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.

Nay Pyi Taw capital must be neat and tidy with operation of smokeless industries: 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 meeting to develop Nay Pyi Taw Capital.

HUMAN resources which will contribute towards the administrative machinery must be turned out as Nay Pyi Taw is the capital where the government offices are functioned, 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 meeting on development of Nay Pyi Taw Capital at the Office of the State Administration Council Chairman in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday afternoon.

In his address, the Senior General said that a government is responsible for economic and social development of the State. As Nay Pyi Taw Council is the capital of the country, undertaking of development tasks started. The Nay Pyi Taw was inaugurated on 17 February 2006, and now it is 15 years and six months old. Yangon is now commercial hub of the State. Mandalay is also a commercial hub. The Nay Pyi Taw must be a model city among all towns of Myanmar.

Nay Pyi Taw is located on 2,725 square miles of area formed with five townships with the title of Thiri in addition to Tatkon, Pyinmana and Lewe townships which is home to some 1.148 million. Some 30 per cent of the people reside in urban area and about 70 per cent in rural area. They are engaged in agriculture and livestock breeding tasks. Roughly, there are 80-90 raining days per year with some 50 inches of rainfall.

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Commerce Ministry operates import processes of essential medical supplies without any delay

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 1,377 oxygen concentrators, 4,328 PPE suits, one ton of glove and 25 tonnes of masks were imported via airways at the Yangon International Airport. In addition, one oxygen plant, 149 liquid oxygen on bowsers, 31 tonnes of liquid oxygen cylinders, four storage containers, 5,014 empty oxygen cylinders, four oxygen plants, one oxygen generator, 3,735 oxygen concentrators, 25,528 PPE suits, one tonne of glove and 86 tonnes of masks were imported through border trade points and seaports.

A total of 947 tonnes of liquid oxygen, 219 tonnes of oxygen cylinders, 72 tonnes of oxygen gas cylinders, 12 liquid oxygen storage containers, six oxygen distributors, 111,919 empty oxygen containers, 26 oxygen plants, two oxygen refills, 11 oxygen generators, 77,639 oxygen concentrators, 151,048 test kits, 522,190 PPE suits, 83 tonnes of gloves and 1,191 tonnes of masks were imported in August.

Of 87 liquid oxygen bowsers imported between 1 July and 17 August, 65 of them drove to Yangon, 15 to Mandalay, two to Bago, four to Mawlamyine and one to Thaton respectively. Among 34 oxygen plants, five were transported to Yangon, five to Lashio, four to Bago, another four to Mandalay, three to Kyaukpadaung, two each to Pakokku, Hpa-an and Mawlamyine, and one each to Taunggyi, Thanbyuzayat, Magway, Dawei, Wakema, Myittha and Mogaung respectively.

Cargo trucks convey medical equipment for anti-COVID-19 measures.

Truck are ready to transport medical supplies to regions and states.

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

Statement to appreciate teachers' efforts

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

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

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

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

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

Information Team
State Administration Council

Manufacturing of quality products in full swing

The country requires a large volume of steel wears per year. So, foreign exchange is spent on import of steel wears. So, efforts are being made to resume Pinpet steel plant and Myingyan steel plant. It is necessary to upgrade the techniques of suspended plants for manufacturing of quality products in full swing.

(Excerpt from the speech to the meeting 1/2021 of the Provisional Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar made by the Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council Chairman Prime Minister of the State Senior General Min Aung Hlaing on 11 August 2021)

Nay Pyi Taw capital must be neat and tidy with ...

FROM PAGE-1

Remaining over 200 days are sunny days with favourable weather at 10 degree centigrade in minimum and 40 degree centigrade in maximum. A total of 10,600 acres of horticultural farms, 176,400 farmlands and 127,900 acres of croplands are located in Nay Pyi Taw Council. Regarding the livestock breeding, local people breed buffalos, cows, pigs, chickens, goats and fish. University of Agriculture, University of Veterinary Science and University of Forestry are main higher education institutions in Nay Pyi Taw Council Area in addition to institute of agriculture, government technical institute and technical high school.

The meeting on development of Nay Pyi Taw Capital is in progress.

> Cotton plants are grown in Meiktila, Pyawbwe and Yamethin as well as in Nay Pyi Taw Council Area. Depending on yield of cotton, thread and textile factories can be established in Nay Pyi Taw Council Area to operate textile industries and garment industries.

In the time of the State Peace and Development Council and the tenure of President U Thein Sein's first term of democratic government, mango cultivation zones and livestock breeding zones were allotted in Nay Pyi Taw Council Area. Some 700 acres of land were permitted for livestock breeding sector in Tatkon Township to operate breeding tasks. Hence, relevant departments need to scrutinize the remaining areas of agriculture and livestock breeding tasks in line with the disciplines.

Nay Pyi Taw Council Area is teeming with rivers and creeks, located between eastern and western mountain ranges. As it is a fertile region, the University of Agriculture and research farms are established. Due to fertile soil and geographical conditions, agriculture and livestock breeding can be operated all the year round. As it is a location for University of Agriculture and University of Veterinary Science, it is necessary to have high yield of crops. These farms need to use drop and sprinkler systems in water consumption. To do so, hydropower is being generated. Renewable energy such as solar power should be used and electricity should be generated at existing dams and reservoirs. Sufficient generation of electricity can contribute to agriculture and livestock breeding tasks in addition to other works.

Cotton plants are grown in Meiktila, Pyawbwe and Yamethin as well as in Nay Pyi Taw Council Area. Depending on yield of cotton, thread and textile factories can be established in Nay Pyi Taw Council Area to operate textile industries and garment industries. The industries based on agriculture and livestock can be operated. Supply of electricity can benefit many industries related to electricity. Hence, it is necessary to systematically calculate the town plans.

Human resources which will contribute towards the administrative machinery must be turned out as Nay Pyi Taw is the capital where the government offices are functioned. It is necessary to consider establishment of universities to conduct the training courses on business, management, judicial and legal affairs and administration. Hence, the correct locations must be chosen for construction of universities.

It is necessary to take basic factors for development of the city into consideration. Systematic management must be made for conducting the international relations in Nay Pyi Taw as main centre. The Nay Pyi Taw International Airport was built with facilities for operating cargo works. It is necessary to select the sites leading to the airport for products of industries based on agriculture and livestock breeding. As Nay Pyi Taw Council Area is established with the purpose of 20 million people, preparations must be made for implementing the urban projects including circular railways, bus lanes, metro lanes and subways. Railway station as well as aviation transport system must be centred in Nay Pyi Taw.

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Nay Pyi Taw capital must be neat and tidy with ...

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The Senior General highlighted formation of public residences, repairing of pavements, construction of buildings and parks. It is necessary to construct the buildings including Uppatasanti Pagoda, Thatta Thattaha Pagoda, Maha Thakyayanthi Pagoda and Maravijaya sitting marble Buddha image and national race village, water fountain and zoological gardens which can attract foreign tourists. Concerted efforts must be made for constant development of Nay Pyi Taw Council Area.

Chairman of Nay Pyi Taw Council Dr Maung Maung Naing reported on facts about Nay Pyi Taw Council Area, land utilization, local and foreign investment, implementation of industrial zones and electrification.

The SAC member and Union ministers gave supplementary reports on implementation of the projects.

The Senior General instructed them to manage opening of necessary institutes, colleges and universities for Nay Pyi Taw as a model capital in agriculture, livestock breeding and education sectors and improvement of school structures. Ways and means must be sought for easing traffic congestion when the Nay Pyi Taw will be booming with large population with transport services in the future.

In his concluding speech, the Senior General said the government must focus on development of Nay Pyi Taw as model capital while continuously carrying out improvement of regions and states. The Nay Pyi Taw capital must be neat and tidy with operation of smokeless industries. Primarily, the project must contribute to uplifting living standard of the people in Nay Pyi Taw. Nay Pyi Taw requires many educated persons to focus on rural development. Only when number of educated persons is abundant, will skilled labours be turned out.

The Nay Pyi Taw Council needs to supervise whether projects are implemented on the allotted plots or not. Efforts must be made for enabling the country's products to occupy the domestic market. Construction of roads must meet the international standards with further estimations for future plans.

> Human resources which will contribute towards the administrative machinery must be turned out as Nay Pyi Taw is the capital where the government offices are functioned. It is necessary to consider establishment of universities to conduct the training courses on business, management, judicial and legal affairs and administration.

