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Republic of the Union of Myanmar

Ministry of Health

Order No 332/2021

Fullmoon of Wagaung 1383 ME

22 August 2021

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

1. The Ministry of Health has taken preventive measures against Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in real-time. Therefore, people from some townships of Nay Pyi Taw, Union Territory Area and Taninthayi Region need to stay at home due to the number of confirmed patients on the rise in these townships.

2. Hence, the people residing in the following townships in Nay Pyi Taw, Union Territory Area and Taninthayi Region are involved in the Stay-at-Home programme.

(a) Nay Pyi Taw, Union Territory Area

(1) Tatkon Township

(b) Taninthayi Region

(1) Dawei Township

(2) Myeik Township

3. The people inclusive of the Stay-at-Home programme of the township need to abide by the following disciplines:-

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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.

Yangon receives medical equipment, accessories donated by PLA, Myanmar Embassy, military attaché office in Beijing

THE Air China flight carrying medical equipment and accessories donated by the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA), Myanmar Embassy and military attaché office in Beijing arrived at the Yangon International Airport yesterday.

Colonel Zaw Myo Han of local military hospital in Dagon Township and officials of the Ministry of Health accepted the donations.

The PLA donated 400,000 SARS-CoV-2 Vaccine (Vero Cell) and 403,200 hypodermic needles while the Myanmar military attaché office (Army, Navy, Air) in Beijing presented 16 oxygen concentrators, 240 PPE suits and 103,500 masks in addition to 72,000 Carrimycin tablets and 100,000 masks by the Myanmar Embassy in Beijing.

These medical supplies were transported from the Yangon International Airport to the medical storage depot in Dagon Township and the central vaccine store depot of the Public Health Department on Mindhamma Road in Mayangon Township.—MNA

Photo shows medical equipment and accessories donated by People's Liberation Army of China and Myanmar Embassy and Military Attache office in Beijing are unloaded from Air China flight.



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State Administration Council
Press Release

Re-invitation to Myanmar citizens who reside in various regions for many reasons

1. Some student youths, State service personnel and citizens, with worries, have evaded to areas of EAOs and foreign countries due to the incitements and intimidation of NLD members, extremist followers, unlawful associations and terrorist groups such as CRPH and NUG, stimulation of CDM, and persons and organizations at home and abroad not wishing to restore peace and stability of the State since Tatmadaw assumed the State responsibilities on 1 February 2021.
2. They are further worried about the dictatorship statement and speeches of unlawful association and terrorist group CRPH and NUG, and some relevant persons. As they face no security guarantee and difficulties in socio-economic life in those areas, they wish to return to their native lands.
3. **The State Administration Council will specifically ease restrictions for service personnel, intellectuals and intelligentsia, and persons from various arenas and citizens who, with worries, absconded from the country except for persons who committed murders, robberies, setting fires, mine explosions and intentional attacks on security troops, those who crowded to attack public service personnel and some people, those who destroyed government and private-owned buildings and those who are highly involved in the CDM activities by providing monetary assistance and other means.**
4. As those who evade their native areas are also citizens, the State Administration Council will arrange their returns from the evaded areas to various parts of Myanmar.
5. As such, the information was released that if those who evaded to various areas, except for persons who committed any kinds of crime, wish to return to their native lands in Myanmar of their own accord due to multiple worries, the citizens abroad can contact nearby ward, village, township and district administration bodies and relevant embassies, military attaché offices and consulates in accord with the easing restrictions under the law.

Information Team
State Administration Council

The State Administration Council will specifically ease restrictions for service personnel, intellectuals and intelligentsia, and persons from various arenas and citizens who, with worries, absconded from the country except for persons who committed murders, robberies, setting fires, mine explosions and intentional attacks on security troops, those who crowded to attack public service personnel and some people, those who destroyed government and private-owned buildings and those who are highly involved in the CDM activities by providing monetary assistance and other means.

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Ministry of Health
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- (a) Reside at their homes only
 - (1) except for service personnel serving at government department;
 - (2) except for those serving at private firms such as banks and monetary services, filling stations, foodstuffs and livestock and fishery, cold storage, medicine and medical equipment production and distribution, purified water production and sales, factories of manufacturing daily personal goods and related industries;
 - (3) those in the airline industry who provide services in relief flights/cargo flights and charter flights, ground services, aircraft refuelling, import/export of goods by air, international freight forwarder companies, companies and agencies that provide customs services, aircraft food production and export and aircraft maintenance;
 - (4) except for staff from private ports, shipping agencies offices, international freight forwarder companies, customer service companies and agencies, container truck services, port export and import cargo trucks and watercraft, inland container depot and dry ports;
 - (5) except for staff from communication service providers such as post services, line phones and mobile phone communication services, internet services (exclusive of sales of telephone and data at shops), tower and fibre maintenance services;
 - (b) relevant region and state governments to issue necessary orders and directives and supervision for prevention of COVID-19 infection at CMP factories and workshops;
 - (c) organizations and companies to perform their works from homes;
 - (d) one person from each house to go out shopping;
 - (e) only two persons per house to go to hospitals and clinics;
 - (f) wear masks if they go outside the houses;
 - (g) allow ferries and registered vehicles only to transport returnees from workplaces to pass the wards;
 - (h) allow one person only in addition to the driver in a vehicle for shopping in the ward and two persons except for the driver to go to hospitals or clinics;
 - (i) abide by the standard operating procedures (SOP) for trucks to ensure smooth flow of commodities in the township;
4. People need to inform relevant ward/village administration bodies about seeking approvals to go outside the houses if they have reasons to raise the limited number of participants in the measures and other emergency issues mentioned in subparagraphs (d), (e) and (h) of Paragraph 3. The relevant administrative bodies need not allow ingoing and outgoing persons, except for officials and those returnees from duty.
 5. Action will be taken against those who fail to abide by the order under the existing laws.
 6. The order came into force at 4 am on 23-8-2021.

Dr Thet Khaing Win
Union Minister

Public Notification on
Counterfeit COVID-19 vaccine

1. The Ministry of Health is releasing public notifications in a timely manner, exercising its authority under the National Drug Law, to ensure that the public has access to high-quality, safe and effective medicines as well as to register them systematically.
2. Amid the current COVID-19 outbreak, the Government is administering the vaccines against the COVID-19 disease, which were both purchased and donated, according to the national priority programme. On 12-8-2021, the public was informed the guidelines to comply with if private pharmaceutical companies, social organizations, private companies import the effective and safe COVID-19 vaccines that are planted internationally. The public was also notified that the counterfeit COVID-19 vaccines are being sold online or by other means.
3. On 16-8-2021, the World Health Organization (WHO) issued Medical Product Alert No.5/2021: Falsified COVISHIELD Vaccine, notifying that counterfeit vaccines are being manufactured and sold in Southeast Asian countries, India and Africa. Myanmar was also notified regarding the counterfeit COVID-19 vaccines.
4. The counterfeit COVID-19 vaccines are being counterfeited and sold under the COVISHIELD brand, and include
 - (a) a 5ml bottle sufficient for ten doses,
 - (b) a 2ml bottle containing four doses of vaccine
5. Therefore, if private clinics, hospitals and the people are found to be importing and distributing counterfeit COVID-19 vaccines, they will be severely punished in accordance with the existing laws.

Samples of counterfeit COVISHIELD vaccines



Ministry of Health

Efforts should be made for ensuring political peace and stability as well as security peace and stability

THE tenure of the current government is a short time. He has explained it in the address delivered to mark the six months period of the government duty. The legal permission for incompleteness of the tasks within the state of emergency period is mentioned in the chapter of the provision of the State of Emergency. Depending on management of the government and good cooperation of the people, the period for carrying out the tasks can be changed. Although the government takes responsibility for a short period, it is necessary to manage food, clothing and shelters of the people without fail. Likewise, efforts should be made for ensuring political peace and stability as well as security peace and stability. Only when the country is peaceful and stable, can the election be held smoothly.

(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)

MoHA Union Minister inspects Bago prison

UNION Minister for Home Affairs Lt-Gen Soe Htut, member of State Administration Council inspected the Bago prison and met the officials of departments concerned under the ministry on Saturday.

During the visit, the Union Minister instructed the officials to keep the inmates in accordance with the prison rules, provide proper meals and examine the foodstuff by the inspection team. He also stressed the need to follow the COVID-19 health rules.

The Union Minister then met the officials of relevant



Union Minister for Home Affairs Lt-Gen Soe Htut meets departmental officials at Bago Region Police Force office.

departments affiliated with the ministry at the office of Bago Region Police Force yesterday. During the meeting, he said the Ministry of Home Affairs mainly serves for security

and it needs to have knowledge of security and the officials should regularly check the operations not to occur security breaches. He then gave instructions to officials to operate manageable scale livestock and breeding farms and follow the COVID-19 rules.

He also inspected the hand sanitizer and hand gel production processes of police at region Police Force compound and encouraged them to sell the products at fair prices to the public in addition to the police members.—MNA

Mandalay seasonal fruit market records brisk sales

THE seasonal fruits from various regions are plentifully flowing into Mandalay market these days.

The COVID-19 impacts brought positive changes to consumer behaviour in domestic market, said fruit vendors in Nyaungpin market, Aungmyaythazan Township.

The seasonal fruits are abundantly harvested for now. The bountiful supply of seasonal fruits including pomelo, custard apple, pineapple, passion fruit, avocado, tangerine, apple, pear, pomegranate imported by Thailand and sunkist fruits are seen in Mandalay market.

