

NATIONAL

Myanmar Economic Recovery Plan-MERP Final Consultation and Presentation led by Working Committee to address the impact of COVID-19 on National Economy Virtual Meeting

PAGE-3

NATIONAL

MoH Minister attends opening ceremony of US centre for disease control and preventions southeast Asia regional office

PAGE-4

THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

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Five-Point Road Map of the State Administration Council

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

COVID-19 vaccines distributed nationwide for second injections

THE Ministry of Health conducts vaccination programmes in respective regions/states for target populations. Starting 26 July 2021, the ministry used Sinopharm and Sinovac vaccines donated by China and purchased from China to vaccinate the public for the first injection. For the second dose, the ministry distributed the vaccines via land or with the help of Tatmadaw (Air) and MAI to the remote areas starting 21 August 2021.

The vaccines were allocated to Mon, Kayin, Ayeyawady, Bago, Taninthayi, Shan, Magway, Sagaing, Mandalay, Nay Pyi Taw, Kachin and Rakhine until 25 August 2021.

These vaccines were also used to vaccinate the factory workers in Yangon, Mandalay, Bago and Ayeyawady regions. — MNA



The COVID-19 vaccines are transported and distributed to one of the remote areas with the help of Tatmadaw aircraft.

INSIDE TODAY

NATIONAL

Imports of COVID-19 protective devices, medical aids continue

PAGE-2

NATIONAL

Opening ceremony for 2nd China-Myanmar border trade fair

PAGE-3

NATIONAL

High-valued Thanaka products to be produced in post-COVID-19 period

PAGE-4

LOCAL BUSINESS

Sesame seeds export exceeds US\$292 mln in seven months

PAGE-5



LOCAL BUSINESS

Myanmar fresh chilli pepper export to Thailand drops this year

PAGE-5

Republic of the Union of Myanmar
State Administration Council
Order No 175/ 2021

3rd Waning of Wagaung 1383 ME
25 August 2021

Appointment and Duty Assignment of
Deputy Minister

THE State Administration Council has appointed and assigned Major-General Khun Thant Zaw Htoo to the duty of Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Border Affairs, according to Section 419 of the State Constitution.

By Order,

Aung Lin Dwe
Lieutenant-General
Secretary
State Administration Council

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)

Daily newspapers available online

FOR those who would like to read the Myanma Alinn, the Kyemon and the Global New Light of Myanmar, published daily by the Ministry of Information, please visit www.moi.gov.mm/mal, www.moi.gov.mm/km, www.moi.gov.mm/nlm and www.gnlm.com.mm/e-paper.

News and Periodicals Enterprise

Imports of COVID-19 protective devices, medical aids continue

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

On 25 August (Yesterday), 259 oxygen concentrators from Yangon International Airport and two oxygen plants, 870 empty oxygen cylinders, four tonnes of masks and 20 oxygen concentrators from the seaport were successfully imported.

A total of 57 tonnes of oxygen (liquid) carried by three

bowzers, four tonnes of liquid oxygen, 4,270 empty oxygen cylinders, one oxygen plant, 279 home oxygen concentrators, 3,100 sets of PPE suits, and 35 tonnes of masks were also imported via Chinshwehaw, Myawady, Tachilek, Kawthoung and Hteekhee trading posts.

The aforementioned items were imported by 25 companies and transported by 25 vehicles, including 3 Bowser vehicles.

One Oxygen Plant will be transported to Yangon, officials said.

It is reported that the Ministry of Commerce is coordinat-



The lorries are seen transporting the imported COVID-19 protective devices and medical supplies to the needed places.



ing with relevant departments, facilitating the importation of essential medical supplies required in prevention, control and treatment of COVID-19, as well as contact persons for inquiries can be reached through the Ministry's Website — www.commerce.gov.mm. — MNA



The lorries are seen transporting the imported COVID-19 protective devices and medical supplies to the needed places.

Manufacturing of quality products in full swing

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

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

Myanmar Economic Recovery Plan-MERP Final Consultation and Presentation led by Working Committee to address the impact of COVID-19 on National Economy Virtual Meeting

THE meeting of final consultation and presentation on Myanmar Economic Recovery Plan-MERP was virtually held by the Working Committee to address the impact of COVID-19 on the National Economy yesterday morning at Office No. (1), Ministry of Investment and Foreign Economic Relations.