The Senior General stressed the need to maintain the forest area in Nay Pyi Taw. Agriculture and livestock zones must be supervised in line with the disciplines. The Nay Pyi Taw must be shaped as a model area in agriculture and livestock breeding sectors of the State. The government must fulfill the technical needs of local farmers for utilizing natural fertilizers.

The Senior General stressed the need for establishment of the Livestock Breeding Research Department as soon as possible. Arrangements must be made for teaching agricultural engineering subject at relevant university.

Only when the Nay Pyi Taw is developed, neat and pleasant, will it attract travellers. International ceremonies must be held in Nay Pyi Taw. Hence, efforts must be made for facilitating the best communication system in Nay Pyi Taw. The project of running electric cars must be implemented in Nay Pyi Taw without fail. Postal system and delivery services must be improved. Relevant ministries need to inspect the potentials for breeding fish and prawn in Paunglaung Dam. Arrangements must be made for establishment of Railway Museums in Nay Pyi Taw and Yangon. The Senior General stressed that the Nay Pyi Taw must be shaped as green city, clean city and smart city.—MNA

No 1 Steel Plant (Myingyan) to resume soon

THE Ministry of Industry is making efforts to restart the steel plant project as soon as possible due to the high cost of steel import each year.

Union Minister for Industry Dr Charlie Than said the steel plant project must be restarted sooner since Myanmar has to import a large volume of irons and steels for industries, constructions, small, medium, and large enterprises every year, costing large amounts of foreign currency.

During his visit to No 1 Steel Plant in Myingyan Township, Mandalay Region on 16 August, he inspected the status of the steel plant construction, installation of machinery, and steel raw materials.

The Union Minister said it is necessary to check and repair the equipment that has been suspended for a long time, to carry out the remaining part of the construction with a systematic drawn-up, to regularly conduct the repair works to prevent damage to the installed machines, to do organized human resource management for each plant as the project activities will be restarted with paying special attention to occupational safety.—MNA

Union Minister for Industry Dr Charlie Than views round No 1 Steel plant in Myingyan.

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UEC donates 100 oxygen cylinders, K1.4 million to Nay Pyi Taw General Hospital (1000-bed)

THE Union Election Commission Chairman and members donated 100 40-litre oxygen cylinders and K1.4 million to Nay Pyi Taw General Hospital (1000-bed) yesterday.

At the donation ceremony, UEC Chairman U Thein Soe explained the purpose of the donations and member U Aung Saw Win presented the oxygen cylinders and cash donated by New Starlight Construction Co., Ltd to Medical Superintendent Dr Aung Ngwe San who then gave a certificate of honour to the officials.—MNA

UEC member U Aung Saw Win presents oxygen cylinders and cash donated by New Starlight Construction Co Ltd to medical Superintendent Dr Aung Ngwe San.

Union Information Minister inspects community centre (Pyinmana), gives instructions for youth development

Union Information Minister U Maung Maung Ohn visits library of community centre (Pyinmana).

UNION Minister for Information U Maung Maung Ohn, accompanied by Deputy Minister U Ye Tint, Permanent Secretary U Myo Myint Maung and officials, visited the community centre at Pyinmana Township Information and Public Relations Department yesterday.

Then, Director-General U Aye Kywe of IPRD clarified the work programmes of community centre (Pyinmana).

The Union Minister and party also inspected the library, child reading room and mobile library.

The Union Minister also met the officials and staff of district and township, Union Territory (Nay Pyi Taw) IPRDs.

During the meeting, the Union Minister talked about the five-point road map and nine objectives of the Provisional Government of Myanmar and duties of ministry's staff like to inform, to educate and to entertain.

He also said the Prime Minister of the State gave instructions to promote the role of youths. The Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs was formed to improve the ability of youths and to become active and fit youths with love for sports, grab the learning access and right knowledge. The ministry will cooperate in these processes.

The youths play a key role in building the future of country. Global countries are making efforts for development of the human resources. It should create a better environment for the youths as they are the hopes of the country. The ministry also needs to adopt various media to keep the patriotism for the country and religion in their mind.

The ministry also broadcasts youth development programmes via State-owned media channels currently.

The Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs should cooperate with the ministries concerned and relevant region/state governments in implementing these development programmes. Moreover, the community centres make efforts to establish youth-based centres. Therefore, all the staff need to be united with active and creative thinking.

Finally, the Union Minister provided cash assistance to the staff.

The Ministry of Information implemented the community centres starting 2015 and conducted various training courses and talks. The centres were established with State budgets, B.O.T system or cash contribution of the well-wishers.—MNA

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News and Periodicals Enterprise

3,306 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 17 August, total figure rises to 360,291

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to **360,291 after 3,306 new cases** were reported on 17 August 2021 according to the Ministry of Health. Among these confirmed cases 279,488 have been discharged from hospitals. Death toll reached **13,623** after **178** died. —MNA

Cotton plantations in ChaungU thriving this year

Female farming workers are removing pests from cotton plants.

MORE than 6,000 acres of cotton crops were cultivated in ChaungU township in Monywa district, Sagaing region this year and it is reportedly thriving, said Daw Khin Myat Myat Oo, the head of ChaungU Township Agriculture Department.

This year, ChaungU Township cultivated over 6,000 acres of cotton crops, depending upon the cotton market and climatic condition.

In order to get the extra income and profit for local farmers by having high yield of cotton productions, the ChaungU Township Agriculture Department official and her staff inspected the cotton-growing villages such as Budar, Pepyittaw, Nwekhwe, Chaungma, Myothit, Khinmon and Aungchantha on 16 August. And, they found that the cotton plantations were growing well.

"Yesterday, we have inspected the cotton field and the field inspection showed that the cotton fields were thriving in those villages. There is no pest as well.

"Currently, it is reportedly successful. The cotton prices are promising this year. The cotton cultivation has also improved by over K1,000 acres this year compared to that of last year.

"The local farmers grow only the crops that make them more profitable," she added.

Last year, the cotton crop was priced at K900 per viss. But this year, the price of cotton fetched K1,350 per viss in the market.

The ChaungU Township is growing model long-staple cotton species such as Shwetaung-8, Shwetaung-10 and Ngwechi-9. Besides, the township cultivated the Raka hybrid cotton species on a trial basis.—Lulay/GNLM

Taninthayi Region reports over 7,800 COVID-19 cases with over 300 deaths

TANINTHAYI Region reported on over 7,800 COVID-19 cases in the third wave of coronavirus, with over 300 deaths, according the official data of the Ministry of Health.

In Taninthayi region, Dawei saw the highest number of COVID-19 confirmed cases while Myeik saw the highest number of deaths. As of 15 August, there were 7,897 COVID-19 cases and 318 deaths in 10 townships in Taninthayi region.

"Since August, a total of 10 deaths were reported daily in Myeik. Some died at the hospital while some died at home. People who die at home are listed as suspect cases. Later, people who died at home in the ward are tested the cause of death whether they die of COVID-19 or not. The death body that died of COVID-19 is to be cremated or buried as quickly as possible in accordance with COVID-19 rules and regulation," said a volunteer from Myeik.

In Taninthayi, Dawei has so far seen 1,879 COVID-19 cases and 90 deaths while Myeik saw 1,666 COVID-19 cases and 111 deaths.

Three districts in Taninthayi region: Dawei, Myeik and Kawthaung have the highest rate of COVID-19 infection and death.

Due to the high rate of infection, some villages in those three districts have restricted in and out of the villagers while the some villages are no longer allowed to stay overnight travellers.—ACM/GNLM

Monsoon paddy cultivated with irrigation water from Mezali Diversion Weir in Pwintbyu Township

LOCAL farmers in Pwintbyu Township, Magway Region, are trying to meet the target of monsoon paddy with irrigation water from the Mezali diversion weir, according to the township head of the Department of Agriculture.

Of 25 townships in Magway Region, Pwintbyu Township is one of the townships that have the highest annual paddy cultivation, and local farmers are mainly engaged in agriculture in all seasons by using the irrigation facilities from the Mezali diversion weir. The Township Irrigation and Water Utilization Management Department supplies irrigation water from the weir through two canals to avoid water shortage of crops. Local farmers, this year too, are working hard to meet the target acreage of monsoon crops with the use of machines and labour, as well as the township Agriculture Department is providing agricultural techniques and inputs needed to increase crop yields, and conducting awareness-raising on pest control measures under the close supervision.