“Mandalay market sees a greater inflow of fruits imported by Thailand than those from China. Most importantly, the local residents like to enjoy

the fruits in the divesting COVID-19 for the health benefits. This is why fruits are highly demanded in the market, especially sunkist fruit, tangerine and pomelo. Normally, the domestic market sees a brisk sale during Thadingyut and Thingyan festivals,” Daw Yu Yu Win, a vendor, said.

Depending on the size of the fruits, the prices stand at K100-K200 each for custard-apple, K600-K800 for apple, K 1,200 for pomegranate, K800 for sunkist fruit, K400 for avocado, K1,000-K1,200 for pear, K400-K500 for pineapple, K2,500 for pomelo of Thailand origin, K1,000 for pomelo of Myanmar origin, K500 for tangerine and K500 for passion fruit respectively.—Min Htet Aung (Mandalay sub-printing house)/GNLM



Vegetables and fruits are being sold at the domestic market.

Sagaing Region Chief Minister inspects development projects in Myinmu

SAGAING Region Chief Minister U Myat Kyaw, accompanied by the region government officials, made an inspection tour to development projects in Sagaing Region on 21 August.

During the inspection tour, the Chief Minister and party inspected the Pyawt Ywa Hydropower Project in Myinmu Township, which supplies irrigation water to 2,000 acres of monsoon paddy and 1,000 acres of summer paddy.

The Chief Minister and party also viewed round broadcasting of fertilizers in the model plot in Pyawt Village, and proceeded to the local breeding and animal feed development research farm in Htihsaung Village, Myinmu Township. In the farm, a total of 159 cows are being raised and



Sagaing Region Chief Minister U Myat Kyaw inspects cow breeding farm in Htihsaung village of Myinmu Township.

animal feed making trainings are being conducted.

During the visit to a model Shwetaung-8 cotton plantation in

North Myoma ward in Myinmu, the Chief Minister coordinated

with departmental officials to grow 59,746 acres of cotton before the cotton plantation season in 2020-2021.

Afterwards, the Chief Minister and party attended the donation ceremonies of oxygen cylinders, concentrators, COVID-19 preventive equipment and foodstuffs in Myinmu and Myaung. Chief Minister U Myat Kyaw addressed the meeting and township departmental officials reported on the regional development activities and current implementation works.

The donations, COVID-19 preventive equipment, foodstuffs and cash assistance were handed over to the officials from the township COVID-19 control and emergency response committees.—Region IPRD/GNLM

2,173 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 22 August, total figure rises to 373,685

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to 373,685 after 2,173 new cases were reported on 22 August 2021 according to the Ministry of Health. Among these confirmed cases, 298,875 have been discharged from hospitals. Death toll reached 14,374 after 138 died.

COVID-19 vaccine is being injected to those of priority groups in regions and states for prevention and control of the disease. Up to 21-8-2021, a total of 4,456,857 people have been vaccinated. Of them, 1,796,830 people have been vaccinated two times and 2,660,027 people once.—MNA

Myanmar continues to import medical supplies

MYANMAR'S import of medical supplies for the prevention, control and treatment of the COVID-19 disease is maintaining momentum with non-stop services at the border checkpoints even on the public holidays.

The medical supplies for the prevention, control and treatment of the COVID-19 are imported from China via Nanphahaw border post between Myanmar and China in Chinshwehaw of Kokang Self-Administered Zone in the northern Shan State. On 21 August, 1,100 empty oxygen cylinders (15L), three oxygen plants, 600 empty spirit container cartons, 615 surgical cap boxes, 3,810 car-

tons of mask, 514 PPE suits and 203 medical regulators and 83 oxygen masks arrived again.

A red FOTON truck on six-wheels, a red FOTON truck on 12 wheels, one brown FOTON truck on 22 wheels and three red FOTON trucks on 22 wheels conveyed over 2,200 boxes with 7,000 masks, 615 boxes of 100,000 surgical caps, 40 regulators, 500 empty oxygen cylinders (15L), 150 oxygen masks and 50 PPE suits to Rolden Triangle warehouse located in Shwekuwa village, Kunlong Township.

Additionally, a red FOTON 12-wheeler delivered 100 PPE suits to Wangchunhlyan ware-

house in Chinshwehaw and one red FOTON truck on 22 wheels also sent 1,538 boxes with 2,500 masks to Nagani warehouse in Chinshwehaw.

Moreover, another red FOTON 12-wheeler and a golden FOTON 22-wheeler transported 1,000 empty chemical container, 600 empty oxygen cylinders (15L), 2,000 masks and 50 PPE suits and 20 regulators to Arlen yard in Chinshwehaw.

The medical equipments are imported by linking with cross-border posts in accordance with the regulations of the related ministries.—Sithu Maung Maung (IPRD)/GNLM



A Cargo truck loaded unit medicines and medical equipment is ready to start trip from Chinshwehaw.

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Agro exports surge to US\$ 4.2 bln during Oct-July period

THE agricultural exports soared to US\$4.22 billion in the past ten months (Oct-July) of the current financial year 2020-2021, in spite of the downward trend in other export groups triggered by the COVID-19 impacts.

The figures reflect an increase of \$913.5 million this FY. The agro exports topped \$3.3 billion in the corresponding period of the 2019-2020 FY, according to the trade figures released by the Ministry of Commerce.

The agricultural exports climbed up even though the main trade partner China shut down all the border in wake of COVID-19 surge in Myanmar.

The coronavirus pandemic impacted the foreign demand for other export groups; agricultural products, fishery, livestock, minerals, forest products, finished industrial goods and other goods.

In the exports sector, the agriculture industry performed the best, accounting for 35 per cent of overall exports. The chief items of export in the agricultural sector are rice and broken rice, pulses and beans and maize. Fruits and vegetables, sesame, dried tea leaves, sugar, and other



Farming workers are nurturing saplings of crops.

agro products are also shipped to other countries.

Myanmar agro products are primarily exported to China, Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka. Sometimes, the export market remains uncertain due to unsteady global demand.

The country requires spe-

cific export plans for each agro product, as they are currently exported to external markets based upon supply and demand. The G to G pact also ensures the strong market for the farmers. Contract farming systems, involvement of regional and state agriculture departments, exporters, traders, and some grower groups, are

required in order to meet production targets, the Agriculture Department stated.

The Commerce Ministry is working to help farmers deal with challenges such as high input costs, procurement of pedigree seeds, high cultivation costs, and erratic weather conditions. — KK/GNLM

Salt market expect to rise in post-salt season, but salt price in Mon State steady

THE price of salt in Mon State is fixed although the trader expected the salt market to go up in the post-salt season, according to Mawlamyine commodity depot.

In Mon State, salt production period is December, January and February. During this period, most salt farmers will sell their raw salt to cover labour cost and other expenditures. However, the salt production in Mon State has been declining due to heavy rain in last February and April.

Besides, the salt price fetched K60-K70 per viss (a viss equals 1.6 kilogrammes) in salt production period of February and March. But, the intermittent rain pushed up the salt price at the end of April.

The local salt farmers are facing inconvenience situation that they have salt but there is no price and they have price, but there is not salt. This being so, the salt price in Mon State is inching upward after post-salt season in June, July and August, National Enlightenment Institute (NEI) estimated.

The National Enlightenment Institute (NEI) is an organization that studies the state's economic development process.

On 22 August, the current raw salt price (normal) is K 120-130 per viss while the raw salt (pure) is K150 per viss. The current salt price has been stable for almost four months in April, May, June and July.

Annually, Mon State produces nearly 40,000 tonnes of sun-dried salt beyond magnesium chloride (MgCl₂), iodized salt (I₂) and table salt (NaCl).

There are about 5,000 salt-pitches in Mon State. Among them, nearly 4,000 acres of salt-pitches produce nearly 40,000 tonnes of salt and domestic salt consumption is 10,000 tonnes. The 2019-2020 statistics showed 14 iodine salt processing plants and one factory each for magnesium chloride (MgCl₂) and table salt (NaCl) production, with the production capacity of 60 tonnes of magnesium chloride, 204 tonnes of table salt and 12,132 tonnes of iodized salt.—NN/GNLM

Rubber export exceeds \$344.9 mln in eight months

MYANMAR'S rubber export generated more than US\$344.9 million revenue in the past eight months (Oct-May) of the current financial year 2020-2021, the Ministry of Commerce's data showed.

The price of domestic natural rubber depends on model of supply and demand when the harvest season ends. The rubber production usually declines during the off-season and it was priced around K900 per pound, according to Mawlamyine commodity wholesale centre.

Myanmar's natural rubber price is also tracking the global

rates, Myanmar Rubber Planters and Producers Association (MRPPA) stated.

The growing demand of rubber gloves during the early outbreak coronavirus pandemic, shortage of natural rubber, the depreciation of Kyat were the reasons of price rise last year, rubber exporters pointed out.

Myanmar's rubber is priced lower than the international rate owing to raw material variability. Rubber price stood at US\$2,600 per tonne in 2020-end in global market, whereas Myanmar rubber fetched only \$2,100 per pound.

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

Viet Nam, the Republic of Korea, India, Japan, and other countries, according to the MRPPA.

About 300,000 tonnes of rubber is produced annually across the country. Seventy per cent of rubber produced in Myanmar goes to China. It is also shipped to Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, Viet Nam, Korea, India, Japan, and other countries.

