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THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

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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.

Myaung Bway Bridge project completed 53%

THE Department of Road of the Ministry of Construction constructs bridges across the nation in order to facilitate the transport sector, and the Myaung Bway bridge in Rakhine State on the Yangon-Sittway Road is now 53 per cent complete, according to the ministry.

The Myaung Bway bridge construction is conducted over Myaung Bway creek at milepost (99/4-99/6) of Yangon-Sittway Road in MraukU Township of Rakhine State. The new bridge is constructed about 68 feet from the downstream of the old Bailey bridge using K4,740 million. There are a total of 80 people, including skilled engineers and workers from Bridge Special Team (7) in the bridge construction processes, said project engineer U Min Khine, Deputy Director of the department. SEE PAGE-3

Myaung Bway bridge construction site in Rakhine State.

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

Myanmar National Airlines to operate regular flights during public holidays

AS the period from 17 to 25 July has been designated as public holidays, the state-owned Myanmar National Airlines (MNA) will operate regular flights for public transport, transport of COVID-19 medicines and equipment, and regular flow of goods, said officials from the Airlines.

In addition to domestic trips, the MNA will fly foreign rescue trips to Bangkok, Singapore, New Delhi and Chengdu, as well as cargo flights to Beijing. — MNA

Public Notification

THE Ministry of Health and Sports is striving for the effective prevention, control and treatment of COVID-19 and only with the participation of the people can these activities be effective in the short term and the third wave of disease can be overcome with minimal damages. Therefore, the people are kindly requested to follow the following points and cooperate with us.

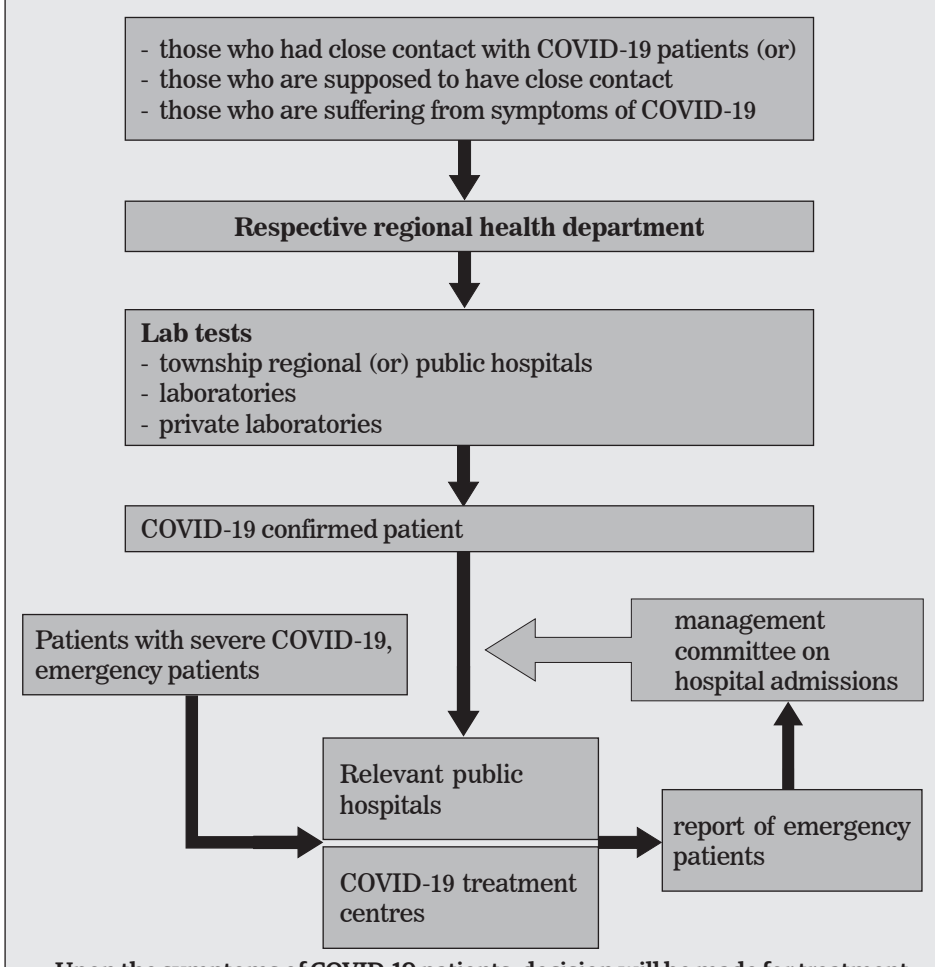
1. Stay indoors as much as possible; Staying at home protects your family members from the risk of infection, breaking down the disease chain in a short matter of time and resulting in the immediate control of the infection in the region.
2. Do not accept any guest at home as well as do not be a guest at all.
3. If you have to go outside, please wear a mask, wash your hands thoroughly for at least 20 seconds, stay 6 feet away from others and avoid going to poorly ventilated rooms.
4. Avoid the crowd.
5. If possible, do shopping once a week and avoid buying from sellers who do not wear masks properly.
6. When you return home, be careful not to bring germs home. Dispose of used masks and disposables properly outside the home and avoid close contact with others at home before changing clothes and washing hands.
7. Please systematically participate in the disease prevention, control and treatment activities, as much as possible, and support with manpower, financial assistance and skills.

Ministry of Health and Sports

5,497 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 17 July, total figure rises to 224,236

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to **224,236 after 5,497 new cases** were reported on 17 July 2021 according to the Ministry of Health and Sports. Among these confirmed cases, **158,969** have been discharged from hospitals. Death toll reached **4,769** after **233** died. —MNA

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



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

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

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

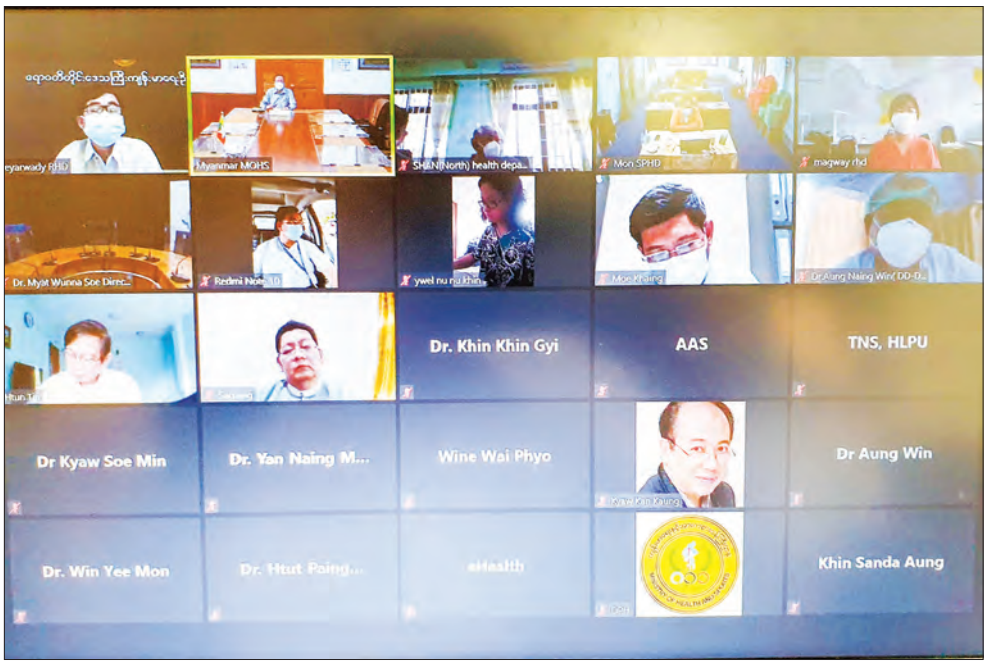
Ministry of Health and Sports

We can stand tall with our military prowess!

We do not need to explain that we can stand tall if our military is strong. It is of crucial importance to have military prowess, powerful arms and ammunition, political influence and prosperity. Military power and political power are primary factors.

(Excerpt from the speech made by the then Minister for Defence General Aung San in Pathein on 6 September 1944)

MoHS calls for added-momentum in COVID-19 control operations



UNION MINISTER for Health and Sports Dr Thet Khaing Win presided over a coordination meeting to accelerate the momentum in COVID-19 prevention, control and treatment activities yesterday.

During the meeting, the Union Minister said the people should follow the orders, notifications and requests of the ministry during the long public holidays. The respective regions/states health officials also need to cooperate with the regions/states administration councils to break the Chin of Transmission.

He then discussed oxygen production rate, mapping for oxygen needs under the coordination of central officials, proper medical treatment for emergency patients, duties of health workers to follow Infection Prevention and Control Guideline, exact name lists for COVID-19 vaccines and issuance of COVID-19 vaccination record cards.

