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Buddhists mark Full Moon Day of Waso with meritorious deeds



Visitors are seen at Lat Loat Taung Shwe Nantwin pagoda in Nay Pyi Taw for doing meritorious deeds on Full Moon Day of Waso on 3 August. PHOTO: MNA

B UDDHISTS conducted meritorious deeds on the special occasion of Full Moon Day of Waso which commemorated the days for conceiving of embryo-Buddha, His total renunciation of worldly experiences, His first sermon of Dhamma Cakka, His performance on miraculous power, confession on His enlightenment, emergence of Buddha’s sermon, formation of Sangha community, emergence of Ariya (Noble Persons) and verbal approval by Buddha for attaining monkhood. People visited Eternal Peace Pagoda in Nay Pyi Taw and other religious sites in and around the area in line with the guidelines of the Ministry of Health and Sports on this auspicious day.

Moreover, Buddhist devotees kept special Sabbath, while religious organizations and individuals donated Waso robes and practised meditation.

The number of vehicles on Yangon-Mandalay expressway dramatically increased due to the holiday-makers.

People across the country, including Yangon and other major cities, performed meritorious deeds and visited recreation places in the respective areas.—MNA

Two new cases of COVID-19 in Myanmar reported on 3 August, total figure reaches 355

Updated at 8 pm, 3 August 2020

Total Cases355

New Cases2

Total Death Tally6

Recovery Update on 3 August 2020 after two consecutive tests

Total Recovery302

New Recovery4

Discharged from Hospital287

New Persons under Investigation from the past 24 hours to 12 noon of 3 August 2020

New PUIs21

SEE PAGE-2

“People are the key”

Hindu organization holds cultural festival ‘Raksha Bandhan’ online

THE Hindu organization, Sana-tan Dharma Swamsevak Sangh (SDSS), organized the Raksha Bandhan festival via zoom cloud meeting yesterday afternoon.

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi delivered a message of loving-kindness in her video clip to the event.

The Raksha Bandhan is the annual festival of Hindu people to honour the love and bonding between a brother and a sister. The latter ties a Rakhi or a sacred thread around the former’s wrists and prays for his long life and well-being while the brother takes an oath to protect her lifelong. It is also held on every full moon day of Hindu month Shraavana which corresponds with August every year.

The SDSS Myanmar or-

ganized the festival which was participated by Union Minister for Religious Affairs and Culture Thura U Aung Ko, Indian Ambassador to Myanmar Shri Saurabh Kumar and other dignitaries.

The Union Minister made a congratulatory message through zoom cloud on the festival, praising loving-kindness, peace, unity, freedom of religion in Myanmar and recognition of the government to different faiths, including Hinduism.—MNA ■

(Translated by Aung Khin)

Union Minister Thura U Aung Ko joins Raksha Bandhan festival via zoom cloud meeting on 3 August. PHOTO: MNA



Union Minister Dr Win Myat Aye comforts flood victims in Bago Region

OFFICIALS from the Department of Disaster Management under the supervision of Na-

tional Disaster Management Committee are providing relief assistance, together with

offering words of comfort and food, to the flood victims in Pyay, Shwedaung and Padaung

townships in Bago Region.

Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr Win Myat Aye, officials, Hluttaw representatives and local authorities visited the temporary relief shelters and gave cash and other supplies.

The Union Minister and party presented K497,700 for the 237 flood victims at Koenawin Phaungdaw Oo pagoda in Pyay Township, K155,400 for 74 flood victims at Shwe Pyaung Pyaung pagoda, K142,800 for 68 flood victims at Shwe Myat Hman pagoda in Shwedaung Township, K386,400 for 184 flood victims in Htonebo Village of Padaung

Township.

Dr Win Myat Aye and officials coordinated in evacuation of people near the bank erosion areas in Tharsikyun Village of Shwedaung Township.

A fibre rescue boat worth about K2 million and 10 sets of life jacket were also presented for the disaster preparedness, response and affected persons in Okpo Township.

During the meetings with the flood victims, the Union Minister and party explained the impacts of climate change such as drought and flood, the government’s measures on these disasters and measures against the COVID-19.—MNA

(Translated by Aung Khin)



Union Minister Dr Win Myat Aye meets flood victims in Bago Region. . PHOTO: MNA

Two new cases of COVID-19 in Myanmar reported on 3 August, total figure reaches 355

FROM PAGE-1

MYANMAR’S COVID-19 positive cases reached 355 after 2 new cases were reported on 3 August according to Ministry of Health and Sports. Case No. 354 and Case No 355 returned from Qatar. Out of the 355 confirmed cases, six died, 302 have recovered, 287 have been discharged from hospitals and 21 were held under investigation.—MNA

Two new cases of COVID-19 on 3 August 2020: updated at 8 pm

Case No	Age	Gender	Address	Contact with positive patient	Oversea travel history	Hospital for medical treatment	Lab result	Remark
354	21	Male	Dagon Myothit (South) Township, Yangon Region	No	Yes, Qatar	Waibargi Specialist Hospital, Yangon	Positive	Keep under Investigation (Hlegu Township)
355	30	Female	Thanatpin Township, Bago Region	No	Yes, Qatar	Waibargi Specialist Hospital, Yangon	Positive	Keep under Investigation (Hlegu Township)

2020 MULTIPARTY DEMOCRACY GENERAL ELECTION

Who is eligible to vote?

- irrespective of sex or religion
- those who are 18 years of age on the date of the election
- citizens, associate citizens, and those who have permission to become naturalized citizens, who do not contravene the provisions of the Hluttaw Election Law
- a person whose name has been included in the voting list of the respective constituency

Who is ineligible to vote?

- a member of a religious order
- person serving a prison sentence
- person adjudged to be of unsound mind as provided for in the relevant law
- person who has not yet been discharged as an insolvent
- person prohibited by the Election Law
- foreigner or person who has assumed foreign citizenship

MoPFI Union Minister inspects textile factory, industry training centre

UNION Minister for Planning, Finance and Industry U Soe Win inspected No.5 Textile Factory under the ministry in Pakokku Township, Magway Region, on 1 August.

At the factory, the Union Minister gave instructions on production of marketable products in stead of traditional ones, inspection on the quality of products, market research, avoiding unnecessary wastes in production lines, maintenance of machines for operating full capacity, readiness for the public-private

partnership (PPP), fire prevention plan and measures against COVID-19 at the factory.

On 2 August, the Union Minister and party visited the No.(2) Industrial Training Centre in Mandalay, and advised for taking healthcare measures of Ministry of Health and Sports when training classes are resumed, generating skillful trainees, supplying teaching equipment, conducting diploma courses and training of trainers(TOT) courses.—MNA ■

(Translated by Maung Maung Swe



Union Minister U Soe Win inspects production lines at No.5 Textile Factory in Pakokku Township on 1 August. PHOTO: MNA

Union Minister Dr Pe Myint holds meeting with stakeholders in music industry



Union Minister Dr Pe Myint holds meeting at MRTV in Yangon with vocalists and musicians. PHOTO: MNA

UNION Minister for Information Dr Pe Myint held a meeting with the stakeholders in music industry at the meeting hall of Myanma Radio and Television in Yangon yesterday afternoon.

The meeting was attended

by MOI officials, together with Myanmar Pyi Thein Tan and Hay Mar Nay Win from the vocalist group, U Kyi Min Thein, Pianist Thein Myint Than, Monywa Nyo Lay, U Win Maw (Golden Melodies), Accordion

Aung Min Naing and U Thit Lwin (Tharaphe Music Production).

The meeting focused on the affairs of music association and copyrights issues. —MNA ■

(Translated by Aung Khin)

YRTA extends management charges exemption on bus lines

By Nyein Nyein

YANGON Region Transport Authority (YRTA) made a further extension to exempt-period for management charges on YBS buses until August-end, according to the YRTA.

Earlier, YRTA set the temporary exempt-period deadline for management charges of K4,000 by 27 March. Then, it extended the due date up to 30 April and again to 31 May, according to YRTA. Continuously, YRTA announced further extensions to last until 30 June, July-end and August-end, the YRTA stated. This move of YRTA is to support YBS companies during the pandemic crisis, said YRTA Managing Director U Aung Nyi Nyi Maw.

Earlier, about 4,500 buses daily ran on Yangon Road. Following the impacts of the coronavirus disease, the number of YBS buses has decreased to over 3,700. At present, 128 bus lines are pro-

viding public transport amid the pandemic.

YBS bus companies make a daily record of trip plan and schedule interval time for the bus. Under the guidance of the Yangon Region government, YRTA is trying to tackle the difficulties of YBS bus lines. YRTA ensures the bus drivers to strictly follow the traffic rules as before. The bus line companies are cooperating with the Ministry of Health and Sports to contain the spread of the infectious disease and providing daily bus services regularly in line with health guidelines. To prevent the possible infection of the virus, the passengers must wear masks, and hand sanitizer is placed in the bus and basin are installed at bus-stops and train stations. There are over 100 bus lines are operating buses on about 135 routes in Yangon Region, along with the Airport Shuttle and city transit.

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Govt, NCA-S EAOs hold press conference after negotiation meeting

THE two-day negotiation meeting of the Government and the NCA-S EAOs (Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement Signatories) Ethnic Armed Organizations successfully concluded on 2 August at the National Reconciliation and Peace Centre (NRPC) in Nay Pyi Taw.

After the second-day meeting on 2 August, Ministry of State Counsellor's Office Director-General U Zaw Htay and NCA-S EAOs Representative Nai Aung Ma Ngay jointly held a press conference about the meeting.

