

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.

PRESS RELEASE

Creating Divisions is Unacceptable While Fighting against the COVID-19 Pandemic

WITH the initiative of the United Kingdom (UK), an Arria-formula meeting on Myanmar was held virtually on 29 July 2021 in New York. The nature of the Arria-formula meeting at the Security Council is informal. There is no outcome document released by the meeting. According to the working methods, a member country of the Security Council can initiate such an informal meeting on which all invitees and activists are able to join without any hindrance.

The intention of the organizers to the afore-said meeting is in question. It was observed that the meeting discussed the issue of Myanmar based on fabricated, distorted and one-sided information instead of presenting different voices and opinions from other stakeholders concerned. It was also designed to mislead the international community with the participation of briefers whose views could not objectively reflect the situation on the ground. The participants include representatives from the terrorist organization of NUG and U Kyaw Moe Tun, a dismissed civil servant who has been facing the charge of high treason. Myanmar strongly objects to and rejects their participation and their statements at the meeting.

Before the said informal meeting, precisely on 26 July 2021, Mr Thomas Andrew, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, issued the press release which also contained the same unfounded and distorted elements.

SEE PAGE-3



240 service personnel receive second dose of COVID-19 vaccines in Nay Pyi Taw

A total of 240 Union-level and Nay Pyi Taw-level civil service personnel received the second dose of COVID-19 vaccines yesterday in Nay Pyi Taw.

The Department of Public Health in Nay Pyi Taw made sure the vaccination went well, taking necessary medical check-ups to the people before the vaccine was administered and monitoring the vaccinated people for 30 minutes to provide medical care in case of side effects.

The Sinopharm Vaccine is a single-dose injection, unlike the previous Covidshield COVID-19 Vaccine, and it is reported that the vaccine has not been shown to cause significant health problems thus far.

People are urged to continue to take precautionary measures by social distancing, wearing a mask and washing hands after receiving the vaccines and the vaccination will continue according to the priority of the Ministry of Health and Sports, depending on the number of vaccines that arrives. – Hein Min Soe/ GNLM

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Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Ministry of Health and Sports
Order No 297/2021
7th Waning of Waso 1383 ME
30 July 2021

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

1. The Ministry of Health and Sports has taken preventive measures against Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in real-time. Therefore, people from some townships of Bago Region and Mandalay Region need to stay at home due to the number of confirmed patients on the rise in these townships.
2. Hence, the people residing in the following townships in Bago Region and Mandalay Region are involved in the Stay-at-Home Programme.
 - (a) Bago Region
 - (1) Nattalin Township
 - (b) Mandalay Region
 - (1) Myittha Township
 - (2) Madaya Township
 - (3) Thabeikkyin Township
 - (4) Meiktila Township
 - (5) Wundwin Township
 - (6) Thazi Township
 - (7) Ngazun Township
 - (8) Taungtha Township
 - (9) Pyawbwe Township
3. The people inclusive of the Stay-at-Home programme of the townships need to abide by the following disciplines:
 - (a) Reside at their homes only
 - (1) except for service personnel serving at government department;
 - (2) except for those serving at private firms such as banks and monetary services, filling stations, foodstuffs and livestock and fishery, cold storage, medicine and medical equipment production and distribution, purified water production and sales, factories of manufacturing daily personal goods and related industries;
 - (3) except for staff from airlines, such as relief flights, cargo flights and specially chartered flights, general aviation transport services, ground services, fuel services, aviation export and import services, international freight forwarder

- companies, customer service companies and agencies, boarding foodstuff production and transport services and aircraft maintenance;
- (4) except for staff from private ports, shipping agencies offices, international freight forwarder companies, customer service companies and agencies, container truck services, port export and import cargo trucks and watercraft, inland container depot and dry ports;
- (5) except for staff from communication service providers such as post services, line phones and mobile phone communication services, internet services (exclusive of sales of telephone and data at shops), tower and fibre maintenance services;
- (b) relevant region and state administration councils to issue necessary orders and directives and supervision for the prevention of COVID-19 infection at CMP factories and workplaces;
- (c) organizations and companies to perform their works from homes;
- (d) one person from each house to go out shopping;
- (e) only two persons per house to go to hospitals and clinics;
- (f) wear masks if they go outside the houses;
- (g) allow ferries and registered vehicles only to transport returnees from workplaces to pass the wards;
- (h) allow one person only in addition to the driver in a vehicle for shopping in the ward and two persons except for the driver to go to hospitals or clinics;
- (i) abide by the standard operating procedures (SOP) for trucks to ensure smooth flow of commodities in the township;
4. People need to inform relevant ward/village administration bodies about seeking approvals to go outside the houses if they have reasons to raise the limited number of participants in the measures and other emergency issues mentioned in subparagraphs (d), (e) and (h) of Paragraph 3. The relevant administrative bodies need not allow ingoing and outgoing persons, except for officials and those returnees from duty.
5. Action will be taken against those who fail to abide by the order under the existing laws.
6. The order came into force at 4 am on 31-7-2021.

Dr Thet Khaing Win
Union Minister

Announcement on contribution of cash donation to COVID-19 vaccination fund

1. The COVID-19 Vaccination Fund account is opened at the Myanma Economic Bank (Nay Pyi Taw) as follows: -
 - (a) The COVID-19 Vaccination Fund Foreign Currency Account Number EDC 600012 in which USD250 million that is equivalent to about K338 billion is deposited.
 - (b) The COVID-19 Vaccination Fund Myanmar Currency Account Number OA 013733 in which K1,000 billion was deposited from the State Fund.
1. Therefore, people and organizations from abroad are encouraged to contribute to the Foreign Currency Account Number EDC 600012 with any foreign currency and those who want to contribute with Myanmar Kyat can donate to the Myanmar Currency Account OA 013733.
2. Donors can contact the Myanma Economic Bank and other local private banks in various parts of Myanmar to donate to the account numbers listed in paragraphs 1 (a) and (b).
3. To keep a list of donors, please provide the name of the donor and contact details. Donors are urged to submit the proof of donation to email: treasury05@365mopf.gov.mm, treasury10@365mopf.gov.mm after completing the donation.
4. The following phone numbers can be reached to enquire about the donation.

Director-General 067-3410156
Treasury Department 09-450455237
Deputy Director-General 067-3410158
Department of Treasury 09-254558424

The Ministry of Planning and Finance

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)

PRESS RELEASE

Creating Divisions is Unacceptable While Fighting against the COVID-19 Pandemic

FROM PAGE-1

Myanmar has been putting its utmost efforts into containing the COVID-19 pandemic with the aim to vaccinate at least fifty per cent of the population by the end of this year. To effectively and rapidly carrying out containment, prevention and treatment of COVID-19 in Myanmar, the Tatmadaw has declared a ceasefire which was initially declared from 10 May 2020 to 31 July 2021 and extended to date.

During the period from 27 January to 21 July 2021, the majority of health staff and public service personnel have been vaccinated. The vaccination programme has been continuing across the country with 12 targeted groups. Three million doses of vaccine had been arrived recently and additional three million doses will be received in August 2021. Meanwhile, some health workers have been making social punishment by shaming, threatening and intimidating their colleagues not to perform their profession. The Ministry of Health and Sports opens the door to everyone who wishes to work together in fighting against the pandemic and to improve the requirements of human resources in the vaccination programme within a short period of time. The Tatmadaw is providing healthcare services and COVID-19-related supplies to the public for the COVID-19 precaution, control and treatment measures.

While Myanmar is working hard to contain, prevent and fight against the pandemic, creating divisions and mistrust among its people is unacceptable. Myanmar strongly condemns any attempt to interfere in the internal affairs of a sovereign country.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Nay Pyi Taw
Dated, 30 July 2021.

COVID-19 immunization conducted in Nay Pyi Taw, Mon state, Shan state, Ayeyawady, Mandalay and Bago regions

TATMADAW has been working together with doctors, medical workers and volunteers to conduct COVID-19 immunization across the country.

