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THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

Vol. VIII, No. 94, 14th Waxing of Waso 1383 ME

www.gnlm.com.mm

Thursday, 22 July 2021

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.

Defence Services Commander-in-Chief's Office (Army, Navy and Air) holds 2021 Waso robes offering ceremony



State Administration Council Chairman Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing is offering the Waso Robe to Pauk Myaing Sayadaw on 21 July 2021.

FAMILIES of the Defence Services Commander-in-Chief's Office (Army, Navy and Air) held a ceremony to donate Waso robes to the members of the Sangha at the office in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

A total of 18 monks led by Ovada Cariya of Uppatasanti Pagoda Presiding Sayadaw of Pauk Myaing Monastery in Lewe Township of Nay Pyi Taw Abhidhaja MahaRahta Guru Bhaddanta Zanida attended the donation ceremony.

Chairman of State Administra-

tion Council Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing also joined the ceremony together with SAC Vice-Chairman Vice-Senior General Soe Win, other council members, Union Ministers and military officials.

The Chairman of SAC firstly paid homage to the Buddha image in Anawrahta Hall and offered Emerald Bowl containing Soon (day-meals), flowers, water and light to the Buddha image.

Then, the Senior General and party took nine precepts from Pauk Myaing Sayadaw.

The Senior General, Vice-Senior General and other SAC members also donated Waso robes, offertories, day-meals and desserts to Pauk Myaing Sayadaw and members of Sangha after the Metta Sutta was recited by the Sayadaws.

The congregation shared the merits gained and concluded the ceremony.—MNA

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MoHS responses to Inquiries about private hospitals and laboratories licenced for COVID-19 diagnosis

Q: We would like to know the address and contact information of private hospitals and laboratories that are licenced for COVID-19 diagnosis.
A: Here is the list of private hospitals that are licenced for COVID-19 diagnosis.

No	Name of Hospital	Address	Contact information
1	Hnin Si Kone hospital	Bahan Township, Yangon Region	Dr Hein Lin Htoo 09966527885
2	Dagon Medicare Hospital	Dagon Myothit (North) Township, Yangon Region	Dr May Kason 09795737500
3	Bahosi Hospital	Lanmadaw Township, Yangon Region	Dr Khin Myat 095108204
4	KBC Hospital	Insein Township, Yangon Region	Dr Htoo Khu Kalu Phaw 095173021
5	SSC Hospital	Bahan Township, Yangon Region	Dr Nilar Soe 09785100414
6	Ar Yu Hospital	Tamway Township, Yangon Region	Dr Wah Wah Win Myint 09421094018
7	OSC Hospital	North Okkalapa Township, Yangon Region	Dr Myo Win Aye 095141820
8	Victoria Hospital	Mayangon Township, Yangon Region	Dr Khin Thiri Moe 09795893612
9	Pan Hlaing Hospital	Hlinethaya Township, Yangon Region	Dr Su Lei Win 09782994133
10	Myotaw Hospital	Chanayethazan Township, Mandalay Region	Dr Nan Oo Hline 0979752227
11	Academy Hospital	Ahlon Township, Yangon Region	Dr Htin Paw 095005478
12	Asia Royal Hospital	Sangyaung Township, Yangon Region	Dr Kyaw Zin Thant 095006890

Here is the list of the licenced COVID-19 diagnosis centres

No	Name of the centre	Address	Contact information
1	N Health Myanmar Laboratory	Lanmadaw Township, Yangon Region	Dr Khin Maung Htwe 09447222326
2	Aye Laboratory	Lanmadaw Township, Yangon Region	Dr Win Thein 09452668216
3	Yangon Airport Molecular Laboratory	Mingaladon Township, Yangon Region	U Wai Phyo Naing 09420726205
4	SML Advanced Medical Laboratory	Bahan Township, Yangon Region	09785314833

Q: How many patients can be examined per day and how much does it cost? We also would like to know what arrangements are being made to make sure that patients do not have to wait a long time to be examined.
A: There is no limitation on the number of patients that can be examined per day in private hospitals. The hospitals are examining as many patients as possible. The test fee costs around 30,000 kyats and the RT-PCR test costs around 20,000 kyats.
Q: We would like to know the address and contact information of private hospitals that will receive COVID-19 patients and we also like to know the number of patients who can be treated there.
A: Here is the list of the address and contact information of the private hospitals that will receive the patients, with the number of COVID-19 patients that can be treated there.

No	Name of Hospital	Number of beds for COVID-19 patients	Address	Contact Information
1	Pan Hlaing Hospital	67	Hlinethaya Township, Yangon Region	Dr Su Lei Win 09782994143
2	Dagon Medicare Hospital	20	Dagon Myothit (North) Yangon Region	Dr May Kasone 09795737500
3	Myotaw Hospital	100	Chanayethazan Township, Mandalay Region	Dr Nan Oo Hlaing 09797572227
4	Academy Hospital	43	Ahlon Township, Yangon Region	Dr Htin Paw 095005478
5	Asia Royal Hospital	50	Sangyaung Township, Yangon Region	Dr Kyaw Zin Thant 095006890

Customs Department gives permit for anti-COVID-19 supplies daily

CUSTOMS Department grants daily permission for importation processes of COVID-19 protective equipment and medical products through airports, harbours and land border checkpoints during the current public holidays, officials said.

On 21 July, the Customs Department issued import process permissions for 42 companies.

The department has already issued import permissions for 1,717 oxygen concentrators, 20,438 Oximeters, 60 sets of oxygen regulators, 4,060 tablets of NOVA-C, 3,080 tablets of Immurich at Yangon International Airport.

Next, 30,027 kg of surgical masks, 15,583.2 cubic metres and 38.32 tonnes of oxygen liquid, 3,878 sets of oxygen cylinders were also given permits at land border crossings of Muse, Chinshwehaw, Kawthoung, Myawady and Tachilek, respectively. — MNA

Corrigendum

PLEASE read "... Section 419 of the Constitution to ..." instead of "... Section 419 of the Constitution Law to ..." in the first and second line of the State Administration Council Order No 147/2021 and also read "2. On 1 February 2021 and before that date ..." instead of "2. On 1 February 2021 and afterwards ..." in the number 2 point of the same order on page 2 of The Global New Light of Myanmar on 21 July 2021.

Errors are regretted. – Ed.

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To benefit the State

THE teachers who joined the CDM due to misunderstanding based on the weakness in administrative measures and political attacks need to report back to the respective schools. The requirements of teachers will be fulfilled during the school opening period. In performing State responsibilities, Council Members need to consider from different perspectives so as to benefit the State.

(Excerpt from the speech of the meeting 10/2021 of the State Administration Council by the Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council Chairman Senior General Min Aung Hlaing on 10 May 2021)

Defence Services Commander-in-Chief's Office (Army, Navy and Air) holds 2021 Waso robes offering ceremony

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State Administration Council Chairman Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and the congregation are taking the Nine Precepts from Pauk Myaing Sayadaw at the Waso robes offering event of the Defence Services Commander-in-Chief's Office on 21 July 2021. **PHOTO: MNA**

State Administration Council Vice-Chairman Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Vice-Senior General Soe Win is presenting the offertories to Pauk Myaing Sayadaw on 21 July 2021. **PHOTO: MNA**

Personal preventive practices against COVID-19 infection

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

6,093 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 21 July, total figure rises to 246,663

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to **246,663** after **6,093** new cases were reported on 21 July 2021 according to the Ministry of Health and Sports. Among these confirmed cases, **170,779** have been discharged from hospitals. Death toll reached **5,814** after **247** died. —MNA

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



A total of 115 tonnes of liquid oxygen, 37 oxygen generators, 1,848 oxygen concentrators and 30 tonnes of masks were imported through the Yangon International Airport and border trade posts yesterday.

to the importation of anti-COVID-19 medicines and related equipment. And relevant departmental officials are cooperating to facilitate and speed up the importation even during the period designated as public holidays.

