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Five-Point Road Map of the State Administration Council

1. The Union Election Commission will be reconstituted and its mandated tasks, including the scrutiny of voter lists, shall be implemented in accordance with the law.
2. Effective measures will be taken with added momentum to prevent and manage the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. Actions will be taken to ensure the speedy recovery of businesses from the impact of COVID-19.
4. Emphasis will be placed on achieving enduring peace for the entire nation in line with the agreements set out in the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement.
5. Upon accomplishing the provisions of the state of emergency, free and fair multiparty democratic elections will be held in line with the 2008 Constitution, and further work will be undertaken to hand over State duties to the winning party in accordance with democratic standards.

Vice-Chairman of State Administration Council Vice-Senior General Soe Win holds talks with Deputy Defence Minister of Russian Federation, cordially meets with families of embassy, military attaché's office

VICE-CHAIRMAN of the State Administration Council Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Commander-in-Chief (Army) Vice-Senior General Soe Win who is currently in the Russian Federation held a meeting with Russian Deputy Minister of Defence Colonel-General Alexander Vasilyevich Fomin at the Ministry of Defence in the afternoon of Russian Standard Time on 3 September.

Also present at the meeting together with the Vice-Senior General were Lt-Gen Aung Soe of the Office of the Commander-in-Chief (Army), the military attaché and senior military officers. The Russian Deputy Minister of Defence was accompanied by officials.

They cordially exchanged views on further cooperation in the enhancement of friendly relations between Myanmar and Russia and the two armed forces, and plans of Russia to



Vice-Chairman of the State Administration Council Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Commander-in-Chief (Army) Vice-Senior General Soe Win presents a souvenir to Russian Deputy Minister of Defence Colonel-General Alexander Vasilyevich Fomin in Moscow.

SEE PAGE-3

Pyin Oo Lwin
NAN MYAING
 PURE ARABICA COFFEE

MoC allows import process of anti-COVID-19 devices, medical aids daily



THE Ministry of Commerce is making efforts to ensure people have access to the essential medical supplies that are critical to the COVID-19 prevention, control and treatment activities, including liquid oxygen and oxygen cylinders, arranging continuous importation on public holidays.

On 4 September (yesterday), anti-COVID-19 equipment, medical products including oxygen plants and concentrators were imported by 18 companies and transported by 32 vehicles, including two bowzers.

A total of 40 tonnes of oxygen (liquid) carried by two bowzers, 12 tonnes of liquid oxygen, 4,085 empty oxygen cylinders, nine oxygen plants, five oxygen generators, 50 oxygen concentrators for home use, 82,750 PPE suits, ten tonnes of gloves, and 26 tonnes of masks were imported via Muse, Chinshwehaw, Myawady, Tachilek

and Hteekhee trading posts and Yangon International Airport.

From 1 August to 4 September, 1,530 vehicles carrying 1,806 tonnes of liquid oxygen bowser, 472 tonnes of liquid oxygen, 74 tonnes of oxygen gas, 19 storage containers, nine liq-

uid oxygen distributors, 200,000 empty oxygen cylinders, 115 oxygen plants, three hospital oxygen generators, three oxygen refilling machines, 31 oxygen generators, 93,395 oxygen concentrators for home use, 200,000 test kits, 900,000 sets of PPE, 133 tonnes of gloves and 2,076 tonnes of the mask were allowed to be imported.

In the same period, a total of 82 oxygen bowzers were allowed to be transported.

Among the 82 vehicles, 66 vehicles were transported to Yangon, five to Mandalay, three to Nay Pyi Taw, four to Mawlamyine, two to Bago, one each to Monywa and Thanbyuzayat.

Two vehicles carrying liquid oxygen plus eight oxygen plants were transported to Yan-

gon and one oxygen plant each were transported to Magway, Mawlamyine and Dedaye.

Out of 115 oxygen plants: 62 oxygen plants to Yangon, 10 to Mandalay, five to Lashio, four to Bago, another four to Myitkyina, three to Kyauk Padaung, three to Mawlamyine, two to Monywa,

two to Magway, another two to Pakkoku, two to Hpa-an, another two to Minbu and one each to Taunggyi, Nay Pyi Taw, Myitta, Moegaung, Myingyan, Kyauktaga, Wakhema, Thanbyuzayat, Dawei, Kungyangon, Sittway, Dedaye, Myinmu and Mudon were successfully transported.



Officials from the relevant departments are cooperating to facilitate and expedite the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), including online registration for the import process during the long public holidays.

It is reported that the Ministry of Commerce is coordinating with relevant departments, facilitating the importation of essential medical supplies required in the prevention, control and treatment of COVID-19, as well as contact persons for inquiries can be reached through the Ministry's Website — www.commerce.gov.mm.—MNA

IDPs in Kyauktaw township receive first jabs of COVID-19 vaccine

PEOPLE in Nay Pu Khan IDP camp in Kyauktaw Township, MraukU District, Rakhine State, received the first doses of Sinopharm COVID-19 vaccines yesterday morning.

With the management of U Kyaw

Swar Nyunt, Chairman of the township administration body, officials from the Township Public Health Department, the Township Administration Department, ward/village administrators and the IDP camp in-charges collaborated

for the vaccination process.

The vaccines were administered in line with the COVID-19 guidelines set by the Ministry of Health, and health awareness lectures were given to the vaccinated people.

It is reported that a total of 678 people from the Nay Pu Khan IDP camp in Kyauktaw Township received their first dose of the Sinopharm COVID-19 vaccine yesterday. — Khin Maung Tun (IPRD)/GNLM



Inoculation process is underway and health workers administer the first doses of Sinopharm Covid vaccines to IDPs in Kyauktaw Township, Rakhine State. PHOTO: KHIN MAUNG TUN (IPRD)

The rate of COVID-19 disease infection has dropped

THE rate of COVID-19 disease infection has dropped due to the supervision of the relevant authorities and the good cooperation of the people, adding the need to diagnose the contact persons of the COVID-19 positive patients in order to continue to reduce the infection and to be cautious despite the decline rate in virus infection.

(Excerpt from the speech to the 9th coordination meeting on COVID-19 prevention, control and treatment activities made by Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister of the Provisional Government of Myanmar Senior General Min Aung Hlaing on 23-8-2021)

Vice-Chairman of State Administration Council Vice-Senior General Soe Win holds talks with Deputy Defence Minister of Russian Federation, cordially meets with families of embassy, military attaché's office

FROM PAGE-1

provide aid for military technology, education, health and various sectors. After the meeting, the Vice-Senior General and the Russian Deputy Minister of Defence exchanged commemorative gifts.

Moreover, the Vice-Senior General went to the Myanmar Embassy to the Russian Federation and cordially met with families of the Myanmar Embassy and the office of the Military Attaché (Army, Navy and Air), urging them to give a helping hand to each other as they are serving the State

duties together abroad, and ensuring loyalty to the State and own ministry as good service personnel in their respective sectors so as to further promote friendly relations between the two countries and raise the State interests.

The Vice-Senior General presented gifts and cash awards for families of the Myanmar Embassy and the office of the Military Attaché (Army, Navy and Air) to Ambassador U Lwin Oo and Military Attaché Commodore Kyaw Soe Moe.—MNA



Vice-Senior General Soe Win holds talks with Russian Deputy Minister of Defence Colonel-General Alexander Vasilyevich Fomin.



The Vice-Senior General cordially meets family members of the Myanmar Embassy and the office of the Military Attaché (Army, Navy and Air) in Moscow.



Vice-Senior General Soe Win presents gifts and cash awards for families of the Myanmar Embassy to Ambassador U Lwin Oo.

3,078 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 4 September, total figure rises to 412,587

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to 412,587 after 3,078 new cases were reported on 4 September 2021 according to the Ministry of Health. Among these confirmed cases, 360,494 have been discharged from hospitals. Death toll reached 15,795 after 102 died.—MNA

Daily newspapers available online

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News and Periodicals Enterprise

MoNREC Union Minister inspects limestone mining, cement plant, conservation works in Mandalay Region

UNION Minister for Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation U Khin Maung Yi conducted a ground survey to limestone mining of Shwe Taung Mining Limited in Pyin Nyaung of Thazi Township in Mandalay region and Apache cement factory to ensure environmental conservation yesterday.

During the visit, the Union Minister said the factory has the capacity to produce 5,500 tonnes of cement per day and is full of production capacity as the needed limestone can be explored near the factory area. It should emphasize the occupational safety and conservation works in limestone



production and operation of the cement plant. If so, it will be a responsible investment and achieve sustainable development. It needs to arrange for better ESG – Environment,

Social and Governance.

The Union Minister also highlighted the need to install a regular monitoring system and another system for controlling the emission from cement production, operate in line with the EIA – Environmental Impact Assessment and adopt Clean Technology in the long run.

The factory in-charge briefed the operations of limestone production, cement factory and work plans being carried out through EIA.

