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Republic of the Union of Myanmar
State Administration Council
Notification No 247/2021

13th Waxing of Wagaung 1383 ME
20 August 2021

Extension of public holidays for further prevention, control and treatment over infection of COVID-19

THE State Administration Council has set the successive public holidays for the five times to head off the infection chains of COVID-19 for the people to abide by the restricted disciplines during the public holidays. In order to soonest reach the normal situation by controlling the infection of COVID-19, the notification was announced that the period from 23 to 31 August 2021 was further set as the successive public holidays (except for the Central Bank of Myanmar and its subordinate government banks and private banks under the specific situation) in accord with Section 25 of the Negotiable Instruments Act.

By Order,

Aung Lin Dwe
Lieutenant - General
Secretary
State Administration Council

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.

Second batch of anti-COVID-19 equipment donated by Indian Gov't arrives in Myanmar

THE special flight carrying anti-COVID-19 medicines and related materials donated by the Indian government arrived at the Yangon International Airport yesterday.

Indian Ambassador to Myanmar H.E. Mr Saurabh Kumar handed over the materials to Director-General Prof Dr Zaw Than Htun of Medical Research Department and Deputy Director-General Dr Thidar Hla of Medical Services Department respectively.

The donation included 50,000 Long Surgical Glove (Elbow) sizes 5 and 7, 1,500 Examination Gloves, 570 Digital BP Cuff, one Portable X-ray 100MA, 14,400 KN-95 Medical Mask (GP 19083), 2,000 rapid Antigen Test Kits, 100 High-flow nasal cannulas (HFNC), 292 Body Beds, 1,240 PPE Coverall, 300 Pulse Oximetre (finger Tip), 24 Oxygen Concentrators, 1,600 Apron and 400 Empty Oxygen Cylinders (40-50) LTR.

The Indian government donated eight types of medical equipment weighing more than five tonnes to Myanmar on 15 August and the current second batch of 40 tonnes of medicines yesterday, and they will continue provide third batch of donations, according to the Ministry of External Affairs of India.—Nyein Thu/GNLM

Indian Ambassador to Myanmar H.E Mr Saurabh Kumar and Director-General Professor Dr Zaw Than Htun pose for documentary photo with donated medical equipment in the background. **PHOTO : KANU**

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Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Central Committee on Prevention, Control and Treatment of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)
Announcement

13th Waxing of Wagaung 1383 ME
20 August 2021

IT is hereby announced that the basic education schools (including private schools and monastic education schools) will be temporarily closed for one more week from 23-8-2021 to 31-8-2021 due to the need to continuously curb the spread of COVID-19.

Public Notification

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Ministry of Information

Union Minister for NREC inspects construction of Shwekyapin jewellery market

Union Minister U Khin Maung Yi views necessary work processes of uncut gem stone.

UNION Minister for Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation U Khin Maung Yi inspected the Gems Trading Centre in Dekkhinathiri Township of Nay Pyi Taw together with Deputy Minister U Min Min Oo and official yesterday.

During his inspection tour, officials of Myanmar Gems Entrepreneurs Association presented the construction of Shwekyapin jewellery market, One-Stop Services to implement Gems Trading Centre and export the finished products, and the Union Minister gave instructions on the necessary things.

The Union Minister then inspected the designing, cutting, curving and finishing processes of uncut jade stones at the workshop and storage of State-owned jade stones.

Moreover, he also attended the coordination meeting on the development of finished jade industry held at Myanmar Gems Trading Centre.—MNA

Public request by Ministry of Health

ONLY when the people cooperate will the work process achieve success in a short time for effective prevention, control and treatment of COVID-19 among the people. As such, all the people are requested to abide by the following points: -

1. Stay at home as much as possible.
2. Don't accept the guests at the house. You don't visit other houses.
3. The older persons above 65 or those suffering from chronic diseases such as diabetes, hypertension and heart must be worn masks in the house. They must be placed at well-ventilated sites.
4. Wear masks if you go outside without fail. Systematically wash hands. Take a six-foot distance from others. Avoid visits to the rooms where ventilation is not good.
5. Avoid the crowds.
6. If possible, go shopping once a week. Don't buy anything from the vendors who don't systematically wear masks.
7. Take care of carrying the virus to the houses whenever return home from outside. Systematically discard the used masks and single disposable equipment outside the houses. Avoid close contact with family members before changing clothes or washing the body.
8. As the vaccines for your quota is the best, accept vaccinations for full time. Despite receiving the vaccination, you should abide by the protective ways.
9. Systematically cooperate in prevention, control and treatment of the disease with manpower, money, materials and expertise.

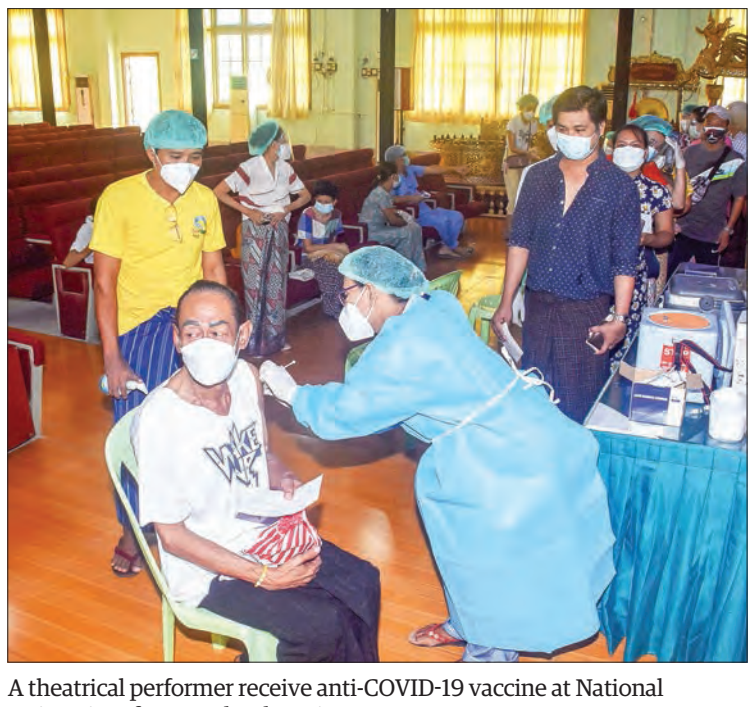
Ministry of Health (2-8-2021)

A hundred of theatrical professionals vaccinated against COVID-19 in Yangon

FORMER theatrical professionals and current members of the Myanmar Theatrical Association were vaccinated against the COVID-19 disease yesterday morning at the National University of Arts and Culture in Yangon.

Healthcare workers from the Ministry of Health administered the vaccines to a total of 100 members of the association after their medical examination.

The COVID-19 vaccination to theatrical professionals is carried out both in Yangon and Mandalay yesterday at the same time, and the second dose will be provided on 20 September.—Ko Ko Zaw (MNA)/GNLM



A theatrical performer receive anti-COVID-19 vaccine at National University of Arts and Culture in Yangon. **PHOTO : ZAW ZAW LATT**

3,009 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 20 August, total figure rises to 368,768

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to **368,768 after 3,009 new cases** were reported on 20 August 2021 according to the Ministry of Health. Among these confirmed cases, **290,823** have been discharged from hospitals. Death toll reached **14,096** after **151** died. —MNA

Scrutinize the spending of budget

The income of the government obtained from levying the tax was lesser because of COVID-19 impacts. So, ministries need to scrutinize the spending of budget as well as to systematically consume drinking water and electricity.

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

MIFER Minister inspects value-added investment agribusiness in Nay Pyi Taw

UNION Minister for Investment and Foreign Economic Relations U Aung Naing Oo visited the Myanmar Golden Produce Co., Ltd which is a J.V business and producing value-added products for local fruits and vegetables in Dekkhinathiri Township, Nay Pyi Taw, yesterday.

While in Myanmar Golden Produce Co., Ltd, Company Managing Director **Daw Hnaung Hnaung Win** presented the situation of the production of value-added products for export and promotion of domestic distribution and also reported on the some implementaion issues faced by the company. The Union Minister facilitated and provided the requirements of company and encouraged it to increase the production to promote the export through product and market wise diversification.

After that, the Union Minister arrived at the MAYLP Agriculture Co., Ltd in Dekkhinathiri Township and inspected production of hybrid paddy by contract farming, quality seeds for domestic distribution and upgrading the domestic paddy varieties for local sale, and also investing in milling rice for export ourpose by cultivating the rice varieties which meet the foreign market demand.

At the farm, Company Managing Director, **U Soe Lin Tun** presented the current situation of contract farming business in collaboration with farmers in townships around Nay Pyi Taw and domestic distribution and export of company. After hearing the report, the Union Minister attended to the need to increase the contract farming areas and production of local paddy varieties which are in high demand in export market.

Afterward, the Union Minister proceeded to the Myanmar Agri Foods Co., Ltd, producer and distributor of frozen vegetables, in Kyiin Village-tract, Pyinmana Township, Dekkhina District. Company Managing Director U Ye Myint Maung clerified the current business operations, and the Union Minister highlighted to increase the production and income of farmers by collaborating for mutual interest. The Union Minister also provided and facilitated the requirements of the company.—MNA

Union Minister U Aung Naing Oo views round machinery at the industry to produce value-added agribusinesses in Nay Pyi Taw.

Professionals from Myanmar Theatrical Association receive COVID-19 vaccination

PROFESSIONALS from the Myanmar Theatrical Association received COVID-19 vaccination yesterday in Mandalay. Vaccinations were given to individual groups and priority programmes in Mandalay Region to prevent and control the spread of the COVID-19 disease.

