Effectice and successful implementation of socio-economic lives of farmers from the rural area, 70 per cent of the total population of the country, is very important current requirement of the State: Vice-Senior General

State Administration Council Chairman Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing receives Minister of Foreign Affairs of Brunei Darussalam, ASEAN Secretary-General
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.

Republic of the Union of Myanmar
State Administration Council
Nine Objectives

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

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

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

Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Ministry of Health and Sports
Order No 127/2021
10th Waning of Kason 1383 ME
4 June 2021

The Ministry of Health and Sports hereby announced the order by exercising authority stipulated in Sub-Section (b) of Section 21 of the Prevention and Control of Communicable Diseases Law.

1. As the Ministry of Health and Sports is taking preventive measures against the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in real-time, people from some townships need to stay at home because the number of confirmed patients is on the rise in Chin State.

2. The people residing in the following townships of Chin State are inclusive of the stay-at-home programme:
   (a) Tiddim Township
   (b) Falam Township
   (c) Thantlang Township
   (d) Haka Township

3. The people inclusive of the Stay-at-Home programme of the township need to abide by the following disciplines:
   (a) Reside at their homes only (except the persons going to government departments, organizations, companies, factories and workplaces for serving duties);
   (b) Arrange only one person from each house to go out shopping;
   (c) Arrange only two persons per house to go to hospitals and clinics;
   (d) Wear masks if they go outside the houses;
   (e) Allow ferries and the registered vehicles to transport the returnees from workplaces to pass the wards;
   (f) Allow one person only in addition to the driver in a vehicle for shopping in the community and two persons except for the driver for going to hospitals or clinics.

4. The people need to inform relevant ward administration bodies about seeking approvals for going outside the houses if they have reasons to raise limited numbers of participants in the measures and other emergency issues mentioned in sub-paragraph (b), (c) and (d) of Paragraph 3, and the relevant administrative bodies need not allow ingoing and outgoing persons, except for officials and those returnees from duty.

5. Action will be taken against those under the existing laws for failing to abide by the order.

6. The order came into force at 4 am on 5-6-2021.

Dr Thet Khaing Win
Union Minister
**Myanmar needs to apply modern techniques for developing agricultural task and manufacturing works in the agriculture and livestock sectors**

As an agro-based country, Myanmar needs to apply modern techniques for developing agricultural task and manufacturing works in the agriculture and livestock sectors to ensure food sufficiency. And surplus must be exported to improve the economy of rural people.

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**Effective and successful implementation of socio-economic lives of farmers from the rural area, 70 per cent of the total population of the country, is very important current requirement of the State: Vice-Senior General**

Head of the Steering Body for Protection of Farmers’ Rights and Enhancement for their Benefits Vice-Chairman of the State Administration Council Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Commander-in-Chief (Army) Vice-Senior General Soe Win delivered an address at the meeting 1/2021 of the Steering Body at the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

In his speech, the Vice-Senior General said that effective and successful implementation of socio-economic lives of farmers from the rural area, 70 per cent of the total population of the country, is the very important current requirement of the State. Successive governments have been protecting the farmers’ rights and enhancing their benefits.

So, the Law for Protection of Farmers’ Rights and Enhancement for their Benefits (2013) was enacted in 2013. The law comprises eight chapters with 29 sections. Section 3 in Chapter II mentions five objectives of the law. Sub-section (a) is to support the farmers with the disbursement of suitable loans, Sub-section (b) to arrange smooth provision for techniques, inputs and production to farmers, Sub-section (c) to give assistance to farmers to get reasonable prices and market for agricultural products, Sub-section (d) to effective perform protection of rights of farmers who own small plots of farmlands and enhance of benefits and Sub-section (e) to provide assistance to farmers for damage and loss in natural disaster as much as possible.

The law was added with two sub-sections. So, Sub-section (f) is to help farmers not to lose in farmland confiscation and protect them for the safety of farming rights, and Sub-section (g) to carry out the emergence of a farmer organization law. The committee aims to ensure food sufficiency of the State, full nutrition of the citizens, more exportation of products from agricultural and livestock sectors, income of increase for farmers and development of socio-economic lives. As such, those attending the meeting are responsible for the protection of the rights of farmers who own small farm plots and the enhancement of their benefits in accord with the essence of the law.

The government and the steering committee must reconstitute the work committees and task forces to implement the provisions of the law effective. These work committees and task forces are to invite entrepreneurs to cooperate with them in the tasks. The Vice-Senior General further urged them to coordinate with relevant ministries in the transfer of agriculture and livestock techniques, quality control for quality seeds, fertilizers, pesticides and agricultural machinery and systematic usage, reduction of natural disaster risks and rehabilitation tasks, enhancement of domestic crop productivity and seeking the reasonable prices and market of agricultural and livestock products. Region and state administration councils need to emphasize preparedness for reducing the risks of natural disasters, providing assistance for crops and supervision for data on loss of farmers.

The Vice-Senior General said the country must emphasize an increase of per-acre yield. Moreover, it is necessary to disseminate 14 points of systematic cultivation to the farmers. Those in charge in agricultural sector in regions and states need to have comprehensive knowledge about nurturing, cultivation, growing number of paddy plants in set plots, proper drainage and seeding, and harvesting process. They have to disseminate the knowledge to farmers. Model plots must be established in regions/states, districts and townships to increase the per-acre yield of crops. Their increased income will contribute to the economic development of the State.

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"Model plots must be established in regions/states, districts and townships to increase the per-acre yield of crops. Their increased income will contribute to the economic development of the State."
CHAIRMAN of the Union Election Commission U Thein Soe received the current ASEAN Chairman Dato Erywan Pehin Yusof, Foreign Affairs Minister of the Brunei Darussalam, and ASEAN Secretary-General, Dato Lim Jock Hoi, yesterday afternoon in Nay Pyi Taw.