The Union Minister then inspected the Ashe Yepaung-sone forest reserve of the Forest Department in Thazi Township of Mandalay Region in the same afternoon. — MNA

Public request by Ministry of Health

ONLY when the people cooperate will the work process achieve success in a short time for effective prevention, control and treatment of COVID-19 among the people. As such, all the people are requested to abide by the following points: -

1. Stay at home as much as possible.
2. Don't accept the guests at the house. You don't visit other houses.
3. The older persons above 65 or those suffering from chronic diseases such as diabetes, hypertension and heart must be worn masks in the house. They must be placed at well-ventilated sites.
4. Wear masks if you go outside without fail. Systematically wash hands. Take a six-foot distance from others. Avoid visits to the rooms where ventilation is not good.
5. Avoid the crowds.
6. If possible, go shopping once a week. Don't buy anything from the vendors who don't systematically wear masks.
7. Take care of carrying the virus to the houses whenever return home from outside. Systematically discard the used masks and single disposable equipment outside the houses. Avoid close contact with family members before changing clothes or washing the body.
8. As the vaccines for your quota is the best, accept vaccinations for full time. Despite receiving the vaccination, you should abide by the protective ways.
9. Systematically cooperate in prevention, control and treatment of the disease with manpower, money, materials and expertise.

Ministry of Health (2-8-2021)

Actual FDI to Myanmar stands at only \$2.2 bln in 2020

THE statistics released by the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA) indicated that the actual FDI to Myanmar in 2020 was only US\$2.2 billion, according to Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC).

The foreign investors make the feasibility study before the operation. Therefore, the permitted capitals by the Myanmar Investment Commission are not brought into the country immediately, said an official of MIC.

Viet Nam put more than 20 per cent of actual FDI in Myanmar in 2020, followed by the Republic of Korea and Singapore.

Manufacturing accounted for 29.77 per cent. Oil and natural gas constituted 26.96 per cent. Real estate drew 25.77 per cent. Other sectors: financial services, power, construction, telecommunications, trading and wholesale, hotels and tourism, livestock and fisheries, agriculture, transport, industrial estate and mining pulled only less than eight per cent each, FDI sector-wise data stated.

The FDIs permitted by MIC and endorsed by the region and state investment committees amounted to \$6.9 million from 158 enterprises in the FY2016-2017, \$6.119 billion from

234 businesses in the FY2017-2018, \$1.94 billion from 89 projects in the 2018 mini-budget year, \$4.5 billion from 298 businesses in the FY2018-2019 and \$5.689 billion from 253 businesses in the FY2019-2020 respectively, according to the DICA's statistics.

Nevertheless, the actual FDI inflow stood at \$1.19 billion in 2014, \$4.27 billion in 2015, \$3.88 billion in 2016, \$4.8 billion in 2017, \$1.77 billion in 2018, \$1.729 billion in 2019 and \$2.2 billion in 2020, the DICA's data showed.

Myanmar attracted foreign direct investment of more than US\$3.767 billion from 45 projects in the past ten months (October-July) of the 2020-2021 financial year from 45 enterprises.

They included expansion of capital by existing enterprises and investments in the Thilawa Special Economic Zone, according to the DICA.

The Ministry of Investment and Foreign Economic Relations has been inviting responsible businesses to benefit the country.

MIC ensures to approve the responsible businesses by assessing environmental and social impacts.

The commission is working together with the relevant departments to screen the projects. — KK/GNLM

Demand for tomatoes high despite prices slump

ALTHOUGH the prices of tomatoes drop, the demand is high at the Thiri Marlar Wholesale Centre of Mandalay, according to the tomato wholesalers.

The country sees a high yield this year and the trucks between 15 to 20 arrive at the Thiri Marlar Wholesale Centre per day.

Currently, although the price of tomatoes drops from between K2,000 to K2,500 per box containing 18 visses of small size tomatoes, while a box containing 18 visses of large size tomatoes to K6,000, the demand is still on the rise, said U Aung Moe Naing, owner of the Aung Wholesale Centre.

“The tomato prices decline but the demand is high as the production rate is also high across the nation this season.



Currently, although the price of tomatoes drops from between K2,000 to K2,500 per box containing 18 visses of small size tomatoes, while a box containing 18 visses of large size tomatoes to K6,000, the demand is still on the rise.

The price is convenient for the customers. We face some difficulties as we cannot trade

peacefully due to the fixed opening and closing hours of the market. The infection rate

of the disease also declines recently. Therefore, the officials should ease the restriction for

the markets in each township. If so, it will be a win-win situation for both the buyers and vendors, including farmers. They should review the operating hours of the market. The current tomato transaction is normal despite the high demand,” he said.

Moreover, one housewife who came to Nyaungbin Market of Aungmyaythazan Township said, “the people began panic buying in the market as the price of tomato is K600 per viss. I also bought two visses of tomatoes.”

The Thiri Marlar market receives the tomatoes produced from Innlay, Ywangan and May Myo townships daily and also trades various types of raw vegetables. — Min Htet Aung (Mdy Sub-Printing House)/GNLM

USD against MMK hits around K1,800

THE exchange rate stood at its highest point of K1,800 per US dollar in the foreign exchange market.

Although the dollar exchange rate hit only K1,708 per dollar on 3 September as stated by the Central Bank of Myanmar (CBM), the outside exchange rate is set at K1,800 per dollar. Thus, the local forex market rate is K100 higher than the rate set by the CBM.

The CBM sold US\$ 28 million in seven times at its auction rate in August to stabilize the US dollar exchange rate. In July, the central bank reportedly sold \$39 million at an auction rate. Besides, the bank sold \$12 million at an auction rate as well.

The CBM is conducting an auction for foreign exchange to reduce the fluctuation of foreign exchange rates in a short-term period.

The dollar exchange rate against Myanmar Kyat stood at around K1,330 per dollar at the end-January. Then, the rate jumped to around K1,800 per dollar on 4 September with a rise of over K400 in over seven months.

In the first eight months of 2021, the highest and lowest exchange rate is currently fixed around K1,327-1,345 in January, K1,335-1,465 in February, K1,420-1,550 in March, K1,550-1,610 in April, K1,585-1,730 in May, K1,595-1,620 in June, K1,626-1,670 in July and K1660-1682 in August.

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. — NN/GNLM

Prompt transport of live aquatic animals important to market sustainability

PROMPT transport of foreign marketable live maritime animals is important to market sustainability.

In the third wave of COVID-19, Myanmar exported its marine products to foreign countries via sea route. However, the live aquatic animals are needed to reach the export market within 24 hours and it is being shipped by regional countries by the air route. If the live aquatic animals will be exported by the charter flight, the cost will be ranging between US\$38,000 or \$40,000 per 11 tonnes. Some local businessmen have also struggled in the transport sector because the flights are not being able to fly directly to the live aquatic marketable countries.

“We have aquatic products as well as export markets. In the third wave of COVID-19, there are difficulties in the transport sector. Although there is an export market with high demand for fishery products, we have difficulty exporting the live marine animals within 24 hours because there is a lack of direct airlines to those countries. The cost of renting the charter flight will be over \$3,400 per tonne. We may also need a link to the banks. That is the reason why we are using the export of aquatic products via sea route to keep the market afloat,” said an official from Super Fresh Capital Hong Kong Co., Ltd. Myanmar’s live water-living animals such as fisheries, shrimp and crab are transported to Hong Kong and

Taiwan through a live aquatic animal’s market in Guangzhou city, the People’s Republic of China.

Earlier, Myanmar exported 10 to 20 tonnes of marine animals alive per day due to the popularity of Myanmar fishery products. Now, it is also shipped the same volume of live maritime animals.

Fisheries, shrimp and crab are transported from Kawthoung to Yangon and then to the market country via flight. Earlier, the foreign marketable soft-shell crab, lobster, mantis shrimp, giant sea perch, eel, cuttlefish and winkle from Rakhine State, Taninthayi and Ayeyawady regions were directly transported to foreign markets through the Yangon region within 24 hours. — Nyein Thu (MNA)/GNLM



GNLM File photo: Workers sort crabs at the market in Myeik, Taninthayi Region.

Perpetrators of armed attack to 6 policemen on Yangon circular train arrested with weapons, ammunition



Perpetrators of armed attack arrested along with weapons and ammunition.

PERPETRATORS of the deadly armed attack that happened on the Insein-Yangon-Insein-Hlawgar-Insein circular train on 14 August 2021, which killed five policemen and injured one, were arrested together with four weapons and ammunition taken from the police force.

Suspects named Kyaw Win Soe, Kaung Pyae Sone Oo and San Min Aung were found and detained at No (302/B), Building number 7, on Dagon Lwin Street, Myitta Nyunt ward, Tamway Township on the morning of 3 September, based on the continuous investigation by a combined team of police and security forces. It was also revealed that they used a taxi AD van with a numberplate 1H/6927 (white colour) and a taxi Fielder with a numberplate GG/6266 (lead colour) by changing the number plates.

Their statements revealed that they were involved in the

incident that happened on the train, and the security forces arrested Myat Phyo Pwint together with four weapons taken from the policemen at No (2/A), Bayintnaung street, Thuwunna Myothit, Thingangyun Township. In addition, Zeya Phyo who returned to the apartment was also detained. Following their statements, the security forces searched the house of Lin Lin (a) Nay Lin Htike (a) Hta Sin Htoo, the leader of the group, in Dagon Myothit (North) Township, however, he escaped. It was also learnt on 2 September that he went to the house of his friend Ma Ohnmar where the security forces searched but did not find him as he escaped again.

