

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.

Announcement on donations for COVID-19 prevention, control activities

CURRENTLY, the third wave of COVID-19 is arising in our country. Due to the increasing infection rate, the Ministry of Health and Sports are making efforts along with the Tatmadaw in order to prevent and control the COVID-19 disease.

The Ministry is now planning to open Nationwide COVID-19 Prevention and Control Hospitals, Clinics, Quarantine Centres and Community COVID Positive Centres. Donations of immunizations, medicines, utensils, foodstuffs, essential aids and cash can be

made directly at the COVID-19 Prevention and Control Hospitals, Clinics, Quarantine Centres and Community COVID Positive Centres.

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Control and Emergency Response Committee

47-member leading committee of 8th State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee holds eighth meeting



The 8th State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee holds its eighth meeting of the 47-member leading committee at the Maha Pasana Cave in Thiri Mingala Kaba Aye Hill in Yangon on 13 July 2021.

THE eighth meeting of the 47-member leading committee of the 8th State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee began at the Maha Pasana Cave in Thiri Mingala Kaba Aye Hill in Yangon yesterday. The meeting was attended by the members of the State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee led by Chairman Sayadaw of the State Sangha Maha

Nayaka Committee Abhidhaja Maha Rattha Guru Abhidhaja Agga Maha Saddhamma Jotika Bhamo Sayadaw Dr Bhaddanta

Kumara Bhivamsa. Also present at the meeting were Union Minister U Ko Ko

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Statement to appreciate teachers' efforts

TEACHERS are honoured as part of the Five Infinite Venerables, and the manner of paying respect to the teachers can be only seen in Myanmar as a tradition. The teachers teach their pupils based on their goodwill like their own children and dutifully serve a teacher's duties. They must train their pupils and students in the best discipline. They see that they grasp their lessons well. They instruct them in the arts and sciences, they provide for their safety in every quarter, and they introduce them to their friends and associates.

As the COVID-19 infection rate is controlled to a certain extent, the basic education high, middle and primary schools under the Department of Basic Education have reopened across nation for the 2021-2022 academic year starting 1 June.

Those who want to seek good sake of one party, political extremist NLD members and supporters, NUG, CRPH and PDF committed arson attacks at the schools using mines, homemade bombs and grenades to fail the teaching processes, and threatened the teachers in addition to the incitements, social punishment and threats against education staff to join CDM while the officials made preparations for the reopening of schools and during the current teaching period. Their doings left some casualties, and the State Administration Council has expressed its deepest condolences and sympathy to the victims' families.

The SAC also appreciates the concerted efforts of teachers, who understand two virtues, Hiri -- shame at doing evil --and Otappa--fear of the results of doing evil --for teaching the new generations of the country amid such difficulties and challenges.

The security forces will take extraordinary measures to ensure the safety of teachers who are making efforts in the academic sector for the next generations in order to promote the education qualification. The people should keep security awareness and cooperate with the security members in community peace and peaceful learning of children.

Information Team
State Administration Council

Request to volunteers to take part in COVID-19 prevention, control and treatment activities

1. Health workers of the Ministry of Health and Sports are making their utmost efforts on the public health services as the numbers of COVID-19 suspected patients and confirmed cases are on the rise in regions/states during the Third Wave of COVID-19.
2. However, some health workers are absent and so, due to the lack of manpower and for the highly contagious disease, the workload and manpower become unbalanced and difficulties arise in prevention and control activities.
3. Therefore, those who want to volunteer in the under-mentioned sectors at the Public Hospitals, COVID-19 treatment centres and the places under travel restrictions are welcomed to participate: -
 - (a) COVID-19 treatment activities – doctors, nurses, experts;
 - (b) Medical equipment maintenance – Medical Engineering;
 - (c) Management of patient information – IT experts;
 - (d) Transfer of patients;
 - (e) COVID-19 vaccination – Computer experts and Data Assistants to register the data of persons who receive the vaccines;
4. The organizations or individuals who want to volunteer can contact the Call Centre (067-3411508, 067-3411509, 067-3411144) of the Ministry of Health and Sports. The officials will then connect with the Nay Pyi Taw, regions/states Public Health and Medical Services Departments and Superintendents. The government will provide accommodations, COVID-19 preventive activities and fuel used in transporting the patients for the volunteers.
5. Those who are providing medical services to families and friends are also requested here to participate in volunteer programmes.

Ministry of Health and Sports

Ladies and Gentleman who Come as Martyrs Mausoleum
Taking drones to museum and flying around the museum highly prohibited



" Notice for those who come to Martyrs Mausoleum "

You are respectfully requested not to carry along the following items into the Martyrs Mausoleum

Mobile Phones and		Flower bouquet, flower wreaths and flower baskets	
Various kinds of Flags		Vinyls	
Bags, Slimbags, Wallets Etc...		Bottles and Cans	
Cameras		PVC and Steel pipes used as poles for Flags	
Matches/Matchboxes			

4,047 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 13 July, total figure rises to 201,274

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to **201,274** after **4,047** new cases were reported on 13 July 2021 according to the Ministry of Health and Sports. Among these confirmed cases, **149,767** have been discharged from hospitals. Death toll reached **4,036** after **109** died. —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 | (4) 09-882557991 |
| (2) 067-3411509 | (5) 09-882557992 |
| (3) 067-3411144 | (6) 09-882557993 |

NATIONAL PEOPLES SHOULD BE DISCIPLINED IN UNISON

All our national peoples should be disciplined in unison and harmony without any racial hatred. Anyone who are adamantly trying to instigate others to do wrongdoings should work for the country.

(Excerpt from the broadcasting speech made by Bogyoke Aung San to the national peoples at 7:40 pm on 1 January 1947)



Press Release

THE Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar observed that U Kyaw Moe Tun has made statements and held discussions at the various forums of the United Nations although he has been dismissed from his assigned duty as Ambassador/ Permanent Representative of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar to the United Nations in New York since 27 February 2021. As such, his statements and discussions made at the various forums of the United Nations are neither official nor representing the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

U Kyaw Moe Tun has been charged with high treason and for his illegal activities as per instructions of the Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH) and the National Unity Government (NUG), both are unlawful associations and terrorist groups, at the respective District Courts, Nay Pyi Taw. Subsequently, the Courts have issued arrest warrants for him.

Therefore, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has already transmitted official notes to the Headquarters of the United Nations and the State Department of the United States of America once again reminding them not to recognize U Kyaw Moe Tun as Permanent Representative of Myanmar to the United Nations and the host country to hand him back to Myanmar to face the charges.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Nay Pyi Taw
Dated: 13 July 2021

National flag to be hoisted at half-mast with siren sound on Martyrs’ Day

THE Office of the State Administration Council has instructed all government departments to continue directing subordinate bodies to display the flag of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar at half-mast in order to commemorate the mourning throughout the country for the 74th Martyrs’ Day that falls on 19 July 2021. The Myanmar Radio and Television (MRTV) is ordered to sound a siren at 10:37 am which was the time the martyrs were fallen and the moving vehicles are urged to stop and honk their cars. — MNA

Technical assistance can revive Myanmar tourism for post-COVID-19: MOHT

UNION Minister for Hotels and Tourism U Maung Maung Ohn attended the coordination meeting with officials of Skylark Company that introduces the post-COVID-19 tourism support application yesterday in Nay Pyi Taw, in line with the COVID-19 control guidelines.

At the meeting, the Union Minister said it is necessary to travel in a new normal way in the future due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the application is supposed to be used effectively in the new normal mode, benefiting all the people and tourists during

COVID-19, as well as supporting the tourism industry in the long run. He called for discussions on the technical assistance which will effectively revive tourism in the post-COVID-19 period.

Managing Director of Skylark Company U Min Myat Soe Moe presented the company’s technical free supports of quarantine centre management system, certificate management system to Inya Centre and the quarantine centre in Mawlamyine during the second wave of COVID-19. He also explained the procedures of the Tourism

Portal/App, basic features of the mobile app and benefits for application users.

The Directors-General discussed the situation to consider for the mutual benefit of the tourists, and departmental officials asked questions about the application and discussed.

The Union Minister said the Ministry would be able to monitor tourist arrivals and know the latest update on information, vaccination status of the tourists, travel history and COVID-19 information through the application. — MNA



Daily newspapers available online

FOR those who would like to read the Myanma Alinn, the Kyemon and the Global New Light of Myanmar, published daily by the Ministry of Information, please visit www.moi.gov.mm/mal, www.moi.gov.mm/km, www.moi.gov.mm/nlm and www.gnlm.com.mm/e-paper.

News and Periodicals Enterprise

Disaster search, rescue drills conducted in Kawthoung



During the drills, the combined forces made special exercises for searching and rescuing speed boats and people in case of natural disasters in the rainy season.

MARINE Police Force (Kawthoung) and the Fire Department forces conducted disaster search and rescue drills near Bayintnaung No (2) Port and the Parchan Bay in Kawthoung Township yesterday morning.

Brig-Gen Ye Min Htet led members of the Naval Police Force (Kawthoung) and Dis-

trict Fire Department Chief Aung Nyein Oo headed members of the fire brigade for the rescue drills.

During the drills, the combined forces made special exercises for searching and rescuing speed boats and people in case of natural disasters in the rainy season.

Search and rescue of drowning people at sea using rescue transport vessels and drills for rescue operations including first aid, evacuation and firefighting were also conducted, according to the Kawthoung Township Fire Department. — Kyaw Soe (Kawthoung)/GNLM

Pin Oo Village gets electricity through NEP Phase-1

THE National Electricity Supply Project (NEP Phase-1) started to supply electricity to the Pin Oo Village, Ngaphe Township, Minbu District, Magway Region yesterday. The implementation began in March 2020.

