

THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

Vol. VIII, No. 101, 5th Waning of Waso 1383 ME www.gnlm.com.mm Wednesday, 28 July 2021

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.

Officials need to seek allotted funds from the ASEAN Fund and deserved rights: Senior General



State Administration Council Chairman Senior General Min Aung Hlaing chairs and addresses the coordination meeting on strengthening collaboration with the international community, including ASEAN and friendly countries, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Nay Pyi Taw on 27 July 2021.

STATE Administration Council Chairman Senior General Min Aung Hlaing delivered an address at the coordination meeting to beef up cooperation with the international community, including ASEAN and friendly countries in the prevention, control and treatment of the COVID-19, at the hall of Bayintnaung Villa in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning.

In his speech, the Senior General said the ASEAN set up a fund for COVID-19 with the participation of Myanmar. It is necessary to rapidly undertake cooperation in disease prevention, control and treatment and assistance. Decisions must be adopted without delay in collaboration with the international community and the ASEAN community.

All must make an effort to improve COVID-19 vaccination, and connections must be made for the soonest arrivals of donated vaccines.

SEE PAGE-3

INSIDE TODAY

NATIONAL Tatmadaw (Army, Navy, Air) families donate K2.218 billion to MoHS PAGE-3	NATIONAL Civil servants, older people receive Covid-19 vaccines PAGE-3	NATIONAL MoC allows import process of anti-COVID-19 equipment on 27 July PAGE-4	NATIONAL Myanmar joins 21st ASEAN SOMTC meeting hosted by Brunei Darussalam PAGE-5	LOCAL NEWS MoHS distributes COVID-19 vaccines nationwide PAGE-5	LOCAL NEWS Over 1,400 people in Myawady city relocated to relief camps PAGE-6
---	--	---	--	---	---

Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Ministry of Health and Sports
Order No 296/2021

4th Waning of Waso 1383 ME
27 July 2021

THE Ministry of Health and Sports is exercising the rights in Article 21-(b) of the Prevention and Control of Communicable Diseases Law to issue this order.

1. The Ministry of Health and Sports is continuously working on prevention measures for Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). Due to a surge of COVID-19 positive cases and rapid increase of cases in the Bago Region, Mandalay Region and Ayeyawady Region stay-at-home programmes are necessary for the people in some townships in Bago Region, Mandalay Region and Ayeyawady Region.
2. Therefore, people living in the following townships in Bago Region, Mandalay Region and Ayeyawady Region are included in the Stay-at-Home Programme.
 - (a) Bago Region
 - (1) Nyaunglebin Township
 - (b) Mandalay Region
 - (1) Natogyi Township
 - (2) Yamethin Township
 - (c) Ayeyawady Region
 - (1)Kyonpyaw Township
 - (2)Bogale Township
3. All people living in these Stay-at-Home townships are required to adhere to the following rules.
 - (a) Stay at home.
 - (1) Employees under the government departments are not included.
 - (2) Those in the private sector concerning banks and financial services, fuel refilling stations, food businesses and cold warehouses, pharmaceutical and medical equipment businesses, drinking water businesses, and factories producing daily hygiene products are not included.
 - (3) Those in the airline industry who provide services in relief flights/ cargo flights and charter flights, ground services, aircraft refueling, import/export of goods by air, international freight forwarder companies, companies and agencies that provide customs services, aircraft food production and export and aircraft maintenance.
 - (4) Those who work in the private ports to provide services for cargo ships, shipping line resident representative offices, international

freight forwarders, companies and agents that provide customs services, container trucking, freight vehicles of export/import goods, shipping companies, inland container depot and dry ports are not included.

- (5) Those who work in the telecommunication service providers such as post-office services, land and mobile telephony services, internet services (excluding the shops that sell telephone and data) and tower and fibre repair services are not included.
- (b) The respective state/region administration councils shall issue necessary orders and regulations to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the raw material and cut-make-pack (CMP) factories and workplaces.
- (c) Organizations and companies to operate from home.
- (d) Only one person per household to go outside to purchase essentials.
- (e) Only two persons per household may go outside for hospital or clinical visits.
- (f) Always wear facemasks/masks when going outside.
- (g) Allow only vehicles transporting working people and permitted vehicles may enter any township.
- (h) Within the ward, only the driver and one other person are permitted to go shopping and only the driver and two other persons are permitted to go to the hospital.
- (i) Comply with Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the smooth movement of goods from those townships.
4. If the number of people exceeds the limitations mentioned in Paragraph 3-(d), (e) and (h), or for any other emergency reasons, prior notice should be given to the relevant ward administrator and they, in turn, must only permit the people going from and returning to the ward and not allow people from outside the ward to enter or other people within the ward to leave.
5. Failure to comply with this order will have action taken under existing laws.
6. This order takes effect as of 4 am on 28-7-2021.

Dr Thet Khaing Win
Union Minister

Volunteers prioritized first
for inoculation

THE government is implementing COVID-19 vaccination priority plans across the nation. The volunteers will also be prioritized first for vaccination, according to the Ministry of Health and Sports.

“The volunteers are the ones who do not want any profits or interests, but they want to work hard only for the people in all areas of the country. Their role is important, maybe at the quarantine centres, in transporting patients or dead bodies and vaccination programmes. They are put in the priority group,” said Dr Khin Khin Gyi, director of the ministry.

There are 13 priority groups for vaccines, and the main target is over 65 years old persons, health workers and other employees, private health workers, monks, nuns, religious organizations, homes for the age and the banking industry.

“Moreover, all the people working in the transport sector also include in the lists. The next one is that the employees of state-run and private factories and industry, hotel and guesthouse staff and the ones working at the prisons, restaurants, teashops and SMEs are on the list. They are the groups that are currently being targeted,” she continued.

Currently, the country receives the two million Sinopharm vaccines donated by the People’s Republic of China and one million vaccines out of two million purchased by the country. All three million vaccines will be used for three million people. – Htet Hlan/GNLM

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.

4,964 new cases of COVID-19
reported on 27 July, total figure
rises to 279,119

MYANMAR’S COVID-19 positive cases rose to **279,119 after 4,964 new cases** were reported on 27 July 2021 according to the Ministry of Health and Sports. Among these confirmed cases, **4,681** have been discharged from hospitals. Death toll reached **7,845** after **338** died. —MNA

Suggestion of health officials needed for use of oxygen

THE Senior General highlighted the anxieties of the people upon rumours related to oxygen like some save the oxygen while some resell, the use of oxygen with the suggestion of hospitals and health officials, oxygen production rate from the oxygen plants established at public hospitals, military hospitals and factories, importation of liquid oxygen and oxygen cylinders from Thailand and China via border trade camps.

(Excerpt from the speech to the 3rd coordination meeting on COVID-19 prevention, control and treatment made by the Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council Chairman Senior General Min Aung Hlaing on 18 July 2021)

Officials need to seek allotted funds from the ASEAN ...

FROM PAGE-1

Relevant ministries and officials need to supervise the production of the vaccine and the incoming of necessary medicinal aids as quickly as possible. The Vice-Chairman of the State Administration Council and

meeting participants discussed arrivals of the vaccines, distribution of the vaccines to the entire nation, production of the vaccines in cooperation with Russia, offer given to other countries to produce the vaccines and taking samples, the collaboration of the

international community, import of vaccines by the private sector and its vaccination process. In his concluding remarks, the Senior General said ASEAN countries themselves face difficulties. Officials need to seek the allotted funds from the ASEAN

Fund and deserved rights. As awarded patients must be nutritious, nearby military units must donate eggs, bananas and other supplementary foods to hospitals and clinics. It is crucial for providing necessary care to the patients without selfishness but

serving the interests of the State and the people. Whenever faces challenges, efforts must be made for ensuring better health of the State and the people. And, the connection must be made with the international community in the fastest manner. — MNA

Tatmadaw (Army, Navy, Air) families donate K2.218 billion to MoHS



The MoHS Union Minister is receiving the donation of over K2 billion from Tatmadaw family members.