Yesterday, the vaccination was conducted to the people over the age of 65, including monks, nuns, civil service personnel and prison inmates in Nay Pyi Taw Union Territory; Lashio and Kutkai townships in northern Shan State; Taunggyi, Kalaw, Pindaya, Namsang and Loilem townships in southern Shan State; Kengtung, Monghkat and Mongpyin townships in eastern Shan State; Mon State; Kayin State; Mingaladon, Hlegu and Hmawbi townships in Yangon Region; Ayeyawady Region; Haka township in Chin State; and Bago Region.

Chairpersons of the respective region administration councils and officials of the respective regional commands encouraged and coordinated as necessary. — MNA



Announcement on Extension of the Precautionary Restriction Measures Relating to Control of the COVID-19 Pandemic until 31 August 2021

1. With a view to the further strengthening of measures to contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has issued the following announcements regarding temporary entry restrictions for visitors from all countries. All those restrictions were extended until 31 July 2021 by the Ministry's announcement dated 30 June 2021.
 - (a) Announcement dated 15 March 2020 regarding precautionary measures for all travellers visiting Myanmar;
 - (b) Announcement dated 20 March 2020 regarding additional precautionary measures for travellers visiting Myanmar and temporary suspension of issuance of visa on Arrival and e-visa;
 - (c) Announcement dated 24 March 2020 regarding additional precautionary measures for travellers from all countries visiting Myanmar;
 - (d) Announcement dated 28 March 2020 regarding temporary suspension of all types of visas (including social visit visas) and visa exemption services.
2. In order to continue its effective response measures to protect the population of the country from the risks of importation and spread of the COVID-19, the Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has decided to extend the afore-mentioned entry restriction measures until 31 August 2021.
3. In case of urgent official missions or compelling reasons, foreign nationals, including diplomats and United Nations officials, who wish to travel to Myanmar by available relief or special flights, may contact the nearest Myanmar Mission for possible exception with regard to certain visa restrictions. However, all visitors must abide by existing directives issued by the Ministry of Health and Sports relating to the prevention and control of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Nay Pyi Taw
Dated: 30 July 2021

240 service personnel receive second dose of COVID-19 vaccines in Nay Pyi Taw

NEWS ON PAGE-1



Coordination meeting held on prevention and control of diseases caused by natural disasters amid COVID-19 surge

THE Ministry of Health and Sports held the coordination meeting on the prevention and control of diseases caused by natural disasters during the COVID-19 surge and the acceleration of vaccination, yesterday afternoon through video-conferencing.

At the meeting, Union Minister Dr Thet Khaing Win said in addition to the recent cases of COVID-19 infection, care should be taken to prevent the infection and other communicable diseases when people are temporarily relocated to temporary camps during the floods, adding the need to take precautionary measures in the camps.

The Union Minister added the need to systematically conduct the COVID-19 vaccination as per the guidelines and to the designated groups; the plans are underway to build oxygen plants to provide more oxygen



to COVID-19 patients, as well as more COVID-19 treatment centres, are building with medical supplies.

The Director-General of the Department of Public Health and Medical Services said the vaccines sent from the Central Government should be linked to the Cold Chain System in the military hospitals to keep the vaccines in cold storage and distribute them to townships.

He added the vaccines

should be given to all designated groups, in addition to the people over 65. If more volunteers are needed, they will be guided by the relevant administration council.

Officials from the Department of Public Health and Medical Services in Kayin State, Mon State, Bago Region, Taninthayi Region and Rakhine State reported on the incidence of floods in the respective regions and states, healthcare in the temporary camps and prevention measures to prevent the spread of infectious diseases and storage and distribution of COVID-19 vaccines and further activities, as well as the completion and ongoing work to increase the oxygen supply for COVID-19 patients.

The Union Minister and officials provided necessary instructions at the meeting.

– MNA

Health and Sports Ministry opens COVID-19 call centre

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

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

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

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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.

MoC facilitates importation of anti-COVID-19 devices and related supplies on public holidays

THE Ministry of Commerce is providing a temporary exemption from the application for import licences for medical supplies and related medicines to control the incidence of COVID-19 outbreak. Relevant departmental officials are also working together to facilitate the import process on public holidays from 26 July to 8 August.

Yesterday, 29 companies successfully imported a total of 10,295 oxygen concentrators, 21 tonnes of liquid oxygen, 18 tonnes of liquid oxygen tanks, 94 tonnes of masks, and 900 task kits were imported through the Yangon International Airport and Muse, Myawady, Chinshwehaw, Kawthoung, Kengtung and Lweje border trading posts.



Chin Shwe Haw



Muse



From July 12 to 30, when the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus started to increase nationwide, a total of 1,241 tonnes of liquid oxygen, 114 tonnes of oxygen cylinders, 59,274 oxygen concentrators and 306,978 tonnes of the test kit and 963 tonnes,

6 oxygen plants and 11 oxygen generators were allowed to import as officials are giving priority to disease control of the COVID-19 by opening border trading posts every day. The Ministry of Commerce steps up co-

operation with relevant departments to facilitate the importation of COVID-19 disease prevention and control equipment by arranging direct contact with officials from trade centres concerned if assistance is needed. — MNA



Myawady



Transport services continued during Covid-19 pandemic period

IN accordance with the guidelines issued by the Ministry of Health and Sports and Central Committee on Prevention, Control and Treatment of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), transport services, including airline, shipping, railway and bus tours are available to ensure the traffic is going smoothly amid the pandemic period, said officials from the Ministry of Transport and Communications.

During the Covid-19 period, flights are operating on a regular basis except for cities designated as Stay-at-Home sites.

From 17 July, a starting date of long public holidays, there have been 167 overseas relief flights with 4,629 passengers and 3,030,872 kilogrammes of goods and 64 trips to local cities along with 3,715 passengers.

Inland water transport is provided with regular routes of Yangon-Dala, Wahdan-Dala, Labattalay – Yaypawgyi, Kyon Thwe-Zee Phyu Chaung and the Mandalay-Bhamo and Rakhine State routes are also operated regularly. From 17 to 30 July, 439 river transport routes have been operated and 46,799 passengers and 2,581 tonnes of goods were delivered.

Myanmar Railways has been operating 36 regular rail lines dai-



ly starting from 19 July with two mail trains on the Yangon-Mandalay route, one express train on Yangon-Mawlamyine, one mail train on Yangon-Pyay, 12 RBE trains on the Yangon Circular rail lines, respectively. A total of 18 trains are operated daily.

From 19 to 30 July, a total of

22 trains, including eight freight trains, four general freight trains have been operating. From 17 to 30 July, 12,064 passengers, 192,264 tonnes of goods have been transported by 2,596 passenger vehicles and 21,781 lorries.

Airlines, shipping, trains and road transport are running regu-

larly to facilitate the flow of goods. Due to the spread of infectious diseases, passenger transport has been reduced due to the decrease in passengers.

As of 17 July, 35 commercial vessels have entered Yangon and Thilawa ports while 21 commercial vessels left the port at the

same time.
There has been container input (13,700) TEUs, output (10,671) TEUs, (259,454) metric tons of general commodities plus 22,401 metric tons during the public holidays.
In addition, the Myanmar Ports Authority (MTA) is on duty 24 hours a day to ensure the immediate release of anti-Covid-19 products and medicines imported by sea.

Officials also coordinated with the relevant departments to facilitate the entry and exit of 39 vehicles from Myawaddy and 81 vehicles carrying liquid oxygen and related materials on the Sino-Myanmar border, respectively. The vehicles will transport essential anti-Covid-19 equipment to Yangon and Mandalay.

The State Administration Council aims to vaccinate 50 per cent to 70 per cent of the country's population by the end of this year. Aid supplies are delivered to the states and regions by domestic airlines.

It is also prepared to be able to transport 284 tonnes at a time with 50 lorries, officials said.

To facilitate the better transport and flow of goods, the Ministry of Transport and Communications is carrying out the transport process as per the instructions. — MNA



Temporary restrictions extended on international passenger flights to Myanmar

THE Ministry of Health and Sports has issued a directive on the temporary restriction of international commercial passenger flights to Myanmar, as it is very important to control the spread of COVID-19 disease in Myanmar.
With the permission of the Central Committee on Prevention, Control and Treatment of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), "Importation of COVID-19 to Myanmar through Air Travel" was revised as "Temporary Measures to Prevent Importation of COVID-19 to Myanmar through Air Travel Issue-2" on (31-12-2020) as of 23:59 Myanmar Standard Time.