In the 2021-2022 monsoon crop planting season, a total of 68,783 acres of monsoon paddy, 900 acres of corn, 166 acres of maize, 5,905 acres of various peas, 429 acres of peanut, 2,448 acres of sesame seeds, 158 acres of sunflower, 1,458 cotton, eight acres of sugarcane, 222 acres of toddy palm, 52 acres of betel leaf, 564 acres of pepper, 170 acres of coconut plants, 1,020 acres of banana, 1,343 acres of fruit trees, 1,310 acres of vegetables, 257 acres of herbal material, 4,381 acres of animal feeds, 823 acres of horticulture, 590 acres of other vegetables, totally 90,978 acres of monsoon crop acres will be planted in Pwintbyu Township, according to the township Department of Agriculture.—Ye Win Naing (NyaungU)/GNLM

Farmers are ploughing farmlands before cultivation of paddy.

Myanmar sesame seed market sees high demand from Chinese buyers

THE price of black sesame seeds recovered on the back of strong demand by China in the recent days in Mandalay market, the pulses traders from Mandalay said.

The demand on the newly harvested sesame varieties (brown sesame, yellow sesame and white sesame) is halted for now. The price of black sesame has risen on the high demand. A three-basket bag was priced at only K145,000 last month, but it increased up to K165,000 in mid-August, Soe Win Myint brokerage in Mandalay stated.

Farmers are winnowing sesame seeds in the farm.

"We see high inflow of black sesame from Shwebo, Wetlet and Monywa areas in Mandalay market this monsoon season. Moreover, the sesame seed from Magway Region also starts to enter Mandalay market. The black sesame is high on demand. In addition, Yuan value is also gaining. China uses black sesame in snack food business, oil production and making herbal medicines. There is one thing that I want to remind the growers to take shelter in time of harvesting and winnowing of sesame for avoiding the excess of acid content," owner of Soe Win Myint Depot suggested.

Both raw sesame seeds and valued-added sesame seeds without husk are conveyed to China. When the COVID-19 cases fall and transportation barriers are eased, the sesame market will raise its head again for sure, he added.—Min Htet Aung (Mandalay sub-printing house)

Gold metal rebounds to K1.7 mln per tical: YGEA states

Photo shows beautiful designs of ornaments made of gold.

THE price of precious pure yellow metal bounced back to K1.7 million per tical (0.578 ounces, or 0.016 kilogrammes) after three months, according to Yangon Region Gold Entrepreneurs Association (YGEA).

The pure gold fetched only K1,574,500 per tical on 1 August, while it gained K1,698,000 per tical on 17 August, showing an increase of K120,000 within three weeks. The price rise is attributed to the Kyat weakening against the US dollar.

The global gold price stood at around US$1,800 per ounce as per the money exchangers.

Last 12 May, the gold price hit an all-time high of K1,709,000 per tical in the history.

In January 2021, the gold price was ranged between the minimum of K1,316,000 per tical (28 Jan) and the maximum of K1,336,000 per tical (6 Jan). It reached an all-time high of K1,410,000 per tical on 3 Feb and hit the minimum of K1,340,000 per tical on 2 Feb. In March, the rate fluctuated between the highest of K1,391,000 (25 March) and the lowest of K1,302,000 (4 March). The price was registered the highest of K1,455,000 (30 April) and the lowest of K1,389,000 (1 April). The price reached an all-time highest of K1,709,000 (12 May) and the lowest of K1,447,000 in May. The price moved in the maximum of K1,575,500 (11 June) and the minimum of K1,543,000 (19 June). Last month, it fluctuated between K1,562,300 (26 July) and K1,587,000 (9 July), the gold traders said.

They also noted that last year's local gold reached the lowest level of K1,310,500 (2 Sept) and the highest level of K1,314,000 (1 Sept). In October, the rate ranged between K1,307,800 (30 Oct) and K1,316,500 (21 Oct). The rate fluctuated between the highest of K1,317,000 (9 Nov) and the lowest of K1,270,000 (30 Nov). In December, the pure yellow metal priced moved in the range of 1,280,000 (1 Dec) and 1,332,000 (28 Dec).

With global gold prices on the uptick, the domestic price hit fresh highs in 2019, reaching K1,000,000 per tical between 17 Jan and 21 Feb, crossing K1,100,000 (22 June to 5 Aug), climbing to over 1,200,000 (7 Aug-4 Sept), and then reaching a high of K1,300,000 on 5 September 2019.—NN/GNLM

Myanmar ships over 172,000 tonnes of pigeon pea this FY

MYANMAR exported more than 172,708 tonnes of pigeon pea to the foreign trade partners between 1 October 2020 and 30 July 2021 in the current financial year 2020-2021, generating an income of US$114.9 million, according to the Ministry of Commerce's trade data.

At present, the price of pigeon pea in India is rising following the relaxation on bean import quota by India. The pigeon pea fetched around K1,302,500 per tonne, according to Bayintnaung wholesale centre's price data.

Myanmar's pigeon pea is primarily shipped to India, and also exported to Singapore, the US, Canada, Pakistan, the UK, and Malaysia. But, the export volume to other countries rather than to India is extremely small.

The domestic bean market is positively related to the law of supply and demand, said an official of Myanmar Pulses, Beans and Sesame Seeds Merchants Association.

India set import quota on beans including black gram and pigeon pea starting from 2017. Myanmar earlier had to export black bean and pigeon pea under the quota system and limit period.

On 15 May 2021, India's Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare approved not only black gram but also other pulses being imported from Myanmar that have bill of landing up to October 2021, with relaxations of conditions regarding clearance consignment up to 30 November 2021. According to this statement, the previous notifications dated 19 March 2021 and 26 March 2021 were revoked.

Additionally, Myanmar can export 250,000 tonnes of black gram (urad) and 100,000 tonnes of pigeon pea under the G to G (government to government) pact during the April-March period between the 2021-2022 financial year and the 2025-2026 FY, as per the Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Commerce and Indian counterpart which signed on 18 June.

This year, the G to G pact ensured strong market next five years, along with other relaxations on import quota, the Myanmar Trade Promotion Organization under the Ministry of Commerce stated.

Myanmar's agriculture sector is the backbone of country's economy and it contributes to over 30 per cent of Gross Domestic Products. The country primarily cultivates paddy, corn, cotton, sugarcane, and various pulses and beans. Its second largest production is the pulses and beans, accounting for 33 per cent of agro products and covering 20 per cent of growing acres.

Among them, black gram, pigeon pea and green gram constitute 72 per cent of bean sown acreage. Other beans including peanut, chickpea, soybean, black eyed bean, butter bean and rice bean are also grown in the country.—MM/GNLM

Sample pigeon peas are displayed at the wholesale depot.

Participate in nation-building tasks with constructive attitude

THE artistes would be ideal persons through presentation of artistic creativity with utmost efforts to win the hearts of the people without any political colours. It can be reviewed the excellent performances created with the advice of maestros without political colours can stand tall till today in the history of artistes of Myanmar.

Moreover, the artistes can motivate the people to have correct concepts to participate in the reconstruction of the country. Their performances can attract the people and lead them to forging the optimism and constructive activities which can be lasting for many years.

Currently, State leaders do not neglect the arena of artistes. The Prime Minister of the State places emphasis not only on the fine art arena and the role of media but also on the lives of artistes, intellectuals and intelligentsia with the concept that the fine arts should be presented for the sake of the people. The government, therefore, provided necessary assistance for establishment of the fine arts centres in Yangon and Mandalay. Moreover, the government recognizes that the artistes are taking part in the important role in nation-building tasks through their professions.

Moreover, the artistes can motivate the people to have correct concepts to participate in the reconstruction of the country. Their performances can attract the people and lead them to forging the optimism and constructive activities which can be lasting for many years.

The Ministry of Information met with those artistes to join hands with the government in undertaking the tasks beneficial to the State and the nationals. The Ministry of Information pledged to give a helping hand to those of the arena of musicians for revitalization, solve their problems in prevention and treatment of COVID-19, and give chances to those of the musician world to coordinate with relevant departments for taking out money from the banks for fulfilling the daily social needs.

The audience people are lovely watching over the activities and performance of the artistes including film stars, musicians, vocalists, dancers and those related to the artistes. As acts of artistes reflect their images, they need to avoid the bad behaviors tarnishing their images. It is because if the people look down on artistes, they will lose their positions in the artiste arena and be difficult to regain their positions. Hence, they should stand on the correct way based on religious and secular worlds.

So, the artistes need to organize the audience people as a national duty to march on the right truck leading to the peaceful and prosperous nation.

■ ■ ■

Expert urges Japan to lead global health finance amid COVID crisis

JAPAN was the largest provider of development aid in response to the COVID-19 health and economic crisis among the Group of Seven industrialized nations in 2020 despite the hit its economy suffered during the pandemic, according to an independent study.