Health staff inject COVID-19 vaccine into professionals of MTA.

Of 100 theatrical performers in Mandalay Region, 62 people were vaccinated under the COVID-19 preventive measures at the National Theatre where it was scheduled to be vaccinated since 10 am.

It is also the first time these professionals from the Myanmar Theatrical Association have been vaccinated against the COVID-19 disease. Performer U Chit Swan Thar who received the vaccination yesterday said, "This is a time when there is an urgent need for healthcare and we must wear masks and stay away from crowds."

He also urged the people to educate the community how to prevent COVID-19. Theatrical performer Daw Khin Win who also received the vaccine said it was the best to be vaccinated to prevent from this global pandemic. She invited all to receive the vaccines with trust and follow the guidelines of the government for COVID-19. Before the vaccination, healthcare workers made sure the normal conditions of the person who is going to be vaccinated. In addition, recreation rooms have been set up so that people who have been vaccinated can stay and in the case of a malfunction, the necessary medical care was provided. The vaccines will continue to be provided in the future when more vaccines arrive, it is reported.—Maung Aye Chan/GNLM

MoC makes concerted effort to facilitate imports of essential medical supply

A cargo truck conveys medical equipment imported via Kanpaite.

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, 21companied imported 635 oxygen concentrators, 1,000 test kits, 440 PPE suits, one tonne of liquid oxygen and 61 oxygen storage containers were imported through the Yangon International Airport and seaports. In addition, 56 tonnes of liquid oxygen, 0.7 tonne of oxygen cylinder, 5,917 empty oxygen containers, 939 home oxygen concentrators, 4,000 COVID test kits, 8,810 PPE suits and 73 tonnes of masks were imported through border trade points.

A total of 1,338 tonnes of liquid oxygen, 73 tonnes of oxygen cylinders, 12 liquid oxygen storage containers, six oxygen distributors, 135,757 empty oxygen cylinders, 33 oxygen plants, two oxygen refills, 11 oxygen generators, 82,366 home oxygen concentrators, 161,808 test kits, 559,875 PPE suits, 83 tonnes of gloves and 1,367 tonnes of masks have been imported by far in August.

Of 93 liquid oxygen bowsers imported between 1 July and 20 August, 68 of them were distributed to Yangon, 15 to Mandalay, two to Bago, four to Mawlamyine, one each to Thaton, Thanbyuzayat, Monywa and Nay Pyi Taw respectively. Among 41 oxygen plants, 11 were transported to Yangon, five to Lashio, four to Bago, two to Pakokku, four to Mandalay, two each to Hpa-an and Mawlamyine, three to Kyaukpadaung, one each to Taunggyi, Thanbyuzayat, Magway, Dawei, Wakema, Myittha, Mogaung and Kyaukdaga 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

Truck are carrying medical supplies via Chinshwehaw border point.

A double cub is ready to transport medicines imported through Hteekhee.

Myawady

Cartons of medicines are seen aboard the cargo truck.

A vehicle is loaded with medical supplies in Muse.

Boxes of medical supplies are boarded the cargo truck in Kanpaite.

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Myanmar aquaculture exports plummet down to $640 million this FY

THE value of Myanmar's aquaculture exports in the past ten months (Oct-July) dropped dramatically to US$640 million on account of the border trade restrictions by the neighbouring countries China and Thailand amid the COVID-19 crisis.

Myanmar exported $750 million worth marine products to the external market in the corresponding period of last FY, the Ministry of Commerce's data showed.

Myanmar's fishery exports declined over the past months, owing to the pandemic-induced restrictions in the border trade. The export will undoubtedly grow if the trade route is open, said an exporter from Muse border.

Fishermen using small boats prepare for fishing in river through traditional ways.

The Myanmar Fisheries Federation (MFF) targets to earn over US$1 billion from aquaculture exports in the current financial year started from 1 October 2020, MFF stated.

Myanmar sends fish and marine products to external market through air, sea and land border.

Myanmar exported 670,000 tonnes of fishery products to 45 countries in the past FY 2019-2020 ended 30 September, generating an estimated income of $850 million despite the difficulties triggered by the COVID-19 crisis. The figure reflected an increase of over $120 million registered in the FY 2018-2019, MRF's data indicated.

The federation is endeavouring to fulfill the requirements of market. Resources are limited for wild-caught fish exports as it looks forward to a long-term interests. The sector also helps develop the rural community and create jobs for local residents. Additionally, the government coordination and guidance play a vital role in the development of sector. This sector also helped inject the economy of the country amid the COVID-19 impacts.

Myanmar exports fisheries products, such as fish, prawns, and crabs, to over 40 countries, including China, Saudi Arabia, the US, Japan, Singapore, Thailand, and countries in the European Union.

The MFF is making concerted efforts to increase the marine export earnings by developing fish farms which meet international standards and adopting advanced fishing techniques.

To ensure food safety, the foreign market requires suppliers to obtain Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) and Good Aquaculture Practices (GAqP) certificates.

To meet international market standards, fishery products must be sourced only from hatcheries that are compliant with GAqP. The MFF is working with fish farmers, processors, and the Fisheries Department under the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, and Irrigation to develop the GAqP system.

Processors can screen fishery products for food safety at ISO-accredited laboratories under the Fisheries Department.

There are 480,000 acres of fish and prawn breeding farms across the country and more than 130 cold-storage facilities in Myanmar. And 28 of them have been given green light to export to EU countries.

Myanmar exported 340,000 tonnes of marine products worth $530 million in the 2013-2014 FY, 330,000 tonnes worth $480 million in the 2014-2015 FY, 360,000 tonnes worth $500 million in the 2015-2016 FY, 430,000 tonnes worth $600 million in the 2016-2017 FY, 560,000 tonnes worth $700 million in the 2017-2018 FY, and over 580,000 tonnes in the 2018-2019 FY, the Ministry of Commerce's data showed.

The federation has asked the government to tackle problems faced in the export of farm-raised fish and prawns through G2G pacts and ensure smooth freight movement between countries to bolster exports, according to the MFF.

Myanmar's economy is more dependent on agricultural sector to a large extent. Also, the fisheries sector contributes a lot to the national gross domestic product (GDP). More than 3.5 million people are relying on the sector. Its fishery production including shrimps and saltwater and freshwater fish are far better than the regional countries. If the country can boost processing technology, it will contribute to the country's economy and earn more income for those stakeholders in the supply chain, Yangon Region Fisheries Department stated. — Ko Htet

Myanmar-India border trade increases this FY

BORDER trade between Myanmar and India hit US$193 million as of 30 July in the current financial year 2020-21 ending September, said a statistical report of Myanmar's Commerce Ministry.

The border trade during the period increased by $108 million compared with the same period of the previous FY.

The Myanmar-India total border trade during the period was shared by Myanmar's export of $192 million and its import of $1.55 million.

The two countries carry out border trade mainly through Tamu, Reed and Thantlang cross-border trade camps, while a major part of bilateral trade are delivered through ships.

Myanmar mainly exports to India fruits and vegetable, fishery and forestry products, while importing from India medicines, electronic products, motorbikes, cotton yarn, non-alloy steel and other construction materials.

Meanwhile, Myanmar's border trade with four neighbouring countries, China, India, Thailand and Bangladesh totalled $8.61 billion, shared by $5.74 billion in export and $2.87 million in import.—GNLM

Goat trade comes to temporary halt amid COVID-19

THE transportation restrictions amid the COVID-19 crisis brought to a halt for goat trade. At present, trade is relying on the forces of supply and demand, traders stressed.

Myanmar's goat market is on downward trend as the neighbouring countries China and Thailand stopped purchasing the goat amid the COVID-19 crisis, said traders from Mahlaing town.

A herd of goats is seen on rural road.

At present, the buyers and sellers determine the price. Live goat is worth K50,000-K160,000 per head, as per the market data of Magway Region Livestock Entrepreneurs Association.

The goat and cattle exporters are asking for regulatory relief and market creation in domestic meat market as they are carrying a heavy burden due to export difficulties through border trade and high input cost such as feedstuff cost and labour wages.

Magway Region Livestock Entrepreneurs Association requested the authorities to ensure reduction of market barriers. It does not mean to reduce the Licence C fee, controlled by municipal committee for butchery, yet to support breeding and meat production. If there is canned meat factory invested in the country, the breeders can provide them as much as they want. The high-quality meat is not usually consumed in the domestic market. Consequently, the cattle and goat exporters are now waiting for export market, while they are being burdened by feedstuff cost and other general costs.

China purchased Myanmar's live cattle and goat through border trade and they make value-added products. They re-export them to other foreign markets. China shut down all the cross-border posts at the present time to contain the spread of COVID-19.—GNLM

PM Bennett receives Covid booster shot as infections surge

ISRAELI Prime Minister Naftali Bennett received a coronavirus vaccine booster shot on Friday, as the country began administering them to people aged 40 and over amid a spike in infections.

At a public hospital in Kfar Saba, a central city near Bennett's home, the 49-year-old Israeli premier kept his eyes on the nurse administering the shot to his left shoulder, with his office saying he was the first head of government in the world to receive a booster.

"We're at the height of the battle now, together we can win; it's within arm's reach, but we're not there yet," Bennett said shortly before receiving the shot.

"I'm asking of you -- use this unique privilege you have as Israelis, and go get vaccinated."

Infections in Israel have in recent weeks surged, raising fears of a lockdown over the Jewish High Holidays, which will take place in September.