Until now, the prevalence of the COVID-19 epidemic has risen in most parts of the world.
With the permission of the Central Committee on Prevention, Control and Treatment of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), the effective period of the above directive will be announced on 31 August has been extended to further prevent the risk of COVID-19 transmission via international air passengers into Myanmar.

Ministry of Transport and Communications

5,127 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 30 July, total figure rises to 294,460

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to 294,460 after 5,127 new cases were reported on 30 July 2021 according to the Ministry of Health and Sports. Among these confirmed cases, 3,442 have been discharged from hospitals. Death toll reached 8,942 after 390 died. —MNA

Ox carts valued as Myanmar's traditional cultural heritage



As a Myanmar proverb says: “Traditional culture cannot be lost as long as carts and boats are not lost”, carts and boats are extensively being used in Myanmar’s society till today. Carts have been used as two-wheeled vehicles since ancient times. Some carts can be pulled by animals such as cows and horses, and some can be pulled or pushed by people.

In the past, ox carts were recognized as a means of transport in villages and were essential in agriculture, trade and various ceremonies. Given the fact that ox carts were used as gifts in wedding ceremonies, it is obvious how much Myanmar people in rural areas value them.

Despite the substantial use of carts, they are not made by common people but by professional carts carpenters as a systematic method of making them are crucial. It is defined as a good cart only if it can provide relief for the oxen that have to pull the cart and the cart is fit in proportion to its weight. As a matter of fact, ox carts, which have been valued as a cultural heritage since the time of our ancestors, can still be found in rural areas in Myanmar.—Zeya Htet (Minbu)/GNLM



Adjust prevention of COVID-19 and supply of foods to the people

THE report on world food sufficiency and nutrition jointly compiled by the UN FAO, UNICEF, WHO, IFAD and WFP on 12 July mentioned that as food deficiency rose up due to conflicts, climate change, COVID-19 pandemic and decline of the economy across the world, the one-tenth of the world population faced food deficiency in 2020.

The report continuously said that a total of 2.4 billion of the global population did not have nutritious foods in 2020, increasing 320 million of the population more than the previous year.

Hence, the authorities need to adopt the correct decisions so as to overcome the challenges of the COVID-19 as well as the food deficiency for the people.

The Worldometer stated that variant COVID-19 rises up infection rate in many countries. Up to the end of July, some 190 million of the global population have been infected by the pandemic while over four million of the people have lost their lives in the outbreak of disease.

The situation of the disease under control is impossible till today. While the outbreak of disease is still in momentum, food deficiency and high prices of commodities become a heavy burden on the people. That is why authorities need to ease the tension from the people who face challenges in the period of COVID-19.

In the daily life of the people, the food supply is of importance. The food deficiency may cause health weakness, shortening of life expectancy, declining of productivity and lesser capability of learning among the youths.

At present, the local authorities restricted the workplaces as long holidays. In fact, less production may cause shortages of foodstuff. As such, the authorities need to review the work process so as to ease the restrictions of workplaces for the resumption of productions to meet the demand of the people.

On the other hand, utmost efforts must be made for the prevention, control and treatment of the COVID-19. But emphasis must be placed on the production of foods for the people. If not, shortage of food will be deficiency among the people and they may not endure the attacks of the pandemic in the long run. It is because the pandemic is expected to still be alive across the world in the coming years.

Hence, the authorities need to adopt the correct decisions so as to overcome the challenges of the COVID-19 as well as the food deficiency for the people.

■ ■ ■

World races to contain Delta variant

Governments around the world on Thursday raced to head off a surge in coronavirus cases driven by the Delta variant, with US President Joe Biden offering new incentives to vaccine holdouts and Israel authorizing booster shots.

THE World Health Organization warned the highly transmissible strain of the virus, first detected in India, could unleash a “fourth wave” of cases in its Eastern Mediterranean zone - an area stretching from Morocco to Pakistan.

Those countries are especially at risk because vaccination rates are low - only 5.5% of the region’s population has been fully vaccinated. So in nations where vaccines are more available, public officials are sounding the alarm.

“People are dying - and will die - who don’t have to die,” Biden said in a speech on his administration’s new initiatives aimed at curbing the spread. “If you’re out there and unvaccinated, you don’t have to die.”

He said all federal government workers would be asked to reveal their vaccination status - and those without the jab would have to mask in the workplace and submit to COVID-19 tests.

The Democratic president also said he would ask the Pentagon to consider making the coronavirus vaccine mandatory for active duty military personnel, and asked state and local govern-

ments to offer \$100 to holdouts who get the shot.

“If incentives help us beat this virus, I believe we should use them. We all benefit if we can get more people vaccinated,” Biden said.

In Israel, Prime Minister Naftali Bennett announced that those over the age of 60 would be offered a third dose of vaccine - a booster shot available from Sunday.

“I call on all elderly people who have already been vaccinated to receive this additional dose,” Bennett said. “Protect yourselves.”

“The decision was based on considerable research and analysis, as well as the rise in risk of the Delta variant wave,” Bennett said.

Israel quickly rolled out its vaccination campaign and had dropped many restrictions on public gatherings in June, but infections soared, and masks are once again mandatory in enclosed public places.

The US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has also urged people living in COVID hotspots - even the vaccinated - to mask up indoors.

The surge in cases across America has left the early vaccine



The World Health Organization warned the highly transmissible strain of the virus could unleash a “fourth wave” of cases in its Eastern Mediterranean zone. People relaxing in the Israeli coastal city of Tel Aviv on 19 April 2021, after the authorities announced that face masks for Covid-19 prevention were no longer needed outdoors. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

adopters angry at those who have so far opted against the jab.

“It’s almost like they don’t care about the rest of the world. They’re being selfish and self-centred,” Alethea Reed, a 58-year-old healthcare administrator in Washington, told AFP.

Mixed bag of measures

The global coronavirus situation is a mixed one: while some places like the French territory of La Reunion and Spain’s Catalonia region are instituting new curbs, others are easing up on restrictions.

Portugal said it would lift its anti-virus measures in several phases from Sunday, with shops and restaurants allowed to open for longer hours and working from home no longer compulsory.

But at the Summer Olympics in Tokyo, already delayed by a

year due to the pandemic, the virus continued to wreak havoc, with nearly 200 infections among the athletes, media and employees taking part in the Games.

Among them were US pole vault hopeful Sam Kendricks, a two-time world champion, and two high-profile golfers: world number one Jon Rahm and 2020 US Open champion Bryson DeChambeau.

Japan hit a new record for the number of daily cases - more than 10,000 - on Thursday, and a state of emergency already in place in Tokyo was to be extended to four more regions.

“The current situation is the worst ever,” a top government advisor on the virus, Shigeru Omi, warned, according to national broadcaster NHK. In Mexico, the national statistics institute said more than 200,000 deaths from the coronavirus were recorded in 2020 - 35% more than originally reported by the government.

And in China, where the novel coronavirus first emerged in the city of Wuhan, small outbreaks driven by the Delta variant were reported in three provinces.

SOURCE: AFP

Flawed scientific papers fuelling Covid-19 misinformation

SCIENTIFIC studies with poor methodology and inaccurate findings are exacerbating a Covid-19 misinformation crisis that is discouraging vaccination and putting lives

at risk.

The intense public interest in the pandemic and divisive debate in the United States over how to address it facilitates the spread of faulty research papers online,



Anti-vaccination activists protest in New York City on 20 June 2021. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

including by vaccine opponents. And even if a study is retracted, it is too late.

“Once the paper is published, the damage is irrevocable,” said Emerson Brooking, resident senior fellow at the Atlantic Council’s Digital Forensic Research Lab, which focuses on identifying and exposing disinformation.

Flawed papers “have been fuel to the fire for Covid-19 skeptics and conspiracy theorists. They are frequently the subject of viral online activity. Their findings are further filtered through salacious and misleading articles from fringe websites,” Brooking told AFP.

