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Monday, 2 August 2021

The Speech made by State Administration Council Chairman Senior General Min Aung Hlaing on the occasion of six months on 1 August 2021 since the State Administration Council has taken the State's responsibilities: -

Esteemed National Peoples,

It has been six months full today since the State Administration Council has performed the responsibilities of the State. First and foremost, I'd like to kindly wish all national peoples good health and be free soonest from the Covid-19 pandemic. The government, entire ethnic brethren and the people, in unison, must collaboratively confront the Covid-19 pandemic hands and hands. Nothing other than individual life is of crucial significance: That's my policy. Only when we are healthy can we be able to work and get an education. None is more important than the health of all national peoples. Therefore, we don't impose any constraint on the processes of preventing, controlling and providing treatment to the Coronavirus disease. We shall build up manpower, material power and intellectual power as much as possible to safeguard against Covid-19. We must conquer it. Collective solidarity amongst all national peoples can overcome the Covid-19 pandemic. And, building a genuine discipline-flourishing multiparty democratic system will be successful. If this spirit of victory is uplifted with unity, trust, endeavours, diligence and perseverance, there will be nothing we cannot do for our country and the people. That is a prelude to my Speech.

I'm reporting on political, social and socio-economic development performances undertaken by the State and Government to the public today.

The State Administration Council started to carry out all responsibilities of the State handed over by the then Acting President



on 1 February 2021 by adhering to provisions of the Constitution (2008). All national peoples are well aware that our country's political system is based on a genuine discipline-flourishing multiparty democratic system. The Tatmadaw government has primarily established a multiparty democracy people have aspired since 1988. The people have chosen the multiparty democratic system. A free and fair election is practically the "life-blood" of the multiparty democracy. It is of much more vital importance for our country where a nascent democracy is being restored. Furthermore, the aspiration of the people will be fulfilled successfully only through a free and fair election in accord with the Constitution and electoral system of our country. A nation-building task is based on three pillars: Executive, Legislature and the Judiciary. Only when these three estates are emphatically aligned with one another through the check

and balance process would it be a democracy of the people, for the people and by the people.

The electoral process of establishing the election commissions at different levels, collecting the lists of voters, campaigning for the election candidates, forming the electoral coordination committees, advance voting and casting votes on the Election Day has been interfered with by the then NLD government and NLD party inappropriately misusing

their executive power in the previous election held in November 2020. Other parties, rather not the NLD party, and their candidates for Hluttaw representatives were subjected to the NLD party's misappropriate abuses of the executive power and the Covid-19 preventive restrictions as a pretext for winning the election and thereby seizing the State power forcefully. After holding the responsibilities of the State, the State Administration Council

A nation-building task is based on three pillars: Executive, Legislature and the Judiciary. Only when these three estates are emphatically aligned with one another through the check and balance process would it be a democracy of the people, for the people and by the people.

has prioritized the very first point of the Five-Point Road Map: The Union Election Commission will be reconstituted and its mandated tasks, including the scrutiny of voter lists, shall be implemented under the law.

The Union Election Commission conducted a detailed township-wise inspection on the casting of votes and voter lists for 315 townships where the Multi-party General Election was held on 8 November 2020. The on-the-ground inspection on the casting of votes and ballot papers at particular polling stations in each township was made in the presence of the members of the Union Election Commission, relevant township ex-election sub-commissions, heads of the township police force, township officials of the Department of Immigration and Population, township administrators and representatives of the parties. An interviewing inspection was also conducted with respective election sub-commissions, polling station heads and voting booth staff.

The ballot-rigging was inspected at the number of 11,305,390 votes in these undertakings. Tatmadaw officially expressed concern about vote-rigging and evidence of an unfair and unfree election even before the election and after the election as well. Findings were firmly presented with documents and tables. In order to seek the solution through negotiation based on the principle of political culture in a democracy, Tatmadaw put forward its opinions and viewpoints and released official statements

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Senior citizens, service personnel and prison inmates receive COVID-19 vaccines across country

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MoC allows import process of anti-COVID-19 medicines, devices on 1 August

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Myanmar rice market sees flat price amid closure of warehouses

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LOCAL BUSINESS

CBM sells \$93.8 mln in past six months

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Republic of the Union of Myanmar
State Administration Council

Order No 152/2021

9th Waxing of Waso 1383 ME

1 August 2021

Formation of Provisional Government of
the Republic of the Union of Myanmar

- The State Administration Council constituted the Management Committee of the State Administration Council with the following persons under Notification No 9/2021 of the Council dated 19-2-2021: -
 - Chairman, State Administration Council,
 - Vice-Chairman, State Administration Council,
 - Union ministers,
 - Attorney-General of the Union,
 - Permanent Secretary, Office of the State Administration Council.
- The State Administration Council, with the aim of easily, promptly and more effectively performing the State duties in accord with the adopted Five-Point Road Map and Nine Objectives, re-constituted the Management Committee of the State Administration Council as “**Provisional Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar**” as follows: -
 - State Prime Minister, Chairman, State Administration Council,
 - Deputy Prime Minister, Vice-Chairman, State Administration Council,
 - Union ministers,
 - Attorney-General of the Union,
 - Permanent Secretary, Office of the Provisional Government.

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

Republic of the Union of Myanmar
State Administration Council

Order No 153/2021

9th Waxing of Waso 1383 ME

1 August 2021

Reconstitution of region or state
governments

- The State Administration Council formed the region or state administration councils for implementing the administrative tasks of regions or states.
- The State Administration Council, with the aim of easily, promptly and more effectively performing the State duties in accord with the adopted Five-Point Road Map and Nine Objectives, the region or state administration councils as the “Region or State Governments” as follows: -
 - Chief Minister,
 - Minister, Security and Border Affairs Ministry,
 - Minister, Economic Affairs Ministry,
 - Minister, Social Affairs Ministry,
 - Minister, Transport Ministry,
 - Minister, Ethnic Affairs Ministry,
 - Advocate-General,
- Yangon Region and Mandalay Region shall form the Minister, Development Affairs Ministry, in their governments. The Chairpersons of the Development Committees, Mayors of Yangon Region and Mandalay Region shall be Minister for Development Affairs.
- Heads of Region or State shall be Secretary of Region or State Governments.

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

Republic of the Union of Myanmar
State Administration Council

Order No 220/2021

9th Waxing of Waso 1383 ME

1 August 2021

Extension of public holidays for further
prevention, control and treatment over
infection of COVID-19

THE State Administration Council has set the continuous public holidays for two times to head off the infection chains of COVID-19 for the people to abide by the restricted disciplines during the public holidays. In order to soonest reach the normal situation with controlling the infection of COVID-19, the notification was announced that the period from 2 to 8 August 2021 was further set as the continuous public holidays (except for the Central Bank of Myanmar and its subordinate government banks and private banks under the specific situation) in accord with Section 25 of the Negotiable Instruments Act.

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

Public Announcement

- During the public holidays from 2.8.2021 to 8.8.2021, the border trade posts will not be closed from their duties and will be allowed to import and export as usual, and the import of COVID-19 medicines and devices will be given priority as per the SOPs coordinated with the relevant departments.
- On these days, it is announced that the Department of Commerce (Head Office) Import and Export Division and the Export and Import Office (Yangon) will allow online import and export licence applications as usual during office hours.

Ministry of Commerce

Personal preventive practices
against COVID-19 infection

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

3,480 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 1 August, total figure rises to 302,665

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to **302,665** after **3,480 new cases** were reported on 1 August 2021 according to the Ministry of Health and Sports. Among these confirmed cases, **213,227** have been discharged from hospitals. Death toll reached **9,731** after **397** died. —MNA

The Speech made by State Administration Council Chairman Senior General Min Aung Hlaing on the occasion of six months on 1 August 2021 since the State Administration Council has taken the State's responsibilities: -

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and announcements to the then government, Hluttaws and relevant officials. However, it did not succeed. Simple errors can be officially resolved. They can prove it according to the law – without terrorist acts. We are paving the way to democracy in accord with the law. At last, they called for the convening of the Hluttaw and attempted to seize the State power forcefully, without resolving the electoral frauds. Consequently, Tatmadaw declared the State of Emergency and took the responsibilities of the State under the Constitution.

Keeping in line with the Constitution and electoral system of our country, people are required to directly vote for the Hluttaw representatives. That's a Legislative pillar. Then, Hluttaw representatives have to choose the President, the Head of State. The President shall appoint and assign the duties of the Cabinet. It's an Executive pillar. The President shall also appoint a Union Chief Justice and Judges. It's a Judicial pillar. That is why the multiparty democratic general election is held to elect representatives for all three pillars of our nation. It can be obviously doubted how can the Hluttaw representatives elected out of vote-rigging, their Executive pillar and the Judiciary represent the people and how can they practise "check and balance", a fundamental principle of democracy. Titled with democracy, they are going to revitalize the one-party autocracy. Thus, we are bringing about the restoration of a genuine discipline-flourishing democratic system.

We have released our findings, on-the-ground inspections and evidence of voter lists of each township, region and state

in detail. It was finalized in July and we announced that the election results were annulled on 26 July as they found that the Multiparty General Election held on 8 November 2020 was not in conformity with the Constitution, Union Election Commission Law, respective Hluttaw Laws and Rules and it also was not a free and fair election. We carried out such measures under the existing laws. We just follow the democratic norm like "No Man above the Law".

After we annulled the 2020 election results, we have to continue to work for a new free and fair election in line with the provisions of the state of emergency. In this regard, we will undertake the tasks according to Chapter 11 – provisions on the State of Emergency of the 2008 Constitution. In the 2020 election, more than 4,869,427 people cast votes without any Citizenship Scrutiny Card. We give priority to those who must have the right to cast votes as they wish in the election and we also prioritize the CSCs for everyone who must have ID cards. According to the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population, it can take up to 18 months if we carry out for 300 people per day. We are working as quickly as possible. The Constitution states the limitation for the duration of the state of emergency. According to Subsection (b) of Section 421, if one cannot accomplish the duties within one year of the emergency period, it permits only two extensions of the prescribed duration for a term of six months for each extension. In the meantime, we have to do the things that should be done. Then, we will take six months to prepare for the election according to the law. We will accomplish the provisions of the

As a result of our talks, we have signed the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) to resolve the ethnic armed conflicts. The agreement was signed based on the demands of the ethnic armed organizations. Tatmadaw stands firm as per the Agreement. I'd like to say to build a union based on democracy and federalism peacefully. I invite all ethnic armed organizations to meet and discuss among others, except for the declared unlawful associations and groups.

state of emergency by August 2023. The final point out of the Five-Point Road Map of the State Administration Council is "to hold the free and fair multiparty democratic elections in line with the 2008 Constitution and hand over State duties to the winning party as per democratic standards".