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

As of yesterday, from July, a total of 557 tonnes of liquid oxygen, 62 tonnes of oxygen cylinders, 17,409 oxygen concentrators, 134,500 test kits and 450 tonnes of masks were imported, mainly from the Myawady Trade Zone and Muse Trade Zone. — MNA



Union Minister for International Cooperation U Ko Ko Hlaing attends the 11th Mekong-Ganga Cooperation Foreign Ministers' Meeting via Video Conference

U KO KO HLAING, Union Minister for International Cooperation attended the 11th Mekong-Ganga Cooperation Foreign Ministers' Meeting (11th MGC FMM), which was held via video conference in the evening of 21 July 2021, from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nay Pyi Taw.

The Meeting was co-chaired by Prak Sokhonn, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Cambodia and Dr Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, Minister for External Affairs of the Republic of India. The Foreign Ministers of other MGC countries, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam, also attended the meeting.

The Ministers launched MGC Website and observed the MGC Documentary Video



before the meeting.

Subsequently, the Ministers reviewed the progress made in the prioritized areas of Mekong-Ganga Cooperation, and exchanged views on future direction. The meeting also agreed to enhance cooperation between India and the Mekong countries.

In his statement, Union Minister U Ko Ko Hlaing expressed appreciation to India

for providing assistance to Myanmar such as COVID-related assistance, scholarships at various fields, restoration of Pagodas affected by the earthquake at Bagan and renovation of two historic temples built by King Mindon and King Ba Gyi Taw at Bodh Gaya, granting five Quick Impact Projects (QIP) for the 2020-2021 Budget Year and the Lines of Credit extended to Myanmar.

The Union Minister highlighted the importance of closer cooperation and coordination among the MGC member countries in the area of health security.

He acknowledged that Mekong-Ganga Cooperation has been achieving several milestones during its 21-year journey of cooperation and reiterated Myanmar's continued commitment of active

cooperation under the MGC Framework.

The Meeting adopted the Joint Ministerial Statement of the 11th Mekong-Ganga Cooperation Ministerial Meeting, and noted the Progress Report on MGC Plan of Action (2019-2022) and the list of Quick Impact Projects.

Mekong-Ganga Cooperation (MGC) was formed in 2000 at Vientiane, Laos with an aim to take collective action towards inclusive regional socio-economic development and strengthening the bondage of friendship among the people of the region. The cooperation was composed of India and five Mekong countries: Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam.—MNA

Tatmadaw aircraft transport oxygen tanks, medical products for hospitals

COVID-19 protective equipment to be used for the Department of Public Health of the Ministry of Health and Sports were transported to Kalay Township by military aircraft from Nay Pyi Taw airport yesterday.

Next, oxygen tanks were also transported to Haka, Mindat, Kandi, and Thandwe Townships

from Mingaladon Air Force Base, Yangon on the same day.

Yesterday, well-wishers donated 50 buckets of bleaching powder, 50 boxes of surgical gowns, 50 boxes of exam gloves, three boxes of the surgical cap, eight boxes of the apron, two boxes of the face shield, 167 boxes of the surgical mask, 240 sets of PPE, 25 boxes of surgical



Covid-protective equipment and devices are transported by the military aircraft.

gloves, eight boxes of KN-95, 25 boxes of goggle, and three generators, three compressors, three dryers, nine tanks, three sets of RIX, three sets of Rank and three

sets of UPS to be used for oxygen production.

It is reported that donors are given certificates of honours for their contributions. — MNA



Anti-Covid medical supplies transported by a military aircraft arrive in Thandwe.

Preparations continue to provide healthcare services to COVID-19 patients

TATMADAW hospitals, military training schools, interrogation and accommodation camps in respective military headquarters are preparing to provide healthcare services to the COVID-19 positive patients and those who need to be quarantined, and healthcare services are being provided at the completed sites. In addition, the Ministry of Health and Sports, in collaboration with department officials, charitable organizations and the public, is preparing for quarantine centres in respective

townships.

Yesterday, chairpersons of the respective state/region administration councils and military officials from the respective commands inspected the sites, provided food and cash assistance, and coordinated where necessary.

As of yesterday, a total of 252 people have been quarantined in the Nay Pyi Taw Interrogation Camp; 40 COVID-19 positive patients are being provided with necessary healthcare services in the Ottarathiri station battalion;

473 positive patients in the Hline Township Interrogation and Accommodation Camp in Yangon Region; 56 positive patients in the Ye Mon station battalion; 34 positive patients in the Patheingyi Station Training School respectively and a total of 98 people recovered from the illness were sent back home yesterday.

The military station medical teams and officials are taking care of the patients with necessary healthcare services. They are in good health, it is reported. — MNA



MoHS to start e-registration system for COVID-19 vaccination



THE Ministry of Health and Sports held a coordination meeting to adopt an electronic registration system in the

COVID-19 vaccination programme on 16 and 20 July. On the first day of the meeting, Union Minister Dr

Thet Khaing Win said the COVID-19 vaccination programme is being conducted to control and prevent the spread of in-

fection rates in the country. The 1.75 million people who received the vaccines will be registered in the electronic Vaccine Management Information System. It should be careful for those who have been fully vaccinated not to get vaccinated again. It needs to use the COVID-19 vaccine effectively. The priority groups are identified for vaccination.

Therefore, the electronic system will be used in collecting data for vaccination of priority groups, issuing vaccination record cards, scanning the record cards with mobile tablets and registering the first

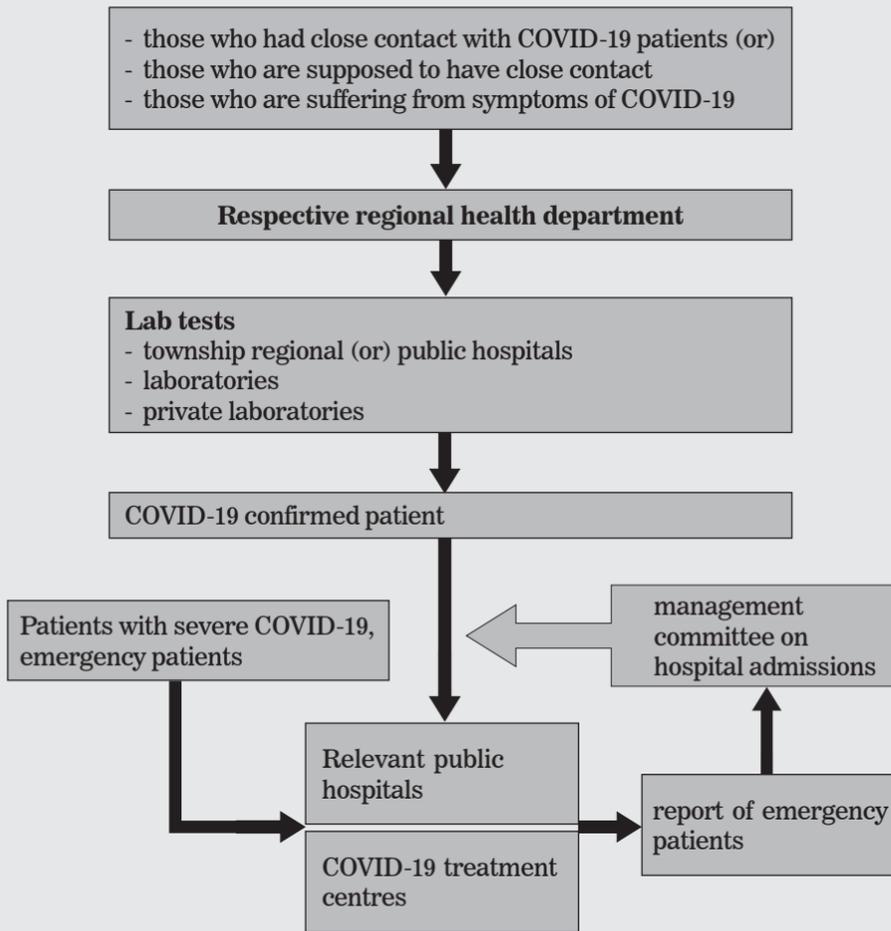
and second doses.

The Tatmadaw technical experts will help in this case. Therefore, an electronic registration system will be set up to ensure a systematic inventory of the vaccination for the priority groups and the systematic vaccination programmes in each township depending on the lists.