Inaccurate information about vaccines is especially dangerous at a time when uptake of the shots has slowed in the United

States, where health officials say almost all recent Covid-19 deaths occurred among those who were not immunized.

‘Shock your socks off’

Medical journal Vaccines published a peer-reviewed paper in late June titled “The Safety of Covid-19 vaccinations -- we should rethink the policy”. It concluded that Covid-19 shots were causing two people to die for every three they saved -- findings that quickly spread on social media.

A tweet from scientist and Covid-19 vaccine critic Robert Malone summarizing the paper garnered thousands of retweets. A video in which conservative pundit Liz Wheeler discussed the study -- which she said “will shock your socks off” -- has been

viewed more than 250,000 times on Facebook.

But Vaccines then retracted the paper, saying it contained “several errors that fundamentally affect the interpretation of the findings”.

At least four Vaccines board members resigned as a result of the study’s publication, including Katie Ewer, an associate professor and senior immunologist at the University of Oxford’s Jenner Institute.

“It should have been recognized that this paper would have a big impact,” said Ewer, who was not involved in its publication. “That no one at the journal picked up on that... is very worrying, especially for a journal dedicated to vaccines.”

Malone’s tweet about the

paper is no longer available, but Wheeler’s video still appeared on Facebook weeks later.

The Gateway Pundit, a website that frequently publishes inaccurate claims, reported earlier in the year that a Stanford University study found mask wearing, which US health authorities recommended to help slow the spread of Covid-19, to be “ineffective” and harmful.

‘Do a better job’

The study -- “Facemasks in the Covid-19 era: A health hypothesis” -- was subsequently retracted by the journal Medical Hypotheses, which said it selectively cited published papers and included “unverified” data.

SOURCE: AFP

Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 4:00 pm Friday 30 July 2021)

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

FORECAST VALID UNTIL MORNING OF THE 31th July, 2021: Rain or thundershowers will be isolated in Lower Sagaing Region, scattered in Mandalay, Magway Regions and Northern Shan State, fairly widespread in Bago, Yangon, Ayeyarwady Regions and (Southern and Eastern) Shan, Kayah States and widespread in the remaining Regions and States with likelihood of isolated heavyfalls in Nay Pyi Taw, Upper Sagaing, Taninthayi Regions and Kachin, Rakhine, Kayin, Mon States. Degree of certainty is (100%).

STATE OF THE SEA: Squalls with rough seas are likely at times off and along Myanmar Coasts. Surface wind speed in squalls may reach (35)m.p.h. Wave height will be about (8 -11) feet off and along Myanmar Coasts.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Strong monsoon over the Andaman Sea and South Bay of Bengal.

FORECAST FOR NAYPYITAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 31 July, 2021: Some rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 31 July, 2021: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 31 July, 2021: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (80%).

WEATHER OUTLOOK FOR WEEKEND: Rain or thundershowers will be widespread in Nay Pyi Taw and Yangon Region, scattered in Mandalay Region.

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Dragon fruits from Popa sold for lower prices despite high yield

THE dragon fruits from Popa, Kyaukpadaung township, Mandalay region are being sold only at K650 per kilogramme despite high yield, said U Aung Win, a dragon fruit grower from Hsin Hsin village.

Although the dragon fruits from the Popa region are good quality fruits. It is also learned that the price of dragon fruit usually goes down when there is a high supply of dragon fruit in its farming. The dragon fruits are cultivated mostly in Popa, Taung Kalap, Popa Lwin, Hse Naga Lae, Shaw Taw and Hsin Hsin villages. There are three types of dragon fruit species_ white, yellow and red. But, people from those villages grew only two types of fruit such as white and red, Daw San San Myint, a local dragon fruit grower from Shaw Taw



Currently, the dragon fruits from Popa are being sold for lower prices at K650 per kilogramme despite good yield, said Daw San San Myint.

village explained.

The dragon fruits are ripened and sold in May. The dragon fruits season ends in November. If the plants are under good care, they can be harvested and sold for up to 17 years, said U Aung Win from Hsin Hsin village.

After growing dragon

moist.

But it seldom likes water-logging.

The dragon fruit stem is heavy and it has to be cultivated with concrete poles. The price of dragon fruit is not consistent, but the price could fluctuate when the fruit is started to yield.

There are always two prices for dragon fruit. At the beginning of its season, it is sold at K500 to K1,200 per fruit in the market, but the price is spirally coming downward.

The dragon fruit sold online are expensive, said U Aung Win.

Currently, the dragon fruits from Popa are being sold for lower prices at K650 per kilogramme despite good yield, said Daw San San Myint. — Ko Htein-KPD/GNLM

Manufacturing sector attracts \$256.8 mln this FY

THE majority of foreign enterprises eye the manufacturing sector for investments in the past nine months (Oct-June) of the current financial year 2020-2021, pumping the estimated capital of US\$256.85 million into 23 projects, the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration stated.

The manufacturing enterprises and businesses that need a large labour force are prioritized, stated Myanmar Investment Commission.

At present, labour-intensive enterprises are facing financial hardship amid the COVID-19 negative impacts and political changes.

Myanmar's manufacturing

sector is largely concentrated in garment and textiles produced on the Cutting, Making, and Pack basis, and it contributes to the country's GDP to a certain extent.

At present, Myanmar's garment export drastically dropped on the back of a slump in demand by the European Union market. Consequently, some CMP garment factories permanently and temporarily shut down and left thousands of workers unemployed.

Myanmar has drawn foreign direct investment of more than US\$3.76 billion in the past nine months of the 2020-2021 financial year, including expansion of capital by existing

enterprises and investments in the Thilawa Special Economic Zone, the DICA's statistics indicated.

Of 44 foreign enterprises permitted and endorsed by MIC and the respective investment committees between 1 October and 30 June of the current FY, 23 enterprises pumped FDI into the manufacturing sector. The power sector received six large projects and the livestock and fisheries sector attracted six projects. Other services sectors drew five projects while the agriculture sector pulled two projects and one foreign enterprise each entered industrial estate and the hotel and tourism sectors. — HH/GNLM



Myanmar's manufacturing sector is largely concentrated in garment and textiles produced on the Cutting, Making, and Packing basis, and it contributes to the country's GDP to a certain extent.

Exports to Japan cross \$582 mln in seven months



Japan has made up over 34.7 per cent of total FDIs in the Thilawa Special Economic Zone.

THE value of export to Japan in the past seven months (October-April) of the current financial year 2020-2021 touched about US\$582.2 million while import was valued only at \$231.87 million, according to the data of the Ministry of Commerce.

The value of trade between Myanmar and its development partner Japan exceeded over \$817 million in the current FY.

Myanmar's export items to Japan are garments, marine products, rice, black sesame, green grams, rubber and other products. In return, it imported machines and machine equipment, electronic equipment, fertilizers, chemical products, medicines, automobiles, and other products.

Bilateral trade values have registered \$1.92 billion

in the last FY2019-2020, \$1.89 billion in the FY2018-2019, \$1 billion in the 2018 mini-budget period, \$1.92 billion in the 2017-2018FY, \$2 billion in the 2016-2017FY and \$1.84 billion in the 2015-16FY, respectively.

This FY, three enterprises from Japan were approved to make initial investments of \$518 million into the country, according to the data of the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA).

Japan has made up over 34.7 per cent of total FDIs in the Thilawa Special Economic Zone.

The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) offers loans such as ODA loans and two-step loans intending to bring about socio-economic development in Myanmar. — GNLM

France lashes out at ‘discriminatory’ England quarantine rule

FRANCE said on Thursday it failed to understand why it was exempt from a new rule allowing fully-vaccinated European Union citizens to enter England without having to quarantine.

From next week, travellers fully jabbed with a vaccine approved by the US Food and Drug Administration or the European Medicines Agency will be able to travel from any country on the British government’s “amber” traffic light list without having to self-isolate at home for 10 days, the UK government said Wednesday. Arrivals from France are the only exception.