During the press conference, Director-General U Zaw Htay said that the main discussion between the government and the NCA-Signatories Ethnic Armed Organizations is to hold a bilateral meeting on the 8th JICM decision number 1, and facts on Chapter 3 and 4 of the NCA, adding that the Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) meetings will also be held in parallel.

After the JICM meeting, UPDJC meeting and JMC-U (Joint Monitoring Committee – Union Level) could be organized, but there was difficulty of holding JMC-S (Joint Monitoring Committee –State Level), but the matter was fruitfully discussed on the second-day meeting, he said.

NCA-S EAOs representative Nai Aung Ma Ngay said that they agree to hold the JMC-S (Joint Monitoring Committee –State Level) in the last week



Director-General U Zaw Htay and NCA-S EAOs Representative Nai Aung Ma Ngay jointly hold a press conference after two-day negotiation meeting on 2 August. **PHOTO: KO HTEIN**

of September this year. The coordination meetings on holding the JICM meeting will be held on 4th and 5th August, and the JICM preliminary meeting will be held on 10 and 11 August, and the JICM meeting on 13 August.

Afterwards, Director-General U Zaw Htay responded to the questions raised by news media. "In November 2018, the RCSS issued a statement saying they withdrew from the JMC (Joint Monitoring Committee) meetings. In the same month, KNU announced its suspension from NCA meetings. It meant that they would not participate in the peace talks. So, we went back to the JICM meetings."

The 8th JICM meeting was

organized on 8 January, and both sides agreed on 8 decisions, according to U Zaw Htay.

He also explained about why Chapter 3 and 4 of the NCA should be discussed again. "The Chapter 3 of NCA is 'Ceasefire Related Matters'. There are some tasks that troops of both sides have to do within 60 days. But some tasks could not be done because of various reasons," he said.

He added, "According to the Chapter 3 of the NCA, designated areas have been set. And it says how to avoid fighting, how to ease military tensions in conflict areas, and how to communicate between leaders of both sides and lower level

commanders. A Code of Conduct has been drawn up based on those facts. But in practice, some facts could not be implemented, and problem occurred. So, there are some points that should be discussed again."

Director-General U Zaw Htay also highlighted that both sides have agreed on how the JMC-S meetings will be held and the schedule of those meetings.

He said that both sides will have to negotiate for frameworks to implement the NCA; processes for post-2020 period, and the matters related to the Union Accord will also be discussed.

He also emphasized that

the government will exert efforts in order that NCA non-signatories can also participate in the peace process.

Regarding how the COVID-19 crisis affected the peace process, he said, "In the past, we agreed that the fourth session of the Union Peace Conference would be organized within the first quarter of 2020. But the COVID-19 pandemic gained momentum in January, February and March, so the frequency of discussions decreased. But during that period, we made online discussions. The agreements reached on those online discussions are also reviewed in this meeting."

The Director-General added that the two-day meeting was fruitful and very important for the upcoming Union Peace Conference 21st century Panglong.

He also informed that there will be meetings between the Tatmadaw and RCSS; and between the Tatmadaw and KNU to discuss the matters related to designated areas and movements of troops.

In response to the request, the National Reconciliation and Peace Centre (NRPC) asked for the list of those families, and then financial assistance was provided to those families, according to the Ministry of State Counsellor's Office Director-General U Zaw Htay.—Myo Myint, Han Lin Naing

(Translated by Maung Maung Swe)

Major preservation prepared for ancient Pakhangyi city in Magway

THE Department of Archaeology and National Museum is preparing for the extensive preservations at the ancient Pakhangyi city in Yesagyo Township of Pakokku District in Magway Region.

A total of 330 religious buildings have been recorded at this area, ranging from stone era to Bagan and Konebaung period.

Officer U Ye Lwin from the department in Magway Region said that the last preservation to the ancient site was carried out about 20 years ago, and the expenditure for this project is being calculated before submitting a proposal for budget.

He added grass and wild plants have been cleared from this area by workers over 53 days.

Ancient Pakhangyi city was a fort under the reign of King Maha Dhamma Razar Dhipati in Nyaungyan period and it was also a district level town in Konebaung period.

Locals in this area produce traditional handicrafts made from earth, bamboo and cotton.

It is also the place where Thanaka plants are commercially planted.—Zayyatu (Magway)

(Translated by Aung Khin)



Ancient Pakhangyi city in Yesagyo Township has recorded over 300 religious buildings which need extensive preservation. **PHOTO: ZAYYATU (MAGWAY)**

Coronavirus impacts hurt Sino-Myanmar border trade in current FY

SINO-MYANMAR border trade has registered a decrease of US\$123.5 million between 1 October and 17 July in the current financial year 2019-2020, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

Data from the ministry show the value of Sino-Myanmar border trade in all five border areas touched over \$4.7 billion in the current budget year, which significantly plunged from over \$4.83 billion recorded in the year-ago period.

Border trade values totalled \$3.89 billion through Muse border in this FY, \$123.35 million via Lweje, \$430.7 million via Chinshwehaw, \$263 million via Kampaiti, and over \$4.45 million via Kengtung. The Commerce Ministry's data showed a drop in trade value through all those border areas.

The decline in trade is attributed to the trade suspension and trade delay amid the tight

security measures of coronavirus. China has been stepping up border control measures to contain the spread of the coronavirus infection.

Therefore, Chinese buyers do not come to Myanmar borders in light of pandemic fears, forcing Myanmar truck drivers to leave for Wanding area to sell the goods. As a result of this, the traffic congestions occur both in two sides; Muse and Kyalgaung areas, causing a long queue on road, said Police Deputy Superintendent Chit Sein of No 123 Traffic Police Force (Muse).

The transport delays caused damage to the quality of the goods and doubled the truck fares. The growers and traders are suffering losses during the pandemic, said an official of Muse border depot.

"The border trade situation remains unchanged. Trading is cool during the monsoon season," he continued.



Trucks from Myanmar carrying agro-products, fishery products and animal products wait Chinese buyers at Kyin San Kyawt Gate near Muse. **PHOTO: VAN ROH HTAN (MUSE-IPRD)**

Next, the export of agricultural products is often halted, on account of China clamping down on illegal goods. Myanmar merchants are facing difficulties in exporting goods to China through the legitimate channel as they find the tax levied by China is too high.

In a bid to lower trade barriers

and offer relief to Myanmar traders through the border trade channel, the Ministry of Commerce, the related departments and Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry have been negotiating with China counterparts.

The two countries are making

efforts to set up more border economic cooperation zones and promote border trade. Myanmar's MOC is trying to boost exports of rice, broken rice, agro-products, fruits and fisheries to China through diplomatic negotiations. After a series of negotiation between Myanmar and China, the General Administration of Customs of the People's Republic of China (GACC) granted licences to 43 Myanmar companies on 10 July 2020 to export the rice to China through a legitimate trade channel.

Myanmar exports rice, sugar, pulses, sesame seeds, corn, dried tea leaves, fishery products, minerals, and animal products to China while it imports agricultural machinery, electrical appliances, iron and steel-related materials, raw industrial goods, and consumer goods from the neighbouring country. — Htet Myat
(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Domestic oil prices see steady rise in August



A man refilling the vehicle with fuel at a filling station in Yangon. **PHOTO: PHOE KHWAH**

THE domestic fuel oil market shows a slight increase in oil prices in early August.

"Domestic oil price is positively related to global market", said a fuel trader.

The fuel oil was pegged at around at K480-520 for Octane 92, K610-630 for Octane 95, K530-570 for diesel and K540-580 for premium diesel on 3 August in the domestic retail market.

In the global markets, oil prices stood at around US\$43.28 per barrel for Brent oil and \$39.9 per barrel for WTI crude oil on 3 August 2020.

The oil and gas sector has been crashed during the coronavirus outbreak. Oil price went

negative on 20 April as there is no place to store all the crude the world is producing, but not using. The global market was broken, leading domestic oil price plunge to more than 50 per cent in April against January's prices.

On 8 January 2020, domestic oil prices were pegged at around K905 per litre for Octane 92, K995 for Octane 95, and K985 for diesel and premium diesel. Then, the prices in the domestic market have been extending its drop.

On 22 April 2020, the oil prices touched a low of K310-330 per litre for Octane 92, K440-455 for Octane 95, K445-465 for diesel, and K455-475 for premium diesel, according to the domestic

oil market.

When transportation businesses have started in mid-May, oil markets are recovering from the collapse in demand caused by the pandemic.

On 10 October 2018, due to an increase in global crude oil prices and the weakening of the Kyat against the US dollar, oil prices had touched a high of K1,065 per litre for Octane 92, K1,115 for Octane 95, K1,085 for diesel, and K1,105 for premium diesel. Myanmar imported nearly US\$2.38 billion worth petroleum products over the past eight months (Oct-May) of the current fiscal year, as per the statistics of the Ministry of Commerce. Ninety per cent of fuel oil in Myanmar is imported while the remaining 10 per cent is produced locally.

Normally, Myanmar imports fuel oil primarily from Singapore, with monthly volumes touching 200,000 tonnes for gasoline and 400,000 tonnes for diesel. There are about 2,000 fuel stations and over 50 oil importer companies in Myanmar. —Ko Htet
(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Trade deficit widens to \$1.7 bln in 2019-2020FY

MYANMAR'S trade gap has significantly widened as of 17 July in the current financial year 2019-2020 to more than US\$1.7 billion from \$718.34 million registered in the corresponding period of the 2018-2019FY, according to the data provided by the Ministry of Commerce.