The confession of the suspects led to the place of pistols used in the attack, and the security forces found and confiscated a communicator (Hytera) and related materials at No 44, Yankyaung street, Motelat-

saung hill (North), Sangyaung. According to the statement of the arrested suspects, Kaung Pyae Sone Oo (a sailor) and 25 other people attended the terrorist training course on 22 March in the KNU territory and returned in May. On 10 August, Nay Lin Htike led 15 people including Kaung Pyae Sone Oo, Ko Zaw, Shan Lay, Ma Phyo, Zeya Phyo discussed to carry out an attack to the train police. San Min Aung (arrested), Kyaw Win Soe (arrested), Ko Shine (on the run), took charge of keeping an eye on the police force and Kaung Pyae Sone Oo, Nay Lin Htike, Ko Zaw, Shan Lay, Aung Gyi and Kyaw Lay took the responsibility to shoot at the police force.

After the attack, the group with Nay Lin Htike took the weapons and ammunition left by a taxi and Kaung Pyae Sone Oo and the other two people left by a Honda Civic.

According to the group mes-

sages in a seized phone from them, ex-MP (NLD) Phyo Zeya Thaw (aka) Maung Thaw contacted his girlfriend Myat Phyo Pwint to keep the police weapons at the secure place. The weapons stored in two guitar bags were transported in 2J/1902 Camery car (lead colour) to the house in Thingangyun on 1 September.

The security forces confiscated those weapons on 3 September. It is reported that the security forces are making continuous efforts to arrest the rest of the perpetrators and has requested the people to work together to identify the related incidents committed by the terrorist groups.—MNA



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(From top to down) Re-seized weapons and ammunition from Tamway, Thingangyun and Dagon Myothit(North) Townships.

Air KBZ extends suspension of domestic flights to highly COVID-19-infected areas

AIR KBZ extended the suspension of their domestic flights to Lashio, Tachilek, Kengtung, Kalay, Dawei, Myeik and Kawthoung until the end-September due to COVID-19 infection, according to its airline announcement.

Thus, the passengers who have bought airline tickets in advance to these destinations can apply for a refund and they

are also allowed to change the flight schedule, passengers' names and destinations through respective airline agencies.

MAI and Air KBZ will resume their flights to Sittway-Mandalay at the end of August and extend Heho-Mandalay-Myitkyina-Putao and Kyaukphyu flights.

MAI and Air KBZ started their Yangon-Sittway direct

flight and Mandalay-Kyaukphyu flights on 27 August. In these trips, MAI and Air KBZ will cooperate and fly with Embraer E190 aircraft.

In September, MAI will fly its rescue and special flights to Kuala Lumpur, Seoul, Bangkok and Dubai. MAI will fly their flights to Kuala Lumpur every Monday, Wednesday and Thursday while the airline will fly to

Seoul, Korea to every Tuesday and Bangkok every Saturday and Dubai every Sunday during September.

Passengers who have purchased tickets for the extended travel period will be allowed to transfer one-time date change free to the next available flight based on seat availability.

The passengers impacted by the flight suspensions need

to inform the new rebooking date or refund application to the airline agent not later than 30 November 2021.

Besides, the non-refundable tickets will be exchanged with a travel voucher.

Its travel voucher will be available by 31 December 2021. The travel voucher is not allowed to be transferred to others. —Aye Maung/GNLM

El Salvador's Bukele gets green light to run for re-election

EL SALVADOR'S top court Friday said populist President Nayib Bukele would be allowed to run for a second term, despite the country's constitution prohibiting the head of state from serving two consecutive terms in office.

The Supreme Court decision will allow Bukele to run for a second term in 2024 -- potentially making him the Central American nation's first president to serve more than five years in office since the 1950s.

In its ruling, the court said a sitting head of state could seek re-election for a second term as long as they have not "been president during the immediately preceding period".

The decision was handed down by judges appointed to El Salvador's highest court by Bukele in May after the country's parliament removed several justices critical of the government -- a move decried by critics as a "coup d'etat" and one which sparked international condemnation.



Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele enjoys broad popularity but has been accused of authoritarian tendencies. PHOTO: AFP

The new judges then reversed a previous decision by the Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court that ruled the president could not serve more than one consecutive mandate. However, that ruling did allow the head of state to run again in a subsequent election.

Elected in 2019, Bukele enjoys broad support in El Salvador over his promises to fight organized crime and improve security

in the violence-wracked country.

His allies also hold a large majority in the country's Congress -- a situation not seen since a peace deal in 1992 put an end to 12 years of bloody civil war.

But he has long been accused of authoritarian tendencies.

Last year, Bukele dispatched troops to the country's parliament in a bid to pressure lawmakers. — AFP ■

France faces anger over planned wind farm next to WWI memorial



The memorial at Villers-Bretonneux has become a lightning rod for the row over wind farms. PHOTO: AFP

OPPONENTS of a wind farm planned next to a battlefield in France where hundreds of Australian soldiers died during World War I are urging the government to cancel the plan, calling it an affront to the memory of the dead.

Politicians and campaigners have spent years trying to overturn plans for turbines next to World War I killing fields in northern France, where around 10,000 Australians were among hundreds of thousands killed and wounded.

In 2017, Australian officials expressed relief after French state electricity company Engie pulled the plug on a wind farm project in Bullecourt, site of two battles that were particularly deadly for the Australians.

The firm said at the time that the negative reaction -- not least from the French state -- had underscored the site's "sacredness".

The same year, French authorities rejected plans for another wind farm next to Australia's national war memorial

in Villers-Bretonneux, close to President Emmanuel Macron's hometown of Amiens, saying it would be a blot on the landscape.

But in March this year, an appeal court in the town of Douai overturned that decision and gave wind energy company Les Vents de Picardie the green light to proceed with the farm around five kilometres from the memorial.

The case has become a cause celebre among local politicians, who are piling pressure on Macron to take the fight to France's top courts.

"We cannot accept that the transition to green energy, which is necessary, be given precedence over the memory of, and respect for the dead," Christophe Coulon, vice-president of the Hauts-de-France region, told AFP in a telephone interview.

"It's a moral issue," said Coulon, who held a press conference with two other prominent local politicians at the memorial site on Thursday.

But the government has so far refused to contest the decision. — AFP ■

33,000 children killed, maimed in 20-year US war in Afghanistan: aid organization

NEARLY 33,000 children have been killed and maimed in Afghanistan amid its 20-year war, an average of one child every five hours, an Iranian media outlet has said.

"The numbers were a devastating insight into the deadly cost of war on children," PressTV reported Wednesday, citing data from Save the Children, a London-headquartered international humanitarian organization which is said to have worked in Afghanistan since 1976 to deliver lifesaving services to children and their families.

"The real number of direct child casualties of the conflict will likely be much higher than the estimated 32,945, and this number does not include chil-

dren who have died due to hunger, poverty and disease in that time," the organization added, according to the PressTV report.

"What remains after 20 years is a generation of children whose entire lives have been blighted by the misery and impact of war. The magnitude of human suffering of the past two decades is beyond comprehension," said Hassan Noor, Asia regional director for Save the Children.

The United States on Monday ended its two decades of war in Afghanistan, the longest war in American history, when the last U.S. planes flew out of the Asian country's capital, Kabul. — Xinhua ■

Taliban battle for final holdout province of Panjshir

ANTI-TALIBAN fighters in Afghanistan's Panjshir Valley said Friday they were battling to repulse "heavy" assaults, as the Islamists seek to capture the last holdout province defying their rule.

Efforts to strike a peace deal between the two sides have failed, and the Taliban are keen to cap their lightning military offensive which saw them seize control of the rest of Afghanistan last month.

"The Taliban have a significant advantage," said Nishank Motwani, an Afghan analyst based in Australia, saying the Islamists were emboldened by their recent victories.

"They are very well armed, and they have the psychological factor in their favour in that they precipitated the fall of the government so quickly."

The Taliban seized an enormous arsenal of weapons and military kit that the now departed US provided to the defeated Afghan army, as well as the support of prisoners they freed from jails.

"The Taliban also have shock troops, including the use of suicide tactics," Motwani added.

Fighters from the National Resistance Front (NRF), made up of anti-Taliban militia fighters and former Afghan security forces, are understood to have significant weapon stockpiles too in the valley, which lies around 80 kilometres (50 miles) north of Kabul.

On Wednesday, senior Taliban official Amir Khan Muttaqi issued an audio message to say their forces had surrounded the valley, calling on the people of the Panjshir to tell fighters to lay down their arms. — AFP ■



Afghan anti-Taliban forces take a rest as they patrol on a hilltop in Panjshir province. PHOTO: AFP

Take care but don't be too much afraid of COVID-19

THE World Health Organization has notified that there have been five variant viruses of COVID-19 spreading in 193 countries while monitoring a new coronavirus variant known as "Mu", which was first identified in Colombia in January.

Mu, known scientifically as B.1.621, has been classified as a "variant of interest", the global health body said recently in its weekly pandemic bulletin. The bulletin mentioned that the Mu variant has a constellation of mutations that indicate potential properties of immune escape.

The WHO said the variant has mutations that indicate a risk of resistance to vaccines and stressed that further studies were needed to better understand it so as to carry out prevention, control and treatment activities for the pandemic.

All viruses, including SARS-CoV-2 that causes COVID-19, mutate over time and most mutations have little or no effect on the properties of the virus. But certain mutations can impact the properties of a virus and influence how easily it spreads, the severity of the disease it causes, and its resistance to vaccines, drugs and other countermeasures.