The meeting was chaired by U Aung Naing Oo, Union Minister for Investment and Foreign Economic Relations as well as the Chairman of the Working Committee to address the impact of COVID-19 on the National Economy. Member of the Working Committee Deputy Ministers, from Ministry of Planning and Finance, Ministry of Labour and Ministry of Commerce, Deputy Governor of Central Bank of Myanmar and separate invitees Deputy Minister from Ministry of Investment and Foreign Economic Relations and representatives of the Ministries concerned attended the meeting.

In the meeting, the Chair-

man of Working Committee stated that the current Myanmar Economic Recovery Plan-MERP is formulated, based on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which is Global Development Agenda, ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework (ACRF) and The Greater Mekong Sub-region COVID-19 Response and Recovery Plan (2021- 2023) as well as to be in line with road-map and Economic Objectives of State Administration Council in order to recover the National Economy affected by COVID-19.

In addition, the union minister expressed MERP is a framework including 10 Action Plans, 27 Expectations and 407 Action Lines will be kept as a living document. And it will be arranged for the relevant Ministries and organizations to update their implementation of the Action Plans if there is any change in the action plan. Although the Action Lines are for the short-term and medium-term, it is



also required to be linked with the long-term National Plan. The respective leading and implementing agency is needed to cooperate and organize with the other relevant ministries in order to implement MERP Action Plans as necessary. Monitoring and Evaluation will also be conducted by identifying Key

Performance Indicator (KPI) in meeting with the targeted result of the implementation of the Action Plans. The task to identify KPI will be consulted with the concerned ministries and further release.

A detailed discussion on the Action Plans of the Myanmar Economic Recovery Plan-

MERP was presented by the Secretary of Working Committee Dr Wah Wah Maung, Director-General for Investment and Foreign Economic Relations. Afterwards, the participants discussed the draft plan and decided to proceed as per the procedures for further approval of the plan. — MNA

Opening ceremony for 2nd China-Myanmar border trade fair

THE opening ceremony of the 2nd China (Lincang)-Myanmar (Lashio) border economic and trade fair was organized online under the supervision of the Myanmar Trade Promotion Organization of the Ministry of Commerce and Lincang provincial government of Yunnan yesterday.

During the ceremony, Shan State Economic Affairs Minister U Khun Thein Maung, Director-General Daw Naw Mu Tar Ka Paw of Myanmar Trade

Promotion Organization, Myanmar Ambassador to China U Myo Thant Pe, Secretary Mar Yan Houk Thon of CCP, Economic Counselor Mr Htan Su Phu of Chinese Embassy and Deputy Director-General Mr Wang Xiaohua respectively made the remarks. Then, the attendees to the event opened the 2nd China (Lincang)-Myanmar (Lashio) border economic and trade fair.

The separate gallery will be constructed for the border trade

fair in the China-South Asia Online Expo building, which is being held in Kunming of China from 25 to 29 August.

A total of 200 Myanmar and Chinese entrepreneurs will participate in the exhibition displaying rice, beans and pulses, marine products, foodstuffs, commodities, ICT and electric power.

The Myanmar traders who want to attend the border fair can register at <http://www.csa-expo.com> from 25 to 29 August. — MNA

2,502 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 25 August, total figure rises to 380,879

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to 380,879 after 2,502 new cases were reported on 25 August 2021 according to the Ministry of Health. Among these confirmed cases, 309,032 have been discharged from hospitals. Death toll reached 14,737 after 115 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 24-8-2021, a total of 4,542,363 people have been vaccinated. Of them, 1,797,550 people have been vaccinated two times and 2,744,813 people once. —MNA

MoH Minister attends opening ceremony of US centre for disease control and preventions Southeast Asia regional office

UNION Minister for Health Dr Thet Khaing Win attended the opening ceremony of the U.S. Health Engagement in Southeast Asia: Launch of U.S. Centres for Disease Control and Preventions, Southeast Asia Regional Office held through videoconferencing yesterday in Hanoi, Socialist Republic of Viet Nam.

The ceremony was also attended by Deputy Prime Minister of Viet Nam Mr Pham Binh Min, Vice-President of the U.S. Ms Kamala Harris, health ministers from the ASEAN countries and Papua New Guinea and officials.

