THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

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## Five-Point Road Map of the State Administration Council

1. The Union Election Commission will be reconstituted and its mandated tasks, including the scrutiny of voter lists, shall be implemented in accordance with the law.
2. Effective measures will be taken with added momentum to prevent and manage the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. Actions will be taken to ensure the speedy recovery of businesses from the impact of COVID-19.
4. Emphasis will be placed on achieving enduring peace for the entire nation in line with the agreements set out in the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement.
5. Upon accomplishing the provisions of the state of emergency, free and fair multiparty democratic elections will be held in line with the 2008 Constitution, and further work will be undertaken to hand over State duties to the winning party in accordance with democratic standards.

# Relevant administrative bodies must help medical doctors discharge duties and ensure convenience of daily lifestyle: Senior General

Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister of the Provisional Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar Senior General Min Aung Hlaing delivers address at the 8th coordination meeting for prevention, control and treatment of COVID-19.

PRIORITY must be given to health staff who were infected by COVID-19 discharging duty on frontline in giving treatments to confirmed patients at hospitals and centres by looking after them as a special matter, said Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister of the Provisional Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar Senior General Min Aung Hlaing at the 8th coordination meeting for prevention, control and treatment of COVID-19 at Bayintnaung Villa in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday afternoon.

In his opening speech, the Senior General said that he has pointed out at the previous meetings to ensure a half down of infection rate in the third wave of COVID-19 in August. The infection rate hit 33.17 per cent on 14 July and 40.82 per cent on 23 July, in comparison with 26.46 per cent on 15 August. The infection rate could be decreased to more than 14 per cent thanks to concerted efforts of the government officials, health staff, social organizations and volunteers.

Those who make attempts to hike the prices of basic household medicines and medical equipment with unusual storage are being exposed for declining the irregularly high prices and action will be taken against them.

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# MoC makes continuous efforts to ensure imports of essential medical supplies

THE Ministry of Commerce is working hard to ensure people have access to essential medical supplies which are critical to the COVID-19 prevention, control and treatment activities, including liquid oxygen and oxygen cylinders, arranging the continuous importation on public holidays.

Yesterday, a total of 1,117 oxygen concentrators were imported via airways at the Yangon International Airport. In addition, 780 test kits, one oxygen storage container, 45 tonnes of liquid oxygen, 5,614 empty oxygen containers, two oxygen refills, 1,344 oxygen concentrators, 8,150 PPE suits and 70 tonnes of masks were imported through border trade points and seaports.

A total of 987 tonnes of liquid oxygen, 72 tonnes of oxygen cylinders, eight liquid oxygen storage containers, six oxygen distributors, 106,905 tonnes of empty oxygen containers, 22 oxygen plants, two oxygen refills, 10 oxygen generators, 73,904 oxygen concentrators, 151,048 test kits, 496,662 PPE suits, 82 tonnes of gloves and 1,105 tonnes of masks have been imported by far in August.

Of 79 liquid oxygen bowsers imported between 1 July and 16 August, 61 of them drove to Yangon, 11 to Mandalay, two to Bago, four to Mawlamyine and one to Thaton respectively. Among 30 oxygen plants, four were transported to Yangon, five to Lashio, four to Bago, two to Pakokku, three to Mandalay, two to Hpa-an, two to Mawlamyine, one each to Taunggyi, Thanbyuzayat, Magway, Dawei, Wakema, Myittha, Kyaukpadaung and Mogaung respectively.

It is reported that the Ministry of Commerce is allowing the importation of COVID-19 devices in accordance with the SOP priority negotiated by relevant departments, and announcements related to the imports of medical supplies and equipment are posted on commerce.gov.mm.—MNA

Cargo trucks convey oxygen cylinder and medical supplies through Muse border point.

Heavy trucks carry medical equipment imported through Myawady border point.

Cargo trucks carrying essential medical supplies are seen at Chinshwehaw border point.

## 2,706 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 16 August, total figure rises to 356,985

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to **356,985 after 2,706 new cases** were reported on 16 August 2021 according to the Ministry of Health. Among these confirmed cases, **275,516** have been discharged from hospitals. Death toll reached **13,445** after **182** died. —MNA

## Emphasis must be placed on development tasks while prioritizing peace and stability, especially political stability

THEY are carrying out the government tasks in a smooth process. It is necessary to consider extension of new sectors. The unrests and terror acts based on vote-rigging in the 2020 election are being combated. Emphasis must be placed on development tasks while prioritizing the peace and stability, especially political stability. The provisional government of Myanmar temporarily takes the responsibility of the country, and when the emergency period runs out, the election will be held under the law. Undertakings will be carried out to hand over the State duty to the government emerged by the election in accord with the Constitution.

*(Excerpt from the speech to the meeting 13/2021 of the State Administration Council made by the Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council Chairman Senior General Min Aung Hlaing on 8 August 2021)*

# Relevant administrative bodies must help medical ...

FROM PAGE-1

Such move aims to enable the people to consume the basic household medicines at regular prices. Region and state authorities need to scrutinize high prices of basic foodstuffs as Myanmar produces foodstuffs. Prices should not be terribly high.

COVID-19 vaccines must be stored systematically for avoiding damage. As EAOs contact the authorities to give vaccination in their regions, officials need to compile the data on target groups set by the Ministry of Health.

District and township officials need to maintain the school buildings for convenient learning of students when the schools are opened with controlling of infection rate to some extent. Priority must be given to teachers who would closely teach the students. Although restrictions have been removed for import of vaccines and medicines, relevant departments need to supervise import of medicines in conformity with the rules of FDA.

Vice-Chairman of the State Administration Council Deputy Prime Minister Vice-Senior General Soe Win takes part in the meeting.

The Vice-Chairman of the State Administration Council Deputy Prime Minister and meeting participants discussed enhancement of immunity of the health staff, volunteers and sanitation workers, deployment of health staff and volunteers for providing health care services to patients at quarantine centres and positive patient centres, and raising health awareness in regions and states where infection rates are high.

Their discussions focused on infection rate and death rate in global countries, infection rate of Myanmar with 210,961 patients and death rate with 10,048 till today, decline of 36 per cent infection rate in comparing the that of the second week of July and the second week of August, remarkable decrease of infection rate in Yangon Region to 74 per cent, Bago Region 62 per cent, Sagaing Region 53 per cent, and Kayin state and Ayeyawady Region 40 per cent.

They explained that contact is being created to receive one million units of vaccine from China in coming week, and efforts of ministries to purchase 24 more million units of vaccines through agreements.

They also explained prevention for infection of variant viruses, vaccination at IDP camps, meetings to take vaccines through cooperation with ASEAN countries and research to produce COVID-19 vaccines through traditional medicines.

The clarification highlighted raising awareness of health for the disease via State-owned TV channels, radios, newspapers and media, further production of oxygen to meet the demand, inspection of medical depots not to increase prices of medicines, and return of Myanmar foreign returnees.

They also discussed running of relief flights to transport passengers and medicines, operation of flights, watercraft and road transport not to halt transportation services, and production of medicines by State-owned and private pharmaceutical factories. The Senior General gave necessary instructions.

In his concluding remarks, the Senior General said: "Priority must be given to health staff who were infected by COVID-19 discharging duty on frontline in giving treatments to confirmed patients at hospitals and centres by looking after them as a special matter. Such special matter is not just for curing their sufferings. It is necessary to solve their consequent problems. So, officials need to register their work records with the title of the persons who were infected while providing treatment to patients. Relevant region and state chief ministers need to look after them. I'd like to urge the ministry to put them on records for looking after them. Moreover, as civilian treatment cannot be undertaken in some areas, those from the Tatmadaw are discharging duty there. Military hospitals are focusing on treatment of COVID-19. Not only quarantine centres and treatment centres but also hospitals admit the infected and suspect people for providing health care services. I'd like to point out that it is necessary to give separate rewards to them."

The Senior General continued to say that although the infection rate is down a half, some townships see high infection rates due to estimation of the World Health Organization. So, efforts must be made for declining the infection rates in some townships. Oxygen is required in treatment of COVID-19 patients as well as those of other diseases. It is necessary to calculate data for the permanent supply of oxygen at the hospitals at different levels.

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> Those who make attempts to hike the prices of basic household medicines and medical equipment with unusual storage are being exposed for declining the irregularly high prices and action will be taken against them. Such move aims to enable the people to consume the basic household medicines at regular prices.

> Region and state authorities are assigned to recruit medical doctors for all hospitals. If necessary, the Tatmadaw will give a helping hand to them. Assignment of medical doctors at all hospitals is the most important.

# Relevant administrative bodies must help medical ...

FROM PAGE-3

Region and state authorities are assigned to recruit medical doctors for all hospitals. If necessary, the Tatmadaw will give a helping hand to them. Assignment of medical doctors at all hospitals is the most important. Relevant administrative bodies must help medical doctors discharge duties and ensure convenience of daily lifestyle. Weak preparations in first and second waves caused difficulties at hospitals. High infection rate in the third wave also brings difficulties. Hence, relevant organizations are to cooperate with each other in making preparations based on population.