FAMILIES from the Tatmadaw (Army, Navy, Air) collectively donated a total of K2.218 billion to the Ministry of Health and Sports for the COVID-19 prevention, control and treatment activities. The cash assistance donation ceremony was held yesterday morning in Nay Pyi Taw and attended by Union Minister for Health and Sports

Dr Thet Khaing Win, Lt-Gen Myo Zaw Thein and Tatmadaw officials. At the ceremony, Lt-Gen explained the donation and handed over the cash assistance to the Union Minister. Afterwards, the Union Minister expressed words of thanks. Tatmadaw has been participating in COVID-19 prevention, control and treatment

activities together with medical workers and charitable organizations since the first wave of COVID-19 in the country. Families from the Tatmadaw Army, Navy, and Air contributed a total of K4.704 billion during the second wave, which was used to buy anti-COVID-19 drugs and equipment for 1,168 public hospitals and 1,070 rural medical departments. — MNA

Civil servants, older people receive Covid-19 vaccines

SINOPHARM Covid-19 vaccines donated by the People's Republic of China were given to the remaining staff from Nay Pyi Taw Council Area yesterday morning at Wunna Theikdi Stadium in Nay Pyi Taw. The 692 remaining staff members were vaccinated by physicians and healthcare volunteers from Nay Pyi Taw Public Health Department and the Tatmadaw Hospital (1000 beds). The second round of the vaccination will also be given to the remaining staff on 28 and

30 July. Similarly, a total of 1,350 people aged 65 and over in Aungmyaythazan Township, Chanayethazan Township, Maha Aungmye Township, Chanmyathazi Township, Pyigyitagon Township, Amarapura Township and Patheingyi Township in Mandalay Region received the Sinopharm Covid-19 vaccine yesterday. The vaccine injections were administered by the township administration council officials and healthcare workers. — MNA



Covid jabs are carried out in the townships of Mandalay Region.

MoC allows import process of anti-COVID-19 equipment on 27 July

FOR the quick and easy import of anti-COVID-19 equipment including liquid oxygen, oxygen gas, and oxygen concentrators, the Ministry of Commerce is allowing regular import activities at international airports, seaports and border trade posts, including Muse, Myawady, Chinshwehaw, Kampaiti, Lweje, Myawady, Tachilek, Kawthoung, Mawtaung, and Hteekee from 26 July to 1 August that are designated as public holidays.

Relevant departmental officials are cooperating to facilitate and expedite the standard operating procedures, including online registration for the import

process during the long public holidays.

On 27 July, 3,879 oxygen concentrators and 9,660 test kits from Yangon International Airport and 58 tonnes of liquid oxygen, 35 tonnes of the liquid oxygen tank, 2,785 home oxygen concentrators, 9,660 test kits, 82 tonnes of masks and 7,000 PPE suits from Muse, Myawady, Chinshwehaw, Kampaiti, and Kawthoung trading posts were successfully imported.

The aforementioned items were imported by 49 vehicles from 33 companies.

From 12 to 27 July, 611 tonnes of liquid oxygen, 465 tonnes of the liquid oxygen tank,

105 tonnes of oxygen gas, 41,382 home oxygen concentrators, 260,528 test kits, 776 tonnes of masks, four oxygen plants and nine oxygen generators have been allowed to be imported as officials are giving priority to disease control of the Covid-19.

The Ministry of Commerce is cooperating with relevant departments to facilitate the importation of Covid-19 disease prevention and control equipment by arranging direct contact with officials from relevant trade centres if assistance is needed and contact persons can be contacted directly at the Ministry's website, Commerce.gov.mm, officials said. —MNA



Myanmar joins 21st ASEAN SOMTC meeting hosted by Brunei Darussalam

THE 21st ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime – 21st SOMTC, hosted by Brunei Darussalam, was held yesterday through videoconferencing.

The meeting was attended by SOMTC leaders led by officials from the 10 ASEAN nations, the ASEAN Deputy Secretary-General and the party. Officials led by Deputy Director-General of the Myanmar Police Force Aung Aung, the leader of SOMTC from Myanmar, also joined the meeting.

The SOMTC leaders briefed on each country's effort, regional and international cooperation to combat transnational crimes. The meeting discussed each country's results and reports on the fight against arms trafficking, terrorism, human trafficking, cybercrime and illegal

wildlife and timber trafficking in 2020. The implementation of the 2019-2021 SOMTC activities from the 2016-2025 ASEAN Transnational Crime Prevention Action Plan Framework were reviewed in detail.

Myanmar discussed its activities and regional cooperation, including with ASEAN, in fighting against violence, human trafficking, money laundering and illegal drugs. Brunei Darussalam led the discussion on the implementation plan of the SOMTC Action Plan 2022-2021 of the ASEAN Framework. Respective countries discussed the preparations for the coordination meeting with its dialogue partners, China, Japan, South Korea, Australia, Canada, European Union, India, New Zealand, Russia and the United States,



that are cooperating in the fight against transnational crime. The meetings with the dialogue partners will be held on 28 and 29 July 2021, it is reported. — MNA

MoHS distributes COVID-19 vaccines nationwide

THE Department of Public Health and Department of Medical Services of the Ministry of Health and Sports distribute three million COVID-19 vaccines, which were received from China, to Nay Pyi Taw Council Area, regions and states depending on the priority vaccination

plans and groups as per the instructions of the State Administration Council.

The officials delivered 16,000 vaccines to Nay Pyi Taw Council, 24,000 vaccines to Bago Region and 40,000 vaccines to Ayeyawady Region until yesterday. They will keep providing

the vaccines to the rest regions/states.

The vaccines will be also transported with the help of Tatmadaw (Air) and Myanmar National Airlines the remote regions by different modes of transport such as road or air. — MNA



Vaccines in stable cold storage are seen being transported to Nay Pyi Taw Council Area and States/Regions, respectively.

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 | (3) 067-3411144 | (5) 09-882557992 |
| (2) 067-3411509 | (4) 09-882557991 | (6) 09-882557993 |

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

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

Over 1,400 people in Myawady city relocated to relief camps

MORE than 1,400 people in low-lying wards of Myawady city were affected by flood after the water level of the Thaungyin River rose above the danger level of 963 centimetres. They were sheltered at the relief camps.

The water level of the Thaungyin River surged after the torrential rainfall on the evening of 26 July. A total of 1,469 flood victims living in No.1, 2, 4 and 5 wards were relocated to the relief camps. They were comprised of 698 males and 771 females from 323 households in low-lying wards.

The natural disaster man-

agement team including deputy district administrator U Aung Chan Nyein, township administration council chairman and members, fire police force, ICRC members, philanthropical organizations, ward administrators worked together to evacuate the flood victims and shelter them at the relief camps.

At present, there are over 10 camps for internally displaced persons in Myawady and the authorities are implementing the evacuation activities in the flood-stricken areas.

Chairman U Soe Tint of Myawady District Administration Council provided



The natural disaster management team is seen helping flood victims in the inundated areas in Myawady.

foodstuffs (59 rice bags and onions) to the 713 displaced persons from 141 households after they arrived in the camps on the evening of 26 July. Food will also be delivered to the remaining households in a timely manner. — Htein Lin Aung/ GNLM

1 mln fingerlings released into Duttawadi River in Sintgaing

FOR the development of fish resources in Sintgaing township, Mandalay region, a total of 1 million fingerlings were released into the Duttawadi River.

The ceremony was led by the Mandalay region fishery department. They released 150,000 fingerlings of Barbus fish and 850,000 fingerlings of a variety of carp.

Kyaukse township fishery department releases fingerlings species yearly into the rivers, natural creek and Inn aims to effectuate sustainable development of the fisheries resources, ensuring sufficient fish ration and enhancing domestic fisheries consumption.

Kumae fishery camp head U Saw Aung Ko Latt gave an awareness talk to the fisherman and public that they prohibited some fishing methods to prevent the destruction of fish resources, such as battery electrofishing, poisonous fishing and explosives fishing. The fishermen are also not allowed to catch up the fish in May, June and July, with no fishing season and not allowed fishing in the restricted fishing area.

So far, the Kyaukse township fishery department has already released over 10.8 fingerlings from Nat Yekan, Kumae, Thayetgon, Yay Nantthar fish hatching camps.—Thet Maung (Kyaukse)/GNLM

Lashio reports nearly 1,500 confirmed cases

LASHIO town in Shan State (North) found nearly 1,500 confirmed patients over the past 45 days, and 77 have died from the virus, while they were hospitalized, the Ministry of Health and Sports (MOHS) announced.

Since the first case of COVID-19 was found on 9 July, the township has reported the infected cases almost every day. Then, the retail shops in the wards and the wholesale shops in the Myoma market were closed.

Due to the high infection rate, the Ministry of Health and Sports has announced

that Lashio was declared as a stay-home township on 27 June.

After becoming Lashio as a stay-home town, the travelling in the town has significantly declined. However, the infected rate has not declined considerably with high daily reports. Now, the authorities have restricted all movement in the town after 20 July.

As of 24 July, Lashio registered 1,494 COVID-19 confirmed cases, 814 recoveries and 77 total deaths, according to the Ministry of Health and Sports. Those confirmed patients are currently under-

going medical treatment at the COVID-19 treatment centres – 108 patients at Lashio public hospital, 460 patients at education degree college COVID-19 treatment centre and 28 patients at education degree college ICU (Intensive Care Unit).