France is unhappy with the UK’s quarantine policy . **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

“This decision is discriminatory towards French people,” said French European Affairs Minister Clement Beaune. “It is

excessive and makes no sense in terms of health policy,” he told the LCI TV channel, adding that “it has no foundation in science”.

The UK singled out France due to the government’s concern over the “persistent presence” of the Beta variant, which is believed to be more resistant to vaccines.

But Beaune said the Delta strain accounted for fewer than five percent of Covid cases in France, and mostly occurred in overseas territories from where relatively few people travelled to the UK.

Beaune also said he regretted that travellers from the EU could still not enter the United States, even though American tourists can easily come to EU countries so long as they are vaccinated or have a negative Covid test.

“We should have kept reciprocity as a trump card up our sleeves at the European level,” he said. “Perhaps Europe overall should have been tougher in the negotiations.”

France on Wednesday reported just under 28,000 new Covid cases for the previous 24 hours and 40 new deaths from the virus.— AFP ■

Sydney police call for military to enforce lockdown

POLICE in Australia’s largest city have requested military help to enforce a coronavirus lockdown as infections in Sydney reached a new record Thursday.

Commissioner Mick Fuller said New South Wales police had asked for 300 Australian Defence Force personnel to be deployed “to boost its operational footprint”.

The city of five million people is in its fifth week of a lockdown that is set to run until the end

of August. Stay-at-home orders have failed to reduce new infections to zero, and compliance has been patchy.

Sydney residents are only allowed to leave their homes for exercise, essential work, medical reasons, and to shop for necessities such as food.

But for weeks, parks and beach promenades have been filled with Sydneysiders drinking coffee and chatting with friends.

Police have increasingly been doling out fines to those violating the restrictions and Fuller said those efforts would be stepped up in the coming days. Last weekend thousands of people gathered in central Sydney to protest against the measures, and further demonstrations have been mooted.

Police have also requested more powers to shut down businesses that they say are not abiding by rules on social distancing. On Thursday state pre-



Police in Sydney want more powers to enforce a coronavirus lockdown. **PHOTO: AFP**

mier Gladys Berejiklian warned that the outbreak – which began mid-June when a driver for an international flight crew contracted the virus -- is “likely to get worse”.— AFP ■

Israel to support tourism industry affected by COVID-19



A Jewish couple visit the grottoes at the Israeli-Lebanese border in Rosh Hanikra. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

ISRAEL has launched a new plan costing 60 million new shekels (18.4 million U.S. dollars) to support the country’s tourism industry, the Israeli Ministry of Finance and Minis-

try of Tourism announced in a joint statement on Sunday.

The program, initiated by Finance Minister Avigdor Lieberman and Tourism Minister Yoel Razvozov, aims to support tourism businesses affected by the entry ban on tourists to Israel due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to the plan, hotels that have suffered a decline of at least 40 per cent in turnover due to the ban will receive special financial support over the coming months.

Financial support will also be given to Israeli travel agents operating inbound tourism in the country.

Besides, the plan will allow more hotel workers from Jordan and the West Bank to enter Israel.

Today, Israel bans the entry of foreign tourists, except for special cases. Plans to reopen inbound tourism have been postponed by the government due to the recent sharp rise in COVID-19 infections in the country.— Xinhua ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

U.S. continues to see COVID-19 spike as CDC mulls revising mask advice

THE highly contagious Delta variant continues to drive surges in COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations and deaths, while experts said it may be time for much of the country to put masks back on.

The U.S. Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is considering revising its COVID-19 guidelines to recommend that even fully vaccinated people wear masks in public, said Anthony Fauci, White House chief medical advisor, on Sunday.

Fauci told CNN that he has taken part in conversations about altering the guidelines, something he described as being “under active consideration.”

He noted that some local areas where infection rates are surging are already urging individuals to wear masks in public regardless of their vaccination status. Los Angeles County reinstated a mask mandate starting on July 17, requiring masking indoors regardless of vaccination status. U.S. surgeon general Vivek Murthy said other areas may have to follow. COVID-19 cases, deaths and hospitalizations in the United States rise again recently, after having been eased for several months. The surges especially focused among the unvaccinated population.

“COVID-19 cases are on the rise in nearly 90 per cent of U.S. jurisdictions, and we are seeing outbreaks in parts of the country that have low vaccination coverage,” said a latest CDC weekly report.

As of July 22, 35 percent of U.S. counties were experiencing high levels of community transmission, according to the CDC.— Xinhua ■

NEWS
IN BRIEF

Japan's Nishi-Nippon Railroad to open 2nd hotel in Bangkok in 2023

JAPAN'S Nishi-Nippon Railroad Co. has announced a plan to launch its second hotel in Bangkok in the summer of 2023.

The company, which operates a railway network in the western Japan prefecture of Fukuoka and is commonly known as Nishitetsu at home, said Thursday that the eight-storey hotel will follow Solaria Nishitetsu Hotel Bangkok opened in May 2020.

The 193-room new hotel will stand in the Thai capital's largest business district of Silom, featuring easy access to Sala Daeng station on the BTS Skytrain mass transit system and Silom station on the MRT subway network.

Both businesspeople and tourists are expected as potential hotel users because of the location, which houses the offices of a number of Japanese companies and is close to one of Asia's busiest entertainment areas, according to Nishitetsu.—Kyodo ■

IAG narrows loss in first half

IAG, the owner of British Airways and Iberia, said Friday that it narrowed its net loss in the first half, but continued to face fallout from the coronavirus pandemic.

The London-listed conglomerate said in a statement that it suffered a loss after taxation of 2.0 billion euros (\$2.4 billion) in the six months to the end of June.

That was almost half the group's net loss of 3.8 billion euros in the same period a year earlier, when the pandemic erupted and ravaged air travel.

Revenues remain severely depressed by the pandemic, down 60 per cent at 2.2 billion euros.

The airline giant said it "continues to be adversely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic together with government restrictions and quarantine requirements". Passenger capacity in the second quarter was only 22 per cent of its pre-pandemic level.—AFP ■

US economy reaches pre-pandemic size, but not as quickly as expected



The US economy's return to its size before the Covid-19 pandemic was a boost for President Joe Biden.

PHOTO: AFP

THE US economy returned to its pre-pandemic level in the second quarter, data released Thursday showed, giving President Joe Biden a political win as Con-

gress moves closer to passing a long-debated plan to improve the country's infrastructure.

However the 6.5 per cent annualized rate of expansion

in the April-to-June period was slower than expected, and the Commerce Department report confirmed that inflation spiked as customers vaccinated against

Covid-19 returned to businesses that suffered throughout the pandemic last year. "Make no mistake: this growth is no accident, it's a direct result of our efforts to deliver economic relief to families, small businesses, and communities across the country," the Democratic president tweeted following the release of the data.

After taking office in January, Biden won passage of a massive \$1.9 trillion spending bill to help the economy's recovery from the historic downturn the pandemic caused last year. However, the disruptions of the preceding months have made getting production and employment back to normal challenging, while prices have surged as businesses face renewed demand, shortages of components and supply chain delays.—AFP ■

Japan's June jobless rate improves to 2.9% as virus step eased

JAPAN'S unemployment rate fell to 2.9 per cent in June, reflecting a pickup in hiring at restaurants and retailers hit hard by the coronavirus pandemic as the state of emergency was lifted in some areas, government data showed Friday.

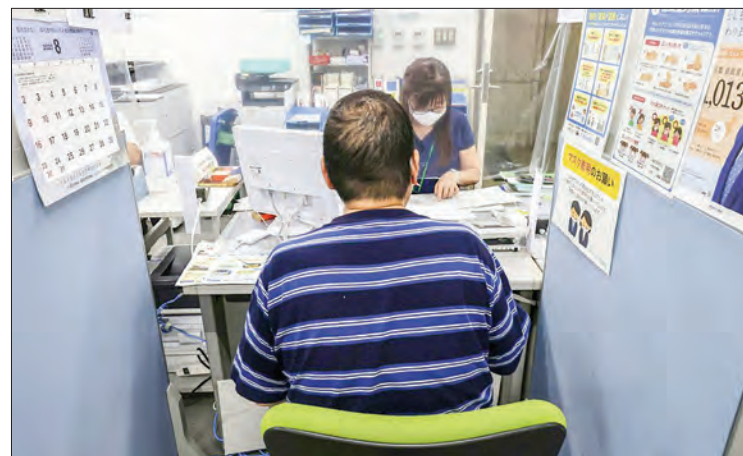
The seasonally adjusted jobless rate dropped from 3.0 per cent for May, improving for the first time since March, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications said.

