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State Administration Council Chairman Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing is sprinkling scented water on the diamond orb, pennant-shaped vane and golden umbrella of the Shwedagon Replica Pagoda in Moscow on 21 June 2021.

CEREMONIES to hoist diamond orb, pennant-shaped vane and golden umbrella atop Shwedagon Replica Pagoda took place at Myanma Theravada Buddha Vihara (Moscow) in Moscow of the Russian Federation in conjunction with the consecration ceremony for donation of Saddhammajotika

Ordination Hall yesterday afternoon of local standard time, attended by members of the Sangha led by Abbot of the Vihara Maha Saddhamma Jotikadhaja Dr Bhaddanta Acchariya, delegation members led by Chairman of the State Administration Council Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General

Min Aung Hlaing, officer trainees from Myanmar Tatmadaw and Buddhist Russians.

At the auspicious time, the Senior General and party led by the abbot Sayadaw hoisted diamond orb, pennant-shaped vane and golden umbrella atop the pagoda. Then, these objects were sprinkled with scented wa-

ter. They performed the rituals of golden and silver showers to mark the successful completion of the ceremony.

The ceremony followed with the consecration of the pagoda. Next, a ceremony to share merits gained for the donation of Saddhammajotika Ordination Hall contributed by leaders of the Tat-

madaw, officer trainees from Myanmar Tatmadaw in Russia and well-wishers took place there.

The Senior General donated cash for the construction of the ordination and missionary fund, the vehicle to be used in missionary tasks and alms to the abbot Sayadaw.

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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.

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
Ministry of Health and Sports
Order No 260/2021

12th Waxing of Nayon 1383 ME
21 June 2021

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

1. The Ministry of Health and Sports has taken preventive measures against Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in real-time. Therefore, people from Pyu Township of Bago Region need to stay at home due to the number of confirmed patients on the rise in the township.
 2. Hence, the people residing in Pyu Township of the Bago Region are involved in the Stay-at-Home programme.
 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 for 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 registered vehicles to transport returnees from workplaces to pass the wards;
- (f) Allow one person only in addition to the driver in a vehicle for shopping in the ward and two persons except for the driver to go to hospitals or clinics;
 - (g) Abide by the standard operating procedures (SOP) for trucks to ensure smooth flow of commodities in the township;
 4. People need to inform the relevant ward administration bodies about seeking approvals to go outside the houses if they have reasons to raise the limited number of participants in the measures and other emergency issues mentioned in sub-paragraph (b), (c) and (f) of Paragraph 3. The relevant administrative bodies need not allow ingoing and outgoing persons, except officials and those returnees from duty.
 5. Action will be taken against those who fail to abide by the order under the existing laws.
 6. The order came into force at 4 am on 22-6-2021.

Dr Thet Khaing Win
Union Minister

Public security system

POLITICAL protests were staged after Tatmadaw had taken the State power. Although the situation of taking over the State responsibilities has been explained many times, some people understood it, but some so didn't. Now, sabotages are committed via insurgents. They attend the explosive and sabotage courses in the area of armed insurgents. They formed CRPH, NUG and PDF declared as unlawful associations to commit terrorist acts on the destruction route. Myanmar Police Force and administrative bodies are to join hands for taking security measures through the public security system.

(Excerpt from the speech to the State Administration Council meeting made by the Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council Chairman Senior General Min Aung Hlaing on 25 May 2021)

Diamond orb, pennant-shaped vane, golden umbrella hoisted atop Shwedagon Relipca Pagoda with consecration, sharing merits ...

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Member of the State Administration Council Lt-Gen Moe Myint Tun and delegation members offered alms to members of the Sangha.

It was reported that Myanmar Theravada Buddha Vihara (Moscow) is located 14 kilometres east of downtown Moscow. It was opened on 1 July 2015 with the contribution of the Chancellor of Sitagu International Buddhist Academies, Abhidhaja Maha Rattha Guru Abhidhaja Agga Maha Saddhammajotika Maha Dhammakathika Bahujanahit-adhara Vice-Chairman of Shw-

egyin Nikaya Joint Shwegyin Sangharaja Sitagu Sayadaw and donations of students and officer trainees from the Myanmar Tatmadaw in Moscow and well-wishers. The opening ceremony was attended by the Sitagu Sayadaw together with members of the Sangha from Europe, Asia and America. Myanmar Theravada Buddha Vihara (Moscow) or Myanmar monastery is a focal point, paying homage to the pagoda and holding religious ceremonies for the Buddhist missionary team in Russia. The Abbot Sayadaw is carrying out religious tasks to strive for the flourishing of the Buddhism.—MNA



The Senior General and the congregation are sharing merits gained for the donation of Saddhammajotika Ordination Hall contributed by Tatmadaw leaders, officer trainees in Russia and well-wishers yesterday.

State Administration Council Chairman Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing holds separate meetings with Security Council Secretary of Russian Federation, Director-General of Rosoboronexport Company



Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing meets Mr Nikolai Platonovich, Secretary of the Security Council of the Russian Federation yesterday.

STATE Administration Council Chairman Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing who is currently in the Russian Federation held a meeting with Secretary of the Security Council of the Russian Federation Mr Nikolai Platonovich Patrushev at the Secretariat of the Security Council at 10:30 am local standard time yesterday.

They frankly exchanged views on cooperation in security measures between the two governments of both countries, political changes in Myanmar, the leadership role of the Tatmadaw in the national politics of Myanmar, plan to enhance the existing friendly relations

between the two countries and the two armed forces and cooperation in all sectors.

After the meeting, the Senior General and the Security Council Secretary of the Russian Federation exchanged emblems and commemorative gifts.

At 9 am local standard time, the Senior General and party received Director-General Mr Alexander A. Mikheev and the party of Rosoboronexport Company at Metropol Hotel to talk about cooperation in military technologies and political changes.

The Senior General exchanged gifts with the Director-General of Rosoboronexport Company. —MNA

State Administration Council Chairman Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing arrives in Russian Federation

THE delegation led by Chairman of the State Administration Council Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing left Nay Pyi Taw military airport by the special aircraft of Myanmar Airways International (MAI) on the morning of 20 June to attend the 9th Moscow Conference on International Security-2021 (M-CIS-2021) in the Russian Federation at the invitation of Minister of Defence of the Russian Federation Army General Sergei Kuzhugetovich Shoigu and arrived at Sheremetyevo International Airport in Moscow in the afternoon local standard time.

The goodwill delegation led by the Senior General was welcomed at the airport by

Deputy Minister for Defence of the Russian Federation Colonel-General Alexander V Fomin, Minister Counsellor of the Myanmar Embassy to Russia U Zaw Lin Oo, Military Attaché Commodore Kyaw Soe Moe and officials.

Next, the Senior General and party proceeded to Metropol Hotel where they spent the night. —MNA

State Administration Council Chairman Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing arrives in Moscow of the Russian Federation on 20 June 2021.



U Wunna Maung Lwin, Union Minister for Foreign Affairs attends opening ceremony of course for “Deputy Chief of Mission (2/2021)”

OPENING Ceremony of the course for “Deputy Chief of Mission (2/2021)”, which is conducted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, took place at 9:30 am on 21 June 2021.

On the occasion, U Wunna Maung Lwin, Union Minister for Foreign Affairs delivered the opening remarks at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

Also present on the occasion were Union Minister for International Cooperation, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, Directors-General, senior officials and participants from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of International Cooperation.

The training will be conducted from 21 June to 16 July 2021 in accordance with COVID-19 preventive regulations and will be participated by 27 participants ranging from Assistant Directors to Directors.— MNA

Deputy Information Minister inspects IPRDs, MRTV relay stations in Magway, Mandalay, Sagaing regions

DEPUTY Minister for Information U Ye Tint made an inspection tour to the Department of Information and Public Relations in Myothit, Taungdwingyi, Minhla, Minbu, Pwintbyu, Salin, Seikphyu, Chauk, Pakokku, Pauk and Myaing townships in Magway Region; NyaungU township in Mandalay Region; Salingyi, Pale, Yinmabin and Monywa townships in Sagaing Region on 18 and 19 June.

During his inspection tour, he also visited the MRTV Relay Stations in Minbu Township, Chauk Township and Pakokku Township, and Newspaper Sub-Printing House in Monywa Township.

At the meeting with



departmental staff, he said to value the job, to pay attention to the performance of the department, to cooperate with regional organizations and the public

in matters of national stability and security, to redistribute the policies issued by the Union Government, and coordinated as necessary. — IPRD/GNLM

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ASEAN Ministers on Energy and Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry of Japan discuss effective collaboration in energy sector

THE Special Meeting of ASEAN Ministers on Energy and the Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry of Japan - SPECIAL AMEM-METI) was virtually held yesterday and Union Minister for Electricity and Energy U Aung Than Oo joined the meeting.