An official from swab team of the Lashio township health department said about 3,000 people, who had close contact with positive patients will be detected with PCR swabs tests on 29 July and are put in home quarantine currently. — Aye Maung/ GNLM

Border trade down over \$693 mln

THE total border trade value exceeded US\$7.65 billion, down over 693 million compared with the same period last year, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

During the period, the country's export via land borders amounted to \$4.98 billion while its import shared \$2.66 billion.

This financial year's border trade decreased by over \$693 million compared to the same period of the last budget year 2020-2021, when it amounted to 8.34 billion, the ministry's figures said.

The trade volume at Muse border trade on the China-Myanmar border exceeded \$2.92 billion, down over \$638 million compared with the same period last year.

Myanmar has opened 18 border trade camps and conducts border trade with neighbouring China through Muse, Lweje, Kampaiti, Chinshwehaw and Kengtung with Thailand via Tachilek, Myawady, Kawthoung, Myeik, Hteekhee, Mawtaung and Maese checkpoints, with Bangladesh via Sittway and Maungtaung and with India through Tamu and Reed land borders, 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



The trade volume at Muse border trade on the China-Myanmar border exceeded \$2.92 billion, down over \$638 million compared with the same period last year.

Sesame price slips on weak demand



Myanmar's sesame seeds export has earned US\$287.75 million in the seven months (October-April) of the current financial year 2020-2021, according to data released by the Myanmar Customs Department.

THE COVID-19-induced low demand resulted in the price slide of sesame seeds in the domestic market, the sesame traders stressed.

At present, the COVID-19 surge impacted freight forwarding, logistics and transport. Warehouses and commodity depots in the states and regions have temporarily shut down to contain the spread of the COVID-19.

Furthermore, China has banned all the border posts with Myanmar in the wake of the COVID-19 threat, causing a drastic drop in sesame demand.

In early July, the black sesame seeds touched a high of K160,000 per 45-viss bag, whereas the sesame seeds fetch only K130,000-140,000 per bag in July-end.

Furthermore, the shipping rates and the container

cost are rocketing in maritime trade amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, posing the toughest hurdles for exporters, said a trader from Bayintnaung Wholesale Centre.

Myanmar's sesame seeds export has earned US\$287.75 million in the seven months (October-April) of the current financial year 2020-2021, according to data released by the Myanmar Customs Department.

Typically, Myanmar exports about 80 per cent of sesame production to foreign markets. China is the leading buyer of Myanmar sesame, which was also shipped to markets in Japan, South Korea, China (Taipei), the UK, Germany, the Netherlands, Greece, and Poland of the EU countries.

EU markets prefer organic-farming sesame seeds from Myanmar. Japan pre-

fers Myanmar black sesame seeds, cultivated under good agricultural practices (GAP), and purchases them after a quality assessment. Black sesame seeds from Myanmar were previously exported to South Korea and Japan.

China usually purchases various coloured sesame seeds from the country, yet, the trade grinds to a halt. This year, Japan has not purchased Myanmar's sesame yet.

Sesame is cultivated in the country throughout the year. Magway Region, which has gained a reputation as the oil pot of Myanmar, is the primary producer of sesame seeds. The seeds are also grown in Mandalay and Sagaing regions.

Of the cooking oil crops grown in Myanmar, the acreage under sesame seed is the highest, accounting for 51.3 per cent of the overall oil crop plantation.

The volume of sesame exports has registered at over 96,000 metric tons, worth \$130 million, in the financial year 2015-2016, 100,000 tonnes, worth \$145 million, in the 2016-2017FY, 120,000 tonnes, worth \$147 million, in the 2017-2018FY, 33,900 tonnes valued at \$43.8 million in the 2018 mini-budget period, 125,800 tonnes, worth \$212.5 million in the 2018-2019FY, and over 150,000 tonnes of sesame, worth \$240 million in the previous 2019-2020FY, respectively, the trade data of Central Statistical Organization indicated. — Ko Htet/GNLM

Thailand placed Myanmar top trading partner among regional countries in 7 months

BILATERAL trade with neighbouring Thailand, Myanmar's major trading partner among ASEAN, accounts for US\$2.85 billion in the seven months (October-April) of the current financial year 2020-2021, the statistics issued by the Central Statistical Organization of the Ministry of Planning, Finance and Industry indicated.

The ministry reported that exports surpassed imports in trade with Thailand, with exports reaching over \$1.83 billion and imports valued at over \$1 billion.

Thailand has been Myanmar's largest trade partner among the regional countries, followed by Singapore and Malaysia.

Thailand accounted for 18.48 per cent of total trade in the 2016-2017FY with an estimated trade value of US\$4.6 billion, 19.17 per cent in the 2017-2018FY with a trade value of \$5.57 billion, 40.38 per cent in the 2018-2019FY with \$5.46 billion and over 40 per cent in the 2019-2020FY with \$5.117 billion, respectively.

Exports of natural gas from the Taninthayi Region contributed to the enormous increase in border trade with Thailand in the previous years. Last year, corn exports to Thailand also rose significantly as well, the Ministry of Commerce stated.

Myanmar primarily exports natural gas, fishery products, coal, tin concentrate (SN 71.58 per cent), coconut (fresh and dry), beans, corns, bamboo shoots, sesame seeds, garment, footwear, plywood and veneer, broken rice and other commodities to Thailand. It imports capital goods such as machinery, raw industrial goods such as cement and fertilizers, and consumer goods such as cosmetics, edible vegetable oil and food products from the neighbouring country.

Myanmar is carrying out border trade with the neighbouring country Thailand through Tachilek, Myawady, Myeik, Mawtaung, Hteekhee, Kawthoung and Maese land borders, respectively. Among them, Myawady performed the largest trade in border trade with Thailand, followed by Hteekhee.

Nevertheless, the trading activity via the border is sluggish amid the COVID-19 surge. Consequently, the trade via land borders sharply fell in the current FY (2020-2021) as against last year.

Apart from its main trade partner China, Myanmar's external trade was mostly carried out with the regional trade partners. — KK/GNLM

Shortages of labour cannot bring good results to society

EVERY workplace must be constituted with an actual number of organizational setups to operate the manufacturing the production at full capacity. All participants in the workplaces need to serve their assigned duties under the division of labour system. If so, they can work with the least mistakes.

Some businesspersons reduce the strength of labour from the workplaces because they wish to cut the labour charge. Consequently, the workers with overloads cannot pour out their strengths in full swing in manufacturing. The overloaded workers cannot create initiatives for the improvement of workplaces. They will lose the freshness and sharpening in production.

Moreover, it is necessary to honour the workers who show

off brilliant efforts in the workplace. Officials need to give a word of encouragement to those outstanding employees for their better performances. If so, those workers will have active participation in the workplaces. In addition, some employees are serving the tasks which are two more steps higher than their positions. But, such employees can serve the tasks dutifully with goodwill. If so, it is necessary to honour those employees and then promote their ranks in harmony with their efforts.

If employers turn a blind eye to the efforts of the employees, no one will emerge for serving the duties beyond their limits and no one is keen to pour out the efforts because they may seem their efforts would not be deserved for the workplaces. In fact, a word of encouragement spoken by the employers may be happy for the workers.

That is why employers or responsible departmental officials need to assess their subordinates who are hard-working for the workplace and who are opportunists. If a situation comes out to give chances to the workers, it is necessary to set aside the opportunists while honouring the workers in hard working. For example, promotion of ranks must be created for those who made utmost efforts for the workplaces.

Everybody wishes to live in peace with convenience. No one can pour out the efforts in workplaces with tiredness and exhaustion. But dutiful employees work hard in manufacturing for uplifting their prestige and integrity. They never surrender to the difficulties of their workplaces. So, we should honour them.

■ ■ ■

But dutiful employees work hard in manufacturing for uplifting their prestige and integrity. They never surrender to the difficulties of their workplaces. So, we should honour them.

Chinese vaccines play vital role in Thailand's battle against COVID-19

In Thailand's fight against the coronavirus and its variants, Chinese vaccines have played a vital role in inoculating its people, with millions having received either a Sinovac or Sinopharm jab.

THE Sinovac vaccine, the first COVID-19 vaccine that entered Thailand, has helped the Southeast Asian country kick-start its national inoculation programme. It's also the primary vaccine in the national roll-out.

As of Saturday, China has provided to Thailand 17 batches of vaccines, totalling 17.5 million doses, according to data from the Chinese Embassy in Thailand.

HIGHLY EFFECTIVE

As the world's largest COVID-19 vaccine supplier, China has provided more than 500 million doses and concentrates to over 100 countries and international organizations, accounting for one sixth of the total global output.

With Chinese vaccines being administered worldwide, they have been found, according to multiple studies, highly effective in preventing infection, hospitalization, severe illness and death from the virus.