The opening ceremony for the village electricity access was held yesterday at the Pin Oo Village Monastery.

Chairman of Ngaphe Township Administration Committee, Township Administrator U Aung Thein Hlaing and members, department heads, Township elec-

tricity manager and staff, Village lighting committee members and villagers attended the ceremony.

At the opening ceremony, Township Electricity Manager U Aung Kyaw Myint informed the villagers that they need to know how to use electricity properly as the street lights plus home lighting will soon be available. Two 100-KVA transformers for 11 miles will be provided by NEP Phase-1 at a cost of about K37 million.

In the village, 74 street

lights will be installed by connecting the voltage lines and the street lights will be lit from 6 pm to 6 am daily, officials said.

“Pe Kone village, Pin Oo village, Yin Shay village, and Chaung Phyu village in Ngaphe Township, got electricity during the NEP project this month.

The villages that have access to electricity with the region’s funds were Nesaw, Sitaw, Myitpya, Thayetpin, Kan Thar and Nga Hlaing Taw,” said officials. — Ma Yu (Ngaphe)/GNLM



MYANMAR GAZETTE

Appointment of Head of Service Organization

The State Administration Council has appointed Dr Kyaw Shwe, Deputy Director-General (Admin & Finance) of the Department of Human Resources for Health under the Ministry of Health and Sports, as Rector of the University of Medicine 1 (Yangon) of the Department of Human Resources for Health on probation from the date he assumes charge of his duties.

47-member leading committee of 8th State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee ...

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of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture and other officials of the ministry and relevant departments.

Bhamo Sayadaw Dr Bhaddanta Kumara Bhivamsa presided over the meeting and Joint Secretary Sayadaw of the State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee Agga Maha Pandita Agga Maha Saddhamma Jotikadhaja Bhaddanta Senila acted as the master of the ceremonies.

First, Chairman of State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee Dr Bhaddanta Kumara Bhivamsa recited Saraniya Ovada Gatha.

Then, the Union Minister U Ko Ko briefed the religious affairs and education sectors, and the Sayadaws coordinated

the discussion.

The Sayadaws all together recited the Jayanaw Voddhiyamule Gatha, and Sadhu three times.

The Union Minister U Ko Ko and wife Daw Tin Tin Nyunt offered the first and day-time meals to the Sayadaws. Then, U Kyin Oo and wife Daw Chaw Su Lwin (Popular Group) donated medicines and medical supplies to the Sayadaws.

At noon, nine Sayadaws led by Bhamo Sayadaw Dr Bhaddanta Kumara Bhivamsa were chanting Yadana Sutta and Metta Sutta at the Maha Pasana Cave in Thiri Mingala Kaba Aye Hill aiming for all the people living in Myanmar and around the globe to be free from COVID-19 infections. — MNA

Personal preventive practices against COVID-19 infection

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

Development of the State

IT is necessary to have sufficiency of electricity, good transport, good communication system and human resources for proper health and education systems in order to ensure development of a country. Health and education sectors must be encouraged for having good human resources. Hence, the education sector must be encouraged to be able to turn out the educated new generations for emergence of human resources.

(Excerption from the speech of Chairman of the State Administration Council Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing at the meeting with Mandalay Region Administration Council members and departmental personnel on 17-5-2021)

Republic of the Union of Myanmar Ministry of Health and Sports Department of Medical Services

Notification No 2/2021
13 July 2021

- Applicants who meet the requirements can apply to be employed as Assistant Surgeons under a contract in the hospitals and COVID-19 treatment centres under the Department of Medical Services.
- Applicant
 - must be a citizen of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.
 - must be a holder of an M.B.B.S Medical Degree and has a valid General Medical Licence (SaMa). (Or) those who have completed an internship must be able to submit a certificate of the internship completion, or the General Medical Licence (SaMa).
 - must not be over 50 years old on the closing date of application.
 - must not have a criminal record.
 - The term of the contract shall be six months and duties must be performed in line with the terms of the contract.
- To submit an application,
 - Fill in the application form completely and with the necessary documents, applications must be submitted to the Director-General, Department of Medical Services, Office No (4), Nay Pyi Taw by 4 pm on 13-8-2021.
 - Information to be attached to the application,
 - Certificate of the Degree (copy) or recommendation letter for internship completion;
 - Medical Licence (SaMa) (copy);
 - One copy of the national identity card;
 - Criminal clearance letter from the relevant police station under the Myanmar Police Force;
 - Medical Certificate from the head of the relevant township health department;
 - The application must be attached with a clear coloured photo taken within 6 months;
 - The names of the public/private hospitals, clinics and organizations and the duration that the applicant previously served must be provided either in the prescribed format or separately;
 - The hospitals/departments that one would like to work in should be listed in a prioritizing order.
- The salary of the Assistant Surgeon will be fixed at the regular rate of (K275,000) with an allowance for other expenses.
- The interview programme will be informed to each applicant.
- For those who want to continue to serve as a civil servant while under the contract, the duration of working under the contract will be changed to “probation period” and counted to receive the employee benefits in accordance with the Civil Service Personnel Law and Rules.
- The assistant surgeons working under the contract will have the same recognition and honour as permanent health workers for emergency medical care.
- For more information, please call 067-3411621 during office hours.

Department of Medical Services, Nay Pyi Taw

Republic of the Union of Myanmar Ministry of Health and Sports Department of Medical Services

Notification No 3/2021
13 July 2021

- The Central Hospitals, General Hospitals and COVID-19 treatment centres under the Department of Medical Services have a high demand of nurses and midwives. Those who meet the job requirements can apply for these positions under the contract system.
- The applicants: -
 - Must be a Citizen of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar;
 - Must have Bachelor of Science in Nursing or Diploma in Nursing or Diploma in Obstetrics or certificate of (18) months midwifery courses;
 - Must be holders of nurse (or) midwife licences;
 - Must not be over 50 years of age on the closing date of applications;
 - Must not have any criminal record;
 - The contract term will be six months, and the applicants must serve the duties as per the terms and conditions of the contract.
- Submission of applications: -
 - Completed applications along with necessary documents must be sent to the Director-General, No (4) Office of the Department of Medical Services, Nay Pyi Taw no later than 4 pm on 13-8-2021.
 - The attached documents with the applications: -
 - Degree/Diploma/Graduation Certificate (copy);
 - Nurse, midwife licence (copy);
 - NRC (1 copy);
 - Criminal clearance letter of Police Force (original);
 - Health recommendation letters of respective township health officers (original);
 - 1 photo taken within the last six months;
 - The names of former public hospitals/ private hospitals/clinics and duration of services must be filled in the prescribed CV or separately.
 - Must mention the priority hospital/departments like 1st, 2nd, and 3rd.
- Nurse’s regular salary is (regular salary – K198,000) and food expense K20,000+ uniform K2,000.
- If applicants complete the midwifery diploma course, they will be appointed at (regular salary -180,000) and food expense K20,000+ K2,000 for uniform.
- The applicants will be informed individually for a personal interview.
- For those who work under a contract system want to serve as government employees, the contract period will be changed into a “probation period” under the Civil Service Personnel Law and Rules to achieve the benefits of civil services.
- They will be praised like other permanent health workers.
- If you have any queries, please contact the Department of Medical Services, Nay Pyi Taw (Head Office) during office hours – 067-73411614 and 067-73411386, and respective Medical Services departments of Nay Pyi Taw/regions/states.

Department of Medical Services, Nay Pyi Taw

Myanmar rice market sees flat price in border despite sluggish trade

BORDER trade disruption led to a sluggish market yet the flat price occurs in the border export market.

The prices of white rice varieties range US\$375 to 405 per metric tonne, the price of glutinous rice price was priced \$600-610 per MT and the broken rice fetched \$300-335 per MT depending on the different varieties and quality, according to Myanmar Rice Federation (MRF).

Meanwhile, the price is stable on the high side despite the low demand and low stockpiles in the domestic market. Yangon market sees low supply from Pyapon, Mawgyun, Dedaye, Kungyangon, Wakhema, Kawhmu, Twantay, Myaungmya, Kyaiklat, Latputa and Shwebo areas.

The price of rice has risen after the stockpiles in the hands of farmers and traders have fallen, according to Mawlamyine Rice Wholesale Centre's trade data.

On 1 June, the prices of low-quality rice moved in the range of K23,500-36,500 per bag depending on the quality and



Myanmar exported 802,000 tonnes of rice and 601,000 tonnes of broken rice, totalling 1.14 million tonnes. The export volume in the past eight months showed a decrease of over 500,000 tonnes as against last FY.

varieties of the rice, whereas the prices surged to K25,300-39,400 per bag on 30 June.

The volume of rice and broken rice exported in the nearly eight months (1 October-28 May) of the current financial year 2020-2021 was estimated at over 1.14 million metric tonnes, generating US\$546.6 million income, the Ministry of Commerce

reports.

The country shipped \$576.28 million worth of 1.958 million tonnes of rice and broken rice in the same corresponding period of last FY.

Myanmar exported 802,000 tonnes of rice and 601,000 tonnes of broken rice, totalling 1.14 million tonnes. The export volume in the past eight months showed

a decrease of over 500,000 tonnes as against last FY.

At present, rice shipment to European countries is declining. However, Myanmar is mostly delivering rice and broken rice to China, Malaysia, the Philippines and Bangladesh and shipping broke rice to China, Indonesia, Belgium, Senegal and The Netherlands. The market cools down

for now due to the transport difficulties and Kyat depreciation.