Japan committed $5.1 billion in new aid funding last year, compared to $4.4 billion pledged by Germany, $1.9 billion by France and $1.0 billion by Canada, the study by Kiyoshi Kodera, a former Japanese Finance Ministry and World Bank official shows, citing data from the Overseas Development Institute, a British think tank.

Among other G-7 members, Britain committed $990 million, the United States $103 million and Italy $50 million.

"If you compare data among the G-7 members, we can see that Japan played a significant role as a major donor even at the time of the coronavirus crisis," said Kodera, now a senior research associate at the London-based ODI.

Most of the $5.1 billion in official development assistance -- which came on the heels of a 4.8 percent fall in Japan's gross domestic product in 2020, the second sharpest contraction on record -- was targeted at developing countries mainly in Asia and multilateral institutions to assist in their fight against COVID-19 and the economic crisis, he said.

Clockwise from far L) European Council President Charles Michel, Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, French President Emmanuel Macron, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, U.S. President Joe Biden, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen hold talks on the first day of a three-day Group of Seven summit in Cornwall, England, on June 11, 2021. **PHOTO: POOL PHOTO/ KYODO**

However, Kodera expects the United States to overtake Japan as the top aid provider among the G-7 in 2021, partly because President Joe Biden's administration extended $2 billion to the COVAX global vaccine-sharing program, the largest single financial contribution to the U.N.-backed initiative snubbed by his predecessor Donald Trump.

In the absence of comprehensive data for Japan's ODA program, Kodera tallied figures such as ODA outlays in the country's initial budget for fiscal 2020, ODA spending from the reserve fund for fiscal 2019 and ODA earmarked in the fiscal 2020 supplementary budgets.

"Government agencies release information about ODA individually and sporadically. For outsiders, Japan's information looks fragmented and hard to comprehend," he said in an interview.

"This has made it difficult for Japan as a whole to communicate with the world about the country's development aid in a holistic and more effective way."

The Foreign Ministry can produce better global narratives by incorporating, for example, the government's contributions to trust funds run by the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank via the Finance Ministry as well, he said.

Kodera retired from public service in 2016 as a Japan International Cooperation Agency vice president after holding posts such as deputy vice minister of finance for international affairs and executive secretary of the Development Committee of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, a career that earned him the nickname "Mr. Development."

Besides the ODI post, the 69-year-old wears other hats such as chair of the board of WaterAid Japan, an international nongovernmental organization for water and sanitation, and board member of Save the Children Japan.

While hailing Japan for offering COVID-19 vaccines and cold chain storage equipment such as refrigerated vaccine transport vehicles to poor countries in what some view as a counter to China's vaccine diplomacy, Kodera urges Tokyo to play a greater role in strengthening health systems in the developing world.

"Besides vaccine supply, critical issues for developing countries are that they have a serious shortage of medical professionals who give shots, and that people are skeptical about vaccines based on misinformation and unsubstantiated rumors," he said.

"Japan can take the lead in helping poor countries train medical professionals and increase funding for vaccination campaigns as fundamental pillars for bolstering health systems in the developing world."

Kodera also requested health and finance policymakers in developing countries to step up coordination so that countries such as Indonesia and the Philippines, whose percentage of state budgets dedicated to health and medical expenditures are comparatively small, can establish sustainable health finance systems.

"Without solely relying on foreign aid, developing economies must ensure sound tax revenue and budget implementation systems so that the health sector is financed by taxpayers' money," he said.

SOURCE: Kyodo

Blood clotting may be the root cause of Long COVID syndrome, research shows

New evidence shows that patients with Long COVID syndrome continue to have higher measures of blood clotting, which may help explain their persistent symptoms, such as reduced physical fitness and fatigue.

THE study, led by researchers from RCSI University of Medicine and Health Sciences, is published in the Journal of Thrombosis and Haemostasis.

Previous work by the same group studied the dangerous clotting observed in patients with severe acute COVID-19. However, far less is known about Long COVID syndrome, where symptoms can last weeks to months after the initial infection has resolved and is estimated to affect millions of people worldwide.

The researchers examined 50 patients with symptoms of Long COVID syndrome to better understand if abnormal blood clotting is involved.

They discovered that clotting markers were significantly elevated in the blood of patients with Long COVID syndrome compared with healthy controls. These clotting markers were higher in patients who required hospitalisation with their initial COVID-19 infection, but they also found that even those who were able to manage their illness at home still had persistently high clotting markers.

The researchers observed that higher clotting was directly related to other symptoms of Long COVID syndrome, such as reduced physical fitness and fatigue. Even though markers of inflammation had all returned to normal levels, this increased clotting potential was still present in Long COVID patients.

"Because clotting markers were elevated while inflammation markers had returned to normal, our results suggest that the clotting system may be involved in the root cause of Long COVID syndrome," said Dr Helen Fogarty, the study's lead author, ICAT Fellow and PhD student at the Irish Centre for Vascular Biology in the RCSI School of Pharmacy and Biomolecular Sciences.

This work was funded by the Welcome Trust, the Health Research Board (HRB) Irish Clinical Academic Training (ICAT) programme as well as the HRB-funded Irish COVID-19 Vasculopathy Study (ICVS). The work was also supported by a philanthropic grant from the 3M Foundation to RCSI University of Medicine and Health Sciences in support of COVID-19 research.

"Understanding the root cause of a disease is the first step toward developing effective treatments," said Professor James O'Donnell, Director of the Irish Centre for Vascular Biology, RCSI and Consultant Haematologist in the National Coagulation Centre in St James's Hospital, Dublin.

SOURCE: RCSI /ANI

The researchers examined 50 patients with symptoms of Long COVID syndrome to better understand if abnormal blood clotting is involved. **PHOTO: RCSI UNIVERSITY OF MEDICINE AND HEALTH SCIENCES/ANI**

Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 7:00 pm Tuesday 17 August 2021)

BAY INFERENCE: According to the observations at (18:30) hrs MST today, the low pressure area over coastal Odisha and adjoining Northwest Bay of Bengal still persists. Monsoon is moderate over the Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal.

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

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

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Weak to moderate monsoon.

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

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

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

Flood Warning

(Issued at 14:00 hrs MST on 17-8-2021)

According to the (13:30) hrs MST observation today, the water level of Thanlwin River at Hpa-an is observed as about (1½) feet below its danger level. It may reach its danger level during the next two days.

It is especially advised to the people who settle near the river banks and low lying areas at Hpa-an Township to take precaution measure.

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Parishioners killed in quake-damaged historic Haiti church

ITS bell tower and yellow walls a sharp contrast with Haiti's blue tropical sky, the historic Immaculee Conception church was the pride of Les Anglais, until it was destroyed by an earthquake Saturday, burying several faithful inside.

On 14 August, at exactly 8:29 am (1229 GMT), a magnitude 7.2 earthquake struck southern Haiti, reducing the church's facade and steeple to a pile of rubble in seconds.

At least 17 people were crushed to death by the collapsing wall and roof.

"I had just finished celebrating the 6:30 am morning mass and had entered the presbytery to have coffee before returning to celebrate baptisms" when the quake struck, said parish priest Wilson Exantus Andre.

"The oldest of the deceased was 24 years old. What is hard is that a woman who has only two children, 18 years old and 3 years old, lost them both," the priest, still in shock, told AFP on Monday.

The bodies of all of the victims were pulled out of the ruins of the church.

The massive quake killed more than 1,400 people across Haiti, according to a preliminary official toll reported on Monday.

- Just seconds -

"It was a beautiful church with very beautiful architecture," said the priest. "It was part of the national heritage, it was the pride of the people of Les Anglais, who never missed an opportunity to talk about it."

But in just a few seconds, the church, built in 1907, was destroyed.

Only part of the nave and the corrugated iron roof withstood the earthquake and its incessant aftershocks. Some of the church's wooden benches were covered in piles of stones that used to be the steeple.—AFP ■

"It was a beautiful church with very beautiful architecture," said Wilson Exantus Andre, the parish priest at the Immaculee Conception church in Les Anglais, in southwestern Haiti. **PHOTO: AFP**

Three in four say climate 'tipping points' close

The survey, conducted before the release of a bombshell UN climate report last week, showed more than half of respondents in G20 nations feel very or extremely concerned about the state of the planet. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

SOME 73 per cent of people now believe that Earth's climate is approaching abrupt and irreversible "tipping points" due to human activity, according to a global opinion poll released Tuesday.