The vaccination record cards containing QR codes will be distributed to the people in advance considering the easy ways for the users and also time-saving for them.

Then, the attendees to the meeting coordinated the discussion. — MNA

Healthcare system for secondary COVID-19 contacts, suspected COVID-19 patients



Upon the symptoms of COVID-19 patients, decision will be made for treatment at respective centres.

Healthcare system for secondary COVID-19 contacts, suspected COVID-19 patients

- Those who have had close contact or have been in contact with COVID-19 confirmed patients and those with COVID-19 symptoms must first inform the respective township health departments or hospitals.
- Then, the swab tests will be conducted at township regional (or) public laboratories and private laboratories.
- The confirmed COVID-19 patients must report to their respective township/region/state health committees and they will be sent to the relevant public hospitals and COVID-19 treatment centres under the arrangement of the management committee on hospital admissions.
- However, patients with severe COVID-19 and emergency patients can directly go to the relevant public hospitals and COVID-19 treatment centres for medical treatment.
- The public hospitals and COVID-19 treatment centres must report the emergency cases to the management committee on hospital admissions.

Ministry of Health and Sports

Tatmadaw provides COVID-19 protective equipment, oxygen tanks



TATMADAW medical team, healthcare workers and civil society organizations are working together for COVID-19-positive patients in the military hospitals, public hospitals, healthcare departments and COVID centres while the third wave of COVID-19 is increasing.

In doing so, Tatmadaw members have been donating the disease prevention,

control and treatment equipment and oxygen tanks and foods to the hospitals.

From 1 July to yesterday, Commanders from the respective military commands have donated 3,952 oxygen tanks, 323,762 surgical masks, 1,560 sets of PPE, 689 hand gel bottles, 200 face shields, four buckets of hand wash, 1,200 surgical gloves, 900 hair covers, with petrol,

food and cash assistance.

Donors from Patheingyi, Laputa, Maubin, Nyaungdon and Ein Mae Townships, Ayeyawady Region provided medical equipment related to the disease, nutritious food and cash assistance to COVID-19 centres and certificates of honour for the well-wishers were given by Commanders and respective officials. — MNA

Consumption of beans, milk, meat, fish instead of eggs prevent COVID-19

EGG prices are skyrocketing and could cause a shortage in the market due to misinformation that they could prevent COVID-19 disease.

Eggs are just one of the food items that should be eaten to build a strong immune system. Eating only eggs does not protect from COVID-19, officials said.

“Eggs can be eaten

but eat more fruits for nutrition.

Eat vegetables, beans, red beans, yellow beans, nuts, wheat, rice, corn, brown rice, potatoes, fish and meats. You can also drink milk to protect from the COVID-19,” said a spokesman for the Department of Public Health. Dr Khin Khin Gyi, Director of the Central Infectious Disease Control Division,

during an interview with Myanma Radio and Television.

When the price of eggs goes up, the Ministry of Health and Sports inform the public that they can also eat different sorts of food: chickpeas, soybeans, lentils, peanuts, bananas, potatoes, milk, chicken, and various kinds of fish instead of eating eggs. — MNA

Poultry breeders get good price of eggs

POULTRY breeders of Minbu (Sagu) township in the Magway region enjoy good selling due to price hikes on growing demand amid COVID-19 resurgence, according to the poultry breeders from Hsin Gaung village, Minbu (Sagu) township.

“There are three sizes of egg: small, middle, and big ones in our Hsin Gaung village. The egg prices have increased to K180, K200 and K220 per egg from about K80, K100 and K120 per one,” said Daw Aye Kywe, a retail-egg consumer.

Regarding poultry farming, the breeders are making less profit because the cost of the poultry farm is very high. Besides, sometimes, they are facing loss when the boiler chicken died due to climate changes. Temperatures of 18 to 25 Celsius are best for poultry chick farming.

This month, the price of

chicken feeds has also risen. But the price of eggs is steady at around K100 per egg. This is the reason why the poultry breeders are making less profit. But it is convenient for the consumers. Since the beginning of July, the price of eggs has been fluctuating and the price has risen to K200 from K110 per egg.

“The villages that raise poultry chickens in Minbu (Sagu) township are Kyaukdon, Yedwingone, Chaungphyu, Thigone, Hsingaung, Zee Ai and Sagu.

There are three or four poultry farms in each village. Some of the local breeders are self-raising while some are joint-farming with foreign companies. Now, the local breeders are happy due to a good price of eggs this year,” said U Myint Aung, a local breeder from Hsin Gaung village. — Zeya Htet (Minbu)/GNLM



Regarding poultry farming, the breeders are making less profit because the cost of the poultry farm is very high. Besides, sometimes, they are facing loss when the boiler chicken died due to climate changes. Temperatures of 18 to 25 Celsius are best for poultry chick farming.

Lettuce farmers earn extra incomes in Kyaukpadaung Township



Lettuce cultivation is started with two feet wide and 15 feet long frame. After sowing, they need to be replanted. The lettuce plants germinate within three days of sowing and are harvested within 45 days.

FARMERS in Kyauk Mauk Taung Sel Village, Kyaukpadaung Township, Mandalay Region, are earning extra incomes by growing a variety of lettuce, said U Tin Tun Aung, a farmer who grows lettuce in Laegwa Village.

“Villages around Kyauk Mauk Taung Sel are engaged in subsistence farming and grow vegetables for their livelihood. They grow a variety of lettuce that provide a quick source of income for the family. The lettuce is kind of fast-growing vegetables and reaches quicker in the domestic market.”

Lettuce cultivation is started with two feet wide and 15 feet long frame. After sowing, they need to be replanted. The lettuce plants germinate within three days of sowing and are harvested within 45 days”, lettuce

farmer U Tin Tun Aung said.

Next, U Nang Tin, a villager in Mong Kone village, also explained that rural farmers should cultivate the easy-to-make-money lettuce salad, which is sold every three days.

“Lettuce plants sprout two to three buds at a time, once every two days. It is harvested and sold every three days. A bunch of lettuce leaves sells for fifty kyats”, U Nang Tin said.

“The Kyauk Mauk Taung Sel villagers grow Lettuce and cauliflowers. Fuecho, a kind of groundwater-grown Lettuce is popular for its quick growth to make a better profit.

“Lettuce is a plant that is easy to grow and quick to make money, so it should be grown by every rural farmer for their extra incomes,” U Nang Tin added. — Ko Htein-KPD/GNLM

CBM sells \$78 million over five past months

THE Central Bank of Myanmar (CBM) sold US\$78 million at an auction rate over the past five months this year.

The bullish hard currency gained in local forex market, reaching the peak of K1,730 on 12 May from K1,330 in January-end. In a bid to control the sharp daily gains of the US dollar, 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 \$24 million as of mid-July in the auction market. Consequently, the exchange rate stands at around K1,650 in mid-July.

The CBM trades the foreign currency with the authorized private banks under the rules and regulations of the FX auction market.

The CBM’s move is aimed at governing the market volatility and supporting the state’s foreign exchange reserves, the CBM stated.

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 practiced 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 affect the currency market. Some people want to hold the hard currency during the 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 in 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.—GNLM

Integrated strengths of the State, people and relevant ministries are of crucial significance in combatting COVID-19

WORLD nations are nowadays tackling the deadly disease of coronavirus across the globe. Much more dedicatedly than ever, all countries do not rule out any possible health directives or protocols to restrict their respective citizens just to following the most fundamental mandates: mask-wearing on all occasions in public, social-distancing of about six feet with one another, hand-washing frequently for at least 20 seconds, and non-gathering nor uncrowdedness amongst others.

The WHO dashboard has very recently vindicated the number of new cases at 390,026. Among 190,671,330 confirmed cases, regrettably, fatalities reached 4,098,758 while 3,568,861,733 vaccine doses have already been accessed to the world population. To date in Myanmar, Covid-positive instances had increased to 240,570 after 5,860 new infections were reported as of 21 July. There are 167,171 recoveries and 5,567 losses of lives accordingly to the Ministry of Health and Sports. We all felt disconsolate!