Next, China Customs granted licences to 47 Myanmar companies on 26 February 2021 to legally export the rice to China through the Muse land border this year. The authorized companies for rice export to China increased this year as against last year. However, the permitted volume of rice for exports has not been confirmed yet, Muse Rice Wholesale Centre.

Moreover, China banned all the border posts on 8 July as the COVID-19 infection is spiking in Myanmar. As a result of this, the agricultural exports dropped dramatically.

Myanmar set the rice export target at only 2 million tonnes in the current FY as summer paddy growing acreage drops. Weather changes affected irrigation water resource availability on agriculture, MRF stated.

Myanmar generated over \$800 million from rice exports in the previous FY2019-2020 ended 30 September, with an estimated volume of over 2.5 million tonnes. — KH/GNLM

Dragon fruit selling well in Ngaphe Township



The price of dragon fruits moved in the range of K400 and K750 per fruit. The business allows to earn a handsome profit for the growers.

THE dragon fruits cultivated using irrigation are highly yielded in Pin Oo village, Ngaphe Township of Minbu District. The high demand allows the growers to generate family income, said a grower U Kan Gyi Maung of Ngaphe Myoma Ward.

There are over 1,000 dragon fruit plants on 3 acres of land in the north of Pin Oo village. The cultivation of a one-year-old plant started in January 2017. The plants are over five years old. The plant bears fruits after six months of cultivation. Natural fertilizer is utilized in cultivation. The spacing is three feet apart between plants and five feet apart between posts. The plants can be harvested about seven times per year. About 10,000 dragon fruits were produced last year. The fruits are delivered to Magway and Yangon cities. The price of dragon fruits moved in the range of K400 and K750 per fruit. The business allows to earn a handsome profit for the growers, said U Kan Gyi Maung. — Ma Yu (Ngaphe IPRD)/GNLM

Myanmar-Thailand border trade down by \$61.49 mln as of 2 July

THE value of Myanmar's bilateral trade with the neighbouring country Thailand through land border has registered a decrease of US\$61.49 million between 1 October and 2 July of the current financial year 2020-2021 as against a year-ago period, the statistics issued by the Ministry of Commerce indicated.

The ministry reported that exports surpassed imports in trade with Thailand this year, with exports reaching over \$2.2 billion and imports valued at over \$971 million, totalling \$3.179 billion.

During the corresponding period of the past FY2019-2020, Myanmar-Thailand border trade touched a high of \$3.241 billion.

Following the COVID surge in Myanmar, some border posts are temporarily restricted, and at present, fruits and agricultural products such as cucumber, mango, tomato and vegetable, fishery products, building ma-

terials and other pharmaceutical-related goods and equipment can be traded.

During the last FY, Myanmar has increasingly exported corns to Thailand through the Myawady border. Myanmar's corn exports to Thailand significantly soared to over 1.2 million tonnes through border posts between Myanmar and Thailand during the October and May period in the FY2019-2020, an official of the Ministry of Commerce said.

There are seven border posts between Myanmar and Thailand, Tachilek, Myawady, Kawthoung, Hteekhee, Myeik, Mawtaung and Maisai. Except for Tachilek and Myawady, the remaining border posts showed a decrease in the trade this FY.

The value of border trade stood at \$204 million via Tachilek, \$1.35 billion via Myawady, \$245 million via Kawthoung, \$95.79 million via Myeik, \$1.2 billion via Hteekhee and \$12.3 million via Mawtaung. Maisai

border post has not witnessed any trade yet.

At present, Myanmar exports corn to Thailand through Myawady and Tachilek land border. Only Tachilek and Myawady showed an increase in trade, while the remaining indicated a drop in trade as against last year.

Additionally, exports of natural gas from the Taninthayi Region contributed to the enormous increase in border trade with Thailand in the previous years. This year, gas exports via the Hteekhee border drastically fell.

Myanmar primarily exports natural gas, fishery products, coal, tin concentrate (SN 71.58 per cent), coconut (fresh and dry), beans, and bamboo shoots to Thailand. It imports capital goods such as machinery, raw industrial goods such as cement and fertilizers, consumer goods such as cosmetics and food products from the neighbouring country. — KH/GNLM

Kyat value increases by K20 within week

THE value of Kyat against a US dollar rose by K20 within a week (7-13 July) in the local forex market.

A dollar is worth K1,660 on 7 July, whereas the rate dipped to K1,635 on 13 July.

The Central Bank of Myanmar (CBM) has sold 15 million dollars so far this month to control the value of the currency. Consequently, the Kyat value slightly increases in the local forex market.

The CBM sold 12 million dollars at an auction market in June as well.

The bullish hard currency gained in the local forex market, reaching the peak of K1,730 on 12 May from K1,330

in January-end. In a bid to control the sharp daily gains of the US dollar in the local market, the CBM reportedly sold \$24 million in May. Consequently, the exchange rate slightly fell to K1,580 in May. Nevertheless, it touches a high of above K1,600 for now.

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

The local forex market's data showed that the dollar exchange rate touched the maximum of K1,345 and the minimum of K1,327 in January 2021. The rate moved in the range of K1,335-1,465 in February. It

reached the lowest of K1,420 and the highest of K1,550 in March. The rate fluctuated between K1,550 and K1,610 in April. The rate fluctuated between K1,585 and K1,730 in May and it moved to the maximum of K1,595-1,620 last month.

In 2020, the exchange rate moved in the range of K1,465-1,493 in January, K1,436-1,465 in February, K1,320-1,445 in March, K1,395-1,440 in April, K1,406-1,426 in May, K1,385-1,412 in June, K1,367-1,410 in July, K1,335-1,390 in August, K1,310-1,355 in September, K1,282-1,315 in October, K1,303-1,330 in November and K1,324-1,403 in December.

In 2019, the rates are



pegged at K1,508-1,517 in July, K1,510-1,526 in August, K1,527-1,565 in September, K1,528-1,537 in October, K1,510-1,524 in November and K1,485-1,513 in December.

On 20 September 2018, the dollar exchange rate hit an all-time high of K1,650 in the local currency market. — NN/GNLM

Security forces seize weapons in MDY Chanayethazan Township



SUSPECTS and those who kept Weapons and ammunition equipment were arrested in Chanayethazan Township, Mandalay Region on 12 July. According to the report, the security forces in Chanayethazan Township, Mandalay Region inspected the PVC

pipe hidden in the garbage dump to the north of a house owned by Nay Lin Aung (alias) Arr Gwayt.

Two more handbags and 13 hand grenades made of steel pipes were also found and seized inside the house.

Police charged Nay Lin

Aung (alias) Arr Gwayt and Lwin Moe (alias) Lin Lu for keeping the weapons and ammunition equipment.

Those arrested will face severe legal actions, and investigations are underway to capture the rest of the suspects, officials said. —MNA

Tatmadaw provides treatments to over 270,000 outpatients

TATMADAW 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 diffi-

culties in healthcare services. A total of 270,415 outpatients and 78,567 inpatients reached these hospitals from 5 February to date.

Senior medical experts, medics, medical assistants and nurses have conducted 12,529 major operations and 6,675 minor operations. The senior doctors gave intensive treatments to the severe cases.

These hospitals managed for the birth of 15,397 babies to date. Of those, 6,374 cases are done in the caesarean section and 9,023 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. — MNA

COVID-19: start ourselves to take preventive measures

ALL people are urged to abide by the following ways of prevention against COVID-19 without fail in line with the motto: "COVID-19: start ourselves to take preventive measures" not to violently infect COVID-19 as next wave and not to be infected of variant COVID-19 virus.

- (1) Systematically wear masks whenever go outside and also wear face shields whenever associate with many people.
- (2) Take adequate distance from each other as much as they can.
- (3) Avoid the crowds.
- (4) Take 20 seconds in systematically washing hands many times.
- (5) Avoid the visits to the closed chambers, air-conditioned rooms and the lesser ventilated rooms as much as possible.
- (6) Those who need to go outside houses should avoid acts close to and eat meals together with older persons above 60 years and those with diabetes, hypertension, and heart diseases.
- (7) Fully cooperate in quarantine processes.
- (8) Don't buy something from the vendors who do not wear masks.
- (9) Exchange information to each other.
- (10) Cooperate in vaccination of COVID-19 pandemic. Continuously follow the preventive measures although they have received the vaccinations.
- (11) Strictly follow the work guidelines for preventing the COVID-19 pandemic issued by the Ministry of Health and Sports.
- (12) If somebody suffers from symptoms of higher body temperature, coughing, suffocation, tiredness and sudden loss of smell and flavour, they need to immediately contact nearby health units to receive medical treatment.
- (13) If those who do not wear the masks when they go outside, and if those who conduct mass gatherings will face legal actions under the existing laws.

Health Knowledge Awareness Promoting Department
Ministry of Health and Sports

Preserve the existence of invaluable mural paintings from ancient buildings

VARIOUS kinds of mural paintings created on the walls of ancient monuments and religious edifices can be dubbed as the windows of the human mind because our forefathers created the artistic works as mural paintings at these locations.

Those forefathers presented their daily experiences as mural paintings. For example, if they faced wildlife while wandering the jungles for hunting and searching for food, they would create pictures of wildlife when they arrived at the residences such as caves or ravines where they could stay away from the danger of wildlife.

Sometimes, they illustrated pictures of scenes, weapons such as Stone Age objects and significant scenes. Hence, we can assess the forefathers' purposes for the creation of these mural paintings, their life-style of the created period, habitats and nature of wildlife, ancient climatic conditions, geographical conditions, ancient monuments, religious edifices, use of colourful paints in mural paintings and ingredients in making the colourful paints.