Between 1 October and 17 July in the current budget year, Myanmar's external trade increased to over \$29.7 billion from \$27.87 billion recorded in the year-ago period.

While exports were estimated at \$14 billion, imports were valued at \$15.7 billion. Compared to the previous financial year, exports showed an increase of \$589.9 million, while imports climbed up by \$1.3 billion.

Myanmar exports agricultural products, animal products, minerals, forest products, and finished industrial goods, while it imports capital goods, intermediate

goods, CMP raw materials, and consumer goods.

The country's export sector relies more on the agricultural and manufacturing sectors. While export earnings from the CMP (cut, make, and pack) garment businesses are rising, the country's reliance on natural resources, such as natural gas and jade, is decreasing.

The government is trying to cut the trade deficit by screening luxury import items and boosting exports.

Myanmar's trade deficit was pegged at \$1.14 billion in the 2018-2019 financial year, \$1.3 billion in the previous mini-budget period (April-September, 2018), \$3.9 billion in the 2017-2018FY, \$5.3 billion in the 2016-2017FY, and \$5.4 billion in the 2015-2016FY, according to the statistics released by the Central Statistical Organization. —Mon Mon
(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

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Fish breeders in Mandalay Region receive fingerlings on 3 August under the Action Plan of COVID-19 Economic Relief Plan.
PHOTO: MIN HTET AUNG

Fingerlings provided to fish breeders in Mandalay Region

THE Department of Fisheries in Mandalay Region supplied the fish breeders in Madaya and Patheingyi townships with fingerlings yesterday under the Action Plan of COVID-19 Economic Relief Plan (CERP).

The assistance of small fry is aimed for recovery of this sector affected by the global pandemic.

Government has allocated K6,000 million to a total of 150,000 acres, with K40,000

worth of fingerlings per acre of fishing pond.

U Thaung Myint, a fish breeder from Madaya Township, expressed thanks for the cash assistance of the government.

Under the CERP, a total of 333 fish farm owners will receive 4.1 million fingerlings for 1,631.36 acres of fish ponds.—Min Htet Aung (Mandalay Sub-Printing House)

(Translated by Aung Khin)

Myanmar citizens stranded in Australia arrive back home by relief flight



Myanmar returnees from Australia are seen queuing for immigration process at Yangon International Airport on 3 August. PHOTO: MNA

MYANMAR nationals, including seafarers, arrived back home by a relief flight of Myanmar National Airlines yesterday night after they were stranded in Australia due to suspension of international flights.

The return of 141 Myanmar citizens was arranged by Myanmar Embassy in Canberra.

On arrival at the airport, the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population, the Ministry of Health and Sports and the Yangon Region government helped for their 21-day quarantine period at the designated places and the respective hotels in line with

the guidelines of immigration and healthcare processes.

In accordance with the directives of National-Level Central Committee on Prevention, Control and Treatment of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in coordination with the Myanmar embassies abroad and other relevant ministries in Myanmar, has been organizing relief/special flights since the end of April 2020, and a total of 9,336 persons arrived back home under this programme.—MNA

(Translated by Aung Khin)

16 Myanmar nationals enter Chinshwehaw border town in returning home

LOCAL authorities in Chinshwehaw border town of northern Shan State received 16 Myanmar returnees from China on 2 and 3 August.

Among 9 males and 7 females, 1 person was from Mandalay Region, 1 from Magway, 1 from Sagaing Region and 13

from Shan State.

They will go back to respective areas through Lashio.

A total of 14,034 persons have returned Myanmar from China through Chinshwehaw border from 30 April to now.—Zin Zin (IPRD)

(Translated by Aung Khin)



A returnee from China is tested for body temperature at the Chinshwehaw border. PHOTO: ZIN ZIN (IPRD)

1,020 Myanmar nationals come back home via Myawady border bridge on 3 August

A total of 1,020 Myanmar nationals returned home from Thailand through No. 2 border bridge in Myawady Town, Kayin State, on 3 August.

Kayin State Hluttaw MP U Thant Zin Aung, Myawady District Administrative Officer U Tay Zar Aung and local officials helped the returnees with

medical tests and other supplies. The number of migrant workers who returned home from abroad through this border has been 57,776 until now.

The latest group of returnees included 558 males and 462 females from different regions and states.—Htein Lin Aung (IPRD)



Myanmar returnees queuing at No. 2 Myawady border bridge on 3 August. PHOTO: HTEIN LIN AUNG (IPRD)

RESURGENCE OF THE VIRUS

“Combatting COVID-19 is priority,” Hong Kong people hail new moves to fight epidemic

THE rebound of the COVID-19 epidemic is changing the lives of people in Hong Kong. Ms Chin, who works for a foreign bank in the Central of Hong Kong Island, has started to work from home since mid-July. This has saved her from the risk of contracting the disease by taking public transport, but not going out also brings her problems. “I’m now shopping online for food. The freight costs me 50 HK dollars (about 6.45 U.S. dollars) each time and I have to place an order several days in advance,” Chin said, adding that wet markets have become high-risk places and many infections were linked to restaurant clusters which made her afraid of dining in or even getting takeaways. Working out amid a resurgence of the virus has also worried people like Mr Lee, who was

running on the jogging track in Victoria Park in Causeway Bay as usual. He maintained his habit of exercising outdoors despite the epidemic. The only difference was that he was wearing a face mask. The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) government announced last week to tighten anti-epidemic measures including mandatory mask-wearing in all public places. “Everyone is very careful these days and a lot fewer people are coming out to exercise, especially the elderly,” Lee said. As of Saturday, Hong Kong has recorded daily additional COVID-19 cases of over 100 for the 11th consecutive day. The death toll has exceeded 30, with most of them elderly people, and the vast majority of the new cases are local transmissions.



People wearing masks walk in the Central area of Hong Kong, south China, July 27, 2020. Hong Kong’s Centre for Health Protection (CHP) Monday reported 145 new confirmed cases of COVID-19, hitting a new daily high in Hong Kong. The 145 new cases included 142 local infections and three imported ones, bringing the total cases to 2,778 in Hong Kong. PHOTO: XINHUA

HKSAR Chief Executive Carrie Lam on July 31 announced the postponement of the 2020 Legislative Council (LegCo) General Election of the HKSAR, due to the current COVID-19 outbreak. “It is understandable. How can elderly people vote when

they are afraid of leaving their homes,” Lee said, adding that organizing activities will increase the risk of infection. “Group gathering is too dangerous in this special period of time when combatting with the epidemic is a priority,” said Ms Wong, a snack shop salesperson

in Nathan Road of Kowloon. “I have two kids and my mom is over 70. I can’t just stop working,” private goods vehicle driver Lui Gor told the reporter as he was moving luggage for his client into a residential building in the rain. SOURCE: Xinhua

RAMPING UP TESTING OF SAMPLES



India’s health ministry announced on Monday that the country’s COVID-19 cases have surpassed 1.8 million, reaching 1,803,695. PHOTO: AFP

India’s COVID-19 cases surpass 1.8 million

India’s health ministry announced on Monday that the country’s COVID-19 cases have surpassed 1.8 million, reaching 1,803,695. As many as 52,972 fresh cases were added to the tally in the past 24 hours, according to data released by the ministry. Meanwhile, 771 deaths took place during the past 24 hours taking the total deaths to 38,135.

A total of 1,186,203 people have been cured and discharged across the country so far, while 579,357 active cases are being treated in hospitals. India is focusing on ramping up testing of samples. A total of 20,202,858 samples have been tested till Sunday, with 381,027 samples tested on Sunday alone. Monday was the fifth consecutive day when more than

50,000 fresh cases were found in the country. They included Home Minister Amit Shah, Governor of the southern state Tamil Nadu Banwarilal Purohit, Chief Minister of southern state Karnataka B.S. Yediyurappa, president of Uttar Pradesh unit of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Swatantra Dev Singh. SOURCE: Xinhua

MASSIVE VIOLATIONS

German govt blasts ‘unacceptable’ virus curb abuses at Berlin protests

THE German government on Monday condemned what it said were “unacceptable” violations of coronavirus restrictions after tens of thousands -- most with no masks -- took to the streets of Berlin to protest the measures over the weekend. Chancellor Angela Merkel’s spokeswoman Ulrike Demmer said that protesters who failed to wear masks or respect social

distancing rules had “exploited their right to demonstrate” and were “in no way justified”. While the freedom to demonstrate was “important”, the “images we saw this weekend were unacceptable”, said Demmer. She said the government condemned “not only the massive violations against hygiene regulations and basic protective measures”, but also reported at-

tempts to hinder journalists from reporting and attacks on police. Around 20,000 people took part in the “day of freedom” demonstration on Saturday, the majority not covering their nose and mouth or respecting Germany’s 1.5-metre (five-foot) social distancing requirement. The crowd, a mixture of hard left and right, and conspiracy theorists, shouted “We are the



Demonstrators march down the Friedrichstrasse street as they protest against the current measures to curb the spread of coronavirus in Berlin, Germany on Saturday. PHOTO: AFP

second wave” as they converged on the Brandenburg Gate, demanding “resistance” and dub-

bing the pandemic “the biggest conspiracy theory”. SOURCE: AFP

Adapting COVID-19 health guidelines is a must for humanitarian sector in face of dual disasters

WITH the rain-induced swollen rivers and creeks, floods hit low-lying areas in lower Myanmar and governments and organizations are putting disaster preparedness and response plans into action.

