines and ensuring that there is no shortage of medicines needed by the people, yesterday afternoon in accordance with the COVID-19 protective guidelines set by the Ministry of Health and Sports.

The meeting was attended by Union Minister for Commerce Dr Pwint San, Deputy Minister U Nyunt Aung, Joint-Secretary of the Central Committee for the Acceleration of Trade and Goods Brig-Gen Yan Naung Soe, the Permanent Secretary and department officials, the Chairman of the UMFCCI (Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry, the Chairman of the Myanmar Pharmaceutical Medical De-



vice Manufacturer Association (MPMDMA) and officials from companies importing medicines and supplies.

At the meeting, the Union

Minister said efforts are being made to ensure that there is no shortage of medicines needed by the people and to facilitate the import of medicines, with con-

tinuous import of the medicines that are needed not only during the current COVID-19 crisis but also the vitamins that the people need to take regularly, medicines

for seasonal flu, cough and diarrhoea and chronic diseases. In addition, relevant ministries, UMFCCI and its associates are coordinating to bring them to market as soon as possible.

The Deputy Minister and Brig-Gen Yan Naung Soe discussed the issue of importing medicines and supplies, Vitamin C, Vitamin D and Zinc that are permitted to distribute with One-Time Permit and the issue of importing much-needed medicines by charter planes from the People's Republic of China and India.

The Ministry of Commerce is granting the licence for the import of medical supplies and medicines related to the prevention, control and treatment of COVID-19 online also on public holidays. —MNA

COVID-19 vaccine protects against serious illness, death

THE COVID-19 vaccine is the most important way so far to control the infection rate of the global pandemic, said Dr Than Naing Soe, Director of the Public Health Department of the Ministry of Health and Sports, at the meeting held on 22 July.

“The effectiveness of the vaccine is like we inject the spike pro-

tein of the virus into the human body. Some vaccine makes the thorns of virus get out of the body. Some try to weaken the virus, stop the virus reproduction and develop high resistance to the immune system,” he said.

“The spike of the virus comes out of the body. Although the virus will not reproduce anymore, it

can affect the immune system gradually. Then, it will produce antibodies, and the immune cells recognize the virus,” he added.

The people must get the vaccines twice. Even if they are infected after two weeks of vaccination, the body would have an immune system that can fight against the virus.

“If the virus enters, the antibodies cover the virus, especially their spike. If the virus enters into the cells, it directly goes to the spikes. The spike protein combines with the ACE2 receptor of the eyes, nose and mouth, and then it leads to human's cells. At that time, the antibodies cover the spike and so the virus cannot

enter the cell. If so, they cannot affect anything,” he continued.

The antibodies destroy the virus and protect from severe illness and death.

Therefore, people should know the advantages of vaccines and get vaccinated against COVID-19, he urged. — Htet Hlan/GNLM

People should get COVID jabs : MoHS

THE COVID-19 vaccination programme is an important process for the prevention and control of COVID-19 and people should get vaccinated for COVID-19 for its effectiveness, according to the Ministry of Health and Sports.

“The vaccines can increase antibodies in everyone's body. It is not easy for the virus to get into the public. Even if their species change, it is hard to reproduce. We do not need to worry so much about the current COVID-19 delta variant. The vaccination programme is an important

process. All entire people should participate in this process,” said an official of the ministry.

The vaccine can reduce the spread of the virus and control the infection rate. Moreover, those who receive the vaccine can be protected from serious illness and death.

If the people get vaccines, they will not suffer the severe condition, and it can also reduce the demand for oxygen, beds at hospitals and the workload of health workers.

“We will conduct vaccination

for half of our priority group this year. If we carry out almost half of the target mid-next year, our country would have proper vaccine coverage. It is not easy to transmit the disease from one to another in the community because everyone has good resistance.

If so, the state economy, social and education can develop again. Then, our country can overcome the COVID-19 pandemic and lead to the development,” the official considered.

— Htet Hlan/GNLM

Fifty oxygen concentrators donated by Khalsa Aid India Sikh Society handed over at Yangon Int'l Airport

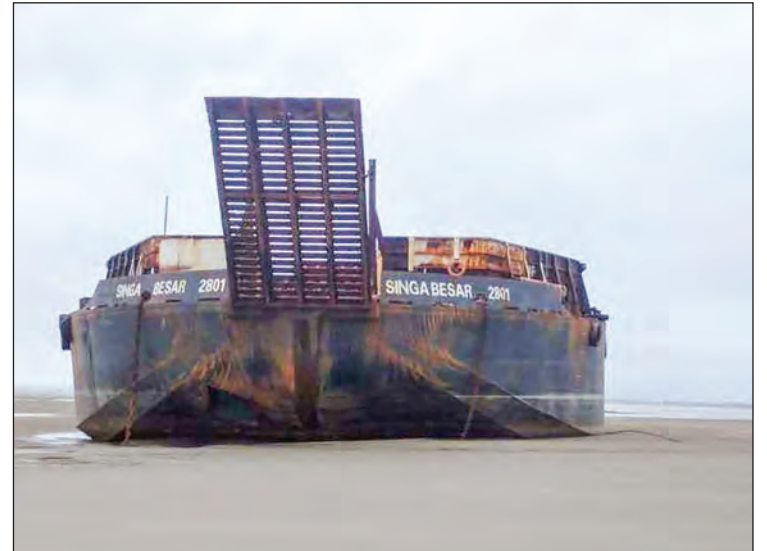
KHALSA Aid India Sikh Society of India donated fifty oxygen concentrators to the Myanmar Embassy in India on 20 July for use in medical purposes to prevent and control the Covid-19 disease and the concentrators were accepted by the Myanmar Ambassador.

The oxygen concentra-

tors were delivered by Myanmar National Airlines (MNA) rescue aircraft from Myanmar Embassy in New Delhi.

Deputy Minister for Health and Sports Dr Aye Tun received the donated 50 oxygen concentrators at Yangon International Airport yesterday. — MNA

Barge Singa Besar 2801 towed by Tug Brantas 1301 from Malaysia grounded near Panga Village of Thanbyuzayat Township due to cutting off the ropes



1. Barge Singa Besar 2801 towed by Tub Brantas 1301 carrying 466 spun concrete piles weighing some 2,681 tonnes left Lumut Port of Malaysia on 6 July 2021. Although arrangements were made to anchor at Thilawa Jetty of Yangon Port on the morning of 21 July 2021, they faced bad weather. So, the tug and barge took shelter at the seaside, some four miles west of Panga Village in Thanbyuzayat Township (estimated LT-608560). In the afternoon of 22 July 2021, worse weather cut off two ropes, and Barge Singa Besar 2801 floated and was grounded.
2. The stranded barge is located between north latitude 15 degrees and 52.5 minutes and east longitude 97 degrees and 41.8 minutes, 2.5 miles southwest of Panga Village in Thanbyuzayat Township. The Tug Brantas 1301 is based one mile south of the barge, north latitude 15 degrees and 52.19 minutes and east longitude 97 degrees and 41.37 minutes. Six Indonesians and two Malaysians, totalling eight, including an Indonesian master mariner, are aboard the barge and the tug.
3. The marine master of the tug will tie the barge with the ropes from the tub at the highest tidal time on early 25 July to be free from the sandbank.
4. The Directorate of Marine Administration and the Myanma Port Authority coordinate with the relevant vessel owner, shipping agents and the flag state authority in time for enabling the barge to be soonest free from the sandbank.—MNA



TUG BRANTAS 1301မှ တွဲဆွဲလာသည့် BARGE SINGA BESAR 2801 သောင်တင် တွဲရေယာဉ်၏ တည်နေရာ

TB BRANTAS 1301 တွဲဆွဲရေယာဉ်

ရေယာဉ်ဆိုင်ရာအချက်အလက်များ

1. Vessel	- TB BRANTAS 1301
2. Type	- Tug Boat
3. IMO No.	- 9524401
4. MMSI	- 533003490
5. Call Sign	- 9MDM2
6. Length	- 30 metres
7. Width	- 22 metres
8. Draft	- 2.9 metres
9. Flag	- Malaysia
10. Voyage	- Malaysia-Yangon
11. Built	- 2008

SINGA BESAR 2801 PENANG (Barge)ရေယာဉ်

ရေယာဉ်ဆိုင်ရာအချက်အလက်များ

1. Vessel	- SINGA BESAR 2801 PENANG
2. Type	- Barge
3. Length	- 60 metres
4. Width	- 15 metres
5. Draft	- 2.5 metres
6. Voyage	- Malaysia-Yangon
7. Built	- 2008

Coordination meeting held to expand Covid-19 Diagnostic, Treatment Centre in Yangon

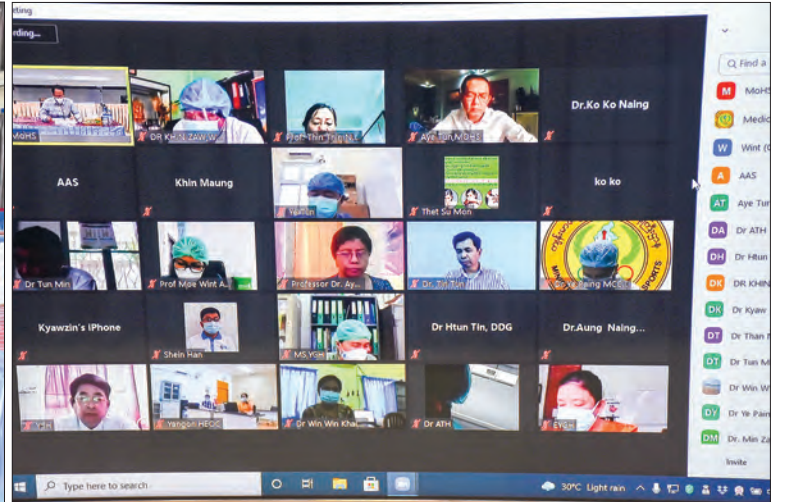
A VIRTUAL coordination meeting was held yesterday at the COVID-19 Command Centre of the Ministry of Health and Sports in Yangon to expand the community-based Covid-19 Diagnostic and Treatment Centre.