We must create conditions to hold a free and fair multiparty general election. We have to make preparations. I pledge to hold the multiparty general election without fail. We must strengthen the genuine and discipline-flourishing multiparty democratic system people aspire. The basic requirements for a free and fair election are stability and the rule of law. Stability means political stability, security stability and economic stability. We have to continue to adhere to the existing laws and develop good disciplinary practices.

There are still political divergences and different opinions that have arisen in our country along with internal armed conflicts since our independence in 1948. We negotiated to seek solutions and so we were able to hold the 2010 and 2015 elections successfully and our country has been on the pathway to democracy. The way to negotiate and find a solution was lost due to the voting frauds of the 2020 election.

We have worked for establishing a genuine and discipline-flourishing multiparty democratic system. I guarantee the establishment of a union based on democracy and federalism. The main thing is to complete all the electoral preparations within a fixed timeframe. We have performed our tasks under the law. The NLD extremists and their supporters chose the act

of terrorism instead of doing or solving it in line with the law. They incited to become anarchic and committed armed insurrection. They think of making enemies with the ones who do not support or have the same opinions. We have to try to bring them back to a stable condition. We must apply our collective strengths to prevent destructive elements, social bullying and rebellious CDM movement that would lead to total annihilation from the State administrative mechanism to the daily life of the people and their socio-economic status.

They want instability and destroy the political, social and economic arenas. They are attempting for the disintegration of the Tatmadaw and intentionally destroying the culture, traditions and history from the very beginning of all Myanmar national peoples. We need to pay special attention in order to know their violent acts very consciously. Most of us are primarily Buddhists in our country. The Buddha devotees were disheartened in their faith in Buddhism during the previous five years. Since the time we took responsibilities, we have emphasized religious affairs under the provisions of the Constitution. For this purpose, the strengths of the patriotic people who love our nation and the people are of crucial significance. We will build a nation that practises a genuine and discipline-flourishing democracy, a modern developed country and a nation that will conform with the aspirations of the Myanmar national peoples. I deeply urge entire ethnic nationals to work together. As a result of our talks, we have signed the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) to resolve the ethnic armed

conflicts. The agreement was signed based on the demands of the ethnic armed organizations. Tatmadaw stands firm as per the Agreement. I'd like to say to build a union based on democracy and federalism peacefully. I invite all ethnic armed organizations to meet and discuss among others, except for the declared unlawful associations and groups. Here, I want to talk about the relation with ASEAN. I joined the ASEAN Summit on 24 April, and the summit adopted five agreements. We implemented the things that we should do. Of the three original nominees for the ASEAN special envoy, we agreed to select the former Deputy Foreign Minister of Thailand, Mr Virasakdi Futrakul. But for various reasons, the new proposals were released and we could not keep moving onwards. I would like to say that Myanmar is ready to work on ASEAN cooperation within the ASEAN framework, including the dialogue with the ASEAN Special Envoy in Myanmar. Preparations are underway to present a briefing on the findings of the election to the international delegations within the next few days.

Esteemed National Peoples,

Our country is facing the third wave of COVID-19 currently like other world nations. We are making our utmost efforts in carrying out the prevention, control and treatment activities in collaboration with the people. The currently occurring COVID-19 pandemic is different from the first and second waves. The number of infected people is increasing daily, and the percentage of confirmed cases and deaths is also higher than before.

These facts are being misrepresented in the news media and on social media, comparing the situation with today's third wave and the previous second wave. It needs to consider the actual condition of infection as closely as possible from the point of view of epidemiology.

The virus was not initially reported seriously in Southeast Asia and Asian countries but in European countries such as France, Spain and Italy, in the

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see southern part and northern part of the Americas such as the US and Brazil. However, due to the geographical distance, it can be supposed that Myanmar was not hit by the first wave of COVID-19.

In the second wave, as a developing country, it has to struggle to tackle the pandemic to some extent. We can see that the variant of the second wave is not much faster in the infection rate than the current COVID-19 strain.

In the third wave, the infection rate is dramatically high in our neighbouring countries and the regional countries are still facing the third wave of COVID-19 seriously. The main point is the emergence of more infectious mutants. The most common Delta Variant is now known to be 60 per cent faster in transmission than the previous strains. The R0 (Reproduction number) of the original COVID-19 virus is between 2.4 and 2.6. But the R0 of Alpha and Delta is between 4 and 5 and between 5 and 8, respectively. (It means, if the R0 is 2, the transmission rate is from 1 person to 2, 2 to 4, 4 to 8, 8 to 16, twice in every step). During the third wave, the Alpha, Beta and Delta recognized as variants of concern by WHO are found in Myanmar. We can estimate how much faster the infection rate will be than the variants of the second wave by looking at the R0 of new variants of this third wave.

When the R0 is 4, the transmission rate will be from 1 person to 4, 4 to 16, 16 to 64 and so on. If the R0 is 8, its rate will be from 1 person to 8, 8 to 64, 64 to 512. The widespread outbreak and rapid spread of the disease in the neighbouring countries and regional countries are unlike the first and second waves, and it is a big challenge for our country.

When the infection rate is so high, the public hospitals that can provide proper medical treatment to the people are facing the human resources problem. The NLD extremists, who were involved in electoral frauds, and their supporters incited the health workers to do so. Due to a considerable imbalance between the number of patients

and the number of health workers for the diagnosis and treatment process, while the infection rate is on the rise, it becomes a major challenge for the country amidst the third wave of COVID-19. Despite these challenges, I'd like to recognize and express thanks to dutiful health staff, volunteers and well-wishers or donors for their fore-front performances in response to the Covid pandemic. As I said earlier, Section 505 will be eased unless CDMers are the leaders or instigators of the violent acts. Covid-19 does not concern with politics. It matters

the transport of 12 million masks immediately. The amount of 12 million masks will be distributed per month. The Ministry of Commerce eases restrictions for the import of oxygen concentrators, liquid oxygen, medicines and medical equipment as well as tax, and such importation does not need FDA recommendations and import licences. For cutting off the infection chains, the community restrictions are adopted, and consideration is conducted to resurge the long term loss of the economic recovery of the State and the people triggered

of doctors. So, the government is striving for fulfilling the needs in time. Oxygen production of oxygen plants across the nation, the oxygen plants from military and civilian hospitals and private oxygen plants are continuously monitored, and emphasis is being placed to fulfil the actual needs of oxygen to hospitals/treatment centres. Effective management will be made for generating the limited volume of oxygen and efficient use. Efforts are being made to produce large quantities and quality liquid oxygen in a short time. Preparations are being made to soonest fulfil the liquid oxygen in Yangon and Mandalay where a high infection rate of the disease happens. Expansion work for the installation of oxygen plants at public hospitals, health departments, Tatmadaw hospitals, State-owned factories and workplaces are now underway. That is why the requirements of public hospitals and health departments will be fulfilled in September, without purchasing oxygen supplies from private factories.

People need to systematically receive the COVID-19 vaccination for the set times to reduce the infection rate and spreading rate. Vaccination was given in all regions and states from 27-1-2021 to 21-7-2021, a total of 1,825,642 people (6.08% of the target population) were vaccinated two times. Arrangements are being made to faster give many COVID-19 vaccines to the people. The government is negotiating to purchase the vaccines. Three million doses out of four million units of vaccines purchased from the People's Republic of China arrived in the fourth week of July, and the vaccination process is being conducted rapidly. Three more million vaccines will arrive in August. Hence, the plan is underway to systematically vaccinate the target groups on priority. Moreover, two million doses purchased from Russia will arrive in Myanmar in batches. Efforts are being made to take the remaining vaccines from India. In this regard, I thank all countries and organizations that cooperate with us in the prevention, control and treatment of the pandemic. I'd like to request the friendly

countries and organizations to continue cooperation with us. We arrange the production of the vaccine at home. I expect 50 per cent coverage of vaccines across the nation at the end of this year. As COVID-19 infects various parts of the world, every country tries hard to take preventive measures and receive vaccines. So, I'd like to urge the people to receive vaccines in respective townships with health awareness.

Esteemed national peoples,

The weakness in emphasis and cooperation of the people in control, prevention and treatment of the COVID-19 depends on the spreading of fake news and misinformation via social networks. Aimed at raising the prices of health-protective equipment in the market and raising the worries among the people, fake office letters are posted on the social networks, and misinformation that hospitals did not admit patients; the government banned further import of oxygen; the global authorities did not recognize the newly-arrived vaccines, and such vaccination might cause danger is spread on the social network pages. Mobilization of the people not to abide by the prevention and control guidelines issued by the Ministry of Health and Sports and restrictions for COVID-19, not to receive vaccines and to cause various crowds among the people are being utterly despicable committed instead of receiving vaccines, avoiding the crowds and public places as much as possible, abiding by the social distancing, wearing masks and face shields and often washing hands while the infection rate is high again. Such moves directly impose threats on the life and property of the people, and it means using COVID-19 as a tool of bioterrorism. Applying such ways for their political gain might be very guilty on the religious ground. As the instability of the State based on health problems is being agitated, control of destructionist acts on the social network is a great challenge.

Protests staged across the nation after 1 February were transformed into anarchic protests and then armed attacks.

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In the third wave, it can be said that the experiences in the previous waves may be advantages. We have known at least the infection way of the disease. We have experienced prevention, control and treatment of the disease. Moreover, as vaccination has been conducted at some percentage, the infection of the disease can be hindered to some degree.

most for the lives of the people and their social affairs.

No matter how there are many challenges, I'll strive for the people to overcome the third wave of COVID-19 amidst various difficulties and hindrances.

In the third wave, it can be said that the experiences in the previous waves may be advantages. We have known at least the infection way of the disease. We have experienced prevention, control and treatment of the disease. Moreover, as vaccination has been conducted at some percentage, the infection of the disease can be hindered to some degree. With regard to the natural disaster, the government machinery does not control the processes without centralization and allow the government departments at different levels in respective areas to freely do their work process. Hence, it can be seen that response to the infection of disease gains momentum. For example, it needed to take a long time for the distribution of 5 million masks to respective regions and states in the past. Now, Tatmadaw aircraft are used in

by COVID-19.

Faster testing, faster finding and faster isolation are important for cutting off the infection chains as well as for the patients. Preparations are being made to admit the confirmed patients in time at suitable COVID-19 treatment centres depending on their symptoms. People should not receive medical treatment of traditional therapies at home if they face the suspicion of infection, and they need to receive a medical examination at nearby local health units. Such units, if necessary, will transfer them to suitable COVID-19 treatment centres. As such, the people need to correctly inform the authorities about their health situation. The Tatmadaw has prepared to admit 39,000 patients at 1,278 patient treatment centres while civilian units have made preparations to admit 71,500 patients at 1,453 centres. Arrangements will be made to extend community COVID positive centres where necessary.