Four COVID-19 variants of concern, including Alpha, which is present in 193 countries, and Delta, present in 170 countries. Five variants, including Mu, are to be monitored. After being detected in Colombia, Mu has since been reported in other South American countries and Europe.

Daily newspapers and international news agencies express the current situation of infection of the pandemic to the global peoples on a daily basis. Hence, Myanmar people need to take special care of the infection triggered by variants of COVID-19 but not culture the too much worries and frightening.

At present, persons with the variant virus of COVID-19 are found in Myanmar. The variant virus of COVID-19 is the variant of concern Delta. So, it is necessary to take care of (Variants of Concern) Delta with high infection and severe impacts, with high death rate. It is important to strictly abide by the health guidelines against COVID-19 issued by the Ministry of Health. Moreover, systematic vaccination is also one of the important steps to remarkably decline the infection rate.

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Study suggests Delta does not cause more severe childhood Covid

US PAEDIATRIC Covid hospitalizations have surged since Delta became predominant, but a new study that offers a first look at the relevant data suggests that fears the variant causes more severe disease are unfounded.

The paper by the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention also found that between 20 June and 31 July 2021, unvaccinated adolescents were more than 10 times more likely to be hospitalized than those who were vaccinated.

The health agency analyzed hospital records from across an area covering around 10 per cent of the US population, between 1 March 2020 and 14 August 2021.

This covered the period before the emergence of Delta, the most contagious strain to date, and after it became dominant, from 20 June onwards.

Weekly hospitalizations of children

Weekly hospitalizations of children aged 0-17 were at their lowest between 12 June and 3 July



Face masks sit on a table outside of Schoolcraft Elementary for students and parents to wear when entering the building on the first day of school on August 30, 2021 in Schoolcraft, Michigan. PHOTO: MATTHEW HATCHER / AFP/FILE

at 0.3 per 100,000, before rising to 1.4 per 100,000 in the week ending 14 August - a 4.7-fold increase.

Pediatric hospitalizations reached their all-time peak of 1.5

per 100,000 in the week leading up to 9 January, when the US experienced its winter wave that was driven by the Alpha variant.

Consistent with prior re-

search, children aged 12-17 and 0-4 are at higher risk of Covid hospitalization than those aged 5-11.

After examining 3,116 hospital records from the period before

Delta, and comparing them to 164 records during the Delta period, the percentage of children with severe indicators was found to not differ greatly.

Specifically, the per cent of hospitalized patients admitted to intensive care was 26.5 pre-Delta and 23.2 post; the per cent placed on ventilators was 6.1 pre-Delta and 9.8 post; and the per cent who died was 0.7 pre-Delta and 1.8 post.

These differences did not rise to the level of statistical significance.

The finding comes with the important caveat that because the number of hospitalizations in the post-Delta period is small, more data will need to accrue for scientists to gain greater confidence about the conclusion.

The study also underscored vaccine effectiveness against pediatric Covid hospitalization during Delta.

Between 20 June and 31 July, among 68 adolescents hospitalized with Covid-19 whose vaccination status was known, 59 were unvaccinated, five were partly vaccinated,

and four were fully vaccinated. This meant the unvaccinated were 10.1 times more likely to be hospitalized compared to vaccinated.

Children shielded by community vaccinations

A second study by the CDC examined childhood Covid cases, hospitalizations, and emergency department visits from June to August 2021, and compared them to the levels of community vaccination at the time.

Covid-related pediatric (ages 0-17) emergency department visits and hospitalizations were 3.4 times higher and 3.7 times higher respectively in states that fell in the bottom quartile of overall vaccinated per capita, compared to states in the highest quartile.

The takeaway message is that, while clinical trials for vaccines among those under the age of 12 and subsequent authorizations are awaited, high community rates of vaccination squelch Covid transmission and protect children.

SOURCE: AFP

Indonesia's private jet rental business soars during pandemic

HIGH-END consumers in Indonesia have decided to travel out of towns and abroad using charter planes or private jets during the surge in COVID-19 cases for various reasons.

"There are travellers who make trips for medical purposes and holidays among other reasons," said the chairperson of the Indonesian Travel Agent Association (Astindo) Pauline Suharno.

The high mobility of Indonesian people who wanted to go out of their towns and abroad has made travel agents busier, as seen from their ticket sales since June 2021, she told CNBC Indonesia recently.

Stefanus Gandi, director of PT Indojet Sarana Aviassi which is an Indonesian company engaged specifically in the rental of private aircraft, also said the transportation business using private jets has increased during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"During this pandemic from last year, the increase has doubled

as compared to before the COVID-19 pandemic," Gandi told local media in Indonesia's resort island of Bali on Thursday.

Gandi said that the increase in users of private jet services operated by his company also occurred during the implementation of the policy on community activity restrictions (locally abbreviated as PPKM).

"During the current PPKM, we are going smoothly. Maybe because people feel that private journeys are safer and so far we can fly to anywhere that commercial flights may not be able to do so," he said.

In addition to being safer, the reasons people use private jet transportation services are time efficiency and limited flights on commercial planes, Gandi added.

"Most of guests who use our services are passengers who have budgets, of course. Based on our records, those who travel for business trips from the beginning of the pandemic are still travelling until now."

During the pandemic, his company served more domestic than international flights, he said, adding that about 90 per cent of their traffic is domestic, and the remaining 10 per cent is abroad.

According to him, Bali is his company's crowded destination which becomes the most favorite place for domestic and foreign users of private jets to make vacations and business activities.

He said his company operates a number of jet aircraft of various types including the Hawker 400 with six seats, the Hawker 800 that carries eight passengers and the Legacy 600 which has 13 seats.

Meanwhile, Sony Faisal, director of private jet charter operator CeoJetset, also said currently in Indonesia there are many super-rich people who spend money on making classy trips.

Faisal said his company understands the needs of the super-rich, one of which is the need for speed. It is common to find long traffic jams that can take hours on the streets of big cities like



Amid the pandemic, the appeal of spaced-out seating and reduced exposure to other people is driving demand for private travel among high net worth individuals and corporations. PHOTO: COURTESY OF INDOJET/XINHUA

Jakarta. "Three hours are valuable for them from their houses to airports," he told Warta Ekonomi daily recently.

Faisal further said his company is preparing breakthroughs in the form of rental packages to reach more markets. If businessmen and politicians can be accommodated with business packages,

the company would prepare event and holiday packages to reach the family market, he said.

"We have indeed made a breakthrough to break the paradigm that private jets are expensive. We have made many breakthroughs so that private jets are more affordable for many people."

Although event and holiday

packages offer lower costs to passengers, by far the best-selling packages on the market are business packages, he said, adding that by relying on a business package, CeoJetset can earn a net income of up to 1 billion rupiahs (about 70,135 U.S. dollars) per month.

SOURCE: Xinhua



Myanmar Daily Weather Report (Issued at 7:00 pm Saturday 4 September 2021)

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

FORECAST VALID UNTIL MORNING OF THE 5 September, 2021: Rain or thundershowers will be scattered in Sagaing, Magway Regions and (Northern and Eastern) Shan, Kayah States, fairly widespread in Kachin and Chin States and widespread in the remaining Regions and States with likelihood of isolated heavyfalls in Mandalay, Yangon, Ayeyawady, Taninthayi Regions and Kayin, Mon States. Degree of certainty is (100%).

STATE OF THE SEA: Squalls with rough seas are likely at times off and along Myanmar Coasts. Surface wind speed in squalls may reach (35)mph. Wave height will be about (8 -10) feet off and along Myanmar Coasts.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Moderate monsoon.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 5 September, 2021: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 5 September, 2021: Some rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 5 September, 2021: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

Flood Bulletin

(Issued at 08:00 hrs MST on 4-9-2021)

FLOOD CONDITION OF AYEYAWADY RIVER

According to the (07:30) hrs MST observation today, the water level of Ayeyawady River at Seiktha has exceeded by about (9) inches above its danger level. It may remain above its danger level during the next (3) days.

According to the (07:30) hrs MST observation today, the water level of Ayeyawady River at Hinthada has exceeded by about (1/2) foot above its danger level. It may remain above its danger level during the next (3) days.

According to the (07:30) hrs MST observation today, the water level of Ayeyawady River at Zalun has exceeded by (1/2) foot above its danger level. It may remain above its danger level during the next (3) days.

Advisory

It is especially advised to the people who settle near the river banks and low lying areas in Seiktha, Hinthada and Zalun townships, to take precaution measure.

EARTHQUAKE NEWS

A slight earthquake of magnitude (4.6) Richter Scale with its epicenter inside Myanmar (about (27) miles northwest of Tanai), latitude 26.71°N, longitude 96.54°E, depth (10) kilometers, about (100) miles northwest of Myitkyina seismological observatory was recorded at (18) hr (35) min (11) sec MST on 4 September 2021.

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Australian researches using helpful parasites to treat coeliac disease



The Australian Institute of Tropical Health and Medicine (AITHM) at James Cook University is Australia's only dedicated health and tropical medicine research institute. **PHOTO: AITHM/XINHUA**

RESEARCHERS at the Australian Institute of Tropical Health and Medicine (AITHM) at James Cook University (JCU) have discovered gut parasites that could be used to treat coeliac disease.