At the meeting, Union Minister for Health and Sports Dr Thet Khaing Win said that the current infection rate was fast and high.

"It is found that there is a high risk of infection and death by late referral while receiving home treatment at homes, especially for an elder person.

Preventive measures are also undertaken to provide medical treatment successfully. We are trying to vaccinate up to 70 per cent of the population under the guidance of the Chairman of the State Administrative Council.

Starting from July 2021, K50,000 will be provided as a monthly allowance for health workers who are fighting against the pandemic. Efforts are being made to appoint about 3,000 new public health supervisors.



It is necessary to systematically manage the availability of oxygen and calculate the need as closely as possible.

Covid-19 Medical Centre (Phaunggyi) will be provided with an oxygen plant that will produce oxygen for 200 cylinders per day. The medical centre in Phaunggyi will be able to accommodate more critically ill patients.

Two RTPCR test kits obtained during the visit of the Chairman of the State Administrative Council to Russia will be

installed and used in Magway Region and Ayeyawady Region.

As per the directives of the Chairman of the State Administrative Council, the safety of oxygen pipelines and the maintenance of ambulances must be checked regularly. It is also planned to provide more ambulances.

Community-based covid-19 diagnostic centres will be opened in Thanlyin, Mingaladon, Dagon Myothit (North) and Dagon Myothit (South) in Yangon Region.

Dagon Myothit (North) and Dagon Myothit (South) are under the responsibility of the Ministry of Health and Sports while Tatmadaw will take responsibility in Mingaladon townships.

With the expansion of community-based COVID-19 Testing and Care centres, hospitals may need to accept more emergency patients. Due to an increase in the number of patients, it has been allowed to accept patients in all private hospitals.

As six million Covid-19 vac-

cines have been shipped in recent days, efforts are being made to vaccinate the public as soon as possible," the Union Minister added.

Afterwards, Deputy Minister for Health and Sports Dr Aye Tun, Yangon Region Director of Public Health and Medical Care Department Dr Tun Min, professors, hospital superintendents and superintendents in charge of the Covid-19 treatment centres presented their actions and plans for the future. —MNA

Importation of oxygen tanks, anti-COVID-19 medicines and related materials continues

A TOTAL of 140 tonnes of liquid oxygen, 5,534 oxygen concentrators, 18 tonnes of masks were imported through the Yangon International Airport and land borders yesterday.

The government allows the continuous importation of oxygen, medicines and related materials that are in urgent need for the COVID-19 prevention, control and treatment activities in the country.

Since 12 July, when the COVID-19 outbreak began to rise nationwide, priority is giv-



en to the importation of anti-COVID-19 medicines and related equipment. Relevant departmental officials cooperate in facilitating and speeding up the importation during the period designated as public holidays.

As of yesterday, from 12 July, a total of 864 tonnes of liquid oxygen, 63 tonnes of oxygen cylinders, 28,092 oxygen concentrators, 198,575 test kits and 635 tonnes of masks were imported. — MNA

Union Election Commission

Announcement of election results in Bago Region, Magway Region, Shan State and Ayeyawady Region 24 July 2021

1. Regarding the Multiparty General Election held on 8 November 2020, the Union Election Commission has inspected the voter lists and the casting of votes of 28 townships in Bago Region, 25 townships in Magway Region, 26 townships in Ayeyawady Region and 49 Townships in Shan State in detail together with the respective UEC members, former township election sub-commission, head of police force, Immigration and Population, administrators and representatives of political parties in accordance with Section 53 of the Hluttaw Election Law, and interviewed the election sub-commissions, poll heads and members.
2. In 2020 Multiparty General Election, the candidates/voters ran/voted in Bago Region, Magway Region, Ayeyawady Region and Shan State as follows;
 - (a) The candidates of 24 political parties and independent candidates competed in 28 townships of Bago Region. Of 3,951,637 voters, 2,839,370 cast votes at 4,144 polling stations, and it shows 71.85 per cent of votes.
 - (b) The candidates of 13 political parties and independent candidates competed in 25 townships of Magway Region. Of 3,310,132 voters, 2,577,560 cast votes at 4,548 polling stations, and it shows 77.87 per cent of votes.
 - (c) The candidates of 31 political parties and independent candidates competed in 49 townships of Shan State. Of 3,634,283 voters, 2,421,348 cast votes at 3,591 polling stations, and it shows 66.63 per cent of votes.
 - (d) The candidates of 21 political parties and independent candidates competed in 26 townships of Ayeyawady Region. Of 4,681,152 voters, 3,541,933 cast votes at 5,748 polling stations, and it shows 75.66 per cent of votes.
3. The previous election commission released 3,951,637 eligible voters in 28 townships in Bago Region. The list of the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population in November 2020 showed 3,505,965 eligible voters who had turned 18. The voter lists mentioned that there were 858,611 citizens, associate citizens, nationalized citizens, and non-identity voters, 37,162 persons repeated on the voter lists more than three times and 382,058 persons repeated on the voter lists two times. According to the crosscheck, 61,008 persons repeated on the voter lists while 1,985 people over the age of 100, and 877 people under the age of 18 on the election day were also found on the lists.
4. A total of 4,144 polling stations of 28 townships in Bago Region took out 4,421,820 ballots and used 2,801,883. It left 1,536,132 ballots instead of 1,619,937. The difference was 181,867 ballots and it found 68,062 extra ballots.
5. The previous election commission released 3,310,132 eligible voters in 25 townships in Magway Region. The list of the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population in November 2020 showed 3,042,674 eligible voters who had turned 18. The voter lists mentioned that there were 172,976 citizens, associate citizens, nationalized citizens, and non-identity voters, 33,956 persons repeated on the voter lists more than three times and 397,504 persons repeated on the voter lists two times. According to the crosscheck, 45,242 persons repeated on the voter lists while 1,567 people over the age of 100, and 650 people under the age of 18 on the election day were also found on the lists.
6. A total of 4,548 polling stations of 25 townships in Magway Region took out 3,820,561 ballots and used 2,551,681. It left 1,190,533 ballots instead of 1,268,880. The difference was 86,872 ballots and it found 8,525 extra ballots.
7. The previous election commission released 3,634,283 eligible voters in 49 townships in Shan State. The list of the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population in November 2020 showed 3,055,597 eligible voters who had turned 18. The voter lists mentioned that there were 616,531 citizens, associate citizens, nationalized citizens, and non-identity voters, 22,697 persons repeated on the voter lists more than three times and 309,248 persons repeated on the voter lists two times. According to the crosscheck, 69,504 persons repeated on the voter lists while 2,597 people over the age of 100, and 1,996 people under the age of 18 on the election day were also found on the lists.
8. A total of 3,591 polling stations of 49 townships in Shan State took out 4,023,194 ballots and used 2,399,225. It left 1,574,907 ballots instead of 1,623,969. The difference was 181,867 ballots and it found 68,062 extra ballots.
9. The previous election commission released 4,681,152 eligible voters in 26 townships in Ayeyawady Region. The list of the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population in November 2020 showed 4,416,766 eligible voters who had turned 18. The voter lists mentioned that there were 706,984 citizens, associate citizens, nationalized citizens, and non-identity voters, 54,285 persons repeated on the voter lists more than three times and 567,300 persons repeated on the voter lists two times. According to the crosscheck, 39,742 persons repeated on the voter lists while 2,707 people over the age of 100 and 3,339 people under the age of 18 on the election day were also found on the lists.
10. A total of 5,748 polling stations of 26 townships in Ayeyawady Region took out 5,238,205 ballots and used 3,479,869. It left 1,641,341 ballots instead of 1,758,336. The difference was 182,719 ballots and it found 65,724 extra ballots.
11. The findings on voter lists and ballot papers used for Pyithu Hluttaw of Bago Region, Magway Region, Shan State and Ayeyawady Region were as follows: -

Sr	State/Region	Pyithu Hluttaw		Amyotha Hluttaw		Region/ State Hluttaw		Ethnic Nationals		Number of Township	Polling station	Township Election Commission	List from Immigration	With drawal	Used	Exact re-remaining	Re-remaining on the ground	Difference	
		constitu-ency	candi-dates	constitu-ency	candi-dates	constitu-ency	candi-dates	constitu-ency	candi-dates									loss	extra
1	Bago	28	124	12	42	56	262	1	7	28	4144	3,951,637	3,505,965	4,421,820	2,801,883	1,619,937	1,536,132	151,867	68,062
2	Magway	25	110	12	49	50	222	1	10	25	4548	3,310,132	3,042,674	3,820,561	2,551,681	1,268,880	1,190,533	86,872	8,525
3	Shan	49	235	12	68	98	498	7	36	49	3591	3,634,283	3,055,597	4,023,194	2,399,225	1,623,969	1,574,907	96,666	47,604
4	Ayeyawady	26	126	12	44	52	272	2	9	26	5748	4,681,152	4,416,766	5,238,205	3,479,869	1,758,336	1,641,341	182,719	65,724