However, we resolutely call for integrated strengths of the State, the people and government ministries concerned in confronting COVID-19 while suppressing our weaknesses for the time being.

heed to the health protocols strictly, all national peoples should rise up and mobilize their consolidated strengths to resist whatever waves of the coronavirus resiliently. Philanthropic or charity organizations – Parahita: the welfare of others in Pali and the Myanmar Language – are encouragingly helping, in both cash and kind, the people who are in dire need of oxygen cylinders as an example to ever keep up Myanma spirit of loving-kindness with one another.

Lastly not the least, we all need to realize that we can have weaknesses and strengths in what we are doing. However, we resolutely call for integrated strengths of the State, the people and government ministries concerned in confronting COVID-19 while suppressing our weaknesses for the time being.



India's Covid deaths 10 times higher than reported: study

INDIA'S coronavirus death toll is up to 10 times higher than the nearly 415,000 fatalities reported by authorities, likely making it the country's worst humanitarian disaster since independence, a US research group said Tuesday.

The Centre for Global Development study's estimate is the highest yet for the carnage in the South Asian nation of 1.3 billion people, which is emerging from a devastating surge partly fuelled by the Delta variant in April and May. The study — which analyzed data from the start of the pandemic to June this year — suggested that between 3.4 million and 4.7 million people had died from the virus.

“True deaths are likely to be in the several millions, not hundreds of thousands, making this arguably India's worst human tragedy since partition and independence,” the researchers said.

After the sub-continent's partition in 1947 into mainly Hindu India and Muslim-majority Pakistan, sectarian bloodshed killed hundreds of thousands of people.

Some estimates say up to two million died.

India's official death toll of just over 414,000 is the world's third-highest after the United States' 609,000 fatalities and Brazil's 542,000. Experts have been casting doubt on India's toll for months, blaming the already overstretched health service.

Several Indian states have revised their virus tolls in recent weeks, adding thousands of “backlog” deaths.

The Centre for Global Development report was based on estimating “excess mortality”, the number of extra people who died compared with pre-crisis figures.

The authors — who included Arvind Subramanian, a former chief government economic adviser — did this partly by analyzing death registrations in some states as well as a recurring national economic study.

They also compared surveys of the spread of Covid-19 in India with international death rates.

The researchers, which also included a Harvard University expert, acknowledged that esti-



A policeman distributes food to the poor people at Guwahati, India, on April 4, 2020, as Indian government ordered lockdown in entire country to fight against the coronavirus pandemic. PHOTO: XINHUA

imating mortality with statistical confidence was difficult.

“(But) all estimates suggest that the death toll from the pandemic is likely to be an order of

magnitude greater than the official count,” they said.

Speculative
Christophe Guilmoto, a spe-

cialist in Indian demography at France's Research Institute for Development, this month estimated that the death toll was nearer 2.2 million by late May.

SOURCE: AFP

Lockdown is hard, but uncontrolled COVID-19 is worse: Australian experts

LOCKDOWNS can affect people's health, but a COVID-19 outbreak is worse, according to Australian and international researchers who have reviewed pandemic responses in countries with and without lockdowns.

The research team, including

Australia's University of Wollongong (UOW) and James Cook University (JCU), found this was “challenging” to determine but “it is unlikely that government interventions have been worse than the pandemic itself in most situations”. Their research, published in BMJ Global Health on Monday,

looked at the impact of lockdowns on deaths, health services, global health programmes, suicide and mental health, by using the World Mortality Dataset (WMD), which accumulated statistics from 94 countries and regions.

The findings indicate that, while there may be multifaceted

impacts of intensive government restrictions, including social and economic costs, these are not apparent in short-term increases in mortality. In fact, the WMD appeared to show that countries with concerted COVID-19 restrictions have had fewer deaths than in previous years, with the authors estimating that lockdowns may reduce annual mortality by three to six percent from eliminating influenza transmission alone.

These findings have been supported by Australian Health Minister Greg Hunt who told reporters on Tuesday that there had been no deaths from influenza in the nation this year and only 408 diagnosed cases so far.

“In an average year, over the last five years, at this stage, we would have had 53,000 diagnosed flu cases and 157 lives lost,” Hunt said, saying the result was an “important by-product” of the COVID rules.

Places that locked down before a major epidemic (such as Australia and New Zealand) have

not had large numbers of deaths, while places with few restrictions such as Brazil, Sweden and much of the United States, have suffered high death tolls, according to the research. “We found that although lockdowns are undoubtedly associated with health harms, their impact on health is unlikely to be worse than the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic itself,” said Dr Lea Merone from JCU and the University of Queensland (UQ).

Researchers said, the severe loss of life that comes with an uncontrolled pandemic and the resulting anxiety, grief and depression seems to outweigh the psychological effects that come with the social isolation caused by a lockdown.

But they added that although stringent control measures will be accompanied by negative consequences in many sectors of the economy, “it is often extremely difficult to separate the potential impacts of lockdowns from those of the pandemic itself.”

While the relationship be-

tween mental health and lockdowns is commonly discussed, researchers found it is “extremely challenging” to ascertain whether these psychological issues were caused by government interventions or driven by the underlying stresses of the pandemic itself.

The equally important link between major COVID-19 outbreaks and depression and anxiety is often overlooked, the authors add.

Whether the lockdowns are responsible for reduced access to healthcare services, which can cause health problems in the long term, is another component of the equation for the experts to determine. They certainly do not conclude that lockdowns cannot be harmful. “Often the most that it is possible to say is that there are harms associated with both large COVID-19 outbreaks and government interventions to prevent the disease,” they said. “The causal relationships are, unfortunately, extremely difficult to untangle.”

SOURCE: Xinhua



Sydney and some surrounding areas entered a hard two-week Covid-19 lockdown on Jun 26, 2021. PHOTO: AFP



Myanmar Daily Weather Report (Issued at 4:00 pm Wednesday 21 July 2021)

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

FORECAST VALID UNTIL MORNING OF THE 22 July 2021: Rain or thundershowers will be scattered in Nay Pyi Taw, Mandalay and Magway Regions, fairly widespread in Sagaing, Bago Regions and Southern Shan, Kayah States and widespread in the remaining Regions and States with likelihood of regionally heavyfalls in Ayeyawady Region and Rakhine, Kayin and Mon States and isolated heavyfalls in Bago, Yangon, Taninthayi Regions. Degree of certainty is (100%).

STATE OF THE SEA: Occasional squalls with rough seas will be experienced off and along Myanmar Coasts. Surface wind speed in squalls may reach (40) m.p.h. Wave height will be about (8-13) feet off and along Myanmar Coasts.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Strong to vigorous monsoon.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 22 July 2021: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 22 July 2021: Some rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 22 July 2021: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

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The Fifth Month of the State Administration Council Government

By Kanaung

CONTINUED FROM YESTERDAY

- **Anti-terrorism:** The Anti-Terrorism Central Committee held a meeting to combat the currently occurring acts of violence in the country under the existing laws and procedures on 23 June in Nay Pyi Taw. Among other topics, the Central Committee members led by the Union Minister for Home Affairs discussed the prevention of such acts by systematically investigating potentially divisive factors and dealing with these in time, and actions to combat extremist and terrorist acts.
- **Substance abuse and trafficking:** In June, the government also implemented the international commitments Myanmar had made towards the 1988 UN Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances. To mark the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking on 26 June, authorities in Yangon, Mandalay and Taunggyi burnt narcotic drugs that had been captured by security forces.
- **Child protection:** The Committee for the Prevention of Recruitment of Child Soldiers held its first meeting in 2021 on 9 June to accelerate the implementation of work plans.
- **Prisoners' rights:** The Myanmar National Human



Rights Commission inspected prisons, police cells and prison camps in June with a view to addressing the rights of detainees and inmates under national law.

- **Housing:** Seventy-five units of the Thukha Taw Win housing estate in Nay Pyi Taw, near the Myoma market, were allocated through a lottery system to buyers who had made payment in early June. Moreover, the government constructed housing units in MraukU and Minbya townships for Rakhine refugees. For civil servants, steps were undertaken throughout June to make Mya Nandar government employee housing in Yangon available starting from 1 July.