Oxygen is essential for the treatment of patients in COVID-19. It is also important to use oxygen only in the consultation

The Speech made by State Administration Council Chairman Senior General Min Aung Hlaing on the occasion of six months on 1 August 2021 since the State Administration Council has taken the State's responsibilities: -

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Innocent people were killed by surprise. Why did they kill the people? Why did they attack the people living in peace? We cannot accept it. Violent protests were responded under the law in accord with the international community. Action must be taken against those who used attacks of fetal weapons and mines. At present, the whole country is stable except for some terrorist attacks. Further tasks will be undertaken for ensuring total peace and stability in the areas, except for that of EAOs.

Various gatherings and crowds across the nation after 1 February were designed to spark the infection of variant COVID-19 species. To do so, various ways of agitations were committed via social networks. The globe has overcome various pandemics in the past. Although various pandemics such as plague and smallpox diseases can be controlled in the advancement of medical technologies at present, respiratory disease COVID-19 may cause infections whenever breathing. If public cooperation lacks, it is sure to difficultly control the disease. It can be seen that even developed and developing countries are yet to perform control, prevention and treatment of the disease on the upper hand. Even in the United States, hospitals cannot give adequate accommodation to patients, facing shortages of ventilators and air fresheners. So, the patients are receiving treatments at home. The problem of oxygen is a difficulty for the countries facing the outbreak of disease. Myanmar's neighbouring countries India and Indonesia are facing severe problems.

Today's the State Administration Council government has inserted the prevention, control and treatment of COVID-19 into the Five-Point Road Map as much as possible. Work procedures related to pandemic management and restrictions have been eased and necessary amendments are being undertaken. To cut off the infection chains among the people, long office holidays were set from 17 July to 1 August. In so doing, cooperation of the entire people except some extremist destructionists was the honourable strength of the people. The

infection rate declined to 34.75 per cent on 29 July, up from 40.82 per cent on 23 July. It is necessary to further decline the infection rate. An announcement will be declared for one more week of official holidays for effective cutting off the infection chains. We will stand with the people. We will protect the people at full capacity. I'd deeply say that Myanmar is sure to conquer the pandemic through harmonious cooperation. In order to curb the chains of infectious disease, one more week of office holiday will be extended. In this regard, necessary measures will be carried out to avoid impacting the manufacturing sector and economic businesses. We will stand together with the people. We will safeguard the people efficiently. I'd like to stress that we Myanmar national peoples must overcome the pandemic, with our concerted and collaborative efforts.

Esteemed national peoples,

The State Administration Council is implementing the Five-Point Road Map and Nine Objectives in serving the State duties. The globe has some 7,000 million of population, facing the high requirements of basic needs. During the pandemic period, food supplies still need for all despite reducing the other services. We must apply it. Our country engaging in agriculture and livestock breeding tasks is home to more than 70 rural people.

So, efforts are being made to ensure the availability of basic agricultural prerequisites such as quality seeds, soil, water and techniques, reclaim the fertile cultivable lands, supply agricultural water and provide proper cultivation methods to the local farmers. With regard to the livestock, encouragement will be given to poultry, pig, goat, cow and fish farming tasks. Systematic breeding tasks are of importance. We have to undertake the establishment of the emerald livestock villages, production of pedigree animals and sufficient manufacturing of feedstuffs using the raw materials. It is necessary to extend agriculture and livestock tasks. For example, we import some US\$1,000 million worth of textile per year. Our country has the season to grow cotton.

Clothing is of importance for all people. Hence, it is necessary to encourage the cultivation of cotton and the production of textile. We must extend river water pumping stations, irrigated areas and cotton cultivation. Likewise, efforts must be made for sufficient production of palm oil and dairy products at home. It is necessary to fully extend oil palm plantations, sesame, groundnut, mustard, sunflower and nigre plantations in lower Taninthayi Region Myeik, Bokpyin and Kawthoung. Dairy cow breeding must be undertaken in the areas with good climatic conditions to have the surplus volume of dairy products at home. In accord with the using domestic products, it is necessary to encourage domestic products and locally made products like a quote "Use and rely on local makes". Employment opportunities should be created within the country so as to lessen the number of migrant workers seeking jobs outside the country. In addition, efforts will be made for reducing fuel consumption and the use of other energy sources. Although the country is engaged in agriculture and livestock breeding, there are the only one University of Agriculture and the only one University of Veterinary Science. The country needs intellectuals and intelligentsia for modernizing the agriculture and livestock breeding tasks. So, agriculture and livestock breeding schools in regions and states are upgraded to institutes and colleges so as to turn out skilled persons. The Ministry of Science and Technology is reconstituted for modernizing the agricultural tasks, transforming the manual into mechanized farming and improving other sectors without losing sight over science and technology.

As the country is based on agriculture, agricultural products must have a certain market. Loss and damage of products yearly happened in the border and regular trade routes due to various reasons. So, efforts must be made for modern storage systems and the production of value-added products. For example, onion powder, fried onion and squash onion must be made in addition to the export of ordinary onion. Farmers must make efforts not to

face loss in agricultural and livestock products. We must march into the agro-based industry.

According to the census in 2014 and 2019 interim census, 8.1 per cent of the children above five years old have never attended the school. Moreover, 18.2 million people above 25 years old had learned middle education only, accounting for a one-third population of the country. Such an amount showed we have to strive for uplifting the education qualification of the people. So, we are carrying out the tasks as a national duty. It is necessary to turn out educated persons for ensuring firm democracy and development of the State. We have to turn out scientists, technologists, law experts, economists and medical professionals. So, I'd like to urge all to encourage higher education practically. We have to encourage education. Amid difficulties, we reopened the schools not to cut the educational chain. Now, these schools are temporarily closed due to the outbreak of COVID-19. I thank all teachers, education staff, parents and students who emphasized education in the schooling days. All the youths should emphasize learning only.

We set up the new Ministry of Cooperatives and Rural Development to contribute to agriculture and livestock breeding tasks the people work. The ministry will not only operate the old cooperative system but will create a public-based system for enabling the people to participate in the same businesses with the same interests, as well. The developed and developing countries are practising a good cooperative system. Now, we have set up the agricultural cooperative societies for the effective operation of the agricultural tasks.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the global countries are facing difficulties in the production and service sectors. Our country also faces such difficulties. Hence, we have to strive for the sufficiency of basic foodstuffs, healthcare services, transport services and social security services. The health sector is related to sports and fitness. Uplifting the sports brings honour to the State. It uplifts not only the physical strength but the mental one, as

well. Despite facing restrictions for COVID-19, uplift of sports is being emphasized. Efforts are being made to modernizing the stadiums and gymnasiums in regions and states. As the strength of the youth plays a key role in uplifting the sports, encouragement will be given to the youth and sports sectors.

The State Administration Council has taken the State responsibilities for six months. After necessary inspections were accomplished in line with the first point of the SAC Five-Point Road Map, actions are taken against those who are responsible under the law. That is why I'd like to inform you that Union-level and Regions/States-level administration structure will be reformed to effectively implement the remaining objectives and roadmap activities.

Esteemed national peoples,

I'd like to give the concluding remarks.

- (1) The State Administration Council has guaranteed a genuine, discipline-flourishing multiparty democracy. At a time when the duties in the state of emergency have been accomplished, the multiparty democracy general election will be held. So, it is necessary to make many preparations. So, all the esteemed national peoples aspiring for democracy and peace and tranquillity of the State are urged to cooperate in the peace, stability and rule of law tasks.
 - (2) We will confront the COVID-19 pandemic through the united strength of the people, the government and all organizations. We overcome challenges altogether. We must conquer all the difficulties. Let's overcome the challenges with the spirit of victory.
 - (3) We are raising the basic businesses such as the agriculture and livestock breeding tasks. At least, we decided to ensure the sufficiency of basic needs during the pandemic period. "Let's unite as the present moment is important." "We must secure the victory through unity."
- May all the esteemed national peoples be physical and mental well-being! Thank you.

Republic of the Union of Myanmar
State Administration Council

Order No 148/2021

9th Waxing of Waso 1383 ME

1 August 2021

**Resignation of Region Administration
Council Chairpersons from their duties
allowed**

THE State Administration Council allowed the resignation of the following chairpersons of Region/State Administration Councils from their respective duties in accord with Section 149 of the Constitution: -

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| (1) U Maung Maung Lin | Sagaing Region |
| (2) U Tin Aung | Taninthayi Region |
| (3) U Ye Myint | Ayeyawady Region. |

By Order,

Aung Lin Dwe
Lieutenant - General
Secretary
State Administration Council

Republic of the Union of Myanmar
State Administration Council

Order No 149/2021

9th Waxing of Waso 1383 ME

1 August 2021

Reconstitution of Union Ministries

THE State Administration Council reconstituted the Ministry of the Union Government Office as following Union ministries in accord with Section 419 of the Constitution.

- (1) Ministry of Union Government Office (1)
- (2) Ministry of Union Government Office (2)

By Order,

Aung Lin Dwe
Lieutenant - General
Secretary
State Administration Council

Republic of the Union of Myanmar
State Administration Council

Order No 150/2021

9th Waxing of Waso 1383 ME

1 August 2021

Reconstitution of Union Ministries

THE State Administration Council reconstituted the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population as following Union ministries in accord with Section 149 of the Constitution: -

- (1) Ministry of Labour
- (2) Ministry of Immigration and Population

By Order,

Aung Lin Dwe
Lieutenant - General
Secretary
State Administration Council

Republic of the Union of Myanmar
State Administration Council

Order No 151/2021

9th Waxing of Waso 1383 ME

1 August 2021

Reconstitution of Union Ministries

THE State Administration Council reconstituted the Ministry of Health and Sports as following Union ministries in accord with Section 149 of the Constitution: -

- (1) Ministry of Health
- (2) Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs

By Order,

Aung Lin Dwe
Lieutenant - General
Secretary
State Administration Council

Republic of the Union of Myanmar
**Central Committee on Prevention, Control and Treatment for COVID-19
Notification**

9th Waning of Waso 1383 ME

1 August 2021

1. The State Administration Council issued a Notification No 220/2021 dated 1-8-2021 declaring from 2 to 8 August 2021 as successive public holidays.
2. To effectively prevent the spread of COVID-19 during these public holidays, the people must obey the following rules: -
 - (a) Reside at homes or dormitory, and not to travel at all except for duty and funeral services;
 - (b) Central Bank of Myanmar, its subsidiaries -- government banks and private banks to open as usual;
 - (c) Not to affect the production rate, the factories and industries must operate under the supervision of the Ministry of Labour, Nay Pyi Taw Council, region/state governments in line with the COVID-19 health rules of the Ministry of Health;
 - (d) To adopt the work-from-home system or other proper methods for important office work of the relevant departments;
 - (e) Shops selling basic essential things like fuel, drinking water, meat, fish and foodstuffs to open;
 - (f) Shops selling medicines and medical supplies to open;
 - (g) Restaurants to adopt a take-away system;
 - (h) To continue healthcare services (government hospitals/private hospitals and clinics);
 - (i) To wear protective gears, including masks, if you go outside
 - (j) To operate the land, sea and air services under the supervision of the Ministry of Transport and Communications, Nay Pyi Taw Council, region/state governments;
 - (k) To comply the SOP (Standard Operating Procedure) of trucks to facilitate the flow of goods;
 - (l) To continue to open cargo ports;
 - (m) To follow the COVID-19 health rules of the Central Committee on Prevention, Control and Treatment for COVID-19 and the Ministry of Health without fail.
3. Action will be taken against those who fail to abide by the above-mentioned orders under the existing laws.