"If you go get the third shot, we can avoid a fourth lockdown," Bennett said. "We're seeing pro-

Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett receives a coronavirus booster shot at Meir Medical Center in the central Israeli city of Kfar Saba, on Friday. **PHOTO: AFP**

found efficacy of the vaccines working, it's safe and it's the way to defeat this virus.

The World Health Organization has called for a moratorium on Covid vaccine booster shots to help ease the drastic inequity in dose distribution between rich and poor nations.

On Wednesday, WHO's emergency director Mike Ryan said that booster shots were like "planning to hand out extra life jackets to people who already have life jackets, while we're leaving other people to drown without a single life jacket."

On Friday, Bennett reiterated his defence of Israel's "pioneering" booster practice, stressing again that his country would provide the world valuable data.

"We from Israel are going to share all the data, all the information all the insights in this pioneering" scheme, he said.

"I'm happy to hear that other countries are following suit, because at the end of the day, this is a global war on Covid and we've got to win."

Israel was one of the first countries to launch a vaccination drive in mid-December via an agreement with Pfizer to obtain millions of paid vaccine doses in exchange for sharing data on their effectiveness. The inoculation campaign was hailed as a success story that helped drastically reduce infections in the country of nine million.

But cases have been rising due to the spread of the Delta variant among the unvaccinated and waning immunity in others.

To try and contain the spread, authorities last week began administering a booster shot to those aged 50 and older, after starting a campaign for over-60s late last month.

Israel has recorded more than 970,000 coronavirus infections since the pandemic started early last year, and over 6,700 deaths.

More than 5.4 million people have received two doses of the vaccine, while 1.2 million have had a third jab. —AFP ■

Japan's governors call for COVID lockdown amid spike in infections

People walk in front of Sendai Station on 20 August, 2021. **PHOTO: KYODO**

JAPAN'S governors urged the central government on Friday to consider imposing a lockdown to better contain a spike in COVID-19 cases, calling the current measures "ineffective" in fighting the highly contagious Delta variant rapidly spreading across the country.

The call by the National Governors' Association during their online meeting came after a COVID state of emergency took effect in seven more prefectures the same day, with restrictions on business activity aimed at curbing Japan's largest-yet wave of infections. The governors echoed calls by some people in the country seeking more drastic measures such as the lockdowns that have been imposed in some other countries. But Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga has expressed doubt over the effectiveness of those steps.

Japan, hit by a resurgence of infections nationwide with Tokyo reporting 5,405 cases Friday, the third-highest daily number, has been struggling to secure hospital beds. It also faces challenges such as taking care of COVID patients recuperating at home and speeding up the vaccination rollout. How to restrict people's movements is also an issue, as the latest emergency appears to have lost its impact on public behavior.

In a set of proposals compiled by the association and to be submitted soon to the central government, the governors seek a lockdown as a temporary COVID measure, saying the state must swiftly consider steps enabling tougher restrictions on people's movements such as legislation to impose a lockdown.

The governors also called for a nationwide state of emergency to prevent the flow of people across prefectural borders, and criticized the government's handling of the coronavirus outbreak in light of the spread of the Delta variant and increasing medical strains. Ibaraki, Tochigi, Gunma, Shizuoka, Kyoto, Hyogo and Fukuoka will be under the emergency that took effect on Friday until Sept. 12, joining Chiba, Saitama, Tokyo, Kanagawa, Osaka and Okinawa. — Kyodo News ■

Bangladesh vaccinates hundreds of sex workers at largest brothel

HUNDREDS of sex workers at Bangladesh's largest brothel have been vaccinated against Covid-19 in a one-day inoculation drive the participants hope will revive an industry devastated by the pandemic.

Hundreds of sex workers at Bangladesh's largest brothel have been vaccinated against Covid-19 in a one-day inoculation drive the participants hope will revive an industry devastated by the pandemic.

Bangladesh, one of the few Muslim nations where prostitution is legal, has at least 11 brothels operational across the country of 169 million.

The western town of Daulatdia, a vast warren of shacks, has been running a brothel for more than a century but the livelihoods of many sex workers have been hit hard by coronavirus lockdowns and fears over contracting the virus.

Authorities have been trying to vaccinate the workers living there but have been hampered by a shortage of supplies.

Health officials administered first and second doses of India-made AstraZeneca vaccines to nearly 200 sex workers in Daulatdia starting from February.

But they were unable to expand the programme further after New Delhi froze exports.

Officials said the scheme restarted on Wednesday after Bangladesh received millions of vaccine doses from China and from the United States under the Covax initiative.

"We now have sufficient supply," Daulatdia's chief doctor Asif Mahmud told AFP. It was "very satisfying" to witness a strong turnout for the jabs in the town, he added. About 400 Chinese Sinopharm jabs were administered on Wednesday as first doses, covering most of the remaining eligible population of sex workers, health officials said. —AFP ■

Ex-deputy PM Ismail Sabri appointed as Malaysia's new leader

MALAYSIA'S king appointed former Deputy Prime Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob as the country's new prime minister on Friday, the palace said, making him the third leader in a span of three years as politics remain fragmented after a 2018 general election.

The king, Sultan Abdullah Ri'ayatuddin, confirmed that Ismail Sabri, 61, has secured backing from a majority of lower house members needed to form a new government, Comptroller of the Royal Household Ahmad Fadil Shamsuddin said in a statement.

Ismail Sabri replaces Muhyiddin Yassin, who resigned Monday with his entire Cabinet, in which Ismail Sabri served as deputy premier and defense minister.

His swearing-in ceremony is slated to be held on Saturday at the National Palace. — Kyodo News ■

Ismail Sabri Yaakob heads to meet the King of Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur on 19 August 2021. **PHOTO: KYODO**

Afghan holdout will struggle against Taliban assault, say analysts

Amrullah Saleh declared himself president after the flight of Ashraf Ghani. **PHOTO: AFP**

THE Panjshir Valley north of Afghanistan's capital Kabul is the final major centre of resistance to the Taliban, but analysts say the fighters gathered there will struggle if the Islamist hardliners launch a full-scale attack.

Surrounded by the high peaks of the Hindu Kush north of Kabul, the Panjshir has long had a reputation as a bastion of resistance -- legendary military commander Ahmad Shah Massoud successfully defended it during the Soviet-Afghan War and the civil war with the Taliban up to his death in 2001.

Right now, it is the only part of the country confirmed to be beyond Taliban control after a lightning offensive saw the rest of the country quickly capitulate.

Amrullah Saleh, latterly the country's vice president and a key powerbroker under the Western-backed governments of the last two decades, and Ahmad Massoud, the son of Ahmad Shah Massoud, have both taken refuge in the area and called for an uprising against the Taliban.

"I write from the Panjshir Valley today, ready to follow in my father's footsteps, with mujahideen fighters who are prepared to once again take on the Taliban," Ahmad Massoud wrote in the Washington Post, calling on the United States to arm his forces.

Saleh, who formerly headed Afghanistan's intelligence service that worked closely with the West, said: "I will never be under one ceiling with the Taliban."

'Make a show'

But analysts doubt Panjshir can become a serious threat to the Taliban.

"The resistance for the moment is just verbal because the Taliban have not yet tried to enter the Panjshir," said Afghan specialist Gilles Dorronsoro from Sorbonne University in Paris. — AFP ■

Soldier faces prison over cannabis-laced cupcakes

A Canadian soldier is facing up to five years in prison after being found guilty of handing out cupcakes laced with cannabis to fellow troops during a live fire exercise.

Unaware they'd been drugged, the soldiers reported feeling intoxicated and confused, and worried about their safety handling munitions after ingesting the cupcakes at Canada's Gagetown base in New Brunswick in July 2018.

In a statement to AFP, the military said Bombardier Chelsea Cogswell was on Wednesday convicted of eight counts of administering a noxious substance to soldiers without their consent and one count of disgraceful conduct.

Her trial, according to public broadcaster CBC, heard she had baked the cupcakes -- described as chocolate with chocolate icing and topped with a jelly bean -- at her home, and gave them out to eight of her fellow troops during explosives training.

This was three months before Canada legalized cannabis for recreational use, but Cogswell reportedly had a prescription for medical marijuana.

Military police tested a cupcake wrapper found to have traces of THC, the main psychoactive compound in cannabis, and urine samples provided by the soldiers.

According to prosecutors cited by local media, her actions may have been motivated by interpersonal conflicts with members of her unit. A sentencing hearing is scheduled for November 16-19. — AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Past disaster failures haunt quake-ravaged Haiti

FIVE days after a powerful earthquake killed nearly 2,200 people in Haiti, aid was arriving but officials were eager to not repeat the mistakes that followed a 2010 quake that devastated the Caribbean nation.

With almost 53,000 homes completely destroyed and more than 77,000 others damaged in Saturday's tremor, authorities have a massive group of people that will need extensive recovery help.

Yet, authorities intend to provide materials for locals to rebuild their collapsed houses, rather than set up the type of camps that popped up after the earthquake that killed over 200,000 in the capital Port-au-Prince.

"In order not to repeat the mistakes of 2010, there will be no distribution of tents, there will be no creation of camps," said Federica Cecchet, the deputy chief of the International Organization for Migration's (IOM) Haiti mission.

Scores of survivors of the 7-magnitude quake 11 years ago spent years living in temporary camps, as the nation's rebuilding effort creaked forward.

More than 1.5 million Haitians were made homeless in that disaster, which also destroyed 60 percent of Haiti's healthcare system, leaving authorities and the international humanitarian community with a colossal challenge.