- **New and renewable energy:** The Union Minister for Electricity and Energy inspected solar power plant construction sites and hydropower plants to monitor the progress and constraints in the provision of energy for the country.

- **Legal issues:** The special appeal court comprising Chief Justice of the Union Supreme Court passed judgments on five exceptional criminal appeal cases and heard six special civil appeal cases on 14 June. On 29 June, the cases against 24 artists under penal code 505-A were withdrawn on 29 June.

- **Sports.** The State Administration Council government has made concerted efforts

to promote sports competitions to enhance the health and fitness of youths. The final match of the States and Regions Football Cup for Under-21 Youth was held on 24 June. The stadiums across the country have seen a step-up in sports activities over the past few months.

- **Population registration:** The month of June also saw the acceleration of the Pankhin project, which aims to issue identity and citizenship cards to the whole population, together with the drive to have all households legally registered.

- **Domestic travel:** To meet domestic demand, a new flight route Mandalay-Magway-Sittway was implemented on 14 and 24 June. Intercity buses resumed operations on 12 June, while the Mandalay-Bagan and Thazi-Myingyan trains also resumed operations on 15 June.

Media issues

The Information Team of the State Administration Council regularly replies to questions raised by the media. Daily news broadcasts address issues of interest to the public. In recent months, the State Administration Council Information Team has made special efforts to identify, quote, and counter the fake news circulated by unethical media and social media outlets, which

have been taken up by foreign news agencies, who do not check with alternate sources, even when the fake news are clearly implausible.

On 11 June, the State Administration Council Information Team broadcast a statement of appreciation for the dedicated efforts of principals and teachers serving in the newly opened schools amidst security concerns and other challenges.

On 12 June, the Information Team held its sixth media conference. Increasingly, as terrorists are tracked down and caught, their confessions are shown on public broadcasts by the Information Team. Every media conference has also included a report on the investigations of the Union Election Commission.

The Ministry of Information issued a warning to media outlets that spread false information. On the other hand, the ministry granted licences to five journals, 22 general publishers and two news agencies on 8 June.

Each year, the government presents the national literature lifetime achievement award, national literature awards in 18 genres and Sarpay Beikman manuscripts award in 14 genres to authors. With a view to promoting Myanmar literature, the government announced on 16 June that the prize values would be increased for achievements as of 2020, to K10 million for the national literature lifetime achievement award, K3 million for each of the winners in the national literature award, K1.5 million for the first prize winner, K1 million for the second and K700,000 for the third in the Sarpay Beikman manuscripts award.

Conclusion

Only a few of the undertakings of the new government have been summarized here. As in previous months, the State Administration Council and the whole government have worked hard and their efforts, together with participation and cooperation from the public, have led to several notable accomplishments despite the challenges over the past month.

■ ■ ■



To mark the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking on 26 June, authorities in Yangon, Mandalay and Taunggyi burnt narcotic drugs that had been captured by security forces.

Indonesians gather to pray for Eid al-Adha despite virus surge

INDONESIANS prayed outside mosques and slaughtered goats to commemorate a sombre Eid al-Adha festival on Tuesday despite efforts to stop mass gatherings as coronavirus deaths skyrocket in one of the world's worst-hit countries.

This is the second year that the biggest Muslim-majority nation has celebrated the Feast of Sacrifice, which signals the end of the annual pilgrimage to Mecca, during the pandemic.

Much of Southeast Asia is currently reeling under a coronavirus surge, as the highly contagious Delta variant wreaks havoc on nations struggling with vaccine rollout capabilities.

Indonesia has recently been



This week marks the second time during the pandemic Indonesia has celebrated Eid al-Adha, which signals the end of the annual pilgrimage to Mecca. **PHOTO: AFP**

overtaking India and Brazil as a global Covid-19 hotspot and its daily death toll hit a record of

1,338 on Monday.

Authorities have banned large crowds, including at tra-

ditional events that feature the sacrifice of livestock, and urged the public not to gather for acts of religious worship.

In the capital Jakarta and elsewhere, some heeded an official request not to go inside mosques but instead gathered to pray on nearby roads, while residents in Bandung laid out their prayer mats in alleyways.

Jakarta's Istiqlal mosque, the biggest in Southeast Asia, was shut, but thousands in Banda Aceh on Sumatra island assembled outside the Baiturrahman Grand Mosque, where vendors hawked animal-shaped balloons.

Checkpoints have been set up on roads across Java and

domestic flights are subject to tighter restrictions to curb travel.

"I usually get together with family for a meal at Eid," said Pringgo Trikusumo, who lives near Jakarta.

"But this year is very different. I'm not seeing relatives and I can't go anywhere."

'Sacrifice even more'

President Joko Widodo appealed to Muslims to pray at home rather than risk infection at public gatherings.

"In the midst of the pandemic, we need to be willing to sacrifice even more," he said in a Monday television address. "Put the interests of the community and others first."—AFP ■

Adelaide becomes latest Australian city to lock down

ADELAIDE will on Tuesday become the latest in a string of Australian cities to lock down, as the largely unvaccinated nation struggles to contain a rapidly spreading coronavirus outbreak.

The state of South Australia, of which Adelaide is the capital, said it would join Sydney and Melbourne in locking down after five local cases were detected.

The decision means more than 14 million Australians are now under orders to stay at home.

"From 6 pm tonight, South

Australia moves into lockdown," state premier Steven Marshall said from Adelaide, indicating the measures would be in place for at least seven days.

"We hate putting these restrictions in place, but we believe we have just one chance -- one chance to get this right."

Only 11 per cent of Australia's 25 million people are currently vaccinated. But until now, widespread community transmission had been contained.

For the past month, authorities have been fighting to quash

an outbreak of the fast-spreading Delta variant, which started after an overseas flight crew infected a Sydney driver.

The virus has since jumped state borders, creating around 100 new cases every day across the vast island nation.

A Sydney lockdown, now in its fourth week, has slowed the spread of the virus there but has failed to eliminate new infections. The Sydney outbreak has now grown to 1,418 cases, with 78 new infections reported on Tuesday.



For the past month, Australian authorities have been fighting to quash an outbreak of the fast-spreading Delta variant. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

Residents are only allowed to leave home for exercise, to buy food or for a handful of other closely defined reasons.

At the same time, author-

ities in Melbourne on Tuesday said a snap five-day lockdown, which had been due to end, would be extended at least another seven days.—AFP ■

UK to roll out COVID-19 vaccines for vulnerable children



Britain will administer coronavirus vaccines to clinically vulnerable youngsters, the government said Monday, but not to all children due to an ongoing review into potential side effects.

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/AFP

BRITAIN will administer coronavirus vaccines to clinically vulnerable youngsters, the government said Monday, but not

to all children due to an ongoing review into potential side effects.

Young people aged 12 to 15 with severe neuro-disabilities,

Down's Syndrome, immunosuppression and multiple or severe learning disabilities will be eligible for vaccination, vaccines minister Nadhim Zahawi said.

He told parliament the move follows advice from the independent Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI).

Health Secretary Sajid Javid said he had accepted the recommendations "and I have asked the NHS (National Health Service) to prepare to vaccinate those eligible as soon as possible".

Britain's medicines regulator has already approved the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine for youngsters aged 12 and over, noted Javid - who is currently self-isolating after contracting COVID.—AFP ■

White House sees more breakthrough COVID-19 cases among staff

A fully vaccinated White House official tested positive for COVID-19 but was found to have had no close contacts with White House principals or staff, confirmed White House press secretary Jen Psaki on Tuesday.

"Yesterday, a fully vaccinated White House official tested positive for COVID-19 off campus. In accordance with our rigorous COVID-19 protocols, the official remains off campus as they wait for confirmatory PCR test," said Psaki during Tuesday's press briefing, confirming earlier local media reports of the breakthrough case. She said the White House medical unit has conducted contact tracing

and interviews, finding no close contact among White House principals, staff or President Joe Biden.

There have been other instances of vaccinated employees testing positive, Psaki said, though they were not commissioned officers and therefore were not reported by the administration.