12. The previous UEC has released the (32/2017) statement for the formation of regions/states election sub-commissions dated on 17 November 2017. Then, they also released Notification No (33/2017) on 4 December 2017 and Notification No (34/2017) on 6 December 2017 for the formation of election sub-commissions with NLD supporters. These statements stated that they appointed the ones nominated by the regions/states chief ministers as chairman and members.
13. Under the directives by the letter number 7/464 general/A Pha Ra (2020) dated 4-8-2020 of the Union Government Office, a support group was formed for the completion of voter list, led by the state chief minister and it was found that there were two- or three-time duplication of voter lists due to the group. Under the instruction of the group, the township election sub-commission added the census lists submitted by the township general administration department into the voter lists. It was found that the voter lists inflated and the duplication occurred due to the addition of people who were already on the lists since the relevant ward/village-tract general administration departments failed to examine the census lists before submitting it.
14. The ward/village-tract administrators served as chairpersons in collecting the numbers of the population to compile the voter lists of Bago Region, Magway Region, Shan State and Ayeyawady Region. In this process, the ward/village-tract administrators appointed by the NLD government and some NLD members jointly collected the numbers of the population. They did not inspect whether the people live in their ward/village tract, whether they are eligible voters in accordance with the Hluttaw Election Law. Therefore, there were many non-identity voters on the voter lists and some repeated on the voter lists two times or over three times with just one NRC card. Hluttaw Election Law Section (15) (c) in Chapter VI "Preparation of Voting Roll" stated, "Whoever has the right to vote in any constituency shall not be included in the voting roll of any constituency other than that of the constituency concerned at the same time." And, it found activities that violate the law. According to Section 19 (b), the names not eligible are included in the voting roll, delete such names from the voting roll. But they did not remove the names.
15. The former UEC also released instructions that the advance voting process for people over 60 can be conducted starting 29-10-2020 before the election day. But some NLD members conducted door-to-door service in collecting advance votes in some places and it caused voting fraud. According to COVID-19 health rules, the announcement and instruction for voters who were unable to return to their constituencies were released on 8-10-2020 and 11-10-2020 respectively by the former UEC. Due to such directives, the voters were found repeated on the voter lists and non-identity voters were also on the lists and were allowed to cast votes.
16. The former UEC also released a statement for voters without any ID cards to cast their vote on 19-8-2020. The non-identity voters cast votes just with voter certificates at the polling stations. Therefore, the non-identity voters, those who repeated on voter lists two times or over three times were allowed to cast vote without complying with the Hluttaw Election Law section 59. Regarding the voting stamps, the instruction that the ballots with a tick without a UEC label will be recognized as valid votes also caused the complicated situations in counting the votes.
17. The voting frauds were supposed to be intentionally committed. Moreover, the NLD party members also interfere in collecting voter lists, election campaign, advance voting process and voting processes even on election day with their power. In addition, all electoral activities, including the campaigns of other political parties and parliamentary candidates misused the COVID-19 restrictions and conspired to seize the state power as well as the former UEC also found misused their authorities and violated the Law and rules.
18. According to the findings in Bago Region, Magway Region, Shan State and Ayeyawady Region, the 2020 Multiparty General Election was found to be inconsistent with the relevant Hluttaw Election Laws/Rules and was not free and fair. Therefore, regarding the Multiparty General Election held on 8 November 2020, it is here announced that measures will be conducted to annul the election results for the Hluttaw candidates of Pyithu, Amyotha and State Hluttaws and ethnic representatives of 28 townships in Bago Region, 25 townships in Magway Region, 26 townships in Ayeyawady Region and 49 Townships in Shan State in accordance with the law.

Myanmar-Thai border trade fall by \$10.2 mln this year

THE border trade volume between Myanmar and Thailand in the current financial year 2020-2021 ending September hit US\$3.26 billion, said a statistical report of Myanmar's Ministry of Commerce.

As of 9 July, the border trade value during this period dropped somewhat by \$10.2 million compared to that of the same period of the previous FY. The bilateral border trade was \$3.27 billion in the previous year.

Myanmar's exports to Thailand reached \$2.25 billion while its imports hit \$1.01 billion.

Between 2016-2017FY and 2019-2020 FY (as of August), Thailand has been Myanmar's largest trade partner among the ASEAN states, followed by Singapore and Malaysia.

Myanmar is carrying out border trade with the neighbouring



Myanmar's exports to Thailand reached \$2.25 billion while its imports hit \$1.01 billion.

country Thailand through seven border checkpoints -- Tachilek, Myawady, Myeik, Mawtaung, Ht-

eekhee, Kawthoung and Maese border areas, respectively. Among them, Hteekhee com-

pleted the most extensive trade in border trade with Thailand, followed by Myawady.

Myanmar's exports to Thailand are primarily agriculture and livestock products. Imports from Thailand are mainly non-alcoholic beverages, fabric and yarn, motorcycles and related parts, and construction materials.

The bilateral trade between Myanmar and Thailand stood at \$3.26 billion in FY2020-2021 (as of July), \$5.1 billion in FY2019-2020, \$5.5 billion in FY2018-2019, \$2.9 billion in mini-budget year of 2018 or transitional period from April to September this year, \$5 billion in FY2017-2018, \$4.3 billion in the 2016-2017FY, \$4.8 billion in the 2015-2016FY, \$5.7 billion in the 2014-2015FY, \$5.6 billion in the 2013-2014FY, \$4.7 billion in the 2012-2013FY, and \$4.5 billion in the 2011-2012FY, according to the Myanmar Ministry of Commerce. — ACM/GNLM

Myanmar mineral exports fall by 46% amid COVID-19 pandemic

MYANMAR sees a 46-per-cent drop in mineral exports over the past nine months because of the mining activity hit by COVID-19 restrictions to contain infections.

The value of Myanmar's mineral exports has drastically slumped to US\$750 million as of 9 July in the current financial year 2020-2021 since 1 October. It reflects a severe drop of \$639.85 million against a year-ago period, the Ministry of Commerce's data indicated. The mineral exports hit over \$1.38 billion in the corresponding period of last FY.

The coronavirus related disruptions led to the slump in mineral exports this FY. The heightened COVID-19 measures also shut down the events like gem emporium and expo last year, a trader said.

So far, excavation of over 1,250 mining blocks has been permitted on a manageable, small, medium, and large scale, according to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation.

Due to the limited extraction of natural resources, exports of forest products and minerals had dropped significantly in the previous years. Permits for mining blocks were suspended in 2016. But after a period of two years, Myanmar's mining sector has now been opened to local and foreign investors, according to the ministry.

Within two years of imple-

menting the Myanmar Mines Law, the Mines Department has approved more than 140 out of 3,000 proposed mining blocks. Many more blocks are to be granted the permit.

The Myanmar Mines Law was enacted on 24 December 2015. But the law came into force when the rules were issued on 13 February 2018.

Under the new regulations, foreign firms can invest in large blocks that cover up to 500,000 acres (about 202,000 hectares), while local firms can invest in all kinds of blocks. Investors can seek a permit to mine for minerals such as gold, copper, lead and tin. The permits cover prospecting, exploration, and production. According to data from the Ministry of Commerce, Myanmar's mineral exports have shown a marked increase in the previous FY2019-2020, touching \$1.87 billion, an increase to \$405.48 million compared with the year-ago period. In the FY2018-2019, mineral exports were pegged at just \$1.465 billion. Oil and natural gas are included in the list of major export items of Myanmar. About six per cent of the country's total export earnings come from the sale of natural gas. About 80 per cent of mineral products are shipped to external markets through sea trade, while 20 of them are sent to neighbouring countries through border trade channels. — Ko Htet/GNLM

Domestic gold price reaches over K1.56 mln per tical

DOMESTIC prices of gold reached K1,569,000 per tical (roughly 16.33 grammes) on 23 July while the international gold price was around US\$1,803 per ounce, according to the domestic gold traders.

The trading of the domestic gold market has been cooling these days due to the health issue in Myanmar. The domestic gold price has also significantly dropped, with instability in the global gold price and the US dollar exchange rate, said U Myo Myint, the chair of Yangon Gold Entrepreneurs Association (YGEA).

YGEA is taking necessary measures to stabilize the gold price as per the instructions of the bureau of special investigation, according to an announcement of YGEA issued on 17 May.

At present, the association has closed the gold trading to be able to make steady the gold price and urged its members to deal only in a cash transaction for the purchase of the gold. Moreover, those illegal importers and those who practise overtrading with negligence will face serious legal action.

Meanwhile, the local dollar exchange rate was at K1,647 per dollar on 23 May but it plummeted to K1,644 per dollar on 24 May, a drop by K2 per dollar a day.