The ASEAN Ministers on Energy, the Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry of Japan and the Secretary-General of ASEAN were also in attendance. The meeting was chaired by the Minister of Industry and Trade of Viet Nam.

The leaders discussed stipulation of regional energy policy of ASEAN and Japan, current

energy usage and appropriate measures to reduce carbon emission.

Moreover, the meeting exchanged views on ASEAN Plan of Actions for Energy Cooperation-APAEC Phase II, 2021-2025, technologies like Clean Coal Technology (CCT) to be conducted between Japan and ASEAN, Carbon Capture, Utilization and Storage (CCUS), hydrogen, energy-saving and effective use of energy, acceleration of renewable energy deployment, development of human resource capacity and further collaboration for Green Energy sector. — MNA



Inspection of Labour Camps by MNHRC in June 2021



THE inspection teams led by the Commission Members of the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission (MNHRC), U Kyaw Soe and U Tin Aung made the inspection visits to the Min Gone Labour Camp on 3 June 2021 and the Shwe Mya Yar and Hlay Hlaw Inn Labour Camps on 11 June 2021 and Taw Kyi Tan Labour Camp on 21 June 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 Labour Camp and their living condition in the Labour Camp. The inspection teams also met with the prisoner and detainees who wish to meet with the team privately and recorded their reports.

While inspecting the labour camps, 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 findings and recommendations of the inspection teams will be put forward to the relevant departments to take necessary actions.—MNA

Media council releases statement urging to follow journalism ethics

THE Myanmar Press Council released a statement saying they condemn the actions that affect the sovereignty of the country including local and international peace yesterday.

The statement said the media council issued a statement on 10 June to prevent from spreading of fake news as the four estates of the country are making efforts for stability, rule of law and community peace.

Some of the unlicensed lo-

cal media outlets, international news agencies and foreign embassies expressed false information regarding the fire outbreak in Kinma Village of Pauk Township of Magway Region that occurred on 15 June, it read.

It also said the official news media provided the perfect information with video footages and such negative doings to spread the fake news by violating the News Media Law of Myanmar will not be a

supportive measure in a process of reform.

Some of the media outlets and embassies intentionally spread the fake news to support certain world organizations in putting pressure timely on the internal affairs of Myanmar.

The statement also urged the local/foreign news agencies and international organizations to follow international media ethics. — MNA

Health and Sports Ministry opens COVID-19 call centre

THE Ministry of Health and Sports opens the COVID-19 call centre at its office in Nay Pyi Taw as of 8 am on 22 June for the reply to queries on health awareness about COVID-19 and facts for abiding by the restrictions to the people on time.

The people can dial the following telephone numbers from 8 am to 9 pm on a daily basis for facts about the COVID-19 disease.

Contact numbers: (1) 067-3411508
(2) 067-3411509
(3) 067-3411144
(4) 09-882557991
(5) 09-882557991
(6) 09-882557993

Newly harvested summer sesame sold well in Mandalay

THE newly harvested summer sesame from Htigyaing, Singu, Madaya, Shwebo and Monywa townships are being sold well at regular prices in the Mandalay market.

“These summer sesame seeds have been grown with irrigated water before the water festival period. The sesame is harvested before the river water rises and it is then sent to the market. Myanmar exports 90 per cent of sesame products to the China market as well as to Japan annually. Last April and May, there was only demand for the black sesame while there was no demand for other sesames. But these days, people are buying all the newly harvested sesame. The prevailing price of

sesame this year is the same as last year,” said U Soe Win Myint from Soe Win Myint brokerage in Mandalay.

The newly harvested summer black sesame is priced at K150,000 per bag (containing three baskets) while Japan white sesame is sold for K147,000 per bag. The normal quality white sesame is sold for K125,000 per bag while the normal quality black sesame is sold for K120,000 per bag and the brown sesame is sold for K105,000 per bag.

The strange thing about the sesame market in 2021 is that the sesame is sold for the same price as last year. Besides, the peeling machines have been set up to produce finished products and those are expected to be



The newly harvested summer black sesame is priced at K150,000 per bag (containing three baskets) while Japan white sesame is sold for K147,000 per bag. The normal quality white sesame is sold for K125,000 per bag while the normal quality black sesame is sold for K120,000 per bag and the brown sesame is sold for K105,000 per bag.

exported to foreign countries. Then, the farmers are being informed that the price could be higher in the market if the

sesames are refined at the harvested time, he added. It is also learned that the monsoon sesame grown across

the country will soon enter the market in early August. — Min Htet Aung (Mandalay Sub-Printing House)/GNLM

Domestic rice price increases despite sluggish market



Despite the inactive market, the prices of rice surged by K2,000 per bag. At present, the rice variety which is highly consumed in the domestic market fetches K32,000-35,000 per bag.

THE price of rice in the domestic market continues rising regardless of the inactive market, said U Than Oo, secretary of Bayintnaung Rice Wholesale Centre.

“Bayintnaung wholesale market showed a significant decline in the volume of trading activity. The retail market is going regularly,” U Than Oo stated.

Despite the inactive market, the prices of rice surged by K2,000 per bag. At present, the rice variety which is highly consumed in the domestic market fetches K32,000-35,000 per bag.

Normally, the rice fetches a lower rate before Thingyan Festival (Myanmar New Year Festival in April). Shortly thereafter, the price usually goes up, he continued.

The price is unlikely to fall this month, Bayintnaung Rice Wholesale Centre reported.

Only a small number of rice export companies are buying the rice at present. Those traders are planning to export them to Bangladesh only.

About 80,000 bags of rice and broken rice were earlier traded per day at the Bayintnaung Rice Wholesale Centre, whereas the trade volume plummeted to about 30,000 bags at present. — NN/GNLM

Corn price continues bullish amid low supply

THE price of corns remains upward trend at K35,100 per 54-viss bag (a viss equals 1.6 kg) on the back of strong demand amidst the low supply.

The prices of Myanmar’s corn are climbing up in the Mandalay market due to high demand by Thailand and China, coupled with the growing demand in the domestic market, traders from Mandalay depot said.

Before Thingyan Festival in April, the corn fetched only K28,000 per bag. Both the foreign demand and domestic demand prompted the sellers to raise the prices starting from the first week of May. Following a gradual upward trend, the corn was priced above K35,000 per bag on 21 June, Soe Win Myint depot from Mandalay stated.

Myanmar has been delivering corns to the neighbouring countries Thailand and China via the land border. The shipment to Singapore, Malaysia and Viet Nam abruptly stopped owing to zero demand, Myanmar Corn Industrial Association stated.

At present, Myanmar is conveying corns to Thailand

through the land border, with a tonne of corn fetching up around 8,000 baht. The arrival of trucks declined from 500 to over 100 amid low supply.

Myanmar’s corn exports to foreign countries generated revenue of more than US\$331.49 million in the first half (Oct-Mar) of the current financial year 2020-2021, Myanmar Customs Department’s statistics showed.

Thailand has granted tax exemption on corn imports between February and August. However, Thailand imposed a maximum tax rate of 73 per cent on corn import to protect the rights of their growers if the corns are imported during the corn season of Thailand, as per the notification of the World Trade Organization regarding corn import of Thailand, said a corn exporter.

With the local corn consumption growing, Myanmar’s corn export to foreign markets is expected to reach 1.6 million tonnes this year, the association stated.

Myanmar is the second-largest exporter of corn among regional countries. At

present, corn is cultivated in Shan, Kachin, Kayah and Kayah-in states and Mandalay, Sagaing and Magway regions. Myanmar has three corn seasons— cold season, summer and monsoon. The country yearly produces 2.5-3 million tonnes of corns.

The corn crop is mostly demanded by the feedstuff processing business. This being so, it is a potential business for both domestic and external markets, said an official of the Ministry of Commerce.

During last FY2019-2020 ended 30 September, the country exported 2.2 million tonnes of corns to the external market, with an estimated value of \$360 million, the Ministry of Commerce’s data showed.

As per data from the Ministry of Commerce, Myanmar exported 1.5 million tonnes valued at \$270 million in the 2018-2019FY, 1.4 million tonnes of corn worth over \$290 million in the 2017-2018FY, 1.2 million tonnes of corn worth \$250 million in the 2016-2017FY, and, 1.1 million tonnes of corn worth \$300 million in the 2015-2016FY. — HH/GNLM

595 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 21 June, total figure rises to 148,617

MYANMAR’S COVID-19 positive cases rose to 148,617 after 595 new cases were reported on 21 June 2021 according to the Ministry of Health and Sports. Among these confirmed cases, 133,753 have been discharged from hospitals. Death toll stands at 3,265 after 3 died. —MNA

Indonesia hits 2 million virus cases as crisis deepens

INDONESIA passed two million coronavirus cases Monday as infection rates soar and hospitals are flooded with new patients, prompting warnings that the Southeast Asian nation's health crisis could spiral out of control.