At the meeting, the Chairman of the Union Election Commission explained the formation of the Union Election Commission and its examination of ballot papers, publication of the findings, future activities and meeting with political parties.

The meeting also discussed matters pertaining to further plans regarding the upcoming election, ASEAN’s cooperation when the election is held, five ASEAN Common Accords, the future five-point roadmap of the State Administration Council, the appointment of the ASEAN Ambassador to Myanmar and the possibility of cooperating in the declining business situation due to COVID-19, including Myanmar politics.

The meeting was also attended by UEC members and officials from the UEC office.

— MNA

MIC meeting 4/2021 highlights on policy matters

MYANMAR Investment Commission (MIC) held its (4/2021) meeting yesterday morning at office No.18, Office of the State Administration Council. The meeting was chaired by member of the State Administration Council, Chairman of Myanmar Investment Commission, Lieutenant-General Moe Myint Tun and was attended by the members of the Myanmar Investment Commission.

The meeting was held only for discussing the investment policy matters and it is intended to sustain the economic development through the investment facilitation, liberalization and promotion.

The MIC ratified the Standard Operating Procedures for scrutinizing investment projects by the State and Region Investment Committees and of the One Stop Service Departments of Myanmar Investment Commission. In addition, the policies on delayed investment projects, the education services and the seasonal crop were discussed and the supported policy measures for tackling them were laid down accordingly.

— MNA

Deputy Minister U Ye Tint inspects IPRD, MRTV Retransmission Stations in Mandalay, Sagaing

DEPUTY Minister for Information U Ye Tint met the IPRD staff of Madaya, Singu and Kyaukmyaung Townships in Mandalay Region and other IPRD staff of YeU, KhinU and Wetlet townships of Shwebo District in Sagaing Region on 31 May.

The Deputy Minister met the IPRD staff of Kanbalu District and inspected MRTV Retransmission Station on 1 June. Then, he held a discussion with the IPRD staff of Kyunhla, Kawlin District and Pyinbu Township and in charge of MRTV Retransmission Station. After that, he inspected the station.

Then, he met the staff and head of the retransmission station at the IPRD office of Wuntho Township.

The deputy minister gave instructions regarding the reports and needs of employees and stressed the need to perform the duties with goodwill.

— MNA

The deputy minister meets the Shwebo IPRD staff on 31 May 2021.
Union Minister U Wunna Maung Lwin receives Dato Erywan Pehin Yusof, Minister of Foreign Affairs II of Brunei Darussalam, Dato Lim Jock Hoi, Secretary-General of the ASEAN

AT the invitation of U Wunna Maung Lwin, Union Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, Dato Erywan Pehin Yusof, Minister of Foreign Affairs II of Brunei Darussalam and Dato Lim Jock Hoi, Secretary-General of the ASEAN arrived Myanmar by special flight at 4:55 pm on 3 June 2021 and the officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs welcomed them at the Nay Pyi Taw International Airport.

The Union Minister for Foreign Affairs received Dato Erywan Pehin Yusof, Minister of Foreign Affairs II of Brunei Darussalam and Dato Lim Jock Hoi, Secretary-General of the ASEAN, at 10:00 am on 4 June 2021 at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Nay Pyi Taw. At the Meeting, they exchanged views on matters pertaining to Myanmar and Brunei relations, ASEAN Community Building efforts, follow up to the ASEAN Leaders’ Meeting, cooperation between Myanmar and ASEAN and implementation of the recommendations of the Preliminary Needs Assessment.

Senior Officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs also attended the Meeting.

In the evening, Union Minister hosted dinner for Minister of Foreign Affairs II of Brunei Darussalam and Secretary-General of the ASEAN.—MNA

MoSWRR Union Minister receives Brunei Darussalam Foreign Minister, ASEAN Secretary-General

THE Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement received Brunei Darussalam’s Foreign Affairs Minister Dato Erywan Pehin Yusof and ASEAN Secretary-General Dato Lim Jock Hoi yesterday.

The meeting discussed matters pertaining to the cooperation work with ASEAN in the reception of Rakhine displaced persons, the implementation of 7 prioritized projects in Rakhine State together with ASEAN, works of ASEAN to communicate international donors for remaining projects, holding of 4th superiors’ coordination meeting on repatriation by the end of June and receiving of humanitarian aid via ASEAN.—MNA

The inspection of prison and police detention by the MNHRC in May 2021


During the inspection visits, in accordance with the provisions of the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission Law, the inspection teams interviewed prisoners and detainees freely and privately group by group and asked them whether there is any problem to see their family members, the availability of appropriate facilities for them, whether there is health care or not, is there torture in prison and their living condition in the prison. The inspection teams also met with the prisoners and detainees who wish to meet with the team privately and recorded their reports.

While inspecting the prisons and police detention centres, the inspection teams inspected the sleeping quarters of the inmates, the kitchen, the food store, the water tanks, the latrines and the arrangement to prevent COVID-19 pandemic.

The finding and recommendations of the inspection teams will be put forward to the relevant departments to take necessary actions.—MNA
School attendance rate expected to be double in Yangon region

The attendance rate in basic education schools in Yangon Region has increased significantly within four days after the countrywide reopening of the schools for the 2021-2022 academic year, and it is expected to be double in the coming week according to the Yangon Region Education office.

“We don’t want students to be affected anymore when it comes to education. We want parents to understand and send the children to schools,” said Yangon Region Education Officer Daw Hnin Kyi (Deputy Director-General).