With regard to natural disasters, the Senior General said: "I'd like to give an instruction for hospitals. The current weather brings heavy rains. The Vice-Chairman recently told me that the weather forecast highlighted heavy rains starting from the last week of August. So, it is necessary to make preparations for no inundation at hospitals and for carrying out better drainage system. Otherwise, evacuation of patients is very difficult and danger. It doesn't matter for healthy persons. So, environs of hospitals and drains must be cleaned. In addition, roads must be improved. It is necessary to be ready for emergency rescue work the whole monsoon. Those from the rescue teams must be ready. They must be provided food supplies with necessary expenses of the government. We need to spend the fund on prevention and preparedness against the disasters. Importantly, efforts must be made for avoiding the disorder events in the disasters. Difficulties may be based on flooding as natural disasters. So, region and state authorities need to make preparations with estimations. Mainly, we need to prepare the prevention of flooding at hospitals not to face difficulties in evacuating patients."

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Later, the Senior General urged all to strive for production of masks, face shields, PPE suits and gloves at home for prevention, control and treatment of COVID-19. Myanmar citizens arriving in foreign countries are re-accepted through various ways and means. Efforts must be made for regularizing the work process without cutting off the momentum, and treatment must be given to those returnees as much as possible.—MNA

# Mya Sein Yaung village project benefit more than eight million people

THE Mya Sein Yaung Village Project that has been implemented since 2014-2015 financial year, with 298.11 billion kyats from the State fund which benefits more than 8 million rural people across the country.

The project aims to promote socio-economic development of the rural areas, with the implementation in agriculture, livestock, rural water supply, rural lighting, village business and other livelihood activities.

At the coordination meeting on Mya Sein Yaung Project held yesterday morning through video conferencing, Union Minister for Cooperatives and Rural Development U Hla Moe said efforts are being made to link with small and medium enterprises, agricultural-based cooperative societies and rural infrastructure development works for socio-economic development of the rural people.

The project covers 22 per cent of all villages in the country and is implemented in a total of 12,084 villages in 289 townships since its establishment in 2014 to date. During the current COVID-19 crisis, arrangements are made to alleviate socio-economic problems, including to prevent delays in money lending and interest rate easing. The Union Minister also added the ministry will work with the relevant authorities to make the project more successful.

Union Minister for CRD U Hla Moe hightlights implementation of Mya Sein Yaung village project.

At present, the project has received 188.84 billion kyats from interest and a total of 2,937 rural development works have been implemented in 2,481 villages through the income from the interest and public contribution.—MNA

## Daily newspapers available online

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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.

# Efforts made to boost tourism industry

THE "Enchanting Myanmar Health and Safety Protocol" website has launched to allow hotels and tourism services to apply it for national certification online as a safe service provider, said Union Minister for Hotels and Tourism Dr Htay Aung at a coordination meeting yesterday.

The Union Minister continued that the entrepreneurs serving in seven hotels and tourism services related industries should inform to apply for the national certificates and other activities.

The heads of region/state branches also need to implement the instructions made by the Chairman of National Tourism Development Central Committee during 1st coordination meeting as soon as possible and submit the reports regarding the completed work plans.

Then, directors-general and heads of region/state branches including Nay Pyi Taw Council who attended the meeting online presented their current work plans.

The Union Minister instructed the meeting participants to create new tourist destinations and significant events in addition to traditional festivals and make efforts to promote the quality of local foodstuffs for the Myanmar Food Show and cooperation works of employees to develop the tourism industry based on their experience, knowledge and skills.—MNA

The Ministry of Hotels and Tourism focuses on development of tourism industry with creation of new tourist destinations.

# Mandalay factory workers vaccinated against COVID-19

A health staff injects anti-COVID-19 vaccine into a local.

THE factory workers in Aungmyethazan Township of Mandalay Region received COVID-19 vaccines yesterday.

The health workers vaccinated a total of 550 people at respective five vaccination gathering points in accordance with the COVID-19 health rules.

U Than Oo, responsible person of Amarahtani Ward Administration office said, "The vaccination process has been started here for 10 days. We vaccinated about 60 people per day and currently more than 1,000 people have received vaccines. Many people come here to get vaccinated due to the rapid spread of disease.

The volunteers pick up the senior citizens who cannot come here for vaccines. The people should wash their hands frequently and avoid mass gatherings. The ward administrative officials always conduct the educative programmes."

U Win Ko Ko, a factory worker said, "We, the factory workers are satisfied with the vaccination process. All the workers come here.

"We did not get much pain for the shot. I want to urge the people to get vaccinated and stay in accordance with the COVID-19 health rules."

Moreover, another factory worker Daw Khin Thein Oo said, "I am waiting for the vaccines for a long time. Now, I have received the vaccine and I want to thank all the officials and health workers for their help. I feel safe after vaccinating. I'd like to invite remaining people to receive vaccines with trust."

Before the vaccination, the health workers check the body temperature, blood pressure and blood oxygen level and vaccinate those who are in normal condition.

Moreover, the officials arrange the halls for the people to take a 30 minutes rest after vaccination and prepare the necessary health care services in case of sudden illness.—Maung Aye Chan/GNLM

# Ahlon Township exhibits medical supplies for retail sale, wholesale

MEDICAL supplies including medicines and equipment needed for the prevention, control and treatment of COVID-19 disease are sold in retail/wholesale exhibitions on Strand Road, Ahlon Township, Yangon Region, starting from yesterday.

The Department of Consumer Affairs and the Myanmar Pharmaceutical and Medical Device Manufacturer Association (MPMDMA) have joined to provide the necessary high quality medicines so that people can purchase them in a single place at fair prices.

Medicines in the exhibition are sold by the member companies of the MPMDMA that have been granted the Drug Importation Approval Certificate (DIAC) from the Food and Drug Administration Department.

The "Medicine Retail/Wholesale Programme" is being implemented by 30 MPMDMA member companies in 30 booths, and about 250 to 300 medicines will be available from Tuesday to Friday, from 10 am to 4 pm, as the first step of the programme.

Depending on the demand, the programme will be extended and the information will be announced on the social media page of the MPMDM, according to the central executive member of the association.

It is reported that plans are underway to extend the second step of the programme at the Myanmar International Trade Centre in Pabedan Township within this month and information on the exact date of the exhibition will be announced in advance.

At present, the Myanmar Pharmaceutical and Medical Device Manufacturer Association (MPMDMA) has a total of 1,050 member companies.—Pwint Thitsar/GNLM

# Yangon water ferry schedule amended for convenience of passengers

Cherry vessel ferry is conveying passengers between Pansodan and Dala.

DURING the COVID-19 outbreak and extended pubic holidays, Yangon (Pansodan-Dala) ferries have amended its route and schedule for the convenience of the passengers, according to the Inland Water Transport (Delta Division).

Currently, the water ferries are running 28 times a day on weekdays and 20 times a day on weekends. Due to the declined number of passengers, the water ferry will be rescheduled depending on the number of passengers onboard, said U Hla Win Naing, the assistant general manager from IWT (Delta Division).

The ferry ships running from Yangon's Pansodan to Dala are set to operate 28 times a day, rescheduling its regular service of 46 times a day.

The Pansodan-Dala jetty is the only gateway for the local people in southern Yangon— Dala, Twantay, Kawhmu, Kungyangon townships and some townships in Ayeyawady Region to link themselves with the commercial hub of Yangon City. Three motor vessels named Cherry 1, 2 and 3, donated by Japan have been running daily. Currently, the water ferries are rescheduled due to declined number of passengers.

Due to the declined number of passengers, the Pansodan-Dala ferries transported a total of 29,010 commuters from 1 August to 15 August and the average daily passenger was 1,900 approximately.

Before outbreak of COVID-19, the ferries transported over 27,000 passengers daily from Dala to Yangon. It is one of the crowded places in the city, generating revenues.—Naing Lin Kyaw (IPRD)/GNLM

# New COVID-19 cases drop in Mandalay District

According to the announcement of Ministry of Health, the number of new COVID-19 cases has decreased in seven townships of Mandalay region within 24 hours.

Mandalay is under the stay at home order as the number of positive cases and deaths increased in July.

In July and early August, more than 50 new cases were reported in seven townships in Mandalay district daily. The number of cases has been dropped slightly since 9 August. On 13 August, Only 19 new cases were reported a day in Mandalay district.

Mandalay district reported 64 COVID-19 confirmed cases with 17 deaths on 9 August, 43 confirmed cases with eight deaths on 10 August, 38 confirmed cases with 13 deaths on 11 August, 22 confirmed cases with 11 deaths on 12 August and 19 confirmed cases with 16 deaths on 13 August.

According to the press release, although the number of new COVID-19 cases in Mandalay district drops, the number of new cases announced on 9, 10 and 12 August in Mandalay region is listed on the highest number of new infection rate daily in the country, with over 40 deaths.—Aye Maung/GNLM

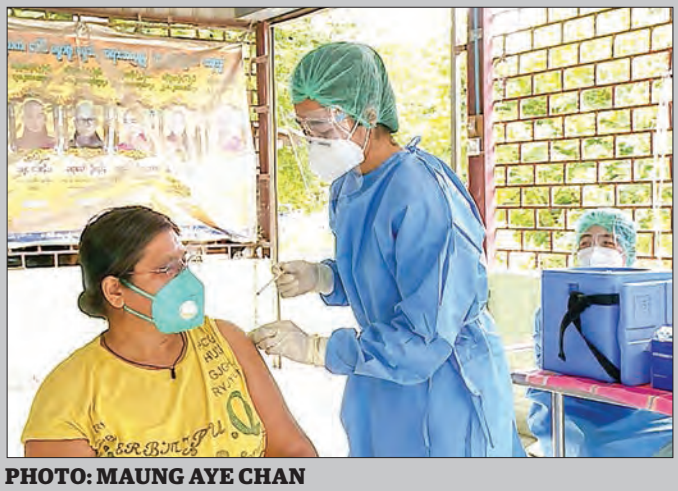


**PHOTO: MAUNG AYE CHAN**

# More than 1,000 acres of monsoon paddy cultivated in ChaungU this year

MORE than 1,000 acres of monsoon paddy have been cultivated in ChaungU Township, in Monywa district, Sagaing region this year, said Daw Khin Myat Myat Oo, the township head of ChaungU Township Agriculture Department.