In Thailand, a field study by the Ministry of Public Health (MOPH) among high-risk groups that had received Sinovac jabs in three worst-hit regions, found that two jabs of Sinovac vaccine can offer a strong protection against COVID-19 infection and pneumo-



Workers arrange vaccine packages at a Sinovac COVID-19 vaccine workshop in Beijing on 18 January, 2021. PHOTO: ZHANG YUWEI/XINHUA

nia, for cases of either Alpha variant or Delta variant.

The study, conducted during the April-June period, has shown that in April and May, when the Alpha variant was spreading in Thailand, two jabs of Sinovac provided about 90 per cent protection against COVID-19 infection and were 85 per cent effective against lung infection, while in June, when 20 to 40 per cent of COVID-19 cases

were caused by the Delta variant, two Sinovac jabs showed 75 per cent effectiveness.

Amid changes caused by new virus variants, "our field studies have not found a decrease in (Sinovac) vaccine effectiveness," said Taweessup Siraphrasiri, an official with Thailand's Department of Disease Control.

Another study run by the Centre of Excellence in Clinical

Virology of the Faculty of Medicine at Thailand's Chulalongkorn University, has found that the Sinovac vaccine has extremely high efficacy in boosting immune responses against COVID-19.

The study showed that 99.49 per cent of the recipients had developed antibody responses four weeks after their second shots, while three weeks after the first shot, around 66 per cent of the

recipients had developed immune responses.

Experts stressed that breakthrough infections do not mean vaccines are pointless, as immunization helps protect people against COVID-19-induced severe illness. On Saturday, Thailand reported 14,260 new cases and 119 more deaths, raising the total number of infections to 481,967 and cumulative fatalities to 3,930.

SAVING LIVES

The Chinese vaccines, with the first batch arriving in February, have supported Thailand's fight against the second wave of the outbreak that started in mid-December and a third wave that began in early April.

Thailand's original vaccination plan, centred on AstraZeneca vaccine produced by local firm Siam Bioscience, hit a snag, with the first batch of locally-manufactured AstraZeneca vaccine delivered in June. "It's hard to imagine how many more medical workers and people might have been infected if they have not been inoculated with the Sinovac vaccine during the past few months, and how many more lives might have been cost?" said Prakrit Vathesatogkit, an expert on lung diseases at Thailand's Ramathibodi Hospi-

tal, Mahidol University.

As the country is grappling with the third wave, also the most deadly wave, which has overwhelmed its medical system, it needs speedy vaccine roll-out to control the situation.

Thailand needs and will continue to use the Sinovac vaccine because of its effectiveness and quick delivery, as "we do not have to wait until the fourth quarter of the year or even next year" for supplies, said Taweessup.

Thailand has so far approved six vaccines for emergency use, but only three of them are now available for injection, namely the AstraZeneca as well as China's Sinovac and Sinopharm.

As of Wednesday, the country had administered more than 15 million doses of vaccine, including more than 7.8 million doses of Sinovac and 558,179 doses of Sinopharm, according to data from the MOPH. Some 5 per cent of the entire population have been fully vaccinated, far below the government's target of vaccinating 70 per cent of the people by the end of the year. Looking at the government's vaccine distribution per day, it is still far away from the vaccination target, which is a big concern, Puey said.

SOURCE: Xinhua

World Bank to finance extra Covid jabs for poorer nations

A new World Bank financing mechanism will allow developing countries to purchase Covid-19 vaccines collectively through the Covax facility, it was announced Monday.

COVAX was set up to ensure 92 developing territories could access coronavirus vaccines to fight the pandemic, with the cost covered by donors.

The new mechanism will allow those countries to buy additional doses on top of the subsidized ones they will already receive via Covax.

Using money from the World Bank and other development banks, the facility says it will make advanced purchases from vaccine manufacturers based on aggregated demand across countries.

The financing mechanism builds on the existing Covax cost-sharing arrangement which aims to provide 430 million additional doses, or enough doses to fully vaccinate 250 million people, for delivery between late 2021 and mid-2022 for the 92 countries.

Those doses could be purchased through new financing arrangement.

Countries should also have some flexibility in selecting to buy particular vaccines that align with their preferences.

Covax is co-led by the World

Health Organization (WHO), the Gavi vaccine alliance and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations.

The financing mechanism "will allow Covax to unlock additional doses for low- and middle-income countries" Gavi chief executive Seth Berkley said in a statement.

"As we move beyond initial targets and work to support countries' efforts to protect increasingly large portions of their populations, World Bank financing will help us advance further towards our goal

of bringing Covid-19 under control."

Vaccine inequity

The WHO has raged against the staggering imbalance in global distribution of Covid-19 vaccine doses. Nearly 3.9 billion doses of Covid-19 vaccines have been injected around the world in at least 216 territories, according to an AFP count. In high-income countries, as defined by the World Bank, 95.4 doses have been administered per 100 inhabitants.

SOURCE: AFP



Boxes containing doses of US Johnson & Johnson Covid vaccines donated through the COVAX mechanism arrive in Bolivia. PHOTO: AFP

MYANMAR GAZETTE

Confirmation and Appointment of Head of Service Organization

THE State Administration Council has confirmed and appointed U Aung Htay Win, Director-General of the Department of Labour Relations under the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population, after his one-year probationary period.



Myanmar Daily Weather Report (Issued at 4:00 pm Tuesday 27 July 2021)

BAY INFERENCE: According to the observation at (15:30)hrs MST today, the low pressure area over the North Bay of Bengal still persists. Monsoon is strong to vigorous over the Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL MORNING OF THE 28 July 2021: Rain or thundershowers will be scattered in Lower Sagaing, Mandalay and Magway Regions and fairly widespread in Northern Shan State and widespread in the remaining Regions and States with likelihood of regionally heavyfalls in Rakhine, Kayin, Mon States and isolated heavyfalls in Bago, Yangon, Ayeyawady, Taninthayi Regions and Kachin, Chin States. Degree of certainty is (100%).

STATE OF THE SEA: Occasional squalls with rough seas will be experienced off and along Myanmar Coasts. Surface wind speed in squalls may reach (40)m.p.h. Wave height will be about (9 -12)feet off and along Myanmar Coasts.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Continuation of increase of rain in Rakhine State.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 28 July 2021: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 28 July 2021: Some rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 28 July 2021: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (80%).

သတင်းစာ ဖာယူလိုပါက ဆက်သွယ်နိုင်ပါတယ်

09 454 237 515

သတင်းစာ ဂျာနယ် စာစောင်များကို နိုင်ငံတကာစံချိန်စို ပုံနှိပ်လိုပါက ဆက်သွယ်နိုင်ပါတယ်

01 860 4530

ကြေးမြို့နယ်များနှင့် ကြေးမြို့နယ်အတွင်းရှိ မြို့ကြီးကြီး ဝယ်ယူချင်ပါက ထိုမြို့ကြီးဆက်သွယ် ဆွေးနွေးနိုင်ပါတယ်

09 974 424 848

Russia PM visits disputed isle off Japan’s Hokkaido

RUSSIA’S Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin on Monday visited a Russian-held island claimed by Tokyo off Hokkaido for the first time since a constitutional amendment last July barred the country from ceding territory, Russian officials said.

The visit to Etorofu Island, known as Iturup in Russia, also marked the first trip to one of the disputed islets off Japan’s northernmost main island by a Russian prime minister since Mishustin’s predecessor Dmitry Medvedev’s visit in August 2018.

In Tokyo, Japanese Vice-Foreign Minister Takeo Mori lodged a protest with Russian Ambassador to Japan Mikhail Galuzin over Mishustin’s visit,

the Japanese Foreign Ministry said.

“The protest is unacceptable in light of our basic stance that the islands were handed over legally as a result of World War II,” Galuzin told reporters after the meeting.

Galuzin declined to comment when asked what would be the consequence of the visit by Mishustin, the second most powerful figure in Russia after President Vladimir Putin, in terms of future negotiations with Japan.

Following Tokyo’s protest, Russia’s Deputy Foreign Minister Igor Morgulov in turn lodged a protest with Japanese Ambassador Toyohisa Kozuki over the move, Russia’s Foreign Ministry

said.

Mishustin inspected a hospital on the island Monday as part of a four-day trip to the Russian Far East and Siberia, according to the Russian government. He then headed to a seafood processing complex on the island, according to local reports.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Katsunobu Kato said at a press conference earlier in the day that Mishustin’s trip “conflicts with Japan’s consistent position on the Northern Territories and is very regrettable.”—Kyodo ■

Mishustin inspected a hospital on the island Monday as part of a four-day trip to the Russian Far East and Siberia. **PHOTO: KYODO**



Lebanon picks billionaire Najib Mikati to form new govt



Lebanon’s President Michel Aoun (L) meeting with two-time premier Najib Mikati at the presidential palace in Baabda, east of the capital Beirut on July 26, 2021. **PHOTO: DALATI AND NOHRA/ AFP**

LEBANESE lawmakers on Monday tasked ex-premier and billionaire Najib Mikati with forming a government and ending one year of politi-

cal deadlock that has crippled the economy.