Burst riverbanks and mudslides have left people displaced across some parts of Bago Region, many of them now seeking shelter in temporary accommodation centres.

While pressing ahead with plans for a potential “double disaster” where the coronavirus adds to seasonal problems, the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement and local governments in flood-hit regions delivered relief supplies to the flood-hit people in a timely manner.

The flood season is demanding regional governments and communities to prepare a joint response to COVID-19 and flooding, without increasing the risk of contracting the coronavirus.

The flood season is demanding regional governments and communities to prepare a joint response to COVID-19 and flooding, without increasing the risk of contracting the coronavirus.

Maintaining social distances between people in the shelters and ensuring the safety of volunteers and staff are challenges at the temporary shelters.

If a lot of people gather in a small evacuation center and somebody is infected, other people can be possibly infected with the COVID-virus.

Hence, our disaster evacuation plans should also enforce the health guidelines of wearing masks, washing hands, monitoring temperatures and maintaining social distancing as they are the most effective interventions to prevent the COVID-19 infection and other communicable diseases.

Another critical component of preparedness is also fighting rumours related with the Coronavirus infection which could emerge with the infection news.

We have already anticipated that rumours related with the Coronavirus infection could emerge with the infection news.

People are advised to be calm in the face of the dual crisis of the COVID-19 and flood as the infection is preventable and curable. People are the key to tackle the challenges brought by the crisis.

All in all, our country’s response to COVID-19 pandemic is in the hands of duty conscious people and the authorities.

WHO warns there may never be a COVID-19 ‘silver bullet’

“We all hope to have a number of effective vaccines that can help prevent people from infection,” WHO Chief

THE World Health Organization warned Monday that there might never be a “silver bullet” for the new coronavirus, despite the rush to discover effective vaccines.

The WHO urged governments and citizens to focus on doing the known basics, such as testing, contact tracing, maintaining physical distance and wearing a mask in order to suppress the pandemic, which has upended normal life around the globe and triggered a devastating economic crisis.

“We all hope to have a number of effective vaccines that can help prevent people from infection,” WHO director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told a virtual press conference.

“However, there’s no silver bullet at the moment—and there might never be.

“For now, stopping outbreaks comes down to the basics of public health and disease control.

“Do it all,” he urged.

The novel coronavirus has killed nearly 690,000 people and infected at least 18.1 million since the outbreak emerged in Wuhan in China last December, according to a tally from official sources compiled by AFP.

China mission

The WHO began pressing China in early May to invite in its experts to help investigate the animal origins of COVID-19.

The UN health agency sent an epidemiologist and an animal health specialist to Beijing on July 10 to lay the groundwork for a probe aimed at identifying how the virus entered the human species. Their scoping mission is now complete, said Tedros.

“The WHO advance team that travelled to China has now concluded their mission to lay the groundwork for further joint efforts to identify the virus ori-



Dr Sonia Maciejewski (R) and Dr Nita Patel, Director of Antibody discovery and Vaccine development, look at a sample of a respiratory virus at Novavax labs in Rockville, Maryland, one of the labs developing a vaccine for the coronavirus. PHOTO: AFP

gins,” he said. “WHO and Chinese experts have drafted the terms of reference for the studies and programme of work for an international team, led by WHO.

“The international team will include leading scientists and researchers from China and around the world. “Epidemiological studies will begin in Wuhan to identify the potential source of infection of the early cases.

“Evidence and hypotheses generated through this work will lay the ground for further, longer-term studies.”

The pair have not yet returned to the WHO’s Geneva headquarters for a debriefing.

Scientists believe the killer virus jumped from animals to humans, possibly from a market in the city of Wuhan selling exotic animals for meat.

SOURCE: AFP

MUCH BIGGER OUTBREAKS

Coronavirus cases worldwide pass 18 million

Fresh clusters have been reported in countries that had previously brought their outbreaks under control, forcing governments to reimpose lockdown measures despite worries over further economic fallout.

THE number of coronavirus cases recorded worldwide topped 18 million on Monday with the illness continuing its march, after Australia’s second-largest city imposed a curfew to halt the spread.

Six months after the World Health Organization (WHO) declared a global emergency, the virus has killed more than 687,000 people since it first emerged in China late last year, according to an AFP tally compiled from official sources.

Fresh clusters have been reported in countries that had previously brought their outbreaks under control, forcing governments to reimpose lockdown measures despite worries over further economic fallout.

Australia’s Victoria state imposed fresh, sweeping restrictions on Sunday, including a curfew in Melbourne for the next six weeks, a ban on wedding gatherings, and an order that schools and universities go back online in

the coming days.

“Anything short of this will see it drag on for months and months,” Victoria premier Daniel Andrews said of the outbreak.

Despite a lockdown, Melbourne has continued to report hundreds of new cases daily even as other states in Australia have reported zero or a small number.

Many other parts of the world are struggling with much bigger outbreaks.

Health authorities in South Africa, where a surge in cases had been expected after the gradual loosening of a strict lockdown, reported that infections exceeded the half-million mark.

The nation is by far the hardest-hit in Africa, accounting for more than half of diagnosed infections, although President Cyril Ramaphosa said the fatality rate is lower than the global average.



Indonesians queue to board a train bounds for Jakarta from Bogor station by applying protocols for the COVID-19 coronavirus in Bogor on 3 August. PHOTO: AFP

Latin America and the Caribbean passed another milestone on Sunday as fatalities in the region climbed to more than 200,000, with Brazil and Mexico accounting for nearly three-quarters.

Iran - battling the Middle East’s deadliest outbreak - reported its highest single-day infection count in nearly a month, warning that most of its provinces have been hit by a resurgence of the disease.

With infections and deaths soaring, the United Nations (UN) health agency has said the coronavirus pandemic is likely to be protracted and warned of possible “response fatigue”.

“The WHO continues to assess the global risk level of COVID-19 to be very high,” the agency said, adding that the effects of the pandemic “will be felt for decades to come”.

Vaccine Race

Mexico overtook Britain to become the third hardest-hit

country in virus deaths - after Brazil and the US - with more than 46,600 fatal cases.

The US has now tallied more than 4.6 million cases and 154,793 deaths.

The pandemic has spurred a race for a vaccine with several Chinese companies at the forefront, while Russia has set a target date of September to roll out its own prophylactic.

However, US infectious disease expert Anthony Fauci said it was unlikely America would use any vaccine developed in either nation.

As part of its “Operation Warp Speed”, the US government will pay pharmaceutical giants Sanofi and GSK up to US\$2.1 billion for the development of a COVID-19 vaccine, the two companies have said.

In Europe, where many countries had hoped their outbreaks had been brought under control, Norway recorded its first virus death in two weeks and Switzerland reported its case numbers had crept up again.

Despite the resurgence, Europe has seen demonstrations against coronavirus curbs.

Thousands protested in Berlin over the weekend urging “a day of freedom” from the restrictions, with some demonstrators dubbing the pandemic “the biggest conspiracy theory”.

The protests, in which many demonstrators failed to wear masks or respect social distancing rules, triggered calls for tougher penalties against those who violate curbs.

At least 45 police officers were injured and more than 130 people were arrested.

The pandemic has also continued to cause mayhem in the travel, sports, cultural and tourism sectors, with more airlines announcing mass job cuts and major festivals and cultural events scaling back.

SOURCE: AFP



Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 7:00 pm Monday 3rd August, 2020)

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

FORECAST VALID UNTIL NOON OF THE 04th August, 2020: Rain or thundershowers will be scattered in Kachin State, fairly widespread in Upper Sagaing Region and Northern Shan State and widespread in the remaining Regions and States with likelihood of regionally heavy falls in Nay Pyi Taw, Mandalay, Magway, Bago and Taninthayi Regions, Rakhine, Kayin and Mon States and isolated heavy falls in Lower Sagaing, Yangon and Ayeeyarwady Regions, Southern Shan, Chin and Kayah States. Degree of certainty is (100%).

STATE OF THE SEA: Occasional squalls with rough to very rough seas will be experienced off and along Myanmar Coasts. Surface wind speed in squalls may reach (40-45)m.p.h. Wave height will be about (10-15) feet off and along Myanmar Coasts.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Continuations of increase of rain in Bago and Taninthayi Regions, Rakhine, Kayin and Mon States.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 04th August, 2020: Intermittent rain or thundershowers which may be heavy at times. Degree of certainty is (100%).

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 04th August, 2020: Some rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

Flood Bulletin (Issued at: 12:00 hrs MST on 3-8-2020)

Flood condition of Ayeyawady River

According to the (11:30) hrs MST observation today, the water level of Ayeyawady River at NyaungU has exceeded by about (2½) inches above its danger level. It may fall below its danger level during the next (1) day.

According to the (11:30) hrs MST observation today, the water level of Ayeyawady River at Seiktha has exceeded by about (1½) feet above its danger level. It may remain above its danger level during the next (3) days.

According to the (11:30) hrs MST observation today, the water level of Ayeyawady River at Hinthada has exceeded by about (½) foot above its danger level. It may remain above its danger level during the next (3) days.

According to the (11:30) hrs MST observation today, the water level of Ayeyawady River at Zalun has exceeded by about (½) foot above its danger level. It may remain above its danger level during the next (3) days.

Flood condition of Ngawun River

According to the (11:30) hrs M.S.T observation today, the water level of Ngawun River at Ngathaingchaung has exceeded by about (1) inch above its danger level. It may continue to rise from the present water level by about (½) foot during the next (3) days and may remain above its danger level.