At present, Myanmar is exporting only rubber sheets owing to lack of machinery and technology. Export rubber varieties include synthetic rubber, ribbed smoked sheet RSS 1, 3 and 5, Myanmar Standard Rubber MSR-20, Technically Specified Rubber TSR-20, and Crepe Rubber.

About 150,000 tons of rubber was exported in the 2017-2018 fiscal year. Myanmar shipped over 190,000 tonnes of rubber, with an estimated value of \$250 million, to external markets in the 2018-2019 fiscal year, an increase of 41,000 tons which helped boost earnings by \$60 million compared to the year-ago period, according to data released by the Ministry of Commerce. Myanmar exported over 200,000 tonnes of natural rubber to foreign countries last FY 2019-2020, generating income of over \$200 million.—GNLM



A worker is loading ribbed smoked sheet rubber onto truck.

Commerce Ministry operates importation processes as planned

THE Ministry of Commerce is making concerted efforts to import the anti-COVID-19 related medical supplies and equipment via air, sea and border trade camps. Moreover, the ministry cooperates with the department concerned to provide services during public holidays from 23 to 31 August in accordance with the SOP.

Yesterday, a toal of 78 tonnes of liquid oxygen, seven tonnes of liquid oxygen cylinders, one oxygen container, one oxygen distributor, 4,964 empty oxygen cylinders, two oxygen plants, one oxygen refill, 597 home oxygen conentrator, PPE suits and masks were im-

ported via Yangon International Airport, Muse, Chinshwehaw, Myawady and Hteekhee border camps. Of four oxygen bowsers, three were distributed to Yangon and one to Mawlamyine, while two oxygen plants were delivered one each to Mandalay and Lashio.

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



A truck carries oxygen container.



A cargo truck transports liquid oxygen container.



Cylinders are refilled with oxygen at the plant.



A cub is seen with oxygen cylinder.



A truck transports liquid oxygen container.



Truck is carrying liquid oxygen from Myawady.

‘Please let us on the bus’: Heartbreak on Kabul airport convoy

AFGHANS aboard a convoy of buses that was given a Taliban escort to Kabul’s airport spoke Sunday of the heartbreak of driving past huge crowds desperate to join them.

Tens of thousands of people are gathered around the airport north of the capital in the hope of getting a flight out of the country as an evacuation run by the US military continues in chaos.

People have been crushed to death in the melee, while images of a family handing a child over a wall to a soldier — and of young men clinging to the side of a military plane as it rolled down the runway for takeoff — have shocked the world.

A journalist aboard the convoy that left a downtown hotel early Sunday told AFP a huge crowd was camped at an intersection close to the airport — many sleeping in the open.



Afghans mass near the airport in Kabul hoping to get in and catch an evacuation flight out of the country. PHOTO: AFP

Families hoping for a miracle escape were crowded between the barbed-wire boundaries of an unofficial no man’s land separating Taliban fight-

ers from US troops and the remnants of an Afghan special forces brigade helping them.

“As soon as they saw our convoy they got up and ran to-

wards the buses,” he said.

“They were showing us their passports or other documents — One man came to my window with wife and child

and waved his passport saying ‘I have a British visa, but can’t get in. Please let us on the bus’.”

There have been reports of the Taliban stopping, harassing and even detaining Afghans trying to flee, but the reporter said his convoy passed largely without incident.

“The didn’t care about us,” he said.

‘One day, you’ll thank me’

The United States — and other nations — had plans to offer sanctuary this year to tens of thousands of Afghans following Washington’s decision to withdraw all its troops from the country.

Those offered the chance of a new life abroad mostly included Afghans who had worked for foreign forces during the 20-year occupation that followed the ousting of the Taliban in the wake of the September 11 attacks . — AFP ■

Hong Kong youngsters to chat with astronauts on space station

HONG Kong youngsters will have the opportunity to engage in a real-time dialogue with three mainland astronauts on China’s space station next month.

The three astronauts, Nie Haisheng, Liu Boming and Tang Hongbo, on board the Shenzhou-12 spaceship were

sent into space and entered the space station core module Tianhe on 17 June and have since carried out a number of tasks as planned.

It is reported that during the conversation on 3 September the astronauts will give a virtual tour of the core module

and answer questions collected in advance.

People who are interested in taking part should submit their questions on the Hong Kong STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) Education Alliance’s website from Aug. 23. — Xinhua ■

Afghan resistance ready for conflict but prefers negotiations

FORMER Afghan government forces forming a resistance movement in a fortified valley are preparing for “long-term conflict”, but are also seeking to negotiate with the Taliban, their spokesman told AFP in an interview.

Since the Taliban took con-

trol of the country following a lightning charge into the capital Kabul, thousands of people have made their way to Panjshir to both join the fight and find a safe haven to continue their lives, Ali Maisam Nazary said.

There, Ahmad Massoud, the

son of legendary Mujahideen commander Ahmad Shah Massoud who was assassinated by Al-Qaeda two days before the September 11, 2001 attacks, has assembled a fighting force of around 9,000 people, Nazary added.

Pictures taken by AFP during training exercises show dozens of recruits performing fitness routines, and a handful of armoured humvees driving across the valley northeast of Kabul. The National Resistance Front’s main goal is to avoid further bloodshed in Afghanistan and press for a new system of government.

But Nazary said the group is also prepared for conflict, and if the Taliban do not negotiate they will face resistance across the country. — AFP ■



The National Resistance Front says Panjshir become a safe zone for all those groups who feel threatened in other provinces. PHOTO: AFP

NEWS IN BRIEF

102 migrants rescued in Channel trying to reach Britain

OVER 100 migrants were rescued in the Channel on Saturday as they tried to reach Britain on makeshift boats, the French maritime prefecture said.

A first boat carrying 38 migrants was reported in difficulty off Boulogne, the authorities said.

The migrants were rescued and returned to France before being handed over to border police, a statement said.

A further 60 migrants were also rescued off Hardelot, including 58 through the intervention of a tug, and two others by a patrol vessel.

Four further migrants were picked up by the same patrol boat. All the migrants were now safe, the statement added.

Since the end of 2018, illegal crossings of the Channel by migrants seeking to reach the UK have soared despite authorities warning of strong currents, low temperatures and the perils of venturing into one of the world’s busiest shipping lanes. — AFP ■

Taliban meets Afghan political figures, assuring security

THE Taliban announced on Saturday that its delegation met with political figures in the Afghan capital Kabul, assuring them of security and safety.

“A delegation from the Political Office of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan met with a number of political figures in Kabul today,” tweeted Muhammad Naem, a spokesman for the Political Office of the Taliban in Qatari capital Doha.

According to the spokesman, the delegation told the attendees about the future of the “Islamic Emirate,” the name of Afghanistan under Taliban rule, which wants a strong central government that respects the rule of law and gives every citizen the opportunity to serve his country.

The Taliban entered Kabul on 15 August after taking control of most parts of Afghanistan, following the rapid withdrawal of the U.S. and NATO forces from the country that began in May. — Xinhua ■

Open generous mind for all with pardon and forgiveness

Everybody should uphold the generosity in relations with others by opening the mind for their relatives and friends in addition to neighbouring people.

They have an excellent practice with forgiveness and tolerance over others in all cases without grudge against the opponents. Their minds should be kept away from grievance, bitterness, rancour, disgruntlement, pique, umbrage, dissatisfaction, bad feelings, hard feelings, resentment, ill feelings, ill will and so on.

Those wishing to become the generous persons should have to wash their dirt minds. They need to forge their minds to be generosity. Gradually, they would have the capacity to influence over others with generous mind. If so, they will be the noble persons. Their powerful minds can easily remove the negative attitudes for malpractice such as envy, deceitfulness, slander, etc. from their souls. Hence, those persons can be dubbed as generous ones.

The mind of generous person can shape the world to be peaceful and tranquil. So, all the global peoples should try hard to realize the practice of generosity to be able to shape the world in peace and tranquility.

to become generous persons with new mind-set whereas the generous persons need to open their minds for forging forgiveness and compassion over malpractices and misdeeds of opponents and those standing on opposite site.

The mind of generous person can shape the world to be peaceful and tranquil. So, all the global peoples should try hard to realize the practice of generosity to be able to shape the world in peace and tranquility.

■ ■ ■

The persons forging the generous minds will automatically culture the compassion and loving-kindness over attacks, assault and battery and encroachment committed by others. If so, their enemies would change their minds to frankly associate with those generous persons. In facts, the generosity and compassion can conquer over all.

Opening the generous mind is similar to the empty drum which can admit everything to its full brim. Those persons have the endurance and tolerance over others. Nature of their minds is always peaceful and tranquil without any frats. Even if the generous persons face the impolite and rude acts, they can analyze the motivation of these moves to be transformed into the useful ones based on the pardon and forgiveness. Despite no expectation to get the benefits, the generous persons will have to enjoy the chances in touch of the opened mind. It is because the generous persons are ready to pardon for the misdeeds of opponents.

Everybody should try hard to improve themselves

Tokyo Paralympics to open under shadow of pandemic

The Tokyo Paralympics open Tuesday after a year-long pandemic delay and with the virus continuing to cast a long shadow as Japan battles a record surge in cases.