In 2021-2022 FY, the department targeted to grow 18,500 acres of monsoon paddy in ChaungU Township. The department sown the seeds in July and started cultivating in the first week of August, 2021. So far, more than 1,000 acres of monsoon paddy have been cultivated," she added.

In order to meet the monsoon paddy cultivation target and get high yield in ChuangU township, township Agriculture Department head Daw Khin Myat Myat Oo and her staff inspected the monsoon paddy fields in the villages starting from 14 August. The department is negotiating with the local farmers and giving awareness regarding the monsoon paddy cultivation.

In 2021-2022 FY, the local farmers from ChaungU Township targeted to cultivate over 102,000 acres of monsoon paddy crops including paddy, edible oil, verity of nutritious pulses, bamboo, kitchen crops and other crops. Those monsoon crops are started cultivating in May, 2021. As of today, over 100,000 acres of monsoon crops have been cultivated, according to the ChaungU Township Agriculture Department.—Lulay/GNLM

Thriving paddy plants bear ears of paddy.

# Manufacturing sector bags $262 mln this FY

THE majority of foreign enterprises eye the manufacturing sector for investments in the past ten months (Oct-July) of the current financial year 2020-2021, pumping the estimated capital of US$262 million into 24 projects, the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration stated.

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

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

Myanmar's manufacturing sector is largely concentrated on garment and textile produced on the Cutting, Making, and Packaging 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 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 drew foreign direct investment of more than US$3.76 billion in the past ten 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 45 foreign enterprises permitted and endorsed by MIC and the respective investment committees between 1 October and 31 July of the current FY, 24 enterprises pumped FDI into the manufacturing sector. The electricity sector received six large projects and the livestock and fisheries sector, six projects. Other service sector drew five projects while the agriculture sector pulled two projects and one foreign enterprise each entered the industrial estate and the hotels and tourism sectors.—HH/GNLM

Myanmar International Terminal Thilawa (MITT). **PHOTO MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY**

# Natural gas export tops US$2 bln in eight months

An oil and natural gas exploration platform is seen in the sea to produce oil and natural gas.

MYANMAR'S exports of natural gas in the past eight months (Oct-May) of the current financial year 2020-2021 exceeded US$2.025 billion, the Commerce Ministry's data showed.

The figures indicated a sharp drop of over $900 million compared to a year-ago period.

Natural gas is included on the list of major export items of Myanmar. About six per cent of the country's total export earnings come from the sale of natural gas.

There are 53 onshore blocks and 51 offshore blocks, totalling 104 blocks. A total of 25 onshore blocks and 31 offshore blocks are being operated under the foreign investment. Natural gas extraction is being made at the Yadanar, the Yedagun, the Shwe, and the Zawtika offshore blocks as well as onshore drilling blocks. Yearly extraction is elevated to cubic feet in 670.36 billion from 600 billion last year, according to the statement of the Ministry of Electricity and Energy.

The Shwe natural gas field, located offshore from Rakhine State, was discovered in 2014. Natural gas extracted from the field is exported to China.

The Yadana natural gas project is being carried out by the TOTAL Company, with its pipeline supplying natural gas to Thailand. Natural gas is also extracted in Yedagun, located offshore from Taninthayi Region and discovered in 1992. The Zawtika Project in the Gulf of Mottama mainly supplies natural gas to neighbouring Thailand.

Production at Yadana and Yedagun is declining, and those projects will be halted in the coming years.

Myanmar's exports of natural gas stood at $3.5 billion in the 2019-2020 FY, $3.9 billion in the 2018-2019 FY, $3.5 billion in the 2017-2018 FY, $3.116 billion in the 2016-2017 FY, and $3.445 billion in the 2015-2016 FY, as per Commerce Ministry data.—KH/GNLM

# Rubber price depends on model of supply and demand when harvest season ends

MYANMAR'S rubber is traded when the buyers and sellers find a price that they are willing to transact during the end of rubber latex collection season, according to Mawlamyine commodity wholesale centre.

Rubber harvesting season usually ends in August. The buyers and sellers agree on the right price when the natural rubber production declines this month.

On 1 July, the sundried rubber sheet was priced at K910 per pound and Ribbed Smoked Sheet (RSS 3) fetched K920 per pound in Mon State.

The rubber production rate usually drops at the end of harvest across the country. Consequently, the price slightly rose when the supply is pretty low.

Additionally, the production is found lesser during the heavy rainfall period. Also, the price depends on the model of supply and demand rather than the set price then.

Moreover, the exporters also purchase the rubbers that are stockpiled in the warehouses. The market price of an asset is determined by the forces of supply and demand at the present time.

According to the price survey of National Enlightenment Institute (NEI), rubber price also surged during June-August last year when the latex production declined. This being so, high rubber price is expected this year as well.

Mon State is the top producer of rubber in the country, accounting for over 240 million pounds of rubber per year, as per data of Mon State Agriculture Department.

Rubber is primarily produced in Mon and Kayin states and Taninthayi, Bago, and Yangon regions in Myanmar. As per 2018-2019 rubber season's data, there are over 1.628 million acres of rubber plantations in Myanmar, with Mon State accounting for 497,153 acres, followed by Taninthayi Region with 348,344 acres and Kayin State with 270,760 acres. About 300,000 tonnes of rubber is produced annually across the country. Seventy per cent of rubber produced in Myanmar goes to China. It is also shipped to Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, Viet Nam, the Republic of Korea, India, Japan, and other countries, according to the MRPPA.

Myanmar yearly exports over 200,000 tonnes of natural rubber to foreign countries, generating income of over $200 million.—NN/GNLM

Labours are working at production of rubber sheeets.

# Join hands among global peoples to defy COVID-19 pandemic

Nowadays, global countries need to look the COVID-19 pandemic as a common enemy of the world. It is because the global common enemy has killed millions of global peoples while attacking other people to be infected ones as much as it can.

The global community needs to fight against the enemy through the united strength. All the countries should set aside discrimination of nationality, skin colour, politics, religion and gender in responding to attacks of the pandemic. All need to join hands in a firm manner to encounter the COVID-19.

> So, we need to seek the best ways for totally controlling the disease not to severely infect the people again and again while making preparations in advance how to live together with COVID-19 in the new normal status.

We all need to exchange the information about the devil pandemic to perform counter-attacks in real time. We should not delay in process of prevention, containment and treatment of the disease.

All global countries should coordinate with one another to assign professionals, researchers and experts regardless of countries and nationals so as to produce the high quality potent vaccines and medicines to defy the pandemic in their respective corners. For the time being, global countries are trying to produce medicines and vaccines against the pandemic. We all have to improve self-immunity to be able to resist the impacts of pandemic.

Applying the powerful united strength, all global countries should emphasize seeking the ways and means how to overcome the challenges in engaging the pandemic, how to manufacture better medicines and vaccines, what we may face variant species of viruses in the future and how to sustain the united strength of the nations to be able to respond to the pandemic in the future.

We should not be careless. We should always monitor the moves of COVID-19. We should give a helping hand to each other for combating the global enemy pandemic. We need to alert the global peoples to prevent the forthcoming impacts of the disease as well as protect the healthy people against the infection of disease.

In fact, experts said COVID-19 would not totally disappear from the world. So, we need to seek the best ways for totally controlling the disease not to severely infect the people again and again while making preparations in advance how to live together with COVID-19 in the new normal status. Hence, strenuous efforts must be made for all the global peoples to search and manufacture medicines for preventive measures and vaccines for treatment.

■ ■ ■

# Study finds COVID-19 during pregnancy is associated with preterm birth

ACCORDING to a large study led by researchers at UC San Francisco, pregnant individuals who contract COVID-19 face a higher risk of having a very preterm birth, as well as any preterm birth.

The findings of the study were published in the journal 'The Lancet Regional Health - Americas'.

The risk of very preterm birth, which occurs at less than 32 weeks of gestation, was 60 per cent higher for people infected with COVID-19 at some point in their pregnancy, while the risk of giving birth at less than 37 weeks (all preterm births) was 40 per cent higher in those with infection.

For those who also had hypertension, diabetes and/or obesity as well as COVID-19, the risk of preterm birth rose 160 per cent.

"Preterm birth is associated with many challenging outcomes for pregnant people and babies, and very preterm births carry the highest risk of infant complications," said lead and corresponding author Deborah Karasek, PhD, assistant professor in the Department of Obstetrics, Gynecology and Reproductive Sciences, and researcher with the California Preterm Birth Initiative at UCSF.

"Our results point to the importance of preventative measures to reduce COVID-19 infection among pregnant people to prevent preterm birth, including vaccination," said Karasek.

"Pregnant people may have concerns about vaccines and the health of their baby, so being able to have an open dialogue that values those concerns, describes evidence about safety, and conveys the risks posed by COVID-19 infection during pregnancy is critically important," explained Karasek.