A new government would face the daunting task of trying to steer Lebanon out of what the

World Bank says is one of the world’s worst financial crises in more than 150 years, and to polls due to take place next year.

Mikati, a 65-year-old telecommunications mogul seen by some as a symbol of Lebanon’s corrupt oligarchy, called his designation a “difficult step” and urged the Lebanese people to support him.

“I don’t have a magic wand and, alone, I can’t make miracles happen,” he said. Mikati will pick up where his predecessor Saad Hariri left off earlier this month when he quit after failing to broker a deal despite intense international pressure.—AFP ■

Explosion shakes chemicals site in Germany

AN explosion at an industrial park for chemical companies shook the German city of Leverkusen on Tuesday, sending a large black cloud rising into the air.

Germany’s disaster agency said the explosion was “an extreme threat” and told residents to stay inside and keep windows and doors closed.

Operators of the Chempark site in Leverkusen, about 20 kilometres north of Cologne on the Rhine river, said the cause of the explosion was unclear.

The explosion happened in a part of the site where waste is



A cloud of black smoke rises above an industrial park in Leverkusen, Germany, following an explosion on Tuesday. **PHOTO: AFP**

incinerated, a spokesperson for Currenta said. Firefighters and pollution detection vans were deployed.—AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Yemen’s warring sides converge on strategic district

YEMEN’S warring sides have deployed reinforcements to the outskirts of a strategic central district, a government military source said on Monday, after Huthi rebels made significant gains in the nearby province of Al-Bayda.

The possible fall to the rebels of the district of Bayhan, near the border with the government’s last northern stronghold of Marib, could pose a major threat to the government. The Iran-backed Huthis escalated their efforts to seize Marib in February, and the fighting has killed hundreds on both sides.

Control of the oil-rich region would strengthen the Huthis’ bargaining position in peace talks. The battle has also raised fears of a humanitarian catastrophe, as many Yemenis had fled to the area to escape fighting in other parts of the country.

A government military source told AFP that fighters from both sides were dispatched to the outskirts of Bayhan after the Huthis seized control of two districts in nearby Al-Bayda province.

Al-Bayda’s deputy governor Ahmed al-Humayqani told AFP on Sunday that the insurgents had taken control of the Nateh and Naman districts, displacing many civilians. The districts “fell without a major military confrontation”, he said, adding that about 80 per cent of residents had fled their homes.

“We, in Al-Bayda, are facing a humanitarian catastrophe, and we call on organizations to intervene urgently to help alleviate people’s suffering,” said Humayqani. Another government official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the Huthis seized Nateh on Saturday after the withdrawal of government troops who are backed by a Saudi-led military coalition.— AFP ■

NATO chief urges ‘negotiated settlement’ in Afghanistan

NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg on Tuesday reiterated calls for a “negotiated settlement” with the Taliban in Afghanistan, admitting the country faced a “deeply challenging” security situation as foreign troops leave.

“The security situation in Afghanistan remains deeply challenging, and requires a negotiated settlement. NATO will continue to support Afghanistan, including with funding; civilian presence; and out-of-country training,” Stoltenberg wrote on Twitter after speaking to Afghan President Ashraf Ghani.— AFP ■

Virus-wracked Indonesia to loosen COVID Curbs

Virus-wracked Indonesia said Sunday that small businesses and some shopping malls could reopen despite warnings that loosening curbs could spark another devastating COVID-19 wave, even as it moved to extend a web of restrictions launched this month.

President Joko Widodo said measures imposed in early July would continue until 2 August as the highly infectious Delta variant tears across the South-east Asian archipelago, which has been overtaking battered India and Brazil as the world's

virus epicentre.

But he added that "adjustments" would be made to a shutdown that closed malls, restaurants, parks and offices including in the capital Jakarta, hard-hit Java and on holiday island Bali.

Traditional markets, roadside vendors and ubiquitous open-air restaurants known as warungs would be among businesses allowed to reopen Monday with restrictions, even in the worst-affected areas.

Shopping malls and mosques in less hard-hit parts of the Muslim majority country

would also get the green light to swing open their doors to limited crowds and hours.

Offices would remain subject to shutdown orders, the government said.

However, there have been widespread reports of employers forcing non-essential employees to work even under the current lockdown.

Widodo, pointing to falling daily infection and hospital occupancy rates, said any loosening would be done "gradually and carefully". Official case rates are down from more than 50,000 a



This picture taken on 4 May 2021 shows a worker pulling a trolley along the road of a wholesale market in Jakarta. **PHOTO: AFP**

day. But testing rates have also declined at the same time, while the number of positive results remains high – suggesting that the virus was still spreading quickly. —AFP ■

Melbourne to lift virus lockdown as Delta outbreak contained

MELBOURNE'S coronavirus lockdown will be lifted late Tuesday, as authorities signalled a Delta variant outbreak in Australia's second-biggest city had been contained.

Neighbouring South Australia state will also ease stay-at-home rules, but the country's largest city Sydney was facing a likely extension to a lockdown now in its fifth week.

After almost two weeks under stay-at-home orders, millions in Melbourne and surrounding Victoria state will exit their fifth lockdown just before midnight Tuesday.

The state had now "seen off two Delta outbreaks" in recent months, premier Dan Andrews said. "It's not over, though, and we've got to be vigilant against



Australia's second-largest city Melbourne will lift a coronavirus lockdown as authorities signalled a Delta variant outbreak was contained. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

this virus, the Delta strain, in the days and weeks and months ahead until we get as many people vaccinated as we possibly can," he added.

"That is some time away." Schools, restaurants and shops will reopen but restrictions including mask-wearing will remain.—AFP ■

Bonus prize for an Olympic medal: 30 seconds mask-free

OLYMPIC athletes have received an extra incentive for winning a medal after organizers said they could remove their masks for 30 seconds for photos on the podium.

Medal-winners were urged not to abuse the relaxation in the rules at the Tokyo Games, which have been marked by their strict anti-coronavirus measures after opening a year late.

"The idea is to give those athletes who have been competing, when everyone else has stepped back, the chance to remove their mask for 30 seconds, staying on those steps for photos," International Olympic



Medal winners will be allowed to take off their mask for 30 seconds on the podium. **PHOTO: AFP**

Committee spokesman Mark Adams said on Monday. "I think everyone appreciates, one, that the risk is very, very, very, low, and two, completely understandable." Athletes are under orders to wear their masks unless training, competing, eating, drinking or sleeping, and are being tested daily.—AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Ryanair losses widen on Covid travel restrictions

Irish no-frills airline Ryanair on Monday announced a widening of losses in its first quarter, hit by Covid travel restrictions in Europe.

Losses after tax hit 272.6 million euros (\$321 million) in the group's first quarter, or three months to June 30.

That compared with a net loss of 185.1 million euros one year earlier for the Dublin-based carrier that flies mainly throughout Europe.

"Covid-19 continued to wreak havoc on our business during the first quarter with most Easter flights cancelled and a slower-than-expected easing of EU government travel restrictions into May and June," Ryanair chief executive Michael O'Leary said in the company's earnings statement.

Costs more than doubled in its first quarter, offsetting a near trebling of revenues.

Traveller numbers however soared to 8.1 million from just half-a-million one year earlier.

And Ryanair was experiencing a "strong rebound of pent up travel demand into August and September", noted O'Leary, adding that the airline expects the rebound to continue.—AFP ■

.....

Vietnam: Economic hub imposes night curfew as country battles virus surge

MORE than 10 million residents of Ho Chi Minh City will be placed under a strict overnight curfew beginning Monday, an unprecedented move to curb infections as Vietnam battles a rapid Covid-19 surge.

After successfully containing limited coronavirus outbreaks last year, the communist country is now recording increasing infections and deaths fuelled by the highly contagious Delta variant.

Hardest-hit are the northern industrial centres and Ho Chi Minh City in the south, which has registered more than 62,000 infections since April -- making up the bulk of Vietnam's 101,000 cases.

Authorities have restricted movement in the once-bustling economic hub for more than two months, and imposed a lockdown in early July. Residents are allowed to leave home only for medical emergencies and food.

But beginning Monday, an additional, strict stay-at-home order will be in effect from 6 pm to 6 am local time -- though authorities refused to use the word "curfew". No end date was announced for the measure.

"Local law enforcement will need to step up patrols... and issue appropriate penalties for offenders, even detention in cases of resistance," said city mayor Nguyen Thanh Phong, according to state media.