Students had lost one year for the 2020-2021 academic year due to the COVID-19 outbreak, and the State Administration Council has arranged to provide free education for the 2021-2022 academic year in line with the COVID-19 prevention and control guidelines.

Despite the reopening of schools, some parents are reportedly worried to send their children to schools. According to a junior assistant teacher from Bahan Township, they often come and check the school’s operation and safety.

Of one million students from a total of 2,700 basic education schools in the Yangon Region, 40% of them are attending schools as for the first week of school reopening for the 2021-2022 academic year, according to the Region Education Office.

— Maung Sein Lwin/GNLM

Children happily go to schools nationwide
Domestic black bean price jumps to over K1.08 mn per tonne

ACCORDING to the Yangon Region Chambers of Commerce and Industry, the domestic black bean price has jumped to over K1.08 million per tonne (Bayinnaung Commodity Depot).

Although the black bean price on 1 May was K888,500 per tonne, the price jumped to about K1,865,000 per tonne on 4 June, increasing around K200,000 per tonne in only one month, according to the bean market data.

Black bean price has increased when India, the primary buyer of Myanmar pluses, has redefined black bean, green gram and pigeon pea bean from a restricted commodity to a free import commodity. However, the price has not reached the price that hit K1.3 million per tonne at the end of 2015.

Since 2017, India has been setting import quota on beans, including black beans and pigeon peas, under the Indian government’s plan to reduce foreign trade policy for 2015-2020.

At present, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry of India has issued proclamation No. S.O.1858 (E) on 15 May 2021 that the three pluses have been changed from a restricted commodity to a fee import commodity as of 31 October 2021.

The black bean plantations yielded around 400,000 tonnes annually in Myanmar, and the bean is mainly exported to India. Other pluses, including green gram and pigeon pea, are produced in Africa and Australia in addition to Myanmar, according to Myanmar Pulses, Beans and Sesame Seeds Merchants Association. — NN/GNLML

Lemon price constantly drops in Kya-in-Seikkyi

The lemon trees are widely grown in Kya-in-Seikkyi township, Kayin State, and the lemon cultivation is successful.

With the yield of lemons getting high in Kya-in-Seikkyi township, Kawthaik District, the local farmers grow the fruit on a commercial scale and earn extra income for their family.

As the lemons have yielded abundantly, the price of lemon has dropped naturally in this monsoon. But, the price of lemon is on the rise in summer.

In the last monsoon, the lemon price hit K15 per one. But the price rose to K150 or K200 per fruit depending upon the size in summer.

But this year, the price of lemon was K40 per fruit, a drop by half this year compared to last year.

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But this year, the price of lemon was K40 per fruit, a drop by half this year compared to last year.

The Department of Agriculture produces quality agriculture produces quality rice and other crops, and the lemon price hit K15 per one. But the price rose to K150 or K200 per fruit depending upon the size in summer.

A view of a lemon plantation.

Agriculture Department projects to cover over 800,000 monsoon crop acres in Yangon southern district

A total of 801,843 acres of monsoon rice crops are planned to cultivate in the townships of Yangon southern district this year, the Department of Agriculture (Yangon southern district) stated.

The projected acres include 59,773 in Thanlwin Township, 107,934 in Kyauk Sar Township, 50,073 in Tada, 153,580 in Thongwa, 110,042 in Kayan, 82,032 in Twantay, 88,097 in Kawkareik District, 36,671 acres in Myeik Township, 1,194 in Kyunsu Township, 1,651 in Taninthayi Township, 42 in Bolpyin Township, and 94 in Kawthoung Township.

Those farmers who have already paid off the previous loan will be prioritized in the loan application process. The MADB Myeik branch has provided K34.2 million worth of loans to the farmers with 228 acres so far.

MADB provides annual agricultural loans to small-scale farmers, intending to have food self-sufficiency and export competitiveness for Myanmar’s agricultural products in order to boost exports, promote the interests of the farmers and enhance their socio-economy. — Khang Htoo (IPRD)/GNLML

MADB to disburse K5 bln monsoon crop loans for over 6,000 farmers in Myeik District

THE Myanmar Agricultural Development Bank (MADB) Myeik branch of the Ministry of Planning, Finance and Industry is implementing to provide K5 billion worth of agricultural loans for the monsoon rice crop season in order to cover 6,122 farmers in five townships in Myeik District.

The MADB Myeik branch will disburse a total of 6,122 farmers (36,671 acres) monsoon crop loans, paying out K150,000 per acre.

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Solve weakness in sanitation of the city with public participation

As Myanmar is a developing country, all sectors of the development face requirements. The authorities spend the efforts. The city needs generous contributors and well-wishers for operating the development tasks. The city dwellers with public participation plays a crucial role in city-building tasks. The city needs the fulfilment of the people amounts to help.

Pandemic plunges 100 mn more workers into poverty: UN

The Covid-19 pandemic has pushed more than 100 million more people into poverty, the UN said Wednesday, after working hours plummeted and access to good-quality jobs evaporated.

Pressing COVID-19 situation urges world to rethink priorities: think tank

With the world reeling from the Covid-19 pandemic, the think tank predicts that economic policies should prioritize public health and social protection over growth targets.
A mine exploded at a basic education post-primary school, killed three men and injured five teachers yesterday afternoon in Sangyi village, Nattalin Township. A total of 233,311 outpatients and 69,735 in-patients reached these hospitals from 5 February to date.

In addition to providing medical care to patients in need of hospitalization, Tatmadaw is making arrangements for the well-being of hospitalized patients and caregivers.

Commanders of Northern Command, Yangon Command, South-West Command, North-West Command and Southern Command comforted the patients—monks, local people, military officers, other ranks and their families—at the respective station military hospitals. The commanders also gave food-stuffs to the patients yesterday. — MNA

### Mine attacks kills 3 men with 5 teachers being wounded in Nattalin

TATMDAW keeps providing healthcare services for patients at the military hospitals and temporary treatment hospitals in the townships of regions and states.