Some mural paintings disappeared in the impacts of bad weather and the destruction of humans. Some mural paintings do not disappear but visitors to the scenes wrote something on the mural paintings, especially at ancient monuments and religious edifices. Hence, letters inked by correction pens badly cover the invaluable mural paintings. Negligent acts of someone can destroy invaluable objects. So, the artistic works never return to normality.

As such, everybody needs to participate in the preservation of ancient objects such as mural paintings. It is because these paintings were created by ancient human beings. As

they do not exist now, their original works of mural paintings cannot be created again. In taking a lesson from the unexpected disappearance of the mural paintings, all the people should join hands with the archaeologists and historians in the preservation of the ancient artworks and artefacts to be able to take pride in these works in the flourishing of culture and contemporary civilization of respective eras.

Hence, everybody, child or adult, takes care of their unintentional acts which may be harmful to any others and anything as destroying the artefacts or structures. On the other hand, they have to hand over any artefacts to the relevant departments for preservation to ensure the long term existence of cultural heritage in the country.

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Hence, everybody, child or adult, takes care of their unintentional acts which may be harmful to any others and anything as destroying the artefacts or structures. On the other hand, they have to hand over any artefacts to the relevant departments for preservation to ensure the long term existence of cultural heritage in the country.

Waso, the Month of Ordination Festival

WASO, the fourth month of the Myanma lunar calendar approximates to July. It is the first of the three heavily rainy months... Waso, Wagaung, and Tawthalin, i.e., July, August and September respectively. The astrological name of Waso is Kataka (Cancer) and its symbol is crab. In this month Myat Lay flower (fragrant Jasminum Grandi florum) blooms, and so Myanmar people regard it as the flower of this month. In the year M.E. 1355, there were two Waso months- first Waso and second Waso, as a month was intercalated after Waso. So, this type of year is called Wa-htat year i.e., two Waso years.

In the early lithic inscriptions of ancient Bagan, this month was called “Malweita” or “Nweita” or “Nweita” or “Nweita”, all of which mean “the month for measuring land”. It is in this month that wet cultivation is done in full swing, and so the farmers have to measure the extent of the lands to till. Hence the land-measuring month is an appropriate name. As Theravada Buddhism flourished and its influence permeated the daily life of the Myanmar people, this month acquired a new name of religious importance “Waso”. It is believed that in the time of King Anawrahta (A.D. 1044-1077) when the Theravada Buddhist monks promoted Pariyatti Sasana, the name “Waso” for this month came into common use. The word “Waso” is a compound of two words “wa” and “so”. “Wa” is derived from the Pali word “wasa” meaning “to recite” “to say” or “to tell”. “So” is a Myanma word which also means “to say” or “to tell”. On the first waning day of this month Buddhist monks say to the Lord Buddha (take a vow in front of the Buddha statue) that they will stay in their residing monastery during the three months of the rainy season.

The history of observing Waso rite goes back to the lifetime of the Lord Buddha. At first, there was no religious restriction of the movement of monks. They freely went about throughout the year. They travelled in all seasons. Greengrass, plants, cultivation and little insects were accidentally trodden upon by travelling monks, thereby dam-

aging or destroying them. When the Lord Buddha heard of public complaint of such unintentional harm, he forbade the monks to go out of their residing monasteries for overnight travel during the three months of cultivating season. For the convenience of the monks, the Lord Buddha prescribed two alternative periods of Wa or Lent, namely Purima Wa and Pyitsima Wa. Purima Wa or first Wa is the period of Lent which begins on the first waning day of Waso month and ends on the day of the completion of three solid months which is the full moon day of Thadingyut (October). Pyitsima Wa or second Wa begins on the first waning day of Wagaung month (August) and ends on the day of the completion of three solid months which is the full moon day of Tazaungmon (November). Depending upon their conditions monks may choose either of these two was.

Either in the evening or at night of the first waning day of Waso all monks of the same monastery are gathered in the assembly hall facing the shrine room of Buddha images. The monastery and the shrine room are artistically decorated with flowers, candles, festoons and various offertories, highlighting the Waso occasion. Firstly, they pay homage to the Lord Buddha. Then the head monk of the monastery explains to the monks the boundaries of the monastery and its compound within which they are obliged to stay during Lent. Starting with the most senior monk (seniority is counted not in terms of age but terms of wasa or ordained years), every monk by turn recites the following formula of Wa vow:

Imasmim vihare imam temasam vassam upemi”

(ဣမဓိံ ဝိဟာရ ဣမ် တေမာသံ ဝဿ ဥပမိ)

which means “I shall stay in this monastery during the three months of rainy season” Every time each monk recites this vow either once or twice or thrice, the rest of the monks utter in chorus word of appreciation in Pali “Sadu” (well-done) three times. Owing to the unavoidable circumstances if a monk has to travel and thus has to stay away from the monastery during Lent, he can make a formal request for a dispensation from



the duties of Lent. This kind of request is called “wa pan” request for leave of absence from the monastery during Lent. But leave of absence must not exceed more than seven days. If he fails to make this request and stays away overnight from the monastery, he commits a breach of Wa vow and thereby he suffers the priestly character in consequence of a breach of a monastic vow as he has not recited the formula of permission. But as the monks strictly observe priestly disciplines there is hardly any case of Wa kyo.

During Lent, monks devote themselves full-time to the observance of religious practice. Especially in the Pariyatti monasteries teaching and learning of Tipitakas and all Buddhist scriptures and kinds of literature are intensively carried out by the teacher and student monks, preparing for the religious examinations held in the month of Nayon (June). At the meditation centres, the instructor monks teach their pupils the correct ways of meditation. The material needs of the teacher and student monks are supplied by lay devotees and the public.

The full moon day of Waso is one of the important days in Buddhist history because it was on this day that four great events of the Lord Buddha's life took place. Firstly, it was on the full moon day of Waso Thursday, that Prince Siddhartha (the Buddha) was conceived in the womb of Queen Maha Maya, the Chief Queen of King Suddhodana of Kapilavatsu. Secondly, it was on the full moon day of Waso, Monday that Prince Siddhartha at the age of 29 after seeing four Omens, renounced his mundane life and left his palace for the forest to become a recluse. Thirdly it was on the full moon day of Waso Saturday that the Lord Buddha gave his first sermon “Dhammacakya” to the five recluses namely Kondana, Vappa, Bhaddiya, Mahanam, and Assaji in the Deer Park Migadawuna. Fourthly it was on the full moon day of Waso that the Lord Buddha under the Mango tree in Sawutti showed his miracles to the heretics to subdue them. In Myanmar, the full moon day of Waso is marked “Dhammacakya Day” which is observed by holding group recitations of Dhammacakya at religious centres throughout the country.

The traditional festive event of Waso is ordination. The earliest mention of the ordination festival is found in the stone inscription at Bagan dated M.E. 595 (1213 A.D). It described the ordination of the son. Another inscription that mentions the ordination event is that of the Innwa (Ava) period. It was dated M.E. 900 (1538 A.D). In Myanma literature of Innwa and other periods, we find references to the ordination festival held in the month of Waso. In fact, there is no specific time or month fixed for ordination. Ordination can take place in any month of the year. But there are two special reasons for holding ordination on the full moon day of Waso. Firstly, it was on the full moon day of Waso that one of the five recluses whom the Lord Buddha gave his first sermon named Shin Kondana became a monk. Secondly, those who have passed religious examinations in the previous month, Nayon are ready to be ordained in Waso so that they can pursue learning (Pariyatti) during Lent. The ordination festival in Waso is in sequence with the religious examination festival in Nayon.

The purpose of ordination

is twofold-to recruit for Sangha the Priestly Order so as to promote and perpetuate Buddha Sasana from those who choose to remain monks for life and to impart Buddhist education and culture to those who stay n monkhood for a certain period. It is a religious requirement for every Buddhist male to become a novice or ordained monk. According to Buddhism the highest religious merit one can attain is by becoming oneself novice or being ordained monk if one is a male or by making one's son or other's son novice or ordaining him a monk. By performing this religious work, the performer becomes an “inheritor of Buddha Sasana.” The performer receives from the community an honorific title of “Shin Taka” “Shin Ama” “Yahan Taka” “Yahan Ama” “Donor of Novitiation” “Donor of Ordination” “Donor of Ordination” which is prefixed to his or her name. Ta death his or her body is carried with two ceremonial gold umbrellas shading it as a token of honour to the deceased “inheritor of Buddha Sasana”. Two historical pieces of evidence that support novitiation and ordination as a religious requirement for the Buddhists are the novitiation of Prince Rahula, son of the Lord Buddha and the ordination of Prince Mahinda and Princess Sanghamitta, son and daughter of King Asoka. A year after the attainment of Buddhahood the Lord Buddha came to Kapilavatsu and resided at the Nigrodha Bihar monastery. One day while the Lord Buddha was at the Court of his father King Suddhodana, Rahula's mother Queen Yasodhara told her son that the Lord Buddha was his father and urged Rahula to ask for patrimony from his father. When the son did accordingly, the Lord Buddha kept silent. Rahula followed the Lord Buddha to the monastery, repeatedly asking for patrimony on the way. When they reached the Nigrodha VBihara the Lord Buddha told his disciple Shin Sariputtara to novitiate Rahula in the Order. Making Rahula a novice (Same-nera) was the grant of patrimony by the Lord Buddha to his son because by becoming a probationer for the priesthood, Rahula was inheriting Buddha Sasana from his father.