Almost all public transport links with the city have already been suspended, while travellers originating from the city are required to stay in mandatory quarantine centres for at least two weeks.— AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Yamato Holdings invests in Singaporean e-commerce solution provider

JAPAN'S logistics giant Yamato Holdings Co. is investing in Singaporean e-commerce solution provider iStore iSend Pte. Ltd. to explore new business opportunities in Asia's rapidly growing e-commerce market.

Tokyo-based Yamato said Monday it made the investment in the Singaporean firm through its investment arm Kuroneko Innovation Fund without releasing the amount or an investment ratio.

According to Yamato, iStore iSend is an e-commerce enablement and fulfillment services firm, providing end-to-end services from website creation, storage and pick-and-pack to delivery arrangements via its proprietary system in Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia. The Singaporean firm deals with more than 30 foreign fast-moving consumer goods brands and about 300 local direct-to-consumer brands.—Kyodo ■

US seeks more time to refile Facebook antitrust case

US antitrust enforcers have asked a federal court for extra time in refiling a monopoly abuse case against Facebook which could roll back its acquisition of Instagram and WhatsApp, but was thrown out last month.

The Federal Trade Commission said Facebook did not oppose the request to extend the filing deadline by some three weeks until August 19, according to a filing in court Friday and posted online Monday.

The extension gives the FTC time to revise its argument in the case.

Last month, Judge James Boasberg of the US District Court of Washington, DC, said in a 53-page opinion that the agency's initial lawsuit lacked evidence, notably in defining the market that Facebook was allegedly monopolizing.

The federal agency based its case on a "vague" assertion that Facebook controlled more than 60 per cent of the social networking market, but the FTC "does not even allege what it is measuring," according to the judge's June 28 ruling.—AFP ■

Trial begins in 'rotten' Vatican financial scandal



It is not known whether former cardinal Angelo Becciu will appear on the trial's opening day. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

A financial scandal involving an opaque, loss-making Vatican property deal paid for with charity funds goes to trial Tuesday after a two-year probe that

has implicated a once-powerful cardinal.

Vatican prosecutors allege that ten defendants, including high-rolling London financiers

and church employees, engaged in various crimes such as embezzlement, fraud, and corruption.

It is unclear whether former cardinal Angelo Becciu, then number two at the powerful Secretariat of State, will appear in the makeshift courtroom held within the Vatican Museums on the trial's opening day.

Becciu, 73, who says he is the innocent victim of a plot, is the highest-profile defendant embroiled in the Church's ruinous purchase of a 17,000-sq metre London property in the upmarket neighbourhood of Chelsea under his watch.

The case against Becciu, which carries charges of embezzlement, abuse of office and witness tampering, also includes separate allegations over hundreds of thousands of

euros of church funds paid to his brother's charity.

The trial ensnaring the former right-hand man to Pope Francis -- who was fired by the pontiff in September and stripped of his privileges as cardinal -- represents the first time a cardinal has been indicted by Vatican criminal prosecutors in modern history.

Bags of money

The complex case alleged by prosecutors paints a picture of dubious, risky investments involving millions of dollars of Vatican money, little or no oversight, and double-dealing by outside consultants and insiders trusted with the financial interests of the Secretariat of State, the Vatican's most important department charged with general affairs and diplomacy.—AFP ■

EU extends 'ghost flight' slot rule for COVID-hit airlines

BRUSSELS said on Monday it had extended rules aimed at avoiding "ghost flights" by carriers trying to keep airport slots as they struggle to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

"As the aviation industry begins to recover from the impact of the COVID-19 crisis, the European Commission remains determined to maintain the relaxation of ordinary slot allocation rules for airlines," a statement said.

"The relief will, therefore, be extended to the next winter planning season, which runs from 31 October 2021, to 27 March 2022." The regulation lowers the requirement for airlines to fly at least 80 per cent of the time to



An Emirates Airlines' Boeing 777 from Dubai lands to Nice airport, in the French Riviera city. **PHOTO: VALERY HACHE/AFP**

hold on to highly-prized take-off and landing slots at airports to 50 per cent. The rules were relaxed last year with the aim of cutting

down on the number of empty or near-empty "ghost flights" as airlines carried on flying despite steep drops in passenger num-

bers. Initially Brussels gave the carriers a complete waiver for maintaining slots but then hiked the required quota of flights back up to 50 per cent ahead of this year's summer season.

Some airline representatives have slammed the decision to maintain that figure into next year as "out of touch with reality" and insisted the threshold needs to be lowered for the upcoming winter months. The International Air Transport Association (IATA) complained that the rules "restrict the ability of airlines to operate with the agility needed to respond to unpredictable and rapidly changing demand, leading to environmentally wasteful and unnecessary flights".—AFP ■

Abu Dhabi slashes business registration costs by 90%



Abu Dhabi's skyline at sunset. **PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/AFP**

ABU Dhabi will slash the cost of establishing new businesses by

"more than 90 per cent" from Tuesday to increase the "compet-

itiveness regionally and internationally" of the emirate, already a magnet for commerce. In recent weeks authorities have ramped up efforts to woo new business to Abu Dhabi, one of seven emirates that make up the United Arab Emirates. Corporate taxes are practically zero in the UAE as it seeks to diversify its previously oil-based economy. "Business set-up fees in Abu Dhabi emirate have been reduced to AED1,000 (€230) — a reduction of more than 90 per cent," the Abu Dhabi government media office said in a statement late on Sunday. The

new tariff will see the scrapping of some fees that were previously payable to different public bodies and the reduction of others, and will come into force from Tuesday, 27 July it added.

"The move will significantly enhance ease of doing business in the emirate and increase Abu Dhabi's competitiveness regionally and internationally," the statement said. According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, the United Arab Emirates is among "jurisdictions with no or insignificant taxes".—AFP ■

Covid woes and chip shortages keep Tata Motors in the red

LOSSES at India's Tata Motors narrowed between April and June, boosted by a 108-per-cent jump in revenues, the company said Monday, even as Covid-19 lockdowns and semi-conductor shortages hit its bottom line. Consolidated net losses at the owners of the Jaguar and Land Rover brands reduced by 47 per cent to 44.50 billion rupees (\$598 million) in the quarter ending June 30, compared to 84.43 billion rupees in the same period last year.

Although a brutal new pandemic wave prompted temporary plant closures

in April, the restrictions were less severe than the total shutdown imposed 12 months earlier.

The auto giant's quarterly revenues more than doubled to 664.06 billion rupees year-on-year.

Sales at its UK-based subsidiary Jaguar Land Rover (JLR) jumped 68 per cent year-on-year as the British luxury car brand pursued a steady recovery.

However, JLR said a global shortage of semi-conductor chips hit production, resulting in a pre-tax loss of £110 million in the quarter.

Semi-conductor production cuts during the pandemic have caused a global shortage of the microchips -- a crucial raw material in the electronics that are now a key component in cars.

Earlier this month, Britain's largest car manufacturer said the shortages could lead to a halving of sales during the July-September quarter.

"Though the current environment continues to remain challenging, we will continue to adapt and manage elements that are within our control," JLR chief executive Thierry



The auto giant's quarterly revenues more than doubled to 664.06 billion rupees year-on-year. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

Bollore said in a statement following the results. "We remain encouraged by the sheer strength of the demand for our vehicles," he added.— AFP ■

Amazon eyes cryptocurrency but not poised for Bitcoin



The cryptocurrency sector is known as a bit of a roller coaster ride for investors, and is being watched warily by authorities and regulators concerned about its lack of transparency. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

AMAZON on Monday denied a report that the e-commerce giant planned

interest in cryptocurrency. City AM cited as unnamed insider as saying Amazon would start taking cryptocurrency, citing a recent job posting by the company for someone with digital currency and blockchain skills. Contacted by AFP, an Amazon spokesperson said information in the story was "fabricated", but that the company does have its eyes on the cryptocurrency sector.

"Notwithstanding our interest in the space, the speculation that has ensued around our specific plans for cryptocurrencies is not true," the spokesperson said.

"We remain focused on what this could look like for customers shopping on Amazon."The cryptocurrency sector is known as a bit of a roller coaster ride for investors, and is being watched warily by authorities and regulators concerned about its lack of transparency. **PHOTO: AFP/File**Cryptocurrency values climbed on speculation that it might be accepted for Amazon purchases.—AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Tesla quarterly profits top \$1 bn for 1st time

US electric carmaker Tesla reported its first-ever quarterly profit above \$1 billion Monday as it reiterated its 2021 production targets despite supply chain upheaval.

Profits surged to \$1.1 billion in the quarter ending June 30, up from \$104 million in the year-ago period as revenues nearly doubled to \$12.0 billion. The fast-growing automaker led by Elon Musk delivered more than 200,000 vehicles in the period, also a record.