He also stressed the need to apply the experience received in the first, second and third COVID-19 wave in medical services in the future.

Then, the respective regions and state health officials coordinated the discussion and the Union Minister instructed the necessary things. – MNA

Myaung Bway Bridge project completed 53%

FROM PAGE-1

"Although the vehicles pass through the old Bailey bridge, they have to wait for other vehicles coming from another direction as it is a one-lane bridge. The Yangon-Sittway Road plays a key role in the trade flows of Rakhine State. Therefore, we construct the new two-lane bridge near the old one-lane bridge to provide proper transportation and facilitate the trade flows for the people," he continued.

The Myaung Bway bridge is a truss bridge with P.C Girder and floor trusses. The bridge contains a Bored Pile foundation with four truss chambers (60 feet each) and five P.C Girder (100 feet each). It is 740 feet (225.54 metres) long. The width of the bridge is 28 feet and it includes 3 feet pedestrian walkway. The water clearance of the bridge is 85 feet in width and 21 feet in height. Its maximum load capacity will be 60 tonnes, according to the Bridge Special Team (7).

The Bored Pile construction for A1, A2, P1, P2, P7 and P8, Pile Cap, Shaft, Abutment and Cross Beam were completed in the 2019-2020FY and currently, the operations for P, P4 and P5 are conducted with the budget of the 2020-2021FY. They will complete soon and the Bored Pile constriction for P6 will start, said U Min Khine.

The old 740 feet long Bailey Bridge can accommodate only 20 tonnes and the vehicles have to await other ones coming from different directions, and it causes delays in trade flow sectors. Therefore, the government arranged to build a new bridge. The bridge project was launched on 1 October 2018 and it will be operational in the 2022-2023FY, according to the Ministry of Construction.—Pwint Thitsar/ GNLM

Health and Sports Ministry opens COVID-19 call centre

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

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

Contact numbers: (1) 067-3411508
(2) 067-3411509
(3) 067-3411144
(4) 09-882557991
(5) 09-882557992
(6) 09-882557993

Over 100 COVID-19 patients recover every day at Inya COVID centre

THE Inya centre in Yangon provides treatment for COVID-19 disease, and there is an urgent need for liquid oxygen donors despite the oxygen supply by the Government.

The 550-bedded Inya COVID-19 centre has a total of 48 rooms that are equipped with oxygen pipelines. If the rooms can be facilitated with the liquid oxygen-supplied vehicles for replenishment, the difficulties patients face at present will be solved.

Today, the closest people to help patients are members of the charities, some of whom are infected and need help to get oxygen supply from the factory. Hence, oxygen donation can effectively support the healthcare providers, volunteers and patients.

More than 100 patients are reportedly recovering every day at the Inya Centre and Oxygen donors are needed because the liquid oxygen can be used all at once to save patients' lives, according to 63-year-old Thant Zin from the Zamani Myanmar charity, who was allowed to return home after recovering from the COVID-19 disease.

Covid- positive patients are receiving treatment at the Inya Centre.

Although the Government is providing the required oxygen to hospitals and COVID centres, there are deaths due to the shortage of oxygen in the Inya COVID centre where hundreds of patients need supplemental oxygen every day.

The liquid oxygen tank connected to the central bar converts the fluid from liquid to gas, providing clean oxygen and preventing lung damage. The Government has also provided the imported 12 oxygen vehicles to hospitals and COVID centres. Some donors are importing the liquid oxygen vehicles from Thailand which contain 25 metric tonnes of liquid oxygen worth 24 million kyats per vehicle and can be used for 2,000 people for two weeks.

In the current oxygen need, the price of an oxygen cylinder rises to K250,000 from K150,000, due to the unnecessary storage of oxygen by the people. Since anxiety is not the answer to the current health problems, avoiding over-storage of oxygen and medication unnecessarily can help those who are suffering from overcoming the COVID-19 third wave.

People are also facing difficulties to buy paracetamols and oral rehydration salts due to the shortage of medicines.U Thant Zin added if UMFCCI and BPI cooperate to provide necessary medicines to the COVID Centres, the current basic medicine problem could be solved. — Kanu/GNLM

MoC conducts faster import process for COVID-19 protective equipment

THE Ministry of Commerce is coordinating with relevant departments to facilitate the faster import of COVID-19 protective equipment during current public holidays.

From 6 am to 4 pm yesterday, a total of 68 companies made import processes of the pandemic protective equipment through International Airport, Seaports and Myawaddy, Tachilek and Chin Shwe Haw border trade posts.

A total of 16.447 million litres of liquid oxygen, 431 liquid oxygen cylinders, 468 vacant oxygen cylinders, 1,141 oxygen tanks, 4,790 home oxygen concentrators, 114,000 Covid Test Kits, 24,446 Kg of surgical masks were successfully imported.

The companies will continue their import processes in the coming holidays, officials said.

For the quick and easy import of COVID-19 protective equipment, the Ministry of Economy and Trade is carrying out regular import and export activities at border trade checkpoints during the public holidays from 17 to 25 July 2021 that are designated as public holidays. — MNA

74th Martyrs' Day Ceremony to be broadcast live on free-to-air channels

THE 74th Martyrs' Day Ceremony to be held on 19 July in Yangon will be broadcast live on free-to-air channels, including MRTV.

The ceremony will be held at the Martyrs' Mausoleum in Bahan Township starting from 8 am. The Martyrs' Day activities can be seen live starting from 7:40 am on Myanma Radio and Television (MRTV), Myanmar Nationalities Television Channel (NRC Channel), MITV Channel, Myawady Channel (MWD), Skynet Up to Date Channel and Channel 9.

The ceremony will also be tuned live on Myanmar Radio and streamed live on MRTV Web portal Facebook pages. —MNA

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We appreciate your feedback and contributions. If you have any comments or would like to submit editorials, analyses or reports please email **aungthuya@gnlm.com.mm** with your name and title.

Due to limitation of space we are only able to publish **"Letter to the Editor"** that do not exceed 500 words. Should you submit a text longer than 500 words please be aware that your letter will be edited.

Development of Human Resources

IT is of vital importance that the development of human resources contributes towards the development of the State. We need to inevitably implement the uplift of education so as to generate plenty of educated personnel resources. Nowadays, schools are reopening though teachers are teaching amidst formidable hardships due to the CDM staff and opposite groups. Remaining schools are yet to reopen.

(Excerpt from the speech of the Management Committee Meeting of the State Administration Council by State Administration Council Chairman Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing on 18 June 2021)

Govt continues importing oxygen tanks

AS the country needs oxygen supplies in COVID-19 control operations, the officials make efforts to produce oxygen from the government and Tatmadaw-owned oxygen plants, private-owned oxygen plants and import oxygen-related products with the donations of donors.

One 26-metric ton tanker carrying liquid oxygen ordered from the foreign countries to use in public hospitals and COVID-19 centres of Mandalay Region arrived yesterday. It was welcomed by region Administration Council Chairman U Maung Ko, Commander of Central Command Maj-Gen Ko Ko Oo and other officials.

Then, the Chairman of Public Health and Fund Rising Committee of Urban Development transferred the tanker to the Superintendent of Mandalay General Hospital.

The Tatmadaw, Ministry of Health and Sports, Regional Administration Council and donors worked together in ordering the liquid oxygen and they will systematically distribute oxygen to the hospitals and the patients in need of oxygen. The further liquid oxygen will arrive in the country very soon.

Moreover, the government permitted the private entrepreneurs to import medical supplies via border trade camps to conduct COVID-19 prevention, control and treatment activities. Therefore, 2,785 oxygen cylinders (40 litres) imported by a private company arrived at the Chinshwehaw border camp in northern Shan State. Similarly, 50 oxygen cylinders (60 litres), 789 cylinders (40litres), 70 cylinders (20 litres) and 104 cylinders (10 litres) were imported using the cash contribution of well-wishers were received via the Myawady border trade camp.

The oxygen cylinders will be distributed to Yangon, Bago and Mandalay regions. — MNA

Cooperation work enhanced to import medicines, medical supplies via land border

THE Muse District Administration Team, Department of Trade and Department of Foreign Affairs of Shweli Township directly work together to import the medicines and medical equipment for COVID-19 prevention via Muse 105 Mile Trade Zone from China, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

"The Chinese side has closed the camps due to COVID-19 pandemic. But, the notification of the Chinese government did not mention the protective gears and medical supplies for COVID-19. Therefore, they allow exiting currently and we permit the entry. We communicate with the head of the department of foreign affairs in Shweli. Some donors apply for the imports," said U Maung Maung Lwin, deputy director of Muse 105 Mile Trade Zone.