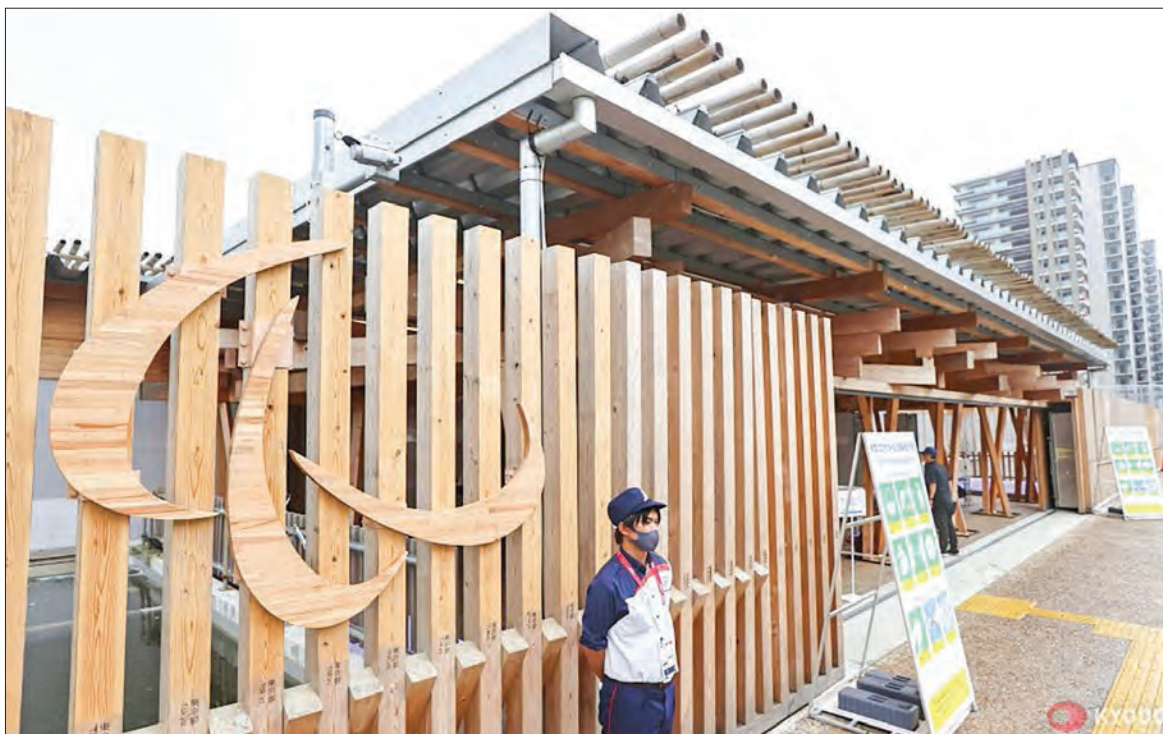


Photo taken on 17 August 2021, shows the athletes' village for the Tokyo Paralympics in the capital's Harumi waterfront district, which formally opened the same day ahead of the 24 August opening ceremony of the games. PHOTO: KYODO

AS at the Olympics, the event will be marked by strict virus rules, with almost all spectators banned and tough restrictions on athletes and other participants.

While a swell of domestic support emerged during the Olympics after months of negative polls, there is deep concern in Japan as the Paralympics approach with

the country going through a fifth virus wave.

More than 25,000 new cases were recorded on Thursday, and medics across the country have warned hospitals are at breaking point with serious cases also at record highs.

It's a challenging environment for the most important sports event for disabled athletes,

and International Paralympic Committee chief Andrew Parsons has warned participants against complacency.

Despite the backdrop, IPC officials insist the reach of the event will be "incredible."

"Of course the fact that we will not have spectators at the venues is a challenge," Parsons told AFP in an interview.

"But we believe we will reach more than four billion people through broadcasting."

Local officials say the Games can be held safely, with athletes and other participants subject to the same anti-infection rules that applied to the Olympics.

Virus 'situation has deteriorated'

Competitors can only enter the Paralympic Village shortly before their event and must leave within 48 hours of the end of their competition.

They will be tested daily and limited to moving between training venues, competition sites and the Village.

The measures are intended to prevent the Games from becoming a superspreader event — and officials say the Olympics proved the restrictions work.

There were 552 positive cases linked to the Olympics reported from 1 July until Sunday, the majority among Japan residents employed by the Games or working as contractors.

So far, 138 cases related to the Paralympics have been confirmed, also mostly among Japan-based Olympic officials, though at least four athletes have also tested positive.

But Olympic officials say there is no evidence of infection spreading from the Games to the rest of Japan, where case numbers were already on the rise.

Still organisers acknowledge the worsening environment.

"The infection situation today is different to how it was before the Olympics. It has deteriorated," said Tokyo 2020 official Hidemasa Nakamura on Friday.

"And the local medical system is also in a very tight situation."

The virus surge has caused tensions, with some local regions and schools cancelling planned trips to Games events despite support for the programme from Tokyo Governor Yuriko Koike.

'Blade Jumper'

The mood among Paralympians remains buoyant though, after the uncertainties of the year-long delay. "It's our time to take aim at gold!" tweeted US archer Matt Stutzman, a Paralympic silver medallist who uses the handle "Armless Archer".

Stutzman is among those likely to be appearing on the medal podium during the Games, which will see 4,400 athletes from around 160 national teams competing.

There are 22 sports, with athletes competing in different cat-

egories and classes depending on the nature of their disability. Badminton and taekwondo are appearing for the first time.

Top names include Germany's Markus Rehm, dubbed the "Blade Jumper" for his gravity-defying feats in long jump, which have earned him three gold medals and a bronze.

He has pushed to be included in the Olympics, but so far without success over concerns that his prosthetic blade gives him an advantage.

Other household names include Tatyana McFadden, the American wheelchair racer who will be competing in her fifth summer Paralympics.

She also appeared at the Sochi Winter Games, where she won a silver medal in the country where she was born, as her adoptive US mother and Russian birth mother cheered her on. Japan will be hoping it can repeat the gold rush that saw it bring home a record 58 gold Olympic medals.

Among its top medal hopes is Shingo Kunieda, the reigning world number one wheelchair men's single champion and considered one of the greatest figures in the sport.

SOURCE: AFP

Indonesia sharply cuts RT-PCR test prices amid call from public

INDONESIAN President Joko Widodo has ordered to cut the test prices of the Reverse Transcription Polymerase Chain Reaction (RT-PCR) to a range between 450,000 rupiahs (some 31.24 U.S. dollars) and 550,000 rupiahs from the previous maximum of 900,000 rupiahs set by the Health Ministry.

The move means that the prices of the RT-PCR tests in Indonesia will be cut between 38.9 per cent and 50 per cent over the previous ones.

"One way to increase testing is to reduce the RT-PCR test prices. I have told the health minister about this and I asked for the cost of the PCR tests to be in the range between 450,000 rupiahs and 550,000 rupiahs," said the president in a video uploaded

to the account of the Indonesian Secretariat Cabinet on 15 August.

Widodo also ordered that the results of the RT-PCR tests in Indonesia should be available within 24 hours as the country needs speedy outcomes.

The Indonesian government has set the highest price for the RT-PCR tests at 495,000 rupiahs for the islands of Java and Bali, and 525,000 rupiahs for the areas outside the two islands.

RT-PCR test prices

The government decided to cut the RT-PCR test prices following debates about the prices of the COVID-19 tests in the country, which were considered too expensive.

The Directorate General of Health Services has issued a regulation concerning the prices for

RT-PCR tests which have been effective from 17 August.

Director General of Health Services Abdul Kadir said the new prices of the RT-PCR tests were set together with the Financial and Development Supervisory Agency.

"From the evaluation results, we agree that the highest price for RT-PCR examinations is lowered to 495,000 rupiahs for Java and Bali islands, and 525,000 rupiahs for outside Java and Bali islands," he said at a virtual press conference in Jakarta on 16 August.

State-owned pharmaceutical company PT Kimia Farma has decided to reduce the prices of RT-PCR and Antigen tests to meet the regulation.

Currently, the company's most expensive COVID-19 test-

ing price is 495,000 rupiahs for RT-PCR and 125,000 rupiahs for antigen.

Easier for the public

"This will make it easier for the public to have COVID-19 tests, which will lead to an overall improvement in Indonesia's health climate," the company's President Director Verdi Budidarmo said.

Agus Chandra, acting president director of PT Kimia Farma Diagnostika (PT Kimia Farma's business unit) said his company would follow the president's instruction to lower the prices of the RT-PCR tests as much as possible.

"In addition to lowering the price of the RT-PCR test to 495,000 rupiahs, we also reduced the price of antigen swab to 85,000 rupiahs



The Directorate General of Health Services has issued a regulation concerning the prices for RT-PCR tests which have been effective from 17 August. PHOTO: Xinhua

for the regular type of device and for the Abbot Panbio brand it falls to 125,000 rupiahs," he said.

However, several health facilities including hospitals in the

country have yet to follow the president's instruction to lower the prices of the RT-PCR tests to detect COVID-19.

SOURCE: Xinhua



Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 7:00 pm Sunday 22 August 2021)

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

FORECAST VALID UNTIL MORNING OF THE 23 August, 2021: Rain or thundershowers will be widespread in Taninthayi Region and Kachin State, fairly widespread in Upper Sagaing Region and Eastern Shan, Chin, Rakhine, Kayin, Mon States, scattered in Nay Pyi Taw, Bago, Yangon, Ayeyawady Regions and (Northern and Southern) Shan States and isolated in the remaining Regions and States with likelihood of isolated heavy-falls in Kachin State. Degree of certainty is (100%).