Tatmadaw medical teams, which comprise Tatmadaw doctors, specialists, medical assistants and nurses, have given medical treatments to the people to solve their difficulties in healthcare services. A total of 233,311 outpatients and 69,735 in-patients reached these hospitals from 5 February to date.

Senior medical experts, medics, medical assistants and nurses have conducted 10,893 major operations and 5,597 minor operations. The senior doctors gave intensive treatments to the severe cases.

These hospitals managed the birth of 15,643 babies to date. Of those, 5,564 cases are done in the caesarean section and 8,079 cases in ordinary delivery.

In addition to providing medical care to patients in need of hospitalization, Tatmadaw is making arrangements for the well-being of hospitalized patients and caregivers.

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### Police arrest suspects together with explosives

**THE** police arrested the suspects, who committed mine attacks in some wards of Myaungmya Township in Ayeyawady Region, together with the explosives.

On 3 June, a bag was found in the house compound of U Naw Mai Hla Kyi, township administrator who lives in 11th street of No (8) Ward of Myaungmya Township. The security forces examined the bag and found a handmade bomb similar to the mine size from suspect Chit Ko Ko (aka) Chit Ko.

According to the words of Chit Ko Ko (aka) Chit Ko, the suspects who made the bombs were Phoe Di (aka) Thit Lwin Thant, who lives in No (5) Ward of Myaungmya township and another man. The police arrested Phoe Di (aka) Thit Lwin Thant at the house of U En Hoke in Nyaung Chay Htauk village. The security members then arrested U En Hoke together with the arms used in riots.

Moreover, the police arrested Nay Myo Aung (aka) San Shay, who lives in No (9) Ward of South Okkalapa Township of Yangon Region and Ma Zar (aka) Tin Zar Nway in Shwe Chi Ward of Pyinmana Township together with handmade guns, magazine and other explosives.

The police also found a bag containing pistol, bullets and bomb discarded by two men riding a motorcycle in Pa La Na Village-tract of Myitkyina Township of Kachin State. Similarly, the police seized the explosives in a house in which two men, including Chit Min Htwe located in Thingangyun Township of Yangon Region yesterday.

Moreover, the security members arrested Zaw Myo Tun (aka) E Ti in Nyaung Pin village of Dagon Myothit (Seik-kan) Township together with the explosives.

The officials will take actions against those who keep or use homemade mines, firearms and explosives in accordance with the law. — MNA

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The officials will take actions against those who keep or use homemade mines, firearms and explosives in accordance with the law. — MNA
NASA announces two new missions to Venus

NASA announced two new missions to Venus on Wednesday that will launch at the end of the decade and are aimed at learning how Earth’s nearest planetary neighbour became a hellish world while our own thrived.

“These two sister missions both aim to understand how Venus became an inferno-like world, capable of melting lead at the surface,” said Bill Nelson, the agency’s newly-confirmed administrator.

“They will offer the entire science community the chance to investigate a planet we haven’t been to in more than 30 years.”

The missions have been awarded about $500 million under NASA’s Discovery Programme, and each is expected to launch in the 2028-2030 timeframe. Both missions were picked from a competitive, peer-reviewed process based on their scientific value and feasibility of their plans.

DAVINCI+, which stands for Deep Atmosphere Venus Investigation of Noble gases, Chemistry, and Imaging, will gather more detail on the composition of Venus’ primarily carbon dioxide atmosphere, to learn how it formed and evolved.

The mission also seeks to determine whether the planet once had an ocean.

A descent sphere will plunge through the dense atmosphere which is laced with sulfuric acid clouds.

It will precisely measure the levels of noble gases and other elements to learn what gave rise to the runaway greenhouse effect we see today. — AFP □

No evidence mystery UFOs are alien spacecraft, report finds: NYTightes

THERE is no evidence that unexplained aerial phenomena spotted in recent years by US military personnel are aliens, an upcoming government report, quoted by The New York Times Thursday said, but officials still can’t explain the mysterious aircraft. The newspaper, which cited senior administration officials briefed on the findings of the highly anticipated report, said they were able to confirm the unusual vessels were not the product of secret Pentagon technology.

But the review of more than 120 incidents over the past two decades was unable to explain the mysterious movements of the craft, which include unusual acceleration, direction changes and the ability to rapidly submerge.

And while senior officials told The Times the lack of clear findings means that while there’s no evidence of alien technology behind the phenomena, it’s also impossible to rule out.

One senior official briefed on the report said intelligence and military officials increasingly worry the phenomena could be China or Russia experimenting with hypersonic technology.

The upcoming report – expected to be released to Congress by June 25 – will have a classified annex, officials told The Times, which will likely fuel speculation that aliens are actually behind the encounters.

The Pentagon last year released videos taken by US Navy pilots showing in-flight encounters with the unusual aircraft. And the mystery was further drummed up by former officials with access to classified intelligence.

“What is true – and I am actually being serious here – is that there’s footage and records of objects in the skies that we don’t know exactly what they are,” former president Barack Obama told “The Late Late Show” last month. — AFP □

Arctic sea ice thinning faster than expected, new study shows

SEA ice in the Arctic’s coastal regions may be thinning up to twice as fast as previously thought, according to a new study, with worrying implications for climate change.

The analysis, by researchers at Britain’s University College London (UCL), concluded the ice in the coastal regions was thinning at a rate 70 to 100 per cent faster than the established consensus.

“The mission also seeks to determine whether the planet once had an ocean.” — AFP □

The dramatic reassessment comes after the team used more up-to-date maps of snow depth on the ice, which has been retreating for decades as the planet warms.