The survey, conducted before the publication of a bombshell UN climate science report last week, showed that more than half (58 per cent) of respondents in G20 nations feel very or extremely concerned about the state of the planet. Scientists are increasingly concerned that some feedback loops in nature — such as irreversible melting of icesheets or permafrost — may be close to being triggered as mankind's mind-boggling carbon emissions show no signs of slowing, despite a pandemic. The IPCC report warned that Earth is on course to be 1.5C hotter than pre-industrial times around 2030 — a full decade earlier than it projected just three years ago. It said that "low likelihood, high impact" tipping points, such as the Amazon degrading from a carbon sink to source, "cannot be ruled out". Tuesday's survey, conducted by the Global Commons Alliance and Ipsos MORI, found four out of five respondents wanted to do more to protect the planet.—AFP ■

UN hot on the trail of temperature records

DURING last week's heatwaves in Italy and Spain, meteorologists in both countries announced provisional data suggesting temperature records had been set there.

But such claims need to be verified by the United Nations before being confirmed or rejected — a process that can take months of careful scientific checking.

The UN's World Meteorological Organization is responsible for signing off on temperature records around the planet.

The Geneva-based agency maintains a global weather and climate extremes archive, which logs records for temperature, pressure, rainfall, hail, aridity, wind, lightning and weather-related mortality.

Here is how the WMO validates record claims, and what the records can tell us:

Months of evaluation

Confirming a claimed heat record takes several months. The WMO first contacts the national weather service of the country concerned, and the specific organisation that captured the supposed record in order to get the raw data. That includes details on the exact location of the reading, the equipment used, its calibration, and the regional weather conditions at the time.—AFP ■

Europe's Vega rocket blasts off with Airbus observation satellite

A European Vega rocket lifted off Monday night from French Guiana carrying an Earth observation satellite and four miniature "cubesats".

It was the second launch this year of the Vega, a crucial component of European ambitions to compete with rivals such as Elon Musk's SpaceX in the booming commercial aerospace market.

The rocket blasted off from the Guiana Space Centre in Kourou at 10:47 pm (0147 GMT), successfully delivering the satellites in just under two hours.

Its main cargo was a high-resolution satellite, the second of four for a new Earth observation constellation operated by Airbus. The first was put in orbit in April by a Vega rocket.

The Pleiades Neo constellation will offer high-resolution imaging of Earth for military or civilian uses such as disaster response, according to Airbus.

Vega's operator Arianespace is a subsidiary of the ArianeGroup, of which Airbus owns half.

The latest Vega also carried four miniature satellites known as "cubesats".

One of them will become part of a constellation of satellites being developed by French start-up Unseenlabs, which specialises in maritime traffic monitoring.

The remaining three cubesats are from the European Space Agency for scientific and technology demonstration purposes.—AFP ■

An Airbus observation satellite has been launched into orbit by a European Vega rocket. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

New Zealand to lockdown after 1st COVID-19 case in 6 months

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern speaks to media during a press conference at Parliament on 17 August, 2021 in Wellington, New Zealand. **PHOTO: KYODO**

NEW ZEALAND said Tuesday it will move into a snap three-day nationwide lockdown from 11:59 p.m., after reporting its first case of COVID-19 in the community in six months.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern told a news conference that the country will move to alert level four, its highest level of restrictions, after a 58-year-old man in its largest city of Auckland tested positive for the coronavirus earlier in the afternoon.

Though it is yet to be determined which strain of the virus the man is infected with, authorities must assume it is the highly contagious Delta variant and move hard and fast to stamp out the virus, Ardern said.

"Going hard and early has worked for us before. While we know that Delta is a more dangerous enemy to combat, the same actions that overcame the virus last year can be applied to beat it again," said the prime minister.

Ardern said she anticipates a longer seven-day lockdown in Auckland and the Coromandel Peninsula, a tourist destination visited by the patient, around 65 kilometers east of Auckland across the Hauraki Gulf.

This is the first case of the novel coronavirus that has been detected in the New Zealand community since February, but no links have yet been found to international arrivals or quarantine facilities, causing concern for officials that there may be unrecognized chains of transmission in Auckland and beyond.—Kyodo ■

Tokyo Paralympics to be held without spectators due to COVID

International Paralympic Committee chief Andrew Parsons (C) is pictured on a screen as Seiko Hashimoto (L), head of the the organizing committee of the Tokyo Games, and Japan's Olympic minister Tamayo Marukawa wave at the start of a meeting in Tokyo on Aug. 16, 2021. **PHOTO: POOL PHOTO/ KYODO**

THE Tokyo Paralympics will be held without spectators due to an alarming rise in coronavirus infections in the host city and many other parts of Japan, organizers said Monday, about a week before the opening of the games.

The exception will be students participating in a government-backed education program, said the organizers, which also staged the recently concluded Olympics largely behind closed doors because of the coronavirus pandemic.

International Paralympic Committee chief Andrew Parsons and representatives of Japan's organizing bodies decided at a meeting to apply the no-spectator policy to Tokyo and the prefectures of Chiba, Saitama and Shizuoka, where all venues are located. They will also ask people not to gather along the roadside to watch outdoor events.

"I am very sorry to all ticket holders who were looking forward to spectating at venues, but I would like to ask for their understanding that this was unavoidable in terms of preventing the spread of infections," Seiko Hashimoto, president of the organizing committee, said at a press conference.—Kyodo ■

Concern over virus outbreak in Australia Indigenous communities

The first significant outbreak among the remote Aboriginal communities since the pandemic began, and has sparked fears for a population widely believed to be more vulnerable to Covid-19. **PHOTO: AFP**

THERE is "enormous concern" over a coronavirus outbreak in vulnerable Australian Indigenous communities, authorities said Tuesday, prompting them to deploy military personnel to deliver vaccines to the largely unjabbed population.

A Delta variant outbreak that began in Sydney two months ago has spread to western New South Wales state in recent days, with health officials saying most of the 116 cases detected in the area so far were among Aboriginal people.

New South Wales premier Gladys Berejiklian said the outbreak was of "enormous concern", with the Outback region under lockdown orders in an attempt to curb transmission.

It is the first significant outbreak among the remote Aboriginal communities since the pandemic began, and has sparked fears for a population widely believed to be more vulnerable to Covid-19.

At least five teams of military health specialists will head to the area from Wednesday to boost local vaccination efforts, Australia's health minister Greg Hunt said.

"They'll support vaccination but where swabbing or other activities are required they're highly mobile, highly flexible and highly trained," he said.—AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

United Kingdom: Unemployment dips as economy reopens

BRITAIN'S unemployment rate dipped in the second quarter on reopening of the economy that has resulted in record-high vacancies, official data showed Tuesday.

While the number of payroll employees has surged, it remains below the pre-pandemic total, the Office for National Statistics added.

The unemployment rate eased to 4.7 percent in the second quarter from 4.8 percent in the three months to the end of May, the ONS said in a statement. "The world of work continues to rebound robustly from the effects of the pandemic," said ONS statistician Jonathan Athow. But he added that "early survey figures show the number of job vacancies passed one million for the first time ever in July".—AFP ■

Pfizer submits data for 3rd dose approval in US

PFIZER and BioNTech on Monday submitted preliminary clinical data to US health authorities as part of their effort to seek authorisation for a third dose of their Covid-19 vaccine for all Americans. Last week, the United States approved the booster shot of Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines for people with weakened immune systems. Pfizer and BioNTech presented the results of their Phase One trial that evaluated the safety and efficacy of a third shot. "The data we've seen to date suggest a third dose of our vaccine elicits antibody levels that significantly exceed those seen after the two-dose primary schedule," Albert Bourla, Pfizer's Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, said in a statement.

"A booster vaccine could help reduce infection and disease rates in people who have previously been vaccinated and better control the spread of virus variants during the coming season," said BioNTech Co-founder Ugur Sahin. The companies plan to submit the same information to European authorities in the coming weeks. The move comes despite appeals by the World Health Organization for a moratorium on booster shots to help ease the drastic inequity in dose distribution between rich and poor nations. Israel has also began administering third doses to its citizens.—AFP ■

Taliban will not get access to Afghan reserves held in US: official

Taliban fighters patrol the streets of Kabul, after a stunningly swift end to Afghanistan's 20-year war.
PHOTO: AFP

THE Taliban will be denied access to any Afghan reserves held in US accounts, a US administration official told AFP on Monday.

The Taliban will be denied access to any Afghan reserves held in US accounts, a US administration official told AFP on Monday.