STATE OF THE SEA: Seas will be slight to moderate in Myanmar waters. Wave height will be about (4 -7) feet off and along Myanmar Coasts.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Likelihood of increase of rain in Upper Sagaing Region and Kachin, Northern Shan States.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 23 August, 2021: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 23 August, 2021: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 23 August, 2021: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (80%).

FLOOD BULLETIN

(Issued at 08:00 hrs MST on 22-8-2021)

FLOOD CONDITION OF CHINDWIN RIVER

According to the (07:30) hrs MST observation today, the water level of Chindwin River at Homalin has exceeded by about (½) foot above its danger level. It may remain above its danger level during the next (1) day.

ADVISORY

It is especially advised to the people who settle near the river banks and low lying areas in Homalin Township, to take precaution measure.

FLOOD BULLETIN

(Issued at 19:00 hrs MST on 22-8-2021)

FLOOD CONDITION OF THANLWIN RIVER

According to the (18:30) hrs MST observation today, the water level of Thanlwin River at Hpa-an has exceeded by about (2) inches above its danger level. It may continue to rise from the present water level by about (½) foot during the next (1) day and may remain above its danger level.

ADVISORY

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

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Israel increasingly uses drones to catch environmental offenders

ISRAEL'S Ministry of Environmental Protection is expanding its use of drones to fight more effectively against environmental offenders.

The cameras on drones make capturing environmental offenses in real-time much easier as the video footage in high resolution of wrongdoings can serve as substantial evidence in court.

Moreover, the ministry's Green Police even has drones with specialized cameras able to record videos at night using infrared or thermal vision.

For each operation, Green Police drone operators adjust the machines for specific conditions. For example, sea missions require drones that can fly in high winds, while in open fields, quiet drones with a long-distance lens can do a better job.

As the main enforcement and deterrence arm of the min-



Israel's Ministry of Environmental Protection is expanding its use of drones to fight more effectively against environmental offenders. **PHOTO: IANS/ANI**

istry, the Green Police has the power to conduct investigations, hand out fines and sanctions, and monitor polluters such as vehicles. Eyal Yaffe, chief of the unmanned aerial vehicle depart-

ment at Green Police, said that currently "most Green Police cases have drone footage that is very helpful in the court, by making the cases unambiguous."

Green Police inspectors are

monitoring and enforcing environmental laws, regulations, and decrees with a focus on illegal dumping, sewage, air quality, hazardous materials, and construction waste. — Xinhua ■

On the hunt for climate killing gas

AFTER finding a rusty gas canister near his midwest US home, Rick Karas checked online if it was worth anything. Incredibly, it turned out to be a coveted commodity in the battle against climate change.

His roughly basketball-sized container was filled with CFCs (chlorofluorocarbons), a potent greenhouse gas that is perfectly legal to possess but which has been globally banned from manufacture for decades.

Absent a government mandate to destroy the ample existing stocks, a handful of companies have stepped in to hunt down the gases in a process funded by

selling carbon credits they earn from destroying the chemicals.

Karas connected online with a company called Tradewater, which subsequently led to one of its staffers picking up the can at his home in tiny Peotone, Illinois, about an hour's drive from Chicago. Minutes later he had a \$100 bill and the gas — once standard in car air conditioners or refrigerators and packed into cans that leak over time — was on its way to the incinerator.

"I feel good. A little cash in the pocket and it helps the environment," Karas, who raises bees, told AFP, though he was completely unaware of the cli-



Companies like Tradewater collect potent greenhouse gases at their facility near Chicago and then sends them for destruction. **PHOTO: AFP**

mate connection. That's the way the Chicago-based firm prefers it.

They make no mention of their mission in online ads targeting would-be sellers and they

even do business under a different name, Refrigerant Finders, to sidestep what remains a politically charged subject in the United States. — AFP ■

Hurricane Henri bears down on US east coast

A swath of the US East Coast, including New York City, was under alert Saturday, as storm Henri was upgraded to what could be the first hurricane in 30 years to hit New England.

Forecasters warned of violent winds, heavy rainfall, the risk of flash floods and surging seas as the storm churned in the Atlantic, packing maximum sustained winds near 75 miles (120 kilometers) per hour.

Nasty weather that preceded Henri forced New York City to halt its star-studded Central Park concert that was billed as a "homecoming" for a metropolis hard hit by the pandemic.



Homes were boarded up in Connecticut as Hurricane Henri steams towards the US east coast. **PHOTO: AFP**

The approaching hurricane had prompted New York Governor Andrew Cuomo to an-

nounce a state of emergency and the deployment of 500 National Guard soldiers in anticipation of

response efforts.

"It's as serious as a heart attack," he warned. He said the storm was expected to make landfall on Long Island, home to the plush Hamptons villages where wealthy New Yorkers retreat in summer, around noon (1600 GMT) on Sunday.

"It will be about a 26-hour event," Cuomo added, telling New Yorkers to expect "significant power outages" and "significant flooding" in some suburbs of the Big Apple. Henri was anticipated to miss New York City by miles, but it could still cause tropical storm conditions beginning Saturday night. — AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Children in 4 South Asian countries at "extremely high risk" of impacts of climate crisis: UNICEF

YOUNG people living in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India and Pakistan are among those most at risk of the impacts of climate change, threatening their health, education, and protection, according to a new UNICEF report received here Friday.

In addition, Nepal and Sri Lanka are among the top 65 countries most impacted globally.

"The Climate Crisis Is a Child Rights Crisis: Introducing the Children's Climate Risk Index" is UNICEF's first child-focused climate risk index.

It ranks countries based on children's exposure to climate and environmental shocks, such as cyclones and heatwaves, as well as their vulnerability to those shocks, based on their access to essential services. — Xinhua ■

Greta Thunberg drops boycott of COP26 meeting

SWEDISH climate campaigner Greta Thunberg said on Friday she hoped to go to the COP26 climate summit in November, months after threatening to skip the event because of unfair vaccine rollouts.

"I've heard from people that all the delegates will be offered a vaccine," Thunberg told AFP. "If that's considered safe, then I will hopefully attend."

The 18-year-old said in April that by November richer countries would be vaccinating young healthy people "very often at the expense of people in risk groups in other parts of the world".

She said at the time that the conference in Glasgow should be postponed if everyone could not attend on the same terms.

The conference has already been postponed once from its original date of November 2020.

Thunberg spoke to AFP on Friday, the third anniversary of the start of her now world-famous "School Strike for the Climate". — AFP ■

India approves emergency use of 2nd locally-made Covid-19 shot

INDIA on Friday authorised the emergency use of a second homegrown Covid-19 vaccine, which is also the first approved for children older than 12 in the country.

India’s Department of Biotechnology announced its approval for ZyCoV-D, by Indian pharmaceutical firm Zydus Cadila, as the “world’s first and India’s indigenously developed DNA-based vaccine for Covid-19.”

The approval for ZyCoV-D, which can be applied using a needle-free injector, comes with vaccination rates picking up across the country over the last few weeks.

“This three-dose vaccine — when injected produces the spike protein of the SARS-CoV-2 virus and elicits an immune response,” the biotechnology department, which partnered with Zydus Cadila, said in a statement. “The plug-and-play technology on which the plasmid DNA platform is based can be easily adapted to deal with mutations in the virus, such as those already occurring,” it added. ZyCoV-D is now the sixth vaccine to be approved by New Delhi after Moderna, Oxford-AstraZeneca’s Covishield, Covaxin — which was developed by Indian firm Bharat Biotech, Russia’s Sputnik V, and Johnson and Johnson.— AFP ■



An Indian health worker inoculates a catholic nun with the Covishield vaccine—one of six approved by New Delhi against Covid-19—at Saint Mary’s Basilica in Secunderabad, the twin city of Hyderabad, on 19 August 2021. PHOTO: NOAH SEELAM /AFP

New President Raisi says tackling Covid, reviving economy priorities



Cars drive under a bridge with a banner showing Iran’s Supreme Leader Ali Hosseini Khamenei receiving a COVID vaccine. PHOTO: ATTA KENARE/AFP

IRAN’S ultraconservative President Ebrahim Raisi said Saturday his government will prioritise tackling Covid and accelerating vaccinations ahead of an economic revival, as he defended his cabinet choices before parliament.

The conservative-dominated parliament began debating the male-only, largely conservative lineup in the morning ahead of a vote of

confidence expected later this week.

“The government’s first priority is controlling the coronavirus, improving the health situation and widespread vaccination,” Raisi said.

“The economy and the livelihood situation is the second” priority, he added, noting that his lineup is meant to bring about “justice and progress”.

Since late June, Iran has seen what officials have called a “fifth wave” of Covid-19 infections, the country’s worst yet, which they have largely blamed on the more contagious Delta variant of the virus.

Daily infections and deaths have hit record highs several times this month, raising total cases since the pandemic started to over 4.5 million and fatalities to more than 100,000.— AFP ■

Serbian cave hermit gets COVID-19 jab, urges others to follow

ALMOST twenty years ago, Panta Petrovic made social distancing a lifestyle choice when he moved into a tiny Serbian mountain cave to avoid society.

Last year, on one of his visits to town, the dreadlocked man with a long beard found out there was a pandemic raging. After vaccines against COVID-19 became available, he got jabbed and urges everyone to do the same.

“It (the virus) does not pick. It will come here, to my cave, too”, the 70-year-old told AFP in his cave on the forested Stara Planina mountain in southern Serbia.

The cave Petrovic calls home is accessible only by a steep climb that is not for the fainthearted.