On July 30, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) issued updated guidance strongly recommending that all pregnant individuals get vaccinated against COVID-19.

Pregnant people are considered a high-risk population for COVID-19 infection, yet less than a quarter have received at least one dose of vaccine, according to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

The UCSF study was the first of its kind large enough to identify the risks of COVID-19 by specific subtype of preterm birth, as well as by race, ethnicity, and insurance status.

The study data reflected both existing disparities in preterm birth rates for Black, Indigenous and other people of colour (BIPOC) compared to whites, and the known outsized burden of the pandemic on communities of colour. Latinx, American Indian/Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander people, as well as people with public insurance, had disproportionately higher COVID-19 rates during pregnancy.

For example, while 47 per cent of pregnant people in the study overall were Latinx, they represented 72 per cent of the people with COVID-19 diagnoses.

"Given that the burden of COVID-19 is greater in these populations, as is the burden of preterm birth, it really points to the need for an equity approach," said Karasek.

"With the surge in infections and increase in the Delta variant, we must think about pregnant people, especially Black and Brown populations, as the groups that need to be prioritized, with supportive policies to reduce exposure and stress, and increase access to care," added Karasek.

The researchers analysed all live births between July 2020 and January 2021 documented by California Vital Statistics birth certificates.

Of the 240,157 recorded births, nearly 9,000, or 3.7 per cent, indicated a COVID-19 diagnosis in pregnancy. The preterm birth rate among birthing people with a COVID-19 diagnosis was 11.8 per cent compared with 8.7 per cent among those without COVID-19.

The overall sample included 47.2 per cent Latinx, 26.8 per cent white, 4.9 per cent Black, 13.2 per cent Asian, 0.03 per cent American Indian/Alaskan Native, 0.4 per cent Hawaiian/Pacific Islander and 7.3 per cent identified as other, unknown, or two or more races. Forty per cent of people in the study had public insurance at the time they gave birth, and 15.9 per cent had hypertension, diabetes, obesity, or a combination of these.

Having comorbidities along with COVID-19 infection increased the risk of preterm birth. Individuals with hypertension, diabetes and/or obesity as well as a COVID-19 diagnosis had a 160 per cent higher risk of very preterm birth and a 100 per cent higher risk of preterm birth compared to those without comorbidities or COVID-19.

Healthcare worker assists a pregnant woman in a hospital in Santarem, Brazil. **PHOTO: AFP**

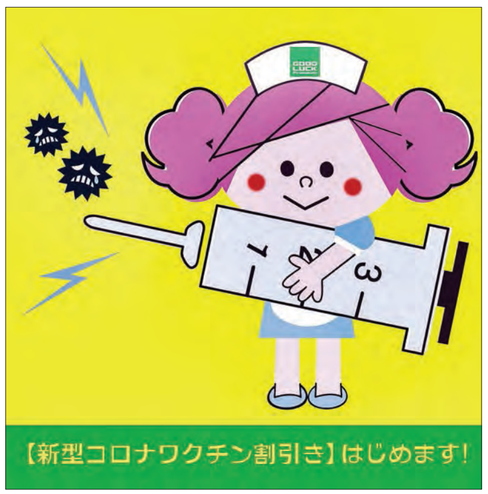
"Researchers found that preterm birth rates didn't vary by whether the births were spontaneous or medically indicated, which may indicate multiple pathways between COVID-19 diagnosis and preterm birth," concluded Karasek.

Limitations of the study included that it couldn't determine when during pregnancy the individuals contracted COVID-19, or how serious the infections were.

These are important details for understanding the mechanisms by which COVID-19 affects preterm birth risk and Karasek said they are currently being studied at UCSF and elsewhere.

*Source : ANI*

# COVID-19 "vaccine discount" for customers catches on at eateries, hotels




Supplied image shows a promotion for vaccination discounts. **PHOTO: GOODLUCK PROMOTION CO./KYODO**

RESTAURANTS, hotels and even wedding venues have begun offering discounts to customers who are fully vaccinated against the coronavirus as part of efforts to jumpstart the economy following the pandemic. While the efforts may promote more people to get vaccinated, some warn such discounts could lead to peer pressure against people who are reluctant to receive the vaccine.

"I want things to return to pre-pandemic days as quickly as possible," said Toshiyuki Fujimura, the 54-year-old deputy manager of a "yakiniku" grilled meat restaurant in Nagoya, central Japan, which is giving up to 3,000 yen ($27) off set meals to customers who show proof of vaccination.

Yuka Torii, a 47-year-old midwife, was happy to use the discount, saying the initiative will act as an incentive for more people to get vaccinated and "make the world a little better."

The tourist federation of Fujikawaguchiko, a town in Yamanashi Prefecture nearby Mt. Fuji, also started offering discounts at 30 of its member stores for fully vaccinated individuals. The offers include 10 percent off facility fees as well as food and beverage expenses.

"Our aim is to encourage more people to come for sightseeing and to get vaccinated," a staff member said. Unzen Onsen Azumaen, a "ryokan" traditional Japanese inn in Nagasaki Prefecture, southwestern Japan, has been distributing coupons for use at its on-site shop to those vaccinated.

The discounts have helped increase reservations gradually after the lodging had to be temporarily closed at one point following the outbreak of the virus, it said. Meanwhile, the Garden Place Kobayashiro, a wedding hall in Niigata Prefecture, has launched a cashback program where newlyweds can receive 3,000 yen back for each attending guest who has been vaccinated.

Yusuke Nakada and Saki Inozume, who plan to hold their wedding in September, said that about a third of their invitation list would be eligible for the service. "We have a lot of elderly relatives, so this will give us peace of mind," the couple, both 26, said with a smile.

Meanwhile, a certain number of people remain reluctant to take the vaccine due to wariness over possible side effects and risks, and concerns have arisen that such discounts could lead to people getting vaccinated simply out of peer pressure.

Goodluck Promotion Co., a concert planning company based in Okayama Prefecture, western Japan, said it does not openly advertise its cashback program for those vaccinated due to the "various opinions" around.

In late July, local governments began accepting applications for so-called vaccine passports certifying people who travel abroad as inoculated against COVID-19, but Chief Cabinet Secretary Katsunobu Kato has maintained a cautious stance about using them within Japan due to concerns they will cause "unfair discrimination."

"Vaccination is based on an individual's free will," said Kenta Yamada, a professor of media law and journalism at Senshu University.

*Source : Kyodo News*



## Myanmar Daily Weather Report

**(Issued at 7:00 pm Monday 16 August 2021)**

**BAY INFERENCE:** According to the observations at (18:30) hrs M.S.T today, a low pressure area has formed over Westcentral and adjoining Northwest Bay of Bengal off North Andhra Pradesh-South Odisha coasts. Monsoon is strong over the Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal.

**FORECAST VALID UNTIL MORNING OF THE 17 August 2021:** Rain or thundershowers will be fairly widespread in Magway Region and widespread in the remaining Regions and States with likelihood of isolated heavyfalls in Sagaing, Mandalay, Magway, Yangon Regions and Kachin, Northern Shan, Chin, 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) mph. Wave height will be about (8 -10) feet off and along Myanmar Coasts.

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

**FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 17 August 2021:** One or two rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

**FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 17th August, 2021:** Moderate rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

**FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 17th August, 2021:** Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

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# Taliban takeover is world's failure, says UK

THE Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan is a "failure of the international community", Britain's Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said on Monday, assessing that the West's intervention was a job only half-done.

"All of us know that Afghanistan is not finished. It's an unfinished problem for the world and the world needs to help it," he told BBC television.

The former British Army officer last week said US President Joe Biden's predecessor Donald Trump had secured a "rotten deal" with the Islamist militants that allowed their return.

He maintained the 20-year intervention by US-led forces in Afghanistan "wasn't a waste, it wasn't for nothing" but accused Western powers of being short-sighted in policy matters.

"If it's a failure, it's a failure of the international community to not realise that you don't fix things overnight," he said.

"I'm afraid when you deal with a country like Afghanistan, that is 1,000 years of history effectively and civil war, you manage its problems and you might have to manage it for 100 years.

"It's not something that you just rock in, rock out and expect something to be fixed."

Wallace also said there had been "a failure to recognise that military might on its own" could not completely resolve the situation in Afghanistan.

"Half the mission on its own... was entirely successful," he said, pointing to the removal of the Taliban after the September 11, 2001 attacks and the death of Al-Qaeda chief Osama bin Laden, which made the world safer.

But "that doesn't mean that the next 20 years are going to be the same", he added, echoing concerns about the impact of the hardline group's resurgence on world security.

Britain last month withdrew the majority of its 750 remaining troops in Afghanistan, but last week announced that 600 soldiers would return to help with repatriation.

Wallace told Sky News 370 embassy staff and British citizens were flown out on Saturday and Sunday, with 782 Afghans scheduled to leave in the next 24 to 36 hours.

Officials are aiming to evacuate 1,200 to 1,500 people from Afghanistan a day, he added.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson has said Britain would help some 3,000 nationals to leave.

Senior politicians and military top brass have strongly criticised the withdrawal of international troops from Afghanistan.

Parliament has been recalled on Wednesday to discuss the situation, including asylum and support for Afghan nationals who have fled. — AFP ■

# Seventy dead, dozens still missing after Turkey floods

A rescue worker walks through the mud and debris after flash floods destroyed parts of the town of Bozkurt in the district of Kastamonu, in the Black Sea region of Turkey on 15 August 2021. **PHOTO : AFP**

SEVENTY people died and 47 are still missing in Turkey after flash floods hit Black Sea regions last week, officials said on Monday.