Tesla reiterated its 2021 forecast, saying: "Over a multi-year horizon, we expect to achieve 50% average annual growth in vehicle deliveries. In some years we may grow faster, which we expect to be the case in 2021." The language is identical to that in the prior quarter, although Tesla alluded elsewhere in the press release to supply chain problems. These include the global semiconductor shortage that has forced General Motors, Ford and other manufacturers to trim production. "With global vehicle demand at record levels, component supply will have a strong influence on the rate of our delivery growth for the rest of this year," Tesla said.—AFP ■

American Airlines urges pilots to conserve jet fuel

AMERICAN Airlines on Monday urged its pilots to do everything possible to save fuel, warning that a supply crunch in the United States is challenging company operations.

"Use all available fuel savings strategies when possible," Managing Director of Flight Operations John Dudley said in a memo to pilots. "Every gallon of jet fuel saved is helpful." Factors behind the supply crunch include shortages of the fuel itself as well as trucks to transport it and drivers, Dudley said. "These challenges are

not only impacting airports and airlines but also the efforts to fight the large forest fires on the West Coast," the memo said.

The fuel crunch is the latest problem facing US carriers, which are experiencing a vaccine-fuelled surge in travel demand after a sharp downturn last year during the worst of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The fuel shortages were found initially in the western United States, but "are now being reported at American stations across the country," Dudley said, adding that fuel delivery de-



American Airlines on Monday urged its pilots to do everything possible to save fuel, warning that a supply crunch in the United States is challenging company operations. **PHOTO: JOEL SAGET/AFP**

lays were expected through mid-August. Dennis Tajer, a spokesman for the Allied Pilots Association (APA), said he expects planes to fly with more fuel than is needed to complete their journey when they travel from cities where fuel is more abundant into cities where supplies are tight.—AFP ■

Amendment to the Open Tender No 3/2021

1. Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation; Department of Mines announced the invitation for open tender regarding the sale of (5008.574) Metric Tons; (21) Lots of Cathode Copper was advertised in state-owned newspapers with the announcement that it would be sold in US dollars and an open tender would be opened on 21.7.2021. However, the open tender will be postponed to 30.7.2021 as the tender opening date is part of the government holidays. The announcement was made in the state-owned newspapers from 16.7.2021 to 18.7.2021.

2. The tender has been rescheduled to open on 30.7.2021, which is now included in the extended public holidays, so the tender opening date will be rescheduled as follows:

(A) Closing date and time: 20.8.2021 (14:00)

(B) opening date and time: 20.8.2021 (15:00)

3. For any further detailed information, it is requested to contact the telephone numbers: 067-3409378 and 067-3409372, Mineral Development Division, Department of Mines, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation.

Tender Committee
Department of Mines

How will Iran's next gov't embrace nuke talks?



Iran's Foreign Ministry has recently confirmed that the Vienna talks to revive the Iran nuclear deal would continue as normal after President-elect Ebrahim Raisi is sworn in on 5 Aug. **PHOTO: AFP**

IRAN'S Foreign Ministry has recently confirmed that the Vienna talks to revive the Iran nuclear deal would continue as normal

after President-elect Ebrahim Raisi is sworn in on Aug. 5.

The next Iranian administration faces complicated negotiations over the revival of the 2015 nuclear deal, internationally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), but it should remain prudent and avoid approaches which might harm its national interests, Iranian analysts said. The U.S. government under former President Donald Trump withdrew from the 2015 agreement in May 2018 and unilaterally re-imposed sanctions on Iran. In response, Iran gradually stopped implementing parts of its commitments to the deal in May 2019.

POWER TRANSITION

Iran will continue to attend the Vienna talks to revive the nuclear agreement after Raisi and his cabinet take office, Iran's Foreign Ministry said on 19 July.

Ministry spokesperson, Saeed Khatibzadeh, said during an online press conference that Iran's policy will not change under the new administration.

Iran, he added, will return to its commitments as soon as the United States returns to its obligations and Iran verifies it.

As for the U.S. side, "we remain open to continuing and ultimately to completing the JCPOA discussions in a productive manner," State Department

spokesman Ned Price told reporters recently. "We were prepared to continue negotiating, but the Iranians have requested more time to deal with their presidential transition," he said, adding that "we recognize, along with the international community, the advantage of a mechanism that ensures permanently and verifiably that Iran cannot acquire a nuclear weapon." Between 6 April and 20 June the JCPOA Joint Commission, attended by a U.S. delegation indirectly, held offline talks in Vienna to discuss a possible return of the United States to the JCPOA and how to ensure the full and effective implementation of the deal.—Xinhua ■

UN warns of 'unprecedented' Afghan civilian deaths from Taliban offensives

THE United Nations warned Monday that Afghanistan could see the highest number of civilian deaths in more than a decade if the Taliban's offensives across the country are not halted.

Violence has surged since early May when the insurgents cranked up operations to coincide with a final withdrawal of US-led foreign forces. In a report released Monday documenting civilian casualties for the first half of 2021, the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) said it expected figures to touch their highest single-year levels since the mission began reporting

over a decade ago. It also warned that Afghan troops and pro-government forces were responsible for a quarter of all civilian casualties. "Unprecedented numbers of Afghan civilians will perish and be maimed this year if the increasing violence is not stemmed," UNAMA head Deborah Lyons said in a statement released with the report. "I implore the Taliban and Afghan leaders to take heed to the conflict's grim and chilling trajectory and its devastating impact on civilians."

During the first half of 2021, some 1,659 civilians were killed and another 3,254 wounded, the



It also warned that Afghan troops and pro-government forces were responsible for a quarter of all civilian casualties. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

UNAMA report said — a 47 per cent increase compared with the

same period last year.

The rise in civilian casualties was particularly sharp in May and June — the initial period of the Taliban's current offensives — with 783 civilians killed and 1,609 wounded, it added. "Particularly shocking and of deep concern is that women, boys and girls made up of close to half of all civilian casualties," the report said.

UNAMA blamed anti-government elements for 64 per cent of civilian casualties — including some 40 per cent caused by the Taliban and nearly nine per cent by the jihadist Islamic State group.— AFP ■

Japan horror manga win U.S. awards touted as Oscars of comic industry



Image shows Junji Ito's "Remina." **PHOTO: JUNJI ITO/SHOGAKUKAN INC/KYODO**

THE English editions of horror comics by Japanese manga artist Junji Ito have won two categories in this year's Eisner awards in the United States, considered

to be the Academy Awards of the comic industry, according to a Japanese publisher.

Shogakukan Inc., which published the two works for which the award was given, said Saturday the 57-year-old Ito's "Remina" won the Best U.S. Edition of International Material -- Asia, while this work and "Venus in the Blind Spot," a collection of short stories, won the Best Writer/Artist in the Will Eisner Comic Industry Awards.

"It's really like a dream. I want to take the fact that the two works I have a deep attachment to have been well evaluated in the United States as food for the mind," Ito said in a statement.

Ito previously won the Best Adaptation from Another Medium category of the Eisner awards in 2019 for his work

"Frankenstein: Junji Ito Story Collection."

"It is a great pleasure to know that Japanese comics and anime are popular even overseas and recognized (such as) through an internationally acclaimed award," said Chief Cabinet Secretary Katsunobu Kato at a regular press conference on Monday, referring to Ito's accolade. "The government will firmly support the overseas expansion of (Japanese) contents," Kato, the top government spokesman, said. Ito, a native of Gifu Prefecture, is known for manga works such as the horror "Tomie" series and "Uzumaki".

Japan's noted manga artists Osamu Tezuka, Naoki Urasawa and Katsuhiko Otomo are among the past winners of the Eisner awards.—Kyodo ■

Political parties urge U.S. to shut down hazardous biological labs: media

AT least 32 political parties worldwide have signed a petition calling for the closure of those U.S. military biological laboratories all over the world due to biosafety concerns, Ukrainian independent media outlet PolitiNavigator reported.

The petition against the proliferation of biological weapons was initiated by a coalition of political forces, which includes the Socialist Movement of Kazakhstan, the United Communist Party of Georgia, the Socialist Party of Latvia and the Communist Party of Pakistan.

As international struggle and competition intensifies, "the accumulated biological weapons can be used by the U.S. military to fight with its opponents, which will lead to catastrophic consequences," the petition said.

Statistics show that the United States has set up more than 200 overseas biological laboratories in 25 countries and regions, including Africa, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and the former Soviet Union, including 16 in Ukraine alone.