The unwanted milestone comes after daily case rates more than doubled in recent weeks and authorities identified the presence of highly infectious Covid-19 variants.

On Monday, official figures showed that Indonesia had recorded a daily record high of 14,536 cases, taking the total to just over two million with nearly 55,000 deaths, among a population of nearly 270 million.

But those figures are widely thought to be a severe undercount, due to low testing and contact tracing -- some experts have said that official cases may only be about 10 per cent of the

real number.

"It's starting to bubble up to the surface, like a time bomb," said Windhu Purnomo, an epidemiologist at Indonesia's Airlangga University.

"This is just the beginning. Depending on how things are handled, we could end up with a major explosion like in India."

Case numbers are spiking as Indonesia grapples with new virus strains, including the highly infectious Delta variant first identified in India.

The rise has also been blamed on millions travelling across the Muslim-majority nation at the end of Ramadan, despite an official ban on the annual migration.

Hospital occupancy rates have soared to over 75 per cent in Jakarta and other hard-hit areas, while funerals for Covid-19 victims have also report-



A woman receives a dose of the Sinovac covid-19 coronavirus vaccine during a mass vaccination at a sports centre in Banda Aceh on 19 June 2021. **PHOTO: CHAIDEER MAHYUDDIN / AFP**

edly jumped. "It's worrying," Jakarta resident Rahmani told AFP at a cemetery where he

attended the funeral of a relative who died of the virus.

"As good citizens we have

to follow government orders to obey health protocols." — AFP

EU data watchdogs want ban on AI facial recognition

THE EU's data protection agencies on Monday called for an outright ban on using artificial intelligence to identify people in public places, pointing to the "extremely high" risks to privacy.

In a non-binding opinion, the two bodies called for a "general ban" on the practice that would include "recognition of faces, gait, fingerprints, DNA, voice, keystrokes and other biometric or behavioural signals, in any context".

Such practices "interfere with fundamental rights and freedoms to such an extent that they may call into question the essence of these rights and freedoms," the heads of the European Data Protection Board and the European Data Protection Supervisor said.

The ban would include any AI that would "categorise individuals into clusters based on ethnicity, gender, political or sexual orientation", the statement said.

The opinion is intended for the European Commission. The EU's executive arm unveiled a proposal in April to regulate AI that fell short of an outright ban on using the technology for public identification.

The commission's plan includes special exceptions for allowing the use of mass facial recognition in cases such as searching for a missing child, averting a terror threat, or tracking down someone suspected of a serious crime. — AFP ■

World economy back at pre-pandemic level: data firm

THE global economy has surpassed its pre-pandemic peak, data survey firm IHS Markit said Monday, as the recovery accelerates thanks to vaccination and the end of pandemic-related restrictions.

IHS Markit, which conducts monthly surveys of businesses that are highly valued by the market as a leading indicator of economic activity, forecasts that with 6.0 per cent growth this year the global economy will post its biggest expansion in nearly 50 years.

"The global economy has reached an important milestone in the second quarter of 2021, surpassing the pre-pandemic real GDP peak attained in the fourth quarter of 2019," the firm said in a statement.

The second quarter ends at the end of June.

The Asia-Pacific region recovered from the pandemic recession at the end of last year thanks to the resilience of China's economy.

IHS Markit's economists estimated that US real GDP hit a new peak in May.

The firm estimates that Africa and the Middle East will return to pre-pandemic GDP in the third quarter that begins in July.

Europe and Latin America will complete their recoveries in the final quarter of this year.

"As recovery from the Covid-19 recession is completed, the global economy is moving into the sweet spot of the current expansion," said IHS Markit's executive director for global economics, Sara Johnson.

"World real GDP growth is picking up from an annual rate of 1.5 percent quarter on quarter in the first quarter to rates of 6.0–7.0 per cent over the remainder of 2021," she added.

IHS Markit's 2021 global GDP growth forecast is in line with that made by the International Monetary Fund in April.

However, the IMF emphasised the unevenness of the recovery and said it expects many nations will not recover to pre-pandemic levels until 2022 or 2023.

Both the OECD and World Bank have also warned about the recovery leaving some nations behind, especially given the lack of vaccines in many countries.

IHS Markit acknowledged that Covid-19 flare-ups remain a risk to economic recovery in places where vaccination has proceeded slowly.

It also pointed to constraints on the recovery posed by disruptions in the supply of certain goods, including semiconductors used in electronics goods and cars. — AFP ■

Iran's Raisi calls for effective nuclear talks, rules out Biden meet



Iran's President-elect Ebrahim Raisi smiles as he greets media representatives during his first press conference in the Islamic republic's capital Tehran, on 21 June 2021. **PHOTO: AFP**

IRAN'S President-elect Ebrahim Raisi said on Monday he will not allow nuclear negotiations for the sake of negotiations, in his first news confer-

ence since winning election last week.

Raisi also ruled out meeting US President Joe Biden but said there were "no obstacles" to resuming diplomatic relations with Saudi Arabia, the Sunni-ruled regional rival of Shiite Iran, which have been severed for five years.

Raisi, 60, won Friday's election in which more than half the voters stayed away after many political heavyweights had been barred from running and as an economic crisis driven by US sanctions has battered the

country.

Raisi, an ultraconservative cleric who heads Iran's judiciary, will replace moderate President Hassan Rouhani — whose landmark achievement was a 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and world powers — in August.

"Any negotiations that guarantee national interests will certainly be supported, but... we will not allow negotiations to be for negotiations' sake," Raisi said of the nuclear talks.

"Any meeting must produce a result... for the Iranian nation," he added. — AFP ■

Fight against foot and mouth disease through public participation

BEING an agro-based country, Myanmar's farmers emphasize breeding of farming cattle with the supply of feedstuff for their convenience because these cattle are used in various kinds of farming works such as harrowing and ploughing as well as threshing paddy.

Foot and mouth disease is a terribly infectious disease for cloven-hoofed animals including farming cattle. As such, it is necessary to emphasize prevention and treatment of such kind of disease. It is highly infectious and can be spread by infected animals comparatively easily through contact with contaminated farming equipment,

vehicles, clothing, and feed, and by domestic and wild predators. The virus causes a high fever lasting two to six days.

Hence, it is necessary to consider vaccination, strict monitoring, trade restrictions, quarantines, and the culling of both infected and healthy (uninfected) animals.

In order to overcome the challenges, a plan is underway to establish the foot and mouth disease control zone in Nay Pyi Taw Council Area as part of serving the interests of the farmers. Generally, the infection of disease occurs in the monsoon.

Hence, the Department of Livestock Breeding and Veterinary decided to implement the foot and mouth disease in the zone pilot project with the State budget. The project will firstly cover Tatkon Township of Nay Pyi Taw Council Area.

Vaccination free of charge for fighting against the foot and mouth disease will firstly cover 52 villages of Tatkon Township where the disease happened within the last five years. Veterinarians and animal health workers started the vaccination for more than 27,000 farming animals and collection of blood samples from farming cattle with more plan to inject vaccine for the FMD to the animals from other townships

in Nay Pyi Taw Council Area.

Only when farming animals are free from any infectious disease which may cause hindrances to farming works in addition to the livestock sector, will the agricultural productivity not decline against the target yields.

In fact, both humans and animals need healthcare services relying on medical doctors and health staff and veterinarians. Hence, it is the onus for all the national people to inform health staff and veterinarians about infection of the disease in time so as to provide necessary treatments for saving the lives of farm animals.

S.E. Asia struggles to increase COVID-19 vaccination among peoples

Countries in Southeast Asia are struggling to increase vaccination rates among their peoples, with less than 10 per cent of the population in many of them completing at least one vaccine shot to protect against the coronavirus.

THE region is also where China is actively conducting "vaccine diplomacy" in a purported effort to increase its influence, but some people, including Japanese expatriates, remain skittish about using Chinese vaccines over safety concerns.

Indonesia, the most populous country in Southeast Asia with over 270 million people, is also the country with the most infections in the region, with some 1.9 million cases to date. The government has been giving people free vaccine shots since January.

Even though jabs have also been given to workers and their families since mid-May -- paid for by their employers -- roughly 7 per cent of the population had completed at least one shot as of June 9.

The company-funded inoculation drive uses Chinese vac-



Local artists paint murals on a wall along a street amid the COVID-19 pandemic in Tangerang in Banten province, Indonesia. PHOTO: AFP

cines and also covers foreigners.

One Indonesia-based Japanese employee in marketing thought of getting vaccinated when returning to Japan for a temporary visit, but decided against it because of a mandatory quarantine upon arrival.

But the employee confided a desire to get vaccinated in Japan, so as to get inoculated with a non-Chinese vaccine. Japan has so far approved vaccines from Pfizer Inc., Moderna Inc. and AstraZeneca Plc.

The Philippines has ap-

proved eight vaccine products for use, including those developed in the United States, China and Russia. But vaccinations have yet to gain traction, and people cannot choose the type of vaccine they receive.