Maha Saddhamma Jotika Dhaja, Sithu Dr Khin Maung Nyunt

The other evidence is as follows:

Great King Asoka was very lavish in charity. He built 84000 stupas and dug 84000 wells and constructed 84000 tanks among other works of religious merit. He promoted Buddhism by sending out Buddhist missionaries to the four corners of the world. One day he asked his guru monk Shin Moggaliputta whether he deserved to be the inheritor of Buddha Sasana. The guru monk replied that although the King's religious givings were incomparably plenty he was only the contributor to the support of Buddhism and that only when he ordained his own offsprings would he become the inheritor of Buddha Sasana. On hearing that his son Prince Mahinda and daughter Princess Sanghamitta offered themselves up to their royal father for ordination.

In the time of Myanmar Kings, ordination in Waso was the great festive event of the month. The Hluttaw or the King's Council arranged the ordination festival. It made a list of names of candidates to be ordained, names of donors who would bear the expenses of the ordination ceremony, names of persons who would support the ordained monks, and names of monasteries the ordained monks were to reside. At this ceremony, Byaw music was played. Byaw is a kind of drum. Byaw music is played on the occasion of religious charity. Byaw musicians were appointed by the King and

were quartered in a separate village. The ordination festival of the Innwa Period was graphically described in the Lawka Byu Har In-Yone Sardan, a Treatise on Court Ceremonies and Festivals compiled by Minister Thiri Uzana of In-Yone as follows:

“First the list of candidates to be ordained was submitted to the Hluttaw. The Crown Prince, Senior Prince, Minister of Royal Granary, Ministers, Governor of town, Minister of Cavalry, Minister of Elephantry, Minister of Treasury, Minister of Gunner, Minister of Artillery, Minister of the Palace Precincts, Minister of Royal, Shield, Minister of Justice, Junior Ministers, wealthy men etc. each took care of one candidate for ordination.

“The Minister of Royal Treasury provided umbrellas and eight priestly utensils namely three pieces of a yellow robe, an alms bowl, a girdle, a short handle adze, a needle, and a water dipper. These were sent to the monasteries where the ordained monks would reside. An allotment of K50/- for each candidate was issued from the Royal Treasury to bear the cost of celebrating the occasion at his house. On the 9th waning moon of Waso, candidates for novitiation and ordination were dressed in fine clothings and in the early hours of that day they were taken to the Innwa Shwezigon Pagoda. They wore a gold coloured head-dress and gold chains provided by the Royal Treasury.

SEE PAGE-10



Spanish Jasmine (Myat Lay)

Waso, the Month of Ordination Festival

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They were carried on the palanquins in the ceremonial procession which included gunners, musicians, palanquins bearing Kamma Vaca or Plates of Scriptures to be recited at the ordination service, bearers of four ceremonial white umbrellas shading the Kamma Vaca, bearers of eight priestly utensils, bearers of betel boxes, tea containers, and water goblets and several other paraphernalia. After paying homage to the Pagoda the procession turned to the Palace. Except for the gunners, all entered the Palace City through the right Marabin Gate."

"After making a round of the Palace podium they went up to the Northern Samok (Gatehouse in a palace) Building where the King was waiting with his Ministers and attendants. The royal drums were being struck to mark the occasion. The Officer-in-charge of the ceremony submitted the list of Candidates to be ordained by reading it out to the King. His Majesty gave the candidates his exhortation as follows:

"To have been born human is a rare opportunity.

To be literate and knowl-

edgeable is a rare opportunity

To have been born a human male during the period of Buddha Sasana is a rare opportunity. and

To be an ordained monk is a rare opportunity.

"These five rare opportunities were pointed out by the Lord Buddha himself. You should therefore be aware that you have now got all these five rare opportunities. You should therefore strictly abide by Vinaya, the Priestly Disciplines, and faithfully follow the teachings of the Lord Buddha."

"After delivering his words of admonition the King performed the libation ceremony by pouring out lustral water from the golden ewer. Then the royal drum was struck and religious music Byaw was played. The procession returned to the Shwezigon Pagoda and at the big rest house the King's admonition was read out in public. The procession then went on the Sima or Ordination Hall where the candidates were formally ordained by the Chapters according to the prescribed procedure".

The following is the account given in the Myanmar Chronicle called Konbaung Set Maha Yazawin Vol. 3 page

219 of the Ordination Ceremony performed in the time of King Mindon.

"... 500 candidates for the priesthood (Upasampada = Being ordained to monkhood) and 500 candidates for novice (Samenera) altogether one thousand were dressed up in fine clothes and were carried on the caparisoned elephants followed by a retinue of attendants lined up in procession. They went round in the Palace City and eventually stopped at the entrance of the pavilions set up on either side of the Mye Nan Taw Palace Buildings. In the pavilions were gathered 100 senior monks and eight priestly utensils for each of the 1,000 candidates about to be novitiated or ordained. Other offertories were artistically displayed in the pavilions.

The candidates sat down respectfully in front of the monks. The Queen Mother entered the pavilions and performed the libation ceremony. Celebrations followed after it."

"In the evening of that day, King Mindon, Chief Queen and the whole Court came out in state and made a ceremonial presentation of 1,000 candidates in the service of Buddha Sasana. The following day the King

and Chief Queen offered rice to the novices and newly ordained monks."

The festive atmosphere of Waso is created by devotees who come to the monasteries to watch with reverence and piety and performance of the Waso rite by the monks. They wear colourful garments and jewellery carrying candles, flowers, robes and other alms to be offered to the monks. These offertories came to be known as Waso candles, Waso flowers and Waso robes. Strictly speaking, Waso robe is offered to the monk in the period between the first waxing day of Waso month and its full moon day both days inclusive. Waso robe is meant to be worn by a monk during Lent. Similar offertories may be presented to the Pagodas and Buddha statues. In the countryside, young people go out to the nearby woodlands to gather wild followers and sprigs of Thabye, thus providing a merry social occasion for meeting between boys and girls. Folk music, song and dance accompany them if they come out in organised groups. On the full moon day and the day after it, shrines, pagodas, and monasteries are crowded with devotees doing works of religious merit.

In the days of Myanmar Kings twice in a year, homage was paid to the parents, elders, superiors, and teachers, namely at the beginning of Lent called "Wa Win (July) and at the end of Lent called "Wa Kyut" (October). On the first waning day of Waso, the King offered to the seven Buddha white umbrellas, prayer flags, prayer festoons, gold and silver flowers and flower vases. At the Hluttaw princes, ministers, high ranking officers, men of wealth and position presented gold and silver bowls and silk clothes to the King and paid him homage. On the 5th waning day, their wives paid homage to the King. At the monasteries, junior monks paid homage to senior monks. In towns and villages, the public paid homage to the Governor of the town and the village headman. At home, children paid homage to their parents, elders and teachers.

Waso traditions have long been maintained and observed by the Myanmar people. The mass media of today carry news and reports of Waso activities at the shrines, monasteries schools, Colleges and Universities.



Seven more rescued from rubble of China hotel collapse



The Siji Kaiyuan hotel collapsed on Monday and no reason for the disaster has yet been given. **PHOTO: CNS/AFP**

RESCUERS have pulled another seven survivors out of the rubble of a small budget hotel that collapsed in the eastern China city of Suzhou, state media said Tuesday.

The Siji Kaiyuan hotel collapsed on Monday afternoon, with authorities initially saying one person had died.

The latest figures bring to 14 the number of those rescued,

according to the People's Daily.

No further information was given on the number of people still missing. No cause for the disaster has yet been given. The hotel opened in 2018 and had 54 guest rooms, according to its listing on the travel site Ctrip. Images from the scene showed orange-clad rescue workers swarming over large piles of rubble.—AFP ■

France fines Google 500 mn euros in news copyright row

France's competition watchdog on Tuesday slapped Google with a 500-million-euro (\$593-million) fine for failing to negotiate "in good faith" with media companies over the use of their content under EU copyright rules.

It is "the biggest ever fine" imposed by the Competition Authority for a company's failure to adhere to one of its rulings, the agency's chief Isabelle De Silva told reporters, saying the decision was intended to "reflect the gravity" of Google's shortcomings.

The regulator also ordered Google to present media publishers with "an offer of remuneration for the current use of their copyrighted content", or risk paying additional damages of up to 900,000 euros a day.

A Google spokesperson said in a statement to AFP that the company was "very disappointed" by the decision.

"We have acted in good faith during the entire negotiation period. This fine does not reflect the efforts put in place, nor the reality of the use of news content on our platform," the company insisted.

"This decision is mainly about negotiations that took place between May and September 2020. Since then, we have continued to work with publishers and news agencies to find common ground."—AFP ■



The long-running legal battle has centred on claims that Google has been showing articles, pictures and videos produced by media outlets when displaying search results without adequate compensation, despite the seismic shift of global advertising revenues towards the search giant. **PHOTO: AFP**

Death toll rises to 64 in Iraq Covid unit fire

A fire which enveloped a Covid isolation unit in southern Iraq killed 64 people.

“Sixty-four (bodies) were retrieved and 39 identified and handed over to their families,” the source at the Dhi Qar Forensic Science Department said.

The deadly Monday evening blaze at Al-Hussein Hospital in the provincial capital Nasiriyah, which medics said was fuelled by the explosion of oxygen canisters, was the second such fire in Iraq in three months.

“Medical teams and relatives of victims are finding it difficult to identify the rest of the corpses,”

the source said, adding that the death toll might rise further with more bodies feared buried under the rubble.

The ward had space for 70 beds.

Outside the hospital, dozens of young demonstrators protested.

“The perpetrators must be deterred... The state must take the necessary measures... to confront the corrupt,” a young protester told AFP early Tuesday.