A 26-tonne liquid oxygen tank imported by Public Health Department and Fund Rising Committee for Mandalay Urban Development arrived in the country via the Kyin San Kyaut border crossing on 16 July, according to the trade zone.

Moreover, the Muse 105 Trade Zone offers One-Stop Service (OSS) without any holidays for fast importation of COVID-19 protective gears and medicines, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

"We offer One-Stop Services by cooperating with the department concerned at Muse 105 Mile Trade Zone. All the departments are also cooperating to make imports and exports smoother in a timely manner," said Deputy Director U Maung Maung Lwin.

The Ministry of Commerce works together with the ministry concerned in importing the medicines and medical supplies for COVID-19.

The ministry will also carry out the services in the public holidays as usual as per the SOP. – Than Min Aung (MNA)/ GNLM

Tatmadaw provides COVID-19 disease prevention supplies, oxygen tanks

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

In doing so, Tatmadaw members have been donating the disease prevention, control and treatment equipment and oxygen tanks and foods to the hospitals.

From 1 July to yesterday, officials from the respective military commands have donated 696 oxygen tanks, 313,162 surgical masks, 740 sets of PPE, 509 hand gel bottles, 150 face shields, 4 buckets of hand wash, 700 surgical gloves, 500 hair covers, with petrol, foods and cash assistance.

In addition, donors are also providing medical equipment related to the disease, foods and cash assistance to the Tatmadaw's COVID-19 prevention, control and treatment activities. It is reported that donors are also given certificates of honours for their contribution. — MNA

Oxygen cylinders donated to public hospitals, military hospitals, health departments, COVID-19 centres across nation

TATMADAW, Ministry of Health and Sports, Yangon Region Administration Council and donors worked together in distributing the oxygen cylinders to the public hospitals, military hospitals, health departments and COVID-19 treatment centres across the nation.

The North-East Command donated 30 Oxygen cylinders to Taung Shay station hospital, Namsang public hospital and Hsipaw hospital in northern Shan State yesterday while 30 oxygen cylinders by the Eastern Command to Sao San Tun Hospital in Taunggyi Township of southern Shan State.

Moreover, the South-West Command donated 20 oxygen cylinders to the public hospitals in Mawlamyinekyun and Pantanaw townships of Ayeyawady Region and the Western Command donated 40 cylinders to the public hospitals in Sittway

Township of Rakhine State while 50 cylinders by the Southern Command to the public hospital in Letpadan Township.

The Ministry of Health and Sports accelerates the operations of oxygen plants in regions and states while Tatmadaw makes efforts to set up more oxygen plants in their respective military commands.

The Commander of Nay Pyi Taw Command Maj-Gen Zaw Myo Tin and party inspected the operations of one oxygen plant established at Tatmadaw Gynaecological and Children Hospitals in Zeyathiri Township which can produce 80 oxygen cylinders (40 litres) per day.

Similarly, Yangon Region Administration Council Chairman U Hla Soe and Commander of Yangon Region Command Maj-Gen Nyunt Win Swe checked the oxygen production processes of oxygen plant at Myanma Dockyards in Kamayut Township, No (4) Fertilizer Factory of Myanmar Petroleum Chemical Enterprise in Myaungtagar Village of Hmawbi Township a nd No (2) Steel Factory of Myanma Economic Corporation. — MNA

Indian Manipur State Government Minister donates COVID-19 devices to Tamu hospital

GOVERNMENT Minister for Manipur State, India, L. Susindro Meitei (Yaima) donated 100 oxygen cylinders with 40 litres of oxygen, 100 oxygen cylinders with 20 litres of oxygen, 475 bottles of hand gel, 75,000 masks yesterday to the Tamu Public Hospital.

The donations were received at the entrance of a Hindu temple near Bo Naing Win Road, Myanmar-India border by Hospital Superintendent Dr Thura of the Tamu Public Hospital. — MNA

Dancing Ladies Ginger flowers grown well in Pindaya Township

PADEIN Ngo flowers (dancing ladies ginger) are grown commercially in Pindaya, Danu Self-Administered Zone, southern Shan State, and are now in full bloom, said local farmers.

The flower is called Padein Ngo in the Burmese language because the flower is so simple and beautiful that it is combined with branches so that a florist cannot even carve the flower-shaped flower.

Mi Mi Khaing, a flower grower, said that she received K100 per flower last year and K1,000 for a bouquet of ten flowers.

The flower is harvested and sold for three months: July to September, she added.

"The dancing ladies ginger flower is a type of egg, with 15 to 20 seedlings per egg. When the harvested flowers run out in the month of Thidingyut (October), the eggs are left in the ground and kept as a species for the next year.

"The seeds of the flower are being sold at K1,500 per pound, and the flower is very suitable to grow on a farm privately and commercially as it provides extra income for a family," said the flower grower Mi Mi Khaing. — Moe Moe Htwe/ GNLM

The flower is called Padein Ngo in the Burmese language because the flower is so simple and beautiful that it is combined with branches so that a florist cannot even carve the flower-shaped flower.

MAI, Air KBZ suspend some domestic flights until July

TWO of Myanmar's domestic airlines, Myanmar Airways International (MAI) and Air KBZ, have suspended their domestic flights until 31 July to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

The two airlines have stopped domestic flights to Lashio, Tachilek, Kalay, Kyaing Tong, Dawei, Kawthoung and Myeik townships.

To prevent the continuous spread of the COVID-19, MAI & Air KBZ have temporarily halted its Tachilek, Kalay, Kyaing Tong, Dawei, Myeik and Kawthoung operations, effective since last May.

According to the announcement of MAI, it would provide free transportation to carry the essential medical equipment and supplies such as oxygen concentrators as their part of domestic and international rescue flights.

Two of Myanmar's domestic airlines, Myanmar Airways International (MAI) and Air KBZ, have suspended their domestic flights until 31 July to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

MAI will also offer to bring the donated medical supplies such as oxygen concentrators, which are urgently needed during the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, to Myanmar, on their relief and scheduled relief operations, including Kuala Lumpur, Seoul-Incheon, Bangkok and Guangzhou in partnership with the Air-KBZ.

MAI also halted international flights to Singapore and Kolkata until end-July. However, they allowed rescue flights to Kuala Lumpur, Seoul-Incheon and Bangkok, according to the announcement of its airline.

Passengers who have purchased tickets for the extended travel period will be allowed to transfer one-time date change free to the next available flight based on seat availability. The passengers impacted by the flight suspensions need to inform the new rebooking date or refund application to the airline agent not later than 30 September 2021.

Besides, the non-refundable tickets will be exchanged with a travel voucher. Its travel voucher will be available by 31 November 2021. The travel voucher is not allowed to be transferred to others.

Yangon International Airport (YIA) has extended the suspension of all incoming international flights till 31 July 2021 to stem the spread of coronavirus, announced the Ministry of Transport and Communications. — Aye Maung/GNLM

Myanmar's border trade reaches over $8.4 bln in first ten months of FY2020-21

Myanmar's major export items are farm, animal, marine, forest, mining, CMP and other products. Myanmar mainly imports capital goods, industrial raw materials, personal goods and CMP raw materials.

MYANMAR'S trade with foreign countries through border crossings reached over US$8.44 billion as of 9 July in the present financial year (FY) 2020-21 which started in October, according to figures released by the Ministry of Commerce.

Border trade with Bangladesh, India, Thailand and China has declined compared to the last FY. Including the maritime routes, total trade so far this year is more than $23.6 billion. That's about $5.6 billion less than the same period last year.

During the period, the country's export via border checkpoints amounted to $5.67 billion while its import shared $2.77 billion.

This FY, border trade decreased to over $392 million compared to the same period of last FY when it amounted to $8.83 million, the ministry's figures said.

Muse topped the list of border checkpoints with the most trade value of $3.5 billion, followed by Myawady with $1.4 billion.

The country conducts border trade with neighbouring China through Muse, Lweje, Kampaiti, Chinshwehaw and Kengtung with Thailand via Tachilek, Myawady, Kawthoung, Myeik, Hteekhee, Mawtaung and Maese land borders, with Bangladesh via Sittway and Maungtaw and with India through Tamu and Reed border checkpoints, respectively.

Myanmar's major export items are farm, animal, marine, forest, mining, CMP and other products. Myanmar mainly imports capital goods, industrial raw materials, personal goods and CMP raw materials. — ACM/GNLM

CBM sells $21 mln as of 15 July

THE Central Bank of Myanmar (CBM) sold US$3 million at an auction exchange rate on 15 July bring a total number of sales to $21 million in July, according to figures released from the CBM.

The CBM reportedly sold $ 3million each on 5,6,7,14 and 15 July and $6 million on 8 July at an auction rate within July. The bank has sold about 21 million in toto within six days.

CBM is selling the US dollar at an auction rate intending to keep the exchange rate stable.