The word "parasite" is often associated with dangerous invaders and disease, but AITHM immunologist Dr Paul Giacomin and his team have shown how this is not always the case.

Results from a recent clinical trial, published in the journal of Clinical and Translational

Gastroenterology and released to the public on Wednesday, showed that participants treated with an immune-modulating hookworm parasite displayed a greater tolerance to gluten and had reduced symptoms.

Giacomin said while there is still a lot to learn about the disease and the treatment, early results have been promising.

"What we do know is there were people in our clinical trial who performed amazingly well. They developed tolerance to glu-

ten which was quite amazing, and surprising to them."

Coeliac disease elicits an abnormal immune response to gluten, contained in many staple foods such as bread, pasta and oats. Coeliac Australia estimates that 1 in 70 Australians suffer from the disease. At present, the only way to manage the disease is to adhere to a strict, lifelong gluten-free diet. "There are a lot of pieces to the puzzle, hopefully in the near future there will be a better treatment for people with coeliac disease, than adhering to a strict gluten-free diet, which we know is inconvenient and expensive," Giacomin told Xinhua.

Senior gastroenterologist at the Prince Charles Hospital Dr Tony Rahman said the findings could have major implications for people whose lives and diets have been severely restricted by the disease.

"This research may have profound implications for the health and lifestyle flexibility or people with coeliac disease, who normally have to adhere to a strict gluten-free diet to avoid accidental gluten exposure," said Rahman. —Xinhua ■

Deadly floods expose dangers of New York's basements

THE deaths of almost a dozen New Yorkers who could not escape their homes during flash flooding has exposed the perils of living in the city's often-dangerous basements.

With rents in the Big Apple among the most expensive in the world, below-ground units offer an affordable option for many low-income residents.

But the cramped, sometimes windowless apartments can come with risks as Wednesday night's record rainfall painfully highlighted.

Of the 13 people killed in New York City, 11 were found dead in basements, police said, as rapidly rising water levels left them with no way out.

The deaths highlight how the effects of climate change are disproportionately impacting the poor.

"Among the people MOST at risk during flash floods here are those living in off-the-books basement dwellings that don't meet the safety codes necessary

to save lives," lawmaker Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez tweeted.

"These are working class, immigrant, and low-income people & families," she added.

Although it is not yet known whether those who died lived in illegal basements, the tragedy has renewed attention about the issue.

The New York Times reported that an 86-year-old woman found dead at home in Queens lived in a building where there

had been complaints about illegal basements.

Another victim was a 66-year-old man, originally from Ecuador, who died in a windowless bedroom in Brooklyn, the newspaper said.

A 2008 study by the Pratt Centre for Community Development found that 114,000 New Yorkers lived in illegal basement apartments but researchers say the number is now likely to be much higher. —AFP ■



A flooded road in New York City on 2 September 2021. **PHOTO: AFP**

Climate change blamed for New Zealand's warmest winter

NEW Zealand saw its warmest winter on record this year as climate change fuelled rising temperatures, a government scientific agency said Friday.

Temperatures in the June-August period were 1.32 degrees Celsius (2.38 degrees Fahrenheit) above average, exceeding the previous record set last year, the National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research (NIWA) said.

The agency said the data meant seven of the top 10 hottest winters in New Zealand had occurred since 2000.

It said the last time the country recorded back-to-back record winters was in 1970 and 1971, but those years

now stood at 18th and 13th respectively on the all-time list -- which dates back to 1909.

"What was considered to be unusually warm at the time is no longer considered unusual," NIWA meteorologist Nava Fedaeff said.

Fedaeff said natural weather patterns played a role in both record-setting periods but a key difference was the amount of carbon dioxide now polluting the atmosphere.

She said one measuring station near Wellington recorded a carbon dioxide concentration of 320 parts per million in the early 1970s but the level was now 412 parts per million, up almost 30 per cent. — AFP ■



People walk on a street in Wellington on 14 May 2020. **PHOTO: AFP/MARTY MELVILLE**

Floating Dutch cow farm aims to curb climate impact

AMONG the cranes and containers of the port of Rotterdam is a surreal sight: a herd of cows peacefully feeding on board what calls itself the world's first floating farm.

In the low-lying Netherlands where land is scarce and climate change is a daily threat, the three-storey glass and steel platform aims to show the "future of breeding".

The buoyant bovines live on the top floor, while their milk is turned into cheese, yoghurt and butter on the middle level, and the cheese is matured at the bottom.

"The world is under pressure," says Minke van Wingerden, 60, who runs the farm with her husband Peter.

"We want the farm to be as durable and self-sufficient as possible."

The cows are a sharp contrast to the huge ships and the smoke from the refineries of Europe's biggest seaport, which accounts for 13.5 per cent of the country's emissions.

With their floating farm, which opened in 2019, Peter and Minke say they wanted to "bring the countryside into the town", boost consumer awareness and create agricultural space.

The Dutch are no strangers to advanced farming methods, using a network of huge greenhouses in particular to become the world's second biggest agricultural exporter after the United States. —AFP ■

Scientific developments: Covid jabs against cancer

THIS morning, scientists have begun discussing the news that the Covid vaccine technology could potentially help in the fight against cancer.

A two-dose vaccine has already been developed by researchers in hopes of targeting tumours in humans. To create the treatment, scientists have designed a vaccine that targets proteins which are present

on the surface of a variety of cancer cells. The vaccine has already been tested in mice, and produced an increased numbers of anti-tumour T cells which attack cancerous growths, helping to increase survival rates.

The team at Oxford University has received the authorization to conduct human trials. When speaking of the research, Prof Benoit Van den Eynde has said,

“The vaccine technology based on viral vector is extremely powerful. In recent years we have had a new approach to treat cancer ... immunotherapy ... it has had remarkable results. But some patients immune system doesn't respond. So ... the idea here is to use a vaccine based on the Oxford technology to really to teach the immune system how to recognise cancer cells.”— AFP ■



A researcher in a laboratory at the Jenner Institute in Oxford, England, works on the coronavirus vaccine developed by AstraZeneca and Oxford University. **PHOTO: UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD/JOHN CAIRNS VIA AP/FILE**

Brunei achieves over 50 pct COVID-19 1st dose vaccination coverage



Local residents wait to get COVID-19 vaccine injection at a vaccination centre in Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei, on 5 July 2021. **PHOTO: JEFFREY WONG/XINHUA**

Half of the Brunei population has received at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccines under the national vaccination programme,

the Brunei government announced on Wednesday. According to the Ministry of Health, as of 31 Aug. 231,613 individuals have been administered with at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccines, accounting for 51.1 per cent of the Sultanate's total population, and 96,212 people have received two doses of the COVID-19 vaccine, accounting for 21.2 per cent of the total population.

The Brunei government officially launched the third phase of its national vaccination program on 5 July, providing free COVID-19 vaccination for all

citizens and residents over 18 years old in the country, aiming to achieve at least 70 per cent vaccination coverage by the end of this year.

The first phase mainly targeted medical personnel, border control personnel fighting against the epidemic in the front line, and senior citizens and students pursuing studies abroad, while the second phase is for teachers, childcare staff and adults with chronic diseases.

Brunei previously announced that five COVID-19 vaccines from Pfizer BioNTech,

Moderna, AstraZeneca, China's Sinopharm, and Johnson and Johnson would be administered in the country. All Brunei citizens and residents, including foreign nationals with a valid identification card, can receive the COVID-19 vaccination for free.

However, facing a new wave of the pandemic starting from 7 Aug with thousands of locally transmitted cases detected in less than a month, Brunei has encountered an explosive growth in demand for vaccines and a shortage of stockpiles. —Xinhua ■

COVID-19 continues to carve lethal inroads throughout Australian states

THE COVID-19 outbreak, which began with just one case in Australia's biggest city Sydney in mid-June, is continuing to gain momentum as the cluster spreads relentlessly throughout the state of New South Wales (NSW). NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian announced at her daily press conference on Thursday that the state had recorded 1,288 new locally acquired cases and seven deaths in the 24 hours up to Wednesday, 8:00 pm local time. All up, there have been 23,586 locally acquired cases in this outbreak.

The state's health system is also dealing with 957 COVID-19 hospitalized patients, including 160 in intensive care and 64 of whom require ventilation.

The premier warned once again that even deadlier weeks lay ahead for the besieged state.

“I've been commenting in the last few days that we anticipate October will be the worst month for the number of people

that lose their lives and also for the rate of people in hospital,” Berejiklian said.

“There's always a lag between when people get diagnosed and when they're likely to need intensive care or hospitalization.”

The escalating toll is a terrible testament to the virulence of the Delta variant of the virus. Much of the state has been in lockdown for more than 11

weeks, during which time vaccination rates have risen markedly including 45,665 jabs in the 24 hours up to Wednesday, 8:00 pm local time, yet the disease shows no sign of abating.

Berejiklian used her latest conference to praise the “outstanding” vaccine rollout efforts saying NSW was expected to become the nation's first state or territory to hit 70 per cent first-dose vaccinations.—Xinhua ■



Residents visit a pharmacy in the Fairfield suburb of Sydney on 2 Aug 2021 during the city's prolonged COVID-19 coronavirus lockdown. **PHOTO: AFP**

NEWS IN BRIEF

'Mu' coronavirus variant predominant in Colombia

A new coronavirus variant known as “Mu,” identified first in Colombia in January, is now the country's predominant strain and behind its deadliest pandemic wave yet, a health official said Thursday.