He said those responsible must be held “accountable... in transparent investigations that show people that it (the state) is

serious about putting an end to these tragedies,” he added.

In a Tuesday tweet, Iraqi President Barham Salih blamed the “catastrophe” at Al-Hussein Hospital on “persistent corruption and mismanagement that undervalues the lives of Iraqis”.

Salih recalled an April fire at a Baghdad Covid-19 hospital which killed 82 people and injured 110. It too was sparked by the explosion of badly stored oxygen cylinders. The April fire triggered widespread anger, resulting in the suspension and subsequent resignation of then health minister Hassan al-Tamimi.— AFP ■



People gather at the ravaged coronavirus isolation ward of Al-Hussein hospital after a massive fire overnight, in the southern Iraqi city of Nasiriyah, on July 13, 2021. **PHOTO: AFP**

‘Silver lining’: Albania medicinal herbs bloom in pandemic



A woman removes weeds from a lavender field in the village of Koplik on 11 June 2021. **PHOTO: GENT SHKULLAKU / AFP**

SCENTS of sage, lavender and cornflowers rise from the meadows of Albania, which has seen soaring overseas demand for medicinal herbs since the coronavirus pandemic.

In Sheqeras, at the foot of the Mali i Thate mountain in Albania’s south, it is the season for cornflowers, a plant traditionally

valued for its ability to boost the metabolism and resistance to infections.

Early in the morning, before the heat of the day, dozens of women wearing broad-rimmed hats, hand-pick the magnificent signature-blue flowers that attract clouds of butterflies and bees. The cornflowers are then

dried in darkened rooms to preserve their colour before being shipped abroad.

For the past few years, Albania has been one of Europe’s top producers of medicinal herbs, mostly wild plants harvested in the foothills.

About 95 per cent are exported to the United States, Australia, New Zealand, France, Germany or Italy.

Booming exports

Demand has been soaring since the coronavirus pandemic increased interest in herbs believed to strengthen the immune system and amid growing enthusiasm for natural and organic products. “Every cloud has a silver lining,” says Altin Xhaja, whose company, Albrut, has, like many others in the sector, expanded areas under cultivation and intensified harvesting of wildflowers.—AFP ■

Masking no longer required for vaccinated US students

STUDENTS and teachers vaccinated against Covid-19 will not need to wear masks in US classrooms when school resumes in the fall, health authorities said Friday.

The new guidance follows the recent federal approval of the Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 shot for Americans aged 12 to 15, with hospitalizations and deaths down sharply since January – but cases beginning an upward trajectory due to the surging Delta variant of the coronavirus. The Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) had announced in May



Students and teachers vaccinated against Covid-19 will not need to wear masks in US classrooms when school resumes in the fall. **PHOTO: AFP**

that vaccinated Americans could drop masks, but the health advice for schools was not immediately changed accordingly.—AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Sputnik V demonstrates strong safety profile during vaccination campaign in San Marino

The Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF), an investor in the Russian Sputnik V vaccine against coronavirus, announced that the vaccine demonstrated strong safety with no hospitalization cases and tolerability among the elderly in San-Marino during the inoculation campaign in the country.

As per an official release issued on Sunday, the results were published in EClinicalMedicine, an open-access clinical journal published by The Lancet.

Beginning from March 4 to April 8, a nationwide study was conducted among individuals in San Marino who received one or two doses of Sputnik V. A descriptive analysis was conducted to quantify the incidence of adverse events following immunization (AEFI) on both occasions.—ANI

South Africa: Measures to remain in place against Delta variant

Covid-19 restrictions imposed in South Africa to limit the devastating effects of the Delta variant will stay in place until the end of the month, President Cyril Ramaphosa announced on Sunday.

Infections for the worst-hit country on the continent “remain extremely high”, the president said in a televised address to the nation.

Bars and schools remain closed, while the 9 pm to 4 am curfew stays in place. Political and religious gatherings continue to be banned.—AFP

Covid not the only risk to the Olympics

The coronavirus might top the risks at the Tokyo Olympics, but organizers in Japan have other deadly, unpredictable threats to contend with: natural disasters.

Japan is regularly rattled by earthquakes and battered by typhoons, and experts warn that disaster preparation for a major event like the Games should not take a back seat because of the virus.

“For organizers, infection measures are an urgent challenge,” Hirotada Hirose, a specialist in disaster risk studies, told AFP. “But the risks of a major earthquake mustn’t be forgotten when you have an Olympics hosted by Japan,” added Hirose, professor emeritus at Tokyo Woman’s Christian University.—AFP

China growth slowed sharply to 7.7% in second quarter: AFP poll

China's economic growth slowed sharply in the second quarter as the country's army of consumers remained hesitant to splurge and exports were dented by disruptions, according to an AFP poll of analysts.

The world's second largest economy has staged a rapid recovery from last year's pandemic-induced slump, but the investment and manufacturing rebound fuelling it now seems to be fading -- and other drivers are not picking up fast enough.

It is forecast to have grown 7.7 per cent on-year in April-June and 8.5 per cent for the full year, according to a poll of 12 analysts conducted by AFP.

While the quarterly figure would be much slower than the record 18.3 per cent seen at the

start of the year, that jump was largely driven by the low base of comparison owing to large parts of the country being locked down to prevent the spread of the virus.

Official figures will be released on Thursday.

The virus first emerged in China in late 2019, but the strict containment measures meant the disease was brought under control fairly quickly, allowing the country to be the only major economy to expand last year.

But analysts note that the economy has been expanding more slowly since the start of 2021 as the pandemic drags on globally.

"The production side of the economy is... under pressure amid increasing supply chal-



While China's economy is seeing healthy growth, there are signs it is slowing down as key markets struggle with the pandemic and consumers remain reticent. **PHOTO: AFP**

lenges," Moody's Analytics economist Christina Zhu told AFP. "Input shortages, surging

raw material costs, and shipping disruptions are weighing on the country's manufactur-

ers, threatening to drag down the country's growth," she said. —AFP ■

UAE to launch its first digital currency by 2026



The iconic Gate Building in Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC) will be the new venue for Art Dubai 2021. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

THE United Arab Emirates will launch its first digital currency by 2026, the central bank of the oil-rich Gulf state, which serves as the region's financial hub, said Monday.

Several central banks around the world have recently announced similar plans, while

criticizing decentralized cryptocurrencies like bitcoin.

The Emirates central bank said its plans include "issuing a digital currency and driving digital transformation in the UAE's financial services sector, by utilizing the latest artificial intelligence and big data solutions."

The announcement is part of its "2023-2026 strategy" which aims to "position it among the world's top 10 central banks," it said according to state media.

In 2019, Saudi Arabia and the UAE announced a test phase of a common cryptocurrency for cross-border transactions.

The UAE has big tech ambitions, investing in artificial intelligence, launching a space programme, and hosting the regional headquarters of large multinational digital firms.

Faced with increasing popularity of the cryptocurrency bitcoin, as well as for online payments during the pandemic, central banks are exploring new units of their own.

China launched the race in March with the start of a test phase of its digital yuan.—AFP ■

Satellite data helped indigenous Peruvians save rainforest: study

INDIGENOUS peoples patrolling the Peruvian Amazon equipped with smartphones and satellite data were able to drastically reduce illegal deforestation, according to the results of an experiment published Monday.

The study, which appeared in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS), showed that recognizing indigenous people's rights to their territory can be a powerful force against the climate crisis, the authors said.

The trial assessed the impact of indigenous forest community monitoring patrols in reducing deforestation when equipped with satellite-based alerts. It found a 52 per cent drop in deforestation in 2018 and 21 per cent reduction in

2019, in villages that were randomly assigned equipment and training compared to those that were not. The reductions in forest loss were especially concentrated in communities facing the most immediate threats from illegal gold mining, logging, and the planting of illicit crops like coca plants used to make cocaine. Though national governments have invested heavily in satellite-based monitoring, empowering indigenous peoples is a departure from the orthodox reliance on local law enforcement.

What's more, deforestation alerts rarely filter down to rainforest communities, which lack reliable access to the internet -- leaving villagers unaware of invaders clearing their land. —AFP ■

EU puts digital tax plan 'on hold' during OECD talks

G20 finance ministers on Saturday approved the agreement at the OECD for a global minimum corporate tax rate of at least 15 per cent, and to allow nations to tax a share of the profits of the world's biggest companies regardless of where they are headquartered. Photo: Shutterstock.com

The European Commission

said on Monday it would delay its plan to propose an EU digital tax in order to not jeopardize efforts to secure a global deal on fairer taxation. After an "extraordinary" breakthrough at G20 talks on Saturday, "we have decided to put on hold our work on a proposal for a digital levy", an EU spokesman said, a day after Washington asked Brussels

to delay its tax plan.

Meeting in Venice, G20 finance ministers on Saturday endorsed a plan agreed by 132 countries to overhaul the way multinational companies, including US digital giants, are taxed.

The G20 called on negotiators to swiftly address the remaining issues and finalize the agreement by October.—AFP ■



View of logs stacked to be cut at a sawmill near Puerto Maldonado, Tambopata province, Madre de Dios region, in the Amazon rainforest of southeastern Peru. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

Japanese astronaut Noguchi expects space tourism to accelerate

Japanese astronaut Soichi Noguchi said Tuesday he expects space tourism to “accelerate rapidly” after U.S. company Virgin Galactic Holdings Inc. successfully carried passengers to the edge of space on the weekend.

“I think changes such as a collapse in the cost (of space tourism) will happen soon,” Noguchi of the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency said in an interview with Kyodo News.