“We believe our new calculations are a major step forward in terms of more accurately interpreting the data we have from satellites,” said UCL professor Julienne Stroeve, who co-authored the study published in The Cryosphere journal.

“We hope this work can be used to better assess the performance of climate models that forecast the effects of long-term climate change in the Arctic,” she said.

The region, home to millions of square kilometres of ice essential for keeping the planet cool, is warming at three times the global rate, Stroeve said.

Sea ice thickness is estimated by measuring the height of the ice above the water. But that measurement is distorted by snow weighing the ice floes down.

Scientists had adjusted for this using a map of snow depth in the Arctic that UCL said did not account for the impact of climate change.

“Previous calculations of sea ice thickness are based on a snow map last updated 20 years ago,” said Robbie Mallett, a PhD student who led the study.

“Because sea ice has begun forming later and later in the year, the snow on top has less time to accumulate.” — AFP □

Virgin Galactic to send up well-known researcher

SPACE tourism company Virgin Galactic announced Thursday it will send researcher Kellie Gerardi, a well-known figure on TikTok, into space to conduct experiments for several minutes while weightless.

The move presents an ideal opportunity for the company to flaunt its ambitions for research with worries high about the future of commercial suborbital flights.

The 32-year-old bioastronautics researcher, who is affiliated with the International Institute for Astronautical Sciences (IIAS), said she always believed the space tourism industry’s success could also “help open up opportunities for researchers like myself.”

The first experiment conducted by Gerardi, who has more than 400,000 TikTok followers and some 130,000 on Instagram, will involve “astro skin,” in which sensors are placed under her flight suit to collect biometric data.

While the process has already been used aboard the International Space Station, data has never before been collected during landing and takeoff.

Virgin Galactic, founded by British billionaire Richard Branson, hopes to begin regular commercial suborbital flights in early 2022, with eventual plans for 400 trips a year.

The flights are far from the classic rocket experience, with a carrier plane taking off from a runway then dropping the spacecraft once in the air, which then ignites its engines.

Asked whether just a few minutes in space was sufficient, Gerardi said “uninterrupted consecutive minutes of time in space in microgravity to do my research” was “really the dream.” — AFP □

The interplanetary variant of the Photon spacecraft developed by Rocket Lab is pictured in an undated artist’s render received on Thursday. The image depicts the moon as a destination, but the spacecraft would be very similar for a Venus mission. PHOTO: AFP / ROCKET LAB / HANDOUT
Senior British judge to quit top Hong Kong court: media

A senior British judge has announced she will quit Hong Kong’s top court when her term ends, stating there were “all sorts of question marks” over Beijing’s new national security law, media reported Friday.

Baroness Brenda Hale, the first female president of Britain’s Supreme Court, is one of 13 foreign judges currently sitting as non-permanent members of Hong Kong’s Court of Final Appeal.

Unlike mainland China, where the courts are beholden to the Communist Party, Hong Kong’s judicial system remains independent and based on common law – a major reason for its position as a global business hub. Lawyers from common law jurisdictions are able to operate in the city, while senior judges are invited to sit on the city’s top court.

But China’s imposition of the security law as she announced she would not seek a second term on the Hong Kong court when her tenure ends in July.

“The jury is out on how they will be able to operate the new national security law. There are all sorts of question marks up in the air,” the Times quoted Hale as telling an online conference Thursday. — AFP

United Airlines unveils plan to revive supersonic jet travel

UNITED Airlines announced plans Thursday to buy 15 planes from airline startup Boom Supersonic in a move that could revive the high-speed form of air travel.

Under the commercial agreement, United would purchase Boom’s “Overture” aircraft once the planes meet “United’s demanding safety, operating and sustainability requirements” with an aim to start passenger travel in 2029, the companies said in a joint press release. The agreement covers 15 planes and includes an option for United to obtain another 35 aircraft. The companies did not disclose financial terms.

Boom’s plane is capable of flying at twice the speed of leading aircraft now on the market, with the potential to fly from Newark to London in three and a half hours and San Francisco to Tokyo in six hours, the companies said.

The jets will also be “net-zero” in carbon use because they will employ renewable fuel.

Commercial supersonic jet travel was introduced in the 1970s with the Concorde, but the jets were retired in 2003 due in part to the high cost of meeting environmental restrictions on sonic booms. The Concorde’s demise also followed a 2000 Air France accident that killed 113 people. — AFP

Australia media fined for breaching Pell trial gag order

A dozen major Australian news organisations were fined Friday for breaching court orders that banned reporting on Cardinal George Pell’s 2018 conviction on child sex abuse charges, which was later overturned.

The news outlets were found guilty of 21 counts of contempt of court for ignoring the gag order in the case of Pell, a top Vatican official who was convicted of abusing two choirboys but later cleared on appeal after spending a year in prison.

They were fined a total of Aus$1 million (US$855,000) and ordered to pay an additional Aus$650,000 in court costs.

The news organizations had already pleaded guilty in a deal with the court that led to contempt charges being dropped against 18 individual journalists and editors who had faced possible jail time if they were also convicted. — AFP

Facebook to bar politicians from posting deceptive content: report

FACEBOOK plans to eliminate an exemption for politicians that allows them to post content deemed deceptive or abusive, and will hold them to the same standards as other users, news website The Verge reported Thursday.

The controversial exemption, given to politicians under the auspices of their posts being newsworthy, could end as soon as this week on the leading social network, the news site said.

Facebook did not immediately respond to an AFP request for comment on the matter.