In January 2021, domestic gold fetched the highest price of K1,336,000 per tical on 6 January. It reached the lowest price of K1,316,000 per tical on 28 Janu-

ary. In February, it got the lowest level of K1,340,000 (2 February) and the highest level of K1,410,000 (3 February). In March, the rate fluctuated between the most elevated of K1,391,000 (25 March) and the lowest of K1,302,000 (4 March). In April, the rate touched the lowest level of K1,389,000 (1 April) and the highest level of K1,455,000 (30 April). In May, the highest gold rate was recorded at K1,709,000 (12 May) and the lowest price was K1,447,000 per tical (3 May), gold traders said.

The local gold price reached the lowest level of K1,310,500 (2 September) and the highest level of K1,314,000 (1 September). In October, the rate ranged between K1,307,800 (30 October)

and K1,316,500 (21 October). The rate fluctuated between the highest of K1,312,000 (16 November) and the lowest of K1,278,000 (28 November). In December, the pure yellow metal priced moved in the range of K1,275,000 (1 December) and K1,333,000 (28 December), according to the gold traders.

With global gold prices on the uptick, the domestic price hit fresh highs in 2019, reaching K1,000,000 per tical between 17 January and 21 February, crossing K1,100,000 (22 June to 5 August), climbing to over K1,200,000 (7 August-4 September), and then reaching an all-time record high of K1,300,000 on 5 September in 2019. — GNLM



YGEA is taking necessary measures to stabilize the gold price as per the instructions of the bureau of special investigation, according to an announcement of YGEA issued on 17 May.

Beware of rumours, fake news among the people

AN ORDER of closing many criminal cases under the trials was issued in accord with Section 419 of the Constitution on 20 July. The State Administration Council issued such an order to effectively take prevention and treatment of COVID-19 infected cases and consider some suspect citizens prosecuted at respective courts but they faced long detention days due to COVID-19 rules.

The order did not be inclusive of all the prosecuted persons at jails and in custody. The cases filed at respective courts for any crime before 1 February 2021 were closed and culprits were released from the cases. At present, the number of crime breakers is on the rise year by year, it is necessary to consider prevention and treatment of COVID-19 at crowded places such as jails and custody.

Hence, people should analyze any information whether or not comprises rumours and fake news. The people should hold up the rationality to separate true news and fake news.

Those prosecuted could not be sent to the trials for their cases due to COVID-19 restrictions. So, they faced loss with long detention days. Hence, the government sympathized with their loss and closed their cases. But it is sure that some unscrupulous persons will blame the endeavours and goodwill of the government, based on misinformation. They always destroy the good deeds of the State Administration Council among the people with fake news and rumours.

At present, the pandemic falls in Myanmar. Unscrupulous persons commit the spreading of fake news and rumours instead of giving a helping hand to the people for free from the disease. They spread rumours and fake news that an outbreak of disease is intentionally committed in Myanmar. In fact, all global countries are facing an outbreak of the pandemic at present. They said that the

health system falls and any prevention, control and treatment of the disease cannot be given to the people. So, people should analyze true and false news.

Myanmar media personnel from foreign-based news agencies turning a blind eye to media ethics deeply spread fake news to destroy Myanmar. They do not scrutinize news sources but exaggerate information and fabricate the news with attempts to cause utter devastation to the country.

Whatever it may be, the danger of fake news, misinformation and rumour is very dangerous. Hence, people should analyze any information whether or not comprises rumours and fake news. The people should hold up the rationality to separate true news and fake news.



Evidence shows COVID-19 virus may have circulated in Italy months earlier than believed

A newly-published research paper indicates that the novel coronavirus could have circulated in Italy in late 2019, weeks before it was formally identified in China.

RESEARCHERS in northern Italy have re-tested blood samples taken for cancer screening, and found coronavirus antibodies in samples taken in as far back as October 2019. The new paper, not yet peer-reviewed, was published this week by MedRxiv, an online medical preprint entity.

The study builds on earlier research from the Milan-based National Cancer Institute, which first reported in November 2020 that it found coronavirus antibodies in a total of 111 tests out of 959 screenings. Of those, four Italian cancer test subjects were shown to have coronavirus antibodies in October 2019, far earlier than the first official identification of the virus in Italy on Jan. 31, 2020.

Virus was in circulation in Italy

In a telephone interview with Xinhua, Giovanni Apolone, one of the researchers behind the report and a director at the cancer institute, said the findings meant that it was "very possible" that the virus was in circulation in Italy "to a limited degree" far earlier

than generally believed.

Apolone said that could help explain why the pandemic hit Italy so hard in early 2020. "It would mean that the virus was gaining a foothold without anyone being aware," he said.

Soon after the institute's preliminary findings were first reported, the World Health Organization requested that 30 biological samples from the study be sent to Erasmus University in Rotterdam, where they are still being studied.

Marion Koopmans, a professor of virology at Erasmus University, told the Financial Times that based on in-progress research, it was "not impossible" that the patients in question had been infected with the virus in late 2019 but that more evidence is needed.

Giovanni Maga, head of the Institute of Molecular Genetics at Italy's National Research Council, said he was "cautiously skeptical" about the topic. Maga said evidence that the virus circulated in Italy in late 2019 was "intriguing", but remains inconclusive.

"This is an area that needs



Medical staff handle samples at a microbiology laboratory in Varese, northern Italy. PHOTO: MIGUEL MEDINA/ AFP/FILE

to be studied more," Maga told Xinhua, adding that research into the first appearance of the virus in Italy would be helpful in calcu-

lating how it spread, information that would be more helpful in confronting a future viral outbreak than in slowing the spread of the

current pandemic.

The National Cancer Institute's research as reported in MedRxiv is not the first to indicate

that the virus may have arrived in Italy far before the first official case was identified in January 2020.

Evidence of coronavirus antibodies

Last December, a team of researchers at the University of Milan's Global Health Centre led by the center's director, Mario Raviglione, found evidence of coronavirus antibodies from a four-year-old who was ill in late November 2019 and was diagnosed with measles -- an easily curable viral infection common in children -- after a test on 5 Dec. of that year.

German virologist Alexander Kekule said in December that evidence showed that there was "an undetected outbreak of the original virus in Northern Italy in the early weeks of 2020."

That time between the arrival of the virus and its official detection "allowed the virus to mutate into a deadlier variant," which helps explain why Italy was hit so hard by the outbreak, said the expert.

SOURCE: Xinhua

Black, Hispanic populations among hardest hit by COVID-19: UM study



People march during an annual celebration of Juneteenth in Evanston, Illinois, the United States, on June 19, 2021. PHOTO: JOEL LERNER/ XINHUA

DEATHS from all causes combined increased dramatically early in the COVID-19 pandemic for certain demographic groups in the United States, particularly for Black and Hispanic people, even when accounting for socioeconomic factors, according to a study posted on the website of University of Michigan (UM) on Wednesday. The study analyzed national numbers from the U.S. Census Bureau, which provide a more detailed and in-depth look at how different factors such as ethnicity, occupation, living situation, income and insurance status can interact to affect death rates. The researchers studied people aged 18-65, comparing mortality figures from the second quarter of 2020, when the pandemic's first wave was in high

gear; to the second quarter of 2019.

Significant increases in mortality

The researchers found significant increases in mortality among all the subgroups they studied, but the sizes of the increase varied considerably. Across all socioeconomic groups, non-Hispanic Black adults under 65 experienced significantly higher increases in mortality than non-Hispanic white people in the same age range. For example, non-Hispanic Black people in the highest income group studied had an increase in mortality more than 3.5 times larger than the increase in mortality experienced by the poorest non-Hispanic white people, which is 46.5 deaths per 100,000 people compared to 12.9.

Hispanic residents tended to

see significantly higher mortality increases than non-Hispanic white residents. This held true among people with insurance, those not living in group quarters, lower-income families, people with work-from-home options, and those in essential industries. People under 65 living in nursing facilities or other health group quarters experienced an increase in mortality of 1,619 deaths per 100,000 residents. Those in correctional facilities experienced an increase of 83.3 deaths per 100,000. This compared to an increase of 16.1 deaths per 100,000 among people not living in group quarters. Uninsured people had an increase of 27.6 deaths per 100,000, compared to an increase of 15.5 deaths among the insured.

An increase in mortality

People with family income at or below the poverty line saw an increase in mortality of 27.1 deaths per 100,000, compared to 13.3 among those with incomes four times the poverty level or higher. Mortality rates increased by 19.1 deaths per 100,000 among people in occupations without work-from-home options, compared to 10.9 among those able to work from home. Among specific occupations, mortality increases were highest among installation, maintenance and repair workers; production workers; legal professions; and transportation workers. In contrast to previous studies, the researchers did not find exceptionally high death rates among health care practitioners or food-service workers.

SOURCE: Xinhua

I say what I see:

By Oung Moug Moug

OVER these days, I've been pondering whether the Covid vaccine could save the lives of the world people and whether it would definitely deter any possible severity of the disease when people suffer from it, perhaps to which one might succumb. What a pity! Almost everybody has lost their loved ones in the mercilessly fatal blow of the coronavirus epidemic. One might not know who will be the next turn. Harumph! Precious lives of both the old and the young alike are nowadays running out abruptly like a famous song title "Killing us softly" -- ironically "not softly".