Instead, the emphasis will be in repairing and rebuilding people's homes after Saturday's disaster that killed at least 2,189 and injured over 12,200. In addition to food, drinking water and emergency medical aid, Haiti disaster authorities have already sent plastic sheeting, boards and nails to the southwestern peninsula hard-hit by the 7.2-magnitude quake. – AFP ■

Statues of "comfort women" near Japan consulate in Hong Kong removed

THREE statues depicting Chinese and Korean "comfort women" have been removed from an area near Japan's Consulate in Hong Kong, activist Chan Yu-lam confirmed to Kyodo News on Friday.

The bronze displays were taken down earlier this month by the activist group Action Committee for Defending the Diaoyu Islands, which erected them three years ago. Diaoyu is what China calls the disputed Japanese-administered Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea.

Last month, the Hong Kong government said that they would confiscate the statues if they were not removed, according to Chan.

The three figures were first erected in 2017 on the 80th anniversary of the Sino-Japanese War to commemorate those who worked in the Japanese military's wartime brothels.

The Hong Kong government said at the time that there were "no plans" to take down the statues after the Japanese Consulate requested that they be removed. — Kyodo News ■

Grow saplings, nurture clusters of tree and conserve forests for better society

A SINGLE tree gives shade to living beings but a cluster of trees provides foods, clothing and shelter while a forest creates good environs and changes climatic conditions. In fact, trees and living and non-living beings are inseparable in the ecological world.

Myanmar is formed with 44 natural conservation areas based on the 2019 list with ASEAN heritage parks-AHP and Ramsar sites. In addition, the UNESCO recognized the Inlay Lake and Indawgyi Wildlife Sanctuaries as the man and biosphere reserve-MAB.

Myanmar established the natural conservation sites, aimed at implementing the policies of the State for environmental and biodiversity conservation and protecting ecosystems, natural plants, wildlife, Myanmar's domestic species of plants, and animals. Moreover, efforts are being made to improve the research works concerning environmental science. These natural conservation sites and forest reserves are based on thriving trees.

> Hence, individual citizens and community of people should place emphasis on growing and nurturing of trees as a national duty with the farsightedness for creation of better society as well as better country of the new generations in the future.

According to the Conservation of Biodiversity and Protected Areas Law, the categories of protected areas are scientific reserve, national park, marine national park, nature reserve, wildlife sanctuary, geo-features significant area, and community conserved protected area.

The government is striving for expanding the area of forest coverage across the nation with activities of tree-growing ceremonies on a yearly basis. It is necessary to establish forests on the barren hills for prevention of climate change impacts. Expansion of forest reserves and protected public forests let the people know the value of forests which can fulfill the needs of food, clothing and shelter to the people.

Consequently, forest reserves and natural areas are attractive to local and foreign travellers. It can contribute to booming the tourism industry so as to generate incomes for the State and the local people. Hence, anyone should not disturb the environmental conservation activities. Every citizen should nurture saplings for thriving without any disturbances and dangers.

Each tree can create shade. A cluster of trees can give food, clothing and shelters to living beings. A forest can change not only the climate but life of people and standard of the country. Hence, individual citizens and community of people should place emphasis on growing and nurturing of trees as a national duty with the farsightedness for creation of better society as well as better country of the new generations in the future.

■ ■ ■

COVID-19: Funding plea to combat Delta variant, call to suspend booster roll-out

The WHO chief said that in an interconnected world, in which the COVID-19 virus is mutating quickly, national leaders need to commit to vaccine equity and global solidarity to save lives and slow down variants.

DURING Wednesday's World Health Organization briefing on COVID-19, WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus called for funding to fight the spread of the deadly Delta variant while also asking wealthy countries to suspend plans to provide booster shots.

International efforts to slow the COVID-19 Delta variant have been hampered by its particularly virulent nature, which has led to hot spots of hospitalizations and deaths throughout regions with low vaccination levels and limited public health measures.

Tedros insisted that there are solutions to the challenge, such as the Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan.

However, this plan urgently needs an additional $1 billion dollars. Similarly, a $7.7 billion appeal has been launched to scale up the ACT-Accelerator initiative, which is providing testing, treatments, vaccines and protective equipment for health workers, along with enhanced research and development into the next generation of health tools.

Clowns wearing face masks pose for a picture before performing in Lima, Peru on Monday during the COVID-19 pandemic. **PHOTO: AFP**

Vaccine injustice: 'Shame on all humanity'

In response to plans by some countries to provide booster jabs, Tedros issued a reminder that only 75 per cent of all vaccine supply has gone to just 10 countries, and that low-income countries have only vaccinated around two per cent of their populations.

Given the huge inequity, the top WHO official called for a temporary moratorium on boosters, to ensure that supplies can be shifted to those countries experiencing major spikes in infection. Whilst the WHO has convened health experts to debate the available data on the efficacy of boosters, the priority remains providing first shots, and protecting the most vulnerable.

"The divide between the haves and have nots will only grow larger", he declared, "if manufacturers and leaders prioritize booster shots over supply to low- and middle-income countries.

The WHO chief said that in an interconnected world, in which the COVID-19 virus is mutating quickly, national leaders need to commit to vaccine equity and global solidarity to save lives and slow down variants. "Vaccine injustice is a shame on all humanity", he added, "and if we don't tackle it together, we will prolong the acute stage of this pandemic for years when it could be over in a matter of months".

Significant jump in infections

Meanwhile, in remarks to the press at the weekly Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO) COVID-19 briefing, Carissa F. Etienne, director of the UN regional agency, said that, over the last week, 1.4 million COVID-19 cases and nearly 20,000 deaths have been reported in the Americas.

Ms. Etienne singled out North America and Mexico as regions of particular concern, with cases in the United States increasing by more than a third, and Canadian cases by more than half. In Mexico, more than two-thirds of states have been deemed at "high" or "critical" risk as hospitals fill with COVID-19 patients.

The Caribbean region is also seeing a rise in infections and deaths: in Jamaica cases rose by 49 per cent and deaths increased by 70 per cent, while steep rises are being reported in in Dominica, Martinique and Guadeloupe. Despite these figures, just one-in-five people have been fully vaccinated against COVID-19 across the Latin America and Caribbean region, and in some countries fewer than five per cent of people have been fully vaccinated.

Avoid complacency

The news was more positive in South America, with most countries seeing a drop in new cases.

For the first time since November, hospital occupancy in Brazil is lower than 80 per cent across all states.

However, noting that transmission remains very active, Ms. Etienne warned against complacency.

SOURCE: UN

Trial results for Covid treatment hailed

The US government has funded the development of AZD7442 and has agreements to receive 700,000 doses. The company will now send the data to health authorities for potential emergency use authorisation or conditional approval.

DRUG firm AstraZeneca on Friday announced positive results from a trial of a treatment for Covid-19 symptoms.

The drug, made from a combination of two antibodies, was initially developed as a treatment for those who had already been exposed to the disease.

A new trial of 5,197 participants who had not been exposed showed a 77-percent reduced risk of developing symptomatic disease, with no severe cases recorded, Astra said in a statement.

A previous trial of the AZD7442 drug had shown it only reduced the risk of developing symptoms by 33 percent, which it concluded in June was not statistically significant.

The data show that one dose could "quickly and effectively prevent symptomatic Covid-19", said Myron Levin, principal trial investigator.

"With these exciting results, AZD7442 could be an important tool in our arsenal to help people who may need more than a vaccine to return to their normal lives."

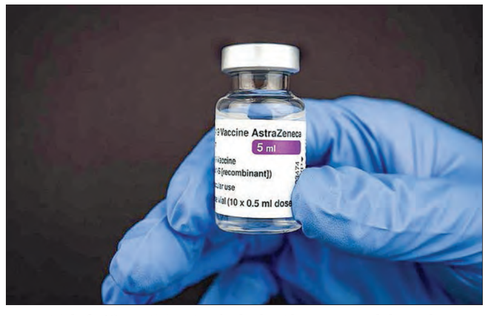
It is hoped that the drug could be used alongside vaccines for those who need more protection, affording up to 12 months of defence.

Participants in the trial were adults who were poor responders or intolerant to vaccines, or who had increased risk of infection because of their locations or circumstances.

The US government has funded the development of AZD7442 and has agreements to receive 700,000 doses.

The company will now send the data to health authorities for potential emergency use authorisation or conditional approval.

AstraZeneca already makes the most widely offered vaccine in the UK, although those under 40 are offered Pfizer or Moderna instead because of concerns over possible side effects.



A new trial of 5,197 participants who had not been exposed showed a 77-percent reduced risk of developing symptomatic disease, with no severe cases recorded, Astra said in a statement.
PHOTO: UNSPLASH/AFP

SOURCE: AFP

■ ■ ■

MYANMAR GAZETTE

Head of Service Organization transferred

THE State Administration Council has transferred Director-General U Khant Zaw of the Department of Rural Development under the Ministry of Cooperatives and Rural Development as Director-General of the Union Minister Office from the date he assumes charge of his duties.

Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 7:00 pm Friday 20 August 2021)

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

FORECAST VALID UNTIL MORNING OF THE 21 August, 2021: Rain or thundershowers will be scattered in Magway Region and Kayin State, fairly widespread in Lower Sagaing, Mandalay, Bago, Ayeyawady, Taninthayi Regions and Kayah, Mon States, and widespread in the remaining Regions and States with likelihood of isolated heavyfalls in Magway Region. Degree of certainty is (100%).

STATE OF THE SEA: Seas will be moderate in Myanmar waters. Wave height will be about (5 -7) feet off and along Myanmar Coasts.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Weak monsoon.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 21 August, 2021: One or two rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 21August, 2021: One or two rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 21 August, 2021: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

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

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Two dead, 20 missing in eastern US flooding

TWO people have died and 20 others are missing in the eastern US state of North Carolina after heavy rains led to massive flooding, officials said Thursday.