The policy reversal would come after an independent oversight board said Facebook was right to oust former president Donald Trump for his comments regarding the deadly January 6 rampage at the US Capitol. — AFP

Race against time to relocate NATO’s Afghan translators

LIKE thousands of Afghan translators who served with NATO forces, Nazir Ahmad fears for his life as the US-led alliance scrambles to pull out of the country in the coming weeks.

“The situation is deteriorating now as foreign forces leave,” he told AFP in Kabul. “We are scared of the insurgents. They know our faces.” Afghans who worked for international armed forces face a threatened wave of Taliban reprisals and fear that resettlement plans by alliance members will leave many of them and their relatives still vulnerable.

Ahmad, 35, who is now in the Afghan capital, worked with British forces for two years in the restive southern province of Helmand, and has applied for relocation to the UK to escape the increased threats to former local staff.

“The insurgents, especially the Taliban, will take revenge and cut off our heads,” he said, explaining the Islamist militia considers former local staff “spies” and “foreign allies”.

Accelerated relocation

Over the past two decades, dozens of Afghan translators have been killed or tortured in targeted assaults by the Taliban.

Many more have been injured in attacks on foreign troops during patrols in armoured vehicles. Britain announced on Monday that it would accelerate relocation for its Afghan staff who worked with the military, offering priority to any current or former locally employed staff deemed at risk.

The UK has relocated 1,360 locally employed Afghan staff worldwide since the end of the 20-year conflict, and says more than 3,000 Afghans are expected to be resettled under the accelerated plans.

But Ahmad’s contract with the British Army was terminated in 2012, for an alleged security breach, making his right to relocation in the UK uncertain. — AFP
Tokyo Motor Show to be held in 2023 under theme of green, digital

THE Tokyo Motor Show will be held in 2023 under a theme of “green and digital,” organizers said Thursday after cancelling it this year due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Akio Toyoda, president of Toyota Motor Corp. who serves as chairman of the Japan Automobile Manufacturers Association, said in an online press conference the theme represents “a medium-to long-term message (for the country) to realize the carbon neutrality target in 2050.”

Toyoda said the auto industry welcomes the government’s new economic growth strategy featuring plans to set up 30,000 fast-charging stations and increase by sixfold the number of hydrogen stations for electrified vehicles.

But Toyoda said that just aiming for the targets is insufficient to cut carbon emissions significantly.

He suggested that the industry can help by deciding where to install them most efficiently and enhance usability, such as by using data collected by “connected cars” equipped with telecommunication systems to analyze where electrified cars are used frequently.

The biennial auto show for 2021 was canceled for the first time since its start in 1954. In 2019 the show drew around 1.3 million people. — Kyodo News

Chinese Taipei boosts coronavirus testing for tech industry

CHINESE Taipei is ramping up testing and vaccinations for tech industry workers in a bid to stop a sudden surge in coronavirus cases hitting its semiconductor industry at a time of global shortages.

In the science parks of northern Hsinchu city, where the world’s largest contract microchip maker Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC) is based, local officials have set up rapid testing sites.

“The Hsinchu Science Park is home to some very important global semiconductor factories,” mayor Lin Chih-chien told AFP. “Hsinchu city has to protect not only its residents, but also importantly protect the home base of the world’s most important semiconductor industries.”

Chinese Taipei’s microchip factories have been struggling to plug a pandemic-driven global shortage of chips that power essential electronic devices. The water-intensive facilities are running at full capacity, even as Chinese Taipei suffers its worst drought in decades.

And now Chinese Taipei is battling a sudden outbreak of the coronavirus, with officials keen to spot any clusters in the tech sector before they spread.

Hsinchu City Medical Association said it has organized rapid testing teams with 120 volunteer doctors and plans to set up four community vaccination sites in the coming days. — AFP

Parking lots: Car space sells for $1.3m in Hong Kong

A single car parking space has been sold for a whopping HK$10 million ($1.3 million) at a luxury Hong Kong apartment complex, local media reported on Friday.

The 12.5 square-metre (135 square-foot) spot is part of a development on The Peak, a swanky area that has attracted some of the city’s richest residents since colonial times.

Boasting breath-taking views over Victoria Harbour, the hilltop has eye-watering property prices — including some of the world’s most expensive real estate.

While Hong Kong’s wealthy think nothing of dropping millions of dollars for their homes, millions of the city’s residents struggle to afford the rent on shoe-box apartments — many smaller than the parking space.

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Technicians working at a microchip making factory in Taiwan.

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Corporate tax deal tops agenda at G7 finance meet

GROUP of Seven finance ministers are set to kick off talks on Friday, with the spotlight on ambitious plans for a minimum global level of corporate tax.

British finance minister Rishi Sunak will host the meeting — which is being held in person after an easing of Covid restrictions — with counterparts from Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States.

The talks will prepare the ground for a broader summit of G7 leaders in Cornwall, south-west England starting on June 11, which will be attended by US President Joe Biden on his first foreign tour since taking office in January.

According to a draft communique seen by AFP, the finance chiefs and central bankers of the world’s seven richest nations will express “strong support” and a “high level of ambition” over a global minimum corporate tax. They then hope to reach a broader agreement at a G20 finance meeting scheduled for July.

Ministers also plan to commit to “sustain policy support”, or stimulus, for “as long as necessary” to nurture economic recovery, while addressing climate change and inequalities in society, according to the document. Furthermore, they will urge “equitable, safe and affordable access to Covid-19 vaccines” everywhere in order to fully overcome the deadly pandemic. And the thorny topic of the regulation of digital currencies such as bitcoin will also be on the agenda. — AFP

Biden to overhaul Trump’s China investment blacklist: report

JOE BIDEN intends to this week overhaul a list of Chinese firms that US investors are allowed to own shares in, as the president re-evaluates the world powers’ post-Trump relationship while maintaining pressure on Beijing.