Nay Pyi Taw Union Territory launches COVID-19 vaccination drive

NAY Pyi Taw Union Territory launched the COVID-19 vaccination drive at designated places in the respective townships according to the target groups and priority programmes to control the spread of the disease.

The vaccines were given to the targeted groups of frontline workers, the elderly, religious persons, volunteers who are participating in the COVID-19 prevention, control and treatment activities, and staff from private industries and workplaces.

A total of 4,066 COVID-19 vaccines were administered yesterday, with a process for screening for contraindications and precautions in place, and information issued by the Ministry of Health and Sports for the peo-

ple to receive the vaccines was also available at the vaccination areas. In addition, the Myanmar Police Force provided security for the safety of the people.

The COVID-19 vaccination is scheduled from 1 to 4 August and will continue to be given to priority groups, although the vaccination period is determined by the population census in each township and the available quotas.

The Ministry of Health and Sports is implementing the COVID-19 vaccination drive to reduce the incidence and mortality of COVID-19 in Myanmar as well as to prevent the spread of the disease and reduce impacts on the country's economy due to the outbreak. — MNA



An inoculation programme is launched in Nay Pyi Taw Union Territory.

Senior citizens, service personnel and prison inmates receive COVID-19 vaccines across country



THE COVID-19 vaccination has been administered to civil service personnel, prison inmates and people over the age of 65, including monks and nuns, in regions and states.

Yesterday, a total of 3,380 senior citizens and 358 inmates in Kintha prison in the Nay Pyi Taw Union Territory; 3,168 southern Shan State; 4,061 people in eastern Shan State; 8,350 people in Mon State and Kayin State; 3,781 people in Taninthayi Re-

gion; 1,200 people in Yangon Region; 7,573 people in Ayeyawady Region; 2,481 people in Rakhine State; 13,867 people in Mandalay Region; 3,500 people in Bago Region were vaccinated.

The vaccination was undertaken by the Tatmadaw medical teams, in collaboration with doctors and medical workers from the public hospitals and volunteers, and officials encouraged and coordinated with them where necessary. — MNA



Regions/ States-wise inoculation programme includes senior citizens, including monks and nuns, service personnel and prison inmates. The vaccination was undertaken by the Tatmadaw medical teams, in collaboration with doctors and medical workers from the public hospitals and volunteers.

More Sinopharm vaccines distributed to cities by ground-road vehicles

OFFICIALS distributed more Sinopharm Covid-19 vaccines to different states and regions yesterday via ground transportation from the government medical warehouse on Min Dhama Road, Mayangone Township, Yangon

Region. The vaccines were arrived from the People's Republic of China and are being distributed under the Central Vaccine Expansion Project title.

The distribution includes

8,800 doses to Pa-An, 23,600 to Pyay, 12,000 vaccines to Mawlamyine, 55,200 vaccines to Ayeyarwady Region and 26,400 vaccines to Magway Region respectively. All the vaccines were carried by Cold Chain Delivery

Logistics vehicles.

The Covid-19 vaccine will be distributed to the public as soon as possible as per the target population groups.

The vaccines are being distributed promptly according to

the specified cold route standards, officials said.

The vaccines will also be distributed to remote areas by air with the help of Myanma Airlines and the military (Air Force), officials added. — MNA

Extreme poverty as important as infection of COVID-19

THE World Bank reported that it expected some 150 million global people with less than 1.90 US\$ per day of income might face extreme poverty in 2021. The report on 7 October 2020 also mentioned that there would be some 115 million poverty-stricken people in 2020 due to the downtrend of the world economy.

The President of the World Bank remarked that the pandemic and the global economic decline might push 1.4 per cent of the global people into extreme poverty. If the pandemic did not occur, the poverty-stricken rate might plunge into 7.9 per cent but actually reached 9.4 per cent.

Economists from the World Bank said the population who might encounter the impacts of extreme poverty in 2020 depends on the trend of the global economy. As such, some 11 million to 115 million global people might face the impacts of extreme poverty. If so, the successes achieved in poverty alleviation for many years would lead to a downturn. Moreover, 40 per cent of global people residing in the economic crises and conflicted areas might double the poverty.

The urban people might face poverty-stricken impacts. So, the rural people are expected to share their aid with the urban people. If firm policies cannot be adopted for fighting the COVID-19 pandemic, the aim to alleviate poverty might stay away from the goal in 2030. The World Bank warned all to note the global poverty rate might be seven per cent in the coming decade.

The number of children facing poverty in all aspects reached 1.2 billion because of the COVID-19 pandemic, according to the press releases issued by UNICEF and Save the Children on 17 September 2020.

The number of children increased to 15 per cent in low-income and medium-income countries. The number of poverty-stricken children who suffered impacts of COVID-19 in early 2020 increased to 150 more million. The press release was based on education, health care services, housing, nutrition, sanitation and water supply triggered by poverty in all aspects in 70 countries.

That is why the authorities need to adopt rapid and firm policies to faster respond to the COVID-19 for mitigating the poverty rate in the country.



The Arctic: An Ocean on Top of the World

BY THAN HTUN (MYANMAR GEOSCIENCES SOCIETY)

THIS is the last and the fifth article of "The World Ocean". My main objective is to introduce the oceans of the world to the young generation so as to be aware of the significant ocean environment of our planet Earth.

"How inappropriate to call this planet Earth when it is clearly Ocean"

Arthur C. Clarke

'Arctic' comes from the Greek word for bear: Arktos. The name doesn't come from the iconic polar bear, but from constellations in the northern sky of the Arctic, 'Ursa Minor' (Little Bear) and 'Ursa Major' (Great Bear).

Of all, the Arctic Ocean is the smallest and shallowest of the world's five major oceans. It spans an area of approximately 5,430,000 sq. mi and is also known as the coldest of all the oceans. The International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) recognizes it as an ocean, although some oceanographers call it the Arctic Mediterranean Sea. It has been described approximately as an estuary of the Atlantic Ocean. It is also seen as the northernmost part of the all-encompassing World Ocean.

The Arctic Ocean includes the North Pole region in the middle of the Northern Hemisphere and extends south to about 60°N. The Arctic Ocean is surrounded by Eurasia and North America, and the borders follow topographic features: the Bering Strait on the Pacific side and the Greenland Scotland Ridge on the Atlantic side. It is mostly covered by sea ice throughout the year and almost completely in winter. The Arctic Ocean's surface temperature and salinity vary seasonally as the ice cover melts and freezes; its salinity is the lowest on average of the five major oceans, due to low

evaporation, heavy freshwater inflow from rivers and streams, and limited connection and outflow to surrounding oceans waters with higher salinities. The summer shrinking of the ice has been quoted at 50%. The US National Snow and Ice Data Center (NSIDC) uses satellite data to provide a daily record of Arctic sea ice cover and rate of melting compared to an average period and specific past years, showing a continuous decline in sea ice extent.

The average depth of the Arctic Ocean is 3,321ft and the deepest point- Molloy Deep (Hole) in the Fram Strait, in the Greenland Sea, East of Greenland at about 18,210ft.

History

Fridtjof Nansen was the first to make a nautical crossing of the Arctic Ocean, in 1896.

The first surface crossing of the ocean was led by Wally Herbert in 1969, in a dogsled expedition from Alaska to Svalbard, with air support. The first nautical transit of the north pole was made in 1958 by the submarine USS Nautilus, and the first surface nautical transit occurred in 1977 by the icebreaker NS Arktika. In World War II, the European region of the Arctic Ocean was heavily contested: Allied commitment to resupply the Soviet Union via its northern ports was opposed by German naval and air forces. Since 1954 commercial airlines have flown over the Arctic Ocean.

Who lives there?

The U.S., Canada, Greenland, Iceland, Norway, and Russia all have territories that reach into the Arctic Ocean. About four million people live in the Arctic region, many of them indigenous groups that have thrived there for millennia. To survive in the harsh climate, many of the region's people rely on the ocean's bounty



Arctic Ocean REF: ENCYCLOPEDIA BRITANNICA, INC.

to sustain their livelihoods. This includes fishing, sealing, whaling, and other activities. The Arctic's otherworldly landscapes are also increasingly drawing tourists to the region. As once impenetrable sea ice becomes less stable, Northern Hemisphere countries have begun to take a greater interest in the Arctic as a path for shipping lanes, military presence, and commercial opportunities, particularly oil and gas exploration.

Ocean life

Much of the Arctic Ocean's complex life can only be seen by underwater explorers who dive through holes in thick sea ice. Much of the ocean here is dark, blocked from sunlight by ice cover, but photographers have dived with lights to expose underwater Arctic life. Scientists note that studying life in the Arctic Ocean can be difficult because the region is hard to access. Much is still unknown about the Arctic's marine food web. The bay is famous for polar bears, but their population is in decline. The Arctic consists of more than just the snow-covered terrain that people expect. Its diverse and often dramatic landscapes include sea ice, coastal wetlands, upland tundra, glaciers, mountains, wide rivers, and the sea itself. The diver-

sity of the landscape of the Arctic means a wide array of wildlife. Species like the beluga, pacific salmon, brown bear, walrus, arctic wolf, arctic fox, narwhal, and grey whale live here. Polar bears remain the most iconic Arctic species and live only in this landscape.

Navigation through the Arctic Ocean

There are two potentially important navigation channels- connect the Pacific with the Atlantic Ocean: (a) Northwest Passage Sea route across the Northern Coast of North America and through the Canadian Arctic Archipelago. (b) Northern Sea Route: Sea Route across the Northern coast of the Eurasian Continent.