The Southeast Asia Regional Office was open to enhance

cooperation in healthcare between the US and the ASEAN countries, conducting field epidemiology training programmes and increasing cooperation in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, monitoring communicable disease and enhancing laboratory tests. – MNA

Union Minister Dr Thet Khaing Win attends the opening ceremony of the US Health Engagement in Southeast Asia: Launch of US Centres for Disease Control and Preventions, Southeast Asia Regional Office held through videoconferencing yesterday.



High-valued Thanaka products to be produced in post-COVID-19 period



Due to the inability to export Thanaka products amid the current COVID-19 pandemic, Ayadaw Thanaka Association is planning to produce high-valued Thanaka products such as beads, combs, statues, Thanaka facial foam, Thanaka leave shampoo, powder, lotion and other traditional medicines made from Thanaka.

IN the post-COVID-19 period, the traditional Myanmar Thanaka will be produced in high-quality products to be sold in shops, said U Kyaw Moe, Chairman of the Myanmar Thanaka Association.

Due to the inability to export Thanaka products amid the current COVID-19 pandemic, Ayadaw Thanaka Association is planning to produce high-valued Thanaka products such as beads, combs, statues, Thana-

ka facial foam, Thanaka leave shampoo, powder, lotion and other traditional medicines made from Thanaka.

The Ayadaw Thanaka venue has been closed at present as COVID-19 cases are on the rise, facing an economic downturn. Both growers and brokers are affected by the lack of sales and in order to revitalize the economy, plans are underway to set up shops to produce and sell a wide range of high-end Thanaka prod-

ucts, according to U Kyaw Moe.

While everyone in the business is affected, Ayadaw is more affected by the economic crisis since most Thanaka trees are grown in Ayadaw. The plan to produce and sell the high-valued Thanaka products also aims to make a living for the local Thanaka growers so that they can generate income, and people will also be able to easily buy them in shops. – Min Htet Aung (Mandalay Sub-Printing House)/GNLM

Dala bus terminal provides regular bus services to travellers

DALA bus terminal is providing its regular bus service for the convenience of the travellers, according to the Yangon Region Transport Authority (YRTA) in Dala Township.

The highway express is running to the townships in the Ayeyawady region and Yangon region through the Dala bus terminal.

Seven bus lines are currently running daily as usual to the townships in the Ayeyawady region. Those seven bus lines include Shwe Myanmar bus lines (Dedaye-Dala), Pan Yoma, Kaung Htet Thu/Shwe Lamin, Toe Ayeya, Myit Ayeya Kyaw (Maubin-Dala) and, Yarthatpan and Aung Sitt The (Pyapon-Dala).

Similarly, five bus lines are also running as usual to the townships in Yangon region. Those bus lines are Htet Aung Kyaw (Dala-Pyapon), Paing Ayeya (Dala-Kyaiklat), Shwe Thahtay (Dala-Pyapon), Hta-waya (Dala-Pyapon) and Shwe Chan Thar (Dala-Pyapon).

“The number of passengers has declined due to the outbreak of COVID-19. Currently, we could not expect many

passengers like before. And, these bus lines are running in line with the current COVID-19 rules and regulations. The bus lines are also carrying only five passengers on board. Although there are only a few passengers on board, the bus lines are running for the convenience of the passengers, said an express driver from one bus line based in the Ayeyawady region.

Besides, over 120 YBS buses and 12 YBS microbus numbers 47,48,49 and 50 are running daily as usual from Dala-Twintay-Kawhmu-Kungyangon townships to Hlinethaya.

During the pandemic period, more than 600 passengers have been transported daily with five passengers aboard in each bus, said an official from the YRTA in Dala township.

About 294 YBS buses, from 23 bus lines in Dala township in Yangon and Ayeyawady, transport the passengers. The YBS business officials have warned YBS passengers to wear masks and maintain social distance from fellow passengers while travelling on board the buses. — Naing Lin Kyaw (Dala)/GNLM

Sesame seeds export exceeds US\$292 mln in seven months

MYANMAR'S sesame seeds export earned US\$292.28 million in the past eight months (October-May) of the current financial year 2020-2021, according to data released by Myanmar Customs Department.

In early August 2021, black sesame seeds fetched only K110,000 per bag, whereas the price slightly rose to K125,000 per bag in the last week of August. The price of black sesame seeds quite recovered on the back of demand by China in the recent days in the Mandalay market, the traders from the Bayintnaung wholesale market said.

The demand for the newly harvested sesame varieties (brown sesame, yellow sesame and white sesame) is halted for now. The price of black sesame has risen on the high demand, Soe Win Myint pulses depot in Mandalay stated.