Advisory

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

HOMEWARD BOUND

SpaceX brings NASA astronauts safely home in milestone mission

AMERICA'S first crewed spaceship to fly to the International Space Station in nearly a decade returned safely to Earth on Sunday, splashing down in the Gulf of Mexico.

The mission, carried out jointly by NASA and the private company SpaceX, demonstrated that the United States has the capacity once more to send its astronauts to space and bring them back.

The SpaceX Crew Dragon Endeavour splashed into the water off Pensacola, Florida at 2:48 pm (1848 GMT), trailed by its four main parachutes.

It was the first water landing for a crewed US spaceship since the 1975 Apollo-Soyuz mission.

"It's truly our honour and privilege," said pilot Doug Hurley, who was joined on the mission by commander Bob Behnken.

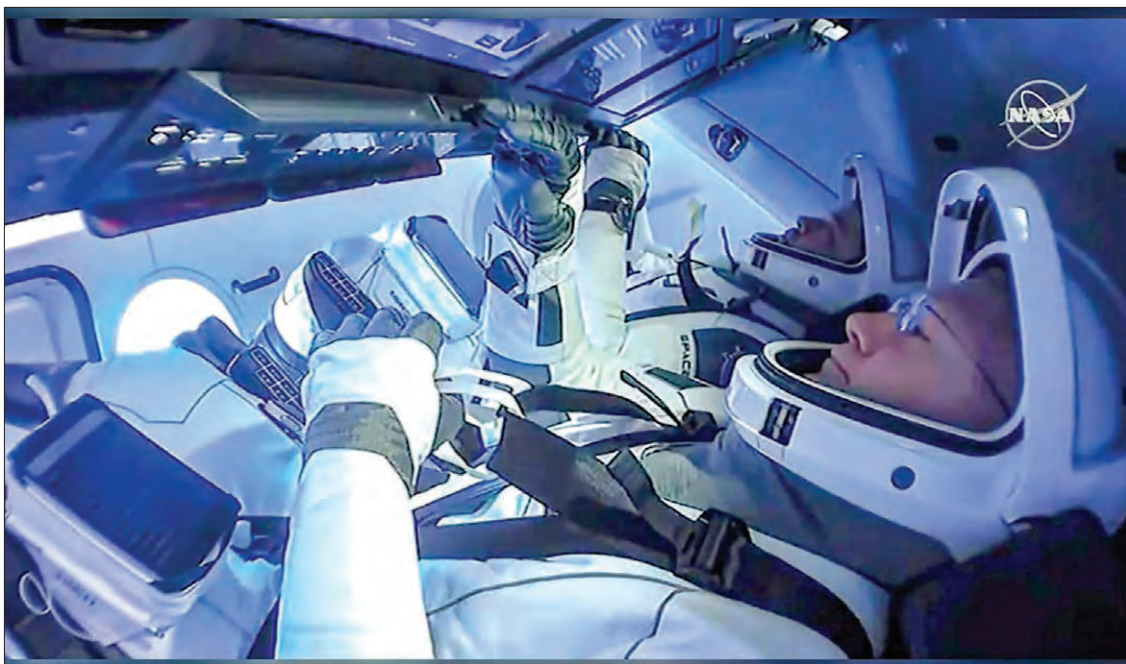
"On behalf of the NASA and SpaceX teams, welcome back to planet Earth and thanks for flying SpaceX," replied SpaceX's Mike Heiman, to laughter in the control room.

Uninvited visitors

A flotilla of civilian boats swarmed the landing zone as a recovery ship sped to the scorched capsule and hoisted it aboard with its crane.

The Coast Guard said it had warned people to stay away from the capsule but "numerous boaters" ignored the requests.

SOURCE: AFP



NASA astronauts Robert Behnken and Douglas Hurley are seen aboard SpaceX's Dragon Endeavour spacecraft, August 2, 2020, in this screen grab taken from a video. **NASA/HANDOUT PHOTO/ AFP**

NEW CONCORDE?

Virgin seeks to revive supersonic commercial flight -- but faster

SPACE tourism company Virgin Galactic on Monday announced a partnership with engine-maker Rolls-Royce to build a supersonic commercial airplane that flies at three times the speed of sound.

The aircraft would travel at Mach 3 -- rather than the Mach 2 speed of Concorde, the pioneering jet that operated from 1976 to 2003.

Any new supersonic plane would have to solve the problems that doomed Concorde, in particular noise and fuel consumption.

"We are excited to... unveil this initial design concept of a high speed aircraft, which we

envision as blending safe and reliable commercial travel with an unrivalled customer experience," said George Whitesides, chief space officer at Virgin Galactic.

The aircraft's draft design showed a plane with a triangular "delta wing" carrying between nine and 19 passengers at an altitude of more than 60,000 feet, or 18,000 metres -- about twice as high as normal commercial flight.

The plane would take off and land at existing airport runways.

Virgin Galactic said its team would "work to address key challenges in thermal management,

maintenance, noise, emissions, and economics that routine high speed commercial flights would entail."

The company signed a non-binding memorandum of understanding with Rolls-Royce to develop an engine for the aircraft.

Virgin Galactic's main focus this far has been its part-plane, part-rocket craft that is being developed to carry tourists to the edge of space.

It is awaiting more test flights, and no launch date for commercial journeys has been set.

SOURCE: AFP



Virgin Galactic unveiled its design for a supersonic aircraft and announced a partnership with Rolls-Royce to build the engine. **PHOTO: VIRGIN GALACTIC/THE SPACESHIP COMPANY/AFP**

AN 'UMBRELLA' SPECIES

Leopards, wolves vanishing from panda conservation areas: study

IT may be one of the most recognizable symbols of conservation, but efforts to protect the giant panda have failed to safeguard large mammals sharing its habitats, according to research published Monday showing dramatic declines of leopards and other predators.

The giant panda has won the hearts of animal lovers around the world and images of the bamboo-eating creature with its ink-blot eye patches have come to represent global efforts to protect biodiversity.

Since conservation efforts began, China has cracked down on poachers, outlawed the trade in panda hides and mapped out dozens of protected habitats.

The strategy is considered one of the most ambitious and

high-profile programmes to save a species from extinction -- and it worked.

The panda was removed from the International Union for Conservation of Nature endangered species list in 2016 although it remains "vulnerable".

But a new study published on Monday in the journal Nature Ecology and Evolution has cast doubt over the idea that efforts to protect the panda automatically help all other animals in its territory.

Researchers found that the leopard, snow leopard, wolf and dhole -- also known as the Asian wild dog -- have almost disappeared from the majority of giant panda protected habitats since the 1960s.

SOURCE: AFP



The giant panda has won the hearts of animal lovers around the world and images of the bamboo-eating creature with its ink-blot eye patches have come to represent global efforts to protect biodiversity. **PHOTO: AFP/ FILE**

Russia aims to produce ‘millions’ of vaccine doses by 2021

MOSCOW — Russia said Monday it aims to launch mass production of a coronavirus vaccine next month and turn out “several million” doses per month by next year.

The country is pushing ahead with several vaccine prototypes and one trialled by the Gamaleya institute in Moscow has reached advanced stages of development and is about to pass state registration, officials said.

“We are very much counting on starting mass production in September,” Industry Minister Denis Manturov said in an interview published by state news agency TASS.

“We will be able to ensure production volumes of several hundred thousand a month, with an eventual increase to several million by the start of next year,” he said, adding that one developer is preparing production technology at three locations in central Russia.

The head of the Russian Direct Investment Fund, which



At more than 850,000 infections, Russia's coronavirus caseload is currently fourth in the world after the United States, Brazil and India. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

finances the trials, said he expects official registration of the vaccine to be complete “within ten days.”

“If this happens in the next

ten days, we will be ahead not just of the United States but other countries too, it will be the first registered coronavirus vaccine,” RDIF chief Kirill Dmitriev said

in televised remarks.

Another vaccine, developed by Siberia-based Vektor lab, is currently undergoing clinical trials and two more will begin hu-

man testing within the next two months, Health Minister Mikhail Murashko said on Saturday.

Gamaleya's vaccine is a so-called viral vector vaccine, meaning it employs another virus to carry the DNA encoding the needed immune response into cells.

Gamaleya's vaccine is based on the adenovirus, a similar technology to the coronavirus vaccine prototype developed by China's CanSino, currently in the advanced stage of clinical trials.

‘Who will buy it?’

The state-run Gamaleya institute came under fire after researchers and its director injected themselves with the prototype several months ago, with specialists criticizing the move as an unorthodox and rushed way of starting human trials.

Vitaly Zverev, laboratory chief at the Mechnikov Research Institute of Vaccines and Sera, said it was too early to register a vaccine.—AFP ■

Top coronavirus advisor warns US in ‘new phase’ of pandemic

WASHINGTON — The United States has entered a “new phase” of the pandemic, White House coronavirus advisor Deborah Birx warned Sunday, with rural areas just as threatened as major cities.

Birx, who heads the White House coronavirus task force, told CNN's “State of the Union” that local virus mitigation procedures were starting to work, but added that “what we are seeing today is different from March

and April”.

“It is extraordinarily widespread. It's into the rural as equal urban areas,” she added. “To everybody who lives in a rural area, you are not immune or protected from this virus.”

“We are in a new phase,” Birx said.

She added that sticking to health and safety guidelines -- such as wearing a mask, maintaining personal hygiene and observing social distancing -- was crucial.