As US forces were evacuating Afghanistan's capital after the Taliban's swift takeover, the official said: "Any Central Bank assets the Afghan government have in the United States will not be made available to the Taliban."

The central bank's gross reserves totaled $9.4 billion at the end of April, according to the IMF.

But most of those funds are held outside of Afghanistan, according to a person familiar with the matter. It was not immediately clear what share of the assets are held in the United States.

The Taliban's seizure of power comes after NATO withdrew its 9,500-strong mission on the back of a decision from US President Joe Biden to pull out his troops.

Afghan president Ashraf Ghani flew out of the country on Sunday night as the insurgents encircled the capital, capping a military victory that saw them capture all cities in just 10 days.

'I cannot forgive him'

The country's central bank governor Ajmal Ahmady went to Twitter to detail his harrowing escape from the country on a military plane on Sunday, after he and his team tried to stabilize the currency amid the Taliban advance towards the capital.

Ahmady, who did not say where he was, said the central bank was informed on Friday that "given the deteriorating environment, we wouldn't get any more dollar shipments," and he met Saturday with banks and money exchangers to reassure them.—AFP ■

BHP to merge oil and gas assets with Australia's Woodside

BHP announced US$17 billion in underlying profits in the 12 months to June 30, up 88 percent from the previous year. **PHOTO: AFP**

MINING GIANT BHP announced Tuesday it will merge its oil and gas assets with Australia's Woodside, in a multibillion-dollar deal that sees BHP exit the liquid fossil fuel business.

The Anglo-Australian firm said the agreement would see Woodside issue new shares to BHP shareholders as it becomes a global top 10 LNG producer.

Woodside's existing shareholders would retain a 52 percent stake in the newly expanded Woodside, while BHP shareholders would own 48 percent.

"Bringing the BHP and Woodside assets together will provide choice for BHP shareholders, unlock synergies in how these assets are managed and allow capital to be deployed to the highest quality opportunities," BHP chief executive Mike Henry said.

"The merger will also enable the skills, talent and technology of both organisations to build a resilient future as the world's needs evolve."

BHP's petroleum business is worth US$15.4 billion, the company said, with oil and gas assets in the Gulf of Mexico, Australia, Trinidad and Tobago.

"Merging Woodside with BHP's oil and gas business delivers a stronger balance sheet, increased cash flow and enduring financial strength to fund planned developments in the near term and new energy sources into the future," said Woodside CEO and managing director Meg O'Neill.—AFP ■

Smoke confirmed at Hamaoka nuclear plant, 2nd reporting within week

File photo taken on 12 May 2019, shows Chubu Electric Power Co.'s Hamaoka nuclear power plant's No. 5 reactor in Shizuoka Prefecture.
PHOTO: KYODO

FIRE alarms went off at the Hamaoka nuclear plant in Shizuoka Prefecture, central Japan, on Tuesday, and the operator confirmed smoke within a building, the second such reporting within a week at the currently suspended plant.

No leakage of radioactive material outside the plant has been confirmed, said the operator, Chubu Electric Power Co., after the incident at around 5:15 a.m. at the building that houses a turbine of the plant's No. 5 reactor. The utility alerted a local fire station after a worker confirmed smoke. However, an on-site inspection conducted by the fire authorities led to the conclusion it was not a case of fire, the company said. The alarms went off on the second and third floors of the four-story building with two underground levels, according to the utility.—Kyodo ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Draft law proposes banning big data-enabled price discrimination

A draft law submitted to China's top legislature for review has proposed to make provisions against big data-enabled price discrimination against existing customers. The draft law on the protection of personal information was submitted to the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress for its third reading on Tuesday.

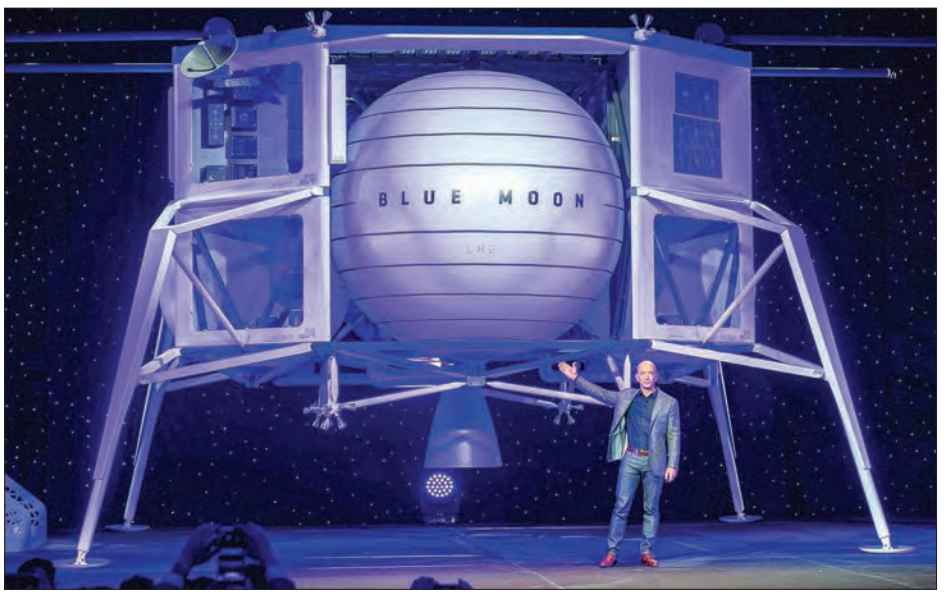
The draft stipulates that automated decision-making using personal information should not unfairly treat individuals in terms of transaction price and other trade conditions.

When pushing information and business marketing to individuals through automated decision-making, personal information processors should provide options that don't target personal characteristics at the same time, or offer ways of rejection, according to the draft.

Marking distinctions between large-scale internet platforms and small personal information processors, the draft stipulates that the former should formulate their own rules on personal information protection following the principles of openness, fairness and justice.

It also authorizes cyberspace authorities to formulate relevant rules for small personal information processors.–Xinhua ■

Blue Origin sues NASA over SpaceX Moon contract



Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos announces Blue Moon, a lunar landing vehicle for the Moon, during a Blue Origin event in Washington, D.C., in 2019. **PHOTO: SAUL LOEB / AFP/FILE**

BLUE Origin, the space company owned by Jeff Bezos, is suing the US government over its decision to award a massive Moon exploration contract to its competitor SpaceX, it said in a statement Monday.

The company has filed a suit with the US Court of Federal Claims "in an attempt to remedy the flaws" in how the contract was awarded, according to the statement.

The human landing system (HLS) contract, worth $2.9 billion, was given to SpaceX, owned by Bezos's billionaire rival Elon Musk, in April.

It was protested by the other bidders, who argued NASA was required to make multiple awards and that the evaluation process was unfair.

"We firmly believe that the issues identified in this procurement and its outcomes must be addressed to restore fairness, create competition, and ensure a safe return to the Moon for America," Blue Origin said. Since losing the contract, Blue Origin has strongly lobbied to have the decision reversed. It filed a protest with the Government Accountability Office, but in July the watchdog upheld NASA's decision. NASA said in a statement Monday that it was notified of Blue Origin's lawsuit and it is reviewing the case. "With our partners, we will go to the Moon and stay to enable science investigations, develop new technology, and create high paying jobs for the greater good and in preparation to send astronauts to Mars," the statement said.—AFP ■

New Asia undersea data cable plan unveiled by Google, Facebook

GOOGLE and Facebook on Monday unveiled plans for a new undersea internet cable connecting Singapore, Japan, Guam, the Philippines, Taiwan and Indonesia.

Google and Facebook on Monday unveiled plans for a new undersea internet cable connecting Singapore, Japan, Guam, the Philippines, Taiwan and Indonesia.

The cable project dubbed Apricot would be some 12,000 kilometers (nearly 7,500 miles) and be operational in 2024 subject to regulatory approvals, the companies said in separate statements.

The project announced by the US firms and regional and global partners "will deliver much-needed internet capacity, redundancy, and reliability to expand connections in the Asia-Pacific region," said Facebook engineering manager Nico Roehrich.

"The Apricot cable is part of our ongoing effort to expand global network infrastructure and better serve the more than 3.5 billion people around the world who use our services every month," Roehrich added. —AFP ■

Google and Facebook on Monday unveiled plans for a new undersea internet cable connecting Singapore, Japan, Guam, the Philippines, Taiwan and Indonesia. **PHOTO: TECHSPOT/AFP**

NEC's Singapore arm sets up academy for training digital-savvy human talent

NEC Asia Pacific Pte. Ltd. has established an academy to develop human resources versed in digital technology such as artificial intelligence covering its employees in Southeast Asia.