After I had furtively looked at the foreign news stories published and broadcast in recent days, I saw a plethora of publishing and broadcasting contents not only in the conventionally printed media but on the modern social media as well. Almost all vindicated a critically key role the Covid vaccine plays in the fight against the global epidemic threatening us all over the world. Whichever branded by a handful of pharmaceutical firms, all vaccines have so far saved the lives of the world public regardless of how regrettably minimal percentage the population might have been getting the jabs across the globe.

If you look into this piece of news content "More than half of all European adults are now fully vaccinated, the EU said on Thursday (21 July 2021), ...", even the developed and prosperous western countries, as well as the US, have yet to accomplish their respective home programmes of vaccination. How dejected the lesser developing and prospering countries like our country Myanmar you all might think of. A health barometer of the WHO showed a total of 3,568,861,733 vaccine doses had been administered as of 19 July 2021. This figure has just registered less than 50 per cent out of the world's population of 7.9 billion.

However, it's so much heartening to see the arrival of vaccine doses Myanmar have purchased from China that has also donated some 500,000 phials of the Sinopharm vaccine. More will come soon. That's great! All national peoples of Myanmar go get the jabs sooner or later.

I sincerely wish you all good health and wealth.



Myanmar Daily Weather Report (Issued at 4:00 pm Saturday 24 July, 2021)

BAY INFERENCE: According to the observations at (06:30) hrs M.S.T today, the low pressure area over Northwest Bay of Bengal had crossed to North Odisha coast. Monsoon is moderate to strong over the Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL MORNING OF THE 25 July, 2021: Rain or thundershowers will be fairly widespread in Sagaing, Mandalay, Magway Regions and Kachin, Eastern Shan States and widespread in the remaining Regions and States with likelihood of regionally heavyfalls in Kayin and Mon States and isolated heavyfalls in Bago and Taninthayi Regions. Degree of certainty is (100%).

STATE OF THE SEA: Squalls with rough seas are likely at times off and along Myanmar Coasts. Surface wind speed in squalls may reach (35-40) m.p.h. Wave height will be about (8-11) feet off and along Myanmar Coasts.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Moderate monsoon.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 25 July, 2021: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 25 July, 2021: One or two rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

NEWS
IN BRIEFSingapore delays
National Day parade
amid COVID-19
surge

Singapore has postponed its National Day parade scheduled for Aug. 9 amid mounting public concern over a new wave of COVID-19 infections in the city-state.

The Defence Ministry on Thursday evening announced the annual parade's postponement until Aug. 21, after the latest round of social distancing measures imposed to curb the recent surge in coronavirus cases is expected to be lifted.

A small ceremonial parade will still be held on the anniversary of Singapore's separation from Malaysia in 1965.

The postponement came amid mounting criticism of the plan to hold the parade on social media, with people saying it clashed with the demand for citizens to abide by strict restrictions on their activities. A petition drive on Change.org calling for the parade to be cancelled had attracted over 39,000 signatures as of Friday morning. "With the rising cases of COVID-19, the continuation of this public event does not make any sense. This event is clearly non-essential during a pandemic," says the petition. —Kyodo News ■

Indonesia to bid for
2036 Olympics after
2032 failure

Indonesia will bid to host the 2036 Summer Olympics after failing to secure the 2032 games, the country's National Olympic Committee said in a statement on Thursday.

Committee chief Raja Sapta Oktohari said, "We will not back down and will continue to fight for the 2036 Olympics," promising more solid preparation. On Wednesday, during the annual session of the International Olympic Committee, members confirmed Brisbane as host of the Summer Olympics in 2032, after the IOC's future host commission held a "targeted dialogue" with the city.

Oktohari said Indonesia aims to be chosen for the IOC targeted dialogue for the 2036 bid. Indonesia has campaigned to host the Summer Games after successfully holding the Asian Games in 2018. —Kyodo News ■

Court ends Samoa constitutional
deadlock, declares new PM

In May, Fiame Naomi Mata'afa was sworn in as prime minister at a ceremony inside a makeshift tent after her FAST party was locked out of the parliament building. PHOTO: AFP

A top Samoan court on Friday ended a 15-week constitutional crisis, confirming Fiame Naomi Mata'afa as the Pacific island nation's first woman prime minister.

The country has been in a political deadlock since April, when long-ruling Tuilaepa Sa'ilele Malielegaoi narrowly lost in

elections and refused to cede power.

In May, Mata'afa was sworn in at an extraordinary ceremony inside a makeshift tent after her

FAST party was locked out of the parliament building.

Samoa's Appeal Court said it did not recognize Malielegaoi's caretaker government, ruling that his Human Rights Protection Party (HRPP) was occupying government offices unlawfully.

It also overturned a previous Supreme Court decision that the tent swearing-in was unconstitutional.

"It is now for the new prime minister and her government to give effect to this judgment and the declaration contained within," the Appeal Court said.

"We declare that the swearing in carried out on 24 May 2021 at the Tiafau Malae of elected members of parliament, to be consistent with the terms of the constitution, the supreme law of Samoa, and therefore lawful." —AFP ■

Crypto crackdown:
Malaysian police steamroll
bitcoin machines

MALAYSIAN police hit on a novel way to dispose of more than 1,000 bitcoin-mining machines seized in raids — they crushed the devices using a steamroller.

Authorities on Borneo island discovered the machines, worth an estimated 5.3 million ringgit (\$1.25 million), in crackdowns between February and April.

Eight people were arrested for allegedly stealing the equiva-

lent of \$2 million worth of electricity to power the energy-hungry computers, according to police.

"The crypto-miners stole electricity," said Hakemal Hawari, a senior police official in the city of Miri, where the devices were seized. "Their actions are dangerous for life and property, as they can cause power outages."

The 1,069 mining machines were laid out in a car park of a



Malaysian police in Borneo destroy seized bitcoin-mining machines / Courtesy of Dennis Wong. PHOTO: AFP

police station in Miri last week and crushed with a steamroller. Six of those arrested were

convicted of stealing electricity, jailed for six months and fined. —AFP ■

Britain hits five individuals with anti-graft sanctions

BRITAIN on Thursday placed sanctions on five individuals around the world including the son of Equatorial Guinea's president, as part of its global anti-corruption regime.

The UK said it had frozen the assets of and put travel bans on the five, who are accused of syphoning off public funds in Equatorial Guinea, Zimbabwe, Venezuela and Iraq.

"The action we have taken today targets individuals who have lined their own pockets at the expense of their citizens," Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said in a statement.



A collection of luxury cars seized from Equatorial Guinea's vice-president Teodorin Obiang Nguema were auctioned off in Switzerland 2019: Britain has now announced sanctions against him and four other figures from other countries accused of corruptly plundering public funds. PHOTO: AFP

"Corruption drains the wealth of poorer nations, keeps their people trapped in poverty

and poisons the well of democracy," he said.

The Foreign Office said it

was sanctioning Vice-President of Equatorial Guinea Teodorin Obiang, the son of the current president, for his involvement in the misappropriation of state funds into his own personal bank accounts.

As well as making corrupt contracting arrangements and soliciting bribes, it said Obiang had splurged \$500 million (425 million euros) on a private mansion in Paris, luxury cars and a collection of Michael Jackson memorabilia including a \$275,000 crystal-covered glove that the singer wore on his 1987-89 "Bad" tour. —AFP ■

Up to two-thirds of Indians have Covid antibodies: study

Up to two-thirds of India's population may have been infected with Covid-19, a government study suggested on Tuesday.

The blood serum survey of about 29,000 people in June and July showed 67.6% of those tested had antibodies.

The results of the study by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) show the impact of a devastating surge of cases in April and May, when India reported about 400,000 cases and 4,000 deaths per day.

In December and January, less than 25% of those in a similar study had positive antibody tests.

ICMR chief Balram Bhargava said that the study shows "there is a ray of hope". "But

there is no room for complacency. We must maintain Covid-appropriate behaviour," he said in New Delhi on Tuesday. The hundreds of millions in India without antibodies are more susceptible to severe infection. Only 13% of the adults in the study were fully vaccinated. India, home to 1.3 billion people, has only vaccinated about 8% of eligible adults, triggering fears of an imminent wave of cases as it eases Covid curbs.— AFP ■

A health worker, centre, inoculates a woman with a dose of the Covishield vaccine against the Covid-19 during a vaccination drive at a vegetable market in Hyderabad, India on June 24, 2021. PHOTO: AFP



Nepal creates short-term jobs for tourism workers amid COVID-19



A health worker inoculates a woman with the Chinese-made Vero Cell COVID-19 vaccine in Kathmandu, Nepal, 25 May 2021. PHOTO: AFP

WITH a large number of workers in the tourism industry rendered unemployed amid the dev-

astating COVID-19 pandemic, the Nepal Tourism Board is implementing a program to provide

temporary employment to those who have lost their jobs.

Launched in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme, the programme is offering short-term employment to lower-level workers in the tourism sector by engaging them in the sanitization and maintenance of tourism facilities, which include trekking routes and bridges along the trails. On Tuesday, the tourism board started seeking proposals from local non-governmental organizations, cooperatives and community-based organizations with a view to having their participation in the program.—Xinhua ■

Sydney outbreak a 'national emergency' as cases spike

SYDNEY'S fast-growing coronavirus outbreak has become a "national emergency", state leaders said Friday, as Australia's largest city reported another record number of new infections.