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



Of the cooking oil crops grown in Myanmar, the acreage under sesame seed is the highest, accounting for 51.3 per cent of the overall oil crop plantation.

suggested.

Both raw sesame seeds and value-added sesame seeds are conveyed to China. When the COVID-19 cases fall and transportation barriers are eased, the sesame market will raise its head again for sure, he added.

The black sesame seeds fetched about K135,000-160,000 in the last week of June 2021, according to the Mandalay commodity depot.

Normally, Myanmar exports about 80 per cent of sesame production to foreign markets. China is the primary buyer of Myanmar sesame, which was also shipped to markets in Japan, South Korea, China (Taipei), the UK, Germany, the Netherlands, Greece, and Poland among the EU countries.

The EU markets prefer

organic-farming sesame seeds from Myanmar. Japan prefers Myanmar black sesame seeds, cultivated under good agricultural practice (GAP), and purchases them after a quality assessment. Black sesame seeds from Myanmar were previously exported to South Korea and Japan.

China usually purchases various coloured sesame seeds from the country, yet, the trade is quite sluggish amid the restriction measures to contain the COVID-19 disease. This year, Japan has not purchased Myanmar's sesame yet.

Sesame is cultivated in the country throughout the year. Magway Region, which has gained a reputation as the oil pot of Myanmar, is the main producer of sesame seeds. The seeds

are also grown in Mandalay and Sagaing regions.

Of the cooking oil crops grown in Myanmar, the acreage under sesame seed is the highest, accounting for 51.3 per cent of the overall oil crop plantation.

The volume of sesame exports has registered at over 96,000 metric tons, worth \$130 million, in the financial year 2015-2016; \$100,000 tonnes, worth \$145 million, in the 2016-2017FY; 120,000 tonnes, worth \$147 million, in the 2017-2018FY; 33,900 tonnes valued \$43.8 million in the 2018 mini-budget period, 125,800 tonnes, worth \$212.5 million in the 2018-2019FY and over 150,000 tonnes of sesame, worth \$240 million in the previous 2019-2020FY, the trade data of Central Statistical Organization indicated. — KK/GNLM

Sino-Myanmar bilateral trade totals US\$7.26 bln in eight months

THE value of trade with Myanmar's major trade partner China through maritime and sea trade channels crossed US\$7.26 billion in the past eight months (October-May) of the 2020-2021 financial year, including \$3.96 billion worth of exports and \$3.29 billion for import, according to data released by the Ministry of Commerce.

Myanmar primarily exports agro products to China through border crossings. However, trading in agricultural products is frequently halted on account of China clamping down on illegal trade through land borders. Furthermore, China has been stepping up border control measures to contain the spread of the COVID-19 since April-end, hindering the border trade. At present, China has banned all the border posts in wake of the COVID surge in Myanmar.

The value of bilateral trade with China stood at \$12 billion in the 2019-2020FY, \$11.36 billion in the 2018-2019FY, \$6 billion in the past mini-budget period, \$11.78 billion in the 2017-2018 financial year and \$10.8 billion in the 2016-2017FY, respectively.

Rice, various types of peas, sesame seeds, corn, fruits and vegetables, dried tea leaves, fishery products, rubber, minerals and animal products are exported to China, whereas machinery, plastic raw materials, consumer products and electronic tools flow into Myanmar. — KH/GNLM

Myanmar fresh chilli pepper export to Thailand drops this year



Additionally, the fresh chilli pepper is priced at extremely lower than the price registered last year, fetching only K1,300 per viss (a viss equals 1.6 kg). Last year, the price hit a record high of K5,000-6,000 per viss, the association stated.

THE export of Myanmar's fresh chilli pepper to Thailand via cross-border trade sharply

fell this year, said Daw Ohn Mar Kyaw, chair of Myanmar Chilli Market and Technical Develop-

ment Association.

Myanmar delivered fresh chilli pepper to Thailand through the Myawady border with over 50 trucks per day in the previous years. This year, about ten trucks loaded with fresh chilli pepper are seen on the border every day, she continued.

"The number of export trucks drastically declines. About seven to ten trucks of fresh chilli pepper are daily exported to Thailand for now. Earlier, Myanmar conveyed over 60 trucks of fresh chilli pepper per day to Thailand," Daw Ohn Mar Kyaw elaborated.