It is equipped with an old rusty bathtub which he uses as a toilet, some benches and a stack of hay that serves as a bed.

Petrovic hails from the nearby town of Pirot where he worked as a labourer on the

black market, as he did abroad for some time. He remarried on multiple occasions, a life he called “hectic”.

Always a nature lover, he gradually found out that isolating from society brings him freedom he never tasted before.

“I was not free in the city. There is always someone in your way — you either argue with your wife, neighbours, or the police”, Petrovic told AFP while

peeling vegetables for lunch.

“Here, nobody is hassling me”, the man added with a smile, revealing his decaying teeth.

‘Money is cursed’

Petrovic mostly feeds on mushrooms and fish from the local creek, but also hikes downtown in search of leftover food in the bins.

And his visits to the town have become more regular recently.— AFP ■



Serbian hermit Panta Petrovic prepares milk for cats in his selfmade house in Pirot. PHOTO: AFP

NEWS IN BRIEF

Hundreds arrested in Australia protests as country posts worst Covid rise

HUNDREDS were arrested after violent clashes between anti-lockdown protesters and police in Australia’s two largest cities Saturday as the country recorded its sharpest rise in daily Covid-19 cases since the pandemic began.

Sydney’s state of New South Wales posted 825 infections -- a record for the entire country — a day after authorities extended the city’s lockdown until at least September to try to head off the Delta variant.— AFP ■

Veteran US civil rights activist Jesse Jackson hospitalized with Covid

VETERAN American civil rights activist Reverend Jesse Jackson was hospitalized after testing positive for Covid-19, despite having been vaccinated, representatives said Saturday.

Jackson, 79, and his wife, Jacqueline Jackson, 77, were in treatment at Northwestern Hospital in Chicago, the reverend’s Rainbow PUSH Coalition organization said in a statement on Facebook.

“Doctors are currently monitoring the condition of both. Anyone who has been around either of them for the last five or six days should follow” the guidelines of the government’s Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the brief statement added.

Baptist minister Jackson has been a leader in the American Civil Rights movement since the 1960s, when he marched with Martin Luther King and helped fundraise for the cause.— AFP ■

Iranian president vows to tackle economic problems



This photo from 12 March 2017, shows an Iranian laborer walking the platform of the oil facility in the Khark Island, on the shore of the Gulf. **PHOTO: AFP**

IRANIAN President Ebrahim Raisi on Saturday said that his government will do the utmost

to tackle economic problems of the country and improve livelihood of the people.

“Economic stability, improvement of macro (economic) indicators, recovery of people’s

livelihood and strengthening the business environment” are the priorities in the agenda of his government, said Raisi in the parliament meeting in defense of his nominated cabinet.

Solving the problems like inflation, depreciation of value of national currency, budget deficit, hardship in people’s livelihoods, high growth of liquidity, high government debt are possible through planning, he said, adding that it requires efficient human resources which could create transformation in the country.

He put current inflation in the country at 44 per cent and 55 per cent, citing recent separate reports by Iran’s Statistic Center and Central Bank of Iran respectively.

If follow-up and monitor-

ing measures are implemented and the implementation of transformation plans in the country are realized, the existing problems of the country can be dealt with.

Raisi pointed to the criteria for picking nominees for the ministerial positions, saying that expertise and knowledge in the field of mission was one of the factors for the selection and introduction of nominees.

“Commitment to work, revolutionary and jihadist spirit, anti-corruption and popularity were also among other criteria for choosing a minister,” the Iranian president said, noting that his cabinet would be a combination of youth and experience so that the efforts will create effective results. — Xinhua ■

Yemen currency clash deepens crisis in war-torn country

ALONGSIDE a grinding seven-year military conflict, Yemen’s government and the Huthi rebels are locked in battle on another front — a currency war that has opened up a gulf in riyal values.

Both the government and the Iran-backed Huthis used the same notes until late 2019 when the rebels banned new banknotes printed in government-run Aden, due to concerns about inflation.

The resulting difference in money supply has since seen the

riyal’s value plummet to around 1,000 to the dollar in government areas, while the value in Huthi-controlled zones has held relatively stable at 600.

Citizens and businesses in both government and rebel-controlled zones have been left out of pocket by the divergence, but especially those in the former, given rampant inflation there.

This internal exchange rate has also complicated trade and led to manipulation by profiteers,

to the detriment of most in a country on the verge of famine.

“Right now, we have — an exchange rate of the same currency inside the country,” said Amal Nasser, an economist with the Sanaa Center for Strategic Studies. “This is bizarre from an economic perspective”. According to Nasser, other experts and ordinary Yemenis, the gap between the two currency values meant higher transfer costs between the two zones. — AFP ■

Taliban inherit untapped \$1 trillion trove of minerals



The country’s untapped mineral riches have been estimated at \$1 trillion, though Afghan officials have put it three times as high. **PHOTO: AFP**

THE Taliban now hold the keys to an untouched trillion-dollar trove of minerals including some that could power the world’s transition to renewable energies, but Afghanistan has long struggled to tap its vast deposits.

The Taliban are already in a financial bind since they returned to power 20 years after their ouster, as major aid donors halted their support for Afghanistan.

Endless wars and poor infrastructure have prevented the country from getting its hands on the metals that could brighten its economic fortunes.

The resources include bauxite, copper, iron ore, lithium and rare earths, according to a January report by the US Geological Survey (USGS).

Copper, which is needed to make power cables, became a

hot commodity this year as prices soared to more than \$10,000 per tonne.

Lithium is a crucial element to make electric car batteries, solar panels and wind farms.

World demand for lithium is expected to grow by over 40 times by 2040, according to the International Energy Agency.

And Afghanistan “sits on a huge reserve of lithium that has not been tapped to this day,” said Guillaume Pitron, author of the book “The Rare Metals War”. Afghanistan is also home to rare earths that are used in the clean energy sector: Neodymium, praseodymium and dysprosium.

The country’s untapped mineral riches have been estimated at \$1 trillion by the USGS, though Afghan officials have put it three times as high. — AFP ■

Lebanon leaders reach short-term compromise on fuel

LEBANESE leaders agreed to a short-term compromise to maintain fuel subsidies Saturday, the presidency and prime minister’s office said, in a move set to trigger more price hikes.

Earlier this month, the central bank said it could no longer support fuel imports at a preferential exchange rate, in what many saw as a de facto end to subsidies.

Widespread panic ensued, with distributors scaling back deliveries until new prices were announced and desperate motorists forming long queues outside petrol stations.

At a time when state electricity supply is almost non-existent, fuel oil has also been in short supply to run back-up generators to power homes, businesses and even hospitals.

On Saturday evening, the presidency announced approval of a “request for the Bank of

Lebanon to open a temporary account to cover urgent and exceptional subsidies for fuel”.

A kitty of up to \$225 million would be set aside to subsidise imports of petrol, fuel oil and cooking gas until the end of September, it said.

The decision was taken at a meeting attended by the presi-

dent, the central bank chief and the caretaker prime minister, as well as the outgoing ministers of finance and energy.

Lebanon’s currency, the Lebanese pound, remains officially pegged at 1,507 to the dollar, but it has lost more than 90 percent of its value on the black market. — AFP ■



Lebanese wait to fill their gas cylinders in the southern city of Sidon amidst a deepening economic crisis, on 10 August 2021. **PHOTO: AFP**

Port of Long Beach's new terminal open to more trade with China

THE Port of Long Beach, U.S. second busiest port, announced Friday the completion of a 1.5-billion-U.S.-dollar new container terminal designed to become one of the most technologically advanced cargo facilities in the world.

"This terminal can move 3.5 million containers per year," Mario Cordero, Executive Director of the Port of Long Beach told Xinhua at a completion ceremony here in southern California.

"And any time you talk about needing more capacity, you are talking about China," he noted.

With two thirds of the port's imports coming from China, Cordero is confident that terminal will

be beneficial to both sides.

"Our goal is to operate as efficiently as possible and this terminal is a grand example of that," said Cordero, as he described the new terminal, which took over a decade to plan, design and build, as "the greatest achievement at the port of choice, a wonder of the maritime industry."

"It was well worth the investment," said Cordero. "The Port of Long Beach's mission for their new terminal is to create efficiency and reliability. In an age of e-commerce, consumers expect their products tomorrow. And we have an Amazon frame of mind," he added.

While capacity in most terminals on the U.S. West



A container ship of China's COSCO Shipping docks at a new container terminal of the Port of Long Beach in California, the United States, 20 August 2021. PHOTO: XINHUA

Coast have remained static, the Port of Long Beach's additional capacity will bring it a greater speed and efficiency reflected

in its berth productivity, speed of trucks through their gates, and the velocity of their rail system throughput, the largest in

North America.

"Additional capacity means more cargo, more supply chain jobs, a strengthening of our re-

gional and national economy," said Long Beach Container Terminal CEO Anthony Otto.

The cost of shipping a 40-foot container from China to U.S. West Coast has soared from 11,000 dollars in July to almost 20,000 dollars this week, shows Freightos index, giving rise to some concern that these exorbitant fees will negatively impact on the terminal's business.

But Cordero was unconcerned. "High rates aren't going to impact this terminal. We're very busy." He pointed out that the carriers charging an arm and a leg now were the same ones that suffered during the 2008-2009 global recession when the rates bottomed out. — Xinhua ■

No. of private lodgings in Japan falls with demand lost due to virus



Photo taken in June 2019 shows a "minpaku" private lodging room in the Ishikawa Prefecture city of Kanazawa, central Japan. PHOTO: KYODO

THE number of private properties for vacation rental in Japan has declined as the novel coronavirus pandemic caused a nosedive in travel demand, dashing hopes for more

foreign visitors during the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics.