The death toll has been climbing all weekend as rescue and recovery workers pick through debris left behind by the subsiding waters in the hardest-hit areas.

More than 40 villages still have no electricity and some areas have no running water, according to the disaster and emergencies service.

Emergency teams set up temporary cell phone receivers and transmitters to help with communications, it said.

The devastation across Turkey's northern regions came just as the country was gaining control over hundreds of wildfires that killed eight people and destroyed swathes of forest along its scenic southern coast.

On Saturday, five Russian servicemen and three Turkish citizens died when their Russian Be-200 firefighting plane crashed in a remote mountainous zone in the south.

Scientists say natural disasters such as wildfires and floods are becoming more intense and frequent because of global warming caused by polluting emissions. — AFP ■

# Russian ambassador to meet Taliban in Kabul Tuesday

RUSSIA said its ambassador to Afghanistan will meet with the Taliban in Kabul on Tuesday and that it will decide on whether to recognise the new government based on its conduct.

Ambassador Dmitry Zhirnov told Russian media meanwhile from Kabul that the Taliban have already established "public order," have even kept girls schools open and are guarding the Russian embassy. "Our ambassador is in contact with the Taliban leadership, tomorrow he will meet with the Taliban security coordinator," foreign ministry official Zamir Kabulov said in an interview with the Ekho Moskvy radio station on Monday.

He said the talks between ambassador Zhirnov and the Taliban would centre on how the group plans to provide security for the Russian embassy in the Afghan capital. On Sunday, as the Taliban completed its military takeover of Afghanistan, Kabulov said that Russia had no plans on evacuating its embassy — though on Monday he said that "part" of its staff would be "evacuated". Kabulov also said that Moscow will decide on recognising the new Taliban government based "on the conduct of the new authorities".

"We will carefully see how responsibly they govern the country in the near future. And based on the results, the Russian leadership will draw the necessary conclusions," Kabulov said.

In an interview from Kabul with the state-run Rossiya 24 television channel, ambassador Zhirnov said that the Taliban had started to "settle" in Kabul and had established "public order". — AFP ■

# Venezuela meetings 'constructive': Norway mediators

NORWAY, which is facilitating talks between the Venezuelan government and opposition in Mexico, said Sunday initial meetings toward resolving the country's political and economic crisis had been "constructive."

"We confirm that we have held constructive meetings under the facilitation of the Kingdom of Norway on 14 and 15 August," the Norwegian foreign ministry said in a statement.

Representatives of the two Venezuelan sides on Friday signed a document agreeing to undertake "a comprehensive dialogue and negotiation process" mediated by Norway and hosted by the Mexican government in Mexico City.

Talks are expected to focus on lifting sanctions and holding elections to try to end a crippling political and economic crisis in the country.

The Norwegian ministry said the parties "discussed the establishment of a mechanism for consultation with political and social actors that is as inclusive as possible."

They agreed to reconvene from 3 to 6 September.

Previous inter-Venezuelan talks in the Dominican Republic in 2018 and Barbados the following year failed to resolve disputes centered on President Nicolas Maduro and Juan Guaido, the opposition leader considered president by about 60 countries. — AFP ■

(From L to R) The head of the Venezuelan opposition delegation, Gerardo Blyde Perez, the Director at NOREF Norwegian Centre for Conflict Resolution, Dag Nylander and the president of the Venezuelan National Assembly, Jorge Rodriguez, sign documents next to Mexican Foreign Minister Marcelo Ebrard, during the launch of negotiations between the Venezuelan government an opposition, at the National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico City on 13 August 2021. **PHOTO : AFP**

Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga enters his office in Tokyo on 16 August 2021. **PHOTO : KYODO NEWS**

# Suga says Japan has secured enough COVID-19 "antibody cocktails"

PRIME Minister Yoshihide Suga said Japan has secured enough "antibody cocktails" to prevent COVID-19 patients in the country from developing severe symptoms, as he visited a Tokyo hotel on Monday that is conducting the treatment amid an increasing strain on hospital beds.

Patients with mild symptoms are staying at the Shinagawa Prince Hotel in Minato Ward and undergoing the treatment, which according to overseas clinical trials lowers the risk of hospitalization or death by about 70 per cent. "We want to prevent at any cost patients from developing serious symptoms as we arrange for hotels like this one to serve as medical facilities for administering the medicine," said Suga.

Tokyo Gov. Yuriko Koike who accompanied Suga and health minister Norihisa Tamura during the visit said she hopes the use of such hotels will spread not just within Tokyo but also in other areas.

The antibody cocktail treatment uses casirivimab and imdevimab developed by US firm Regeneron Pharmaceuticals Inc. and Swiss health care company F. Hoffmann-La Roche Ltd and is administered intravenously. It was famously used to treat former US President Donald Trump for COVID-19.

Suga has announced his plan to create hubs to conduct the treatment soon, hoping to reduce the number of patients with serious symptoms that has been on the rise with the spread of the highly contagious Delta variant of the novel coronavirus in Japan. The official number of COVID-19 patients with serious symptoms hit record high of 1,603 as of Sunday, up 40 from the previous day and marking a record high for the fourth straight day, according to the health ministry. They include people in intensive care units and those on respirators or life support. — Kyodo News ■

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Most Algeria forest fires 'under control': emergency services

MOST of the deadly forest fires that have hit northern Algeria in the past week are "under control" and no longer endanger residents, the country's emergency services said.

Firefighters were still struggling Sunday to put out 19 blazes, after over 90 people, including 33 soldiers, were killed in wildfires since 9 August. "Most of these fires have been brought under control and don't represent a danger to residents," said Colonel Farouk Achour, a spokesman for the civil protection authority. The authority's efforts focus currently on the "protection of inhabited areas, notably El Tarf, Bejaia, Jijel and Tizi Ouzou, Achour said. — AFP ■

### Iran reduces number of diplomats in Afghanistan

IRAN has reduced its diplomatic presence in Afghanistan, the foreign ministry said Sunday, leaving a skeleton staff at the embassy in Kabul as the city fell to the Taliban. "There has been a reduction in staff at Iran's embassy in Kabul," foreign ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said in a statement, adding that some personnel remained to ensure the "embassy's necessary activities" continue.

Khatibzadeh said staff had evacuated three of the Islamic republic's five Afghan diplomatic missions – in Mazar-i-Sharif, Jalalabad and Kandahar – but would continue their activities from the capital. "Currently at these three offices only some guards and some local workers are present," he added. — AFP ■

# Sri Lanka axes health minister over Covid misinformation as outbreak grows

SRI LANKA'S president on Monday demoted the health minister who publicly endorsed sorcery and magic potions to battle Covid-19, as coronavirus infections and deaths hit record highs.

President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's office said Pavithra Wanniarachchi's health portfolio had been given to Media Minister Keheliya Rambukwella who is also the government spokesman. Wanniarachchi was in intensive care in January after contracting the virus despite publicly consuming and endorsing a "magic potion" against Covid-19 made by a sorcerer.

She also poured a pot of "blessed" water into a river in November after a self-styled god-man told her that it would end the pandemic in the island nation of 21 million people. Sri Lanka's health ministry under Wanniarachchi came under intense criticism last week for understating coronavirus infections.

Police health officials inoculate people with a dose of the Sinopharm vaccine against the Covid-19 coronavirus at a vaccination camp held in Colombo on 14 August 2021. **PHOTO : AFP**

Despite the demotion, she will remain in the cabinet — the president gave her the less important transport ministry. The number of daily virus deaths crossed 150 in the past week, overwhelming crematoriums.

Daily infections crossed 3,000, and with hospitals struggling to cope, even government health workers say the actual number of infections could be three times higher.

The government has so far rejected calls for a lockdown to contain the surge, but last week tightened restrictions.

Wedding and parties have been banned from Tuesday, while state ceremonies and public gatherings are also prohibited until 1 September. — AFP ■

# Spain sizzles in crushing heat as fires blaze

FIRES in Spain's central Avila province forced hundreds of people to flee their homes Sunday as parts of the country sweltered under crushing temperatures.

The fire, which has been burning in the city Navalcruz since Saturday morning, has been fed by winds of up to 70 kilometres an hour (54 miles per hour) across the Iberian peninsula.

It now has a perimeter of more than 40 kilometres and may already have burned more than 5,000 hectares (12,350 acres), said Jose Angel Arranz, forestry director of the Castilla y Leon region.

The authorities have already evacuated at least 600 people from five towns in the Avila district, near the Sierra de Gredos mountain range, and more than 500 firefighters are tackling the blaze with the help of specialised aircraft.

Around 80 kilometres to the south meanwhile, another fire, near El Raso, was still active. Like the one in Navalcruz, it is rated two on a three-point scale of seriousness.

The emergency services backed by 12 firefighting aircraft have also been fighting a blaze in Azuebar, eastern Spain, since Saturday, which has burned more than 500 hectares, the regional government in Valencia reported. The blaze is threatening part of the Sierra de Espadan Natural Park.

On Twitter, Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez sent a message of solidarity to those forced to flee their homes.