Donald Trump prohibited Americans from buying stakes in 31 Chinese companies that were deemed to be supplying or supporting China’s military and security apparatus. The list included major telecoms, construction and technology firms such as China Mobile, China Telecom, video surveillance firm Hikvision, and China Railway Construction Corp. It was among a series of measures by the White House aimed at quelling the Asian giant’s rise and which has left ties between the two severely strained.

Biden’s new order will see the Treasury Department create a list of firms that would be hit with financial penalties for their links with China’s defence and surveillance technology sectors, Bloomberg News reported without citing sources. The president is expected to sign the order this week, it added.

Previously, the sanctions and choice of targets were tied to a congressionally mandated Defence Department report. The review came after two Chinese companies successfully challenged the order in court, and Biden said it was needed to be sure it was legally watertight and sustainable.

While the Biden administration has pledged to take a more diplomatic line with China following the upheaval of his predecessor, he has said he will keep to a strict line on several issues, including defence and technology. He is expected to keep the list largely intact, while the Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control will add new firms after consulting the departments of Defence and State. — AFP

China deepens reform of business permits to boost market entities

A full-coverage listing-management system will be adopted for enterprise-related business licensing items nationwide starting from July 1, said a State Council circular released Thursday.

At the same time, more reforms of the examination-and-approval system will be launched in pilot free trade zones (FTZs), the circular said. A digital-licence system for businesses will be available nationwide by the end of 2022, with paper materials no longer needed if the target information can be obtained via the digital-licence system.

By the end of 2022, a simplified, highly efficient, fair and transparent industry-access rule with a low threshold and strict management will be established in an effort to make administrative operations more convenient and predictable for market entities. — Xinhua

Japan eyes cooperation with foreign firms to boost chip output

JAPAN will encourage domestic companies to cooperate with foreign semiconductor makers to build factories in the country to boost output capabilities amid a global computer chip shortage, the government said Friday.

The plan to revive the country’s vulnerable sector comes when the government is re-evaluating its links with China’s defence and surveillance technology sectors, Bloomberg News reported without citing sources. The president is expected to sign the order this week, it added.

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European air lobbies fear summer chaos at airports

A year after the coronavirus pandemic emptied airports, air travel associations fear chaos during Europe’s summer holiday season as travel restrictions and infection rates are falling. The International Air Transport Association (IATA) reported last week that on average, people travelling at peak times now stay twice as long at airports — three hours — compared with 2019.

That time is generally spent checking in, passing security and immigration controls, picking up checked bags and making it through customs. And there’s the new reality: Airlines having to check passengers’ Covid tests, temperature and other health documents.

The wait time has increased even though the volume of traffic is “only about 30 per cent of pre-COVID-19 levels”, an IATA statement said. The sector lobby group warned that time spent in airports could swell to five hours and 30 minutes if traffic rebounds to 75 per cent of its pre-pandemic level, and even longer “without process improvements”. — AFP

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Legal woes facing Netanyahu as opposition readies to unseat him

Netanyahu, 71, was formally charged in 2019 over allegations he accepted improper gifts and sought to trade regulatory favours with media moguls in exchange for positive coverage. PHOTO: AFP

ISRAELI'S longtime premier Benjamin Netanyahu is set to lose power after a diverse coalition united in an 11-hour deal against him, raising questions about the next steps in his ongoing corruption trial.

Here’s a look at what could lie ahead for the first Israeli prime minister to have been indicted in office:

**Immunity?**
If Netanyahu loses the premiership, it “wouldn’t change anything in the case itself, because he didn’t have immunity anyway”, Amir Fuchs, an analyst at the Israel Democracy Institute, told AFP.

Under Israeli law, a sitting prime minister does not have automatic immunity from prosecution. But he or she is not obliged to resign when charged, only when convicted and after all avenues of appeal have been exhausted.

**Reparations**
Netanyahu, 71, was formally charged in 2019 over allegations he accepted improper gifts and sought to trade regulatory favours with media moguls in exchange for positive coverage. PHOTO: AFP

A group of countries led by Canada said Thursday they’ve made a claim for reparations against Iran over its downing of a Ukraine jetliner, on behalf of victims’ families.

The Islamic republic shot down Ukraine International Airlines flight PS752 shortly after take-off from its capital Tehran on January 8, 2020, killing all 176 people aboard, including 85 Canadian citizens and permanent residents. Three days later, it admitted that its forces had mistakenly targeted the Kiev-bound Boeing 777-200 plane.

People hold signs with images of the victims of the downed Ukraine International Airlines flight PS752, which was shot down near Tehran by the IRGC, as family and friends gather to take part in a march to mark the first anniversary, in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, on January 8. PHOTO: COLE BURSTON/AFP

Britain, Canada, Sweden and Ukraine said in a joint statement that the two missile strikes on the plane, as well as Iran’s “omissions” in an investigation report on the crash, “amount to breaches of international law”.

“Our claim states that our respective countries, nationals and residents on board flight PS752 were seriously and irreversibly harmed by the tragedy and Iran must fulfill its legal responsibility to make full reparations to the group of states,” they said, calling on Iran to formally begin negotiations on reparations. In a separate statement, the group also announced that Afghanistan would not take part in the upcoming talks as it focuses on domestic strife.

In a final report in March, the Iranian Civil Aviation Organisation (CAO) pointed to the “alertness” of its troops on the ground who shot the missiles amid heightened tensions between Iran and the United States at the time. — AFP

**Peruvians face choice for ‘lesser evil’ in presidential vote**

PHOTO: X07403/ AFP

Peru’s presidential candidates Keiko Fujimori (left) and Pedro Castillo represent polar opposite economic models but share similar views on gay rights issues.