As of 12 July, there were 18,578 vacation rental homes and apartments registered under the coun-

try's law on private lodging business, compared with a peak of 21,385 in April 2020, according to data released by the Japan Tourism Agency.

In fiscal 2020 through March this year, a total of 1.14 million people stayed in those private lodgings, down 77 per cent from the previous year.

Private lodging, known in Japan as "minpaku," has gained attention since a law legalizing it took effect in June 2018 to relieve a shortage of hotel rooms amid an inbound tourism boom.

Before the global spread of COVID-19 in

early 2020, concerns had grown that there would be a shortage of accommodation during the Tokyo Games, especially in Tokyo, Osaka and other major cities, resulting in a surge of registered private lodgings at a pace of several hundred units per month.

The Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics, originally scheduled for the summer of 2020, were postponed for a year due to the pandemic. The decision to stage the Summer Games mostly without spectators to prevent spread of the virus hit private lodging operators. — Kyodo News ■

Dark days for tourism in the City of Light

FEW tourists are gazing at the Mona Lisa or wandering the streets of Paris this summer, dashing hopes that the top tourist destination would see brighter days after last year's pandemic-linked desertion.

The City of Light has seen between 3.6 million and 4.7 million visitors between June and August, down from 10 million in 2019, before the coronavirus emerged and wrecked international travel, according to tourism office figures.

Only 2.6 million tourists visited Paris last year.

"With clients from afar not coming, the impact is considerable," Didier Arino, director of the travel firm Protourisme, told AFP.

France eased its travel rules ahead of the summer season, putting countries in a red, orange and green

colour-coded system that determines if visitors need to take a Covid-19 test before arriving, have a compelling reason to visit or quarantine.

Museums and other cultural venues reopened after long closures, though visitors have to show proof of vaccination or negative tests.

But Paris visitor numbers still disappointed.

'Reinventing ourselves'

Arino said occupancy rates at hotels in Paris were worse than elsewhere in France, with revenues down 60 per cent.

Romain Jouhaud, director general of 4 Roues Sous 1 Parapluie, a company that offers guided visits in a classic French car in the capital, said he only had 120 customers this summer compared to 360 in 2019. — AFP ■

Central Chinese city suspends business, construction ahead of downpours

KAIFENG, a city in rain-ravaged Henan Province in central China, on Saturday ordered the full suspension of construction and business operations to cope with heavy rainstorms forecast for Sunday and Monday.

All enterprises, tourist resorts and construction sites are ordered to shut down or halt operations from 8 a.m. Sunday to noon

on Monday, and roadside shops other than those providing life necessities should suspend operations by midnight Saturday, according to the city's headquarters of flood prevention and drought control.

The suspended sectors may reopen afternoon on Monday if the rain situation allows.

The city activated the second level emergency

response for flood prevention at noon on Saturday as heavy rainstorms with rainfall up to 250 mm are forecast from Sunday to Monday. The maximum hourly precipitation rate may reach 60 to 90 mm, according to the city's weather department. In Zhengzhou and Xinxiang, two cities that were hard hit by rain-triggered floods last month, the second lev-

el emergency response for flood prevention was also activated. In the provincial capital Zhengzhou, the residents living in flood-hit zones, mountainous areas, and those living on the first floor of buildings in the urban area were requested to be evacuated, according to a circular issued by the city's headquarters of flood prevention and drought control. — AFP ■



The Eiffel Tower reopened in mid-July after a nine-month hiatus due to the pandemic. PHOTO: AFP

Voting starts in Yokohama mayor election, result key to Suga's fate



Incumbent Yokohama Mayor Fumiko Hayashi is seeking re-election by supporting the Yamashita Pier casino resort project. **PHOTO: KYODO**

VOTING is under way in the Yokohama mayoral election Sunday, with the result set to have major implications for Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga's hopes of remaining in power beyond

the fall.

Hachiro Okonogi, a former chairman of the National Public Safety Commission and a close Suga ally, and the opposition-backed Takeharu Yamanaka

appeared to be neck-and-neck heading into the poll with incumbent Mayor Fumiko Hayashi trailing.

A loss by Okonogi, 56, would be a significant blow to Suga heading into a leadership race of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party and a general election in the coming weeks and months.

Yamanaka, 48, a data scientist by training and a former professor at Yokohama City University, has criticized Suga's government over its response to the coronavirus pandemic.

Japan is experiencing its largest wave of COVID-19 yet and dissatisfaction with Suga's handling of the pandemic is only growing, with a recent nationwide survey by Kyodo News showing support for his Cabinet at a record-low 31.8 per cent.

The second most populous city in the country after Tokyo, Yokohama, the capital of Kanagawa Prefecture, is home to the constituency of the prime minister's seat in the House of Representatives.

Yamanaka is running with the support of the main opposition Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan as well as the Japanese Communist Party and the Social Democratic Party.

He has criticized the government as ignoring calls from infectious disease experts to take stronger measures to curb the spread of COVID-19.

Besides serving as a gauge for Suga's popularity, the Yokohama election is a referendum of sorts on the city's bid to host a casino after Japan legalized their operation as part of so-called integrated resorts in 2018. — AFP ■

'Impossible' to evacuate all allied Afghans by August 31: EU

"IT'S mathematically impossible" for the US and its allies to evacuate tens of thousands of their Afghan personnel and families by 31 August, EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell warned Saturday.

Borrell, speaking to AFP from Spain in a telephone interview, added that "we have complained" to the Americans that their security at Kabul airport was overly strict and hampering attempts by Afghans who worked for the Europeans to enter.

31 August is the deadline the United States had announced for the complete pullout of its forces from Afghanistan, but President Joe Biden has flagged that might be extended if airlifts remain viable.

The US military is currently in control of Kabul's airport and

running its air traffic control operations.

"As far as I know, for the moment the Americans haven't said they will stay beyond August 31, but they might change their thinking," Borrell said. "They want to evacuate 60,000 people between now and the end of this month. It's mathematically impossible," he said. Borrell told AFP that, for Europe's evacuation efforts, "the problem is access to the airport — the US checks and security measures are very strong" and were preventing the passage of Afghan staff.

He said Brussels had lodged a complaint with the US, asking for "more flexibility".

The EU's top foreign policy official had been in Madrid accompanying European Council



Protesters in London carry placards and wave Afghan flags as they march in solidarity with the people of Afghanistan. **PHOTO: AFP**

President Charles Michel and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen on a visit to a Spanish air base receiving incoming flights carrying European citizens and Afghan personnel — and several American citizens.

He said just 150 of the 400 Afghans employed by the EU have been evacuated so far. "I'm very aware that this is very insufficient," he said. "Planes are leaving while people are still on the tarmac," he said. — AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Ex-UK PM Blair slams West's 'abandonment' of Afghanistan

FORMER UK prime minister Tony Blair, who in 2001 took Britain into war in Afghanistan alongside the United States, on Saturday condemned their "abandonment" of the country as "dangerous" and "unnecessary".

In his first public comments on the crisis since the Afghan government collapsed last weekend, Blair criticised the US motives for the withdrawal as "imbecilic" and "driven not by grand strategy but by politics".

"The abandonment of Afghanistan and its people is tragic, dangerous, unnecessary, not in their interests and not in ours," Blair wrote in a wide-ranging article published on his institute's website.

"We didn't need to do it. We chose to do it.

"We did it in obedience to an imbecilic political slogan about ending 'the forever wars', as if our engagement in 2021 was remotely comparable to our commitment 20 or even 10 years ago." — AFP ■

Taliban co-founder Baradar in Kabul for talks to set up government

TALIBAN co-founder Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar arrived in Kabul on Saturday for talks on establishing a new "inclusive" government in Afghanistan, a senior official said.

It comes after other senior Taliban leaders were seen in the capital in recent days, including Khalil Haqqani — one of America's most wanted terrorists with a \$5 million bounty on his head. A senior Taliban official told AFP that Baradar would meet "jihadi leaders and politicians for an inclusive government set-up". Hours later, pro-Taliban social media accounts showed Haqqani announcing that Ahmad Massoud — the son of Afghanistan's most famed anti-Taliban fighter Ahmad Shah Massoud — had "declared allegiance" to the movement. — AFP ■

Who's who in the Taliban leadership

THE Taliban's senior officials were gathering in the Afghan capital Saturday for talks with elders and politicians on forming a government after their stunning sweep to power last weekend.

The inner workings and leadership of the group have long been shrouded in secrecy — even during their rule from 1996 to 2001 — but here is a rundown of what is known:

Haibatullah Akhundzada, the supreme leader

Haibatullah Akhundzada was appointed leader of the Taliban in a swift power transition after a US drone strike killed his predecessor, Mullah Mansour Akhtar,



The Taliban's senior leaders are gathering for talks on forming a new government after taking over Afghanistan. **PHOTO: AFP**

in 2016. Before ascending the movement's ranks, Akhundzada was a

low-profile religious figure. He is widely believed to have been selected to serve more as a spiritual

figurehead than a military commander.