The NEC APAC Future Academy is housed in the office of NEC Corp.'s Singapore subsidiary, which serves as the Japanese electronic giant's regional headquarters.

The academy features the three pillars of developing human-centric design capabilities, incubating future innovations and advancing global research collaboration, according to Teh Chong Mien, managing director for Singapore operations of the NEC subsidiary.—Kyodo ■

T-Mobile acknowledges breach of customer data, launches probe

T-Mobile said Monday it had begun an investigation after a hacker group claimed to have obtained data from some 100 million of the operator's US customers and put at it up for sale on the dark web. **PHOTO: AFP**

T-Mobile said Monday it had begun an investigation after a hacker group claimed to have obtained data from some 100 million of the operator's US customers and put at it up for sale on the dark web.

T-Mobile on Monday acknowledged a breach of customer information after a hacker group claimed to have obtained records of 100 million of the operator's US customers and offered some of the data on the dark web.

The US wireless operator said it could not determine the number of customers impacted but that it had begun a "deep technical review of the situation across our systems to identify the nature of any data that was illegally accessed."

T-Mobile initially said it was checking the validity of the hacker group's claim, and hours later acknowledged that at least some data were accessed.

"We have determined that unauthorized access to some T-Mobile data occurred, however we have not yet determined that there is any personal customer data involved," a company statement said.

"We are confident that the entry point used to gain access has been closed." T-Mobile said it was conducting its own analysis with digital forensic experts and coordinating with law enforcement on the hack. The massive breach purportedly includes sensitive personal information like social security and driver's license numbers, according to media reports citing postings from dark web forums. —AFP ■

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE
M.V CTP MAKASSAR VOY.NO. (231N)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V CTP MAKASSAR VOY.NO. (231N)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **18-8-2021** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **HPT** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

Damaged cargo will be surveyed daily from 8 am to 11:20 am and 12 noon to 4 pm to Claim's Day now declared as the third day after final discharge of cargo from the Vessel.

No claims against this vessel will be admitted after the Claims Day.

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Malaysian king meets party leaders in hunt for new PM

MALAYSIA'S king met political party chiefs Tuesday as the hunt began for a new prime minister, a day after the last leader quit.

Muhyiddin Yassin resigned Monday after a turbulent 17 months in office, plunging the country into political turmoil as it battles a worsening coronavirus outbreak.

He fell on his sword after members of his crisis-riven coalition pulled support, and amid mounting public anger at his government's handling of the pandemic.

The king, Sultan Abdullah Sultan Ahmad Shah, has ruled out elections due to the outbreak, meaning it will likely be up to him to pick the next premier based on who commands most support.

A vehicle carrying Malaysia's Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin arrives at the National Palace in Kuala Lumpur before he resigned on Monday. **PHOTO: AFP**

Opposition chief Anwar Ibrahim and leaders from other parties headed to the national palace in Kuala Lumpur for a meeting with the monarch to chart a way forward.

With Malaysia's political landscape fractured after several years of upheaval, there is no obvious successor to 74-year-old Muhyiddin. The opposition is pushing Anwar, who has been seeking the top job for two decades, while remnants of the collapsed government are trying to cobble together a coalition. There has also been speculation a unity government could be formed until the outbreak is under control and polls can be held safely. MPs have also been asked to submit the name of their choice for prime minister to the palace by Wednesday afternoon, and the drama is expected to take several days to play out.

A premier must have the support of at least 111 MPs out of 222 in the lower house of parliament.—AFP ■

Taliban to give Al-Qaeda covert, not overt support

THE Taliban will offer support to Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan more discreetly than during their first period in power when they openly embraced the terror network, analysts say.

After conquering Kabul for the first time in 1996, the Islamic fundamentalist Taliban regime provided Al-Qaeda with a safe haven to operate training camps, even describing its leader Osama bin Laden as a "guest" of the country.

But after being overthrown in 2001 in retaliation for the September 11 attacks in the United States, which were planned from Afghanistan, the incoming Taliban authorities in Kabul are expected to take a new approach this time.

"If the Taliban of 2021 are different from those of 2001, it's not because they have moderated their religious obscurantism, but because they don't want to make the same strategic error, which was their blind support for Al-Qaeda which cost them power," said Jean-Pierre Filiu, a jihadism specialist at Sciences Po university in Paris.

Filiu told AFP that he expected the Taliban to again offer safety to bin Laden's successor Ayman al-Zawahiri and others, citing personal links between the two organisations. The fathers of Sirajuddin Haqqani and Mullah Yaqoob, both senior leaders in the modern-day Taliban, had past links to bin Laden, for instance.

Taliban fighters are seen in Afghanistan's Laghman province - the militants are effectively in power after the country's president Ashraf Ghani fled. **PHOTO: AFP**

When the Taliban's leader Haibatullah Akhundzada was appointed in 2016 Zawahiri showered him with praise, calling him "the emir of the faithful".—AFP ■

Ivory Coast starts Ebola jabs after first case in decades

AFP file photo of a health worker from the Guinean Ministry of Health cleaning a suspected contact of an Ebola patient's arm ahead of administering an anti-Ebola vaccine in Gueckedou earlier this year. **PHOTO: AFP**

IVORY Coast was set to roll out vaccinations against Ebola on Monday after the country recorded its first known case of the disease since 1994, the health ministry said.

"Health workers, close relatives and contacts of the victim" will be vaccinated from Monday afternoon, using 5,000 doses sent from Guinea, spokesman Germain Mahan Sehi told AFP.

Ivorian health workers had previously said that vaccinations of "targeted groups" had already begun on Sunday.

The case was recorded in Abidjan, Ivory Coast's economic hub, in an 18-year-old Guinean woman who had arrived in the country on Wednesday after travelling by road from Labe in Guinea, the authorities said on Saturday.

The World Health Organization (WHO) said genetic sequencing of a virus sample would determine whether the case was linked to a recent flare-up of Ebola in neighbouring Guinea.

The fact that it had occurred in a conurbation of more than four million people was of "immense concern," it said.

Ebola causes severe fever and, in the worst cases, unstoppable bleeding. It is transmitted through close contact with bodily fluids, and people who live with or care for patients are most at risk.

The death rate varies from 25 to 90 per cent, according to past outbreaks, although the chance of survival rises significantly if the disease is spotted at an early stage. — AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Hong Kong leader tells legal body to stay out of politics

HONG KONG'S leader on Tuesday warned one of the city's top legal bodies against getting involved in politics, in the latest sign of the government telling professional bodies to toe Beijing's line.

Chief executive Carrie Lam's comments towards the Law Society come as China remoulds Hong Kong in its own image and pursues civil society groups deemed to be politically disloyal or supportive of the city's democracy movement.

"If the Law Society allows politics to hijack their legal profession, the government will... consider severing its relationship with it," Lam told reporters, without spelling out what measures the government might take. With over 12,000 members, the Law Society is the city's largest association of solicitors and the only regulatory body of its type with statutory powers.

It can issue practising certificates, investigate professional malpractice and establish rules of conduct for the industry.—AFP ■

Zambia's new president vows 'better' democracy after landslide win

ZAMBIAN president-elect Hakainde Hichilema on Monday slammed the southern African country's outgoing "brutal regime" while promising a "better democracy" in his debut address to the nation, hours after winning the top job in a landslide.

Speaking shortly after his predecessor Edgar Lungu conceded defeat, the business tycoon and veteran opposition leader said his camp had been victims of a "brutal regime that is exiting".

"I will be a president of all Zambians, of those that voted for me and of those that did not," he pledged.

After a campaign dominated by the country's economic woes and marred by sporadic violence, Hichilema garnered 2,810,757 votes against 1,814,201 for the incumbent Lungu in Thursday's election, according to nearly final results.

Lungu conceded defeat, saying he congratulated "my brother... Hichilema for becoming the seventh republican president."—AFP ■

Biden defends US pullout from Afghanistan despite panic in Kabul

VICTORIOUS Taliban fighters patrolled Kabul on Monday 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.

US President Joe Biden on Monday defended the withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan, even in the face of the Taliban's stunning victory, which prompted panic in Kabul with thousands mobbing the airport in a desperate attempt to flee.

Afghan people climb atop a plane at the Kabul airport in a desperate attempt to flee Taliban rule. **PHOTO: AFP**

In his address at the White House -- his first public appearance since the Islamist insurgents took control of the country in astonishing fashion at the weekend -- he admitted the Taliban advance had unfolded more quickly than expected.