Arctic Opening

A rare and record ozone hole has formed over the Arctic. An opening in the ozone layer appears each spring over the Antarctic, but the last time this phenomenon was seen in the north was in 2011.

Biology

More fish species are found in the Arctic Ocean than anywhere else in the world. There is a wide variety of marine life living in the Arctic Ocean, including jellyfish, fish, seals and even endangered marine species such as whales

and walrus. The area has a fragile ecosystem that is slow to change and slow to recover from disruptions and damage.

The Arctic Ocean has relatively little plant-like except for phytoplankton, which is a crucial part of the ocean and there are massive amounts of them in the Arctic. During summer, the sun is out day and night, enabling the phytoplankton to photosynthesize for long periods and reproduce quickly, but the reserve is true in winter when they struggle to get enough light in order to survive.

The polar bear, which is a carnivorous bear whose native range lies within the Arctic Circle, lives and hunts on the ice of the Arctic Ocean. The Arctic is home to millions of seals, which become prey when they surface in holes in the ice in order to breathe, or when they reset on the ice. Polar bears hunt primarily at the interface between ice, water, and air. They only rarely catch seals on land or in the open water.

There are 4 whale species in the Arctic Ocean including the bow head whale, grey whale, narwhale, and the beluga whale. The bow head whale is one of the biggest whales in the world, growing up to 18 meters (59 feet) in length and it can weigh up to 100 tonnes.

There are six seal species living in the Arctic Ocean including the bearded seal, ribbon seal, ringed seal, spotted seal, harp seal, and hooded seal. The harp seal, also known as the saddleback seal, is native to the Arctic Ocean and even to the Atlantic Ocean, with an average length of 1.8 meters (6 feet) and an average weight of 165 kg (363 pounds).

Sea Ice

Three types of ice cover the Arctic Ocean: polar ice, fast ice, and pack ice. The polar ice doesn't melt and can be as thin as 2 metres in the summer and 50 metres thick in the winter. Over 10 million square km (3.8 square miles) of ice melt yearly. If the ice disappears, the polar bears living and hunting on the ice of the Arctic Ocean will completely disappear. They rely on the ice to serve as a platform when they hunt and they'll starve without the ice platforms. During summer, its ice shrinks by 50 per cent. Ships often get trapped in the ice and are crushed by the ice. The Titanic, which was a British passenger liner, sank because it ran into an iceberg that had broken away from a glacier from the Arctic

Ocean. Out of the 2,224 passengers and crew aboard, more than 1,500 died, making it one of the deadliest commercial peacetime maritime disasters in modern history.

Geology

The crystalline basement rocks of mountains around the Arctic Ocean were recrystallized or formed during the Ellesmerian Orogeny, the regional phase of the larger Caledonian Orogeny in the Paleozoic Era. Regional subsidence in the Jurassic and Triassic periods led to significant sediment deposition, creating many of the reservoirs for current day oil and gas deposits. During the Cretaceous period, the Canadian Basin opened and tectonic activity due to the assembly of Alaska caused hydrocarbons to migrate toward what is now Prudhoe Bay. At the same time, sediments shed off the rising Canadian Rockies built out the large Mackenzie Delta.

The drifting apart of the supercontinent Pangea, beginning in the Triassic period, opened the early Atlantic Ocean. Rifting then extended northward, opening the Arctic Ocean as mafic oceanic crust material erupted out of a branch of Mid-Atlantic Ridge. The drifting apart of the supercontinent Pangea, be The Amerasia Basin may have opened first, with the Chukchi Borderland moved along to the northeast by transform faults. Additional spreading helped to create the "triple-junction" of the Alpha-Mendelev Ridge in the Late Cretaceous epoch.

Throughout the Cenozoic Era, the subduction of the Pacific plate, the collision of India with Eurasia and the continued opening of the North Atlantic created new hydrocarbon traps. The seafloor began spreading from the Gakkell Ridge and the Paleocene Epoch and Eocene Epoch, causing the Lomonosov Ridge to move farther from land and subside.

Because of sea ice and remote conditions, the geology of the Arctic Ocean is still poorly explored. The Arctic coring Expedition drilling shed some light on the Lomonosov Ridge, which appears to be continental crust separated from the Barents-Kara Shelf in the Paleocene and then starved of sediment. It may contain up to 10 billion barrels of oil. The Gakkell Ridge rift is also poorly understood and may extend into the Laptev Sea.



Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 4:00 pm Saturday 1 August 2021)

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

FORECAST VALID UNTIL AFTERNOON OF THE 02nd August, 2021: Rain or thundershowers will be scattered in Lower Sagaing, Magway Regions, fairly widespread in Mandalay Region and (Southern and Eastern) Shan State and widespread in the remaining Regions and States with likelihood of regionally heavyfalls in Naypyitaw, Rakhine, Kayin, Mon States and isolated heavyfalls in Upper Sagaing, Magway, Taninthayi Regions and Kachin, Chin States. Degree of certainty is (100%).

STATE OF THE SEA: Squalls with moderate to rough seas are likely at times off and along Myanmar Coasts. Surface wind speed in squalls may reach (30-35)m.p.h. Wave height will be about (7-10)feet off and along Myanmar Coasts.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Increase of rain in Rakhine, Kayin, Mon States.

FORECAST FOR NAYPYITAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 02nd August, 2021: Some rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 02nd August, 2021: One or two rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 02nd August, 2021: One or two rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

Flood Warning

(Issued at 12:00hrs M.S.T on 1-8-2021)

According to the (11:30) hrs M.S.T observation today, the water level of Shwegyin River at Madauk is observed as about (1) foot below its danger level. It may reach its danger level during the next (1) day.

According to the (11:30) hrs M.S.T observation today, the water level of Sittoung River at Madauk is observed as about (½) foot below its danger level. It may reach its danger level during the next (1) day. According to the (11:30) hrs M.S.T observation today, the water level of Bilin River at Bilin is observed as about (1) foot below its danger level. It may reach its danger level during the next (2) days.

It is especially advised to the people who settle near the river banks and low lying areas at Shwegyin Township, Madauk and Bilin Township to take precaution measure.

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SEE PAGE-10



Polar bears remain the most iconic Arctic species, and live only in this landscape. PHOTO: WWF

MoC allows import process of anti-COVID-19 medicines, devices on 1 August

FOR the quick and easy import of anti-COVID-19 medical products and equipment, including liquid oxygen, oxygen gas, and oxygen concentrators, the Ministry of Commerce is allowing regular import activities at border trade points from 2 to 8 August that are designated as public holidays.

Officials from the relevant departments are cooperating to facilitate and expedite the standard operating procedures including online registration for the import process during the long public holidays.

On 1 August (yesterday), 5,822 oxygen concentrators and

15,000 test kits from Yangon International Airport and 95 tonnes of liquid oxygen, seven tonnes of liquid oxygen tank, 6,306 home oxygen concentrators, and 40 tonnes of masks from Muse, Myawady, and Chinshwehaw trading posts were successfully imported.

The aforementioned items were imported by 36 vehicles from 23 companies.

From 12 July to 1 August, 822 tons of liquid oxygen, 575 tonnes of liquid oxygen tank, 114 tonnes of oxygen gas, 75,452 home oxygen concentrators, 337,878 test kits, 1,145 tonnes of masks, eight oxygen plants, 11

oxygen generators and four oxygen filling machines have been allowed to be imported by 785 vehicles as officials are giving priority to disease control of the Covid-19.

The Ministry of Commerce is cooperating with relevant departments to facilitate the importation of Covid-19 disease prevention and control equipment by arranging direct contact with officials from relevant trade centres if assistance is needed and contact persons can be contacted directly at the Ministry's website, Commerce.gov.mm, officials said. —MNA



The Arctic: An Ocean on Top of the World

FROM PAGE-9 Natural Resources

Petroleum and natural gas fields, placer deposits, polymetallic nodules, sand and gravel aggregates, fish, seals and whales can all be found in abundance in the region.

The political dead zone near the centre of the sea is also the focus of a mounting dispute between the United States, Russia, Canada, Norway, and Denmark. It is significant for the global energy market because it may hold 25% or more of the world's undiscovered oil and gas resources.

Climate

The climate of the Arctic region

has varied significantly during the Earth's history. During the Paleocene-Eocene Thermal Maximum 55 million years ago, when the global climate underwent warming of approximately 5–8 °C (9–14 °F), the region reached an average annual temperature of 10–20 °C (50–68 °F). Currently, the Arctic region is warming twice as fast as the rest of the planet.

This Ocean is obviously affected by climate changes, and because of the rising of global temperatures, the ice layer gradually becomes thinner and thinner. The thaw could cause serious flooding, burying some countries underwater, polluting some territories because of its high

concentration of radioactive contaminants, and alter the direction of the ocean currents which could cause severe weather disruptions. Animal species would also be affected. Some researchers think that by 2040, the Arctic could be entirely melted because the ice pack of the ocean shrinks by eight per cent each year.

The Arctic Ocean: A Future in Peril

The Arctic Ocean is one of the most spectacular places on earth for wildlife, but there is much we have yet to learn about this vast ecosystem. Although the weather is harsh in the winter, with gale-force winds, 20-foot seas, and shifting sea ice, these waters provide unspoiled habitat for

millions of migratory birds and thousands of marine mammals, including polar bears, ice seals, endangered bowhead whales, and Pacific walrus. The explorers are still learning about the intricate interactions between wildlife and the ocean in these remote waters. With so much still unknown, it is difficult to fully assess the risks involved in drilling offshore for oil and gas.

- Sources: 1. *Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc.*
2. *Ned Allen Ostenson, 1996. The Arctic Ocean.*
3. *Sarah Gibbens, 2019. The Arctic Ocean explained.*
4. *National Geographic Expeditions.*
5. *Lectures of Parcham Classes*

Myanmar rice market sees flat price amid closure of warehouses

THE price of rice in the domestic market is quite stable as the warehouses and the wholesale centres are temporarily shut down amid the COVID-19 surge.

High-quality rice is demanded in the domestic market and the price moves in the range of K36,000-42,000 per bag depending on different varieties. The low-quality rice is priced between K21,500 and K33,000 per bag. The price has remained unchanged in recent days and trade is nearly halted as the COVID-19 cases are spiking in the country.

Yangon market sees low supply from Pyapon, Mawgyun, Dedaye, Kungyangon, Wakhema, Kawhmu, Twantay, Myaungmya, Kyaiklat, Laputa and Shwebo areas. Next, Border trade disruption led to a sluggish market yet the flat price occurs in the border export market.