"As Japanese, we want to get inoculated with the vaccines approved in Japan," Nobuo Fujii, vice president of the Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Philippines, said, expressing hope that Japanese expatriates in the Philippines will be able to get vaccinated at Japanese diplomatic missions there.

In Singapore, over 40 per cent of its people have received at least one shot of vaccine. Vaccination, which is now available to people as young as 12, has been undertaken by not just medical professionals but temporary workers, including university students looking for jobs.

Vietnam is credited with keeping total infections at a relatively low level -- about 10,000 cases so far -- but it is struggling to secure vaccine doses.

That is in large measure because, with historical anti-China sentiment strong among the public, Vietnam has not received vaccine supplies from China. It is the only country without Chinese vaccines among the 10 countries that make up the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

As of June 8, less than 2 per cent of its population had been given at least one vaccine shot.

Japan, eager to curry favour with countries in the region as it pursues its own vaccine diplomacy, donated 1 million coronavirus vaccine doses to Vietnam on Wednesday.

Tokyo is also considering donating COVID-19 vaccine to Indonesia, Malaysia, the Phil-

ippines and Thailand in July, according to Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi.

Safety concerns and low efficacy rates had often been cited to avoid Chinese vaccines. But after approving Sinopharm vaccine for emergency use in May, the World Health Organization on June 1 approved a second Chinese vaccine, Sinovac.

The Chinese government quickly seized on the development to say that the WHO authorization has validated Chinese vaccines' safety and efficacy.

After ASEAN and China held a foreign ministers meeting on June 7, Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi credited the country with playing an important role in inoculating people in ASEAN, expressing hope for further supplies of Chinese vaccines.

SOURCE: KYODO

U.S. to invest over 3 billion USD for COVID-19 antiviral medicines

The U.S. government is investing more than 3 billion U.S. dollars to accelerate the development and manufacturing of antiviral medicines, according to government authorities.

THE plan, called the Antiviral Program for Pandemics, will respond to the urgent need for antivirals to treat COVID-19 by spurring the availability of medicines to prevent serious illness and save lives, according to a statement of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

This plan will support research to identify and accelerate availability of breakthrough treatment options. It also will build sustainable platforms for developing antivirals for other viruses with pandemic potential, said the HHS.

The plan provides more than 300 million U.S. dollars for research and lab support, nearly 1 billion U.S. dollars for preclinical and clinical evaluation, and nearly 700 million U.S. dollars for development and manufacturing through the U.S. National

Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), and the U.S. Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA), according to the HHS.

Identifying effective treatment options to prevent people diagnosed with COVID-19 from progressing to serious illness and death are vitally important, even as hundreds of millions of Americans get vaccinated against COVID-19 and cases, hospitalizations and death rates continue to fall, experts have said.

Highly effective oral antiviral medicines that can be taken at home early in the course of infection, similar to antiviral treatment for influenza, would save lives and prevent overwhelming surges in hospitalizations, according to the HHS.

"New antivirals that prevent serious COVID-19 illness



People wait in line in Immokalee, Florida for services from the Coalition of Immokalee Workers and Partners in Health to test, educate and vaccinate the poverty-stricken community during the Covid-19 outbreak. PHOTO: SPENCER PLATT/CSIS/XINHUA

and death, especially oral drugs that could be taken at home ear-

ly in the course of disease, would be powerful tools for battling the

pandemic and saving lives," said NIAID Director Anthony Fauci.



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

FORECAST VALID UNTIL AFTERNOON OF THE 22 June, 2021: Rain or thundershowers will be isolated in Lower Sagaing and Northern Shan State, scattered in Mandalay Region and Eastern Shan State, fairly widespread in Upper Sagaing, Magway Regions and Southern Shan, Kayah, Kayin States and widespread in the remaining Regions and States with likelihood of regionally heavy falls in Rakhine State and isolated heavy falls in Yangon, Ayeyawady Regions. Degree of certainty is (100%).

STATE OF THE SEA: Seas will be moderate in Myanmar waters. Wave height will be about (6-8) feet off and along Myanmar Coasts.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Moderate monsoon.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 22 June, 2021: One or two rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 22 June, 2021: One or two rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

FORECAST FOR Mandalay AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 22 June, 2021: Likelihood of isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (60%).

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Setbacks for Le Pen, Macron parties in French regional vote

FRANCE'S far-right led by Marine Le Pen insisted Monday it could recover from a disappointing first round of regional polls marked by a strong result from the traditional right and another feeble performance by President Emmanuel Macron's ruling party.

The vote on Sunday was widely watched as the last national electoral test ahead of presidential and parliamentary elections next year which polls currently show as being a close race between Le Pen and Macron.

The National Rally (RN) of Le Pen badly underperformed forecasts, while Macron's centrist Republic on the Move party received barely over 10 per cent of ballots in an election marked by record high abstention.

The vote determines who leads the 13 regions of mainland France, with the outcome due



French President's Brigitte Macron (L) reacts as Emmanuel Macron (2nd L) speaks with Le Touquet's mayor Daniel Fasquelle (2nd R) and Pas-de-Calais' deputy Robert Therry (R) near a polling station in Le Touquet, for the first round of the French regional elections on 20 June 2021. **POTO: AFP**

to be decided in second round run-off on this coming Sunday. "Of course we're asking

ourselves questions," RN vice-president Jordan Bardella told RMC radio on Monday

morning. "But it's a two-round election and it's not because we had results that were weaker

than we expected that the election is a foregone conclusion.

"There's a second round and voters will have another chance to express themselves," he added.

Traditional right-wing candidates topped the vote in six out of 13 regions in mainland France, with the Republicans (LR) party the dominant force nationally, while the traditional left led by the Socialists finished first in five.

The National Rally emerged in pole position in only one, the southeastern Provence-Alpes-Cote d'Azur region, which is home to Marseille, Saint-Tropez and Cannes.

"Our voters didn't turn out," Le Pen said on Sunday night in comments from her stronghold of Henin-Beaumont in northern France. "I call on them to respond urgently."

— AFP ■

Australia deputy PM loses job in government climate split

A climate change revolt in Australia's governing coalition on Monday brought in a new deputy prime minister likely to challenge the country's already hesitant moves to cut greenhouse gas emissions.

Barnaby Joyce, best known internationally for threatening to euthanise Johnny Depp's dogs, defeated incumbent Michael McCormack in a snap internal party vote, elevating him to the role of deputy PM.

The vote for the leadership of junior coalition partner the Nationals came as apparent cracks emerged in the ruling coalition over climate change policy.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison told G7 leaders last week that Australia wants to achieve net-zero carbon emissions "as soon as possible", and preferably by 2050.

McCormack had reportedly been accused by party colleagues of failing to push back against such accelerated climate action, a charged topic among the Nationals' rural conservative voters.

On Monday, Joyce dodged questions on whether he would support Australia taking a net-zero by 2050 target to November's UN Climate Change Summit in Glasgow.

But he echoed conservative talking points that strong climate change action posed a threat to Australia's commodity-dependent economy.

"If the National Party room believes that the best deal for regional Australia is to make sure that we secure their jobs, is to make sure that we secure their industries... that's the view that I'll support," he told reporters in Canberra. Joyce previously held the Nationals' leadership but stepped down in a 2018 scandal when it was revealed the married father-of-four had an affair with a young adviser and she was pregnant. — AFP ■

Spanish PM heads to Catalonia before pardon to separatists

SPANISH Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez will deliver a major speech in Barcelona Monday as his government is poised to pardon the jailed Catalan separatists behind a failed 2017 independence bid.

He is set to outline his roadmap for Catalonia during an address beginning at noon (1000 GMT) to regional dignitaries at the prestigious Liceu theatre in the heart of the Catalan capital.

The highly anticipated speech, called "Reunion: a plan for the future for all of Spain", appears to be a final act before his government officially announces the controversial pardons.

Barring a last minute sur-

prise, Sanchez's cabinet will approve the pardons on Tuesday, top-selling daily El Pais reported Sunday.

The Socialist premier is scheduled to address parliament on 30 June to defend the move.

Sanchez has sought in recent weeks to rally support for the pardons, arguing they are key to overcoming the political impasse over Catalonia's separatist drive.

Catalonia has been a dominant theme in Spanish politics since the rich northeastern region in 2017 pressed ahead with a banned independence referendum which was marred by police violence. — AFP ■

Israel-based i24News channel to open Dubai office

ISRAEL-based i24News television network said Monday it would open an office in Dubai, the first to do so since the normalization of ties between the Jewish state and the UAE.

"In the last year, we have witnessed regional diplomatic changes that enable business ties and opportunities for partnerships," said Frank Melloul, chief executive of i24News.