"We committed that we would release information proactively if it is commissioned officers," she said. Commissioned officers hold a high-level position where they work for the president, rather than working for another White House official.—Xinhua ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Malaysian Ringgit to trade stronger against USD over longer term: analysts

ANALYSTS on Wednesday foresaw that Malaysian Ringgit will appreciate 0.2 per cent to 0.5 per cent against the U.S. dollar over the longer term.

AmBank Research said in a note that it continues to believe that the Ringgit would benefit from a weaker U.S. dollar and could touch 4.15 against the U.S. dollar, which is stronger than the mid-point of its long-term trading range of 3.80 to 4.50.

However, the research house maintained its forecast for the Ringgit against the U.S. dollar at 4.10 to 4.15 for 2021 and 4.05 to 4.10 for 2022.

It said the COVID-19 pandemic uncertainties, coupled with the management, the speed of vaccination rollout, and the eventual reopening of the economy, external demand's strength and domestic political challenges will impact the movement of the Ringgit going forward.—Xinhua ■

Pandemic and politics leaves Hong Kong's poor languishing

SQUEEZED into a tiny temporary apartment, Rainbow and her family struggle to make ends meet in Hong Kong, where the number of households in poverty has soared during recent political turmoil and the coronavirus pandemic.

For much of the last year, Rainbow's electrician husband left their 290 square-foot (27 square-metre) studio flat each morning to look for work. Most days he returns empty-handed.

"Before the pandemic, he could regularly work for 20 to 25 days a month, but now he only gets four to five days of work," the 43-year-old told AFP, asking to use just her nickname.

"The worst was when he couldn't find any job for a whole month."

On paper, Hong Kong is one of the world's wealthiest cities.

Per capita incomes are around \$48,000 -- about the same level as Germany -- while the government has enviable reserves of around \$116 billion despite a year of heavy pandemic spending.—AFP ■

US says near deal with Germany on Russia pipeline



US President Joe Biden and German Chancellor Angela Merkel hold a joint press conference on 15 July 2021 in which they discuss Nord Stream 2. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

THE United States said Tuesday it was near a deal with Germany over concerns on Nord Stream 2, the nearly complete pipeline from Russia that Ukraine and others fear will embolden Moscow.

German Chancellor Ange-

la Merkel on a visit last week to Washington acknowledged differences with President Joe Biden but said that both agreed that Ukraine must remain a transit point for Russian gas even as Nord Stream 2 opens shortly in the Baltic Sea.

"The Germans have put forward useful proposals and we have been able to make progress on steps to achieve that shared goal... to ensure that Russia cannot weaponize energy flows," State Department spokesman Ned Price told reporters.

"We don't have any final details to announce yet but I expect we will be... in a position to say more soon," he said.

His remarks came as a top State Department official, Derek Chollet, landed in Ukraine ahead of a stop in Poland — two countries that have sharply criticized Germany over the deal with Russia.

The United States and a number of nations historically suspicious of Russia say that the new pipeline will reduce the remaining leverage of

Ukraine, which has been battling pro-Moscow separatists since 2014 but remains a transit point for Russia's crucial export to Europe.

US officials have said they hope that Germany will agree to automatic repercussions if Russian President Vladimir Putin exerts more pressure on Ukraine over energy.

Biden drew rebukes even from some allies in Congress when he waived most sanctions over Nord Stream that would have been triggered under US law.

The administration argued that it was too late to stop the pipeline and that it was better to focus on cooperation with Germany, which has rejoiced at working with Biden after high tensions with his predecessor Donald Trump.—AFP ■

French President Macron among potential Pegasus spyware targets: NGO

PHONE numbers used by French President Emmanuel Macron and top members of his government are among the potential targets for the Pegasus spyware supplied to several governments worldwide, the NGO that leaked the list of numbers said Tuesday.

"We found these numbers but we obviously couldn't do a technical analysis of Emmanuel Macron's phone" to determine

if it had been infected with the malware, the head of Forbidden Stories, Laurent Richard, told LCI television.

"But it shows in any case there was an interest in doing it," he said.

"If this fact is established, it's obviously very serious," a spokesman for Macron's office said. Forbidden Stories, a Paris-based media nonprofit, and Amnesty International initially



French President Emmanuel Macron's phone number was among some 50,000 believed to have been identified as people of interest since 2016 by clients of the Israeli firm NSO, developer of the Pegasus cyber-surveillance technology. PHOTO: FORBIDDEN FILMS/ AFP

had access to the leaked numbers, which they then shared with media organisations in-

cluding The Washington Post, The Guardian and Le Monde.—AFP ■

Thousands protest as Colombia gov't submits new tax reform plan

THOUSANDS of Colombians returned to the streets on Tuesday to protest against President Ivan Duque's government, which submitted a new tax reform plan to Congress.

Tax reform was the issue that in April sparked mass nationwide protests that left more than 60 people dead and the government facing accusations of use of excessive force.

Protesters in several cities marked Colombia's independence day by demanding police reform and greater support from the government in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, which has seen the poverty rate rise from 37 to 42 per cent in the country of 50 million.

"I hope that finally Con-



Thousands of Colombians marked their independence day with another anti-government protest. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

gress will start to legislate in favor of the interests of all Colombians and not just a group of individuals that are getting

rich," Ivan Zapata, a 46-year-old dentist protesting in Bogota, told AFP.

Clashes between riot po-

lice and demonstrators, some armed with machetes, left dozens of civilians injured in the cities of Medellin and Cali, while 20 police officers were also injured, according to officials. The government described the protests as largely peaceful.

The demonstrations were called by the influential National Strike Committee that represents indigenous people, trade unions and students, among others.

The group had suspended its protests on June 15 but vowed to kick them off again on the nation's independence day with the aim of taking demonstrators' demands to Congress.—AFP ■

Honda to temporarily halt plant in central Japan amid chip crunch

HONDA Motor Co. said Wednesday it will temporarily halt production at a central Japan plant for five days in early August due to a global semiconductor shortage, which would cut output by an estimated 10,000 vehicles.

The automaker said it will make up for the lost output at its Suzuka plant in Mie Prefecture from 2 Aug. to 6 Aug. by running the production lines on holidays from September.

At the factory, Honda

produces around 2,000 units per day, including N-Box minivehicles and Fit compact cars.

Toyota Motor Corp., meanwhile, has said it will scale back production at its Takaoka plant in Toyota city, Aichi Prefecture in August as the company faces difficulties in procuring chips.

Production at the plant, which manufactures cars such as the Corolla, will be partly halted for five days through 6 Aug., slashing output by some 9,000 units.

The move came after Toyota halted production lines in June at two of its plants in the northeastern prefectures of Iwate and Miyagi, affecting an estimated 20,000 vehicles.

A global chip crunch has disrupted the production plans of many Japanese and overseas carmakers. Semiconductors have been in high demand for use not only in cars but also a variety of products including laptops and game consoles.—Kyodo ■



Honda Motor Co.'s Suzuka factory in Mie Prefecture in June 2020. PHOTO: KYODO

United Airlines suffers quarterly loss, but sees profits ahead

UNITED Airlines turned in another loss in the second quarter but expects profits to return in the second half of 2021 as travel picks up, the company reported Tuesday.

But despite hitting a “turning point” following the damaging months

during the Covid-19 pandemic when travel was largely shut down, a full recovery in the business is not expected until 2023, United said. The major US passenger carrier lost \$400 million in the quarter ended June 30, a big improvement over the first quarter when

it lost \$1.4 billion. Revenue rose to \$5.5 billion, but is still down by more than half compared to the same three months of 2019 before the pandemic struck, according to the statement.

“Thanks to the professionalism and perseverance of the United

employees... our airline has reached a meaningful turning point: we’re expecting to be back to making a profit once again,” United CEO Scott Kirby said in a statement.

He said the company is focusing on plans for the future “as we emerge from the most disruptive crisis our company has faced.”

Widespread Covid-19 vaccinations have allowed travel to resume, even as rising infections from the highly-transmissible Delta variant are sweeping the globe and putting the economic recovery in jeopardy.