**Extreme temperatures**

Spain has been in the grip of a heatwave since Wednesday, and the fires burn as the state meteorological agency (AEMET) recorded what appeared to be record temperatures. Their provisional data registered a peak of 47.4 degrees Celsius (117.3 Fahrenheit) at around 5 pm (1500 GMT) in the southern city of Cordoba. — AFP ■

# China's retail sales falter as virus rebounds

A man walks past a retail store of Chinese electric car Li Auto at a shopping mall in Beijing on 12 August 2021. **PHOTO : AFP**

GROWTH in China's retail sales and industrial production slowed in July, official data showed Monday, with a rebound of Covid-19 dragging on demand while recent floods disrupted businesses. The world's second-largest economy staged a rapid recovery from last year's coronavirus outbreak, beating back the virus with mass testing and strict lockdowns.

But a flare-up across the country due to the Delta variant has threatened the good news on growth with renewed localised lockdowns and extensive travel restrictions. Retail sales rose 8.5 per cent on-year in July, the National Bureau of Statistics said on Monday, below a Bloomberg consensus forecast of analysts. This figure was also below 12.1 per cent growth in June, likely reflecting the virus resurgence in dozens of places last month, according to analysts.

"The spread of domestic outbreaks and natural disasters have affected the economy of some regions, and economic recovery remains unstable and uneven," NBS spokesman Fu Linghui told a press briefing on Monday. But he added that "the national economy continues to stabilise and recover" overall.

Industrial production rose 6.4 per cent in July, easing as well from the month prior, the NBS said. China's urban unemployment rate, meanwhile, ticked up to 5.1 per cent.

Iris Pang, ING's chief economist for Greater China, told AFP industrial output was weak "because of the semiconductor chip shortage that has affected production". A shortage of chips has been sending shock waves through the global economy, squeezing supplies of everything from cars to headphones. Capital Economics' chief Asia economist Mark Williams added in a recent note that a "broad-based slowdown" seen in July was likely caused by disruptions in the final week of the month, due to Covid-19 and the aftermath of flooding in central China. — AFP ■

# HSBC to buy Axa's Singapore insurance business

HSBC has agreed to buy the Singapore unit of French insurance giant Axa as the British banking group expands its foothold in Asia, the companies announced Monday. HSBC makes 90 per cent of its profit in Asia and has said it plans to redouble efforts to seize more of the market in the region.

The bank has agreed to acquire Axa Singapore, the city-state's eighth largest life insurer, for $575 million (487 million euros).

"This is an important acquisition that demonstrates our ambition to grow our wealth business across Asia," HSBC chief executive Noel Quinn said in a statement. "Wealth is one of our highest growth and highest return opportunities, and plays to our strengths as an Asia-centred bank with global reach," he said.

The bank said it plans to merge the operations of HSBC Life Singapore and Axa Singapore once the deal, which is subject to regulatory approval, is completed.

As part of its Asia pivot, HSBC sold its 90 branches in the United States this year and completed a long-running disposal of its unprofitable French retail business.

Singapore is a "strategically important scale market for HSBC, and a major hub for its ASEAN wealth business," the banking group said, referring to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. Axa said it expects the transaction to be completed in the fourth quarter.

The sale is part of Axa's "simplification journey" in the region, said the French insurer's Asia and Africa chief executive, Gordon Watson. — AFP ■

# Japan's Shizuoka Gas to enter natural gas supply business in Thailand

JAPANESE regional utility firm Shizuoka Gas Co. will enter the industrial natural gas supply business in Thailand next year through an investment in a local firm and develop new Japanese corporate customers in the Southeast Asian country.

On 5 August, Shizuoka Gas agreed with Scan Inter Public Co., a Thailand-based natural gas supplier, to acquire 49 per cent of shares in Thai-Japan Gas Network Co. within the year, according to the Japanese company based in Shizuoka Prefecture, central Japan.

Thai-Japan Gas Network was established by Scan Inter in March in Nonthaburi Province, north of Bangkok, as a spin-off company to strengthen supply businesses for industrial compressed natural gas and liquefied natural gas.

The acquisition is planned for the end of 2021, a Shizuoka Gas official told NNA last week, without disclosing the investment amount.

Thai-Japan Gas Network has a registered capital of 412 million Thai baht ($12 million), and Scan Inter plans to hold the remaining 51 per cent stake. — Kyodo News ■

# Berlin to sell part of its stake in Lufthansa group

THE German government said Monday it will sell part of the 20 per cent stake it took last year in Lufthansa to prop up the airline group during the coronavirus pandemic.

The Economic Stabilisation Fund (WSF) that holds the shares in Germany's flagship carrier "is selling a limited part of its stake", it said in a statement.

Berlin will reduce its ownership by a maximum of five per cent "over several weeks", the WSF said.

The Lufthansa group, which also includes Austrian, Swiss and Brussels Airlines, was saved from bankruptcy last June by a German government bailout.

The government took a 20-per cent stake in the group as part of a nine-billion-euro ($10 billion) state aid package.

But the help was seen as a temporary fix and Berlin will now begin to sell its shares due to the recent "positive of the company" and "the initial success of the forward-looking measures", the WSF said.

Lufthansa halved its losses in the second quarter of 2021 compared to a year ago, as travel restrictions eased over the coronavirus pandemic and passengers returned.

Parked aircrafts operated by German airline Lufthansa are pictured at Berlin Brandenburg BER airport Willy-Brandt in Schoenefeld near Berlin on 31 May 2021. **PHOTO : TOBIAS SCHWARZ / AFP**

Increased bookings saw the group record a positive cash flow for the first time since the start of the health crisis and it is expecting a return to profit later this year.— AFP ■

# Asian stocks mixed as China recovery weakens

ASIAN stocks were mixed on Monday morning, as the resurgence of the Delta coronavirus variant continued to weigh on economies globally, including in China where new data showed activity slowed more than expected in July.

Retail sales expanded 8.5 per cent in July year-on-year and industrial output was up 6.4 per cent, according to figures released by Beijing's statistics bureau, with both figures below analyst estimates.

Lockdowns and other movement restrictions brought in to combat the country's recent coronavirus outbreaks have been blamed for hampering economic performance, as well as a series of deadly floods.

"The spread of domestic outbreaks and natural disasters have affected the economy of some regions, and economic recovery remains unstable and uneven," National Bureau of Statistics spokesman Fu Linghui told a press briefing. But he added that "the national economy continues to stabilise and recover" overall.

Raymond Yeung, chief economist for Greater China at ANZ Banking Group, said the figures "suggest the economy is losing steam very fast". Surging infections linked to the delta variant of the coronavirus "also adds extra risk to August's activities," he added.

Iris Pang, ING's chief economist for Greater China, told AFP industrial output was weak "because of the semiconductor chip shortage that has affected production".

A shortage of chips has also been sending shock waves through the global economy, squeezing supplies of everything from cars to headphones.

A pedestrian walks past a stock indicator displaying the Nikkei 225 of the Tokyo Stock Exchange (C, top) and other world stock markets in Tokyo on 16 August 2021. **PHOTO : AFP**

There were dips in Hong Kong, Sydney, Singapore, Taipei and Jakarta, while Shanghai, Wellington and Manila were up.

In Tokyo, the benchmark Nikkei 225 index dropped nearly two per cent in morning trade despite government data showing a 0.3 per cent rise in GDP — slightly more than expected after a surge in virus infections and new restrictions.

Mizuho Securities said markets were "expected to be weighed down by drops in US consumer sentiment and a stronger yen".

The University of Michigan reported Friday that US consumer sentiment plunged to its lowest level in a decade, as coronavirus infections continue to surge there.

Long-lingering fears over an end to the US Federal Reserve's vast financial support put in place at the start of the pandemic continued to weigh on sentiment. — AFP ■

# Japan's economy grew 0.3 per cent in Q2 despite virus surge

JAPAN'S economy grew 0.3 per cent in the three months to June, slightly more than expected despite a surge in virus cases and new restrictions, data showed Monday.

The growth came after a contraction in the world's third-largest economy in the previous quarter, driven by a slowdown in consumption after the government introduced stay-at-home requests as infections surged.

Economists surveyed by Bloomberg had forecast just 0.1 per cent quarter-on-quarter growth.

The data released by the cabinet office also showed a slight upwards revision for the first quarter, when the economy shrank 0.9 per cent, compared to a previous estimate of 1.0.

Japan recorded growth in the two quarters to December, but that came to a halt with a resurgence in coronavirus cases over winter that led to the imposition of states of emergency.

Tokyo and other regions have now spent much of the year under virus restrictions, with the vaccine rollout beginning later than other developed nations and moving more slowly.

The programme has picked up speed and around a third of Japanese are now fully vaccinated but infections are at record levels, with nationwide daily cases topping 20,000 in recent days.

The surge in cases, driven by the more contagious Delta variant, has clouded the chances for a strong and fast vaccine-driven recovery. — AFP ■

# Thailand downgrades 2021 outlook as Covid-19 hampers recovery

THAILAND downgraded its economic growth forecast for 2021 on Monday as it battles its worst Covid-19 wave, which has brought record numbers of new infections and deaths.

The kingdom last year suffered its worst full-year performance since the Asian financial crisis of 1997 with a 6.1 per cent economic contraction.

The Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council (NESDC) had initially given a cool forecast for recovery during the first quarter, estimating growth of 1.5 to 2.5 per cent for 2021.

But on Monday, NESDC secretary general Danucha Pichayanan announced it had to revise that figure down to between 0.7 and 1.2 per cent.