The 56-year-old, who returned to Earth in May after a six-month stay at the International Space Station, predicted that costs could fall from tens of millions of yen per person at present to fit the budgets of ordinary tourists.

“I think we can organ-

ize ‘a six-day space trip with Noguchi,’” the veteran astronaut joked. “If you want to see the aurora borealis, the coral reefs of the Caribbean Sea, and the Himalayas in one day, the only way will be through space travel.”

On Sunday, Virgin Galactic’s space plane flew to about 80 kilometres above Earth’s surface, successfully sending the six passengers including the company’s founder, billionaire British businessman Richard Branson, into sub-orbital space and allowing them to enjoy a few minutes of weightlessness.

In November last year, Noguchi arrived at the ISS aboard U.S. aerospace manufacturer SpaceX’s Crew Dragon ship on his third mission to the station.



Japanese astronaut Soichi Noguchi gives in an interview in Tokyo on 13 July 2021. He returned to Earth in May following a six-month mission on the International Space Station. **PHOTO: KYODO**

In his two previous space Shuttle Discovery and Russian Soyuz spacecraft.—Kyodo ■

Vietnam’s Vinfast to launch electric cars in US, Europe next year

VIETNAM’S first home-grown car manufacturer Vinfast said Monday it will launch two new electric vehicle models early next year in North America and Europe, as it pushes to enter the lucrative but crowded market.

The carmaker is a subsidiary of Vietnam’s largest private conglomerate, Vingroup, which is owned by the country’s richest man, a press-shy billionaire who started his career selling dried noodles in Ukraine.

The company said Monday it had officially



Vinfast sold around 30,000 vehicles last year. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

begun operations in the US, Canada, France, Germany and the Netherlands and had recruited staff and opened offices in these “key

March 2022, the company added.

But Vinfast will face stiff competition, especially when going up against big-name brands including Volkswagen and Elon Musk’s Tesla. To prepare for its entry into global markets, the company said it had recruited experts from firms including Tesla, BMW and Toyota. Domestically, Vinfast has already sold vehicles that include sedan and SUV models, along with e-scooters and even electric buses.

—AFP ■

Consumer group lodges EU complaint against WhatsApp

The European Consumer Organization announced on Monday it had lodged a complaint with the European Commission against Facebook’s attempt to modify the terms of service for the WhatsApp messaging service.

The US tech titan has sought to nudge users of

its messenger platform to accept new terms of service, but Facebook denies that this would allow WhatsApp to share more user data with its main social platform. Regulators and privacy activists have condemned the move, and authorities in some countries – including EU

member Germany – have stepped in to impose temporary bans. In a statement announcing its complaint, the European Consumer Organization (BEUC) accused Facebook of “unfairly” pressuring users to accept the hand-over and failing to explain it.—AFP ■



Facebook is seeking to nudge users of its WhatsApp messaging service to accept new terms of service. **PHOTO: INDRANIL MUKHERJEE/AFP**

NEWS IN BRIEF

US economy not yet ready for end to Fed stimulus, top official says

THE recovery in key areas of the US economy is not sufficient enough for the Federal Reserve to start pulling back on its aggressive stimulus programme, a top central banker said Monday.

While the Fed has begun to consider when to taper its massive bond-buying programme, New York Fed President John Williams told reporters the economy has not made the “substantial progress” required for it to act.

The US economy shed more than 20 million jobs last year amid the pandemic, and still has not recovered 6.8 million of those. Policymakers have stressed that they will wait for more improvements before acting.—AFP

Musk defends Tesla’s SolarCity deal in US shareholder trial

TESLA chief Elon Musk defended the electric car maker’s controversial 2016 acquisition of SolarCity Monday at the start of a trial on whether the billionaire put his own interests ahead of investors.

Musk told a Delaware court that he was not enriched by the Tesla-SolarCity deal and that he did not inappropriately pressure fellow board members to greenlight the transaction, according to CNBC.

A group of Tesla shareholders contends that Musk, who was chairman of both Tesla and SolarCity at the time of the transaction, “poisoned” Tesla’s ability to fairly evaluate the purchase, wasting corporate assets in the \$2.6 billion deal and harming shareholders, according to a complaint.—AFP

Sharp, Fuyo General Lease form solar power joint venture in Thailand

JAPAN’S Sharp Corp. and Fuyo General Lease Co. have established a joint venture in Thailand to sell solar-generated electricity to corporate clients.

Sharp said Monday that Bangkok-based Sharp Solar Solution Asia Co. concluded an accord with Fuyo General Lease of Mizuho Financial Group Inc. the same day to create S-Solar Generation Thailand Co. in the Thai capital.—Kyodo

MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY HOLIDAY NOTICE

As the wharves, warehouses and chellan Offices of Yangon Port will be closed on the 19th JULY 2021 (Martyr’s Day) and 23rd JULY 2021 (FULL MOON DAY OF WASO), Loading, Unloading and delivery for Goods will be received on Payment as Holiday Fees.

Myanma Port Authority “Notice of High Tide”

Exceptionally high spring from 20.00 feet to 20.47 feet high above the chart datum are expected to occur in Yangon River during the period of July 23rd to July 27th, 2021. Please be noted that it is not serious level of tide because the highest tide level have reached up to 22 feet above the chart datum in year 2014 and 2015, and this notice is normally issued whenever high tide of Yangon River is expected to reach over 20 feet high above the chart datum in order to take precautionary measures to the public living near river foreshore area of Yangon City.

NEWS
IN BRIEF

Moldova pro-Europeans win resounding election victory

Moldova's main pro-European party has won a resounding victory in parliamentary polls, results showed Monday, strengthening the hand of President Maia Sandu as the former World Bank economist pushes to reform her ex-Soviet country.

Sunday's snap election -- called by Sandu in April to shore up her position against pro-Russia forces -- saw her centre-right Action and Solidarity (PAS) party take 52.80 per cent of the vote.

PAS will get 63 seats in the 101-seat parliament for four-year terms, according to the Central Election Commission. A coalition of socialists and Communists, led by former Kremlin-backed president Igor Dodon, came second with 27.17 per cent, the commission said Monday, with all votes counted. After early results showed her party leading late on Sunday, Sandu hailed what she called a vote for change in a country beset by poverty and corruption. —AFP ■

US urges Ethiopian unity after criticizing election

The United States on Monday urged Ethiopians to reject violence and divisions as it voiced concern over the conduct of elections held amid brutal fighting in the Tigray region.

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed secured another five-year term in results announced Saturday but the State Department said it stood by its statement issued before the vote that the process "was not free or fair for all Ethiopians" due to violence and opposition parties' boycott.

"All of this underscores the need to launch an inclusive effort to build a national consensus on the governance of Ethiopia," State Department spokesman Ned Price told reporters. "In this period following the election, it's critical that Ethiopians come together to confront growing divisions. We urge politicians and community leaders to reject violence and to refrain from inciting others to violence," he said. —AFP ■

Democrats walk out again over Texas voting restrictions

TEXAS Democratic lawmakers fled their state Monday seeking to derail a Republican-led voting restrictions bill that critics say is blatant voter suppression following Donald Trump's presidential election loss. Several members of the Texas legislature decamped for Washington seeking to deny ruling Republicans the quorum they would need to pass the new measure.

The dramatic move escalates the fight over voting rights in Texas and nationwide, as Republicans in several states introduce legislation to tighten voting rights by, among other things, making mail-in voting more difficult and curtailing early voting hours. Republicans say the bills

are needed to prevent election fraud, as claimed by Trump in his repeated falsehoods that the 2020 election was stolen from him. But critics say the measures aim to make it more cumbersome for ethnic-minority voters, who tend to vote Democratic.

"Today, Texas House Democrats stand united in our decision to break quorum and refuse to let the Republican-led legislature force through dangerous legislation that would trample on Texans' freedom to vote," Texas House Democratic Caucus Chair Chris Turner and other state lawmakers said in a statement.

"We are living on borrowed time in Texas," they said, adding it was imperative the US Con-



Texas Democratic state Representative Chris Turner, seen here on 10 July speaking to a group of people waiting to testify against renewed efforts by Texas Republicans to pass voting restrictions as state lawmakers hold committee hearings on election integrity bills at the State Capitol on 10 July 2021 in Austin, Texas. **PHOTO: AFP**

gress act quickly to pass legislation protecting Americans "from

the Trump Republicans' nationwide war on democracy." —AFP ■

Top US general in Afghanistan relinquishes command



General Austin "Scott" Miller (R) -- the highest-ranked officer on the ground in Afghanistan -- handed command to General Kenneth McKenzie (L). **PHOTO: AFP**

The top US general in Afghanistan relinquished command

Monday at a ceremony in the capital, the latest symbolic ges-

ture bringing America's longest war nearer to an end even as the Taliban continue a bloody onslaught across the country.

General Austin "Scott" Miller -- the highest-ranked officer on the ground in the war-torn nation -- handed command to General Kenneth McKenzie, who will oversee remaining operations from a US-based headquarters.

Miller has been in Afghanistan since 2018, but was charged more recently by commander-in-chief President Joe Biden with organising the final withdrawal of US troops, to be completed by the end of August.

The pace of the pullout -- and multiple offensives launched

recently by the Taliban -- have raised fears that Afghanistan's security forces could be swiftly overwhelmed, particularly without vital US air support.

Biden has made clear, however, that America's involvement in a war launched after the September 11, 2001 attacks has to end, and Afghans must chart their own future.