Even so, United has been preparing for a travel rebound, announcing the purchase of 270 new Boeing and Airbus aircraft – the largest combined order in the airline’s history.—AFP



A United Airlines plane sits at the gate at Denver International Airport. The airline industry has been hit hard by the coronavirus pandemic. PHOTO: DANIEL SLIM/AFP

New US homebuilding jumps sharply in June

CONSTRUCTION projects started in the hot US housing market jumped sharply in June, according to government data Tuesday, offering hope more homes will come on the market and ease the supply crunch.

Housing starts increased 6.3 per cent compared to May surging to an annual rate of over 1.6 million units, seasonally adjusted, the Commerce Department reported.

And new construction of single-family homes also jumped 6.3 per cent to nearly 1.2 million annualized, according to the report.

Any relief will be welcome in the US market which has boomed throughout the pandem-

ic, driven by rock-bottom borrowing rates, which has sent home prices soaring and drained limited supplies.

However, new building permits issued in the month fell 5.1 per cent, the data showed, which signals fewer homes in the pipeline in the industry squeezed by high material costs and a labour shortage.

“The drop in permits is more important than the jump in starts,” said Ian Shepherdson of Pantheon Macroeconomics.

“The bad news is that permits lead starts, and they are trending inexorably downwards, in the wake of the fall in new home sales.”—AFP ■

News IN BRIEF

N. Korea buys leaf tobacco from China in June despite nonsmoking law

NORTH Korea has continued to import leaf tobacco from China, according to the Chinese government, even though Pyongyang has banned smoking nationwide in public places since late last year.

North Korea has closed its borders with China and Russia since early 2020 in response to the coronavirus pandemic, but the latest data, released Tuesday, indicates cigarettes are deemed a necessity in North Korea that must be imported amid limited trade.

Analysts say the country’s state-run companies have bought leaf tobacco from China, with total sales accounting for around 30 per cent of China’s exports of the product in June.

In November, North Korea enacted the “tobacco-prohibition law”. Legal and social controls on production and sales of cigarettes have been tightened, while penalties have been imposed on those violating the law.

At a ruling party meeting in June, meanwhile, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un said the food situation in the nation is “getting tense”, as the country’s agricultural sector was devastated by powerful typhoons and flooding last year.—Kyodo ■

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NEWS IN
BRIEFMali interim leader
'safe' after mosque
attack

MALI'S interim president Assimi Goita was "safe and sound," his office announced, after an AFP journalist said he had been attacked on Tuesday by two armed men, one of whom wielded a knife, in the great mosque in the capital Bamako.

The attack took place during prayers for the Islamic festival of Eid al-Adha.

Goita was taken from the scene, according to the journalist, who said it was not immediately clear whether he had been wounded.

An official at the presidency later said Goita was "safe and sound".

Goita arrived at the military camp of Kati, outside the capital, "where security has been reinforced," the official said.—AFP ■

EU guards patrol
amid migrant 'crisis'

WITH a pair of binoculars, a German police officer working for the EU border agency Frontex scans an empty field crossed by the Belarus-Lithuania border on the lookout for migrants.

The Baltic EU member state has seen more than 2,000 arrivals since the start of the year across the border from Belarus.

Most of the migrants are from Iraq, and Lithuanian officials suspect the influx is being orchestrated by the Russia-backed Belarusian regime as retaliation against EU sanctions.

"I arrived on July 1 and the situation has been interesting from the start because it is very tense," said the guard, who gave his name only as Mike in line with Frontex policy.

The officer, who previously patrolled the Bulgaria-Serbia border, said he found 80 migrants on his first night patrol.

Lithuania, which has a population of 2.8 million people, has declared a state of emergency over the arrivals and has redoubled diplomatic efforts to stem the flow.

Lithuanian Foreign Minister Gabrielius Landsbergis visited Iraq last week, where his Iraqi counterpart Fuad Hussein vowed to investigate "the plan to smuggle Iraqis into Europe".—AFP ■

Philippine drug war
dead exhumed as
grave leases expire

RODZON Enriquez's skeletal remains are pulled out of a coffin-sized tomb in Manila and placed in a body bag. Five years after the 21-year-old was killed in the Philippines' drug war, the lease on his grave is expiring.

Activists estimate tens of thousands of people have died since President Rodrigo Duterte ordered police to go after drug addicts and dealers in a widely-condemned campaign that has largely targeted poor men.

Many of the dead were put in "apartment" tombs stacked metres high in jam-packed cemeteries across the sprawling capital, where a five-year lease on a rectangular concrete box costs about 5,000 pesos (\$100).

As leases run out, a Catholic charity is helping families unable to afford the renewal fee to retrieve the bones of their loved ones with the aim of having them cremated and put in a permanent burial site. "I don't want his remains thrown away,"



An armed agent of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency stands guard next to seized illegal drugs during a news conference. **PHOTO: TED ALJIBE/AFP/FILE**

Corazon Enriquez, 63, told AFP, after her son's bones were carried away on a stretcher by two men wearing masks, gloves and protective coats.

The mother of seven had welcomed Duterte's promise to

rid the country of drugs.

"If you know of any addicts, go ahead and kill them yourself as getting their parents to do it would be too painful," Duterte told the public soon after he was sworn into office.—AFP ■

Severe rainstorms kill 12 in flooded China subway



At least 12 people have died in the floods. **PHOTO: AFP**

TWELVE people died after torrential rains flooded a subway in the central Chinese city of Zhengzhou, as shocking images

showed passengers struggling against chest-high water inside a train carriage.

As dams burst and river em-

bankments were breached in record downpours across Henan province, President Xi Jinping described the situation as "extremely severe" with flood control measures entering a "critical stage", state media reported Wednesday morning.

Around 200,000 city residents were evacuated, local government officials said, with soldiers leading rescue efforts in the city of over 10 million people, where days of rain have inundated the streets and subway.

Rainstorms submerged Zhengzhou's metro, killing 12 people and injuring five, while hundreds were rescued from the subway, city officials said in

a Weibo post. Nerve-shredding images shared on social media showed shocked passengers contending with the fast-rising waters inside a train carriage. Rescuers cut open the roof of the coach to pull people to safety, local media reported.

Others showed dramatic rescues of pedestrians in Zhengzhou from torrents gushing through the streets. Relatives outside the city made anxious pleas on China's Weibo for information as communications to the city went down. "Is the second floor in danger? My parents live there, but I can't get through to them on the phone," one user wrote.—AFP ■

Flood-battered Germany prepares billions to rebuild

CHANCELLOR Angela Merkel's cabinet will huddle Wednesday to approve a massive relief package to rebuild German regions destroyed in historic flooding and better protect them in future.

A week into the region's worst flooding disaster in living memory, which has killed at least 169 people in Germany and 200 in Europe, the right-left "grand coalition" government will unblock aid for demolished homes, businesses and vital infrastructure.

With the damage estimated in the billions of euros, Merkel told reporters on a visit to the badly hit medieval town of Bad Muenstereifel on Tuesday that Berlin would come through to

help in the short and long term.

"This was flooding that surpassed our imagination when you see the destruction it wrought," Merkel told reporters after touring what the Bild daily called the "apocalyptic" wreckage of the 17,000-strong community in North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) state.

She said ministers would clear the way for emergency assistance for citizens who had suffered losses and do everything in their power "so that the money is with people fast".

"I hope it will be a matter of days," she said, noting that she had met local victims "left with nothing but the clothes on

their backs".

'Months if not years'

The stopgap aid will be supplemented by a longer-term

reconstruction fund financed by the federal government and "solidarity contributions" from all 16 of Germany's regional states, she said.—AFP ■



The west of the country was deluged over two days last week, with torrents of water sweeping away trees, cars and bridges and destroying swathes of housing. **PHOTO: AFP**

Erdogan presses hard line on Cyprus, pushes to reopen ghost town

TURKEY'S President Recep Tayyip Erdogan insisted Tuesday on a two-state solution in Cyprus and threw his weight behind plans for a coastal resort that was emptied of its original Greek Cypriot residents to be partially reopened.

His speech in the north of divided Nicosia marked another step towards opening up the ghost town of Varosha in defiance of UN resolutions and EU disapproval.

Speaking at a parade to mark the 47th anniversary of the Turkish invasion that divided the island, Erdogan took aim at failed UN efforts to reunite the two sides, saying "we don't have another 50 years to waste".