The variant was responsible for Colombia's deadly third infection wave between April and June, health official Marcela Mercado told a local radio station.

During this period, with about 700 deaths per day, nearly two-thirds of tests from people who died came back positive for the Mu variant, she said. “It is already in more than 43 countries and has shown high contagiousness,” she added.

On Tuesday, the World Health Organization declared Mu, scientific name B.1.621, a “variant of interest.”—AFP ■

EU and AstraZeneca: Vaccine supply dispute settled out of court

THE European Union and UK-based drugs giant AstraZeneca announced Friday that they had reached a settlement in a dispute over a shortfall in coronavirus vaccine deliveries.

The agreement will see the firm deliver the rest of the 300 million doses it promised under contracts with the EU before the end of March 2022, and brings to an end a battle in the Belgian courts.

Brussels was furious when the British-Swedish pharmaceutical outfit fell far short of its delivery promises, undermining the early stages of the EU Covid-19 vaccine rollout. Officials accused AstraZeneca of prioritizing UK vaccine deliveries over the EU order, and European Commission lawyers went to court to demand deliveries or see huge daily fines imposed for any ongoing shortfall.—AFP ■

India's exports grew over 45 pct in August, trade deficit also up



India's total exports grew by more than 45 per cent during August compared to last year, to 33.14 billion U.S. dollars, revealed the latest data released by the federal ministry of commerce and industry. **PHOTO: SAM PANTHAKY/AFP**

INDIA'S total exports grew by more than 45 per cent during August compared to last year, to 33.14 billion U.S. dollars, revealed the latest data released by the federal ministry of commerce and industry.

However, due to a significant increase in imports during the said month, the trade deficit widened to 13.87 billion U.S. dollars too, which is the highest in the past four months.

"India's merchandise ex-

ports in August 2021 was 33.14 billion U.S. dollars, an increase of 45.17 per cent over 22.83 billion U.S. dollars in August 2020, and an increase of 27.5 per cent over 25.99 billion U.S. dollars in August 2019," said an official statement by the ministry.

It further said that the country's merchandise exports in April-August 2021 were 163.67 billion U.S. dollars, an increase of 66.92 per cent over 98.05 billion U.S. dollars in April-August 2020,

and an increase of 22.93 per cent over 133.14 billion U.S. dollars in April-August 2019.

Responding to the latest trade data, president of the Federation of Indian Export Organizations (FIEO) A. Sakthivel said that the continuous growth in exports since March this year not only augurs well for the economy as a whole but also yet again reiterates the commitment and hard work of the exporting community. —Xinhua ■

High prices, shortages plagued US service sector in August: survey

THE massive US service sector continued expanding in August but businesses remained worried about high prices and shortages of materials and labour, although there were signs that situation could be improving, an industry survey released Friday said.

The Institute for Supply Management (ISM) reported its services index was at 61.7 per cent in August, just under what was expected and below the all-time high of 64.1 per cent in July. The index was nonetheless well above the 50-per cent threshold indicating expansion and in its 15th straight month of growth after the sector plunged last year when the Covid-19 pan-

demic began. "There was a pull-back in the rate of expansion in the month of August; however, growth remains strong for the services sector," the survey's chair Anthony Nieves said.

Positive trends were seen in shortening supplier delivery times, a sign the supply chain snarls of recent months could be untangling. Prices remained high but fell 6.9 percentage points, and order backlogs also declined.

However, the report showed business activity and production falling 6.9 percentage points from July, new export orders falling more than five percentage points and new orders declining slightly.—AFP ■



The US service sector was expanding in August, but shortages of labour and materials continued to trouble businesses, an industry survey said. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

Nepali handicraftsmen look forward to expanding export to China in post-pandemic era

RAJESH Shakya, a Nepali handicraft trader, has seen a significant drop in handicraft export to China due to the COVID-19 pandemic, while the northern neighbour remains the top export destination for his products.

As a managing director of Harati Ma Handicrafts Pvt. Ltd. based in the Kathmandu Valley, Shakya has been exporting metal crafts to China for the past decade.

"China is the largest market for my products, with 60 per cent of my total handicrafts going to China," Shakya told Xinhua, and added that has been pulled down around 90 per cent by the pandemic.

"I'm awaiting the COVID-19 situation to normalize as soon as possible so that we could send more goods abroad."

Europe has been the major market for Nepali handicraft items, however, in recent years, China has emerged as a large

market for Nepali traders, according to handicraft exporters.

As shown by the Nepali central bank's statistics, handicrafts topped Nepal's exports to China in the 2020-21 fiscal year that ended in mid-July. The South Asian country shipped handicraft products worth 308 million Nepali rupees (2.62 million U.S. dollars)

to China in the last fiscal year, accounting for nearly one-third of Nepal's total exports to China valued at 1.01 billion rupees (8.66 million dollars) during the period, according to the central bank.

The export has suffered badly in the last two fiscal years as the COVID-19 pandemic rages, noted the bank. —Xinhua ■



A Nepali woman prepares traditional products at a stall during the Handicraft Trade Fair in Kathmandu, Nepal, on 14 Nov 2018. **PHOTO: XINHUA/SUNIL SHARMA/FILE**

NEWS IN BRIEF

Delta hits US hiring in new setback for Biden

THE United States added far fewer jobs than expected in August as businesses grappled with the Delta wave of Covid-19, a major disappointment and indication that the economy's recovery is facing renewed complications.

The United States added far fewer jobs than expected in August as businesses grappled with the Delta wave of Covid-19, a major disappointment and yet another complication for President Joe Biden's plans to remake the world's largest economy.

Employment rose by just 235,000 jobs last month, according to Labour Department data released Friday, and while the unemployment rate fell to a pandemic low of 5.2 per cent, the report was nowhere near the job gains seen in recent months, which have topped one million.—AFP ■

US judge rejects bid for patent by AI 'inventor'

A US judge has ruled that artificial intelligence can't get a patent for its creations, ruling that such a privilege is reserved for people.

District court judge Leonie Brinkema backed a decision by the US patent office to turn away applications made on behalf of a "creativity machine" named DABUS.

Brinkema issued a ruling on Thursday saying that "the clear answer is 'no'" to the question of whether an AI machine qualifies as an inventor under patent law.

"As technology evolves, there may come a time when artificial intelligence reaches a level of sophistication that might satisfy accepted meanings of inventorship," Brinkema said in the ruling.—AFP ■

ANA, JAL plan drone services to boost remote areas, own bottom lines

TOP Japanese aviation companies ANA Holdings Inc. and Japan Airlines Co. are planning to launch commercial drone services to deliver medical supplies and daily necessities to people living in remote areas of Japan.

The two companies see the new services as playing a useful role in supporting local health care provision and disaster preparedness as well as expanding community infrastructure on remote islands and other far-flung areas. At the same time, the initiatives will help them promote management diversification and strengthen profitability as the coronavirus pandemic continues to take a toll on their overall business performances. ANA Holdings, the parent of All Nippon



Japan Airlines Co. carries out a delivery test flight of a drone among Nagasaki Prefecture's Goto Islands in southwestern Japan in November 2020. PHOTO: JAPAN AIRLINES CO./KYODO

Airways Co., conducted a trial run jointly with a pharmaceutical company and other concerns in March. Footage that it released shows a drone carrying a package of medical supplies from one island to

another among Nagasaki Prefecture's Goto Islands in southwestern Japan at a speed of around 100 kilometres per hour.

The drone, whose propellers rotate at high speed before the 8-kilogramme

body slowly rises off the ground, took about 10 minutes one way to reach its destination, compared with 45 minutes needed by conventional delivery using a ship-and-land route.—Kyodo ■

China-Europe freight train trips hit 10,000 by end-August

CHINA-EUROPE freight train trips have taken a robust growth momentum since the start of 2021, with the total number surging 32 per cent year on year to reach 10,030 by the end of August, data from the China State Railway Group Co., Ltd. showed Thursday.

During the period, the freight trains carried ap-

proximately 964,000 20-foot equivalent unit containers of goods, growing 40 per cent from the same period in 2020.

This was the sixteenth straight month that trips made by China-Europe freight trains had exceeded 1,000, said the company, adding that the total number of train



Photo taken on 21 Feb 2021 shows a China-Europe freight train departing from Chengdu International Railway Port in Chengdu, southwest China's Sichuan Province. PHOTO: XINHUA

trips has surpassed 10,000 two months earlier than last year. So far, the China-Europe freight trains

travelling along 73 routes have reached more than 170 cities in 23 European countries.—Xinhua ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Philippine Airlines files for bankruptcy

Philippine Airlines said Saturday it was filing for bankruptcy in the United States to slash \$2 billion in debt as it tries to survive an industry gutted by the coronavirus pandemic.

The national carrier of the Philippines said the filing will allow it to restructure contracts and cut debt by at least \$2 billion while getting \$655 million in fresh capital when it emerges from the Chapter 11 process.

PAL will also downsize its fleet by 25 per cent and re-negotiate contracts to reduce lease payments.

"Philippine Airlines will continue business-as-usual operations while finalizing the restructuring of our network, fleet and organization," senior vice-president and chief financial officer Nilo Thaddeus Rodriguez said in a video message.