Governor Roy Cooper declared a state of emergency on Wednesday after Tropical Storm Fred dumped nearly a foot (30 centimeters) of rain in western parts of the state in recent days. "Historic" flooding is taking place in Haywood County along the Pigeon River, Cooper's office said in a statement. Ground, water and aerial rescue teams were searching for the missing and clearing the area, the county said.

So far, nearly 100 people have been rescued from the floodwaters. The floods damaged or destroyed many roads and bridges in the area and power outages hit thousands of homes.

"We have been searching abandoned vehicles, homes (and) buildings for survivors," Haywood County Sheriff Greg Christopher told WYFF4, a local media outlet. "And we'll continue the search to ensure that every community member is located or at least accounted for."

Cooper expressed hope that the state of emergency will facilitate rescue efforts. "North Carolina is strong and resilient, and we're committed to helping people and businesses recover as quickly as possible," he said.—AFP ■

Some baby bats babble like human infants, scientists find

HUMAN babies are not the only babblers, said a study published Thursday, some bats are also very talkative in their infancy and even make sounds that recall the googoo-gagas of our own tots.

Babbling in human children is key to developing the careful control over the vocal apparatus necessary for speech.

The study published in the journal Science indicates the same is true for the greater sac-winged bat, or Saccopteryx bilineata, native to Central America.

"Human infants seem to babble on the one hand to interact with their caregivers, but they also do that when they're completely alone, seemingly happily just exploring their voice, and that's the same what our bats are doing," study co-author Mirjam Knornschild, behavioral ecologist at the Museum of Natural History in Berlin, told AFP.

Bats communicate by ultrasound, sound waves at frequencies above human hearing, but they can also make sounds audible to people. "It sounds like a high pitched twittering to our ears... it's melodic," said Knornschild, who has worked with bats since 2003.

Saccopteryx bilineata don't hide away in gloomy caves, but prefer to live in trees, making them easier to observe.

The babbling of 20 baby bats was recorded in Costa Rica and Panama between 2015 and 2016 by researcher Ahana Fernandez, also affiliated with the Museum of Natural History in Berlin, who spent hours with the bats in the forest.—AFP ■

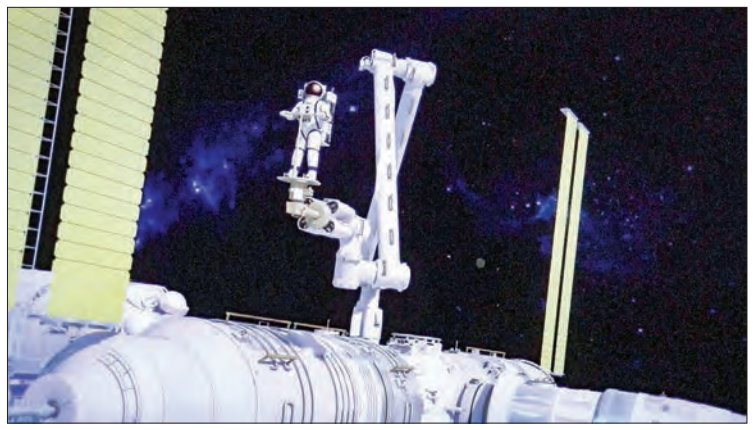
China's astronauts make spacewalk to upgrade robotic arm

CHINESE astronauts edged into space on Friday to add the finishing touches to a robotic arm on the Tiangong space station.

The foray, the second spacewalk in two months and relayed on state television, is part of China's heavily promoted space programme which has already seen the nation land a rover on Mars and send probes to the moon.

In June, three crew arrived at the station, where they are set to remain in space for a total of three months in China's longest crewed mission to date.

On Friday, astronauts Nie Haisheng and Liu Boming successfully exited the Tianhe core module to install foot stops and a workbench on the station's robotic arm, said the China Manned Space Agency in a statement.



The foray, the second spacewalk in two months and relayed on state television, is part of China's heavily promoted space programme which has already seen the nation land a rover on Mars and send probes to the moon **PHOTO: CGTN/XINHUA/FILE**

Video footage showed the astronauts working outside the spacecraft while tethered to it with a long rope.

Their tasks also include working on a thermal unit and adjusting a panoramic camera, state broadcaster CCTV reported. This marks only the third spacewalk for Chinese astronauts, after the first in 2008 -- when Zhai Zhigang made China the third country to complete a spacewalk after the Soviet Union and the United States.—AFP ■

Tokyo robot cafe offers new spin on disability inclusion

At a Tokyo cafe, Michio Imai greets a customer, but not in person. He's hundreds of kilometres away, operating a robot waiter as part of an experiment in inclusive employment.

Dawn cafe's robots are intended to be more than a gimmick, offering job opportunities to people who find it hard to work outside the home.

"Hello. How are you?" a sleek white robot shaped like a baby penguin calls from a counter near the entrance, turning its face to customers and waving its flippers.

Around 20 miniature robots with almond-shaped eyes are dotted around the cafe. **PHOTO: AFP**

Imai is behind the controls at his home in Hiroshima, 800 kilometres (500 miles) away, one of around 50 employees with physical and mental disabilities who work as Dawn's "pilots", operating robot staff. The cafe opened in central Tokyo's Nihonbashi district in June and employs staff across Japan and overseas, as well as some who work on site.—AFP ■

Tourist vehicles stop next to the wild bears on Romania's Transfagarasan mountain road. **PHOTO: ROMANIA-INSIDER/AFP/FILE**

Census could be blessing or bane for Romania's bears

ROMANIA will soon conduct a census of its endangered brown bears using DNA for the first time, with tensions raised between villagers fearing further attacks and conservationists warning against looser hunting laws. Incidents with hungry bears descending into villages have sparked the ire of residents, in a country that has seen around 100 attacks over the last three years.

A hunting ban loophole that allows the shooting of so-called nuisance bears is already being abused, say activists, who fear a rise in killings if the census finds the protected species is not that endangered. Sport hunting — which attracts amateurs from all over the world in search of a "trophy" — has been banned since 2016. But in a recent controversial case, environmentalists accuse a Liechtenstein prince of killing a brown bear, named Arthur, on a March hunt in the Carpathian Mountains — using a permit to shoot a female bear seen as a nuisance to residents. Activists say the 17-year-old bear was the country's largest, observed for years in the area.

Yet while the hunting ban loophole may be abused, residents are also fed up with rampant bear attacks -- and want protection.

'Villagers frightened'

Last month, a bear killed a shepherd and seriously injured another in the eastern part of the forested and mountainous Transylvania region.—AFP ■

New Zealand extends Delta outbreak lockdown

NEW ZEALAND extended a national Covid-19 lockdown Friday as case numbers continued to rise and a Delta variant outbreak spread from Auckland to the capital Wellington.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said the initial three-day lockdown, which would have expired overnight Friday, would be extended by another four days.

She said New Zealand was still trying to assess the scale of the outbreak, which emerged in Auckland this week, ending the country's run of six months without community transmission.

"We just don't quite know the full scale of this Delta outbreak. All in all, this tells us we need to continue to be cautious," she said.

Ardern said all the cases, including those in Wellington, were linked, giving less cause for concern. "That's important, as it means we're starting to build a picture of the edges of this cluster," she said. "At this stage, we don't have random cases popping up." New Zealand has won widespread praise for its coronavirus response, which focuses on eliminating the virus in the community rather than containing it, and has seen only 26 deaths in a population of five million.

But its vaccine rollout has been less stellar, with only around 20 percent of the population fully inoculated.

Neighbouring Australia has been pursuing a similar "Covid zero" strategy, but is struggling to contain outbreaks of the Delta variant. The New Zealand outbreak has been traced back to a traveller who returned from Sydney earlier this month, although it remains unclear how the virus jumped quarantine containment into the community.—AFP ■

New Zealand has adopted a policy of eliminating the virus in the community, rather than containing it. **PHOTO: AFP**

First virus case reported in Paralympic Village

The Olympic Village in Tokyo. **PHOTO: KYODO**

A first coronavirus case has been detected in the Paralympic Village, days before the Games open, organisers said Thursday as Japan battles a record wave of infections.

The case involves a Games-related member of staff who is not resident in Japan, according to organisers, who did not give further details.

Organisers have so far reported 74 cases linked to the Paralympics, mostly among contractors and Games staff who live in Japan. Another six cases have been reported by local areas hosting teams for training camps.

There have not yet been infections reported among athletes in the Village, which opened to Paralympians on Tuesday.

The Paralympics open on August 24, with around 4,400 athletes from approximately 160 teams set to take part.— AFP ■

Sonny Chiba: Japanese martial arts actor, 'Kill Bill' star dies: agent

SONNY Chiba, a Japanese martial arts expert and actor who appeared in Quentin Tarantino's "Kill Bill," has died from Covid-19 complications, his agent said Thursday. He was 82.

"Sonny passed away from Covid-19 yesterday," Timothy Beal told AFP. "Such tragic news. He was a great friend and an awesome client. Such a humble, caring and friendly man." Born Sadaho Maeda in 1939 in Fukuoka, in the southwest of Japan, Chiba studied martial arts throughout the 1960s, becoming a particular expert in karate. His skills landed him numerous roles in Japanese films and television series, including with the influential Toei studio, who recruited him in a competition for new talent.—AFP ■

Sonny Chiba, seen here with actress Lucy Liu at the premier of "Kill Bill volume 1" has died of complications from Covid-19. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

NEWS IN BRIEF

Study suggests Pfizer Covid jab declines faster than AstraZeneca

The effectiveness of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine against Covid-19 declines faster than that of the AstraZeneca jab, according to a new study published on Thursday.