With the rising US dollar exchange rate, the CBM has been constantly selling the US dollar at an auction exchange rate since 12 May. Consequently, the exchange rate dips to around K1,600 in the local foreign exchange market.

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

The local foreign exchange market's data in 2021, the highest and the lowest exchange rate is currently fixed around K1,327-1,345 in January, K1,335-1,465 in February, K1,420-1,550 in March, K1,550-1,610 in April, K1,585-1,730 in May and K1,595-1,620 in June.

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.

Last year, 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

The Central Bank of Myanmar (CBM) sold US$3 million at an auction exchange rate on 15 July bring a total number of sales to $21 million in July, according to figures released from the CBM.

Remove hatred to build prosperous society

MORE than 130 ethnic nationals have been living in Myanmar by sharing the future since time immemorial. They all are giving a helping hand to each other as well as one another whenever they face challenges.

In the past, kings of city-states across the nation fought against each other to enjoy the taste of victory but they did not have any reasons. The battles and wars brought uncountable losses. A large number of soldiers on both sides in addition to the people from both city-states died in action. The wars born grievance in the hearts of losers. These were undesirable scenes of the wars.

> All the ethnic nationals should choose such a way to march into prosperity. If they set aside the hatred, they will see the best way to a prosperous nation.

Nonetheless, they could show united strength whenever the country faced the invasion of other countries. The armed forces of Myanmar formed with various ethnic nationalities made utmost efforts in driving out the colonialists and Fascists with the sacrifice of lives and blood in the fine tradition. They showed off their loyalty to the State.

Sometimes, siblings in a family having diverse ideas and attitudes may meet disputes as family problems. All family members know the root causes of the problems. So, they have the best ways and means to solve such problems and they have the right to solve such problems because they are members of the family. The family does not need any person outside the family for solving their problems. On the other hand, the outsiders do not have the right to solve the family problems.

Everybody needs to consider the problems at the levels from the family to the national. Firstly, all the ethnic people should remove the hatred and doubts from their hearts before holding the dialogues to solve the problems. Only when everybody holds up the win-win situation, will the problems meet the solutions. If all ethnic nationals seek the solutions for the problems, they can easily shape a prosperous nation.

Every family sets an aim each to enjoy prosperity. Likewise, every nation set an aim each to have prosperity. In fact, the way to a prosperous nation is very short, smooth and straight. All the ethnic nationals should choose such a way to march into prosperity. If they set aside the hatred, they will see the best way to a prosperous nation.

■ ■ ■

Act now to provide COVID-19 vaccines for all: ECOSOC President

The ECOSOC President urged the international community to combat rising poverty and hunger through measures that include social protection and relief programmes. Greater access to advanced technologies and innovations, particularly digital technologies, is another priority, as they are vital to achieving the SDGs and climate goals.

ENSURING COVID-19 vaccines for all will be critical if the world is to defeat the pandemic, the President of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), Munir Akram, said on Friday in his address to the closing its high-level segment.

ECOSOC is one of the six main organs of the UN, and the pandemic is unfolding during its 75th anniversary.

Reflecting on the past year, Mr. Akram recalled how the Council responded to the crisis, and climate and development challenges, including through drawing attention to the special needs of the world's least developed nations.

He urged countries to build on convergence and consensus achieved to confront major tasks ahead, starting with ensuring everyone, everywhere, is protected against the virus.

"Universal and affordable access to COVID-19 vaccines is essential to defeat the virus and to revive global trade, investment and growth. We have agreed on what needs to be done. We must now do it," he said.

Keep climate finance commitment

ECOSOC promotes collective action for a sustainable world.

The meeting was held one day after the conclusion of its annual High Level Political Forum (HLPF) to review progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Developing countries will need $4.3 trillion to recover from the triple crises and to realize the 17 goals by 2030.

Mr. Akram welcomed plans to create $650 billion in Special Drawing Rights (SDRs), a type of reserve foreign asset developed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), among other debt relief initiatives.

On climate change, he highlighted the critical need for developed countries to fulfill their commitment to provide $100 billion annually in climate finance.

"Scaled-up investment in sustainable infrastructure, an estimated requirement of $1 trillion per year, is essential also for the transition to a dynamic 'green' global economy," he said, while also calling for action plans for job creation in sectors such as construction, renewable energy, transport and housing.

People take pictures after being administered doses of the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine inside the Central World shopping mall in Bangkok on 7 June, 2021 as mass vaccine rollouts begin in Thailand. **PHOTO: AFP**

Fight hunger and poverty

The ECOSOC President urged the international community to combat rising poverty and hunger through measures that include social protection and relief programmes.

Greater access to advanced technologies and innovations, particularly digital technologies, is another priority, as they are vital to achieving the SDGs and climate goals.

Mr Akram also stressed the need to mobilize the political will to address structural and systemic barriers to equitable growth and development, namely unequal financial, tax and trade regimes.

SOURCE: UN

'Deeply negative impact' of COVID pandemic, reverses SDG progress

For many developing nations, "the pandemic is still raging, people are still dying at unacceptably high levels and economies are in dire straits", Ms Mohammed said.

CLOSING a key international development forum on Thursday, the deputy UN chief observed that a year of "immense challenges" has reversed progress on meeting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

After eight "solid days" of deliberations at the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), Amina Mohammed attributed the COVID pandemic to "a reversal of SDG progress in some areas, and delayed action on many of the major transitions required to meet our 2030 goals".

She said the pandemic has had a "deeply negative impact" on health and well-being; employment, businesses, incomes, education; and human rights, with "a particularly damaging effect on women and girls".

Building on emergency actions

Throughout the Forum, during which nine Global Goals and 47 Voluntary National Review outcomes were examined in depth, many participants observed that some of the measures put in place during the pandemic could provide a foundation for SDG progress.

Ms. Mohammed gave the examples of digital learning, which could help to transform education more broadly, along with building on critical fiscal support many countries had provided to their economy, jobs and people.

"Governments should now consider whether some of these measures can be integrated into comprehensive social protection systems", said the UN official.

Recover, restart

Recovery efforts can be designed both to restart economies and accelerate SDG implementation.

Ms. Mohammed said that stimulus packages and Special Drawing Rights for foreign exchange reserves, can be leveraged to advance gender equality, boost investment in education, health and social protection. They could also be used to accelerate climate change mitigation and generate decent jobs.

Workers wear face masks as a preventive measure against the spread of the novel coronavirus COVID-19, at the textile plant K.P.Textil in San Miguel Petapa, 20 km south of Guatemala City, on July 10, 2020. **PHOTO: JOHAN ORDONEZ / AFP**

But there can be no pandemic recovery without "international solidarity and cooperation", including through climate finance and financing for development, she added.

Pandemic 'still raging'

For many developing nations, "the pandemic is still raging, people are still dying at unacceptably high levels and economies are in dire straits", Ms Mohammed said.

"We must support these countries in their response to the COVID-19 pandemic and in recovering better to accelerate SDG implementation", she underscored.

While this applies "first and foremost" to ensuring universal access to lifesaving vaccines, she stressed that it also extends to delivering "a financial lifeline" for those States faced with major debt pressures as well as for mobilizing resources, technology, know-how and partnerships to "facilitate economic transformation".

UN support

The UN development system is committed to "fully supporting this endeavour", she said. Under the leadership of empowered and independent Resident Coordinators (RCs), UN country teams have responded well to the needs of Governments throughout the pandemic, she told ministers.

Moreover, following three years of reforms, they are "primed to deliver the transformative support" that Governments demand to accelerate SDG implementation.

'Unity of purpose'

With "political leadership, solidarity and unity of purpose", the deputy UN chief asserted that we can end the pandemic, secure improvements in people's lives between now and 2030, and "keep the promise" of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

"We must not drop our collective ambition when the needs have never been greater", she concluded.

SOURCE: UN

I say what I see:

By Oung Moung Moung

AFTER I had read the news article: Pacific islands Wallis and Futuna branded Covid-free on The Global New Light of Myanmar the other day, I tapped my fingers on computer keyboards browsing through the google search to find out where the islands were. It's officially named the Territory of the Wallis and Futuna that is a French remote island just with a population of 11,500. They have declared themselves Covid-free as they have had no cases at all since 1 April.

A total of 5,497 new cases has been reported so far in Myanmar, accordingly to the Ministry of Health and Sports. There have been 224,226 Covid-positive patients and the fatalities reached 4,769, the ministry data further vindicated. So sad! The pathogen causes patients oxygen deficiency in their blood. You see! People are now adamantly grabbing oxygen cylinders from wherever they can get. Some are donating oxygen to fill in different sorts of cylinders — 40 litres, 10 litres and so on.