Additionally, the fresh chilli

pepper is priced at extremely lower than the price registered last year, fetching only K1,300 per viss (a viss equals 1.6 kg). Last year, the price hit a record high of K5,000-6,000 per viss, the association stated.

Myanmar's fresh chilli pepper is shipped to Viet Nam via sea route and primarily sent to China and Thailand via land border, Daw Ohn Mar Kyaw continued.

It is commonly grown in the Ayeyawady Region and Kyaukse Township of Mandalay Region. The export varieties of fresh chilli pepper are 692,777,999, Demon, Sunshine and Lucky one. — NN/GNLM



Emerging countries will bear the brunt of the losses from slow vaccination efforts, according to the Economist Intelligence Unit. **PHOTO: NARINDER NANU/ AFP/FILE**

Slow Covid vaccination to cost global economy \$2.3 tn: study

THE slow rollout of coronavirus vaccines will cost the global economy \$2.3 trillion in lost output, a report released Wednesday found.

The Economist Intelligence Unit's study found that emerging and developing economies, whose vaccine rollouts are far behind those of wealthier countries, will bear the brunt of those losses.

The report comes as advanced nations move towards providing booster shots to their populations while the international effort to provide vaccines for poorer nations remains inadequate.

The study calculated that countries which fail to vaccinate 60 per cent of their populations by mid-2022 will suffer the losses, equivalent to two trillion euros, over the 2022-2025 period.

"Emerging countries will shoulder around two-thirds of

these losses, further delaying their economic convergence with more developed countries," the EIU said.

It warned the delayed rollout of vaccines could fuel resentment, increasing the risk of social unrest in developing economies.

The Asia-Pacific Region will be the worst hit in absolute terms, accounting for nearly three-quarters of the losses.

But as a percentage of GDP, sub-Saharan Africa will suffer the worst losses.

Around 60 per cent of the population of higher-income countries received at least one dose of the coronavirus vaccine as of late August, compared to just one per cent in poorer nations, according to the study. Two doses are required to be fully vaccinated for most shots.

"Vaccination campaigns are progressing at a glacial pace in

lower-income economies," it said.

The report's author, Agathe Demarais, said the international effort to provide coronavirus vaccines to poor nations, Covax, has failed to live up to its even modest expectations.

"There is little chance that the divide over access to vaccines will ever be bridged" with rich countries providing only a fraction of what is needed, she said in a statement.

"Finally, the focus in developed economies is shifting towards administering booster doses of coronavirus vaccines, which will compound shortages of raw materials and production bottlenecks," she added.

The EIU said its study was conducted by combining its in-house forecasts for vaccination timelines in around 200 countries with GDP growth forecasts. —AFP ■

Messenger RNA Covid vaccines 66% effective against Delta: US study

THE effectiveness against infection of the Pfizer and Moderna Covid-19 vaccines dropped from 91 per cent before the Delta variant became dominant to 66 per cent afterwards, according to a large study of US health workers published Tuesday. The Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has been examining the real-world performance of the two vaccines since they were first authorized among healthcare personnel, first responders and other frontline workers.

Thousands of workers across six states were tested weekly and upon onset of Covid-19 symptoms, allowing researchers to estimate efficacy against symptomatic and asymptomatic infection. By looking at the rate of infections among vaccinated and unvaccinated people and the amount of time they were tracked, vaccine effectiveness was estimated at 91 per cent in the initial study period of 14 December 2020 to 10 April 2021.

But during weeks in the run-up to 14 August when the ultra-contagious Delta variant became dominant, effectiveness fell to 66 per cent. The report's authors said there were a number of caveats, including that the protection from vaccines could be waning over time anyway, and the 66 per cent estimate was based on a relatively short study period with few infections.

"Although these interim findings suggest a moderate reduction in the effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines in preventing infection, the sustained two thirds reduction in infection risk underscores the continued importance and benefits of COVID-19 vaccination," they said.

A number of studies have now concluded vaccine efficacy has dropped against Delta, even though the precise level of that drop differs between papers.

Protection against severe disease appears more stable, exceeding 90 per cent, according to a recent CDC study of patients in New York.

Another CDC study of Los Angeles patients released Tuesday that was carried out from 1 May to 25 July showed unvaccinated people were 29.2 times more likely to be hospitalized with Covid-19 than the vaccinated -- corresponding to efficacy of about 97 per cent. Delta became the dominant strain in the United States in early July.