"Two doses of Pfizer-BioNTech have greater initial effectiveness against new COVID-19 infections, but this declines faster compared with two doses of Oxford-AstraZeneca," researchers at Oxford University said.

The study, which has not been peer reviewed, is based on the results of a survey by Britain's Office for National Statistics that carried out PCR tests from December last year to this month on randomly selected households.

It found that "the dynamics of immunity following second doses differed significantly" between Pfizer and AstraZeneca, according to the university's Nuffield Department of Medicine.—AFP ■

Biden warns may act against governors opposing school mask mandates

WITH a new US school year beginning, President Joe Biden on Wednesday warned governors who oppose student mask requirements that they could face legal action for intimidating educators seeking to protect children against Covid-19.

In the latest political flashpoint over the coronavirus pandemic, Republican governors in Florida and Texas, two of the country's largest states, have rejected recommendations by health authorities to require that students wear masks when they return to the classroom.

Florida's Board of Education raised eyebrows when it voted this week to slap punishments on two school districts that instituted mask mandates in defiance of Governor Ron DeSantis.—AFP ■

Protest against Covid measures is Latvia's biggest in a decade

MORE than 5,000 people gathered in the Latvian capital Riga on Wednesday to demonstrate against coronavirus restrictions and government plans to make vaccines obligatory for many workers.

"For freedom!" people chanted at the largest demonstration in the Baltic country since 2009, also calling on Prime Minister Krisjanis Karins to resign and parliament to reject stricter measures.

Most of the protesters went unmasked on the march, which passed by the president's and prime minister's residences. Current restrictions do not require face coverings at outdoor events.

Also Wednesday, 180 new coronavirus infections were reported in the country of 1.9 million people, bringing Latvia's total number of cases to 140,505 since the pandemic began.— AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

US moves to prolong jobless aid as claims hit new pandemic low

President Joe Biden's administration announced steps on Thursday to allow US states to continue expanded unemployment benefits as the country grapples with a surge in the Delta variant of Covid-19, even as data showed jobless claims declining for a fourth straight week.

Congress approved a massive expansion of the unemployment safety net as the pandemic began last year, but after repeated extensions the programs are due to expire nationwide early next month.

States will be able to use money left over from the $1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan approved in March to continue some of the jobless programs, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen and Labor Secretary Marty Walsh said in a letter to top lawmakers. "There are some states where it may make sense for unemployed workers to continue receiving additional assistance for a longer period of time, allowing residents of those states more time to find a job in areas where unemployment remains high," the officials wrote. The pandemic aid boosted benefit payments and helped the long-term unemployed and freelance workers not normally eligible for regular state benefits, but many states cut them off early amid criticism the programs encouraged people not to work, even as employers struggle to fill open positions.—AFP ■

Spanish government feels heat over high power prices

SCORCHING heat has caused power prices to soar in Spain, leading to renewed tensions in the country's leftist coalition government over how to lower ballooning electricity bills.

A recent heatwave which sent temperatures soaring as high as 47 degrees Celsius (117F) in the southern region of Andalusia caused demand for electricity to jump as people turned on their air conditioners, putting further pressure on power prices which were already high due to a global natural gas supply crunch.

"Everything indicates the month of August will end with the highest electricity bill in history," consumer rights group Facua said Tuesday.—AFP ■

China delays imposing anti-foreign sanctions law on Hong Kong

CHINA has unexpectedly postponed a vote to impose an anti-foreign sanctions law on Hong Kong amid concerns from the business community over its impact on the territory's status as a financial hub, the South China Morning Post reported Friday.

The Hong Kong-based English-language newspaper quoted a mainland source as saying that the central government "hopes to listen to further views on the matter," which was discussed during a four-day meeting of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress.

If the legislation takes effect in Hong Kong, foreign companies operating in the special administrative region would be put in a bind as they would be prohibited from complying with the sanctions imposed by other nations.

The law that provides a legal basis for China's determination to take countermeasures against foreign sanctions was already enacted in the mainland in June. The legislation allows for countermeasures against individuals and organizations that "endanger China's sovereignty, security and development interests" and could result in the seizure of assets, denial of entry or any "other necessary" steps.

The leadership of Chinese President Xi Jinping has long been at odds with other countries over its alleged human rights abuses against the Muslim Uyghur minority in Xinjiang and security challenges posed to Taiwan and its vicinity.

Photo taken on 5 August, 2019 shows China's national flag and the flag of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) on the Golden Bauhinia Square in Hong Kong, south China. **PHOTO: XINHUA/WU XIAOCHU**

Along with the United States, Britain and Canada, the European Union levied coordinated sanctions against the Asian nation over the Xinjiang issue earlier this year.— AFP ■

Oil prices tank, stocks mostly sink on Delta fears

Oil prices have taken a hit from concerns about demand as the US holiday season draws to a close and the Delta variant triggers new containment measures. **PHOTO: AFP**

MARKETS fell in Asia on Thursday following a second straight day of losses on Wall Street in response to Federal Reserve minutes indicating it could begin withdrawing its huge financial support by the end of the year.

Oil prices tanked Thursday and global stocks mostly sank on worries the latest wave of Covid-19 infections will crimp global growth. "Investors are spooked by the virus once more, compounded by news that the Federal Reserve in the US may be on the brink of reducing its economic support for the US economy," analysts at Hargreaves Lansdown said.

In late morning deals, the main Paris stock index briefly tumbled 3.0 percent before paring losses, with the luxury sector hit hard especially amid worries over China's stumbling economic recovery as well as a looming crackdown on the rich by the authorities in Beijing.

Luxury firms have come to rely heavily on well-heeled Chinese in recent years, and shares in Paris-listed luxury groups suffered.

Shares in LVMH fell 6.4 percent, Kering dropped 9.5 percent, and Hermes lost 4.7 percent. Analysts at UBS said investor concerns are "driven by three primary factors: 1) renewed Covid-related restrictions; 2) potential macro slowdown; and 3) most recently policy concerns amid the government calling for wealth distribution and clampdown on high incomes." The Frankfurt and London indices also slumped, mirroring Asia's weak performance.

But Wall Street stocks finished little changed following a better-than-expected US jobless claims report.—AFP ■

Businesses say Hong Kong quarantine threatens financial hub status

EUROPEAN business leaders have warned that Hong Kong's stringent quarantine measures have left its residents "indefinitely trapped" in the city, threatening its status as an international business centre.

In a rare open letter to chief executive Carrie Lam on Thursday, the European Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong said the city's most recent hardening of measures for inbound travellers were "out of proportion" and a "significant setback".

The Chinese financial hub maintains some of the strictest quarantine rules in the world, an approach that has kept virus cases low but left most residents cut off from the rest of the world for the past 18 months.

Arrivals from high-risk countries have to stay in hotel quarantine for 21 days, while for lower-risk countries that drops to seven days followed by another seven days of self-monitoring.

A screen showing the listing of JD.com in Hong Kong is seen outside the trading hall of Hong Kong Exchanges and Clearing Limited (HKEX) in south China's Hong Kong, June 18, 2020. **PHOTO: XINHUA/WANG SHEN**

Last week, the authorities announced that a brief flirtation with relaxing some of these rules had to be scrapped.—AFP ■

Japanese major mobile firms start to provide online health services

MAJOR Japanese mobile carriers are starting to provide online medical services through smartphone applications, to meet the growing demand of people seeking health services from home amid the COVID-19 pandemic, local media reported Thursday.

Photo shows how to use the Online Home Doctor services launched by Joes Corp. in Tokyo. **PHOTO: JOES CORP. /KYODO**

The mobile companies, including KDDI Corp. operating the au brand, are adding new functions to their health monitoring apps that permit users to consult doctors and pharmacists via video chat.

The KDDI started offering the online health checkup service on the "au Wellness" app, which logs users' step counts and the amounts of calories burned, from June. The checkup costs 330 yen (3 U.S. dollars) per session.

It also schedules to offer medication consultations with pharmacists from September.

"We want to offer services that can solve issues in many situations with just one app," a KDDI representative said.

Its industry peer SoftBank Corp. provides online medical examinations on its health management app designed for companies to use through employees' welfare programs. Companies taking great care of their workers' health state have begun using the app as part of their programs, officials of the firm said.

Meanwhile, NTT Docomo Inc. has established a capital and business tie-up with medical technology company Medley Inc. The carrier plans to allow its customers to use Medley's online health checkup app with their Docomo accounts later this year.—Xinhua ■

Amazon to launch more US brick-and-mortar stores

The Amazon logo is seen at Amazon campus in Palo Alto, California **PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/AFP**

AIMING for a bigger presence in US brick-and-mortar retail, Amazon plans to open "several" multipurpose shopping venues similar to department stores, The Wall Street Journal reported on Thursday.

The stores will sell household items, electronics and apparel, showcasing Amazon's private-label merchandise, the newspaper said, adding that some of the first stores are expected in the states of California and Ohio.

The move comes on the heels of Amazon's 2017 acquisition of Whole Foods Market for $13.7 billion, which significantly expanded the e-commerce giant's presence in physical retail.

At around 30,000 square feet, the shops will be far smaller than traditional department stores but bigger than most existing physical retailers in the company's network, which includes bookstores and smaller grocery shops.