I had also read one of the encouraging news stories that two bowsers with a capacity of 20 metric tons of liquid oxygen each arrived in Yangon the other day. Those are the first batch of 26 similar tankers of liquid oxygen purchased from foreign countries. The amount of 20 tonnes can fill in approximately over 3,000 40-litre oxygen cylinders. We hope for a sense of relief among people in dire need of oxygen for severe patients of their loved ones. Apart from oxygen, we all need to be very (very) careful to protect ourselves and thereby prevent from the disease others.

I do wish all Myanmar people good health and wealth.

Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 7:00 pm Saturday 17 July 2021)

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

FORECAST VALID UNTIL AFTERNOON OF THE 18 July 2021: Rain or thundershowers will be isolated in Magway Region, scattered in Lower Sagaing, Mandalay Regions and (Northern and Eastern) Shan, Rakhine States, fairly widespread in Nay Pyi Taw, Bago, Ayeyawady Regions and Southern Shan, Kayah States and widespread in the remaining Regions and States with likelihood of isolated heavyfalls in Upper Sagaing, Taninthayi Regions and Kachin State. Degree of certainty is (100%).

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

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Likelihood of increase of rain in Bago, Yangon, Ayeyawady, Taninthayi Region and Kayin, Mon States.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 18 July 2021: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 18 July 2021: One or two rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 18 July 2021: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

The Global New Light of Myanmar
www.gnlm.com.mm
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Biden, Xi join APEC talks on pandemic response

PACIFIC Rim leaders including US President Joe Biden and Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping began virtual talks Friday to discuss urgent joint action against the Covid-19 pandemic and resulting economic crisis.

The unprecedented online talks involving heads of state from the 21-nation Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) group was called at short notice by New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern.

Ardern is scheduled to host the annual summit of APEC leaders in November but said the extraordinary circumstances created by Covid-19 meant some issues needed immediate attention.

The unprecedented online talks involving heads of state from the 21-nation Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) group was called at short notice by New Zealand. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

"It's a unique opportunity to get APEC leaders together to discuss how we get our region through the health crisis and accelerate economic recovery," she said ahead of the meeting, which began at 11 pm (1100 GMT).

Ardern said better cross-border cooperation was needed as the world battles fast-spreading virus variants and an economic shock not seen since World War II.

"Responding collectively is vital to accelerate the economic recovery for the region," she said.

The White House said in the lead-up to the talks that the United States intended to serve "as an arsenal of vaccines for the region".

US officials also said it would be Biden's first chance to meet many of the APEC leaders since he took office, allowing him to underline Washington's broad goal for "a free and open Indo-Pacific".

APEC nations collectively account for 60 per cent of global GDP, with Russian President Vladimir Putin, Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga and Australia's Scott Morrison among those attending the virtual meeting.

But most attention will be on whether Biden and Xi can set aside the rivalries of an increasingly fraught US-China relationship to cooperate on Ardern's agenda.

Washington has accused Beijing of lacking transparency about the origins of the pandemic, adding to existing tensions on issues such as trade tariffs and the treatment of Uyghurs in Xinjiang.

Ardern has signalled she wants greater powers for the World Health Organization, as well as the establishment of cross-border systems to rapidly identify and respond to future pandemics. — AFP ■

All 18 on missing Russian plane found alive in 'miracle'

RUSSIAN officials hailed a "miracle" on Friday (July 16) after a passenger plane made an emergency landing in a Siberian field and all 18 people on board emerged, suffering only cuts and bruises.

The An-28 plane, operated by Siberian Light Aviation (SiLA), was flying from the town of Kedrovy to Tomsk when communication was lost, Governor Sergei Zhvachkin's office said.

The emergencies ministry announced later that the plane had been found, apparently after making a "hard landing", and that survivors had been spotted.

The aviation agency said the plane had been found 155 kilometres from the airstrip in Tomsk.

Mr Zhvachkin's office announced that everyone on board, including three crew, were alive and that medics had "recorded mainly bruises and abrasions".

"We all believed in a miracle. And thanks to the professionalism of the pilots, it came true: everyone is alive," the governor said.

Images circling on social media showed the plane flipped upside down with dirt inside the cabin and its nose destroyed.

Mr Zhvachkin said that all of the passengers and crew would be taken to the regional capital Tomsk, where they would be examined by doctors.

The Interfax news agency cited a local official as saying that six passengers refused to take a helicopter from the crash site to Tomsk and would be travelling instead by minibus. — AFP ■

A photo taken on July 23, 2006 shows an Russian IL-20M (Ilyushin 20m) plane landing at an unknown location. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

Pulitzer Prize-winning Indian photographer killed in Afghanistan

An artist paints a poster of photographer Danish Siddiqui outside an art school in Mumbai after news broke that the Pulitzer Prize winner had been killed covering fighting in Afghanistan. **PHOTO: AFP**

A Pulitzer Prize-winning photographer with Reuters news agency was killed Friday covering fighting between Afghan security forces and the Taliban near a border crossing with Pakistan, the media outlet reported, citing an army commander.

Afghan forces were fighting to retake Spin Boldak when Danish Siddiqui and a senior officer were killed in Taliban crossfire, the commander told Reuters.

The agency reported Siddiqui, an Indian national, had been embedded with Afghan special forces in the former Taliban bastion of Kandahar this week.

"We are urgently seeking more information, working with authorities in the region," Reuters president Michael Friedenberg and editor-in-chief Alessandra Galloni said in a statement.

"Danish was an outstanding journalist, a devoted husband and father, and a much-loved colleague. Our thoughts are with his family at this terrible time."

Reuters said Siddiqui, 38, had earlier reported being wounded in the arm by shrapnel while covering the fighting. — AFP ■

S.African township becomes 'racial' flashpoint in Rainbow Nation

ARMED residents kept warm by the fire while guarding a roadblock outside a township that has become a flashpoint between black South Africans and counterparts of Indian origin.

Since looting erupted in South Africa on July 9, many neighbourhoods have mobilized to defend homes, businesses and infrastructure against looters.

But in Phoenix, a suburb of the city of Durban in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) province, the unrest has spiralled into confrontation among two ethnic groups in the so-called Rainbow Nation.

Twenty people there have died, Police Minister Bheki Cele said on Thursday, in some of the worst violence since the end of white-minority rule in 1994.

Young men of South Asian heritage brandished handguns and machetes at their checkpoint, where they said they deterred troublemakers. But the group has been accused of racism and mistreatment — of wrongly barring individuals from the area simply for being black — and others have been criticized for vigilante justice.

"We are not racist," insisted Karim Loven, the head of a local policing forum. — AFP ■

Diplomats from 48 countries oppose politicization of COVID-19 origin-tracing

PERMANENT representatives of 48 countries to the United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG) on Thursday addressed to World Health Organization (WHO) Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, and voiced their support to advance the study of origins of SARS-CoV-2 globally and opposed the politicization of the origin-tracing.

The diplomats highlighted that COVID-19 is a common enemy of mankind, and it can only be defeated by solidarity and cooperation of the international community.

Cooperation on the study of origins of the SARS-CoV-2 is an important aspect of the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, they said in the letter. "As provided in the resolution WHA 73.1 entitled COVID-19 response, the purpose of the origin-tracing is to identify the zoonotic source of the virus and the route of introduction to the human population, including the possible role of intermediate hosts."

The diplomats stressed that the study of origins is "a matter of science, and should be conducted around the world by scientists."

"Origin-tracing shall not be politicized," they said. "Otherwise the global cooperation on the study of origins will be hindered, and the global anti-pandemic efforts will be jeopardized."

Photo taken on Jan. 22, 2020 shows an exterior view of the headquarters of the World Health Organization (WHO) in Geneva, Switzerland. **PHOTO: XINHUA**

The diplomats also welcomed the publication of the Joint Report of the WHO-convened global study of origins of SARS-CoV-2 and appreciated the hard work of the scientists of the joint experts group, stressing that the global study on origin-tracing "should be based on and guided by this scientific report".

They called on the WHO Secretariat, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the World Health Assembly (WHA), to cooperate with member states to advance the study of origins around the world, and take effective measures to prevent political factors from interfering with the study process.— Xinhua ■

COVID-19 deaths in Africa surge more than 40% over previous week

Secondary school students wash their hands at a temporary hand washing point in Kigali, Rwanda on March 16, 2020. **PHOTO: AFP**

AFRICA has recorded a 43% week-on-week rise in COVID-19 deaths, as hospital admissions increase rapidly and countries face shortages in oxygen and intensive care beds.

Fatalities increased to 6,273 in the week ending on 11 July 2021 from 4,384 deaths in the previous week. Africa is now less than 1% shy of the weekly peak reached in January when 6,294 deaths were recorded. Namibia, South Africa, Tunisia, Uganda and Zambia accounted for 83% of the new deaths recorded in the past week. The continent's case fatality rate, which is the proportion of deaths among confirmed cases, currently stands at 2.6% against the global average of 2.2%.