"This crisis caused by the pandemic is unlike the financial crises of 1997 and 2009 — our estimation is based on domestic causes," he said during a press conference.

He added that the new forecast was dependent on the hope that the pandemic's curve will flatten after the third quarter, thus enabling a relaxation of restrictions by October.

"But if the pandemic continues and relaxation cannot start in the fourth quarter... the growth could be lower than 0.7 per cent," Danucha said.

Thailand's GDP for the second quarter was up 7.5 per cent on the same period last year, the first sign of recovery since the pandemic.

The growth was most visible in agricultural, industrial and exports sectors, while tourism — once Thailand's cash cow — remained sluggish.

Since the start of the pandemic Thailand has recorded 928,314 cases with 7,733 deaths, the bulk of them detected since April. — AFP ■

A customers writes down a takeaway food order at a restaurant in Bangkok on 19 July 2021, ahead of the nighttime curfew restriction implemented to reduce the spread of the Covid-19 coronavirus. **PHOTO : AFP**

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**Amendment to the Open Tender No 3/2021**

1. The 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 by US dollars. The tender opening date was on 21.7.2021 and 30.7.2021, which is part of the public holidays and so, the tender opening date was postponed to 20.8.2021 by advertising in the state-owned newspapers.

2. However, the tender has been rescheduled to open on 20.8.2021, which is now included in the extended public holidays, so the tender opening date will be re-schedules as follows:
(a) Closing date and time of tender: 27.8.2021 (14:00)
(b) Opening date and time of tender: 27.8.2021 (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

NEWS IN BRIEF

## Australia's second-largest city introduces coronavirus curfew

A coronavirus curfew was announced Monday for Australia's second-biggest city of Melbourne, with residents confined to their homes overnight as authorities work to stamp out a Delta variant outbreak.

More than five million Melbourne residents will be unable to leave their homes between 9:00 pm and 5:00 am from Monday evening, with essential workers requiring permits to be on the streets.

Victoria state premier Dan Andrews said the decision came after a series of street parties, pub crawls and home gatherings over the weekend, as Melbourne reached a "tipping point" in its latest outbreak.

"We've seen lots of different people flouting these rules, not doing as they should, making really poor choices," he said. — AFP ■

## France to begin Afghanistan evacuations on Monday

FRANCE said it will evacuate its first nationals and Afghan colleagues from the fallen Afghan capital Kabul to a base in the United Arab Emirates on Monday.

"We are planning to carry out the first rotation between now and the end of this Monday," defence minister Florence Parly said, adding there were several dozen French citizens to be evacuated. "We have organised at the base we have in the United Arab Emirates the capabilities to receive the first evacuees," Parly said.

These are for French nationals who remain in Kabul but also "people under our protection and who we are going to evacuate", Parly said.

The French base in the UAE "will serve as a military hub to ensure the back and forth between Abu Dhabi and Kabul and then repatriation in France", Parly added. — AFP ■

# Taliban in control of Afghanistan, panic in Kabul

US soldiers take up their positions as they secure the airport in Kabul on 16 August 2021, after a stunningly swift end to Afghanistan's 20-year war, as thousands of people mobbed the city's airport trying to flee the group's feared hardline brand of Islamist rule. **PHOTO: AFP**

THE Taliban were in control of Afghanistan on Monday after President Ashraf Ghani fled the country and conceded the insurgents had won the 20-year war.

The astonishingly quick collapse of the government, with militants taking over the presidential palace on Sunday night, triggered fear and panic in the capital.

Thousands of people were on Monday trying to escape Kabul and the feared hardline brand of Islamic rule of the Taliban, with scenes of chaos as crowds gathered at the airport.

Ghani fled on Sunday as the insurgents encircled Kabul, with the Taliban sealing a nationwide military victory that saw all cities fall to them in just 10 days.

"The Taliban have won with the judgement of their swords and guns, and are now responsible for the honour, property and self-preservation of their countrymen," Ghani said in a statement posted to Facebook, his first since fleeing. In a video posted to social media, Taliban co-founder Abdul Ghani Baradar also announced his movement's victory.

"Now it's time to test and prove, now we have to show that we can serve our nation and ensure security and comfort of life," he said.

Government forces collapsed without the support of the US military, which invaded in 2001 after the September 11 attacks and toppled the Taliban for its support of Al Qaeda.

The United States ultimately failed to build a democratic government capable of withstanding the Taliban, despite spending billions of dollars and providing two decades of military support.

President Joe Biden was determined to withdraw all American troops by the end of this month, insisting there was no choice and he would not "pass this war" onto another president.

But the US administration was left shocked by the rapid collapse of the Afghan government.

Despite insisting there would be no Saigon-style panicked evacuations from Kabul, American officials, their Afghan allies and other residents fearful of the Taliban were all trying to flee on Monday. — AFP ■

# UN chief calls for 'restraint' in Afghanistan

THE UN called on the Taliban to exercise restraint Sunday, and particularly to protect the rights of women and girls, after the militants entered Kabul and cemented their grip on the country.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres "urges the Taliban and all other parties to exercise utmost restraint in order to protect lives and ensure that humanitarian needs can be addressed," said a UN statement.

He was "particularly concerned about the future of women and girls, whose hard-won rights must be protected," the statement added. The United Nations Security Council will hold a meeting on Monday on Afghanistan.

The meeting will be held at 10:00 am (1400 GMT) in New York, according to the Security Council's schedule.

Guterres is to report on the situation in Afghanistan at the meeting, which has been requested by Estonia and Norway, the delegations of the two non-permanent members of the Security Council said.

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani acknowledged Sunday that the Taliban had "won" hours after fleeing his country to, he said, "prevent a flood of bloodshed."

The Taliban have reconquered Afghanistan in a lightning surge 20 years after the US invasion and took control of Kabul on Sunday, more than two weeks before the August 31 deadline set by President Joe Biden to complete the withdrawal of American troops from the country. — AFP ■

# Death toll in massive Haiti quake jumps to over 1,200

THE death toll from Haiti's powerful earthquake jumped to over 1,200 on Sunday, as crews desperately dug through collapsed buildings for survivors in the Caribbean nation still reeling from its president's assassination.

In Les Cayes, as in other hard-hit cities on the southwestern peninsula, most of the population spent the night sleeping outdoors in front of their houses — or what remained of them — amid fears of new aftershocks.

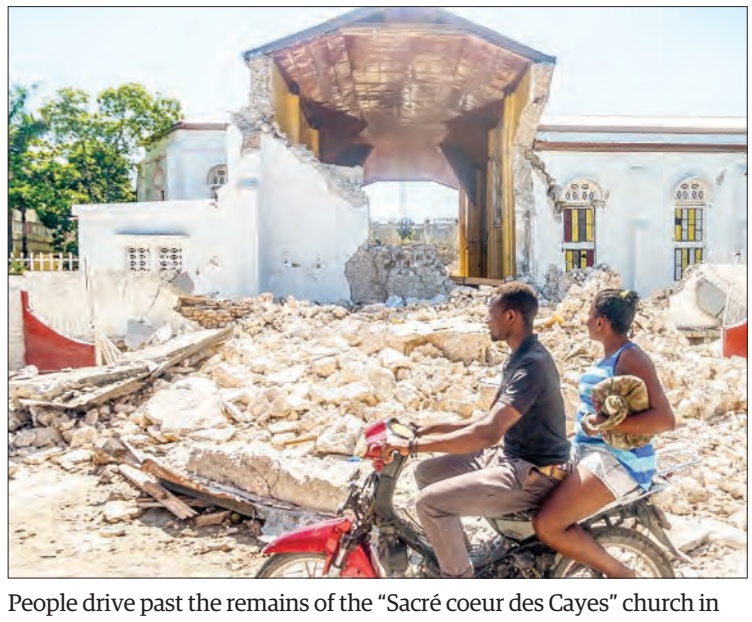
The streets there were filled with the grinding of heavy equipment lifting debris from collapsed buildings, as well as the quieter sounds of people pulling away rubble by hand while searching for the missing.

"Thanks to God and also to my phone, I'm alive," said Marcel Francois, who was rescued from his collapsed two-story home in Les Cayes.

His younger brother Job Francois said a desperate-sounding Marcel had called to say, "'Come save me, I'm under the concrete'... He told me he couldn't breathe, that he was dying."

The neighbors and Job spent hours freeing him and his 10-year-old daughter from the heavy debris.

At least 1,297 people were killed in the 7.2-magnitude quake that struck Saturday about 100 miles (160 kilometers) to the west of the densely populated capital Port-au-Prince, which was devastated in a massive 2010 quake.



People drive past the remains of the "Sacré coeur des Cayes" church in Les Cayes on 15 August 2021, after a 7.2-magnitude earthquake struck the southwest peninsula of the country. **PHOTO: AFP**

Some 13,600 buildings were destroyed and more than 13,700 damaged, trapping hundreds under rubble and leaving more than 5,700 people injured, the country's civil protection agency said in an update. — AFP ■

# Indonesia volcano erupts, blankets villages in ash

INDONESIA'S most active volcano Mount Merapi erupted Monday, belching a cloud of ash into the air as red lava flowed down its crater.

The early morning explosions spewed clouds as far as 3.5 kilometres (2 miles) from the rumbling volcano, blanketing local communities in grey ash.

There were no evacuation orders or reports of casualties.