As of Sunday, the US had tallied more than 4,665,000 cases of COVID-19 and 154,834 deaths, according to Johns Hopkins University, making it by far the hardest-hit country in the world. The US notched 47,508 new cases on Sunday -- a slight dip from the previous five days, which had all recorded more than 60,000 new infections.—AFP ■



People practice social distancing at Washington square park in San Francisco. **PHOTO: AFP**

Firefighters struggle to contain blaze in southern California

LOS ANGELES — More than 2,200 firefighters were battling a blaze that was burning out of control Monday in southern California, threatening thousands of people and homes east of Los Angeles.

The Apple Fire, which broke out Friday near the city of San Bernardino, has so far burnt more than 20,000 acres (8,000 hectares), sending up columns of smoke visible for miles.

Record low moisture in the vegetation, low humidity and high temperatures are fuelling the blaze, the United States Forest Service said.

At least 2,600 homes and nearly 7,800 people were evacuated. Officials said it was not clear when they might be able to return.

By early Monday about

2,260 firefighters backed by helicopters, water-dumping planes and trucks were working to put out the fire.

Crews managed to contain five per cent of the fire by Monday, after losing control of the blaze during Sunday afternoon.

There were no reports of casualties, and the only damage so far has been to two buildings and one home.

The edges of the fire are burning on rugged hills hard for crews to reach, authorities said.

Dense vegetation fueled the blaze near homes, said Fernando Herrera, fire chief in Riverside County, while hot and dry conditions Monday will help the flames keep alive.

Officials said the fire may have been set deliberately and a probe is underway.—AFP ■

U.S. presidential election to be held in November as planned: officials

WASHINGTON — Officials from the White House said Sunday that the U.S. presidential election will be held on Nov. 3 as planned after President Donald Trump earlier

raised the possibility of delaying it. “We’re going to hold an election on Nov. 3 and the president is going to win,” White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows told CBS's

Face the Nation.

Meadows's remarks were echoed by presidential campaign adviser Jason Miller, who told Fox News Sunday that “The election

is going to be on Nov. 3 and President Trump wants the election to be on Nov. 3.” Trump raised the possibility on Thursday of delaying the country's presidential

election in November, alleging that “universal mail-in voting” will make the 2020 election “the most inaccurate and fraudulent” in history.—Xinhua ■

HSBC profit slump adds to bank sector virus woes

LONDON — HSBC on Monday reported a 69-per cent slump in net profit, joining a number of major banks whose earnings have been slammed by the coronavirus fallout.

HSBC announced earnings of \$3.1 billion (2.6 billion euros) compared with almost \$10 billion in the first six months of 2019, as spiralling China-US tensions also hurt the British-based but Asia-focused lender.

Alongside HSBC results, top French bank Societe Generale on Monday announced a second-quarter loss of more than one billion euros as the pandemic forced it to set aside more provisions against bad loans.

UK banks Barclays, Lloyds and NatWest all last week reported huge financial hits linked to the pandemic's fallout.

But there have been some bright spots, with French bank BNP Paribas weathering the coronavirus storm in the second quarter with only a small dip in net profits thanks to a surge in investment banking.

Credit Suisse meanwhile saw net profit jump almost a



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PHOTO: AFP

quarter in the April-June period, also on investment banking gains.

'Better prepared'

"HSBC has done little to lift investors' spirits as it brings the curtain down on what has been a costly half-year reporting sea-

son for banks in general," noted Richard Hunter, head of markets at Interactive Investor.

Even though banks "are much better prepared for this economic onslaught than during the financial crisis of over a decade ago... the immediate outlook is bleak", he added.

HSBC said that its pre-tax profit slid 64 per cent to \$4.3 billion in the first half while revenue was down nine per cent at \$26.7 billion. The figures missed analyst forecasts and the bank also raised its estimate for 2020 loan losses to \$13 billion from \$8 billion.—AFP ■

France's Societe Generale plunges into loss on COVID hit

PARIS — Top French bank Societe Generale said Monday the COVID-19 crisis pushed it into a

second quarter loss of more than a billion euros as it was forced to increase loss provisions sharply.



Societe Generale said the clear challenge now was to adapt to the changes brought by the pandemic. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

The net loss of 1.26 billion euros (\$1.48 billion) for the three months to June compared with a profit of more than a billion euros in the same period a year earlier and follows a loss of 326 million euros in the first quarter.

"This quarter has been sharply impacted by the COVID-19 global health crisis and its economic repercussions," Societe Generale said in a statement.

Net banking income -- a bank's core measure of profitability -- tumbled 13.5 per cent, with all business areas affected except for private banking, asset management and financial and consultation services.

Given the uncertain outlook,

the bank said it had put aside 653 million euros to cover losses during the three months.

While most banks have suffered badly in the coronavirus pandemic like Societe Generale, its French peer BNP Paribas bucked the trend, managing to report Friday only a slightly lower second quarter net profit of 2.3 billion euros thanks to a surge in investment banking.

BNP however was also forced to more than double provisions to 1.4 billion euros.

Societe General said it had been forced into two large write-downs -- 700 million euros on its markets activities, plus another 650 million euros on certain tax benefits.—AFP ■

Pandemic sees JAL post 93.7 bil. yen net loss in April-June period

TOKYO — Japan Airlines Co. said Monday it posted a net loss of 93.71 billion yen (\$885 million) in the April-June quarter, as the global coronavirus outbreak sharply reduced demand for air travel.

JAL marked its largest loss on a quarterly basis since the April-June period in fiscal 2009

when it logged a net loss of 99 billion yen in the wake of the global financial crisis, its worst result.

The loss is also the largest since it relisted in 2012 after filing for bankruptcy.

The company again withheld its earnings forecast for the current business year through March, citing uncertainty due

to the virus pandemic.

Meanwhile, the airline said its estimated revenues from domestic and international passengers are expected to be 55 per cent or 65 per cent lower than the previous year's revenue of 1.06 trillion yen.

"It is very hard to foresee a path to recovery right now,"

Hideki Kikuyama, a senior managing executive officer of JAL, said at a press conference, but he was adamant the company "will survive this crisis." In the April-June quarter, JAL logged an operating loss of 131.01 billion yen on revenue of 76.39 billion yen, down 78.1 percent from a year earlier.—Kyodo ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Made in India video conferencing app 'Lauk' launched

NEW DELHI — Senior Journalist turned Entrepreneur Anuranjan Jha has launched 'Lauk', a video conferencing and web streaming platform and solution purely made in India for Indians.

It's "to the India, by the India and for the India". It offers a general video conferencing platform as well as 'Lauk Classroom' for educators and 'Lauk Studio' for live streaming, webinars, and other services.

On the development, the founder and promoter Anuranjan Jha said that the app is a result of clarion call by our Prime Minister Narendra Modi for AatmaNirbhar Bharat adding to that vocal for local is an idea whose time has come.

— ANI ■

Yahoo Japan, Line to postpone merger to March due to coronavirus

TOKYO — The operator of Yahoo Japan online services and messaging app provider Line Corp. said Monday they will postpone their merger to March of next year due to the impact of the novel coronavirus outbreak.

Z Holdings Corp. and Line said the global pandemic has caused a delay in antitrust screenings in some countries after the two sides announced in November last year they would merge in October this year in a bid to compete with global tech firms such as Amazon.com Inc. and Alibaba Group Holding Ltd.

SoftBank Corp., which has a 44.6 per cent stake in Z Holdings, and Naver Corp., Line's South Korean parent, will start a tender offer for Line shares on Tuesday as part of their merger procedures, they said.

The four companies also said they have agreed on a tie-up to promote cooperation within them and jointly strengthen their technological development after winning approvals from antitrust authorities on their merger plan.

—Kyodo ■

Microsoft to keep exploring TikTok deal after talks with Trump



In one of many fronts in the increasingly poisonous US-Chinese relationship, President Donald Trump has threatened to ban the wildly popular app TikTok, citing national security concerns. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

WASHINGTON — Microsoft announced Sunday it would continue talks to acquire the US operations of popular video-sharing app TikTok, after meeting with President Donald Trump who seemingly backed off his earlier threats to ban the Chinese-owned platform. “Following a conversation between Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella and President Donald J Trump, Microsoft is prepared to

continue discussions to explore a purchase of TikTok in the United States,” the company said in a statement, acknowledging the “importance of addressing the President’s concerns” over national security. Microsoft added that it would continue negotiations with ByteDance, TikTok’s Chinese parent company, with the intention of “completing these discussions no later than September 15.” The statement came after Trump on Friday said he would ban the app, which is especially popular with young audiences who create and watch its short-form videos and has an estimated one billion users worldwide.

TikTok should be sold or blocked in the US, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin told ABC earlier Sunday, while Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said on Fox News the president would “take action in the coming days with respect to a broad array of national security risks that are presented by software connected to the Chinese Communist Party.”—AFP ■

Textiles industry faces scrutiny after Leicester outbreak

LEICESTER — Earlier this summer Leicester, in central England, and its thriving textiles industry found itself in the spotlight for all the wrong reasons.

As the government was starting to ease coronavirus lockdown measures, the city of around 355,000 people became a COVID-19 hotspot, prompting officials to reimpose the social distancing regime.

This in turn led to renewed allegations modern slavery is rampant in its textiles sector -- and that it had continued to operate at full capacity during the pandemic, fuelling the local spread of the virus.

At an imposing, derelict-looking building in a district home to many fabrics factories, the sounds of sewing machines puncture the silence of the otherwise quiet street.

Outside, a handful of employees load dozens of boxes onto a truck.

Faded signs elsewhere in the neighbourhood highlight the presence of many other clothes-making hubs and the extent of the industry in parts of Leicester.