COVID-19 cases have risen for eight straight weeks, topping 6 million on 13 July 2021. Over the past month, Africa recorded an additional 1 million cases. This is the shortest time it's taken so far to add 1 million cases. Comparatively, it took around three months to move from 4 million to 5 million cases. This COVID-19 surge is the fastest the continent has seen.

The surge is driven by public fatigue with key health measures and an increased spread of variants. To date, the Delta variant, which is currently the most transmissible of all variants, has been detected in 21 African countries, while the Alpha variant is in 35 countries and Beta in 30.

"Deaths have climbed steeply for the past five weeks. This is a clear warning sign that hospitals in the most impacted countries are reaching a breaking point," said Dr Matshidiso Moeti, World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Director for Africa. "Under-resourced health systems in countries are facing dire shortages of the health workers, supplies, equipment and infrastructure needed to provide care to severely ill COVID-19 patients.

Hospital admissions in around 10 countries have increased rapidly and at least six countries are facing shortages of intensive care unit beds. Demand for medical oxygen has spiked and is now estimated to be 50% higher than at the same time in 2020, yet supply has not kept up. — WHO ■

Homes raided in probe of former UK Health Secretary Hancock's COVID-19 breach leak

UK regulators raided two homes Thursday as part of a probe into how politically explosive security camera footage showing former Health Secretary Matt Hancock kissing an aide in his office was leaked to a newspaper.

A still image of the footage, published on the front page of The Sun tabloid last month, led Hancock to admit he broke government coronavirus restrictions while having an affair with the advisor and to resign from the government.

Several weeks on from the controversy, the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), a media and data regulator, confirmed it was investigating an alleged data breach over how the image was accessed.

The ICO said private contractor Emcor Group, which manages the Department of Health and Social Care's closed-circuit TV services, had "submitted a breach report".

The report alleges "images were taken from the DHSC CCTV system without consent" it added.

"As part of the investigation, ICO teams searched two residential properties in the south of England on Thursday 15 July 2021."

"Personal computer equipment and electronic devices were seized as part of the operation."

Steve Eckersley, director of investigations at the regulator, said: "It's vital that all people, including employees and visitors to public buildings, have trust and confidence in the protection of their personal data captured by CCTV. — AFP ■

Hancock's breach of Covid social distancing restrictions with aide Gina Coladangelo has cost the health secretary his job. **PHOTO: AFP**

NEWS IN BRIEF

Paytm's expected $2.2bn IPO fuels India market

DIGITAL payments pioneer Paytm on Friday took a major step towards launching India's biggest initial public offering, telling regulators that it would seek to sell $2.2 billion in shares. The offering is the latest in a wave of IPOs in India, with food delivery firm Zomato this week raising $1.3 billion.

Paytm is backed by the Ant Group of Chinese tycoon Jack Ma, which holds a nearly 30 per cent stake, along with Masayoshi Son's Softbank Vision Fund, Berkshire Hathaway and other high-profile investors.

Founder and chief executive Vijay Shekhar Sharma, who has a net worth of $2.3 billion according to Forbes, holds just under 10 per cent of the company. As a part of the IPO, Paytm will issue fresh shares worth 83 billion rupees and sell an equal amount of shares through a sale offer, according to its prospectus filed with Indian regulators. — AFP ■

Stocks sag on concerns about Covid, global growth

GLOBAL stocks mostly fell Friday as worries about rising Covid-19 cases and their effect on global growth weighed on sentiment, pushing Wall Street into the red for the week.

After data showed an unexpected rise in US retail sales, Wall Street pushed higher at the open. But markets soon tumbled into the red and losses grew as the day progressed.

Analysts pointed to profit taking as a factor in Friday's session and throughout the week following records earlier in the month.

Investors are "continuing to trim winning positions" as they await more clarity on the course of the economy, said Briefing.com analyst Patrick O'Hare. The broad-based S&P 500 ended down 0.8 per cent at 4,327.16, taking its weekly losses to around one percent.—AFP ■

APEC leaders vow to accelerate equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines

LEADERS from 21 Pacific-Rim economies including Japan, the United States and China pledged on Friday to beef up the availability of COVID-19 vaccines to tackle the coronavirus pandemic and to provide the necessary ongoing support for their economies to recover.

"We will only overcome this health emergency by accelerating equitable access to safe, effective, quality-assured and affordable COVID-19 vaccines," the leaders of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum said in a statement issued after their informal virtual summit.

Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga attends an online meeting of Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation leaders on 16July 2021, in Tokyo. **PHOTO: JAPAN'S CABINET PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICE/ KYODO**

Emphasizing the role of extensive immunization as a global public good, they also vowed to "redouble our efforts to expand vaccine manufacture and supply, support global vaccine sharing efforts, and encourage the voluntary transfer of vaccine production technologies on mutually agreed terms."

Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga, U.S. President Joe Biden, Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin were among the attendees of the extraordinary meeting hosted by New Zealand, which currently holds the rotating APEC presidency. During the talks, Suga conveyed Japan's determination to hold a "safe and secure" Olympics from next week by taking all necessary measures to stem coronavirus infections, a senior government official said. With regard to global efforts to ensure fair access to coronavirus vaccines, Suga stressed Japan has been working to provide millions of doses to other countries and regions through such channels as the U.N.-backed COVAX global vaccine sharing program. — Kyodo News ■

Foreign luxury cars see brisk sales in Japan amid pandemic

FOREIGN luxury cars priced at more than 10 million yen ($90,830) in Japan are becoming popular among wealthy people who cannot travel abroad amid the coronavirus pandemic and who are willing to spend money on the back of higher global share prices.

Domestic sales of luxury foreign-brand vehicles such as Italy's Ferrari and Britain's Bentley hit record highs in June since 1988, when comparable data became available, industry data showed.

The trend clearly contrasts with worsening living conditions for some people, including part-time and nonregular workers, as the spread of the coronavirus dealt a blow to employment in the service and other business sectors.

Sales of foreign-made luxury passenger cars priced at 10 million yen or more surged 60.9 per cent to 3,336 units in June from a year earlier, exceeding the previous year's level every month since the beginning of this year, according to the Japan Automobile Importers Association.

Sales in 2020 were also solid, increasing 0.5 per cent from the previous year to 22,712 units, even though the economy was significantly damaged by the coronavirus pandemic.

Last month, sales of Ferrari jumped 80.6 per cent from a year earlier to 121 units, while those of Bentley expanded 23.9 per cent to 83 units. Sales of Germany's BMW Alpina more than tripled from a year earlier, while those of Britain's Aston Martin more than doubled and Britain's Land Rover climbed 90.1 per cent, all of them logging their highest sales for June, according to the association. — Kyodo News ■

US warns of 'growing risks' for business in Hong Kong

THE United States on Friday warned its business community of growing risks of operating in Hong Kong following a clampdown by China in the major financial hub.

In a long-awaited advisory that has already been denounced by China, US government agencies led by the State Department told entrepreneurs that they face particular risks from the imposition a year ago of a draconian new security law.

The advisory said there were "growing risks" that "could adversely affect businesses and individuals operating in Hong Kong."

"As a result of these changes, they should be aware of potential reputational, regulatory, financial and, in certain instances, legal risks associated with their Hong Kong operations," it said.

The United States is warning of growing risks to businesses in Hong Kong, seen in May 2021. **PHOTO: AFP**

The advisory acknowledged that Hong Kong, a former British colony handed back to China in 1997, "retains many economic distinctions" from the mainland including stronger protections of intellectual property.

But it pointed to a changing climate under the national security law including the arrest of one US citizen -- John Clancey, a prominent human rights lawyer.

Dozens of people have been charged under the law, which bans subversion and other offenses against the state, including the media tycoon Jimmy Lai, former lawmakers and pro-democracy activists. — AFP ■

Teeth gritted, Spain tourism rides 'Covid rollercoaster'

THE prospects for Spain's tourism sector are getting bleaker, with European reservations slowing over soaring Covid cases, but industry figures hope the summer won't resemble the catastrophe of 2020.

The Exceltur tourism association said this week that it had seen a sudden slowdown in reservations after the French and German governments urged their citizens to avoid Spain, which has seen a recent surge in infections.

"Bookings were going well but have slowed down, especially from France," Jorge Marichal, head of the Spanish Confederation of Hotels and Tourist Accommodation (CEHAT), told Spain's RTVE public broadcaster.

"The situation changes very quickly and within hours. The whole summer will be the same — a roller-coaster ride in which we will have to make decisions as we go along."

The season started on a positive note: bookings at seaside hotels — which in April and May were 80 per cent lower than in 2019 — improved in June, meaning the figure was only 60 per cent below the same period two years ago, Exceltur said.