The job availability ratio improved to 1.13 from 1.09 a month earlier, the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare said. The latest figure of 1.13 means that there were 113 openings for

every 100 job seekers.

Japan lifted its third state of emergency, which asks alcohol-serving establishments to suspend their operations, other eateries to close early and people to refrain from unnecessary outings, in nine prefectures including Tokyo in late June, and only the southern island prefecture of Okinawa remained under the measure.

But the capital was put under a state of emergency again in mid-July amid a resurgence of infections and four other prefectures are now expected to be added to the measure, clouding the outlook for the employment environment.



A job seeker has a consultation session at HelloWork job centre in Tokyo on Aug. 31, 2020. PHOTO: KYODO

Looking at figures unadjusted for seasonal factors in the reporting month, the total number of unemployed people increased

110,000 from a year earlier to 2.06 million, but people in work also rose 220,000 to 66.92 million, the ministry said.—Kyodo ■

Tunisia's political crisis fuelled by endless economic pain



Tunisia's economy last year contracted by more than eight per cent as the Covid pandemic battered the tourism-reliant economy. The dinar currency has plunged by about 50 per cent over a decade, and debt has reached 100 per cent of GDP. PHOTO: AF

SPIRALLING prices, stagnant wages, jobs lost to the pandemic: anger over deep economic woes in debt-hit Tunisia goes a long way to explain the political turmoil that has hit the North African country this week.

When President Kais Saied fired the premier, suspended parliament and assumed executive powers on Sunday in what critics called a "coup d'etat", tens of thousands of Tunisians nonetheless took to the streets to celebrate.

A visit to a Tunis market

helps explain why.

Many people say they are worse off than they were 10 years ago, when a popular revolt ousted dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, kicking off the Arab Spring and sending Tunisia on a rocky path to democracy.

Tunisia, a country of 12 million, has had nine governments since, but none have managed to revive the economy, which since last year has been additionally battered by the Covid pandemic.—AFP ■

UK bank Lloyds logs soaring profit on COVID recovery

BRITISH bank Lloyds said on Thursday that first-half net profits surged on lower-than-expected credit losses as the economy extended its recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Profit after tax soared to £3.9 billion (€4.6bn) in the six months to June, Lloyds Banking Group (LBG) said in a results statement. That compared with slender net profit of £19 million one year earlier. LBG released a total of £837 million that had been set aside to cover souring loans during the pandemic.

That compared with a vast impairment charge of

£3.8 billion last time around linked to the emergency health crisis.

“During the first six months of 2021, the group has delivered a solid financial performance with continued business momentum, bolstered by an improved macroeconomic outlook for the UK,” said interim chief executive William Chalmers.

“While we are seeing clear progress in the vaccine roll-out and emergence from lockdown restrictions, the coronavirus pandemic continues to have a significant impact on the people, businesses

and communities of the UK. The lender was also helped by a booming domestic property market.

Lloyds meanwhile unveiled a £390-million deal to buy savings and pensions firm Embark. Chalmers is leading the bank until incoming new boss Charlie Nunn takes the helm in August.

Rival Barclays had revealed Wednesday that its first-half net profits jumped to £3.8 billion on the back of the improved economic outlook.

In England, the bulk of lockdown measures were lifted last week after



The lender was also helped by a booming domestic property market. **PHOTO: TOLGA AKMEN/ AFP**

a phased easing of restrictions. Tougher curbs however remain across the rest

of the UK. Nevertheless, the highly-transmissible Delta coronavirus variant is forcing some countries to reimpose restrictions.—**AFP ■**

Danone to replace bulk of board after investor onslaught

DANONE said Thursday it would replace almost its entire board months after activist investors forced the ousting of the French food and beverage giant's CEO.

Among the casualties is former CEO Franck

Riboud, who is the son of Danone's founder, and whose successor Emmanuel Faber was summarily dismissed in March under pressure from rebelling shareholders.

“The renewal will be completed by the general

shareholders meeting of the spring of 2023,” the group said in a statement published alongside half-year results.

Only the recently-appointed chairman of the board Gilles Schnepp and two staff representatives on the 12-person body would remain, it said.

Danone, best-known for its eponymous yoghurts, also owns global water brands Evian and Volvic.

It has split its business into four divisions: dairy and plant-based products, waters, early life nutrition and medical nutrition.

Faber, who was ousted

in March over complaints that his focus on social responsibility was holding back the company's profitability, has been replaced as CEO by Antoine de Saint-Affrique, who joins in September from Swiss chocolate group Barry Callebaut.

Saint-Affrique has spent the bulk of his career at the food and consumer goods conglomerate Unilever, heading up its food division from 2011 to 2015.

Faber's dismissal followed months of complaints from foreign shareholders about Danone's underperforming share price.—**AFP ■**



Big changes after shareholders went sour on Danone's strategy. **PHOTO: AFP**

Fast-growing but controversial, Robinhood falls in Nasdaq debut

ROBINHOOD had a rough start on Wall Street Thursday, falling sharply in its Nasdaq debut after the fast-growing online trading app raised \$1.9 billion in an initial public offering.

Trading under the ticker “HOOD,” Robinhood Markets ended at \$34.82, dropping 8.4 per cent after entering the market at \$38.

The Silicon Valley firm, launched by two friends who met at Stanford University, has billed itself as an accessible and fun platform for young and first-time investors, scored outsized growth during the coronavirus pandemic.

But the company, which now has a valuation of around \$29 billion, has also drawn skepticism over

its business model and criticism from key regulators over its practices.

Commentators on CNBC monitoring the IPO described the offering as “polarizing”, with loud voices in the investment community on both sides.

“The brand Robinhood really stands for this next generation of consumers,” the company's Chief Executive Vladimir Tenev said in an interview with the network.

The company had set aside 20 to 35 per cent of shares for customers in the initial offering, an unusually large portion for individual investors. But Tenev declined to provide the level of participation.—**AFP ■**

Big Tech booms even as lockdown living wanes

BIG Tech goliaths like Facebook and Amazon unveiled whopping profits this week, showing their dominance in lockdown lifestyles is on course to grow well beyond the pandemic. “Tech wins the day, the week, and seemingly the year,” Futurum Research analysts said of the surging revenues, driven by digital advertising, cloud computing, gaming and booming use of smartphones and e-commerce.

“The strength of tech is clearly untethered from Covid,” they added.

Powerhouses Facebook, Apple, Microsoft and Google parent Alphabet all reported higher revenues even as they face heightened scrutiny from anti-trust regulators for their growing dominance of key economic sectors.

Amazon said Thursday that second-quarter profit jumped 48 per cent from a year ago to \$7.8 bil-

lion, even if that showing was below high Wall Street forecasts. A growing number of consumers turned to Amazon during the pandemic to get everything from tofu to toilet paper, and its cloud computing division also grew to help businesses and consumers stay connected. The Amazon results capped a series of earnings from the major tech firms that benefited from successive lockdowns, but also the

gradual lifting of restrictions. Earlier in the week, Apple said its profit in the just-ended quarter nearly doubled amid improving consumer spending and a “growing sense of optimism” as pandemic lockdowns eased.

Revenue from iPhone sales jumped some 50 per cent and Apple posted increases for its services such as digital payments, music, streaming television and gaming.—**AFP ■**



The fast-growing online investment platform Robinhood stumbled in its trading debut and still faces questions about its model. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

NEWS
IN BRIEF'Dangerous'
heatwave hits
Athens again

In Athens' parliament square, the Evzones parade under their red berets and stifling heat.

With sweat beading on their foreheads, the presidential guards rehearse their choreography in front of a cluster of tourists as a new heatwave hits the Greek capital.