"The establishment of our office in Dubai Media City gives us a strategic platform to expand our

coverage of the Middle East right from the heart of the region's media industry hub," he added. The news channel also announced a series of agreements with the United Arab Emirates, including content exchanges with the publisher of English-language daily Gulf News, and advertisements from the UAE's tourism ministry.

Mona Al Marri, director general of the Government of Dubai Media Office, welcomed "the establishment of cooperation between the media sectors of the

UAE and Israel", while Majed Al Suwaidi, the director of the Dubai Media City, said that adding i24News to the centre "adds to the rich global diversity of media". Two major Emirati telecom operators, Etisalat and DU, would carry content from i24News, which broadcasts in Arabic, English and French.

In December, the channel based in Israel's coastal city of Tel Aviv signed a deal with Abu Dhabi Media for shared reporting and archival content.

The state-owned Dubai Media Incorporated said it signed a memorandum of understanding with i24News to cooperate on content creation, media technology and employee exchange programmes. The channel and Dubai Media Incorporated also said they connect their media with a "Fibre of Peace" an optical line connecting the Gulf to Israel to share information.

Under the US-brokered accords last year, Israel established ties with the UAE, Bahrain, Mo-

rocco and Sudan.

The accords have been condemned by the Palestinians as they break with years of Arab League policy which has held that there should be no relations with Israel until it makes peace with the Palestinians.

Israel has already signed a raft of deals with both the UAE and Bahrain, ranging from tourism to aviation and financial services. This month, a first Emirati student began study at an Israeli university. — AFP ■

In Berlin, a new push for lasting peace in Libya

GERMANY will seek to broker lasting peace in Libya on Wednesday, gathering world powers in Berlin to extract a firm promise to withdraw foreign fighters and keep the North African country on track for its December 24 election.

The efforts to end a decade-long spiral of violence in Libya would bring the country's transitional government, as well as US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, to Berlin for the in-person UN-sponsored talks.

In a phone call with Libyan interim Foreign Minister Najla Mangoush just days ahead of the meeting, Blinken "stressed the United States' commitment to increasing diplomatic engagement to promote international efforts supporting progress in Libya."

Like host German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas, Blinken and Mangoush harked back to last year's meeting and the pledges made but which have not been fully implemented.

The presidents of Russia, Turkey and France had then vowed to end foreign meddling in Libya and withdraw foreign militants or troops.

Since those talks, a formal truce was agreed last October that led to the creation of a transitional government under Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibah and a presidential council headed by Mohammad Younes Menfi which have promised to hold polls.

However, the UN has warned that progress has stalled, notably on a key requisite of the polls — the pullout of all foreign soldiers. — AFP ■



Libyan Interim Prime Minister Abdulhamid Dbeibah, as he stands atop an excavator on June 20, 2021, in the town of Buwairat al-Hassoun, during a ceremony to mark the reopening of 300-kilometre road between the cities of Misrata and Sirte. Libya's unity government today reopened the coastal highway linking the country's east and west, that was cut off in 2019 as eastern-based military strongman Khalifa Haftar launched an offensive to seize the capital Tripoli. **PHOTO: AFP**

Israel to allow Gaza 'limited' export of farm produce



A Palestinian police officer searches a truck's fabrics cargo slated for export at the Karm Abu Salem (Kerem Shalom) crossing in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip, 21 June 2021 **PHOTO: AFP**

ISRAEL said Sunday it will allow the "limited export" of farm produce from Gaza, one month after a ceasefire with the enclave's Hamas rulers to end an 11-day conflict. The crowded Mediterranean territory, home to around two million Palestinians, has been under an Israeli blockade since 2007.

Extra restrictions since intense violence last month has meant Gaza's farmers have been unable to export goods as usual, creating a glut of produce such as tomatoes and strawberries, causing prices to tumble.

"Limited export of agricultural produce from the Gaza Strip" will begin Monday, said COGAT in a statement, the Israeli military body that administers civilian affairs in Palestinian territories. It added that

"this civilian measure, which was approved by the political echelon, is conditional upon the preservation of security stability". Goods will be allowed out of the Gaza Strip through the Kerem Shalom crossing.

The fragile ceasefire that ended 11-days of air strikes by Israel and rockets fired from Gaza came into place on 21 May.

The conflict killed 260 Palestinians including some fighters, according to Gaza authorities.

In Israel, 13 people were killed, including a soldier, by rockets fired from Gaza, the police and army said. In recent days, ceasefire violations have included Palestinian militants setting off incendiary balloons to spark fires in farm land -- and Israel responding with two rounds of air strikes. — AFP ■

Ethiopians vote in poll overshadowed by Tigray

ETHIOPIANS voted Monday in a delayed national election taking place against the backdrop of war and famine in the northern Tigray region and questions over the poll's credibility.

It is the first electoral test for Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, 44, who came to power in 2018 championing a democratic revival in Africa's second-most populous country, and a break from its authoritarian past.

"This election is different," said Milyon Gebregziabher, a 45-year-old travel agent voting in the centre of the capital Addis Ababa. "There are a number of parties to choose from. In the past there was just one, we did not have the luxury of choice."

Abiy, a Nobel Peace laureate who freed political prisoners, welcomed back exiles and ended a cold war with neighbouring

Eritrea before sending troops to confront the dissident leadership of Tigray late last year, has promised this election will be Ethiopia's most competitive in history, free of the repression that marred previous ballots.

But the spectre of famine caused by the ongoing fighting in Tigray, and the failure to stage elections on schedule in around one-fifth of constituencies, means that promise is in doubt. — AFP ■



A staff member of the National Electoral Board marks a voter's finger before he votes at a polling station in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 21 June 2021. **PHOTO: AMANUEL SILESHI / AFP**

Germany arrests Russian scientist for 'spying' for Moscow

German federal prosecutors said Monday they had arrested a Russian scientist accused of passing sensitive information from a German university to Moscow in return for cash.

They said in a statement the suspect, identified only as Ilnur N., had been taken into custody on Friday on suspicion of "working for a Russian secret service since early Oc-

tober 2020 at the latest".

Ilnur N. was employed until the time of his arrest as a research assistant for a natural sciences and technology department at an unnamed German university.

Federal prosecutors believe he met at least three times with a member of Russian intelligence between October 2020 and June 2021.

On two occasions he

allegedly "passed on information from the university's dominion".

He is suspected of accepting cash payments in exchange for his services.

German authorities searched his home and workplace in the course of the arrest. The suspect on Saturday appeared before a judge who remanded him in custody. — AFP ■

Danger and demons: Yemen's mysterious 'Well of Hell'



An aerial view taken on 6 June 2021 shows the Well of Barhout known as the "Well of Hell" in the desert of Yemen's Al-Mahra province. Closer to the border with Oman than to the capital Sanaa 1,300 kilometres (800 miles) away, the giant hole in the desert of Al-Mahra province is 30 metres wide and thought to be anywhere between 100 and 250 metres deep. Local folklore says it was created as a prison for the demons — a reputation bolstered by the foul odours rising from its depths. **PHOTO: AFP**

SURROUNDED in mystery and tales of demons, the Well of Barhout in Yemen's east — known as the "Well of Hell" — is a little-understood natural wonder.

Closer to the border with Oman than to the capital Sanaa 1,300 kilometres (800 miles) away, the giant hole in the desert of Al-Mahra province is 30 metres wide and thought to be anywhere between 100 and 250 metres deep. Local folklore says it was created as a prison for the demons — a reputation bolstered by the foul odours rising from its depths.

Yemeni officials say they don't know what lies below.

"It's very deep — we've never reached the bottom of this well, as there's little oxygen and no ventilation," said Salah Bab-

hair, director-general of Mahra's geological survey and mineral resources authority. "We have gone to visit the area and entered the well, reaching more than 50-60 metres down into it. We noticed strange things inside. We also smelled something strange... It's a mysterious situation."

Sunlight doesn't extend far into the structure, and little can be seen from the edge except the birds that fly in and out of its depths. Videographers seeking close-ups of the inside of the well have said they are almost impossible to capture — local superstition has it that objects near the hole can be sucked towards it.

Babhair said that the well was "millions and millions" of years old. "These places require more study, research and inves-

tigation," he said.

Over the centuries, stories have circulated of malign, supernatural figures known as jinns or genies living in the well.

Many local residents remain uneasy about visiting the vast hole, or even talking about it, for fear of ill fortune from a chasm which, legend has it, threatens life on Earth itself.

Yemenis have had enough bad luck as it is. The country has been embroiled in a civil war since 2014 between the government and the Huthi rebels.

The United Nations says Yemen is suffering the world's worst humanitarian crisis, with tens of thousands killed, millions displaced and two-thirds of its 30-million population dependent on some form of aid. — AFP ■

McDonald's to create 20,000 jobs in UK and Ireland

US fast-food giant McDonald's has announced plans to create 20,000 jobs in Britain and Ireland to help meet an expected boom in post-pandemic demand.

McDonald's said in a statement published Sunday that it will open 50 restaurants over the next 12 months as Covid restrictions ease.