According to PolitiNavigator, there is evidence showing that biologists in the U.S. military are working in Kazakhstan to develop new methods of spreading infectious and deadly virus strains through livestock raised in Central Asia.—Xinhua ■

Two Koreas restore severed communications in surprise thaw



South Korean President Moon Jae-in (R) is credited with brokering the rapprochement between North Korea and the United States in 2018. **PHOTO: KCNA VIA KNS/AFP/FILE**

NORTH and South Korea signalled a surprise thaw in relations on Tuesday, announcing the restoration of cross-border communications that were severed more than a year ago and

an agreement between their two leaders to improve ties.

The joint announcement, which coincided with the anniversary of the end of the Korean War, was the first positive

development since a series of summits between the North's Kim Jong Un and the South's President Moon Jae-in in 2018 failed to achieve any significant breakthrough.

The two sides revealed that Kim and Moon had exchanged a series of letters since April in which they agreed that re-establishing hotlines would be a productive first step in re-booting relations between the two rivals who, despite the end of their 1950-53 conflict, remain technically at war.

"The top leaders of the north and the south agreed to make a big stride in recovering the mutual trust and promoting reconciliation by restoring the cut-off inter-Korean communication liaison lines," North Korea's official KCNA news agency reported.

Pyongyang unilaterally cut off all official military and political communication links in June last year over activists sending anti-Pyongyang leaflets across the border but the two sides said all lines were restored on Tuesday.—AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Haitian presidential security chief arrested over assassination

HAITIAN police said Monday they had arrested the head of Jovenel Moise's security as part of the ongoing investigation into the president's 7 July assassination.

Security chief Jean Laguel Civil is suspected of involvement in the plot that saw Moise killed at his home in the middle of the night by armed commandos who bypassed the president's guards without firing a shot.

Civil had already been placed in solitary confinement at a prison in Delmas, near Port-au-Prince.

"I can confirm that Jean Laguel Civil was arrested Monday by police as part of the investigation into the assassination of president Jovenel Moise," police spokeswoman Marie Michelle Verrier told AFP.

Port-au-Prince commissioner Bed-Ford Claude had already ordered immigration authorities to prohibit four police officers who were responsible for Moise's security from leaving the country.

Police on Monday also issued a warrant for Wendelle Coq Thelot, a judge for the highest court in the country who had been fired by Moise.—AFP ■

Former Ivory Coast foes set for long-awaited meeting

IN a key moment in Ivory Coast's turbulent politics, President Alassane Ouattara on Tuesday will meet his predecessor Laurent Gbagbo for the first time since the pair fought a post-election conflict a decade ago.

Gbagbo, 76, has leapt into the spotlight since returning last month from Europe, where he won a landmark case at the International Criminal Court (ICC).

In the last months of his stormy rule from 2000 to 2011, Gbagbo rejected defeat by Ouattara in a presidential ballot.

The conflict that broke out claimed more than 3,000 lives. After he was ousted, Gbagbo was flown to The Hague to face charges of crimes against humanity, of which he was eventually acquitted.

Commentators will be scrutinizing Tuesday's meeting for signs of whether the two former rivals have buried the hatchet, boosting hopes for national healing after bloody clashes last year.—AFP ■

US to end combat operations in Iraq

US President Joe Biden said ahead of talks with Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhemi on Monday that relations were entering a new phase that would include the end of US troop involvement in combat operations in Iraq.

Biden said at the opening of the talks that the US role will be "to continue to train, to assist, to help, to deal with ISIS (Islamic State) as it arises" in Iraq.

"But we're not going to be, at the end of the year, in a combat mission," he said.

Biden declined to say how

many U.S. troops, of the current level of approximately 2,500, will remain there.

In a joint statement issued Monday by the United States and Iraq following technical meetings, the two countries said, "The security relationship will fully transition to a training, advising, assisting, and intelligence-sharing role, and that there will be no U.S. forces with a combat role in Iraq by 31 December 2021." "This is a shift in mission. It is not a removal of our partnership or our presence or our close engagement



Iraq's prime minister says there is no need for any foreign combat forces on Iraqi soil. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

with Iraqi leaders," White House press secretary Jen Psaki ex-

plained to reporters just prior to the Oval Office meeting.—AFP ■

Cuba blames US for Molotov cocktail attack at Paris embassy



Demonstrators marching against and in favour of the Cuban government took to the streets around the world on the weekend. **PHOTO: AFP**

CUBA denounced the targeting of its Paris embassy on Monday

as a "terrorist attack" encouraged by the United States after

the building was bombarded with Molotov cocktails.

Firefighters in the French capital said two incendiary devices were thrown at the delegation, located in the city's 15th arrondissement, causing minor damage. "We denounce the Molotov cocktail terrorist attack against our Embassy in Paris @EmbaCubaFrancia," Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez said on Twitter. "I hold the US government responsible for its continued campaigns against our country that encourage this behaviour and for its calls for

violence, with impunity, from its territory," he tweeted. Fire officials said they were alerted to the attack after midnight and "the devices, which caused minor damage, were extinguished before (firefighters) arrived." Police did not immediately provide any more information. Three Molotov cocktails — two of which reached the embassy's facade and another that made it into the building — struck the building at 11:45 and started a fire that was quickly put out by the mission's employees, according to the Cuban Foreign Ministry.—AFP ■

Thet Htar Thuzar faces two consecutive losses in Tokyo Olympic



Myanmar's Thet Htar Thuzar hits a shot to Belgium's Lianne Tan in their women's singles badminton group stage match during the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games at the Musashino Forest Sports Plaza in Tokyo on 27 July 2021. **PHOTO: AFP**

MYANMAR'S Badminton star player Thet Htar Thuzar faced two big losses in Tokyo Olympic 2020 that is being held at the Musashino Forest Sports Plaza in Tokyo.

Yesterday (on 27 July), Thet Htar Thuzar played against Belgium's Lianne Tan in their women's singles badminton group stage match at the Musashino Forest Sports Plaza in Tokyo.

Thet Htar Thuzar suffered a 6-21 and 8-21 loss to the Belgium star.

On 25 July, Thet Htar Thuzar met Gregoria Mariska Tunjung of Indonesia at their first group stage match and Thet

Htar Thuzar lost with 11-21 and 8-21 points.

After two big losses, Thet Htar Thuzar has been disqualified from the group stage of the Women's Single Badminton event of the Tokyo Olympics.

Likewise, Ye Tun Naung, a sniper from the Myanmar national team, withdrew from the competition after finishing 14th in the men's 10m air pistol event on 24 July.

A total of thirty-six athletes from different countries competed in the men's 10m air pistol event of the Tokyo Olympics.

—GNLM ■

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.

Brazil's Ferreira claims Olympic surfing's first gold



Brazil's Italo Ferreira celebrates winning the men's Surfing gold medal final at the Tsurigasaki Surfing Beach, in Chiba, on 27 July 2021 during the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games. **PHOTO: YUKIIWAMURA / AFP**

BRAZIL'S Italo Ferreira claimed Olympic surfing's first-ever gold medal on Tuesday, as American Carissa Moore won the women's event. Ferreira,

who learned to surf standing on the foam box his father sold fish from, snapped his board on the first wave of his final against Japan's Kanoa Igarashi. He had to

wait in the sea as a team official brought him a replacement, but he shook off the early setback to score 15.14 to Igarashi's 6.60.

"I think it's one of the

best days of my life, for sure," said Ferreira, the 2019 world champion. "For me that was a long day, and it was a dream come true. In the last couple of months I have been training a lot, just to live in this moment." "I just want to say thank you God for the opportunity to be here and do what I love," he added.

Igarashi had shocked tournament favourite Gabriel Medina in the semi-finals, landing a stunning aerial move late in the contest to beat the Brazilian world number one. And the Japanese rider's luck looked to be in when Ferreira snapped his board on the very first wave. But the Brazilian promptly took control of the contest with an imperious performance, before being carried back up the beach on his teammates' shoulders. —AFP ■

Fairytale debut gold step too far for Tokyo Games icon Osaka

THE upside of the painful setback Naomi Osaka suffered Tuesday when she was knocked out of the Tokyo Games, an Olympics to which she will be forever associated due to her prominent opening ceremony role, is that it leaves the young achiever something to chase.

In being chosen to light the Olympic cauldron on home soil, her status among the world's most recognizable and influential sporting faces was confirmed in the clearest of manners. Whether her high-profile torch-carrying role played any part in her on-court flame out is impossible to know, but to anyone watching these unprecedented games, it was clear Osaka was

not quite ready for the moment. Osaka's third grand slam title came at the 2020 U.S. Open when her show of support for the Black Lives Matter movement, by wearing masks bearing the names of victims ahead of each round, seemed to inspire rather than impinge on her performance on the court.

Following her press boycott, withdrawal and subsequent revelation of her struggles with anxiety at this year's French Open, Osaka seemed to be dealing with more than her fair share of personal issues. Carrying the Olympic flame to the cauldron, and the hopes of the host nation at her debut games, may have been a step too far. — Kyodo News ■