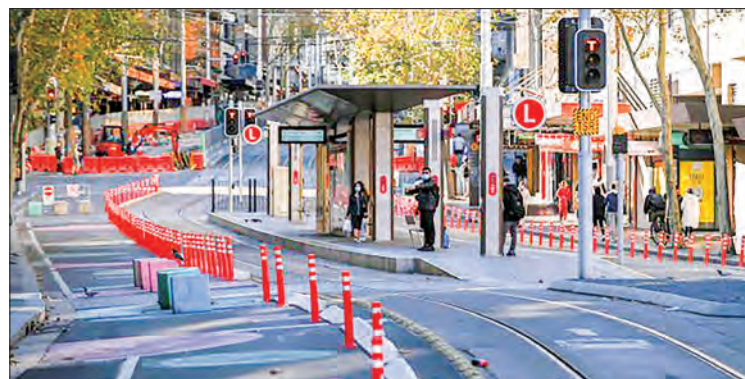
Admitting a month-long lockdown had so far failed to stop a Delta-variant outbreak, the state of New South Wales pleaded for Canberra to urgently send more vaccines and resources. Declaring the outbreak a national emergency could pave the way for more federal government involvement in stemming the crisis. "We have an obligation on behalf of the nation to contain the virus," said New South Wales premier Gladys Berejiklian. "There is no

doubt that the numbers are not going in the right direction."

Her state on Friday reported 136 new cases, a record for this outbreak, which now totals 1,782.

With the virus "spreading

everywhere" and half the country's 25 million people currently in lockdown, Berejiklian said the government must "refocus" its glacial vaccine rollout.—AFP ■



People wait for a tram in the near-empty central business district in Sydney on Sunday, on the first full day of a two-week Covid-19 coronavirus lockdown. PHOTO: STEVEN SAPHORE/AFP

NEWS IN BRIEF

France launches vaccine pass for cultural venues

PEOPLE wanting to go to cinemas, museums, sporting matches and other cultural venues in France will have to show proof of Covid-19 vaccination or a negative test starting Wednesday, as the country braces for a feared spike in cases from the highly transmissible Delta variant.

The so-called "health pass" will be required for all events or places with more than 50 people, before being extended to restaurants, cafes and shopping centres in August, President Emmanuel Macron announced in a televised address last week.

Once inside, however, people can take off their face masks, which remain necessary inside shops or businesses or on public transportation.

Masks are now mandatory outside again in the southern Pyrenees-Orientales department neighbouring Spain, as well as in much of the western Charente-Maritime department near Bordeaux, a popular tourist spot, where case numbers are soaring.

Outdoor mask mandates were also reimposed Tuesday in Toulouse and other nearby towns.

Health Minister Olivier Veran warned of an unprecedented increase in Covid-19 cases because of the Delta variant on Tuesday, when 18,000 cases were reported over 24 hours.

"That means we have an increase in the spread of the virus of around 150 per cent in the last week: we've never seen that," Veran told parliament as it began debate on the stricter rules aimed at encouraging vaccine hold-outs. The initial Covid-19 pass was implemented by decree, while lawmakers will vote on its extension to restaurants and trains or planes for long-distance travel.—AFP ■

UK: Food workers to be exempt from isolation

THE British government announced on Friday that more than 10,000 food workers would be exempted from isolation in case of contact with a coronavirus patient in order to avoid supply problems in the United Kingdom, in the midst of soaring infections.

As of this week, some of these employees will be able to escape ten-day isolation provided they test negative daily, regardless of their vaccination status. The United Kingdom is experiencing an explosion in infection linked to the Delta variant, causing hundreds of thousands of contact cases to quarantine, thereby hampering economic activity. After the publication in the press of images of empty shelves in some supermarkets, raising fears of shortages, the government was forced to act.— AFP ■

Israel announces national target for 85 pct cut of emissions by 2050



Aerial view of the 40-megawatt Ketura Solar field. The Ketura Solar field is the second but biggest "large" field in 2015 in Israel. **PHOTO: EGE/JERUSALEM POST/XINHUA**

ISRAEL has announced that it will move to a low-carbon economy by 2050, the state's Ministry of Environmental Protection said in a statement on Friday.

The decision, which aims to move to a clean, efficient and competitive economy, was formulated by Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett along with seven relevant ministers.

Israel thus joins dozens of countries that have already decided on a vision and strategy for a low-emission economy, led by China, the U.S., the EU, Canada and Japan, the statement noted.

The Israeli decision sets a national target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by

at least 85 per cent by 2050, compared to 2015.

This includes 96-per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions in transportation, 85-per cent reduction in gas emissions in the electricity sector, and 92 per cent in the municipal waste sector.

The decision also sets an interim target for 2030 of a 27 per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.

To reach the targets, a special budget will be allocated for electric buses, charging points, and for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in industry, businesses and local authorities.—Xinhua ■

Eurozone economy booms at fastest rate in 21 years

BUSINESS activity in the eurozone shot ahead at its fastest rate in 21 years in July, a closely watched survey said on Friday, as the economy went into full throttle with loosened COVID-19 restrictions.

But the survey showed that the spread of the Delta variant was beginning to chip away at business confidence, with concern that new measures could again sow chaos in the economy.

The PMI composite index from economic data group IHS Markit said activity rose from 59.5 in June to a strong 60.6 in July, well above the 50-point level that indicates growth.

With the summer in full swing, Chris Williamson, chief economist at IHS Markit, said that tourism and hospitality sectors were especially responsible for pushing the economy to historic growth levels.

However, for manufacturers, supply chain delays remained a "major concern", hurting production and pushing costs higher. This, he warned, would likely "feed through to higher consumer prices in coming months" and make itself felt in the inflation data.

Pointing to a darker days ahead, Williamson said the delta variant posed "a major risk to the outlook". —AFP ■



Tourists visiting the Esplanade des Droits de l'Homme with the Eiffel tower in the background, in Paris. The tourism and hospitality sectors were especially responsible for pushing the eurozone economy to historic growth levels. **PHOTO: STEPHANE DE SAKUTIN / AFP**

Burundi suspends rare-earth mining in row over riches

BURUNDI'S government said it had suspended the operations of several international mining companies, complaining it was not getting its fair share of income from the country's mineral wealth.

One of those targeted runs the Gakara project, one of the

world's richest deposits of rare earths, which are key components in many hi-tech products.

In a letter to the companies seen by AFP, Mines Minister Ibrahim Uwizeye said the decision was taken earlier this month because of "numerous failures" regarding the country's mining

code. "The state, which owns the soil and minerals, is not making a profit as it should," the letter said.

Uwizeye described the mining contracts as "unbalanced".

"We want to renegotiate all these agreements for the benefit of the people, because these minerals must be used to finance the development of the country," he told AFP Thursday.

The seven companies involved are of British, Chinese and Russian origin but the main target of Burundi's ire is UK-listed Rainbow Rare Earths.

Rainbow, via a subsidiary that is 10-per cent owned by the Burundi government, operates Gakara, the only producing rare-earth mine in Africa.

Others companies whose operations have been suspended are involved in mining gold and coltan, which is used mainly in electronic devices.—AFP ■



Coltan is a highly lucrative source of niobium and tantalum, which are used in electronics and high-performance alloys. **PHOTO: AFP**

NEWS IN BRIEF

Modi rival demands India inquiry into Pegasus claims

INDIAN Prime Minister Narendra Modi's main political rival Rahul Gandhi on Friday demanded an inquiry into the Pegasus spyware scandal, accusing the government of "treason".

Gandhi is one of dozens of Indian politicians, journalists and government critics on an alleged global database of 50,000 possible Pegasus spying targets that was revealed by an international group of media outlets.

The Indian government has rejected spying claims although critics note it has not said whether it is a client of NSO Group, the Israeli maker of the Pegasus spyware which effectively captures a target's cellphone.

The claims have sparked uproar in the Indian parliament, with one opposition MP -- since suspended -- on Thursday snatching and ripping up the text of a statement on the subject being delivered by IT minister Ashwini Vaishnaw.

"Pegasus is classified by the Israeli state as a weapon and that weapon is supposed to be used against terrorists," Gandhi, 51, told reporters in New Delhi.

"The prime minister and the home minister have used this weapon against the Indian state and against our institutions. The only word for this is treason.... and this has to be investigated."

The alleged database of phone numbers included more than 1,000 in India, with the owners of 300 of them identified in the media reports.—AFP

Colombia authorizes export of dried cannabis flowers

COLOMBIA gave the green light Friday to export dried cannabis flowers for use in medical products in addition to allowing manufacturers to produce goods such as textiles or food containing the plant.

In a bold embrace of a booming global market, President Ivan Duque signed a decree ending “the ban on the export of dried flower” in an event organized at Clever Leaves, one of the 18 multinationals that grows medicinal cannabis in Co-

lombia.

Colombia “is coming in as a major player in the international market” for cannabis, Duque said.

Colombia, the world’s top producer of cocaine and which has major cannabis production, legalized the production of medical marijuana in 2016.

Until now, however, it was only allowed to export extracts of the plant, not its flowers.

Authorities had feared that exportation of the flowers would allow them to be diverted to the illegal

side of the trade.

In a letter sent to Duque on 14 July, the cannabis cultivation company Canamonte argued that a rule against exportation of the flowers prevented growers from “accessing the largest and most profitable market segment of the medical cannabis industry”.