PERUVIANS will be faced with choosing the “lesser evil” between rightwing populist Keiko Fujimori and radical leftist unionist Pedro Castillo when voting for their new president on Sunday.

Scandal-tainted Fujimori, 46, has reached the second-round runoff for the third election in a row, and is running level with schoolteacher Castillo in the most recent opinion polls.

However, 18 per cent of voters remain undecided between the two polar opposite candidates.

“For the majority of the population it’s more about the election of the lesser evil,” Peruvian political scientist Jessica Smith told AFP, adding that the vote pits “anti-Fujimorism” against “anti-communism.”

It’s a choice between Fujimori’s neoliberalism and Castillo’s socialism; between the status quo and change.

Fujimori draws her support from the capital Lima while Castillo is a bulwark of the rural deep interior.

Battle lines were drawn between the two camps last Sunday, with Fujimori accusing Castillo of stoking violence in the electoral campaign, and the leftist firing back that corruption “is synonymous with Fujimorism” in Peru.

Castillo’s opponents have tried to link him to the political arm of the Maoist Shining Path rebels defeated by Fujimori’s father Alberto when he was president from 1990-2000, but the unionist says he was actually part of the “peasant patrols” that resisted the communist guerrillas. — AFP

**Canada-led nations demand reparations from Iran for Ukraine flight’s downing**

PHOTO: COLE BURSTON/ AFP

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**France halts joint military operations with Mali over coup**

PHOTO: COLE BURSTON/AFP

FRANCE said Thursday it would suspend joint military operations with Malian forces after the West African country’s second coup in nine months, adding to international pressure for the military junta to return civilians to positions of power.

The decision comes after Mali’s military strongman Assimi Goita, who led last year’s coup, ousted the country’s civilian transitional president and prime minister last week.

The move sparked diplomatic uproar, prompting the United States to suspend security assistance for Malian security forces and for the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to suspend Mali.

France’s armed forces said Thursday that “requirements and red lines have been set by ECOWAS and the African Union to clarify the framework for the political transition in Mali.” — AFP

**The Global New Light of Myanmar**

PHOTO: COLE BURSTON/AFP

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**SPORT**

**AFC announce squad missed out in 2022 World Cup Qualifiers**

THE ASEAN Football authorities recently announced a squad was missing out in the 2022 World Cup Qualifiers in June.

The list includes ASEAN football stars, including star strikers: Aung Thu and Dangda. The missing-out squad list for the month of June is Goalkeeper Neil Etheridge of the Philippines (surgery), Defender Theerathon Bumnan of Thailand (withdraw), Italian Maurizio maestri's offer of a new contract as the club.

THE late arrival of a quartet of Premier League stars is set to give Germany a timely boost as head coach Joachim Loew looks to fix his misfiring side in their final preparations for Euro 2020. The Chelsea trio of Champions League winners Timo Werner, Kai Havertz and Antonio Ruediger, as well as Manchester City midfielder Ilkay Gundogan, had all joined the squad by Thursday.

They were given extra time off after Saturday's European final. Their arrival boosts the Loew's side, who hit the woodwork twice with 16 shots on goal as Wednesday's friendly against Denmark finished in a disappointing 1-1 draw.

Loew is running out of time to get Germany ready to face world champions France on June 13 in their opening game of the European Championship before facing holders Portugal four days later in Group F. “The problem has been with us for a long time,” Loew said after Germany's lack of finishing was again an issue Wednesday. “We create a variety of opportunities, but we don’t reward ourselves. We have to work on that.” Loew has praised Havertz, who showed his “enormous quality” with the goal which decided Chelsea’s win in the Champions League final.

The 21-year-old attacking midfielder gives an extra option up front, while City’s top-scorer midfielder gives an extra option up front, while City’s top-scorer midfielder gives an extra option up front, while City’s top-scorer midfielder gives an extra option up front, while City’s top-scorer midfielder gives an extra option up front, while City’s top-scorer midfielder gives an extra option up front, while City’s top-scorer midfielder gives an extra option up front, while City’s top-scorer midfielder gives an extra option up front, while City’s top-scorer midfielder gives an extra option up front.

Arsenal confirm David Luiz among four players to leave

ARSENAL have confirmed Brazil defender David Luiz will leave the club when his contract expires, while Martin Odegaard, Dani Ceballos and Mat Ryan are also set to depart the Emirates Stadium.

Luiz opted not to accept Arsenal’s offer of a new contract as he called an end to his two-year stay in north London. The former Chelsea centre-back endured some difficult times with the Gunners as he struggled with inconsistent form before missing the end of this season due to injury.

Luiz, 34, helped Mikel Arteta’s side win the FA Cup in 2020 and gave an emotional speech to his team-mates before their last game of the Premier League season.

“If in some moments, I did something bad with you guys, sorry, but it was always my intention to give my best for you guys,” Luiz said. “It was always my intention to help you guys. I think you understood a bit that I am a collective person, so my happiness is to see the others happy. So I try my best.”

Australian keeper Ryan made three appearances during his loan spell but will now return to Brighton. Real Madrid duo Odegaard and Ceballos returning to the La Liga side following the end of their loan spells.

Denmark midfielder Odegaard joined the Gunners in January, while Spanish midfielder Ceballos spent two years with the club. — AFP

Sabalenka beaten at French Open to open door for Serena

THIRD seed Aryna Sabalenka was dumped out of the French Open in the third round on Friday by Russia’s Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova, leaving Serena Williams as the highest-ranked player left in her half of the draw.

Russian 31st seed Pavlyuchenkova won 6-4, 6-2 in an equalising automatically as hosts.

The opening two rounds of qualifying also set to depart the Emirates

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