In total, the city has around 1,500 factories, employing around 10,000 workers. —AFP ■

Back on track: Europe’s fading night trains win reprieve

PARIS — Key routes were cut and the intricate network of overnight routes across Europe was reduced to just a handful of services.

It was one of the quintessential European travel experiences.

With passengers cradled to

sleep by the clank of the wheels on the rails, the network of night trains that spanned the continent inspired travelogues, thrillers and films.

But the cost required to keep them running, coupled with the growth of high speed day trains and the popularity of

budget airlines, meant that the era of the couchette and wagon lit was quietly fading into the night.

Key routes were cut and the intricate network of overnight routes across Europe was reduced to just a handful of services.

But increasing awareness among passengers and governments of the carbon footprint from air travel -- coupled with shrinkage in the airline sector due to the coronavirus epidemic -- means that night trains may be in line for an unexpected renaissance. —AFP ■

Stock markets rebound in Europe, Japan

LONDON — Stock markets in Europe and Tokyo rebounded Monday, helped by a recovery in manufacturing sectors, with investors scooping up bargains in coronavirus-driven trading.

London’s benchmark FTSE 100 index was up 1.1 per cent in early afternoon deals.

In the eurozone, Frankfurt surged 2.2 per cent and Paris won 1.2 per cent.

Japan’s Nikkei 225 closed up more than two per cent, helped by data showing the country’s economy contracted less than first thought in January-March.

Shanghai put on 1.8 per cent following a forecast-beating

reading on factory activity from Caixin, days after a strong official report showed improvement in the manufacturing sector.

A spike in coronavirus infections has forced fresh lockdowns and sparked worries about the impact on the world economy.

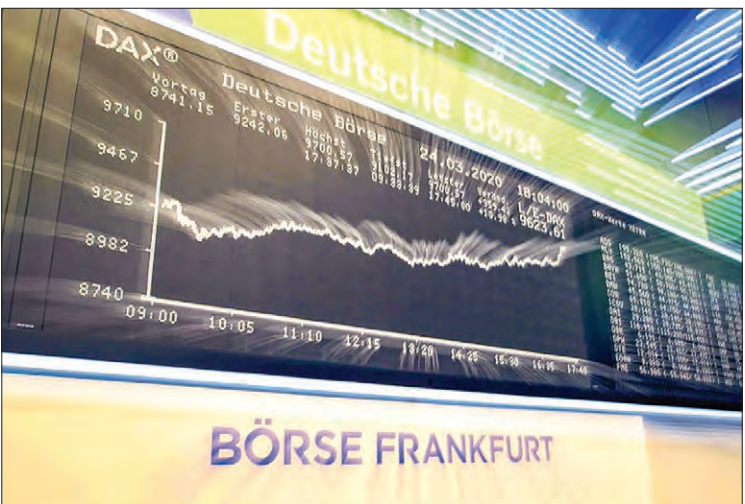
A lack of substantial progress by US lawmakers on a new stimulus package has also frustrated traders, while China-US tensions continued as the White House considers measures against Chinese tech firms, citing national security.

With COVID-19 showing no sign of easing globally -- total cases topped 18 million Monday

-- governments are moving to re-deploy containment measures.

Australia’s Victoria state imposed fresh, sweeping restrictions Sunday, including a curfew in Melbourne for the next six weeks, a ban on wedding gatherings in the city, and an order that schools and universities go back online in the coming days.

Britain introduced new measures in several northern counties at the end of last week, while there are reports the government is considering fresh moves to avert another economically painful national lockdown, including sealing off London.



Bargain hunting has driven some exchanges higher. PHOTO: AFP

The new wave of infections has fanned fears that a nas-

cent economic recovery will be knocked off track.—AFP ■

Job prospects for foreigners dim as Singapore unemployment rise

SINGAPORE — Singapore's total employment contracted dramatically, and retrenchment doubled as earlier warnings that the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic will severely impact the economy and labour market started showing up in job numbers.

As the Singapore economy came to a standstill during the lockdown from April 7 to June 1 to prevent the spread of the virus, total employment in the Q2 covering that period saw the largest quarterly plunge ever as the pandemic took a toll on jobs.

Last week, the Singapore Manpower Research and Statistics Department of the Ministry of Manpower (MOM) released preliminary estimates which showed, when comparing Q2 with Q1, that total employment (excluding Foreign Domestic

Workers or FDWs) contracted by 121,800, four times higher than that in Q1 2020. This brought the total employment decline since the start of 2020 to 147,500.

Since then, with the COVID-19 infection rates stabilizing, Singapore has embarked on a gradual reopening of its economy. Although some businesses including retail outlets, cinemas and restaurants have reopened, safe-distancing measures, capacity restrictions and consumer concerns about their health mean that it will take some time for business volume to reach pre-pandemic levels.

As expected, unemployment rose but remains below the peaks seen in previous downturns. The overall unemployment rate in June 2020 rose to 2.9 per cent from 2.4 per cent in March 2020.—ANI ■



Migrant workers take part in repair work next to a road in Singapore on Jun 3, 2020. (PHOTO: AFP/ROSLAN RAHMAN)/FILE

Millions return to lockdown in Philippines as virus cases soar

MANILA — More than 27 million people in the Philippines -- about a quarter of the population -- will go back into lockdown Tuesday after overwhelmed health workers warned the country was losing the battle against the coronavirus.

Since the beginning of

June, when much of the country emerged from one of the world's longest stay-at-home orders, confirmed infections in the archipelago have increased fivefold, surging past 100,000.

The new restrictions announced by President Rodrigo Duterte late Sunday apply to

the capital Manila and four surrounding provinces on the main island of Luzon.

For the next two weeks, public transport, including the ubiquitous jeepney minibuses, will be halted and domestic flights grounded to try and slow the spread of the virus, which has killed more than 2,000 people in the country.

People have been ordered to stay home unless they need to buy essential goods or exercise outdoors.

Only a limited number of businesses will be allowed to operate and restaurants will be permitted to do take-aways only.

"We really fell short. Nobody anticipated this," Duterte said, as he rejected calls for the Health Minister Francisco Duque to be sacked.

"Nobody expected that thousands will get sick on a single day."

The move comes after 80 medical associations representing tens of thousands of doctors on Saturday called for Duterte to tighten virus restrictions as hospitals, unable to cope with the influx of patients, turned people away.

On Monday, they welcomed Duterte's decision, saying it will give medical workers breathing room and buy time for the system to handle the surge.

The Philippines announced a record 5,032 new infections on Sunday.

More than 5,000 medical workers have contracted the virus -- including 500 in the past week, health department figures show.— AFP ■



The Philippines is extending coronavirus restrictions in and around Manila because cases remain too high. PHOTO: TED ALJIBE/AFP

Pandemic turns into opportunity for Nepal teachers to upskill technologically

LALITPUR [Nepal] — With COVID-19 outbreak forcing educational institutions of Nepal to go online, teachers like Dawa Lama who faced hurdles in conducting virtual classes with confusion about use of technology while teaching using the internet and online platforms, don't feel the same way now.

After attending a training camp organized by Patan Secondary School for teachers like him to address their issues and upgrade them in the application of technology, Lama says he has upgraded his technological skill and ideas.

"Attending training has definitely enhanced my skills. As the COVID-19 has kept students away from school, it has enabled us to conduct some virtual classes," Dawa said on the third day of his 5-day training session.

The school is providing training to teachers to enable them to conduct virtual classes efficiently.— ANI ■

Prison raid mars relative calm in Afghanistan after ceasefire

KABUL — At least 29 people have been killed in a raid on an Afghan prison claimed by the Islamic State group, officials said Monday, as the country waited to see if a government ceasefire with the Taliban would rupture after its formal expiration.

Fighting was still raging at the jail in the eastern city of Jalalabad, where some 1,700 IS and Taliban inmates were being held.

IS's news outlet Amaq said its fighters were behind the raid,

which saw hundreds of inmates escape before many of them were recaptured.

The ongoing attack was Afghanistan's most violent incident since the Taliban and Afghan security forces held a three-day ceasefire over the Eid al-Adha festival which ended Sunday.

IS was not part of that truce which Afghan authorities hope will pave the way for peace talks with the Taliban as soon as this week.

Under a deal signed by the Taliban and the United States in February, the "intra-Afghan" talks were slated to start in March, but were delayed amid political infighting in Kabul and as an agreed prisoner swap dragged on.

Both Kabul and the Taliban have signalled they could be ready to start talks after Eid, and the Afghan government on Sunday offered to extend the ceasefire.

The insurgents have not formally responded.

Prisoner release

The biggest hurdle to talks starting is a contentious prisoner swap stipulated under the US-Taliban deal.

Under the exchange, Kabul is meant to free around 5,000 Taliban prisoners in return for 1,000 Afghan security personnel held captive by the insurgents.— AFP ■

Lebanon foreign minister resigns in protest at crisis management

BEIRUT — Lebanon's foreign minister Nassif Hitti resigned Monday in protest at the government's mishandling of a spiralling economic crisis, warning that if there is no will to reform "the ship will sink".

"I have decided to resign today as foreign minister," Hitti said in a statement, charging that the government had shown no will to initiate changes demanded by the International Monetary Fund.

"I participated in the government under the logic of serving one boss, which is Lebanon," the 67-year-old veteran diplomat

added. "But I found that in my country there are many bosses and contradictory interests.

"If they don't unite in the interest of the Lebanese people ... then the ship, God forbid, will sink with everyone on board," he added, warning that Lebanon risked becoming a "failed state".