As part of agreements reached with suppliers, lenders and lessors, Rodriguez said PAL will secure \$505 million to execute the recovery plan. The money will later convert into airline equity and long-term debt.

It will also obtain another \$150 million in debt funding after it emerges from the restructuring process "in a few months", Rodriguez said.

Philippine air travel volume collapsed by 75 per cent from about 30 million passengers in 2019 to seven million last year due to pandemic restrictions, PAL president Gilbert Santa Maria said in the same video.—AFP ■

US fines Kraft Heinz \$62 mn on 'bogus' cost savings

US regulators fined Kraft Heinz \$62 million over an alleged accounting scheme that inflated the food giant's financial results due to bogus cost savings, authorities announced Friday.

The Securities and Exchange Commission charged the company and two former executives over accounting practices between 2015 and 2018 that misrepresented expenses at the maker of Philadelphia cream cheese and Grey Poupon mustard, the agency said in a news release.

"Investors rely on public companies to be 100% truthful and accurate in their public statements, especially when it comes to their financials," said Gurbir Grewal, director of the SEC's enforcement division.

"When they fall short in this regard, we will hold them accountable." The agency alleged in a civil complaint that Kraft Heinz procurement employees negotiated agreements with suppliers that allowed them to obtain upfront discounts in exchange for future spending commitments by the company.—AFP ■

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V GUANG PING VOY.NO. (040N)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V GUANG PING VOY.NO. (040N)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **5-9-2021** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **MIP** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

Phone No: 2301185

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S SAMUDERA SHIPPING LINES

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V KOTA HALUS VOY.NO. (KHLU0183N)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V KOTA HALUS VOY.NO. (KHLU0183N)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **5-9-2021** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **AWPT** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

Phone No: 2301185

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S ADVANCE CONTAINER LINES

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V NEGAR VOY.NO. (SCY1104)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V NEGAR VOY. NO. (SCY1104)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **5-9-2021** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **MITT** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

Phone No: 2301185

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S LAND AND SEA INTERMODAL LOGISTICS
SDN BHD LINE

Who could replace Suga as Japan's prime minister?

JAPAN'S vaccine tsar and a low-key moderate are among the possible replacements for Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga, who said Friday he will not run in his ruling party's leadership vote.

Only one Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) member has so far announced their candidacy for 29 September vote, with the winner obliged to call a general election by late October.

Here, AFP profiles some potential candidates:

Fumio Kishida, dovish ex-minister

Fumio Kishida, 64, is the only declared candidate and has already pledged to spend big if elected, promising a new stimulus package to counter the effects of the pandemic on the world's third-largest economy.

The soft-spoken politician is seen as "moderate and capable", making him a top pick for the



Japan's vaccine tsar and a low-key moderate are among the possible replacements for Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga. PHOTO: POOL/AFP/FILE

premiership, according to Tomoaki Iwai, a politics professor at Nihon University. Although the ex-foreign minister is head of an LDP faction known for its dovish stance, his low-key presence and alleged lack of charisma could hamper his chances. Elected from Hiroshima, Kishida worked

to invite then-US president Barack Obama for a historic 2016 visit to the city which was devastated by an atomic bomb.

He also helped cement a deal between Japan and South Korea that was meant to end a long-running dispute over the use of sex slaves during Japan's occupation.

Taro Kono, vaccine tsar

Former defence minister Taro Kono has overseen Japan's vaccine rollout, which began slowly but has picked up speed, with just under half the population now fully inoculated.

The 58-year-old was once considered an ambitious and independent-minded political reformer, but has toned down his rhetoric in recent years.

Currently minister for administrative affairs, Kono -- a fluent English speaker and keen Twitter user -- served as foreign minister between 2017-19.

He travelled extensively as Japan's top diplomat, but also oversaw the deterioration of ties with South Korea over unresolved wartime disputes. In recent years, he has largely avoided discussing his passionate opposition to nuclear power, given the government's official support.— AFP ■

Taliban battle for final holdout province of Panjshir



Fighters from the National Resistance Front (NRF), made up of anti-Taliban militia fighters and former Afghan security forces, are understood to have significant weapon stockpiles in the valley.

PHOTO: AFP

ANTI-TALIBAN fighters in Afghanistan's Panjshir Valley said

Friday they were battling to repulse "heavy" assaults, as the

Islamists seek to capture the last holdout province defying their rule. Efforts to strike a peace deal between the two sides have failed, and the Taliban are keen to cap their lightning military offensive which saw them seize control of the rest of Afghanistan last month. "The Taliban have a significant advantage," said Nishank Motwani, an Afghan analyst based in Australia, saying the Islamists were emboldened by their recent victories.

"They are very well armed, and they have the psychological factor in their favour in that they precipitated the fall of the government so quickly."

The Taliban seized an enormous arsenal of weapons and military kit that the now departed US provided to the defeated Afghan army, as well as the support of prisoners they freed from jails.

"The Taliban also have shock troops, including the use of suicide tactics," Motwani added.

Fighters from the National Resistance Front (NRF), made up of anti-Taliban militia fighters and former Afghan security forces, are understood to have significant weapon stockpiles too in the valley, which lies around 80 kilometres (50 miles) north of Kabul.— AFP ■

Foreign aid groups in Afghanistan navigate Taliban rule

AS a humanitarian catastrophe looms, relief organizations are scrambling to maintain their operations in war-ravaged Afghanistan, holding high-stakes talks with the Taliban in a bid to salvage their critical lifeline of aid.

Even before the Taliban's lightning offensive that ousted the Western-backed government on 15 August, Afghanistan was already heavily aid-dependent -- with 40 per cent of the country's GDP drawn from foreign funding.

The UN has warned 18 mil-

lion people are staring down the barrel of humanitarian disaster, and another 18 million could quickly join them.

Battered by decades of war, the country was also grappling with a prolonged drought. Then in 2020, the coronavirus pandemic added a fresh layer of strain to a barely functioning health system. The Taliban onslaught sparked a new exodus, both within and beyond the country's borders. According to the UN refugee agency, over half a million Afghans have become internally displaced this year.—AFP ■



How the Taliban's pledges of a softer brand of rule will translate into reality remains to be seen. PHOTO: AFP

NEWS IN BRIEF

Biden orders release of secret 9/11 documents

US President Joe Biden on Friday ordered declassification over the next six months of still secret documents from the government investigation into the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

Biden is responding to pressure from families of some of the approximately 3,000 people killed by Al-Qaeda on 11 September 2001.

They have long argued that the classified documents might contain evidence that the government of Saudi Arabia, a close US ally, had links to the hijackers who flew into the World Trade Center and Pentagon.

"Today, I signed an executive order directing the Department of Justice and other relevant agencies to oversee a declassification review of documents related to the Federal Bureau of Investigation's September 11th investigations," Biden said in a statement.

Declassification must take place "over the next six months".—AFP ■

ABBA announces new album after nearly four decades

SWEDISH pop icons Abba on Thursday announced that they are releasing a new album as well as putting on a show featuring digital avatars.

The group's Bjorn Ulvaeus and Benny Andersson said via a video presentation in London that "We have made a new album with ABBA". At the top of London's ArcelorMittal Orbit tower, Universal Music Group held a presentation of a new song called "I Still Have Faith in You". Then Ulvaeus and Andersson appeared, both dressed in black, and announced their new collaboration in person.

"The album is in the can now, it's done," said Andersson, describing the group's return to the studio. "It's been 40 years, or 39, it was like no time had passed. It was quite amazing," Andersson said. "We've done as good as we could at our age. "At our age there's a certain depth to the whole thing," said Ulvaeus. "There's a lot of experience to that, a lot of years, that I hope people can feel".—AFP ■

Biden wants Afghan exit to end US global cop role

“AMERICA is back,” goes President Joe Biden’s catchphrase, but his unapologetic exit from Afghanistan shows America won’t be back to business as usual.

Beyond the trauma of the Kabul evacuation, Biden is pitching a much broader retreat: a halt to using vast military resources to impose order and US values around the planet.

“This decision about Afghanistan is not just about Afghanistan,” Biden said in what many see as a historic speech on Tuesday. “It’s about ending an era of major military operations to remake other countries.”

“Human rights will be at the centre of our foreign policy but the way to do that is not through endless military deployments,” he said. “Our strategy has to change.”



US President Joe Biden and First Lady Jill Biden walk off a military airplane following a prayer after the last American service members killed in Afghanistan were flown home. PHOTO: SAUL LOEB/ AFP

Benjamin Haddad, director of the Europe Centre at the Atlantic Council and an expert on transatlantic relations, called the speech “one of the most eloquent repudiations of liberal internationalism by any US president in the last decades.”

For those Americans fond of imagining their country to be a unique, invincible superpower – winner of the Cold War, then awesome military interventionist everywhere from Iraq to Africa ever since – this is a shock.—AFP ■

Merkel tours German flood zone to drum up party support



Merkel will check in on the flood-stricken community of Altenahr in Rhineland-Palatinate state. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

GERMAN Chancellor Angela Merkel returned Friday to the scene of deadly flooding in the west of the country in a bid to

shore up support for her embattled party before this month’s national election.

Since the July disaster put

crisis management and climate change back at the top of the agenda, Merkel’s Christian Democrats (CDU) and their unpopular candidate, Armin Laschet, have been haemorrhaging support. With the 26 September vote fast approaching, the outgoing Merkel checked in on the flood-stricken village of Altenahr in Rhineland-Palatinate state, and will view two inundated towns in Laschet’s own neighbouring North Rhine-Westphalia on Sunday.