Flowers, which concentrate the plant’s medicinal and psychoactive compounds, “may represent 53 per cent of this market worldwide,” according to Duque.—AFP ■



Employees work at the Clever Leaves company -one of the first legal cannabis producers certified by the Colombian government. PHOTO: AFP

French firm makes first sale of artificial heart

FRENCH prosthetics maker Carmat said Monday it had sold one of its artificial hearts for the first time since its 2008 founding, for implantation into an Italian patient awaiting a transplant.

The operation “was performed by the team headed by heart surgeon Ciro Maiello at the Azienda Ospedaliera dei Colli hospital in Naples, one of the centres with the greatest experience in the field of artificial hearts in Italy,” Carmat said in a statement.

The company secured a European CE marking in December 2020 for sale of the Aeson prosthetic heart as a “bridge to transplant”. That certification was



A Carmat employee shows an auto-regulating, bioprosthetic artificial heart. PHOTO: BERTRAND GUAY/AFP

based on results from a study known as PIVOTAL, launched in 2016 and still under way.

In November 2019, results from the first 11 patients in the study showed that 73 per cent survived for six months with the

prosthetic or made it to a successful transplant within the same period.

Carmat said that the first commercial sale of its artificial heart marked “a major milestone that opens up a new chapter in the company’s develop-

ment”, adding that it hoped to find more customers in France and Germany by the end of the year.

A spokesperson told AFP that it was the first time one of the hearts had been used outside of a clinical trial.

Costs for the operation – more than €150,000 – were paid by the regional health system, as Italy’s national system will not cover the treatment until it has been in use for several years.

On July 15, Carmat had announced the first implantation of an Aeson heart into a patient in the US, in a clinical study at Duke University Hospital in Durham, North Carolina.—AFP ■

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V ASIATIC KING VOY.NO. (09W/E)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V ASIATIC KING VOY.NO. (09W/E) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 25-7-2021 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of MIP where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

Phone No: 2301185

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S GOLD STAR LINES

သတင်းစာ ဂျာနယ် စာစောင်များကို နိုင်ငံတကာခံချိန်ခွဲ ပံ့ပိုးလိုပါက ဆက်သွယ်နိုင်ပါသည်

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CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V MEDI OKINAWA

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V MEDI OKINAWA VOY.NO. (101) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 25-7-2021 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of IBTT where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

Phone No: 2301928

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S BEN LINE AGENCIES (S’PORE) PTE LTD

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V DISCOVER

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V DISCOVER VOY.NO. (05/2021) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 25-7-2021 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of TMIT where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

Phone No: 2301928

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S UNI SPRING LOGISTICS HOLDING PTE LTD

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V ORIENTAL GRACE V.2698

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V ORIENTAL GRACE VOY.NO. (2698) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 26-7-2021 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of MITT-5 where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

Phone No: 2301928

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S CHUN AN INTERNATIONAL LOGISTICS CO LTD

NEWS
IN BRIEFUN Security Council
condemns Turkey
leader's position on
Cyprus: statement

THE UN Security Council on Friday condemned Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's call for two states in Cyprus and a move to reopen a resort emptied of Greek Cypriots, calling for a "just" settlement with a united country under a "bizonal" federation, diplomats said.

"The Security Council condemns the announcement in Cyprus by Turkish and Turkish Cypriot leaders," said the statement, obtained by AFP and which diplomats said was agreed upon and would be formally adopted later in the day.

"The Security Council expresses its deep regret regarding these unilateral actions that run contrary to its previous resolutions and statements." Cyprus has been divided since 1974 when Turkey invaded in response to an abortive coup engineered by the then military junta in Athens that aimed to unite the island with Greece.—AFP ■

Blinken to pay
first trip to India
amid Afghanistan
withdrawal

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken will speak next week in India about supporting Afghanistan as worries grow in New Delhi about Taliban gains amid the end of the two-decade US military mission, officials said Friday.

On his first visit to the emerging US ally since taking office, Blinken will also look to resume work together on supplying Covid-19 vaccines and explore greater security and cyber cooperation, officials said.

Blinken will meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar on the trip Wednesday and afterwards hold separate talks in Kuwait. Dean Thompson, the top US diplomat for South Asia, said that Blinken would welcome India's "shared commitment to peace and supporting economic development in Afghanistan," where New Delhi has pumped in some \$3 billion since the US invasion overthrew the Taliban regime following the September 11, 2001 attacks.—AFP

Charles and Diana's 'wedding of the century'

THEIR fairy-tale marriage 40 years ago this month was dubbed the "wedding of the century".

But for Prince Charles and Lady Diana Spencer it would all end in tears, recriminations and tragedy, with the after-effects still being felt by the British royals today. Presidents and prime ministers as well as the crowned heads of Europe and beyond streamed into St Paul's Cathedral in London on July 29, 1981 for the ceremony, which was watched on television by 750 million people around the world.

Here is an account of the wedding based on AFP reporting of the time.

Love and fanfare

The marriage of Charles, a bachelor of 32, and his 20-year-old blushing bride was a heady mix of "love and protocol", wrote AFP special correspondent Michel Le-

clercq on the day.

The famous kiss from the balcony of Buckingham Palace which was splashed on front pages around the world the next day took place against a backdrop of British fanfare, with horse-drawn carriages and trumpets. People around the globe watched from their armchairs as Lady Diana stepped out of the glass carriage which had brought her to St Paul's Cathedral.

As she arrived on the arm of her father Earl Spencer, the woman who was about to become the Princess of Wales revealed the day's best-kept secret: her spectacular wedding gown.

The dress

She climbed the steps of St Paul's in her ivory taffeta dress, a 7.5-metre (22-foot) train cascading behind her, and a diamond tiara on her head.



The official British royal family wedding day photo of Prince Charles (C-R) and Lady Diana Spencer (C-L), the Princess of Wales. PHOTO: POOL/AFP/FILE

"When she appeared wearing ivory, hidden under a multitude of pleats, frills, mother of pearl sequins and crinoline, a formidable roar rose from the crowd," AFP wrote.—AFP ■

India rescuers hunt for survivors as landslide toll hits 45



National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and other rescue team personnel inspect the site of the landslide. PHOTO: AFP

RESCUERS in India combed through mud and debris Saturday in a desperate search for survivors as the death toll from multiple monsoon-triggered landslides climbed to 45, according to officials. As many as 68 others were missing after heavy rains

lashed India's western coast, causing landslides that buried dozens of houses in hard-hit Raigad district, south of Mumbai. "Forty-three people have died in three landslides in the district... Rescue operations are continuing", Sagar Pathak, a disaster management official in Raigad, told AFP. Fifty-three people were missing, he said, with many feared trapped under layers of mud following the accidents. Earlier on Friday, state government spokesman Anirudha Ashtaputre told AFP that two others had died in Satara district due to landslides. Elsewhere in the state, up to 15 people were also missing, according to state authorities. The Navy, Army and

Air Force sought to evacuate people stranded by flooding, but their operations were hampered by landslides blocking roads, including the main highway between Mumbai and Goa.

Water levels rose to 3.5 metres (12 feet) on Thursday in areas of Chiplun, a city 250 kilometres (160 miles) from Mumbai, following 24 hours of uninterrupted rain that caused the Vashishti river to overflow, submerging roads and homes. Maharashtra state's chief minister Uddhav Thackeray said emergency workers were struggling to reach cut-off neighbourhoods in Chiplun, because of damage to roads and bridges there.—AFP ■

El Salvador seeks arrest of ex-president Sanchez Ceren for graft



Ex-minister Carlos Caceres is among those arrested on charges of embezzling state funds. PHOTO: PRENSA PRESIDENCIA DE EL SALVADOR/AFP

El Salvador's attorney general Salvador Sanchez Ceren and announced the apprehension of several ex-ministers on charg-

es of embezzling state funds. The charges date from the 2009-2014 government of Mauricio Funes, under whom Sanchez Ceren was vice-president, during which time he and others are alleged to have pocketed undue bonuses. Sanchez Ceren lives abroad but his co-accused — former ministers Carlos Caceres and Violeta Menjivar, plus deputy ministers Calixto Mejia, Erlinda Handal and Hugo Flores have all been arrested.

They were paraded before the press in handcuffs on Thursday. "All these people contributed to embezzlement that cost the Salvadoran state

more than \$350 million," Attorney-General Rodolfo Delgado told journalists. "They will be charged with the crime of money laundering," he added.

"The money was delivered to the presidency... on a monthly basis and constituted an addition to the salary that by law should be earned for exercising a public service." President Nayib Bukele, who replaced Sanchez Ceren, tweeted that his predecessor was "officially a fugitive from justice," as he had "left our country via a terrestrial border in December 2020, and never came back." —AFP ■

US, Russia to hold new talks to encourage stability

THE United States and Russia will hold high-level talks next week in the second bid in as many months to encourage stability in the tense relationship, officials said Friday.

The so-called Strategic Stability Dialogue, set up during a 16 June summit between US President Joe Biden and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin in Geneva, will take place on Wednesday in the same city, the US State Department said.

“Through this dialogue, we seek to lay the groundwork for future arms control and risk reduction measures,” it said in a statement.