The US group currently employs more than 130,000 people at 1,400 restaurants in Britain and Ireland.

"It's fantastic to be able to offer an additional 20,000 people an opportunity to work with

us," said Paul Pomroy, chief executive of McDonald's UK & Ireland.

"There is no doubt the pandemic has had a huge impact on many people's employment opportunities and threatened the future of high streets up and down the country."

However, Pomroy also cautioned over the weekend that McDonald's faced recruitment difficulties, in line with the broader sector.

It is "getting harder and harder to recruit" staff, he told the Sunday Telegraph newspaper. — AFP ■

'Steep' surge in South Africa virus cases: Ramaphosa

SOUTH Africa's daily Covid-19 infections have soared sharply in recent weeks, jumping over 1,500 per cent from April, the president said Monday as the country's vaccination rollout remained slow.

"The climb in new cases has been extraordinarily rapid and steep over the past few weeks," President Cyril Ramaphosa said in a weekly newsletter published every Monday.

He said average new daily cases had risen from below 800 in early April to over 13,000 in the past week.

"In other words, it increased more than fifteen-fold from the last low point," he

added.

South Africa is the continent's worst affected country, accounting for 35 per cent of its total cases.

Gauteng, the country's most populous province and commercial hub, is the epicentre of the outbreak.

It has already seen new infections exceed peaks in the two previous waves.

The government last week deployed army medical personnel to help health workers battle the outbreak in Gauteng, where Ramaphosa said "hospitals are reaching capacity, and healthcare workers are exhausted". — AFP ■

US, French astronauts make ISS spacewalk



This NASA TV frame grab image captured on 20 June 2021 shows US astronaut Shane Kimbrough seen from ESA (European Space Agency) astronaut Thomas Pesquet's helmet camera, fixing bolts, during unfolding and alignment of the solar panel during the ISS Expedition 65 US Spacewalk #75 to complete work on the IROSA Solar Array. The spacewalking duo were installing the first of six new rollout panels on 16 June 2021 — but problems with display and controls on Shane Kimbrough's spacesuit forced him to return to the station to reset his systems. The time lost meant they were only able to manoeuvre the panel into position, but unable to install the cabling and bolts needed to complete the process during Wednesday's spacewalk of seven hours and 15 minutes. **PHOTO: HANDOUT / NASA TV / AFP**

A French and an American astronaut completed a six-hour spacewalk Sunday as they installed new solar panels to boost power supplies to the International Space Station (ISS), NASA said.

"It is a huge team effort each time and couldn't be happier to return with @astro_kimbrough," tweeted Frenchman Thomas Pesquet, referring to his American colleague Shane Kimbrough.

Pesquet is with the European Space Agency, Kimbrough with NASA.

The two men, who arrived on the space station in late April, activated the internal batteries in their space suits at 11H42 GMT, then opened the hatch to the ISS airlock.

They then continued the work of positioning, attaching and deploying six new-generation solar panels, referred to as iROSA, for Roll-Out Solar Array. **Another spacewalk Friday**

The panels, 60 feet (19 metres) long when deployed, were delivered to the station early this month by an uncrewed SpaceX flight.

The astronauts are slated to complete the installation of a second solar panel array on Friday. The new panels, which will power both daily operations and the research and science projects carried out on the ISS, are expected to have a 15-year lifespan.

A first spacewalk on Wednesday ran into several snags, notably problems with Kimbrough's spacesuit. He temporarily lost data on his spacesuit display unit, and then suffered a brief spike in the suit's pressure reading. — AFP ■

Equity markets sink as traders contemplate Fed tightening

ASIAN and European markets tumbled Monday on growing expectations the US Federal Reserve will begin lifting interest rates as early as next year as it looks to prevent the economic recovery from overheating.

In a bid to soothe traders fretting over surging inflation, central bank officials have for months pledged to maintain their ultra-loose monetary policy until the rebound was well on track. But last week it brought forward its forecasts for tightening.

The news was initially broadly taken in stride by investors as the Fed's so-called "dot plot" outlook for rates suggested it would not begin hiking until 2023, and would discuss winding down its bond-buying programme later this year.

But investors were spooked by comments from St Louis Federal Reserve President James



Pedestrians walk past a stock indicator displaying numbers of the Nikkei 225 of the Tokyo Stock Exchange in Tokyo on 21 June 2021. PHOTO: AFP

Bullard that liftoff could come as soon as late 2022, adding that it made sense for officials to become "a little more hawkish" as inflation surges.

That sparked hefty losses on Wall Street, with the Dow and S&P 500 dropping more than one per cent and the Nasdaq almost one per cent.

And the selling continued in Asia, with Tokyo leading the way with a more than three per cent fall, while Hong Kong, Sydney, Singapore, Taipei and

Bangkok all lost more than one per cent. There were also losses in Seoul, Wellington, Manila, Mumbai and Jakarta, though Shanghai

ended slightly higher. London, Paris and Frankfurt all tumbled soon after opening. "We had expected the Fed to start discussing tapering at last week's meeting and to upgrade its interest rate forecasts," said Mansoor Mohi-uddin at Bank of Singapore. "But the central bank's tweaks clearly surprised the markets. Thus, in the near-term investors may keep unwinding reflation trades." Still, the losses were not a surprise to some observers, as many markets are at record or multi-year highs and investors were taking the opportunity to cash in profits. "The shift toward tapering and a pull forward in first rate hikes may cause bouts of nervousness in markets with shares vulnerable to a decent correction," said Shane Oliver of AMP Capital.— AFP ■

Japan's JMA Management Centre forms 1st overseas unit in Thailand

JMA Management Center Inc has set up its first overseas subsidiary in Thailand to offer human resources development services to Japanese companies aiming to expand into the Association of Southeast Asian Nations region. JMAM (Thailand) Co was formed in Bangkok on 27 May with an initial capital of 70 million yen (\$635,250) and five employees, including two Japa-

nese representatives, an official of the Tokyo-based company told NNA. Its core business is to provide support for Thai workers hoping to acquire manufacturing skills certificates. The support business regarding the Thai version of the "production meister" tests is based on the scheme undertaken by the Human Resources Development Association of Japan.

It will begin in August in a tie-up with the Thailand Professional Qualification Institute, a government agency, with correspondence courses and training among the key programs to be offered. The Thai subsidiary will also pursue ways to expand its business in human resources development by localizing its parent's resources, hoping to foster future corporate leaders. It

also plans to provide learning programmes related to the internet of things, or IoT, and artificial intelligence. The launch of the Thai unit came nearly two years after JMA Management Center, which also engages in book publishing, opened a representative office in July 2019 for marketing surveys and development of goods and services.— Kyodo News ■

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V KOTA HALUS VOY.NO. (KHLU0177N/S)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V KOTA HALUS VOY.NO. (KHLU0177N/S) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 22-6-2021 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of AWPT where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

No claims against this vessel will be admitted after the Claims Day. Phone No: 2301185

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S ADVANCE CONTAINER LINES

Bitcoin dives as China widens crackdown on crypto mining

BITCOIN tumbled more than 10 per cent Monday after China broadened a crackdown on its massive cryptocurrency mining industry with a ban on mines in a key southwestern province. Chinese mines power nearly 80 per cent of the global trade in cryptocurrencies despite a domestic trading ban since 2017, but in recent months several provinces have ordered mines to close as Beijing turns a sharp eye to the industry. Authorities in the province of Sichuan ordered the closure of 26 mines last week, according to a notice widely circulated on Chinese social media and confirmed by a former bitcoin miner. The price of bitcoin sank to as low as \$32,309. The unit has taken a severe hit in recent weeks, having hit a

record near \$65,000 in April, partly because of Beijing's crackdown. The notice reportedly instructed power companies to stop supplying electricity to all cryptocurrency mines by Sunday. It vowed a "complete clean-up" and ordered local governments to carry out a "dragnet-style investigation" to find and shut down suspected crypto mines. The province represents one of the largest bases for mining in the country. A former cryptocurrency miner told AFP they had "closed everything" in line with the requirements in recent days. "There have been working groups coming to check... making sure we shut down operations and removed the machines," he said.— AFP ■

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Iran's Bushehr nuclear plant shut down over 'technical fault'

IRAN'S southern Bushehr nuclear power plant has been temporarily shut down over a "technical fault", the country's atomic energy body said in a statement.

"Following a technical fault at Bushehr power plant, and after a one-day notice to the energy ministry, the plant was temporarily shut down and taken off the power grid," the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran said on its website around Sunday midnight.

The statement said the plant will be reconnected to the grid and the issue will be resolved "in a few days", but did not elaborate further.

Iran's national electricity company had in a statement on Sunday called on Iranians to minimise consumption during peak hours due to a "predicted rise in temperature" and "limitations in power generation due to ongoing repairs at (the) Bushehr

plant". The company said that the repairs may continue until the end of the week, which is Friday in Iran.