According to a recent paper in the journal *Virological*, the amount of virus found in the first tests of patients with the Delta variant was 1,000 times higher than patients in the first wave of the virus in 2020, greatly increasing its contagiousness. —AFP ■



The Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has been examining the real-world performance of the two vaccines since they were first authorized among health care personnel, first responders and other frontline workers. **PHOTO: PATRICK T. FALLON/ AFP/FILE**

Louisiana's 'Cancer Alley' reeling in the time of Covid

SILOS, smokestacks and brown pools of water line the banks of the Mississippi River in Louisiana, where scores of refineries and petrochemical plants have metastasized over a few decades. Welcome to "Cancer Alley." Industrial pollution on this ribbon of land between New Orleans and Baton Rouge puts the mostly African-American residents at nearly 50 times the risk of developing cancer than the national average, according to the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

For years activists, who gave the 87-mile (140-kilometre) stretch its sinister nickname, have been fighting to clean up the area. Then, last spring, it began making headlines for a different reason: one of its parishes — Louisiana's equivalent of US counties — was hit with the highest rate of Covid-19-related deaths in the country.

"It ran through this community. People were terrified here," says Robert Taylor, 79, a resident of the parish of St John's the Baptist. In April 2020, at the

height of the first wave, three residents were dying every day in the community of 43,000. "It changed our way of life," says Angelo Bernard, 64, who works for the Marathon refinery.

"In Reserve, we all used to get together all the time," he remembers. "We don't anymore. I go out as little as possible." Since then nearly one in eight parishioners has been infected.

The Delta variant has made the situation even worse: infections have exploded in the last three weeks. —AFP ■

Japan, Britain hold joint naval drill south of Okinawa Island

JAPAN and Britain have held a joint naval drill in the Pacific Ocean south of Okinawa Island, Japan's Defence Ministry said Wednesday, as the two countries deepen defence cooperation amid China's growing military clout.

The drill, conducted on Tuesday, involved the Japanese Maritime Self-Defence Force destroyer Ise and a strike group of the British aircraft carrier the Queen Elizabeth, marking the first time for the Royal Navy's largest warship to exercise with the Self-Defence Forces near the Japanese archipelago.

U.S. and Dutch naval vessels accompanying the British strike group also participated in the drill, according to the ministry.

In the exercise, which was open to the media, the F-35B advanced stealth fighter jets belong-



A F-35B fighter jet takes off from British aircraft carrier Queen Elizabeth during Japan and Britain's joint naval drill in the Pacific Ocean south of Okinawa Island on 24 Aug 2021. **PHOTO: KYODO NEWS**

ing to the U.S. Marine Corps and the Royal Navy took off from the Queen Elizabeth's ski ramp-like deck as part of the training.

The drill also involved F-15 fighter jets of Japan's Air-Self Defence Force and the U.S. Air Force.

Japan is considering deploying a total of 42 F-35B fighter jets in the future to an ASDF base in Miyazaki Prefecture in the coun-

try's southwest, according to the Defence Ministry.

"It is essential to strengthen cooperation with countries that share universal values, regardless of geographical distance," Rear Adm. Yasushige Konno of the MSDF told a press conference Tuesday.

When asked about the stealth fighter jets, Konno said, "At present, only the United States and Britain are deploying (the F-35B jets). It is very meaningful for us to be able to participate in a joint exercise and gather information."

The Queen Elizabeth and its strike group left Britain in May to showcase London's increased engagement in the Indo-Pacific in the face of Beijing's active presence in the East and South China seas. — Kyodo News ■

Indonesia sets sail on maritime vaccination drive

INDONESIA is taking its vaccination drive to the sea as the world's biggest archipelago nation ramps up a bid to inoculate its huge population.

The navy has deployed 60 boats and warships to scour thousands of kilometres of

coastline in the hunt for unvaccinated fishermen, from westernmost Sumatra to holiday island Bali and remote Papua.

Among their targets, a navy warship deployed a flotilla of rubber dingies with crew and vaccines aboard to

jab willing fishermen in rickety boats off Sumatra at the weekend. About 1,000 seafarers have been jabbed since the nationwide programme kicked off last week, although authorities admit they don't even know how many might be out there.