After being appointed leader, Akhundzada secured a pledge of loyalty from Al-Qaeda chief Ayman al-Zawahiri, who showered the cleric with praise — calling him "the emir of the faithful". This helped seal his jihadi credentials with the group's long-time allies. Akhundzada was tasked with the enormous challenge of unifying a militant movement that briefly fractured during the bitter power struggle after Akhtar's assassination, and the revelation that the leadership had hidden the death of Taliban founder Mullah Omar for years. — AFP ■

NEWS
IN BRIEF

Israel strikes Gaza after border clashes

ISRAEL struck Gaza on Saturday after clashes between its troops and Palestinians protesters on the border left dozens injured, including an Israeli policeman and a 13-year-old Palestinian boy who were both critically wounded.

The clashes, which saw crowds of young Palestinians hurling firebombs and trying to scale the Gaza border wall, with Israeli troops firing in return, came exactly three months since Israel and the enclave's Hamas rulers reached a truce following their deadliest fighting in years. The Hamas Islamist-run Gazan health ministry said the injured included a 13-year-old boy left in a critical condition after being hit in the head.— AFP ■

Bolivia ex-leader tried to 'take her own life' in prison, lawyer says

BOLIVIA'S jailed former president Jeanine Anez attempted to take her own life in prison on Saturday, her lawyer said, a day after prosecutors charged her with "genocide" over the 2019 deaths of protesters.

Anez has been jailed since March, originally on charges — trumped up, her defenders say — of staging a coup against her predecessor and rival, former president Evo Morales.

One of Anez's lawyers, Jorge Valda, said the former leader, despondent over her legal situation, had "attempted to take her own life — an attempt in which, thank God, she failed."

Bolivian officials had announced Anez tried to harm herself, with Interior Minister Eduardo del Castillo saying she had suffered only "scratches" on her arm in the attempt early Saturday and is in stable condition.— AFP ■

Key ally Merkel visits Ukraine before leaving office

GERMAN Chancellor Angela Merkel visits Ukraine on Sunday, an ally she has supported in its conflict with pro-Russia separatists but has disappointed with her appetite for Russian gas.

She will meet with President Volodymyr Zelensky just two days after holding talks with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin in Moscow ahead of her departure from office next month.

In power for 16 years, the German leader has been a key ally of Kiev since 2014, when Moscow annexed Crimea and pro-Russia separatists broke away from Ukraine in the east.

But she has also been unwavering in pushing across the finish line a controversial Russian gas pipeline to Europe despite fierce opposition from Ukraine, the United States and several European countries. "You can call it a pragmatic approach," Zelensky said this week in an interview with several media outlets, adding that Merkel was conducting a "very delicate balancing act".



German Chancellor Angela Merkel will visit Ukraine ahead of her departure from office next month. PHOTO: POOL/AFP/FILE

"In my opinion, this is too soft." Despite disagreements over the pipeline, Germany is a key mediator in attempts to resolve the protracted conflict in eastern Ukraine, which has claimed more than 13,000 lives.

Since the fighting broke out, Merkel has been one of the loudest voices accusing the Kremlin of backing the separatists, which Moscow denies. And she played a crucial role in clinching the Minsk peace accords in 2015, which helped halt the fiercest clashes. But for many in Ukraine, the deal, which assumes some autonomy for the breakaway parts of the Donetsk and Lugansk regions, was unfavourable for Kiev and is difficult to fulfil. "With Merkel's departure, the foundation of the Minsk agreements will become even more fragile," Kiev-based political analyst Volodymyr Fesenko told AFP.— AFP ■

US vice president arrives in Singapore for 1st trip to Asia

U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris arrived in Singapore on Sunday as part of her first official trip to Asia that aims to show U.S. commitment to the Indo-Pacific region amid the growing clout of China.

Her two-nation trip to Asia, which includes Vietnam, comes as US President Joe Biden faces strong criticism at home and abroad over the chaos caused by the hasty US troop withdrawal from Afghanistan amid the Taliban's recent takeover of the country.



US Vice President Kamala Harris aims to underline Washington's commitment to Asia during her trip to Singapore and Vietnam. PHOTO: POOL/AFP

Harris will stay in Singapore for three days from Sunday, holding talks with Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong on Monday, after which they plan to hold a joint press conference.

Also Monday, she will visit Changi Naval Base where she will board a US littoral combat ship.

She will deliver a speech the following day to underscore the importance of partnerships and areas for further cooperation, before flying to Vietnam where she will become the first sitting US vice president ever to visit the country.

Last month, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin visited Singapore, Vietnam and the Philippines, becoming the first member of Biden's Cabinet to visit Southeast Asia.

The Biden administration has been striving to strengthen cooperation with its partners and like-minded countries to counter China's growing assertiveness in the region.— Kyodo ■

Nigerian oil hub hails coronation of new king

THOUSANDS of people in traditional red and white attire thronged to the riverine community of Ode-Itsekiri in southern Nigeria's oil hub Warri on Saturday to witness the ascension of their new king.

The king or Olu of Warri is one of the most important traditional rulers in Nigeria, reigning over a kingdom dating back to the 15th century with a trading hub and seaport once used by Portuguese and Dutch slave merchants.

Nigeria's kings and emirs hold no official political powers, but they wield enormous influence as custodians of spiritual and cultural heritage in Africa's most populous nation which has more than 300 ethnicities.

The new King, Omo Oba Utiyeninoritsetsola Emiko, 37, ascended the throne as the 21st Olu of Warri at the ceremony in Ode-Itsekiri, his people's ancestral home. The US-educated prince was crowned by traditional chiefs of the ancient town in the presence of ministers, governors, senators, religious leaders and diplomats.

After the crown was placed on his head, the kingmakers bowed to pay homage to the new king to applause from the ecstatic crowd of on-lookers. The new king, now officially known as Ogiame Atuwatshe III of Warri kingdom, urged Itsekiri to support him, as guests were given displays of music, dancing, acrobatics and a boat regatta.— AFP ■



The king or Olu of Warri is one of the most important traditional rulers in Nigeria reigning over a kingdom dating back to the 15th century. PHOTO: AFP / PIUS UTOMI EKPEI

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.

Ancelotti insists his gaze is focused on current Real stars

REAL Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti again batted away questions about rumoured galactico signings and told his pre-match press conference on Saturday that he was happy working with the stars he had. Real won 4-1 away to Alaves on the opening weekend of La Liga and on Sunday visit Levante, who drew their opener at Cadiz.

But many of the questions he faced were about potential signings. After a while even Ancelotti began to lose patience. "These are personnel issues, I don't have to talk about it here," he said. Ancelotti dismissed a question about the possible return of Cristiano Ronaldo, with whom the coach won the Champions League and Club World Cup in a first stint at Real. "The subject is finished," Ancelotti said. "We look forward. Everyone at Real Madrid loves CR7. I love him even more, because CR7 has helped me win a lot of the titles I have won." Ancelotti sidestepped a question on whether Kylian Mbappe might be arriving from Paris Saint-Germain. "I don't know, really," the Italian said. "It doesn't matter to me. I have a very good squad, strong. I want to coach it. I'm very happy. I'm focused on the team I have." — AFP ■

FIFA Ranking: Myanmar team still standing fourth in ASEAN



Myanmar striker Suam Lam Mang celebrates the first goal over Tajikistan during their FIFA World Cup Qualifiers at Mandalay Thiri Stadium in Mandalay on 14 November, 2019. PHOTO: MFF

THE Myanmar men's national football team is currently standing fourth in the ASEAN region and ranked 145th in the world with 1,057 points, according to the FIFA rankings released for

August 2021.

Thailand have dropped 14 places while Myanmar downgraded to sixth from previous point of 139th, according to the data released by the FIFA.

Team Viet Nam is still standing first in ASEAN with world ranking of 92nd and 1,261 points earned. Meanwhile, Thailand's national football team is placed second in ASEAN with FIFA

ranking of 120th and 1,149 points. The Philippines squad is third with world ranking of 128th and 1,132 points.

Next, Malaysia national team is fifth after Myanmar in ASEAN and the team is standing as 154th in the world ranking with 1,041 points earned. In the meantime, Singapore is next with FIFA world ranking of 160th and 1,000 points.

Indonesia and Cambodia are in the seventh and eighth place in ASEAN with FIFA ranking of 174th and 179th.

Laos is next in the ninth place with FIFA world ranking of 186th. Brunei and Timor Leste are in the tenth and eleventh place with FIFA ranking of 190th and 195th separately.

Myanmar had highest records of FIFA ranks as 97th in April 1996 and lowest as 182nd in August 2012, according to the FIFA.— GNLM

Ugas stuns Pacquiao to retain WBA welterweight crown



Filipino boxer Manny Pacquiao (left) trades blows with Cuba's Yordenis Ugas during the WBA welterweight title fight in Las Vegas. PHOTO: AFP

CUBA'S Yordenis Ugas sent Manny Pacquiao spinning to a dramatic upset defeat on Saturday, outclassing the Filipino boxing icon with a composed unanimous points victory at the T-Mobile Arena.

In his first fight after a two-year absence from the ring, Pacquiao was made to look every bit of his 42 years as the younger Ugas dominated with a stinging jab and cleaner punching to retain his WBA welterweight belt.

Ugas, 35, had only been drafted in to face Pacquiao ear-

lier this month after the eight-division world champion's original opponent Errol Spence Jr. suffered an eye injury in training.

But the defending champion seized his opportunity brilliantly to win on all three cards, with one judge scoring it 115-113 and two others 116-112.

"That's boxing," a deflated Pacquiao said afterwards.

"I had a hard time in the ring making adjustments. My legs were tight. I'm sorry I lost tonight, but I did my best." — AFP ■