"No progress can be made in negotiations without accepting that there are two peoples and two states with equal status," he said.

The island is divided between the Greek Cypriot-run Republic of Cyprus and the self-declared Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, recognized only by Ankara.

Turkish Cypriot leader Ersin Tatar, an Erdogan ally who supports a two-state solution rather than the federation long sought in UN-led negotiations, said an initial 3.5 per cent of Varosha would "be removed from its military status".

Erdogan said this showed "how sensitively Turkish Cypriot authorities approach this issue".

The speech sparked bickering with the EU's top diplomat Josep Borrell, who said any such move was "an unacceptable unilateral decision".

Turkey's foreign ministry hit back, accusing Borrell of "acting as a spokesperson or advocate for the Greek Cypriot



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan (C-L) and Turkish Cypriot leader Ersin Tatar (C-R) wave as they take part in a parade in the northern part of Cyprus' divided capital Nicosia. PHOTO: AFP

administration".
The United States condemned the plan by Tatar and

Erdogan, with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken saying "was clearly inconsistent" with UN Security Council resolutions.—AFP ■

Roiled by presidential assassination, Haiti swears in new PM



Rivals for power -- Haiti's former interim leader Claude Joseph (L) and new Prime Minister Ariel Henry in Haiti's capital Port-au-Prince as Henry and his new government are sworn in. PHOTO: AFP

HAITI'S new prime minister Ariel Henry took office Tuesday in the aftermath of the president's assassination two weeks ago,

pledging to improve the country's dire security and to organize long-delayed elections.

Henry was installed as head

of a new government in an attempt to stabilize a country on the brink of chaos since the murder of president Jovenel Moise at his residence in the early hours of 7 July.

The swearing-in of Henry, who was named to the post by Moise days before his death, was seen as a key step towards holding elections as demanded by many Haitians and the international community.

After the president was killed by armed commandos, acting prime minister Claude Joseph declared a "state of siege" and said he was in charge, launching a power tussle in the violence-racked, impoverished Caribbean nation.—AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

S. Korea share wish to improve frosty bilateral ties: Motegi

JAPANESE Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi said Tuesday he believes Tokyo and Seoul "share a wish to improve ties" soured over wartime history, but declined to comment on South Korean President Moon Jae In's scrapped plan to visit Japan for the Olympics.

Motegi made the remark at an online press conference while visiting Jamaica. When asked about Moon's aborted visit for the opening of the Tokyo Olympics later this week, he only said, "The Japanese government is not in a position to answer."

Seoul announced Monday that Moon will not visit Tokyo after a senior Japanese diplomat made inappropriate remarks about the president's efforts to address bilateral ties.

The trip was seen as a chance for Moon and Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga to hold their first face-to-face talks since the premier took office in September last year. Asked about the comment by Hirohisa Soma, Japan's deputy chief of mission in Seoul, that Moon's diplomatic efforts to mend frayed ties were tantamount to "masturbating," Motegi said, "I think the remark was extremely inappropriate as a diplomat and I regret it was made."—Kyodo News ■

Taliban in 'defence status' during Afghan Eid holiday

THE Taliban said Wednesday they would fight only to defend themselves over the Muslim holiday of Eid al-Adha, but stopped short of declaring a formal ceasefire.

The militants are waging sweeping offensives across Afghanistan, snapping up territory, seizing border crossings and encircling cities, with the withdrawal of foreign troops all

but complete.

"I can confirm we are in defence status during Eid," a spokesman for the Taliban told AFP, without offering further details. Eid al-Adha is one of the biggest festivals on the Muslim calendar, and sees livestock sacrificed to share with the less privileged. In Afghanistan, celebrations started this Monday and will run to the end of Friday.

For past Islamic holidays, the militants have declared a pause in fighting with government forces, offering a brief respite to Afghans who can visit family in relative safety.

But the group has been criticised for using ceasefires to reinforce their positions and resupply fighters, allowing them to attack Afghan security forces once the truce expires.—AFP ■

Belarus opposition leader asks US for targeted sanctions

THE exiled leader of the Belarusian opposition said Tuesday that she asked the United States for tighter sanctions on some companies, hoping to force them away from veteran strongman Alexander Lukashenko.

Svetlana Tikhonovskaya, who says she easily won last year's election in which Lukashenko said he secured a sixth term, is on a visit to Washington as President Joe Biden's administration vows to step up pressure on the pro-Moscow Belarusian leader.

In a meeting Monday with Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Tikhonovskaya said she presented a list of companies on which she hopes the United States can impose further sanctions.

"We understand that only Belarusians themselves can bring the country to democratic changes, but we hope for American active and non-symbolic participation," Tikhonovskaya told a roundtable of the State Department Correspondents' Association.—AFP ■



Fireworks filled the sky after Brisbane was named host of the 2032 Olympics. PHOTO: AFP

'We've done it, Brisbane!': Australian city awarded 2032 Olympics

BRISBANE was awarded the 2032 Olympics on Wednesday, triggering wild celebrations and fireworks as it became the third Australian city to host the Summer Games after Melbourne and Sydney.

International Olympic Committee president Thomas Bach confirmed the widely expected result after delegates voted 72 to five with three abstentions at the IOC session in Tokyo.

"The International Olympic Committee has the honour to announce that the Games of the 35th Olympiad are awarded to Brisbane, Australia," Bach said.

The announcement was greeted by cheers from the

Australian delegates in Tokyo, while in Brisbane fireworks lit up the skies and crowds who had gathered for the vote went wild.

Brisbane's victory looked a certainty after it was unanimously proposed as the single candidate for 2032 by the IOC's 15-strong executive board in June.

"I'm so excited -- I have so much pride for my state, for my people. Never in my lifetime did I think that this was going to happen," said Queensland state premier Anna Palaszczuk.

"We've done it, Queensland! We've done it, Brisbane! This is fantastic, this is amazing -- tonight is your night, enjoy."

Australia has already hosted the Olympics twice, in Melbourne in 1956 and Sydney in 2000, widely considered one of the most successful Games in recent history.

Hundreds of people packed Brisbane's Southbank riverside precinct for the announcement, watching the city's final pitch to the IOC on a big screen.

Rhys Cush, 24, one of those in the masked-up crowd, said he hoped to work at the 2032 Olympics and also attend as a spectator. "I'm an extremely big fan. I even watched the softball this morning," he told AFP. "I'm super excited about having the Olympics coming here." — AFP ■

Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council Council Nine Objectives

1. Political affairs

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

2. Economic affairs

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

3. Social affairs

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

One year late, Tokyo Olympics sports finally gets underway

THE Tokyo Olympics sports programme finally opened on Wednesday after a year's pandemic delay with softball in disaster-hit Fukushima as the Games suffered their first drugs controversy.

Japan thrashed Australia 8-1 in the first action of the 2020 Games, which are struggling for public support with Tokyo under a state of emergency following a surge in coronavirus cases.

The formal opening ceremony of the games is due to be held on Friday. Fans are barred from most of the Olympics and the game took place in front of empty stands at Fukushima, which was ravaged by an earthquake, tsunami and nuclear disaster in 2011.

The Olympics are being staged in biosecure "bubble" conditions, with athletes tested daily and under orders to stay socially distanced and wear masks when not competing, training, eating or sleeping.

Later, the Australian city of Brisbane is expected to be confirmed as host of the 2032 Olympics in a vote at the International Olympic Committee session. — AFP ■

Arsenal cancel US trip after coronavirus cases

ARSENAL announced on Wednesday they had cancelled their pre-season trip to the United States after a "small number" of their touring party tested positive for coronavirus.



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States after a "small number" of their touring party tested positive for coronavirus.

The Premier League side were scheduled to play Italian champions Inter Milan this weekend in the opening round of the Florida Cup, which also includes Everton and Colombia's Millonarios. In a statement announcing their withdrawal, Arsenal did not specify how many members of their touring group had tested positive for the virus, nor if any players were among those with a Covid-19 diagnosis.

"Following a small number of positive Covid tests among the planned party to travel to America tomorrow, we have sadly been forced to withdraw from the Florida Cup," the statement read. — AFP ■