Most of the 2,500 US and 7,500 NATO troops who were in Afghanistan when Biden detailed the final withdrawal in April have now gone, leaving Afghan troops to fight an emboldened Taliban seemingly bent on a military victory. —AFP ■

Bali boots tourists for breaking virus rules

SEVERAL foreign tourists were kicked out of Bali Monday for breaking the Indonesian holiday island's stricter virus rules, as the country is slammed by its deadliest Covid-19 wave.

Three visitors from the United States, Russia and Ireland were put on planes bound for their home countries after being nabbed for not wearing masks in public, violating Bali's new zero-tolerance policy, authorities said. "They broke minimum virus rules requiring face masks during the emergency restriction period," said Jamaruli Manihuruk, head of Bali's legal and justice office, which oversees immigration enforcement. A Russian woman who refused to self-quarantine



This picture taken on January 7, 2021 shows tourists preparing to board a fast boat from Sanur beach near Denpasar on Indonesia's resort island of Bali. **PHOTO: SONNY TUMBELAKA/AFP**

after testing positive was also set to be deported once she was virus-free, he added.

The four are the first foreigners to be deported for breaking Bali's stricter Covid-19

rules as the beach-dotted island clamps down on rampant violations. —AFP ■



People take part in a demonstration against the government of Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel in Havana, on 11 July 2021. **PHOTO: AFP**

Cuba blames US for unprecedented anti-government protests

Havana on Monday blamed a US “policy of economic suffocation” for unprecedented protests against Cuba’s communist government, as Washington pointed the finger at “decades of repression” in the one-party state.

The longtime foes traded barbs a day after thousands of Cubans took to the streets chanting: “Down with the dictatorship” in protests dispersed by police who arrested dozens.

The anti-government rallies erupted spontaneously in several cities as the country endures its worst economic crisis in 30 years, with chronic shortages of electricity, food and medicine and a recent worsening of the coronavirus epidemic.

The only authorized gatherings in Cuba are usually events of the ruling Communist Party, but according to the data journalism site *Inventario*, a total of 40 demonstrations took place

on Sunday.

President Miguel Diaz-Canel blamed the discontent on the United States pursuing a “policy of economic suffocation to provoke social unrest in the country.”

Cuba has been under US sanctions since 1962.

“What do they want? To provoke social unrest” with a view to “regime change,” he said in an address broadcast on public television and radio.— AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Venezuela detains opposition leader on charges of ‘terrorism,’ ‘treason’

Venezuelan opposition leader Freddy Guevara was arrested Monday by the secret police and will be charged with “terrorism” and “treason,” the prosecutor’s office said.

Attorney — General Tarek Saab said in a statement that Guevara, a close ally of opposition head Juan Guaido, was detained by members of the Bolivarian National Intelligence Service (Sebin) due to “his links with extremist and paramilitary groups associated with the Colombian government,” which together with the United States is one of the harshest critics of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro.

“He will be charged with the crimes of terrorism, attacks against the constitutional order, conspiracy to commit a crime and treason,” said Saab.

Guevara, elected to parliament in the 2015 election that gave the opposition control of the assembly under Guaido’s leadership, has been accused in the past by the Socialist government of encouraging violence in protests that called for Maduro’s departure. Some 125 were killed in the subsequent clashes that took place between April and July 2017.— AFP ■

10 Colombian ‘paramilitaries’ killed in clashes: Maduro

Ten Colombian “paramilitaries” died during violent clashes between armed groups and security forces that have ravaged Caracas, Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro said Monday.

Firefights first broke out Wednesday evening, forcing people to flee their homes.

The socialist leader said at least 20 “Colombian paramilitaries” helped train armed groups that have carried out constant shootings, leaving an unknown number of civilians killed by “stray bullets”.

“At least 20 Colombian paramilitaries, we captured three with their weapons, it seems that others were killed who are being identified,” Maduro said in front of the presidential Miraflores Palace.

“I don’t know if the number they gave me is exact, 10 killed, and there are others fleeing and we are looking for them.”

Venezuela’s armed forces have engaged in clashes with Colombian armed groups along the border since March 21, displacing thousands of civilians who fled to Colombia. Venezuela does not name the armed groups it blames for the unrest, apart from calling them “terrorists” or linking them to drug trafficking or to Colombian President Ivan Duque.

However, security sources in Colombia say they are likely dissidents of the now-disbanded Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) rebel group, an analysis Maduro — who has accused Colombia and the United States of seeking to overthrow him — has conceded was possible.— AFP ■

Greek coastguards hit with new migrant pushback claim

TCHINDA said the longed-for destination of his risky Aegean crossing -- the island of Kos -- was already tantalizingly in view when Greek vessels halted the boat he was sailing in along with 30 other migrants.

“First a navy ship blocked our way, then it was joined by two smaller Zodiac-type boats,” the 39-year-old from Cameroon told AFP.

“The coastguards were armed and shouted at us to go home,” he said in a series of phone interviews conducted between July 1 and 8.

A cellphone video shared by the Cameroonian with AFP shows a packed dinghy immobilized by a Greek coastguard patrol boat, with four crew members monitoring the migrants.

A second patrol boat and a



Greece has toughened its migration policy since 2019, with increased border patrols among other measures. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

third vessel can be seen in the distance.

“Stay down and stay calm, for your safety,” a Greek coastguard, in a mask and gloves, says, holding a long pole.

Next to him, a female coast-

guard fingers a machine gun.

But the migrants, most of them men wearing life jackets, are agitated.

“I am tired,” one man shouts back. “Pushback,” says another.—AFP ■

US says helping investigate Haitian president’s killing



Security awaits the arrival of a Haitian diplomatic delegation at the US embassy in the Tabarre neighbourhood of Port-au-Prince on 11 July 2021, three days after the assassination of Haitian leader Jovenel Moise. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

THE United States said Monday it was helping investigate Hai-

tian president Jovenel Moise’s assassination and did not rule out sending troops at Haiti’s request. According to Haitian authorities, a hit squad of 28 men -- 26 Colombians and two US citizens -- killed the president in his home last week, also injuring his wife. “At the request of the Haitian government, the Department of Justice, along with its US government partners, is assisting the Haitian National Police in the investigation,” the department said in a statement.

“An initial assessment has been conducted in Haiti by senior US officials. The department will continue to support the Haitian government in its review of the facts and circumstances surrounding this heinous attack.”—AFP ■

XXXI Southeast Asian Games to be rescheduled amid pandemic surge

THE XXXI South East Asian (SEA) Games was originally planned to hold with forty kinds of sports in 12 cities in Viet Nam from 21 October to 2 December 2021 but the tourney has been postponed to next year amid the global outbreak of the pandemic, said SEA Games officials.

It was decided at the SEAGF Office meeting held by

video conferencing on 8 July that the rescheduling date would be announced again.

The meeting decided to hold the SEA Games in 2022 and proposed to hold the event from the last week of April to the first week of May, but the host Viet Nam replied that they would approve the proposal after submitting it to their government.

“Although 40 sports will be included in the competition, Myanmar will compete in only 18 potential sporting medals. Although 529 medals will be awarded for 40 sports, Myanmar will only compete for 281 medals for 18 sports,” said officials from the Department of Sports and Physical Education. — GNLM

IOC chief praises ‘best-prepared Tokyo’ as Olympic Village opens



Olympics chief Thomas Bach (L) has praised Tokyo has the ‘best-ever prepared’ host city. **PHOTO: POOL/AFP**

OLYMPICS chief Thomas Bach praised Tokyo on Tuesday as the “best-ever prepared” host city, as athletes began entering the Olympic Village 10 days before the opening ceremony.

The final countdown to the Games comes with Tokyo under a coronavirus state of emergency and spectators banned from

attending all Olympic events in the city and surrounding regions.

International Olympic Committee President Bach, who arrived in Japan last week and spent three days in quarantine, told Tokyo 2020 chief Seiko Hashimoto that organizers were “doing a fantastic job”.

“You have managed to make Tokyo the best-ever prepared city for an Olympic Games,” he said.

“This is even more remarkable under the difficult circumstances we all have to face.”

The pair met as the first athletes began entering the Olympic Village, which opened Tuesday without any of the welcome ceremonies or media opportunities often seen at the Games.

Organisers declined to even specify which teams were entering or how many athletes were now in the Village.

Strict coronavirus rules mean athletes can only enter the Village five days before their events and must leave within 48 hours of winning or being eliminated.

Despite the low-key opening, Bach said organizers could “be confident that the stage is set”. — AFP ■

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.

Euro 2020 experiment proves a hit on the pitch, less so off it

IT began with Italian celebrations in Rome and ended with Italian celebrations at Wembley.

This European Championship finally concluded with Italy’s penalty shoot-out win over England, a year after the tournament was postponed due to the health crisis.

The incidents when ticketless fans tried to break through ticket barriers at Wembley, leading to violent scenes, may have tarnished Sunday’s final in London.

But overall Euro 2020 was an uplifting tournament for

the football on the pitch and it marked the return of spectators on a large scale for the first time since the coronavirus pandemic.

The intervening 12 months since the tournament was postponed saw football played almost entirely behind closed doors — contrast that with the official crowd of 67,173 at the final, and more without tickets who stormed their way into the stadium.

Organizers will have questions to answer about why more was not done to control the



This European Championship finally concluded with Italy’s penalty shoot-out win over England, a year after the tournament was postponed due to the health crisis. **PHOTO: AFP**

crowds, especially with virus cases in the United Kingdom surging.

Euro 2020 was an experiment, a major tournament held for the first time all across Europe, with 11 host cities as far apart as Seville and Baku.

That led to enormous variations on the number of spectators at games, from the crowds in London and the full houses in Budapest to sparse attendances elsewhere, in Azerbaijan and Glasgow, as supporters found it almost impossible to travel to certain countries. — AFP ■