At the start of July, the government restated its aim of drawing 45 million visitors this year, around half the number in 2019.

Tourists are still visiting Spain, but many are making plans only at the last moment in fear that the travel rules will change. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

Before the pandemic hit in spring 2020, Spain was the world's second-most popular tourist destination after France, and the sector accounted for around 12 per cent of the economy.

But the situation has deteriorated rapidly following a mass outbreak among students celebrating in the Balearic Islands that quickly spread across the country.

On 8 July, France warned its nationals against travelling to Spain or Portugal on holiday because of a spike in Covid-19 cases caused by the highly-contagious Delta variant.

The move sparked outrage across the Pyrenees although France's top diplomat later modified the warning, saying only that vaccination was a must before travelling to Spain.

Germany also declared all of Spain to be a risk area last week, including its two popular archipelagos — the Canary Islands in the Atlantic and the Balearic Isles in the Mediterranean. — AFP ■

Ford recalls 775,000 Explorer SUVs

Ford recalled 775,000 Explorer sport utility vehicles built between 2013 and 2017, an earlier generation than this model, which was unveiled in 2019. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

FORD announced Friday it is recalling about 775,000 Explorer vehicles due to a problem in the rear of the car that can reduce steering control and increase crash risk.

The automaker will address a joint issue in the popular sport utility vehicle that can lead to a fractured "toe link" in the back of the auto, the company said in a press release.

"Affected vehicles may experience a clunk noise, unusual handling, or a misaligned rear wheel," Ford said. A fracture "significantly diminishes steering control, increasing the risk of a crash," the company.

More than 85 per cent of the affected autos are in North America, with the rest coming from China and other international markets. — AFP ■

US sees surprise retail sales increase in June

AGAINST expectations, US retail sales rose in June, the Commerce Department said Friday, with shoppers stepping up purchases at department stores and electronics outlets as pandemic business restrictions ease.

Sales rose 0.6 per cent last month to $621.3 billion, beating forecasts for a decline after they fell by a downwardly revised 1.7 per cent in May, the data said.

Sales jumped the most at department stores, electronics and appliance retailers and clothing outlets, as well as at gas stations, likely a consequence of rising oil prices and an increase in domestic travel.

Motor vehicle and parts dealers, however, saw a two per cent fall in sales amid soaring used car prices and a shortage of semiconductors that's forced some manufacturers to idle assembly lines.

"Core" retail sales excluding gas stations and the auto sector rose 1.1 per cent. "To see core sales rising so strongly in June is a positive sign that consumers feel confident and are still cash-rich, in aggregate," said Ian Shepherdson of Pantheon Macroeconomics.

Government stimulus payments combined with an easing of Covid-19 business restrictions has pushed retail sales higher in recent months, though the growth has been uneven. Gas stations saw sales rise 2.5 per cent, electronics and appliance stores 3.3 per cent and general merchandise stores climbed 1.9 per cent — within which department stores grew 5.9 per cent. — AFP ■

Electronics outlets were among the shops that saw sales grow in June amid a surprise increase in US retail sales. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

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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), at the day 20th and 22nd JULY 2021 (COVID-19 Gazetted Holiday), 21st JULY 2021 (Alternative Holiday of Qurbani Eid) and 23rd JULY 2021 (FULL MOON DAY OF WASO), Loading, Unloading and delivery for Goods will be received on Payment as Holiday Fees.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Slain Haiti leader's funeral set for July 23, ex-president Aristide back home

THE funeral for Haiti's slain president Jovenel Moise will take place on July 23, officials said Friday, as the troubled nation's first democratically elected leader Jean-Bertrand Aristide arrived home after receiving medical care in Cuba.

The state funeral services will take place in Cap-Haitien, a historic city in the north of Haiti, which has slid dangerously toward disorder since Moise was gunned down in his home in the early hours of July 7.

Moise's widow Martine Moise, who was seriously injured in the attack and is being treated in the United States, is expected to return home for her husband's funeral.—AFP ■

Biden says social media misinformation on Covid 'killing people'

PRESIDENT Joe Biden said Friday that social media disinformation about Covid-19 and vaccinations is "killing people".

"They're killing people. The only pandemic we have is among the unvaccinated. And they're killing people," he told reporters at the White House as he left for a weekend at the presidential retreat in Camp David.

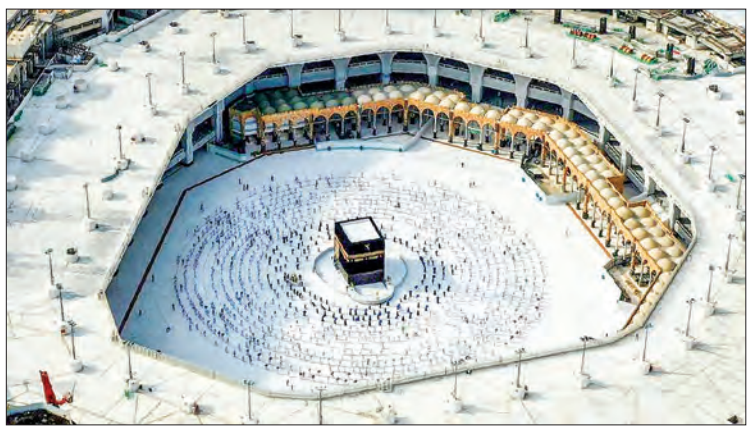
The White House is turning up the pressure on social media companies, especially Facebook, to weed out what officials say is widely spread disinformation on coronavirus vaccinations.

According to US health officials, a current spike in Covid-19 deaths and illnesses around the country is almost exclusively hitting people who remain unvaccinated.

"There is a clear message that is coming through: this is becoming a pandemic of the unvaccinated," Centres for Disease Control and Prevention director Rochelle Walensky told reporters on Friday.

Many of those refusing vaccinations, despite the ease of availability throughout the United States, have said they do not trust the shots. — AFP ■

Pilgrims head to Mecca for 2nd pandemic hajj



Every able-bodied Muslim is obliged to perform the hajj pilgramage to the Kaaba at least once. **PHOTO: STR /AFP/FILE**

PILGRIMS will begin to arrive in the Muslim holy city of Mecca on Saturday for the second downsized hajj staged during the coronavirus pandemic with only fully vaccinated residents permitted to participate.

The kingdom seeks to repeat last year's success that saw no virus outbreak during the five-day ritual but nonetheless caused resentment among Muslims abroad.

It is allowing 60,000 residents of Saudi Arabia to participate through a lottery, higher than in 2020 but drastically lower than in normal times. Religious rites will begin on Sunday.

Among the chosen ones was Ameen, a 58-year-old Indian oil contractor based in the eastern city of Dammam, who was picked for the ritual along with his wife and three adult children.

"We are overjoyed," said Ameen, who only gave his first name.

"So many of our friends and relatives were rejected," he told AFP.

In 2019, some 2.5 million Muslims from around the world participated in the annual hajj -- a key pillar of Islam that is a must for able-bodied Muslims at least once in their lifetime.

Earlier this month, the hajj ministry said it was working on the "highest levels of health precautions" in light of the pandemic and the emergence of new variants. — AFP ■

Two charged in plot to attack Democratic HQ in California

TWO men with extremist militia links have been charged with amassing an arsenal of guns and pipe bombs to attack the California headquarters of the Democratic Party, the US Justice Department said Friday.

Ian Benjamin Rogers, 45, and Jarrod Copeland, 37, began planning the attack on the Sacramento headquarters shortly after Republican president Donald Trump's loss to Joe Biden in the November 3 election last year, according to the indictment unsealed in San Francisco federal court.

Two men charged in with plotting a bomb attack on the Sacramento, California Democratic Party headquarters were followers of the extreme right Three Percenter militia movement. **PHOTO: AFP**

Their plan gained pace after the January 6 Trump-inspired insurrection at the US Capitol in Washington, which temporarily halted the certification of Biden's election victory.

"I want to blow up a Democrat building bad," Rogers told Copeland in a message.

In their messages Rogers and Copeland expressed hopes of igniting a "revolution" with their attack.

"After the 20th we go to war," Rogers wrote to Copeland, referring to the January 20th inauguration of Biden as president.

The Justice Department unveiled an expanded indictment against the two, after having first charged Rogers alone in January. — AFP ■

In Los Angeles, 'tiny homes' spring up for homeless people

Los Angeles has established several "tiny home villages", including this one in the Tarzana neighbourhood, to help the homeless. **PHOTO: AFP**

IN a parking lot in Los Angeles, a village of miniature prefab houses has sprung up, one of several sites in America's second-largest city where so-called "tiny homes" are being put up to help the homeless get back on their feet.