And he did not shy away from heaping criticism at the Western-backed government that was overthrown in Kabul, saying US troops could not defend a nation whose leaders "gave up and fled," as did President Ashraf Ghani.

"We gave them every chance to determine their own future. We could not provide them with the will to fight for that future," Biden said, adding he could no longer ask US soldiers to risk their lives in the country, 20 years on. "Our mission in Afghanistan was never supposed to have been nation-building."

The Taliban captured Kabul, and many other cities, with little bloodshed -- but in the capital, a sense of panic and fear overwhelmed residents, some of whom worried about a repeat of the insurgents' brutal Islamist rule from 1996 to 2001.— AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Libya political upturn boosts migrant exodus

As violence in Libya has waned this year, the number of would-be migrants to Europe intercepted so far has doubled compared to the same period of 2020, experts say.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) says 20,257 people have been intercepted at sea and returned to Libya so far this year.

The North African country remains one of the main departure points for tens of thousands of migrants, mainly from sub-Saharan Africa, hoping to attempt the dangerous Mediterranean crossing.

Most try to reach the Italian coast around 300 kilometres (186 miles) away.

A Libyan navy official, speaking on condition of anonymity, also told AFP of a "100 percent increase in departures from January to July" compared with the same period last year, without giving figures.

Lawyer Anwar al-Werfalli, a specialist in migration law, attributes the rise in migrant numbers "in particular to the end of the fighting" in Libya.

The 2011 uprising that brought about the downfall and death of dictator Moamer Kadhafi plunged the country into chaos and years of infighting between militias.

But a UN-brokered ceasefire in October 2020 has been generally respected, and a transitional government was installed this year.

Werfalli said this has created some "stability which, though relative, encourages migrants to undertake the crossing". The central Mediterranean crossing between Libya and Italy or Malta is by far the deadliest in the world, according to IOM figures.– AFP ■

US criticizes Iran nuclear work amid talks break

THE United States on Monday voiced alarm over Iranian production of uranium metal reported by the UN nuclear watchdog as it urged the clerical state to return to talks.

The State Department said the United States has seen the latest report to members by the International Atomic Energy Agency and believed that Iran "has no credible need to produce uranium metal."

Iran promised not to produce uranium metal, which can be used to build a nuclear bomb, as part of the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) under which it was to scale back its nuclear program drastically in return for sanctions relief.

But Iran said earlier this year that it was researching uranium metal to provide advanced fuel for a research reactor -- one of a series of steps it took outside the JCPOA after former president Donald Trump withdrew the United States from the deal.

"We have made clear that continued nuclear escalations beyond JCPOA limits are unconstructive and inconsistent with a return to mutual compliance," State Department spokesman Ned Price said. –AFP ■

At the Pentagon, US military officials bitter as they watch chaos in Kabul

A US soldier points his gun towards an Afghan civilian as US forces secure the Kabul airport. **PHOTO: AFP**

THE mood was sombre Monday in the corridors of the Pentagon, where US military personnel watched helplessly as chaos erupted at Kabul airport and privately criticized the slow pace of Joe Biden's administration in evacuating US-allied Afghans who fear Taliban retribution. Some criticized the State Department, which has sole authority to grant visas to former interpreters and other US military support staff and their families, for waiting more than two months to begin the process for Afghans in fear of their lives. Videos posted on social networks showed scenes of panic and fear in Kabul, including crowds running next to a US military transport plane as it taxies to take off, with some trying to desperately cling to its sides.—AFP ■

China chides U.S. for hasty troop withdrawal from Afghanistan

CHINESE Foreign Minister Wang Yi has chided the United States for its hasty withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan and urged Washington to play a constructive role in helping rebuild peace there, Chinese media said Tuesday.

During telephone talks with U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Monday, Wang also said China is "willing to communicate" with the United States to "promote the realization of a soft landing on the Afghan issue," according to the official Xinhua News Agency. The Taliban declared victory in Afghanistan after taking control of the capital Kabul and President Ashraf Ghani fled the nation on Sunday, marking the Islamist militant group's return to power 20 years after its removal by U.S.-led forces. Following the move, thousands of Afghans reportedly rushed to the airport in Kabul, with video footage showing some falling from deadly heights after trying to cling to the outside of a departing U.S. military plane, attempting to escape from the Taliban. Wang told Blinken that the hurried U.S. troop drawdown was having a "serious negative impact," Xinhua reported. —Kyodo News ■

Afghans crowd at the airport as they wait to leave from Kabul on Monday **PHOTO: AFP**

Athletes' village reopens with 1 week to go to Tokyo Paralympics

The athletes' village for the Tokyo Paralympics officially opens in Tokyo's Harumi waterfront district on 17 August , 2021. **PHOTO:**

THE Tokyo Games athletes' village reopened Tuesday a week before the start of the Paralympics as Japan continues to grapple with an alarming rise in coronavirus infections.

The welcoming of the first Paralympic delegations to the 44-hectare village in Tokyo's Harumi waterfront district came a day after organizers decided to hold competitions behind closed doors at all venues as a precaution against the spread of the virus. As was the case with Olympians, residents at the village will be required to undergo daily COVID-19 testing, wear face masks and observe physical distancing.

But since some Paralympic athletes may have a higher risk of suffering severe symptoms due to underlying health conditions, the organizers have said they will focus on enhancing safety at the village for the Paralympics.

Similarly to the Olympics, there was no special event to welcome the delegations as they entered the fenced-off complex.

Still, a ceremony was held in Shizuoka Prefecture, which will host cycling events, ahead of the start of the Paralympic torch relay.—Kyodo News ■

Abraham completes Roma switch from Chelsea for 40 million euros

Tammy Abraham (R), won the Champions League with Chelsea last season. **PHOTO: POOL/AFP/FILE**

TAMMY Abraham has completed his move to Roma from Chelsea, the Serie A club announced on Monday, the England forward joined former Blues boss Jose Mourinho in the Italian capital in a deal worth 40 million euros ($47 million). In a statement, Roma said that Abraham had signed a five-year contract and that Chelsea would "retain the right to a percentage of any future transfer fee involving the striker".

Italian media report that the 23-year-old, who will wear the number nine jersey left vacant by Edin Dzeko's transfer to Inter Milan, will earn 4.5 million euros net each season. "You can sense when a club really wants you — and Roma made their interest clear immediately," said Abraham to the Rome website.

"Roma is a club that deserves to be fighting for titles and trophies. I've had the experience of winning major trophies and I want to be in those competitions again — so I want to help this team to achieve that and get to the level where Roma should be."— AFP ■

Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council Nine Objectives

1. Political affairs

(a) To build a Union based on democracy and federalism, through a disciplined and genuine multiparty democratic system that is fair and just.

(b) To emphasize the achievement of enduring peace for the entire nation in line with the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA).

(c) To continue implementing the principle of peaceful co-existence among countries through an independent, active and non-aligned foreign policy.

2. Economic affairs

(a) To enhance production based on agriculture and livestock through modern techniques and strengthen all-round development in other sectors of the economy.

(b) To develop a stable market economy and promote international investment in order to enhance the economic development of the entire National people.

(c) To promote and support local businesses to create employment opportunities and increase domestic production.

3. Social affairs

(a) To ensure a strong and dynamic Union spirit, the genuine spirit of patriotism.

(b) To respect and promote the customs and traditions of all National peoples and preserve and safeguard their cultural heritage and national characteristics.

(c) To enhance the health, fitness and education quality of the entire nation.

Murray returns with win over Gasquet in Cincinnati Masters

ANDY Murray returned to the ATP Tour on Monday after last competing at Wimbledon, reaching the second round of the Cincinnati Masters with a 6-4, 6-4 win over Frenchman Richard Gasquet. The three-time Grand Slam champion, who owns two titles here and played the 2016 final, has been struggling over the summer with a groin strain.

Murray, with 15 aces among his 38 winners, was pleased with his effort. "I thought I did well. I moved pretty well for my first singles match in a while on hard courts," he said. "(I was) certainly, a little bit more confident in my movement than when I played him a couple of years ago (2019).

"He uses all the angles on the court really well and makes you move a lot. I served well (and) got a lot of free points on my serve.

"I thought I was taking control of the rallies when I had the opportunities so it was a good match." Wild card Murray and Gasquet, a longtime rival whose 53rd ranking meant he had to qualify, first played 15 years ago.—AFP ■

Great Britain's Andy Murray returns a shot to Richard Gasquet of France during the ATP Cincinnati Masters tournament in Ohio. **PHOTO: AFP**