The Bushehr plant, which produces 1,000 megawatts of power, was completed by Russia after years of delay and officially handed over in September 2013.

In 2016, Russian and Iranian firms began building two additional 1,000-megawatt reactors at Bushehr. Their construction was

expected to take 10 years.

Iran's Gulf Arab neighbours have often raised concerns about the reliability of the Bushehr facility and the risk of radioactive leaks in the event of a major earthquake.

In April, Bushehr province was shaken by a 5.9-magnitude earthquake, leaving five people injured but causing "no damage" to the nuclear complex, according to authorities.

Iran started rolling blackouts in May after Tehran and several other cities were hit by unannounced power cuts that sparked complaints from consumers and an apology from the energy minister.

The shortages were blamed on heat, drought impacting hydropower generation, and surging electricity demand blamed in part on crypto-currency mining. — AFP ■

EU targets key Belarus sectors after plane diversion

EU foreign ministers eyed sanctions on key sectors of the Belarus economy Monday, as the bloc ratchets up pressure on President Alexander Lukashenko after the forced landing of an airliner.

Ministers meeting in Luxembourg were discussing broad-ranging measures targeting major revenue sources for the Belarusian regime: potash fertiliser exports, the tobacco industry, petroleum and petrochemical products, and the financial sector.

"We will consistently continue on the path of sanctioning Lukashenko and his regime. We will no longer only sanction individuals, but we will now also impose sectoral sanctions," German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said.

"We want to contribute in this way to the financial drying up of this regime."

Austria's top diplomat Alexander Schallenberg said he expected ministers to give "unanimous" backing for economic sanctions that would also include a ban on sales of



European Union Foreign Policy Chief Josep Borell answers journalists' questions as he arrives for a European Union Foreign ministers meeting, in Luxembourg, on 21 June 2021. **PHOTO: AFP**

surveillance equipment to Belarus and tightening of an arms embargo.

But EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell warned no final decision would be taken until after the bloc's leaders meet for a summit in Brussels later this week.

"We're going to hurt the economy of Belarus heavily," Borrell told journalists.

The ministers were set Monday to formally sign off on placing 86 additional individuals and entities in Belarus on

an assets freeze and visa ban blacklist.

Seven of the individuals being sanctioned are linked directly to the incident involving the Ryanair passenger jet last month and the rest are targeted over the government's broader crackdown on opposition, diplomats said.

Belarusian strongman Lukashenko sparked international outrage by dispatching a fighter jet on 23 May to intercept the flight from Greece to Lithuania. — AFP ■

German conservatives to unveil post-Merkel plan

GERMAN conservatives will unveil Monday a plan to win voters in a future without Angela Merkel, as chancellor candidate Armin Laschet looks to extend his lead ahead of September's election.

Laschet, the head of Merkel's Christian Democratic Union (CDU), and Markus Soeder, the leader of the smaller Bavarian Christian Social Union (CSU), are to present the alliance's manifesto together after months of damaging in-fighting.

A public spat between the two over who would be chancellor candidate has been one of several setbacks for the bloc in the run-up to voting on 26 September — the first election in 16 years not to feature Merkel.

But the conservative alliance has gained momentum in recent weeks, bringing home a thumping win in a key regional election and now polling on around 28 per cent, ahead of the Greens in second place with about 21 per cent.

Laschet and Soeder appeared together in public Sunday

in a show of unity ahead of a final meeting to finalise the details of their election platform.

"Certainly there were a few moments in recent months where we were in dispute, but we are now on course together," Soeder said.

Life after Merkel

The CDU-CSU alliance, also known as the Union, has dominated German politics for 70 years but faces a struggle to rebrand itself without Merkel, who despite many ups and downs remains immensely popular. "For a long time, Merkel alone was the Union's manifesto," the Bild daily wrote recently, suggesting that Laschet had been "rushing from meeting to meeting" in a scramble to finalise a new strategy for the alliance.

The conservatives have faltered as Merkel prepares to bow out, provoking anger over the government's pandemic management and a corruption scandal involving shady coronavirus mask contracts. — AFP ■

US Navy tests warship's metal with megablast

THE US Navy has started a series of tests on its newest and most advanced aircraft carrier by detonating powerful explosions to determine whether the ship is ready for war. The first of the tests, which are known as Full Ship Shock Trials, occurred Friday when the Navy set off a giant explosive event near the USS Gerald R. Ford, according to a statement.

Images and video footage

showed an enormous burst of water shoot from the ocean as a result of what US media called a 40,000-pound (18,144-kilogramme) explosion. The US Geological Survey said the explosion, which occurred in the Atlantic Ocean off the Florida coast, registered as a 3.9 magnitude earthquake. The Navy "conducts shock trials of new ship designs using live explosives to confirm that our warships can continue to meet

demanding mission requirements under harsh conditions they might encounter in battle," it said in the statement.

After the trials, the warship will undergo maintenance and repairs. The tests are being conducted "within a narrow schedule that complies with environmental mitigation requirements, respecting known migration patterns of marine life in the test area," the Navy added. — AFP ■



In this handout image courtesy of the US Navy the aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) completes the first scheduled explosive event of Full Ship Shock Trials while underway in the Atlantic Ocean, 18 June 2021. The US Navy has started carrying out what it calls 'Full Ship Shock Trials' by detonating powerful explosions to test whether its aircraft carriers are ready for war. **PHOTO: AFP**

US, Japan, S Korea envoys meet to discuss North Korea

TOP US, Japanese and South Korean envoys on North Korea met face to face in Seoul on Monday to strengthen their coordination, with the new US representative expressing hope for a positive response from the North following US overtures for dialogue.

“We continue to hope that the DPRK will respond positively to our outreach, and our offer to meet anywhere, anytime without preconditions,” Sung Kim, the US special envoy for North Korea, said at the outset of the meeting. DPRK stands for the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, North

Korea’s official name.

The administration of US President Joe Biden has recently finished a review of its North Korea policy and signaled its readiness for dialogue with North Korea, while building on a 2018 bilateral agreement that included Pyongyang’s commitment toward denuclearization.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un last week “stressed the need to get prepared for both dialogue and confrontation, especially to get fully prepared for confrontation” with the Biden administration, according to the state-run Ko-

rean Central News Agency.

Monday’s meeting was the first trilateral talks as US special envoy for North Korea for Sung Kim, who was appointed to the position last month. He also doubles as ambassador to Indonesia.

“Our policy calls for a calibrated, practical approach that is open to and will explore diplomacy with the DPRK, as we seek to make practical progress that increases the security of the United States and our allies,” Kim also said.

A meeting between the US and South Korean envoys was held ahead of the trilateral

meeting. At the first US-North Korea summit in 2018 in Singapore, Kim Jong Un and Biden’s predecessor Donald Trump agreed Washington would provide security guarantees to Pyongyang in return for “complete” denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

At his meeting with South Korean President Moon Jae In in May, Biden signaled that his policy would build on the 2018 agreement, focusing on the denuclearization goal as well as improving relations between the United States and North Korea.

— Kyodo News ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Japan hopes Iran will help stabilize Middle East under new president

JAPAN hopes Iran will help stabilize the Middle East under president-elect Ebrahim Raisi, Japan’s top government spokesman said Monday, following the election of the conservative hard-liner last week. “We hope Iran will play a constructive role in easing tensions in the Middle East and stabilize the situation under President-elect Raisi,” Chief Cabinet Secretary Katsunobu Kato told a press conference.

“Peace and stability in the region is extremely important to Japan,” given about 90 per cent of Japan’s crude oil imports come from the Middle East, Kato said.

He added the government intends to deepen bilateral ties with Iran, which already has a friendly relationship with Japan. — Kyodo News ■

Armenia PM party wins majority in snap polls

ARMENIAN Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s party won 53.9 per cent of the vote in snap parliamentary polls called in an effort to defuse a political crisis after a war with Azerbaijan, official results showed Monday. An alliance led by his rival, ex-leader Robert Kocharyan, came second with 21 per cent, according to the results based on ballots from 100 per cent of precincts counted. A winning party or bloc needs to obtain at least 50 percent of seats plus one and can be assigned additional seats in order to form a government.

Pashinyan hours earlier claimed victory based on early results, but Kocharyan’s grouping swiftly contested the vote and alleged election fraud.

A record four electoral blocs and 21 parties ran for election on Sunday.

The vote was seen as a two-horse race, with both Pashinyan, 46, and Kocharyan, 66, drawing massive crowds in the run-up to the polls. — AFP ■

Free Covid vaccines for all Indian adults as Modi hails yoga ‘shield’

INDIA opened up free vaccinations to all adults in an attempt to bolster its inoculation drive on Monday, as Prime Minister Narendra Modi kicked off a muted International Yoga Day hailing the practice’s “protective” properties against the virus.