The prices of white rice varieties range US\$375 to 405 per metric ton, the price of glutinous rice price was priced \$600-610 per MT and the broken rice fetched \$300-335 per MT depending on



At present, rice shipment to European countries is declining. However, Myanmar is mostly delivering rice and broken rice to China, Malaysia, the Philippines and Bangladesh and shipping broken rice to China, Indonesia, Belgium, Senegal and The Netherlands. The market cools down for now due to the transport difficulties triggered by the COVID-19 impacts and Kyat depreciation.

the different varieties and quality, according to Myanmar Rice Federation (MRF).

The volume of rice and broken rice exported in the nearly eight months (1 October-28 May) of the current financial year 2020-2021 was estimated at over 1.14 million metric tons, generating US\$546.6 million income, the Ministry of Commerce reports.

The country shipped \$576.28 million worth of 1.958 million tonnes of rice and broken rice in the same corresponding period of last FY. Myanmar exported 802,000 tonnes of rice and 601,000 tonnes of broken rice, totalling 1.14 million tonnes. The export volume in the past eight months showed a decrease of over 500,000 tonnes as against last FY.

At present, rice shipment to European countries is declining. However, Myanmar is mostly delivering rice and broken rice to China, Malaysia, the Philippines and Bangladesh and shipping broken rice to China, Indonesia, Belgium, Senegal and The Netherlands. The market cools down for now due to the transport difficulties triggered by the COVID-19

impacts and Kyat depreciation.

China Customs granted licences to 47 Myanmar companies on 26 February 2021 to legally export the rice to China through the Muse land border this year. The authorized companies for rice export to China increased this year as against last year. However, the permitted volume of rice for exports has not been confirmed yet, Muse Rice Wholesale Centre stated.

Moreover, China banned all the border posts on 8 July as Myanmar is battling against the exploding pandemic. As a result of this, the agricultural exports dropped dramatically.

Myanmar set the rice export target at only 2 million tonnes in the current FY as summer paddy growing acreage drops. Weather changes affected irrigation water resource availability on agriculture, MRF stated. Myanmar generated over \$800 million from rice exports in the previous FY2019-2020 ended 30 September, with an estimated volume of over 2.5 million tonnes. — Ko Htet/GNLM

Black gram likely to remain high when market resumes

THE prices of black gram (urad) are expected to remain on an upward trend following the rising prices in India when the warehouses and wholesale centres are reopened, exporters said.

Following the policy change of India's pulses import, the prices of the black gram will remain strong in the domestic market, according to the traders from Mandalay commodity depot.

Strong demand boosted the price of the black gram (urad) to K1,137,500-1,292,500 per tonne on 16 July before the market was closed down, as per Bayintnaung market's data. Following the closure of warehouses and commodity depots in each township triggered by the COVID-19 threat, the pulses trade is on the verge of suspension at the present.

The domestic bean market is positively related to the law of supply and demand. The price depends on the buyers and sellers. There

is no official set price, the traders stressed.

Some traders do price negotiation over the call as the warehouses and the wholesale centres are temporarily closed.

Sometimes, they experience transport and transaction problems, said a trader.

As Myanmar is facing the rapid spread of COVID-19, agricultural exports to China through border posts also came to an abrupt stop, resulting in the price slip in green gram, sesame and peanut.

Nonetheless, the prices of black beans and pigeon beans remain high on the back of strong demand by India.

Myanmar has shipped over 431,264 tonnes of the black gram to foreign countries as of 18 June 2021 since October 2020, generating an income of US\$335.67 million, according to the Ministry of Commerce. — Mon Mon/GNLM

CBM sells \$93.8 mln in past six months

THE Central Bank of Myanmar (CBM) sold US\$93.8 million at its FX auction rate in the past six months (February-July), according to the auction results released by the CBM.

In July, the CBM reportedly sold \$6 million on 8 July and \$3 million each on 5,6,7,14,15,16,26,27, 28, 29 and 30 July in the auction market, totalling \$39 million which is the largest amount sold in the past six months. Consequently, the exchange rate stands at around K1,645 in July-end, according to the CBM.

The bullish hard currency gained in the local forex market, reaching the peak of K1,730 on 12 May from K1,330 in January-end. In a bid to strengthen the local currency and govern the market volatility, the CBM reportedly sold about 6.8 million dollars on 3 February 2021, \$12 million in April, \$24 million in May, \$12 million in June and \$39 million in July in the auction market. The CBM trades the foreign currency with the authorized private banks under the rules and regulations of the FX auction market.

The currency intervention is required to steer the own currency value. It is one of the responsibilities of the CBM to control the price. This is why the CBM practised the foreign exchange intervention. The dollar gain will

benefit the exporters. Yet, it will hike up the local food prices. The currency intervention is required to steer the own currency value. The current political changes in Myanmar and the COVID-19 impacts affect the currency market. Some people want to hold the hard currency during difficult times, a market observer shared his opinion.

The local forex market's data showed that the dollar exchange rate touched the maximum of K1,345 and the minimum of K1,327 in January 2021. The rate moved in the range of K1,335-1,465 in February. It reached the lowest of K1,420 and the highest of K1,550 in March. The rate fluctuated between K1,550 and K1,610 in April. The rate fluctuated between K1,585 and K1,730 in May

and it moved to the maximum of K1,595-1,620 last month.

In 2020, the exchange rate moved in the range of K1,465-1,493 in January, K1,436-1,465 in February, K1,320-1,445 in March, K1,395-1,440 in April, K1,406-1,426 in May, K1,385-1,412 in June, K1,367-1,410 in July, K1,335-1,390 in August, K1,310-1,355 in September, K1,282-1,315 in October, K1,303-1,330 in November and K1,324-1,403 in December.

In 2019, the rates are pegged at K1,508-1,517 in July, K1,510-1,526 in August, K1,527-1,565 in September, K1,528-1,537 in October, K1,510-1,524 in November and K1,485-1,513 in December.

On 20 September 2018, the dollar exchange rate hit an all-time high of K1,650 in the local currency market. — KK/GNLM



The currency intervention is required to steer the own currency value. It is one of the responsibilities of the CBM to control the price. This is why the CBM practised the foreign exchange intervention. The dollar gain will benefit the exporters. Yet, it will hike up the local food prices. The currency intervention is required to steer the own currency value.

U.S. equities book weekly losses amid Fed decision, economic data

U.S. stocks declined for the week as investors parsed policy updates from the Federal Reserve and a slew of key economic data.

For the week ending Friday, the Dow and the S&P 500 both fell 0.4 percent, while the tech-heavy Nasdaq Composite slid 1.1 percent.

The S&P U.S. Listed China 50 index, which is designed to track the performance of the 50 largest Chinese companies listed on U.S. exchanges by total market cap, logged a weekly loss of 4.4 percent.

The U.S. Federal Reserve on Wednesday kept its benchmark interest rate unchanged at the record-low level of near zero amid growing concerns over surging inflation and the

rapid spread of the Delta variant.

“The path of the economy continues to depend on the course of the virus. Progress on vaccinations will likely continue to reduce the effects of the public health crisis on the economy, but risks to the economic outlook remain,” the Fed said in a statement after concluding a two-day meeting.

At a virtual press conference Wednesday afternoon, Fed Chair Jerome Powell said that “we have some ground to cover on the labor market side.”

The Fed chief also said that U.S. inflation will “remain elevated” in the coming months before moderating to normal levels due to supply bottlenecks. — Xinhua ■

Morocco's economy shrinks 6.3 pct in 2020

MOROCCO'S economy shrank by 6.3 percent in 2020 amid the COVID-19 pandemic and a bad agricultural harvest, the central bank said Saturday.

The labour market lost 432,000 jobs, state budget deficit increased to 7.6 percent of the GDP, while the public debt rose to 76.4 percent of the GDP, said Abdellatif Jouahri, governor of Morocco's central bank, in a statement released after he presented to the Moroccan king the annual report on the economic situation for the 2020 fiscal year.

During the year 2020, current account deficit shrank to 1.5 percent of the GDP due to the decline of the country's foreign exchanges, the foreign currency reserves increased to the equivalent of seven months of imports, and inflation was limited to 0.7 percent, the report added.

Morocco is gradually overcoming this crisis with significant progress in the vaccination campaign and a significant recovery of the economy, despite the concerns surrounding the evolution of the pandemic, Jouahri said.

The report added that Morocco should tackle some problems that affect the competitiveness of its economy, such as unfair competition, tax evasion, unprofitable subsidies as well as corruption. — Xinhua ■



People enjoy summer time at the municipal swimming pool in Rabat, Morocco, on June 22, 2021. The municipal swimming pool of Rabat reopened recently. PHOTO: XINHUA

COVID-19 outbreak continues to weigh on Thailand's economic growth

THAILAND'S central bank said Friday that the country's economy in June continued to be impacted by the latest COVID-19 outbreak, the most deadly wave since the pandemic began.

In June, the country's private consumption remained weak, while the tourism sector has yet to recover, but exports, which jumped 46.1 percent year on year, had supported the economy along with public spending, the Bank of Thailand said in a statement.

The country's headline inflation in June declined from May as the low base effect from energy prices gradually abated while core inflation was stable. The labor market remained vulnerable because of the third wave of the outbreak that started in early April.

The central bank said manufacturing production declined slightly from the previous month as production in automotive, petroleum, and construction materials dropped in line with the



Thai dancers wearing face shields perform at the Erawan Shrine in Bangkok, Thailand, May 4, 2020. PHOTO: XINHUA

weak domestic demand.

The global shortages of shipping containers and semiconductors also weighed on production, especially in the food processing, electrical appliances, and automotive sectors, it said.

The manufacturing production index, a gauge of manufacturing activity, fell to 17.6 in June from 25.7 in May, according to the central bank. On Friday, the country reported 17,345 new

cases and 117 additional fatalities, raising the total number of infections to 578,375 and the cumulative fatalities to 4,679.

Thailand's economy posted its worst performance in more than two decades last year, plunging 6.1 percent from one year earlier. Its growth outlook this year has been downgraded by various institutions because of the third wave of the outbreak. — Xinhua ■

Olympic merchandise selling well as Japan's medal haul grows



A man picks up a t-shirt at an official shop in Tokyo, July 26, 2021. PHOTO: KYODO

AS Japan's impressive medal haul grows, sales of official Tokyo Olympics merchandise such as badges and keyrings have been surging, with fans queuing outside stores to buy them despite mounting COVID-19 infections.

While public skepticism about holding the games during a pandemic was strong when they officially opened a week ago, many people in Japan appear keen to get hold of souvenirs of what is likely to be a once-in-a-lifetime event — especially as the country has so far stayed near to or at the top

of the gold medal count.

The official online store, which sells goods ranging from apparel to Japanese traditional crafts, even became temporarily inaccessible due to a traffic surge.

An official shop in Tokyo's Shinjuku district was stocked with some 1,700 items in all, but popular goods such as pin badges and mugs quickly sold out after the games got under way.