The City of Angels has a large homeless population, second only to New York. Tens of thousands live rough -- their tents, and their distress, are plain for any resident or visitor to see.

In the Tarzana neighborhood, 76 tiny homes paid for by the city have been erected. Each is 64 square feet (six square meters), and is equipped with two beds and shelving as well as air conditioning and heating.

Each one costs $6,500 and can be set up in just 90 minutes. Toilets and showers are shared, and state-of-the-art washing machines face large, bright orange tables under umbrellas. The set-up feels a bit like a campground.

Zuri-Kinshasa Maria Terry, 46, has just moved into the Tarzana development. The former stripper says she ended up on the streets a year ago, after two weeks in intensive care because she had contracted Covid-19, and waited two months for the tiny home village to open. — AFP ■

Domestic politics tie Biden's hands on Cuba

HOPES that President Joe Biden would ease draconian trade and travel restrictions with Cuba laid down by his predecessor are caught hostage to domestic politics and the vocal Cuban-American community opposed to Havana, analysts say.

Biden was vice-president when Barack Obama thawed relations with the Caribbean country in 2014, reopening diplomatic missions, cutting back a decades-old embargo, permitting US tourists to visit and imports from the communist-controlled island.

But the support inside the United States for last weekend's anti-government protests across Cuba, and the tight math surrounding Biden's Democrats' control of Congress, explain why he has not reversed the extreme punitive measures against Havana put in place by president Donald Trump over the past four years.

People in Miami, Florida protest to show support for Cubans demonstrating against their government. **PHOTO: AFP**

Ahead of the presidential election last year, Biden said he would reverse Trump's policies. But pressed on Thursday about whether he would ease the US embargo, Biden demurred.

"Cuba is unfortunately a failed state, and (is) repressing their citizens," he told reporters.

"There are a number of things that we would consider doing to help the people of Cuba, but it would require a different circumstance or a guarantee that they would not be taken advantage of by the government."

'Challenge the regime'

After he took office in January many Democrats pressed Biden hard to reverse Trump's policies. — AFP ■

Kabul, Taliban negotiators to meet in Qatar as Afghan fighting rages

Former Afghan chief executive Abdullah Abdullah (C) and former Afghan president Hamid Karzai (L) will be part of a Kabul negotiating team due to hold talks in Qatar with Taliban delegates. **PHOTO: AFP**

REPRESENTATIVES of the Afghan government and the Taliban were due to meet in Doha for talks on Saturday as violence rages in the country while foreign forces finalize their withdrawal.

The two sides have been meeting on and off for months in the Qatari capital but the talks have lost momentum as the insurgents have made battlefield gains.

Several high-ranking officials including former president Hamid Karzai and former chief executive Abdullah Abdullah were heading to Doha on Friday afternoon.

"The high level delegation is here to talk to both sides, guide them and support the (government) negotiating team in terms of speeding up the talks and have progress," said Najia Anwari, the spokeswoman for the Afghan government negotiating team in Doha.

"We expect that it (will) speed the talks and... in a short time, both sides will reach a result and we will witness a durable and dignified peace in Afghanistan," she told AFP. — AFP ■

Cyprus says police patrol boat warned off by Turkish coastguard

CYPRIOT police said the Turkish coastguard fired warning shots at one of its vessels patrolling for undocumented migrants off the island's north coast on Friday, as tensions mount ahead of a visit by the Turkish president to the breakaway north.

The Cyprus government said it was preparing a protest to the United Nations over the incident, which it said was the first of its kind.

But a Turkish diplomatic source denied that either the Turkish or the Turkish Cypriot coastguard had fired on any Greek Cypriot vessel.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan is due in the breakaway north of the island next week to mark the anniversary of Turkey's 1974 invasion, a visit Greek Cypriots see as inflammatory with reunification talks in limbo.

The Cypriot police vessel spotted the Turkish coastguard some 11 nautical miles from the small fishing port of Kato Pyrgos, just west of the UN-patrolled armistice line separating government-held territory from the north, the Cyprus News Agency reported. — AFP ■

Cypriot police said the Turkish coastguard fired warning shots at one of its vessels patrolling for undocumented migrants off the island's north coast on Friday, as tensions mount ahead of a visit by the Turkish president to the breakaway north. **PHOTO: MARINE POLICE/AFP**

NEWS IN BRIEF

Belarus opposition leader to meet White House officials next week

EXILED Belarusian opposition leader Svetlana Tikhanovskaya will meet with White House officials during her US visit next week, an administration official said Friday.

Mass anti-government demonstrations broke out in Belarus in August 2020 after President Alexander Lukashenko, who has ruled Belarus with an iron grip for nearly three decades, claimed a sixth term in power.

Tikhanovskaya, until then a stay-at-home mom, ran in place of her detained husband and claimed to have easily won but allegations of fraud mushroomed and Lukashenko declared himself the winner. Tikhanovskaya was forced to choose exile and now lives in Lithuania. — AFP ■

Biden to host Iraqi PM at White House on July 26

PRESIDENT Joe Biden will welcome Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhemi to the White House this month, his office said Friday.

The 26 July meeting will "highlight the strategic partnership between the United States and Iraq," the White House said in a statement.

Kadhemi and US envoy Brett McGurk discussed the withdrawal of troops from Iraq Thursday in Baghdad.

Some 3,500 foreign troops are still on Iraqi territory, including 2,500 Americans, who have been posted to help fight the Islamic State group since 2014.

In Washington, Kadhemi is expected to push for a concrete timetable of American troop withdrawal. The implementation of their departure could take years.

Iraq, long an arena for bitter rivalry between the US and Iran despite their shared enmity towards IS, has seen growing numbers of rocket and drone attacks on American targets in recent months. — AFP ■

Italy's president Sergio Mattarella has conferred 'Order of Merit of the Italian Republic' honours on coach Roberto Mancini and his Euro 2020 winning football team. **PHOTO: AFP**

Italy's president honours Euro 2020 winners

ITALY'S president Sergio Mattarella has conferred 'Order of Merit of the Italian Republic' honours on coach Roberto Mancini and his Euro 2020 winning football team.

The honours were "a sign of recognition of the sporting values and national spirit that animated the Italian victory at the European championship," a statement from the Italian residential palace said on Friday.

Mancini and Italian FA president Gabriele Gravina were conferred with the honour of 'Grand Officer of the Republic' with team manager Gabriele Oriali and head of delegation Gianluca Vialli receiving 'Commander of the Republic' awards.

Captain Giorgio Chiellini was named an 'Officer' and along with all the team were given the honour of 'Cavaliere' (Knights).

Italy beat England last weekend on penalties in London to win the title for the first time since their victory in 1968. — AFP ■

Kane 'our player' says new Spurs boss Nuno

TOTTENHAM manager Nuno Espirito Santo issued a hands off warning to clubs interested in Harry Kane on Friday amid speculation over the England captain's future.

Kane is reportedly keen to leave his boyhood club this summer in the search for the first silverware of his career. Despite Kane's efforts in winning the Premier League Golden Boot last season, Spurs have missed out on Champions League football for the second consecutive season.

And England's heartbreaking Euro 2020 final defeat to Italy on penalties means the 27-year-old is still yet to win a major trophy in his career for club or country.

Premier League champions Manchester City have been strongly linked with a move for Kane as they look to replace all-time top goalscorer Sergio Aguero, who has moved to Barcelona on a free transfer.

But former Wolves boss Nuno, who was appointed as Jose Mourinho's successor, is expecting his prized asset to return to Tottenham for pre-season training after a short break following his efforts at the European Championship. — 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.

Women's football goes pro in Japan

AS global interest in women's football approaches fever pitch, former champions Japan are eyeing a return to glory with the country's first professional league for female players.

A decade since winning the 2011 Women's World Cup, Japan has fallen behind, even as the sport becomes more popular and lucrative elsewhere.

But the new league's organizers hope it will bring prestige and fresh talent to Japanese clubs when it kicks off in September, tapping into growing enthusiasm across the region ahead of the 2023 World Cup in Australia and New Zealand.

"We had a sense of urgency, as we felt that Japan would be left behind globally if it didn't go pro now," said Kikuko Okajima, chair of the WE League — short for Women Empowerment.

"We're in the middle of a pandemic, but we decided not to delay the tournament and to launch the pro-league," she told AFP.

Japan is currently 10th in the FIFA women's rankings, behind several European teams and the number-one US side, who were led to victory at the last World Cup by star winger Megan Rapinoe.

The national team — nicknamed "Nadeshiko" after a pink flower that symbolises femininity in Japan — won silver at the London 2012 Olympics but failed to qualify for Rio, and its chances of a medal this summer on home turf are slim. — AFP ■

The new league's organizers hope it will bring prestige and fresh talent to Japanese clubs. **PHOTO: AFP**