"They're amazing, but they must be suffering," says Jim Grace, an Irish tourist who, holding a bottle of water, watches them under the scorching sun.

"We're adapting," says his wife Esther Grace. "We're drinking lots of water and putting on sunscreen."

Dubbed a "dangerous" event due to how long it will last and the small difference between maximum and minimum temperatures, the heatwave is expected to peak on Monday, with temperatures likely reaching 42 to 44 degrees Celsius.—AFP ■

Defrocked US
cardinal charged
with sexual abuse

FORMER US cardinal Theodore McCarrick has been charged with sexually assaulting a teenage boy, court documents showed Thursday, making him the most senior Roman Catholic official in America to face criminal charges in the massive clergy abuse scandal.

The 91-year-old, a former archbishop of Washington DC, was slapped with three counts of indecent assault and battery against a child over 14, according to a filing in a Massachusetts district court.

McCarrick was thrown out of the Catholic Church in 2019, becoming the highest-ranking Church figure to be expelled in modern times. He had been found guilty by the Vatican of sexually abusing at least one teenage boy in the 1970s and of sexual misconduct with adult male seminarians. McCarrick, who played a key role in raising funds for the Holy See from wealthy US donors, was stripped of his cardinal's title in 2018 before he lost his priest's status the following year.—AFP ■

U.S., Vietnam agree to strengthen security cooperation



US Secretary of Defence Lloyd Austin (C) inspects a guard of honour along with Vietnam's Defence Minister Phan Van Giang (L) during a welcoming ceremony in Hanoi on Thursday. **PHOTO: VIETNAM NEWS AGENCY/AFP**

U.S. Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin met with Vietnamese Defence Minister Phan Van Giang in Hanoi on Thursday, with the two of them agreeing to strengthen security cooperation with an

eye to China's expansionary activities at sea. According to the state-run Vietnam News Agency, Austin and Phan appreciated the results of bilateral defence cooperation, including U.S. support for Vietnam improving the law enforcement at sea.

The United States has provided patrol boats to Vietnam, which has territorial disputes with China over the Spratly and Paracel island groups in the South China Sea.

"They shared views on the importance of respecting the legitimate rights and interests of coastal states, peacefully solving disputes as well as maintaining peace, stability, safety, order and freedom of aviation and navigation at seas and oceans," VNA reported, without directly refer-

encing China.

VNA said Austin announced further cooperation in decontaminating soil contaminated with defoliants used by the U.S. military during the Vietnam War.

The U.S. defence secretary also paid courtesy calls on Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh and President Nguyen Xuan Phuc.

During a reception hosted for the Pentagon chief, VNA said Phan "affirmed that Vietnam always considers the U.S. as a leading partner in its foreign policy and wants to further develop bilateral cooperative ties in areas of mutual interest."

Austin proposed the two sides consider lifting bilateral ties to a "strategic partnership" in the future, the news agency reported.—Kyodo ■

Blinken says nuclear
talks with Iran 'cannot
go on indefinitely'

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Thursday that nuclear talks with Iran "cannot go on indefinitely" but that Washington was "fully prepared" to continue negotiations.

The US is indirectly involved in Iran's talks with world powers to revive a nuclear deal that gave Iran some relief from international sanctions in exchange for limits on its nuclear programme.

The deal was torpedoed in 2018 by then US president Donald Trump, who unilaterally withdrew from the agreement and

imposed punishing sanctions.

"We're committed to diplomacy, but this process cannot go on indefinitely... we look to see what Iran is ready to do or not ready to do and remain fully prepared to return to Vienna to continue negotiations," Blinken said during a visit to Kuwait on Thursday. "The ball remains in Iran's court." Iranian President Hassan Rouhani's government has been holding talks with major powers in Vienna since April on bringing Washington back into the agreement. But a deal



US Secretary of State Antony Blinken uses a visit to Kuwait to warn Iran that the ball is in its court in negotiations on restoring a landmark nuclear deal. **PHOTO: AFP**

now seems unlikely until after he hands over to President-elect Ebrahim Raisi early next month.

Raisi is an ultraconservative but has expressed support for the nuclear talks, arguing Iran needs

an end to US sanctions.

Iran's ultraconservative camp, which deeply distrusts the United States, has repeatedly criticized Rouhani over the 2015 deal.—AFP ■

China accuses BBC of 'fake news'



The BBC said its reporters covering the floods in China had been subjected to online vitriol. **PHOTO: AFP**

BEIJING on Thursday launched a scathing attack on the BBC, accusing it of broadcasting "fake news" and saying the organiza-

tion was "naturally unpopular" over its coverage of devastating floods in central China.

The broadside by the foreign ministry comes after the BBC called on Beijing to put a stop to the harassment of its journalists by nationalists who have accused foreign media of biased reporting.

Days of heavy rain last week sparked record flooding in the central province of Henan that has claimed the lives of at least 99 people.

The BBC said its reporters covering the deluge had been subjected to online vitriol, while other outlets had been harassed on the ground in "attacks which

continue to endanger foreign journalists". But Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian on Thursday called the broadcaster a "Fake News Broadcasting Company" that has "attacked and smeared China, seriously deviating from journalistic standards".

Zhao said the BBC deserved to be "unpopular with the Chinese public" and "there is no such thing as hatred without reason".

The war of words erupted after a youth branch of China's ruling Communist Party on Tuesday posted comments online calling on its 1.6 million followers to track the movements of BBC reporters.—AFP ■

Philippines says US military deal ‘in full force again’

PHILIPPINE President Rodrigo Duterte has walked back on a decision to end a key military deal with the United States, his defence secretary said Friday during a visit by Pentagon chief Lloyd Austin.

Duterte told the United States in February last year he planned to axe the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) after Washington cancelled the visa of a close ally who led his internationally condemned war on drugs.

The deal has been prolonged three times since then, most recently in June after months of negotiations between the two sides.

Philippine Defence Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said Friday the VFA was “in full force again”, during a news conference with Austin, who was in Manila on the last stop of a Southeast Asia tour.

“Last night, after the meeting between Secretary Austin and the president... the president decided to recall or retract the



Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte has walked back on a decision to end a key military deal with the United States. PHOTO: PHILIPPINES' PRESIDENTIAL PHOTOGRAPHERS DIVISION (PPD)/AFP

termination letter for the VFA,” Lorenzana said, adding: “We are back on track”.

The 1998 VFA provides the legal framework for the US to hold joint military exercises and

operations in the Philippines and is a key component of their decades-long alliance.

It is also seen as a bulwark against China’s growing clout in the region. Austin, who was

visiting Southeast Asia for the first time as US defence secretary, welcomed Duterte’s decision, saying it “provides us some degree of certainty going forward”.—AFP ■

Japan, U.S. get S. Korean heads-up on comm. line reopening with North

SOUTH Korea informed Japan and the United States via diplomatic channels before announcing earlier this week its agreement with North Korea to restore inter-Korean communications lines, Japanese and South Korean diplomatic sources said Thursday.

The advance notice about the Tuesday announcement signals the government of President Moon Jae In placing importance on cooperation with the United States and Japan

on North Korean issues despite having frosty ties with Tokyo over wartime labor and other issues.

The U.S. administration of President Joe Biden is working to restore relations with its allies that frayed under his predecessor Donald Trump’s administration and has attached importance to the trilateral framework involving the United States and its key Asian allies.

The Moon government appears to be responding in



File photo shows (From L) South Korean First Vice-Foreign Minister Choi Jong Kun, Japan’s Vice-Foreign Minister Takeo Mori and U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman pose for a photo in Tokyo on 21 July 2021. PHOTO: KYODO

kind. “We believe South Korea will continue to work in concert with Japan and the United

States going forward,” a Japanese government official said.—Kyodo ■

Five Iraqi crew killed in helicopter crash on combat mission



Iraqi forces carry out a controlled explosion of a suspected hideout. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

FIVE Iraqi troops were killed Thursday when their helicopter crashed on a “combat mission” north of Baghdad, the military said, as a security source confirmed it had been hit by ground fire.