The store, which requires visitors to undergo temperature checks and sanitize their hands, was packed recently with

customers bumping shoulders in order to purchase Olympic items.

During the weekend, there was even a long line outside the outlet, despite the Japanese capital being under a COVID-19 state of emergency since July 12.

“I didn't expect it to be so crowded,” said Fuzuki Maruyama, a 32-year-old shop assistant.

Before the opening of the Olympics, opinion polls showed high levels of public unease about hosting the games, even mostly behind closed doors, as Tokyo battled a resurgence of infections.

But as Japan's gold medal count increased and TV programming became dominated by Olympic competitions, the snapping up of merchandise could indicate a softening of sentiment in Tokyo and elsewhere.

“After watching an event, I became excited,” said a 47-year-old man who visited an official merchandise store in the central Japan city of Nagoya to buy a present for his child. — Kyodo News ■

Carmakers warn chip shortage putting brakes on recovery

THE automobile industry is being hit hard by a shortage of computer chips that has slowed production and is set to drag on for months.

Carmakers and suppliers have turned in strong results that beat expectations for the first half of the year, but they warned that a lack of semiconductors had crimped production.

Microchips are essential for the electronics systems of modern cars, and have been in short supply since the end of last year.

The situation is to some extent the fault of carmakers, who scaled back orders when the pandemic hit, so chipmakers shifted output to consumer electronics, which was seeing a boom in demand as people splurged on equipment to work and relax at home.

That left carmakers



Thousands of unfinished cars are seen parked at a Volkswagen factory in Pamplona, Spain, in May due to the lack of semiconductor supplies. PHOTO: AFP

in a tight situation as demand returned, with many slowing or even temporarily halting production at factories.

While automakers and analysts were initially confident the impact would be short-lived and limited, they now see it as lasting

through the rest of the year and the impact as more significant.

Jaguar Land Rover has warned the chip shortage could cut its third-quarter output by half.

The Volkswagen Group said the impact was likely to be “more

pronounced” in the third quarter as it lowered its annual production forecast by roughly 450,000 vehicles.

That is five per cent of last year’s production level, or a third of the output increase that VW had expected earlier this year. — AFP ■

Luxury looks homeward as Covid curtails travel



It is the “upper middle class, the rich and ultra-rich untouched by the crisis” who could not travel and instead bought luxury goods, said Arnaud Cadart at Flornoy. PHOTO: AFP

THE luxury sector has flashed back from the Covid-19 pandemic but the crisis is still putting a crimp in travel, a key part of the market.

Industry giants have reported results that show the world’s well-heeled are splurging on luxury goods as sales surpass even pre-pandemic levels.

LVMH – home to Louis Vuitton, Moët, Fendi, and Kenzo brands among others – saw first-half sales

climb by 11 percent above their pre-pandemic level to 28.7 billion euros (34.1 billion) as it reported a profit of 5.3 billion euros, a whopping 64 percent increase from 2019.

Rival Kering – which owns the Gucci and Balenciaga brands – bested its pre-pandemic level by 8.4 percent with a record 8 billion euros in sales. Hermes reported a 29-percent jump to 4.0 billion in sales.

Both recorded profits of more than a billion euros, beating expectations.

The Swiss luxury group Richemont – Cartier, Piaget, and Montblanc – beat its pre-pandemic level in the second quarter by 18 percent, while Italy’s Prada bested 2019 first-half sales by eight percent.

It is the “upper middle class, the rich and ultra-rich untouched by the crisis” who could not trav-

el or eat out and instead bought luxury goods, said Arnaud Cadart at asset manager Flornoy.

The Chinese, “who represent 35 to 40 percent” of luxury customers, are still crucial, he added.

But while Chinese buyers previously made a lot of their purchases while visiting Europe, they are now making them at home. **‘Violent rebound in the United States’**

In fact, “what was surprising was not so much the recovery in China but the violent rebound in the United States,” remarked Erwan Rambourg a sector analyst and author of “Future Luxe: What’s Ahead for the Business of Luxury”.

Compared with previous crisis recoveries, after the September 11 terror attacks or the 2008 economic crisis for example, “the feeling of guilt, the idea that it is inappropriate to buy luxury goods, disappeared,” Rambourg told AFP. — AFP ■

As Italy’s inflation looks stable, consumers worry about energy price growth

AMID the latest data showing a stable inflation trend in Italy, with food and non-alcoholic drink prices declining, rising costs of energy products seem to feed concerns among consumers.

The all-item consumer price index increased by only 0.1 per cent in June against May, and by 1.3 per cent on an annual basis, the National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT) said.

More specifically, ISTAT’s latest report showed prices of unprocessed food and of transport services decreased

compared to June 2020 -- by 1.1 per cent and 1.4 per cent, respectively -- and those of processed food, including alcohol, declined by 0.4 per cent.

Still on an annual basis, prices related to recreation services and personal care registered a 1 per cent increase, while those of regulated energy products and non-regulated ones grew by 16.9 per cent and by 12.8 per cent, respectively.

“Inflation in June is still mainly supported by the prices of energy goods,” ISTAT noted. — Xinhua ■

Egypt’s biggest handicraft exhibition benefits sellers, buyers

HUNDREDS of Egyptian artisans have found an opportunity to showcase and market their handmade products in the country’s biggest annual exhibition in the Mediterranean resort city of New Alamein.

Dubbed Diarna which means “our homes” in Arabic, the exhibition showcases hundreds of handicrafts and heritage products made by 250 entrepreneurs, productive families and micro-enterprises, including textiles, furniture, home accessories, ceramics, women’s accessories, leather, copper kitchenware, and silver and marble artworks.

Starting on 25 July and running until 25 Aug, the one-month event is organized by the Social Solidarity Ministry, aiming to revive traditional crafts and support small-sized handicraft manufacturers by providing outlets to market their products.

“Such events help me market my products in other cities,” Nema Ahmed, an exhibitor and maker of women’s garments with embroidery, told Xinhua at the 1,000-square-metre main hall.

Ahmed, who lives in Upper Egypt’s Sohag Province, said the turnout is good and visitors showed admiration for her handmade products.

“Customers cannot find such items everywhere ... Handmade products are unique and rare, and that is why many people visit the exhibition,” said the young woman.

Owning a store in her hometown, Ahmed noted that this is her second year to join the annual event which allows her to meet new customers and find out their preferences.

Such exhibitions help business owners sell their goods amid the recession caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, she said.

Ahmed expressed her hope that the exhibition could be held more than once a year since it gives a boost to the national economy in general.

For visitors, the exhibition is also a good chance to find breathtaking pieces of artwork at reasonable prices.

“I have bought some leather bags and wallets at very affordable prices,” Maha Rashidy, a social development expert, told Xinhua. — Xinhua ■

NEWS
IN BRIEF

A year after the mushroom cloud, Lebanon still bleeds

ON 4 August 2020, a fire at the Beirut port ignited one of the largest non-nuclear explosions in history. It disfigured the city, took more than 200 lives and shattered Lebanon's psyche.

The blast was felt as far away as Cyprus, and the destruction is hard to fathom. But if one thing can outweigh what happened to Lebanon that day, it is what hasn't happened since.

Not one culprit has been put on trial, jailed or even identified. Families of the victims have received no visit, apology or explanation from those at the top.

The reforms demanded by donors who flew to the wounded country's rescue are a dead letter, and a new government promised last September has yet to materialize.

With a tailspinning economy, a health sector ravaged by Covid-19 and a future stunted by an intensifying brain drain, Lebanon was already well on its way to collapse before last 4 August.

Yet the cataclysmic blast that shocked the world and sowed the kind of devastation caused by wars and natural disasters did not mark the end of the free fall.

"We thought that was rock bottom. How could it get worse?" Rima Rantisi, a lecturer at the American University of Beirut, remembers of the immediate aftermath. — AFP ■

Maine's 'Lobster Lady'
-- 101 and going strong

IN her boat off the northeastern US coast, 101-year-old Virginia Oliver expertly handles the slick body of a lobster as she snaps rubber bands around its claws, just as she has done since age seven.

The centenarian is the oldest licenced lobsterwoman in the state of Maine, and local historians describe her as perhaps the oldest active one in the world.

Oliver goes out into the waters off the city of Rockland three days a week with her 78-year-old son Max, who helps her crew the boat, aptly named by her late husband "Virginia", after her.

"I'm going to do (this)... till I die," said Oliver. "That's time enough. People say to me 'well, why do you go for it?' Because I want to. I'm old enough to be my own boss."

Oliver -- known by friends as Ginny and to some as the Lobster Lady -- has lived in Rockland her entire life and still lives on the same street where she was born in 1920.

"Ginny's awesome," said David Cousens, a lobsterman and former president of the Maine Lobstermen Association.

"Ginny has been fishing as long as I can remember, obviously. She's 101 years old, she's still going, about three days a week she's down here, she's usually here early in the morning."

Oliver is up at 3:30 am and heading out to her boat by 5 am. Either in her pickup truck or Max's 1956 Chevy, mother and son drive down to a private cove and take their small dingy out to the lobster boat, which sits at a mooring. — AFP ■



Virginia Oliver -- known as the 'Lobster Lady' in her native Maine, in the northeastern United States, has been trapping lobsters for over nine decades. PHOTO: AFP

Mexico holds referendum on prosecuting ex-presidents



Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador has used his daily news conferences to highlight allegations against his predecessors. PHOTO: AFP

MEXICANS vote Sunday in a national referendum promoted by President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador on whether to investigate and prosecute his predecessors for alleged corruption.

Lopez Obrador, a self-styled anti-graft crusader, says the public consultation will strengthen

participatory democracy, but critics see it as little more than a political stunt.

To be binding, 37.4 million people -- 40 percent of the electoral roll -- must participate, but many voters appear unenthusiastic.

While the "yes" vote could win up to 90 per cent, it will be difficult to achieve even 30 per

cent turnout, said Roy Campos, director of the polling company Mitofsky.

Rosario Gomez is among those who plan to vote at one of 57,000 ballot boxes set up by the electoral institute, compared with more than 160,000 for June's legislative and local elections.

"It's about time these thieves pay!" the 52-year-old market vendor said.

Political circus

Mexico is ranked 124th out of 179 on Transparency International's world corruption perceptions index.

But former presidents can be tried like any other citizen and critics argue that the referendum is unnecessary.

"Waiting for the results of a consultation is making justice a political circus," said Jose Miguel Vivanco, regional director of New York-based Human Rights Watch. — AFP ■

YouTube suspends Sky News Australia channel



YouTube said Sunday it had barred Sky News Australia from uploading new content for one week, citing concerns about Covid-19 misinformation. PHOTO: AFP

YOUTUBE said Sunday it had barred Sky News Australia from uploading new content for one week, citing concerns about Covid-19 misinformation.