After touring the rubble-strewn roads of Altenahr where the vast majority of homes are still uninhabitable, Merkel acknowledged residents’ trauma.—AFP ■

Top Afghan TV network stays on-air despite fear of Taliban

AS Taliban fighters entered Kabul on the evening of 15 August, executives at Afghanistan’s biggest independent TV network had a tough decision to make: stay on-air or go dark.

Tolo kept broadcasting, but like the rest of the country’s TV and radio stations, it now faces a tough and uncertain future under the Taliban, whose return has sent fear coursing through

the media.

The Islamist militant group killed and threatened journalists throughout its 20-year insurgency. During their 1996-2001 regime, TV and most entertainment were banned, and there was no media to speak of.

The Taliban takeover “put us in a very, very difficult situation... to continue our work or not,” Lotfullah Najafizada, the director of

Tolo News, told AFP in a phone interview.

“As a 24/7 news operation, we didn’t even have one hour to take a break and rethink.”

Tolo stayed on because it had a duty to cover the news, he said, and also because it would have been an “almost impossible” task to negotiate a resumption with the Taliban had the network shut down.—AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

‘Shaman’ rioter pleads guilty over US Capitol unrest

A conspiracy theorist who became one of the most recognized rioters storming the US Capitol last January pleaded guilty Friday to obstructing congressional proceedings, a charge carrying a prison sentence of up to 20 years. Images of Jacob Anthony Chansley, who as a shirtless man carrying a spear and wearing a horned fur hat became known as the QAnon shaman, were beamed around the world when he and others invaded the Capitol building and took over the US Senate.

Chansley has been a subscriber to QAnon, the far-right conspiracy theory blamed for fueling Donald Trump’s supporters who tried to halt Congress’s certification of results of the 2020 election won by Joe Biden.

Speaking by videolink to federal Judge Royce Lambert in US District Court in Washington, Chansley said “yes your honour” to pleading guilty to the most serious charge in a six-count indictment.

Chansley, who in court acknowledged his “mental vulnerabilities,” has undergone a psychiatric evaluation, with the judge saying he determined that Chansley was competent to stand trial.

Sentencing was scheduled for 17 November. According to guidelines estimated by the prosecution, Chansley could face a sentence of between 41 and 51 months in prison.

His lawyer, Albert Watkins, sought leniency from the court.

“Mr Chansley has zero criminal history, we do know that he was not a planner (of the unrest), he was not violent,” Watkins said.—AFP ■

Venezuela government, opponents resume talks in Mexico

VENEZUELA’S government and opposition returned to the negotiating table in Mexico City on Friday, with President Nicolas Maduro’s rivals demanding guarantees of free and fair elections in return for sanctions relief. The main opposition alliance announced this week that it would end a three-year election boycott and take part in mayoral and gubernatorial polls in November.

The move came after the two sides last month began negotiations mediated by Norway and hosted by Mexico in a bid to solve the political crisis that has marked Maduro’s eight-year rule.

“Our aim is to reach an agreement that resolves the conflict through a free and fair presidential and parliamentary election, with guarantees,” opposition leader Juan Guaido said in a video posted on social media.

“We all know that today there are no conditions for a free and fair electoral process in Venezuela. That’s why we’re in Mexico. We’re fighting to achieve these conditions,” he said.

The talks have a seven-point agenda including easing sanctions, political rights and electoral guarantees -- but not the departure of Maduro, accused by the opposition of fraudulent reelection in 2018.

“This round can focus on perhaps the most important condition for many actors: impartial international monitoring, which for some is a basic condition to guarantee that the election result will be respected,” said political analyst Oswaldo Ramirez of consulting firm ORC Consultores.—AFP ■



One Taliban official has sat down for an interview with a woman host on Tolo News. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

Women fighters make history at ONE Championship Empower event

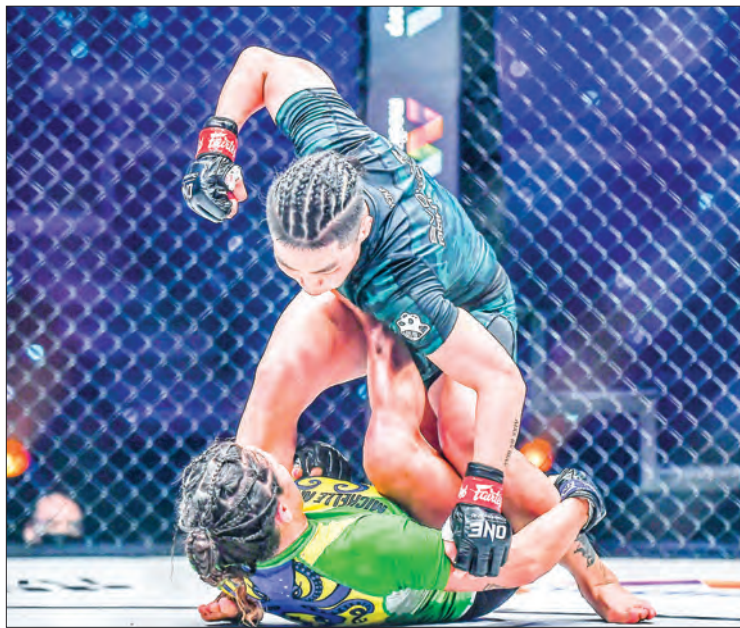
THE world's best female MMA fighters showed their best on the stage at the first all-women's event in ONE Championship history, named ONE: EMPOWER at Singapore Indoor Stadium on Friday.

In the main event or ONE Women's Strawweight World Title fight, Xiong Jing Nan "The Panda" successfully defended her world title against Michelle Nicolini with a unanimous decision after five rounds.

"The win pushed Xiong's record to 16-2 and made her the most dominant women's World Champion in ONE history, surpassing reigning Atomweight queen "Unstoppable" Angela Lee, who's made four successful defences", ONE Championship officials said after the event.

Next in the Atomweight World Grand Prix Quarterfinal, Seo Hee Ham beat Denice Zamboanga with a split decision.

In the quarterfinal fight



Xiong Jing Nan takes dominance over Michelle Nicolini at their ONE Women's Strawweight World Title fight at Singapore Indoor Stadium on 3 September. **PHOTO ONE CHAMPIONSHIP**

2, Stamp of Thailand defeated Alyona Rassohyna of Ukraine with a split decision.

In the quarterfinal fight 3, Ritu Phogat of India made a win over Meng Bo of China via unanimous decision.

Next in the quarterfinal

fight 4, Itusuki Hirata of Japan shaped a victory over Anderson of USA via unanimous decision.

In the Atomweight Kickboxing bout, Anissa Meksen of France beat Cristina Morales of Spain via technical knockout in Round 2. — GNLM

'Hurricane Hannah', 'Paralympics Bolt' strike gold as pandemic Games lauded

HANNAH Cockroft and Nick Mayhugh enjoyed yet more golden success on the athletics track as the successful staging of the Games was lauded as "remarkable" on Saturday's penultimate day of Paralympics action in Tokyo.

Britain's Cockroft won her seventh Paralympics gold while American Mayhugh said he wanted to be the "Usain Bolt of the Paralympics" after claiming his third Tokyo gold.

"Hurricane Hannah" clocked 1min 48.99sec in the

T34 800m, obliterating her own Paralympic Games record set in Rio by almost 12 seconds.

"I don't think it will ever sink in," Cockroft said of winning her second Tokyo gold to go with her three golds won at Rio 2016 and two from London 2012. "Not many athletes get the privilege of doing this for 10 years or get to stand on the podium that many times."

Mayhugh smashed his own world record, set only the day before, to take gold in the men's T37 200m in 21.91sec.

"I know I'll never be able to run 9.5 for the 100m, but I want to be the Usain Bolt of the Paralympics," said the former footballer, who also took gold in the 100m and Friday's night's 4x100m universal relay. He won silver in the 400m.

"You set your own limits. You believe in yourself and you set your own barrier and surpass it. Usain Bolt did exactly that with me. He was my greatest inspiration so thank you to him." — AFP ■



USA's Nick Mayhugh strikes a Usain 'lightning' Bolt pose after his 200m world record Saturday. **PHOTO: AFP**

Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council 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.

Teens shock defending champ Osaka, No. 3 Tsitsipas at US Open

DEFENDING champion Naomi Osaka of Japan and Greek third seed Stefanos Tsitsipas were both ousted from the US Open by 18-year-olds in epic stunners on Friday at Arthur Ashe Stadium.

Four-time Grand Slam champion Osaka was shocked by Canadian left-hander Leylah Fernandez 5-7, 7-6 (7/2), 6-4 after Spain's Carlos Alcaraz upset French Open runner-up Tsitsipas 6-3, 4-6, 7-6 (7/2), 0-6, 7-6 (7/5).

"Honestly the Alcaraz

match gave me motivation and gave me the energy to do the same," Fernandez said. "I saw his match and I saw the way he won and I'm like 'I'm going to do that next now.'"

After the upset, defending champion Osaka announced she was taking a break from playing tennis.

"I honestly don't know when I'm going to play my next tennis match," Osaka said, wiping away tears. "I think I'm going to take a break from playing for a while." — AFP ■