Department stores were once prominent spaces in American retail, showcasing not only high-end fashion but also items such as toys, furniture and appliances.—AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Hackers steal $97 mn from Japanese crypto exchange

JAPANESE cryptocurrency exchange Liquid was scrambling Friday to recover stolen assets worth nearly $100 million, in the second such major heist by hackers in recent days.

The Tokyo-based company said in a statement Thursday that it had "detected unauthorized access of some of the crypto wallets managed at Liquid".

Elliptic, a London-based firm which helps track stolen cryptocurrencies, said its analysis found "just over $97 million in cryptoassets have been received by the accounts identified by Liquid as belonging to the thief".

"Our investigators are also aiding Liquid with tracking the stolen funds," Elliptic added in a blog post.

The heist comes after a hacker stole assets worth $600 million last week from cryptocurrency trading company Poly Network, before gradually giving the money back, claiming they had pulled off the theft to highlight a security flaw.

Liquid said it had suspended cryptocurrency withdrawals while it assesses the impact of the attack, although trading was continuing.

Cryptocurrencies have soared in popularity as assets in recent years, despite their volatility and concerns over their environmental impact as trading them requires vast quantities of electricity.–AFP ■

Johnson & Johnson announces new CEO

ALEX Gorsky will step down as chief executive of Johnson & Johnson in January, ceding the role to longtime company executive Joaquin Duato, the health care giant announced Thursday.

Gorsky, the CEO since 2012, is stepping aside "due to family health reasons," according to a company press release, which said he will stay on as executive chairman.

Gorsky oversaw development of the company's one-shot Covid-19 vaccine. His tenure also coincided with a 60 percent increase in research and development, the company said.

He has also been at the helm during a recent settlement with US states over opioids, agreeing to pay up to $5 billion over nine years.

However, the company still faces litigation from plaintiffs who have sued J&J, alleging talcum products caused cancer.

Duato, currently the vice chairman of the company's executive committee, will also join the company's board of directors.–AFP ■

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(INVITATION FOR OPEN TENDER)
(1/2020-2021)

1. Open tenders are invited for supply of the following respective items in Myanmar Kyats.

Sr No.	Tender No.	Description	Remarks
(a)	DMP/L-001(21-22)	14", 10", 4" HFERW API 5L Grade X-46 , X-42 3LPE Coated Steel Line Pipe (3) Items	Ks
(b)	DMP/L-002(21-22)	Steel Ball Valve and Pipe Fitting (2) Groups	Ks
(c)	DMP/L-003(21-22)	Fire Fighting System for National Oil and Gas Information Center, Phase I, Nay Pyi Taw	Ks

2. The Open Tender forms including Description of Materials / Qtty with details specifications and Tender Terms & Conditions can be available during office hours commencing from **20 August 2021** at the Finance Department, Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise, No. (44) Complex, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar.
3. The interested Bidders should submit the **Technical Specifications with Original Bid Bond and Commercial Quotation in each separate sealed envelopes** on which to be addressed to the Managing Director, Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise and should reach in Tender Box of the Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise not later than **12:00 pm** on **20 September 2021**.
4. Tender Closing Date & Time – **20-9-2021, 12:00 pm**

Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise
Ph No. + 95 67 – 411206

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE
M.V PNT MIGHTY V.06/2021

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V PNT MIGHTY VOY.NO. (06/2021)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **21-8-2021** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **SPW-7** 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.

Phone No: **2301928**

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S RK SHIPPING & TRADING PTE LTD.

Five promises the Taliban have made in Afghanistan

THE Taliban have tried to reassure fearful Afghans -- and a wary international community — that this time around they will be "positively different", but their reputation precedes them and few trust the group.

Here are five promises the Taliban have made — and their record on the issues:

The Taliban have tried to reassure fearful Afghans – and a wary international community -- that this time around they will be "positively different". **PHOTO: AFP**

Women will have rights, but...

The Taliban are "committed" to the rights of women, who will be able to work and study, the group's spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said Tuesday.

But he stressed at every mention of women that their rights will be determined by Islamic law. That has always been interpreted by the Taliban's ultra-conservative leadership.

The last time they were in power, from 1996 to 2001, they brutally suppressed women's rights.

Girls were banned from going to school, and women were largely barred from public life — allowed out of the house only when covered head-to-toe in a burqa and accompanied by a male relative.

Women accused of violating these rules were given harsh punishments -- including being stoned to death for adultery.

Even after they were toppled by US-led forces in 2001, women suffered similar restrictions in the areas under Taliban control. The militants have threatened and attacked women activists, journalists, MPs and even educators for two decades.

Pardons for all?

The Taliban have insisted that they have forgiven all that fought against them -- including government officials, the police and the armed forces.

But many are sceptical because of their record with amnesty announcements, and tens of thousands of Afghans have tried to leave the country since the Taliban victory fearing reprisals.

During their first regime, Taliban fighters killed political opponents and also massacred civilians and religious minorities.

Security for embassies, foreign organisations

The Taliban have tried quickly to reassure foreign governments and organisations that their embassies, offices and personnel are safe — one Russian diplomat said the situation was already better than under the previous administration.

The Taliban, however, have a poor record when it comes to protecting foreign personnel and missions.

In 1996, they entered a United Nations compound where former president Najibullah had been granted refuge, dragged him out to kill him and hang the body from a post.

And two years later, when they captured the northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif, they raided the Iranian consulate, killing nine diplomats and a journalist.

No use of Afghan soil against other countries

A core point of the troop withdrawal deal Washington signed with the Taliban last year was that they will not allow militant groups to operate out of Afghanistan.

US-led forces toppled the first Taliban regime because it had refused to give up Osama bin Laden and Al-Qaeda after the September 11, 2001 attacks.

The group has stressed that it is going to honour that commitment, reiterating after taking over that other nations will face no threats. However, a UN Security Council monitoring report released in June said the Taliban and Al-Qaeda remain close.

No more drugs

The Taliban have promised that they will end the narcotics industry in Afghanistan, one of the world's hubs for the production and trafficking of drugs such as heroin.

It may take some doing, especially if their new government does not have the same access to financial reserves and foreign aid that have sustained Afghanistan's fragile economy for two decades.

And despite their claims to the contrary, UN monitors say the illicit drugs industry has been one of the biggest sources of revenue for the Taliban, bringing in hundreds of millions of dollars, according to estimates published last year.— AFP ■

Kenyan court to rule on disputed bid to change constitution

KENYA'S Court of Appeal will give its verdict on Friday on the president's controversial three-year quest to change the constitution, a ruling that could shake up the political landscape less than a year before elections.

President Uhuru Kenyatta argues his proposed modifications to the 2010 constitution will help end repeated cycles of election violence, a hot-button issue that has divided the political elite.

The reforms came about following a rapprochement between Kenyatta and his erstwhile opponent Raila Odinga and a famous handshake between the two men after post-election fighting in 2017 left dozens of people dead.

The so-called Building Bridges Initiative (BBI) seeks notably to dilute the current winner-takes-all electoral system blamed by Kenyatta for poll unrest, and create new posts including one of prime minister.—AFP ■

China passes tough new online privacy law

Face mask-clad passengers use their smartphones while riding the subway in Wuhan, in China's central Hubei province. **PHOTO: AFP**

CHINA passed a sweeping privacy law aimed at preventing businesses from collecting sensitive personal data Friday, as the country faces an uptick in internet scams, leaks and concerns about tech giants abusing clients' personal information.

Under the new rules passed by China's top legislative body, state-run and private companies handling personal information will be required to reduce data collection and obtain user consent.

The Chinese state security apparatus will maintain access to swathes of personal data, however, and Beijing has long been accused of harnessing big tech to accelerate repression in the northwestern Xinjiang province and elsewhere.—AFP ■

Hezbollah says Iran fuel tanker to sail to Lebanon

A file picture shows Iran's Revolutionary Guards driving speedboats in front of an Iranian oil tanker. **PHOTO: AFP**

HEZBOLLAH chief Hasan Nasrallah said Thursday a tanker would set off from Iran "within hours" to bring desperately needed fuel supplies to Lebanon, in defiance of US sanctions.

Many questions remain about how the shipment would reach its stated destination, where acute and growing fuel shortages have forced hospitals, businesses and government offices shut amid a crippling economic crisis.

But the move, prohibited by US sanctions on Iran's oil industry, could drag Lebanon into the covert naval war between Tehran and Israel. Nasrallah dared Iran's foes to stop the shipment. "The vessel, from the moment it sails in the coming hours until it enters (Mediterranean) waters, will be considered Lebanese territory," he said during a televised speech to mark the Shiite Muslim commemoration of Ashura. "To the Americans and Israelis, I say: it's Lebanese territory." He said a first ship would bring fuel for "hospitals, manufacturers of medicine and food, as well as bakeries and private generators."—AFP ■

Afghan debacle set to cloud Merkel's final Putin visit

GERMAN Chancellor Angela Merkel will visit Russia's Vladimir Putin in Moscow in the twilight of her reign on Friday, with Afghanistan set to be the final twist in their long and thorny relationship.

From alleged cyberattacks to the conflicts in Ukraine and Syria, Merkel and Putin have rarely seen eye to eye during the chancellor's 16 years in power.

Her return to Moscow for what is likely a farewell visit comes on the anniversary of the poisoning of Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny -- which sent relations plunging to a new low as Germany pinned the blame on Russia.

Now, as Merkel prepares to bow out of politics following an election in Germany on September 26, the crisis in Afghanistan could be the latest subject to drive a wedge between the two leaders.

While Merkel has described the Taliban's return to power as "bitter", Russia has taken a more conciliatory tone.