Merapi, close to Indonesia's cultural capital Yogyakarta on Java island, has been particularly active in recent months and authorities raised its danger level late last year.

Residents were told to avoid the area within a five-kilometre radius of the rumbling volcano, Indonesia's geological agency said.

"Residents should avoid volcanic ash and they've been warned about potential lava flows in the area surrounding Merapi," it added.

A villager watches as Mount Merapi, Indonesia's most active volcano, spews ash and smoke 3,500 meters from its peak as seen from Sleman in Yogyakarta on 16 August 2021. **PHOTO: AFP**

Mount Merapi's last major eruption in 2010 killed more than 300 people and forced the evacuation of around 280,000 residents from surrounding areas.

That was its most powerful eruption since 1930, when around 1,300 people were killed, while another explosion in 1994 took about 60 lives.

The Southeast Asian archipelago nation has nearly 130 active volcanoes.

Indonesia experiences frequent seismic and volcanic activity due to its position on the Pacific "Ring of Fire", where tectonic plates collide. — AFP ■

# Malaysia PM quits after just 17 months in office

MALAYSIA'S prime minister and his government resigned Monday after just 17 months in office, throwing the country into fresh political turmoil as it battles a serious coronavirus outbreak.

Muhyiddin Yassin's tumultuous period in office came to an end after allies withdrew support and a last-ditch bid to cling to power failed, and he becomes the shortest serving premier in Malaysian history. After a final cabinet meeting, the 74-year-old headed to the national palace to submit his resignation to the king. Science Minister Khairy Jamaluddin confirmed on Instagram that the entire cabinet had quit.

"Thank you for the opportunity to, once again, serve the nation," he wrote.

Mohamad Redzuan Yusof, a minister in the prime minister's office, confirmed to AFP that Muhyiddin had tendered his resignation, and it had been accepted.

Muhyiddin was reportedly set to address the nation later Monday. There is no clear successor to Muhyiddin but an election looks unlikely as the country faces its worst Covid-19 wave yet and an economic downturn.

Rather, a period of political horse-trading is expected before a new coalition emerges that can command a majority in parliament. "His replacement is anybody's guess," said Oh Ei Sun, an analyst at the Singapore Institute of International Affairs.

Malaysia's constitutional monarch formally appoints the premier, and it will be up to him to assess who has sufficient backing from MPs.

Muhyiddin came to power in March last year without an election at the head of a scandal-plagued coalition following the collapse of a two-year-old, reformist government led by nonagenarian political heavyweight Mahathir Mohamad.

But his government faced turmoil from day one — his majority in parliament was in doubt, its legitimacy was constantly questioned, and he faced a constant challenge from opposition chief Anwar Ibrahim. — AFP ■

# Last top Khmer Rouge leader appeals genocide conviction

THE last surviving senior Khmer Rouge leader on Monday began an appeal against his life imprisonment for his role in the genocide committed by the regime in Cambodia more than four decades ago.

The brutal communist group, led by "Brother Number 1" Pol Pot, left two million Cambodians dead from overwork, starvation and mass executions from 1975 to 1979.

Former Khmer Rouge head of state Khieu Samphan, 90, is challenging his 2018 conviction for genocide against ethnic-minority Vietnamese.

His lawyers on Monday argued the UN-backed court had taken a "selective approach" to witness testimony and not given proper weight to evidence in his favour.

They also said the tribunal had convicted him using legal criteria that he could not have known when the alleged crimes took place more than 40 years ago.

Khieu Samphan was jailed alongside "Brother Number 2" Nuon Chea for life for genocide and a litany of other crimes, including forced marriages and rapes. — AFP ■

# Heavy rain continues in Japan as mudslides kill 4, leave 5 missing

A fire service department officer wades through a flooded area in Takeo City, Saga Prefecture on 15 August 2021. **PHOTO: AFP**

HEAVY rain continued to pelt vast areas of Japan on Monday as mudslides had killed at least four people and left five others missing, with the country's weather agency urging the public to remain vigilant as the threat of more disasters remains.

The Japan Meteorological Agency said more heavy rain is forecast for wide areas from western Japan to the northeastern parts of the country in the coming days as a stationary front is expected to remain parked over the Japanese archipelago this week. The agency said even a small amount of rain could trigger disasters as the land may have already been saturated with rain from the past few days, warning of flooding and mudslides.

As of Monday morning, the country's land ministry confirmed 62 cases of rain-triggered mudslides in 17 of Japan's 47 prefectures and 36 rivers that have overrun their banks in nine prefectures, damaging homes and disrupting transportation.

In the central Japan city of Okaya, Nagano Prefecture, Yuki Makibuchi, 41, and her sons Haruki, 12, and Naoki, 7, died after a mudslide struck a house early Sunday morning. Another teenage boy and a man in his 40s were taken to hospital with slight injuries.

Masao Makibuchi, the 68-year-old grandfather of the two boys who died in the disaster, told Kyodo News he heard a loud noise in the morning and found that sediment from a mountain behind the house had hit the second floor.

Makibuchi, who stayed in the house together with the three, said he tried to push aside mud to save his daughter-in-law and grandsons but could not even move through a distance of 1 meter. "I was with them just a moment ago, and now they're gone in an instant," he said. — Kyodo news ■

# 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.

# Myanmar Futsal teams to prepare for Viet Nam SEA Games

THE Myanmar men's and women's Futsal teams will be preparing for the Viet Nam SEA Games, according to the Myanmar Football Federation.

The XXXI South East Asian Games to be held in Viet Nam was originally scheduled for later this year, but it was postponed to next year due to the COVID-19 epidemic.

The Myanmar Futsal team had previously planned to start training this mid-year if it was held earlier this year, but the training was postponed due to the tournament postponed.

The Myanmar Football Federation recently appointed Boonlert Charoenwong, Thailand's coach as Myanmar Futsal technical director and the head coach of Myanmar women's Futsal team to prepare for the upcoming SEA Games.

The Myanmar Football Federation (MFF) has been trying to appoint a foreigner coach as head coach of the Myanmar men's national Futsal team since last year, but the plan has not yet been implemented.

The Myanmar Futsal team has not competed in international competitions since 2020 due to the pandemic.

Futsal was introduced to the SEA Games in 2007, and Myanmar teams competed in 2007, 2011, 2013 and 2017 versions of the SEA Games.

The Myanmar men's and women's teams competed in all four occasions, but only the Myanmar women's team won a bronze medal in the 2011 Indonesia SEA Games.—Ko Nyi Lay/GNLM

# Bayern next up for Haaland in German Super Cup showdown at Dortmund

BAYERN Munich are the next team to try to shackle Norwegian goal-machine Erling Braut Haaland when the defending Bundesliga champions face Borussia Dortmund for the German Super Cup on Tuesday.

Under new coach Julian Nagelsmann, Bayern are bidding to win a tenth straight Bundesliga title, but were held to a 1-1 draw at Moenchengladbach last Friday on the season's opening weekend. Dortmund threw down a marker before the one-off German Super Cup match by beating Frankfurt 5-2 at home on Saturday with Haaland involved in all of the hosts' five goals. The towering striker, who only turned 21 last month, has now scored a phenomenal 62 times in 61 games for Dortmund. "Haaland is the complete package, that has to be said. We need him," said Dortmund captain Marco Reus. Haaland has already scored five goals in his first two games this season.

A hat-trick in the German Cup was followed up by a stunning display in the Bundesliga as he tore into Frankfurt defence, scoring twice and creating goals for Reus, Thorgan Hazard and Giovanni Reyna. Haaland revelled in creating space for his team-mates, then showed clinical finishing for the chances which came his way. Only a superb save by Frankfurt goalkeeper Kevin Trapp in added time denied Haaland another hat-trick.

"It's amazing the consistency he brings to the field," said Dortmund's new head coach Marco Rose.

"We are happy that he is here and it's for others to think about how to stop him."— AFP ■

# No Messi, no problem as Barcelona take 'leap into unknown' with victory

Barcelona's players celebrate during the Spanish League football match between Barcelona and Real Sociedad at the Camp Nou stadium in Barcelona on August 15, 2021. **PHOTO : AFP**

BARCELONA started life without Lionel Messi by defeating Real Sociedad 4-2 in their La Liga opener at the Camp Nou on Sunday even if fans admitted it felt like "a leap into the unknown". Captain Gerard Pique gave them a 19th minute lead with his 50th goal for the club.

Martin Braithwaite found the net in first half injury time and in the 59th minute. Sergi Roberto added a fourth in the last minute of the game. Just over 20,000 fans were in attendance as crowds returned for the first time since the pandemic.

However, they had to hold their breath at one stage when Sociedad came back from 3-0 down to get to 3-2 thanks to goals from 20-year-old Julen Lobete in the 82nd minute and a 30-metre free-kick from skipper Mikel Oyarzabal three minutes later. Six-time Ballon d'Or winner Messi called time on his two-decade career at Barcelona last week and moved to Paris Saint-Germain. Messi's memory lingered heavy over the Camp Nou on Sunday despite the removal of a giant photograph of the Argentine superstar from the entrance in the wake of his move to France.

Some banners were in place well before kick-off venting the fans anger towards president Joan Laporta. One read "Laporta, Barca is not your business", while another proclaimed "Barca yes, Laporta no!" "It was a big emotional blow," said 23-year-old Barca fan Adria De Lucas.

"I was in my room when I saw the news. I started sending messages to all my friends, and no one believed it. It was emotionally hard." — AFP ■