The move comes after a review of posts uploaded by the Rupert Murdoch-owned TV channel, which has a substantial online presence.

"We have clear and established Covid-19 medical misinformation policies... to prevent the spread of Covid-19 misinformation that could cause real-world harm," a YouTube statement said.

With 1.86 million YouTube

subscribers, the channel -- which is owned by a subsidiary of Murdoch's News Corp -- has a conservative following well beyond Australia.

Its posts, including some questioning whether there is a pandemic and the efficacy of vaccines, are widely shared on social media forums around the world that spread virus and vaccine misinformation.

The last YouTube upload, from three days ago, features a host claiming that lockdowns have failed and criticizing state authorities for extending Sydney's current stay-at-home or-

ders.

Sky News confirmed the temporary ban and a spokesperson said "we support broad discussion and debate on a wide range of topics and perspectives which is vital to any democracy".

"We take our commitment to meeting editorial and community expectations seriously."

YouTube has a "three strikes" policy on violations, with the first resulting in a one-week suspension, a second strike within 90 days producing a two-week ban, while a third means permanent removal from the platform. — AFP ■

All flights from Kandahar Airport cancelled after rocket strikes



At least three rockets struck Kandahar airport in southern Afghanistan overnight, an official told AFP on Sunday, as the Taliban pressed on with their sweeping offensive across the country. **PHOTO: U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE /AFP**

At least three rockets struck Kandahar airport in southern Afghanistan overnight, an official told AFP on Sunday, as the Taliban pressed on with their sweeping offensive across the country.

“Last night three rockets were fired at the airport and two of them hit the runway... Due to this all flights from the airport have been cancelled,” airport chief Massoud Pashtun told AFP.

Pashtun said work to repair the runway was underway and expected the airport to be oper-

ational later on Sunday.

An official at the civil aviation authority in Kabul confirmed the rocket attack.

The Taliban have for weeks launched withering assaults on the outskirts of Kandahar, stirring fears that the insurgents were on the verge of capturing the provincial capital.

Kandahar’s air base is vital to providing the logistics and air support needed to keep the militants from overrunning Afghanistan’s second-biggest city.

The attack on the airport

came as the Taliban inched closer to overrunning two other provincial capitals -- Herat in the west and Lashkar Gah in the south.

The Taliban’s significant territorial gains during the final stages of the US military withdrawal have largely been in sparsely populated rural areas.

But in recent weeks they have brought increasing pressure on several provincial capitals and seized key border crossings. — AFP ■

Ocean Viking ship rescues nearly 200 migrants off Libya



The Ocean Viking on Saturday rescued 196 migrants off Libya, the humanitarian ship’s operator said. **PHOTO: AFP**

THE Ocean Viking on Saturday rescued 196 migrants off Libya, the humanitarian ship’s operator said.

It first picked up 57 people in an inflatable dinghy struggling in international waters off the North African country, SOS Mediterranee said.

In the afternoon, the ship’s crew carried out two additional rescues in the same area, plucking 54 people from a dinghy and 64 others from a wooden vessel.

In their latest operation, they saved 21 people from a wooden vessel.

The total rescued included

at least two pregnant women and 33 minors, 22 of them unaccompanied.

According to the International Organization for Migration, at least 1,146 people have died at sea trying to reach Europe during the first half of 2021.

SOS Mediterranee says it has rescued more than 30,000 people since February 2016, first with the ship Aquarius, then with Ocean Viking.

SOS Mediterranee accuses European Union governments of neglecting coordinated search-and-rescue action to discourage migrants from attempting the crossing from war-torn Libya, where they are often victims of organized crime and militia violence. Libyan authorities are also accused of forcibly returning intercepted ships to Libya, even when they are in European waters. — AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Protesters demand probe into Canada indigenous schools

HUNDREDS of protesters in Canada’s capital called on Saturday for a probe into a boarding school system for indigenous children, as outrage built after the discovery of hundreds of unmarked graves at several of the facilities.

Until the 1990s, some 150,000 indigenous, Inuit and Metis youths were forcibly enrolled in the schools, where students were physically and sexually abused by headmasters and teachers who stripped them of their culture and language.

“Indigenous Peoples need truth and justice,” MP Mumilaaq Qaqqaq wrote on Instagram. — AFP ■

Dozen homes destroyed, five hospitalised in Greece forest fire

AROUND a dozen homes were destroyed and five people were hospitalized with breathing problems Saturday in a forest fire near Patras, Greece’s third largest city, authorities said.

Some 145 firefighters, 50 trucks, eight firefighting planes and helicopters have been mobilized to extinguish the fire in the Zeria region in the Peloponnese, about 210 kilometres (130 miles) west of Athens, the firefighting service said.

The authorities evacuated people from five villages in the region as well as from the tourist resort of Loggos on the coast.

Around a dozen homes burned and five people experiencing breathing problems were transported to hospitals in the region, the civil protection authority said. — AFP ■

S. Africa pays tribute to rangers in commemoration of World Ranger Day

SOUTH African Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment Barbara Creecy thanked rangers for protecting wildlife in the country on Saturday in commemoration of the World Ranger Day.

“In the battle to conserve our wildlife and halt poaching, it is our rangers who remain at the forefront, putting their lives on the line daily to conserve our environment and vulnerable species despite the additional risk of contracting COVID-19,” said Creecy.

Creecy said the collaboration between the rangers, police, National Prosecuting Authority and other stakeholders is bearing fruits from January to June 2021, with 40 alleged poachers arrested within the

Kruger National Park. A total of 125 people have been arrested for rhino poaching and rhino horn trafficking across the country in the past six months.

Numerous confiscations of rhino horn have also taken place since January, both within the country as well as at OR Tambo International Airport. A total of 14 cases have been finalized since the start of the year with a verdict, representing a 93 per cent conviction rate.

“It is clear that the multi-disciplinary, integrated approach to investigating illegal wildlife trade is bearing fruit and that effective collaboration with critical role players remains key to our success,” said Creecy. — Xinhua ■



A rhinoceros crosses a road inside Kruger National Park, some 60 km from Nelspruit in South Africa on June 13, 2010. **PHOTO: AFP**

Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council Nine Objectives

1. Political affairs

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

2. Economic affairs

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

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

3. Social affairs

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

Olympics: Schauffele golden in men's golf, Matsuyama misses medal

U.S. golfer Xander Schauffele won the gold medal in men's Olympic golf Sunday with Japanese medal hope Hideki Matsuyama being knocked out on the first hole of a seven-way bronze playoff.

Schauffele carded an 18-under four-round total to beat Rory Sabbatini of Slovakia by one shot. Seven players, including Matsuyama, Ireland's Rory McIlroy, American Collin Morikawa and eventual bronze medalist C.T. Pan from Taiwan, finished at 15-under.

Schauffele shot a 67 on Sunday at Kasumigaseki Country Club with five birdies and a single bogey while Sabbatini made two bogeys but still shot an Olympic record 61 to soar 15 places up



Japan's Hideki Matsuyama (2nd from R) and Xander Schauffele (far L) of the United States exchange words before starting the final round of the Tokyo Olympic men's golf tournament on 1 Aug 2021, at Kasumigaseki Country Club in Kawagoe, Saitama Prefecture, near Tokyo. **PHOTO: KYODO**

the leaderboard.

Matsuyama, who was seeking to become the first Japanese, male or female,

to win an Olympic medal in the sport, and Great Britain's Paul Casey bogeyed the first playoff hole and

were knocked out.

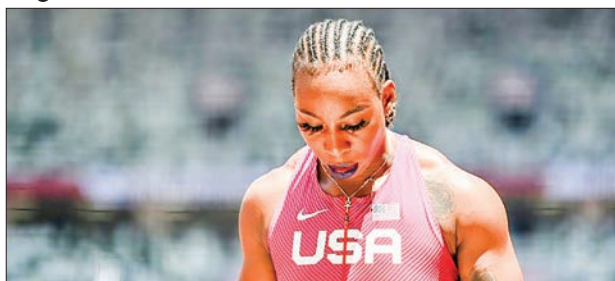
All five remaining players -- Pan, Morikawa, Chile's Mito Pereira, Columbia's Sebastian Munoz and McIlroy -- made par on the second extra hole to advance.

Eventually, it became a two-man race between Pan and Morikawa on the fourth playoff hole, the third time each man had played the 18th on the day.

Pan hacked his approach to the edge of the green from the deep rough but Morikawa plugged deep near the front lip of a greenside bunker allowing the Taiwan player to take bronze with a par.

There were no galleries because of the rising COVID-19 infections in Japan. — Kyodo News ■

US Olympic hammer thrower Berry undeterred by anthem backlash



Gwen Berry qualified for the women's Olympic hammer final in Tokyo. **PHOTO: AFP**

ATHLETE-ACTIVIST Gwen Berry is determined to have the last laugh on critics who demanded she

be barred from the Olympics over her podium protest at US track and field trials.

The American hammer thrower was thrust into the national spotlight in June after turning away from the US flag during a rendition of the national anthem at Hayward Field.

Berry, who advanced to the Olympic hammer final on Sunday with a throw of 73.19m, faced calls from Republican lawmakers for her to be kicked off the US team, with right-wing

pundits questioning her patriotism.

However the 32-year-old shrugged off her critics on Sunday as she competed in a uniform emblazoned with "USA" and an American flag.

"All those people that hate me aren't here, so they can't affect me," said Berry, adding that she has learned to "compartmentalize" the abuse. — AFP ■

Australia's McKeon takes place among all-time greats after Olympic pool heroics

SWIMMING great Ian Thorpe says Emma McKeon has "flown under the radar" in Australia but now she is firmly on the map after her stunning performances at the Tokyo Olympics.

McKeon has joined the greats of Australian sport, winning her 11th Olympic medal -- and fifth gold -- on Sunday to become the country's most decorated Olympian.

The 27-year-old's haul eclipses the nine medals won by Thorpe and fellow swimmer Leisel Jones, putting her two clear at the top of Australia's all-time list.

McKeon won seven medals in Japan, which is the most for any female swimmer at one Olympics and the most a woman has achieved in any sport at a single Games since 1952.

"It's very surreal," McKeon said on Sunday at the end of a nine-day meet at the Tokyo Aquatics Centre. "I only hear from you guys those kinds of stats."

"I look at the athletes that have gone before me and have been so impressed and inspired by what they've done but I've never been into the stats and medal counts. But to be in that kind of company, it's an honour and I know I've worked hard for it." — AFP ■



Australia's Emma McKeon won four gold medals in Tokyo to take her overall tally of Olympic medals to 11. **PHOTO: AFP**