The helicopter came down near Amerli in Salaheddin province, the military said, in an area where Iraqi troops have carried out repeated operations against suspected sleeper cells of the Islamic State group.

Video footage sent to journalists in Baghdad showed firefighters attempting to put out

a blaze in the wreckage of the aircraft.

The security forces had launched an operation on Tuesday to “search and clear areas in the south of Kirkuk province”, which borders Salaheddin, a statement on their Twitter account said.

The security source told AFP that the helicopter that came down was one of two that had been checking pylons carrying high-voltage power lines in the area, a frequent target for holdout jihadists in recent months.—AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Peru’s Castillo chooses leftist party colleague as PM

PERU’S President Pedro Castillo on Thursday named a prime minister from within his Marxist-Leninist Free Peru party -- 41-year-old Guido Bellido who first became a lawmaker six days ago and has never held public office.

Inaugurated in Lima himself just Wednesday, Castillo presided over Bellido’s swearing-in at the Pampa de la Quinua, site of the 1824 battle that ended Spanish domination of Peru and South America at large.

Bellido, an electronic engineer, vowed he would represent the interests of all Peruvians and advance “the fight against corruption”.

He is one 37 Peru Libre lawmakers elected to the 130-member Congress in April. Under Peruvian law, parliamentarians can also hold government positions.—AFP ■

Top US, UN officials head to Ethiopia to press for Tigray aid

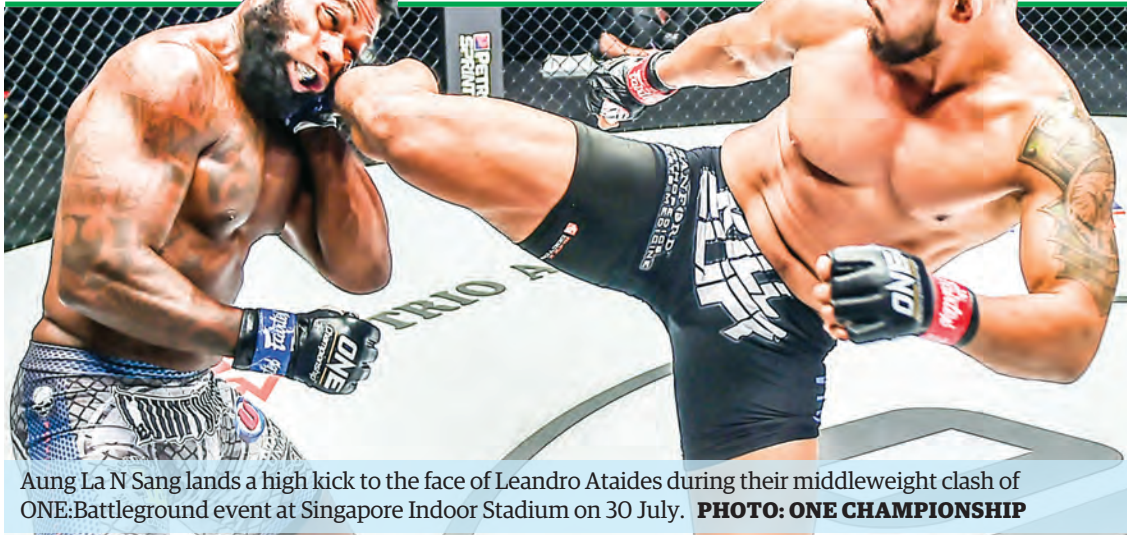
US aid head Samantha Power and the UN humanitarian chief will hold talks in Ethiopia to press for urgent access into conflict-battered Tigray as fears grow that millions face famine, officials said Thursday.

Power will meet officials in Addis Ababa to “press for unimpeded humanitarian access to prevent famine in Tigray and meet urgent needs in other conflict-affected regions of the country,” the US Agency for International Development said in a statement.

Power will also travel to Sudan on her trip starting Saturday as Western nations seek to support the civilian-backed transitional government after decades of authoritarian rule, USAID said.

The United Nations has warned that food rations in the Tigrayan capital Mekele could run out within days if more aid is not allowed in.

Some 5.2 million people -- more than 90 per cent of Tigray’s people -- depend on outside assistance, according to the UN.—AFP ■



Aung La N Sang lands a high kick to the face of Leandro Ataides during their middleweight clash of ONE: Battleground event at Singapore Indoor Stadium on 30 July. **PHOTO: ONE CHAMPIONSHIP**

Aung La N Sang stops Leandro Ataides with impressive shots

FORMER two-division ONE World champion Aung La N Sang is back into action as the Burmese Python beat Brazilian giant fighter Leandro Ataides via knockout in their ONE Middle Weight clash of ONE: Battleground event at Singapore Indoor Stadium yesterday. Both fighters launched the fight with the colourful tactic.

Aung La N Sang mostly relied on the standing fight including kickboxing while the Brazilian fighter stayed on the ground fights.

Leandro Ataides has planned to take Aung La N Sang down on

the floor but all of his attempts were failed under the strong punches of the Burmese Python.

Aung La N Sang threw high kicks in early minutes to prove that he is a king of the ONE Championship stand-fighters.

A minute in, Ataides shot Aung La N Sang for a double-leg takedown and pressed him to the fence. But Aung La took his best position again and pressed Ataides to the fence and landed a knee to break the stamina of the Brazilian fighter. With fabulous boxing skills, Aung La landed continuous left and right punches on

the chest and face of Leandro Ataides at a 3-minute mark of the first round. The referee stopped the Middleweight contest after 3 minutes and 45 seconds in the first round when Aung La N Sang knocked out Leandro Ataides. With a win, Aung La N Sang was coming off back-to-back losses to Reinier de Ridder in which he lost his middleweight and light heavyweight belts previously.

The victory improved Aung La N Sang's professional MMA record to 27 wins, 12 losses, and no draw while Ataides now has 11 wins and five losses. — GNLM

Olympics: Sone claims women's heavyweight judo gold for Japan

AKIRA Sone continued Japan's judo gold rush at the Tokyo Olympics on Friday, beating Cuba's Idalys Ortiz for the women's over-78-kilogramme title. The victory brought Japan's gold medal tally for the Tokyo Games to 16, matching its all-time Olympic record. Japan set the mark when it first hosted the games in Tokyo in 1964 and equaled it at the 2004 Athens Games. The 21-year-old Sone lived up to her billing as the

gold medal favourite in the heaviest women's weight class at Nippon Budokan, winning each bout from the round of 16 through the semifinals by Nippon. The Olympic debutant faced a prolonged battle against Ortiz, in a rematch of the 2019 world championship final, but came out on top once again when the Cuban picked up her third penalty to end the bout after 4 minutes, 52 seconds of golden score. — Kyodo ■

Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council 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.

Australia's Jessica Fox wins first Olympic canoe slalom gold

AUSTRALIA'S Jessica Fox won her first Olympic gold medal Thursday in the women's canoe slalom, an event she pushed to have added to the programme in Tokyo.

Fox, regarded as perhaps the greatest paddler of all time with 10 world titles, claimed an elusive Olympic title as Britain's Mallory Franklin took silver with Andrea Herzog of Germany earning bronze.

"So much emotion, so much joy, so much builds up to this moment. It's just incredible," said Fox.

"I was dreaming of it and I really believed it was within me, I could do it, but you never know what is going to happen in the Olympics.

"It is about holding your nerve and I probably didn't do that very well in the kay-

ak a couple of days before, so it was hard to get to this point but it has been incredible to do what I did today." The 27-year-old Fox had won bronze in kayak slalom earlier in the week, following bronze at the 2016 Games in Rio and silver at London four years earlier.

She campaigned to ensure genders were equally represented in Japan, with women competing in the canoe slalom at the Games for the first time.

"I can't believe it. I am so proud to be here today in the women's C1 category and I am so proud of all the women who have raced here and been part of this moment," said Fox. "(I'm) grateful to all the women, all the coaches, all the people who lobbied for gender equality in our sport." — AFP ■



Australia's Jessica Fox won her first Olympic gold medal Thursday in the women's canoe slalom, an event she pushed to have added to the programme in Tokyo. **PHOTO: AFP**