Moscow is seeking contact with the Taliban, with top diplomat Sergei Lavrov calling it a "positive signal" that the Islamists are "declaring and in practice showing their readiness to respect the opinion of others".

The trip will be the 20th visit to Russia for Merkel, a Russian speaker who grew up behind the Iron Curtain in the former communist East Germany. German government spokesman Steffen Seibert said Afghanistan would "obviously" be up for discussion, along with Ukraine.

Ukraine assurances

The German leader will also travel to Ukraine on Sunday, where she will meet President Volodymyr Zelensky amid continued tensions over Moscow's troop build-up on Ukraine's borders.—AFP ■

Putin is expected to give Merkel a warm reception in what looks set to be their final official meeting. **PHOTO: SPUTNIK/AFP/FILE**

Capitol Hill bomb threat standoff ends as suspect surrenders

First responders and police investigate a possible bomb threat near the US Capitol and Library of Congress in Washington, DC, on August 19, 2021 **PHOTO: ERIC BARADAT, AFP**

A man who threatened to set off a bomb on Washington's Capitol Hill surrendered to police Thursday, ending an hours-long standoff that rattled lawmakers still shaken by January's pro-Trump insurrection.

The incident triggered evacuations and a massive police response, and sent jolts of anxiety through a city that has spent months on alert, as political tensions soared following the deadly US Capitol riot.

The suspect, an apparent right-wing extremist identified by US Capitol Police as Floyd Ray Roseberry, had been broadcasting live on social media from his truck, assailing President Joe Biden and Democrats, warning of a "revolution," and complaining about the US government and its policy in Afghanistan.

He had also claimed that four more sets of explosives were lying in wait in Washington and that they would be detonated, along with his bomb, if police used deadly force against him.

Much of the complex was cordoned off as police and FBI agents negotiated with the driver, who police said had appeared to have a detonator in his hand.

"He got out of the vehicle and surrendered, and the tactical units that were close by took him into custody without incident," US Capitol Police Chief Thomas Manger told reporters.

Law enforcement were still investigating whether the vehicle, which was parked on the sidewalk next to the Library of Congress, contained actual explosives.

Manger said it was unclear what Roseberry's motives were, but in his Facebook Live steam he issued a series of incoherent threats and asked to speak to Biden.—AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

In midst of Afghan crisis, US VP Harris visits Vietnam

Just as US forces struggle with the desperate evacuation from Afghanistan, Vice President Kamala Harris embarks Friday on a trip to Vietnam, site of perhaps an even more infamous American military debacle.

The Southeast Asia trip, also taking in Singapore and a virtual meeting with ASEAN regional representatives, was planned long before a Taliban victory last weekend triggered the US scramble from Afghanistan.

Harris has taken some flak, especially from right-wing commentators who see the choice of Vietnam as, at best, tone-deaf.

The writers of "Veep," a television comedy series satirizing a hapless vice president, "could not have scripted this better," tweeted Sean Spicer, a former White House press secretary for president Donald Trump.—AFP ■

Taliban kill relative of DW journalist in Afghanistan: broadcaster

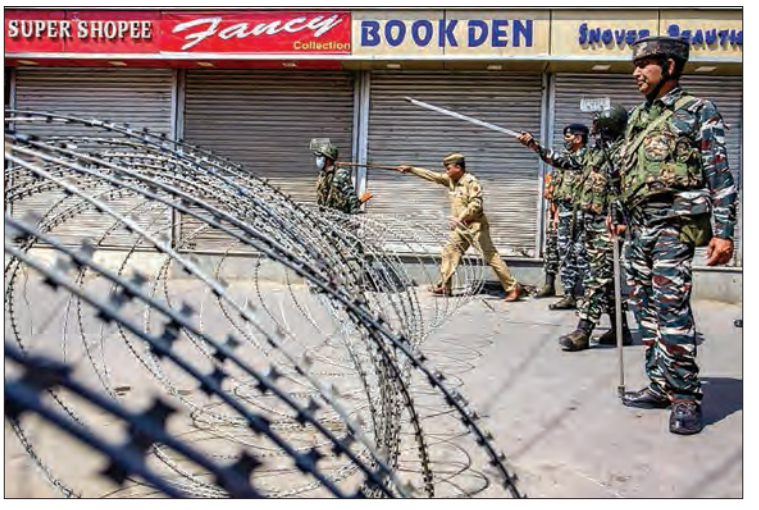
TALIBAN fighters in Afghanistan have shot and killed a relative of a Deutsche Welle journalist while hunting for him, the German public broadcaster said.

The militants were conducting a house-to-house search for the journalist, who now works in Germany, DW said Thursday.

A second relative was seriously wounded but others were able to escape, it said, without giving details of the incident. DW director general Peter Limbourg condemned the killing, which he said showed the danger to media workers and their families in Afghanistan.—AFP ■

In Indian Kashmir, few now dare to speak out

PUBLIC protests in Indian-controlled Kashmir were once an almost weekly occurrence but two years after New Delhi imposed direct rule on the region, locals say arbitrary arrests and intimidation by security forces wielding batons and snatching phones have left many too scared to voice dissent. A week before the region's partial autonomy was abolished, and as a massive troop deployment fanned out to help forestall a local backlash, "Rafiq" was one of thousands put in "preventative detention". He believes he was arrested because in the past he had "protested against injustices". Freed after a harrowing year behind bars, the 26-year-old -- too frightened to give his real name -- says he is a "broken man". Echoing accounts from a dozen other Kashmiris told to AFP, he and 30 others were bundled onto a military aircraft to a jail hundreds of miles from his home where they were "abused and intimidated". "A bright light was kept on all night in my cell for six months... It was hard to imagine that I would come out alive," he said. — AFP ■



Kasmhiris now no longer have a locally elected government and are ruled by a lieutenant governor appointed by New Delhi.
PHOTO: AFP/FILE

Myanmar placed in Group D of Asian Cup Women's Qualifiers

Myanmar team player (white) attempts to clear the ball against Viet Nam team player during the third round qualifiers for Olympic on 6 February 2020. Photo: MFF

MYANMAR women's national football team is placed in the Group D of the 2022 AFC Women's Cup Asian Qualifiers, according to the Asian Football Confederation.

The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) is scheduled to host the qualifiers in Lebanon from 13 to 25 September, according to the decision of the host countries.

Myanmar is falling in the Group D with host Lebanon, UAE and Guam.

According to the fixtures, Myanmar will play against host Lebanon on 17 September, Guam on 20 September and UAE on 23 September.

The tournament will be divided into eight groups and only the top team in each group will win the tournament, so the Myanmar team will have to play every important match and get a good result to win the tournament.

According to the group vote, the Group A includes China Taipei, Bahrain and Laos, while the Group B consists of Vietnam, Tajikistan, Maldives and Afghanistan.

In the meantime, Singapore is placing in the Group C together with Iraq and Indonesia while Myanmar is in the Group D with UAE, host Lebanon and Guam.

Next, South Korea, Uzbekistan and Mongolia are placed in the Group E, and Group F consists of the Philippines, Hong Kong and Nepal.

The Group G consists of Jordan, Iran and Bangladesh while ASEAN powerhouse team Thailand is included in the Group H with Palestine and Malaysia.

The Myanmar women's team has qualified the Asian Cup Women's Cup four times in 2003, 2006, 2010 and 2014. However, the Myanmar team did not qualify the last 2018 tournament.—Ko Nyi Lay/ GNLM

Arteta surprised Arsenal forced to play through Covid outbreak

ARSENAL manager Mikel Arteta said on Friday he was surprised his side were forced to play their Premier League opener at Brentford last week despite a coronavirus outbreak that saw four players test positive.

Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang, Alexandre Lacazette, Willian and reserve goalkeeper Alex Runarsson missed the match. An extra round of testing was carried out on the day of the Gunners' 2-0 defeat to the Premier League new boys, but Arteta was mystified as to why the precedent of matches being postponed in such circumstances from last season was not continued.

Manchester City, Fulham, Aston Villa and Newcastle all had games called off in the 2020/2021 campaign due to outbreaks.

"I was surprised, but the regulators decided that the best thing to do was to play the game," said Arteta at his pre-match press conference ahead of Chelsea's visit to the Emirates on Sunday. "We did what we had to do through the club, through the club doctor, how things developed and the risk we could see there." Aubameyang and Willian are in contention to return against Chelsea, but Lacazette and Runarsson remain unavailable.—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.

Canelo to fight Plant in November for undisputed title

MEXICO'S Saul "Canelo" Alvarez said Thursday he will fight unbeaten American Caleb Plant for the undisputed world super middleweight boxing crown on November 6 in Las Vegas.

The showdown will see Alvarez defend his World Boxing Association, World Boxing Council and World Boxing Organization crowns against International Boxing Federation champion Plant.

"This Nov 6th we'll put mexican boxing on top," Alvarez tweeted. "Going for the missing belt!" Alvarez, 56-1 with two drawn and 38 knockouts, seeks his eighth win in a row. He beat Britain's Callum Smith by unanimous decision in December 2020 for the WBA and WBC crowns and added the WBO title three months ago by beating Britain's Billy Joe Saunders. Plant, 21-0 with 12 knockouts, won the IBF crown by defeating Venezuelan Jose Uzcategui by unanimous decision in January 2019. He has defended it three times since then, most recently beating countryman Caleb Truax by unanimous decision in January.— AFP

Mexico's Canelo Alvarez will fight for the undisputed super middleweight title against unbeaten American Caleb Plant on November 6 in Las Vegas, he announced Thursday. **PHOTO: AFP**