Prime Minister Hassan Diab's office said he had "accepted the resignation on the spot and started making contacts and examining options in order to appoint a new minister".

Lebanon is mired in its worst economic crisis since its 1975-1990 civil war, with runa-

way inflation, galloping prices and bank capital controls fueling poverty, despair and angry street protests.

Prime Minister Hasan Diab's government, formed in January and billed as a group of technocrats, has struggled to secure international financial support.

Hitti's resignation comes after France's top diplomat Jean-Yves Le Drian during a visit last month scolded Lebanon's leadership for failing to take the necessary measures to save the country from collapse.—AFP ■



Lebanon's Nassif Hitti, who resigned as foreign minister on Monday, pictured on July 23 before receiving his French counterpart Jean-Yves Le Drian in Beirut. **PHOTO: AFP**

Australian city begins curfew as global virus cases top 18 million



A man walks past a large face mask pinned to a tree in Melbourne after the state announced new restrictions to stop the spread of COVID-19. **PHOTO: AFP**

MELBOURNE — Australia's second-largest city started a six-week curfew and the Philippine capital was ordered back into lockdown, as the number of global coronavirus cases on Monday topped 18 million.

The spread of the virus is gathering pace with worldwide deaths nearing 700,000, and a

White House adviser warning that it was "extraordinarily widespread" in the United States -- the worst-hit nation.

There has been a resurgence in countries that had previously brought their outbreaks under control, including Australia, where sweeping new restrictions kicked in for hard-hit

Victoria state despite their heavy economic cost.

They include a nighttime curfew in Melbourne for the next six weeks, with the city ordering non-essential businesses to close, and a ban on weddings.

"It's hard, especially knowing that in other parts of the country people are quite free to go around and (enjoy) almost normal life," said Tracy Skilling, 42, who manages a cafe in Melbourne. "People just seem quite despondent and down... and just want it to be over."

Melbourne had continued to report hundreds of new cases daily even as other states in Australia reported zero or a small number. Authorities in the Philippines have also had to reimpose curbs after infections surged past 100,000, forcing more than 27 million people -- including in the capital Manila -- back into lockdown on Tuesday for two weeks.—AFP ■

Italy inaugurates new Genoa bridge after deadly collapse

GENOA — Italy inaugurates a sleek new bridge in Genoa on Monday, though relatives of the 43 people killed when the old viaduct collapsed say the pomp and ceremony risk overshadowing the tragedy.

Jets trailing the colours of the Italian flag will roar overhead as the national anthem plays, almost two years to the day the Morandi highway gave way during heavy rain, hurling dozens of cars and several trucks onto railway tracks below.

President Sergio Mattarella will be the first to officially cross the new bridge, designed by famed Italian architect Renzo Piano, who gave it a curved, gleaming underbelly evoking the hull of a ship in tribute to Genoa's maritime history.

The names of the victims will be read aloud -- though many of their loved ones will not be present.

"We won't be at the inauguration, we don't want the tragedy to be transformed into a carni-

val," said Egle Possetti, whose sister died in the August 14, 2018 disaster along with her husband and their two children.

"You can have this sort of big party if you knock down the bridge because it's old, you build a new one, and no one's died."

The Morandi bridge had been riddled with structural problems for decades, leading to expensive maintenance, and its collapse threw the spotlight on Italy's creaking infrastructure.—AFP ■

Masks on as German children start new schoolyear under virus cloud

BERLIN — Thousands of children in northern Germany became the first in Europe to begin a new school year on Monday, with the rest of the country watching anxiously as full-time classes began after months of curtailed hours over the coronavirus pandemic.

Masks will be a daily accessory for some of the 150,000 children returning to school in the Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania region, Germany's first state to reopen the school gates after the summer holidays.

Education ministers of Germany's 16 states had agreed that schools will reopen full-time after the summer break, after offering only partial hours in the weeks when the lockdown was eased.

With infection numbers once again creeping up, fears are rising that the new school start could yet prove tempo-

rary.

But officials warn that children cannot afford to miss more school.

"The children need to be present in school because we have to prevent more lost time," Steffen Kaestner, headteacher of the CJD Jugenddorf-Christophorus school in Rostock, told AFP.

Strict rules have been drawn up to limit transmission of the new coronavirus, with cases across Germany rising above 500 per day in recent weeks.

Different age groups are being taught separately, so that if a pupil tests positive, only one class will have to go into quarantine and the rest of the school can remain open.

Masks must be worn in the corridors, classrooms regularly ventilated and pupils are required to wash their hands regularly and avoid hugging.—AFP ■



Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania is the first of Germany's 16 states to reopen schools. **PHOTO: AFP**

Milner urges Liverpool to stay focused after title triumph

LONDON — Liverpool midfielder James Milner has warned his team-mates it would be “criminal” for them to lose their focus after one Premier League title triumph.

Jürgen Klopp’s side ended a 30-year wait to be crowned English champions in June.

Form dipped once the title had been secured, with two of the three league defeats they suffered all season coming in their final seven matches, while their 100 per cent home record also fell in a draw against Burnley.

The players are currently on a break before pre-season begins but Milner, who won two titles in three years with Manchester City, says they have to be switched on when they return.

“I think it’s getting that balance right. We have to enjoy it because we know how hard it is to win trophies,” the 34-year-old told liverpoolfc.com.

“We’ve been very good to do it but also lucky to win the amount of trophies we have had this year.

“Trent (Alexander-Arnold) thinks it’s absolutely easy, he just

turns up and wins trophies every year but I can assure you, with the amount of years I’ve had in my career, it’s not that easy.”

He warned his teammates against letting their standards drop. “That would be criminal and something we definitely don’t want to look back at,” he said.

“We have a couple of weeks to enjoy this and enjoy being champions and then, as soon as next season starts, it’s down to the fans to carry on enjoying it and enjoy being champions for us.” — AFP ■



Liverpool’s James Milner kisses the Premier League trophy. **PHOTO: AFP**

Lampard calls for ‘fair’ treatment for tired Chelsea



Chelsea boss Frank Lampard. **PHOTO: AFP**

LONDON — Frank Lampard has called on the Premier League to give Chelsea a fair start to next season, saying the September 12 launch date is “too early” for his players.

The Blues lost Saturday’s FA Cup final 2-1 to London rivals Arsenal but are still not finished with the current campaign.

Lampard’s side take on Bayern Munich on Saturday in the rescheduled second leg of their Champions League round-of-16 tie, trailing 3-0 from the first leg.

Even if they exit the competition, Chelsea will have just 35 days before the new season is due to begin.

Manchester City are also still in the Champions League, the final of which is scheduled for August 23, while Manchester United and Wolves are involved in the Europa League, which ends on August 21.

It is understood that when Premier League clubs agreed a September 12 start date, it was also clear there would need to be at least a 30-day break for Chelsea and any of the other teams playing in the end-of-season European competitions.

Lampard lost Willian and Ruben Loftus-Cheek on the eve of the FA Cup final to injury and Cesar Azpilicueta and goalscorer Christian Pulisic during the game to hamstring problems.

“Even in a worst-case scenario, we don’t go through against Bayern, the 12th feels too early for me for the players to start playing again,” said the Chelsea boss.

“The players need a break. That is why we have pulled two hamstrings and had players pull out of the game before this.”

Lampard implored the Premier League to make sure clubs start the next season with a level playing field. — AFP ■

Postponed Tokyo Paralympics schedule unveiled with minor changes

TOKYO — Tokyo 2020 organizers on Monday unveiled the new schedule for the coronavirus-postponed Paralympics next year, with only minor modifications to the original calendar for the event.

The historic decision to delay the 2020 Games over the pandemic means the Paralympics are now scheduled to run from August 24 to September 5, 2021.

The programme will feature 539 events across 22 sports, with modifications made only to start and finish times for some events, Tokyo 2020 said at a press conference. “Having the schedule fixed is a big step for athletes. We would like to continue our work to create a safe and secure Games,” Tokyo 2020 Games delivery officer Hide-masa Nakamura told reporters.

The postponement of the

Games has created a massive headache for organizers, as they navigate everything from securing venues to devising coronavirus countermeasures.

So far specific measures to prevent infection have not been announced, with decisions ex-

pected sometime this autumn.

For the Paralympics in particular, officials said they are mindful that they must cater to the needs of individual athletes and spectators with a range of different health and physical requirements. — AFP ■



Someity (right), the official mascot of the Tokyo 2020 Paralympics, with Miraitowa the mascot of the Tokyo Olympic Games. **PHOTO: AFP**



Argentina’s Emiliano Grillo was added to the field for this week’s PGA Championship after three-time major winner Vijay Singh of Fiji withdrew due to an injury. **PHOTO: AFP**

Singh injury allows Grillo to play in PGA Championship

SAN FRANCISCO — Fiji’s Vijay Singh, a three-time major champion, has withdrawn from this week’s PGA Championship with an injury,

allowing Argentina’s

Emiliano Grillo into the field. The PGA Championship, the year’s first major tournament, starts on Thursday at TPC Harding Park in San Francisco and is

being staged without spectators due to the coronavirus pandemic. Singh won the 1998 and 2004 PGA Championships as well as the 2000 Masters. It would have been his 97th career major start.

Grillo is set to make his 17th career major start. His best result was a share of 12th at the 2016 British Open.

China’s Zhang Xinjun, the first alternate, Sweden’s Alex Noren, American Pat Perez and Sweden’s Henrik Norlander, have all already received berths. — AFP ■