It added the US delegation will be led by Deputy Secretary

of State Wendy Sherman and include Bonnie Jenkins, recently confirmed as the under secretary of state in charge of arms control. The diplomacy comes amid tensions on multiple fronts between the two nations, with Washington warning Moscow of action unless it stops a sharp rise in online extortion attacks, which US officials say largely originate in Russia.

Russia denies responsibility, but Putin has welcomed Biden’s efforts to bring more predictability to the relationship between the two global powerhouses.

In announcing the future dialogue, Biden and Putin pointed out that Washington and Moscow spoke to each other to avoid



Russian President Vladimir Putin shakes hands with US President Joe Biden at a summit in Geneva on 16 June 2021. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

worst-case scenarios even at the height of the Cold War.

Sherman will meet with the Russians days after undertaking a similar mission to China, a visit

the State Department described as being aimed at ensuring there are “guardrails” in increasingly hostile US-Chinese relations.—AFP ■

Iraqi PM to focus on US troop withdrawal in Biden meeting



Most US soldiers deployed in Iraq in 2014 to lead a coalition against the Islamic State group have left. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

WEAKENED by pro-Iran factions at home, Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhemi will meet with US President Joe

Biden on Monday to discuss a possible full US troop withdrawal from his country.

The White House talks be-

tween the two allies come just a week after a deadly attack claimed by the Islamic State group, despite Baghdad declaring the Sunni extremists defeated over three years ago.

Kadhemi finds himself backed into a corner by the influence of Iraq’s other main ally -- neighbouring Iran, which has long seen the United States as its arch-nemesis. Despite shared enmity on the part of the US and Shiite Iran toward a resilient IS, Kadhemi is under intense pressure from pro-Tehran armed factions who demand the withdrawal of 2,500 US troops still deployed in Iraq.

Operating under the Hashed al-Shaabi, a paramili-

tary network whose tentacles extend deep into the state, these Shiite factions stand accused of carrying out around 50 rocket and drone attacks this year against US interests in Iraq.

“If there is no significant announcement on the withdrawal of troops, I fear that the pro-Iran groups may... increase attacks on the US forces,” Iraqi researcher Sajad Jiyad told AFP.

Such concerns are given weight by the leader of one such paramilitary group Asaib Ahl al-Haq, who recently warned that “resistance operations will continue until all American forces have left Iraqi territory”.—AFP ■

Tensions high as Haiti says farewell to slain president

HAITI said farewell Friday to its slain president Jovenel Moise under tight security at a state funeral marred by an eruption of gunfire outside the venue, highlighting the instability of the impoverished Caribbean country.

Just over two weeks after the 53-year-old Moise was shot dead in his home in Port-au-Prince in the early hours of July 7, he was interred in Cap-Haitien, the main city in his native northern region.

In an open-air funeral lasting several hours, Moise’s coffin was draped in the red, white and blue Haitian flag and the presidential sash, and surrounded by flowers. Military guards kept watch, and

soldiers performed the national and presidential anthems. One by one, representatives of the government and foreign diplomats stopped to pay their respects to Moise’s widow Martine -- who was seriously wounded in the attack that killed her husband, and required treatment in the United States. She had her arm in a sling and wore a black hat and a mask bearing a photo of her late husband on one side.

“What crime did you commit to deserve such punishment?” she asked in an emotional eulogy, calling Haitian politics “rotten and unfair” and insisting her husband had tried to clean it up be-



Mourners attend the funeral of slain Haitian president Jovenel Moise. PHOTO: AFP

fore being “savagely murdered”. “Overnight, he found the whole system lined up against him,” the

widow said, nevertheless noting she was not seeking “revenge or violence”.—AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Venezuela says US military jet violated its airspace

VENEZUELA on Friday accused the United States, of violating its airspace, in what it said was a “blatant provocation”, warning it would “respond forcefully” to any manoeuvre it saw as an act of aggression.

The incident came as the Colombian and US militaries took part in exercises near Venezuela’s Caribbean coastline.

Venezuela reported that a US “type C-17 heavy military transport” crossed into its airspace late Thursday for “a period of three minutes... making a journey of approximately 14 nautical miles,” a defense ministry statement said.

“This blatant provocation took place during joint military exercises by the Colombian Air Force and Army in the Departments of Antioquia and Cundinamarca, respectively, in which there is also a presence of American F-16 and RC135 fighter jets for strategic exploration,” it added.—AFP

Sierra Leone lawmakers vote to abolish death penalty

SIERRA Leonean lawmakers voted to abolish the death penalty Friday, becoming the latest African country to move towards banning capital punishment.

A majority of MPs voted in favour of an amendment abolishing the death penalty, according to an AFP journalist who was present in the chamber.

Capital punishment will be replaced with life imprisonment or a minimum 30-year jail term for crimes such as murder or mutiny. No execution has taken place in the country since 1998, and death sentences have often been commuted.

But Sierra Leone, which is still recovering after decades of civil war, has frequently come under fire from rights groups for keeping capital punishment on the books. In May, Deputy Justice Minister Umaru Napoleon Koroma announced that the government would move to ban the death penalty to “uphold the fundamental human rights of Sierra Leoneans”.—AFP

VAR system to be introduced in Viet Nam for World Cup qualifiers

THE Video Assistant Referee (VAR) technology will be introduced at the My Dinh National Stadium in Hanoi, Viet Nam for third-round qualifiers for the 2022 FIFA World Cup which will begin this year in September.

Viet Nam will represent ASEAN in upcoming third-round World Cup qualifiers and the team will host some crucial matches at their home stadium.

The Vietnamese Football Federation (VFF) also stated that this will be the first time VAR to be used in the country.

“The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) regulation stated that all matches in the third and final round of the FIFA World Cup qualifiers in Asia will use the VAR technology,” football authorities said.

“As such, the installation of

the VAR system at the My Dinh National Stadium will be supported by AFC’s partners.

“Viet Nam’s first game in Group B of the third-round qualifiers will be away to Saudi Arabia on 2 September 2021 before their first home game against Australia at the My Dinh National Stadium on 7 September 2021,” ASEAN football authorities added. —GNLM

Djokovic makes fast start to Olympic gold bid despite ‘brutal’ heat

NOVAK Djokovic launched his quest for Olympic gold on Saturday with a straight-sets win at the Tokyo Games as tennis stars toiled in the searing summer heat on the opening day of the tournament.

World number one Djokovic, the undisputed favourite for the men’s title in Japan, easily dispatched Bolivia’s Hugo Dellien 6-2, 6-2, avoiding a repeat of his first-round exit five years ago in Rio.

“It was challenging but I’m pleased to overcome the first hurdle,” said Djokovic, who was beaten by Juan Martin del Potro at the 2016 Olympics. “I think I was solid on the court. I could always do better but for a first match I’m satisfied.”

Djokovic dodged the worst of the sweltering conditions at Ariake Tennis Park as late afternoon cloud cover provided some respite from the hot sunshine that confronted players in the earlier matches.

“It was the hottest day so far. Humidity is brutal. It’s certainly hot but also humid, the hard courts absorb the heat and it stays trapped in there. There was not much wind, not much breeze,” said Djokovic.



Novak Djokovic made short work of Hugo Dellien in the first round of the Tokyo Olympics. **PHOTO: AFP**

The 19,900-seat venue, home to 11 outdoor courts and the showpiece Ariake Coliseum court, was almost empty, with fans barred from all but a handful of Olympic sites in Tokyo because of strict Covid-19 rules. — AFP ■

Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council Nine Objectives

1. Political affairs

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

2. Economic affairs

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

3. Social affairs

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

Chinese shooter wins first gold of Tokyo Olympics as storm threat looms



China's Yang Qian celebrates after winning the women's 10m air rifle competition at the 2020 Olympics. **PHOTO: AFP**

CHINESE shooter Yang Qian won the first gold medal of the Tokyo Olympics on Saturday as the coronavirus-hit Games braced for a potentially disruptive tropical storm heading towards the Japanese capital.

Chinese shooter Yang Qian won the first gold medal of the Tokyo Olympics on Saturday as the coronavirus-hit Games braced for a potentially disruptive tropical storm heading towards the Japanese capital.

Yang snatched a dramatic last-shot victory from Russia's Anastasiya Galashina in the women's 10-metre air rifle as attention switched from the troubled build-up to the event to the sporting action.

Elsewhere on the first full day of competition, Japanese gymnastics star Kohei Uchimura crashed out of the horizontal bars competition.

Tour de France champion Tadej Pogacar headlined a star-studded peloton in the men's cycling road race and hot favourite Novak Djokovic prepared to launch his bid for Olympic glory.

Games chiefs are desperate for sport to take centre stage after the coronavirus pandemic forced a one-year postponement and dogged the lead-up to the Games.

But Covid-19 has cast a fresh shadow, forcing German cyclist Simon Geschke out of the road race while Dutch rower Finn Florijn has also tested positive.

Seventeen new Games-related cases were announced on Saturday, taking the total number to 123, of which 12 are athletes.

Now Games chiefs have another threat to contend with as Tropical Storm Nepartak headed towards Tokyo, with the weather agency saying it was due to arrive on Tuesday.

As a “protective measure” organizers have brought forward to this weekend rowing events that had been scheduled for Monday and said they were following the track of the storm.

“Unlike an earthquake, we're able to predict the path of a typhoon so we're able to prepare in advance,” said Tokyo 2020 spokesman Masa Takaya. — AFP ■