The country’s vaccination drive has significantly slowed in recent months due to a shortage of jabs and hesitancy, even as it battled a vicious surge in cases in April and May that overwhelmed the healthcare system in many places.

Case numbers have since fallen sharply and the authorities have again relaxed many restrictions, sparking fears of another wave.

The government had expanded the vaccine rollout to include all adults aged below 45 on



Practitioners perform a yoga position during an event to mark International Yoga Day at the Red Fort in New Delhi on 21 June 2021. PHOTO: AFP

1 May, but states and private hospitals had to procure and buy the shots themselves for the younger age group, leading to confusion and shortages.

But New Delhi later changed

tack, announcing it would procure 75 per cent of vaccine supplies and distribute them to states so that they can inoculate people for free.

So far it has administered

275 million shots, with barely four percent of people fully vaccinated.

The government aims to inoculate all of India’s almost 1.1 billion adults by the end of the year.

“The vaccination drive is expected to pick up speed now... the daily vaccination has picked up over the last week and is expected to strengthen further,” community health expert Rajib Dasgupta told AFP. “However, both existing inequities as well as hesitancy merit deeper attention to make this a success.”

The free rollout came as Modi marked the annual Yoga Day event with an early-morning address to the nation as it emerges from the surge, saying that the practice had again proved itself to be a source of “inner strength”. — AFP ■

Tokyo Olympic organizers to decide on spectator limits



File photo taken from a Kyodo News helicopter on 8 June 2021, shows the National Stadium, the main venue of the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

THE Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics organizers started a meeting Monday during which they are expected to agree to

allow up to 10,000 spectators to enter each games venue, provided it does not exceed 50 per cent of a venue’s capacity. Represent-

atives of five organizing bodies, including International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach and Tokyo Gov. Yuriko Koike, will finalize a policy on spectator limits, having already barred those from overseas.

They are expected, however, to leave open the option of holding the games without spectators in case the infection situation worsens before or after the Olympics begin on 23 July.

The Japanese organizers had initially sought to set the policy by the end of spring, but the schedule was delayed as Tokyo has been under COVID-19 states of emergency for most of this year due to multiple waves of infections driven by highly contagious coronavirus variants.

Organizers have said they will apply the Japanese government’s policy on spectator caps at large events to the Olympics, implying they will allow 50 per cent of venue capacity or up to 10,000 fans, whichever is smaller.

For the Olympic opening ceremony at the National Stadium, which can accommodate 68,000 fans, the spectator cap is expected to comprise both ticket holders from the general public and officials related to the games, according to officials familiar with the planning. Organizers were considering allowing about 20,000 spectators in total, but they have been trying to cut the number of games officials, possibly by several thousand people, the officials said. — Kyodo News ■

Asian Qualifiers playoff draw ceremony to be held on 24 June

A draw ceremony for the playoff matches of the Asian Qualifiers will be held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on 24 June, said the AFC football authorities.

In the playoff round, Cambodia, Indonesia, China Taipei and Guam will fight for the next stage.

Cambodia and Indonesia are in Pot 1, while China Taipei and Guam are in Pot 2. The first-leg match will be played on 7 September, followed by the second-leg battle on 12 October.

The two winning teams will advance to the third round of the Asian Cup.

A total of 22 nations including Myanmar have qualified directly for the third round and the teams are Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kuwait, Bahrain, Jordan, Palestine, Malaysia, the Philippines, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, India, Thailand, Singapore, Afghanistan, Hong

Kong, Maldives, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Myanmar, Yemen, Mongolia and Bangladesh.

In the third-round Asian qualifiers, the qualified teams will be divided into six groups. The winning teams or top 11 teams will advance to the 2023 AFC Asian Cup Finals.

The winners will join 13 countries that have already qualified for the Asian Cup Final stages, including China, Syria, Australia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Japan, Oman, the United Arab Emirates, South Korea, Iraq, Lebanon and Viet Nam. —GNLM ■

England shutting out Euro 2020 ‘noise’, says Sterling

RAHEEM Sterling says England are shutting out the “noise” and “panic” from outside their Euro 2020 camp after their laboured goalless draw against Scotland.

The Manchester City forward was part of Gareth Southgate’s team that was booed off the pitch at Wembley on Friday and came in for widespread criticism from elsewhere.

But the 26-year-old, who scored the only goal in England’s opening win against Croatia last week, said the players knew how to ignore the external pressure.

“I do feel there’s a bit of an overreaction... I just feel there’s more of a panic on the outside than inside the building,” he said.

“At the same the players who have been at a few tournaments, who have huge experience, try to help the other ones.

“I don’t see anyone in the camp that feels any pressure or feels hard done by. As much as



England’s forward Raheem Sterling gestures during the UEFA EURO 2020 Group D football match between England and Scotland at Wembley Stadium in London on 18 June 2021. **PHOTO : CARL RECINE / POOL / AFP**

we can inside the building the best thing we can do is focus on the training field, focus on what’s being doing inside.”

“The more you listen to outside noise, the more it can affect you,” he added.

Despite the disappointing result against Scotland, England

can top Group D if they beat the Czech Republic at Wembley on Tuesday.

That would guarantee a last-16 tie at Wembley, though it would be against world champions France, Germany or defending champions Portugal.

— AFP ■

Switzerland forced to wait for knock-out fate despite Shaqiri double

XHERDAN Shaqiri scored twice as Switzerland beat Turkey 3-1 in Baku on Sunday but they will have to wait to see if they reach the last 16 of Euro 2020 as one of the four best third-placed teams. Wales held on to second place in Group A thanks to a superior goal difference after their 1-0 loss to Italy.

Shaqiri’s goals came after Haris Seferovic’s first-half opener and either side of Irfan Kahveci scoring Turkey’s only goal of the tournament. “Over the next few days I can’t do anything. We have to wait,” Switzerland coach Vladimir Petkovic said. “I’m optimistic we will reach the next round.” Turkey boss Senol Gunes said he would not consider standing down despite his team finishing bottom of the group. “My thought is not about resigning now,” Gunes said. “I’m very sad to be going out after this. This team is good enough to overcome this. I believe in their talent.”

Petkovic made two changes from Wednesday’s heavy loss to Italy, including giving Steven Zuber his first start of the championship.

Gunes brought centre-back Merih Demiral back after dropping the Juventus defender last time out, with his side looking to avoid a third straight competitive defeat for the first time since Euro 1996. Switzerland opened the scoring in the sixth minute, silencing the 17,000 crowd supporting Turkey due to close historical and diplomatic ties between Ankara and Baku.

Seferovic buried a low effort past Turkish goalkeeper Ugurcan Cakir for his 22nd international goal, after Zuber’s turn and pass. Zuber was involved again for the second 20 minutes later, as Seferovic held up possession and his pass deflected to the Eintracht Frankfurt winger’s feet. The former Hoffenheim man then fed Shaqiri who curled a sublime effort past a helpless Cakir from the edge of the box.

Shaqiri should have doubled his account for the match less than two minutes later when a bursting run put the Liverpool midfielder clear with just the goalkeeper to beat, but Cakir saved with his foot. — AFP ■



Switzerland’s midfielder Xherdan Shaqiri scores his team’s third goal during the UEFA EURO 2020 Group A football match between Switzerland and Turkey at the Olympic Stadium in Baku on 20 June, 2021. **PHOTO : VALENTYN OGIRENKO / POOL / AFP**

Rahm wins US Open to take first major crown, top ranking

JON RAHM made tension-packed long birdie putts on the last two holes Sunday to win the 121st US Open and capture his first major title, defeating South African Louis Oosthuizen by one stroke.

The 26-year-old Spaniard curled in a spectacular birdie putt from just inside 25 feet at the par-4 17th hole then made his fourth birdie of the week at the par-5 18th, blasting out of a bunker and rolling in an 18-footer to seize the lead.

“I have a hard time explaining what just happened because I can’t even believe I made the last two putts,” Rahm said.

After stunning, fist-pumping putts to reach the clubhouse, Rahm could only watch 2010 British Open champion Oosthuizen play the last four holes.

At 17, Oosthuizen sent his tee shot left into bushes and made bogey to fall two adrift and a closing birdie only made him a major runner-up

for the sixth time in his career.

“I played good. Just fell a little short again,” Oosthuizen said. “Jon played a great round of golf. Errant tee shot on 17 just cost me. I fought really well to stay in it and just fell short again.”

Rahm fired a four-under par 67, the only leader to go bogey-free on the back nine, to finish 72 holes on six-under 278 with Oosthuizen on 279 and American Harris English third on 281.

“He was a major champion in waiting. It was just a matter of time,” four-time major winner Rory McIlroy said of Rahm. “To shoot 67 out there was a really good round.”

On the same course where he won his first US PGA title in 2017, Rahm became only the fourth US Open winner to close with back-to-back birdies, matching Jack Nicklaus, Tom Watson and Ben Hogan. — AFP ■