"Bad weather is usually the biggest barrier, but the real challenge now is actually finding (them) because we don't exactly know where they are," said navy spokesman Laode Muhamad Holib, adding that the search area extended 24 nautical miles off the coast. "We're just combing the sea." Some Indonesian fishermen spend weeks or even months far from the coast.

Others closer to shore often leave for work before vaccination centres open and return home after they're closed. — AFP ■



Fishermen got doses of Covid-19 vaccines onboard an Indonesian naval ship off the coast of southern Riau. **PHOTO: INDONESIAN NAVY/AFP**

Why is 31 August the date for the US pullout from Afghanistan?

US President Joe Biden said Tuesday that he aims to have all US forces out of Afghanistan by 31 August, ending a massive two-week airlift from the country at the risk of leaving potential evacuees behind.

How was 31 August set?

Former president Donald Trump set an agreement with the Taliban insurgents in February 2020 that all US forces would withdraw from Afghanistan by 1 May this year. Biden ordered a review when he came into office in January. On 14 April he announced a four-month postponement of Trump's deadline, saying US and NATO troops "will be out of Afghanistan before we mark the 20th anniversary of that heinous attack on 11 September."

The focus was to evacuate the remaining 2,500 US troops, several thousand NATO soldiers, and some 16,000 civilian

contractors who remained in the country.

Critics said the conjunction of the US pullout and commemorations of the 20th anniversary of the 9/11 attack might not look good. In early July, Biden set an earlier, more precise final day. "Our military mission in Afghanistan will conclude on 31 August," he said.

What was the problem?

Washington also wanted to give the Afghan government more time to organize its fight against the Taliban, including handing over previously US-controlled bases and equipment to Afghan forces. Washington and NATO partners expected that Afghan forces would be able to slow, if not stop, the Taliban campaign against them. US intelligence said that government forces should be able to hold on at least six months after the US departure. — AFP ■

Taliban shows off 'special forces' in propaganda blitz

THE Taliban has been showing off its own "special forces" on social media, soldiers in new uniforms equipped with looted American equipment who contrast sharply with the image of the usual Afghan insurgent.

Pictures and videos of fighters in the so-called "Badri 313" unit have been posted online for propaganda purposes

to underline how the Taliban have better equipped and trained men at their disposal than in the past, experts say.

The soldiers are shown in uniforms, boots, balaclavas and body armour similar to those worn by special forces around the world — and unlike the shalwar kameez, turban and sandals of the traditional

Taliban fighter.

Rather than a battered Russian-designed Kalashnikov rifle slung over their shoulder, the men of Badri 313 hold new US-made rifles such as the M4, sometimes with night-vision goggles and advanced gun-sights.

Badri 313 "likely represents some of the best trained

and equipped fighters within the Taliban more broadly, although as you would expect there is a degree of sensationalizing in propaganda coverage of the unit by the group," Matt Henman from the Janes defence consultancy told AFP.

A Western weapons expert who writes anonymously on Twitter under the pseudo-

nym of Calibre Obscura said the unit would be no match for Western special forces, or those of India or Pakistan.

But "they are more effective than normal Taliban and certainly more than standard Afghan national army troops from a couple of weeks ago," he told AFP. — AFP ■

Seek the best ways in spending allotted budgets for the people

NOW is the new era with changing the setting of the financial year from 1 October to 30 September to 1 April to 31 March starting from the 2022-2023 financial year. The past setting of the financial year from 1 October to 30 September was set by the previous government. Hence, the interim budget must be drawn for six months from 1 October 2021 to 31 March 2022.

The country may face some economic loss with declining incomes including that from taxes and other income in the coming six months. As the government must spend the expenditure on prevention, control and treatment of COVID-19 without fail, union ministries need to scrutinize the expenditures as much as they can. The estimated income must be actual income to be gained within six months, and the estimated expenditure must be actual cost within six months.

The allotted budget is the primary source for the development of the nation. Those at the management level need to exercise thrifty measures in spending the budget on the implementation of the projects, which must directly benefit taxpayer people.

Office of the Auditor-General of the Union and to be in line with financial rules and regulations.

The allotted budget is the primary source for the development of the nation. Those at the management level need to exercise thrifty measures in spending the budget on the implementation of the projects, which must directly benefit taxpayer people.



Wakhaung, the month of casting lots festival

By Dr Khin Maung Nyunt
(Maha Saddhamma Jotika dhaja Sithu)

WAKHAUNG (August) is the 5th month of the Myanmar lunar calendar. Myanmar is a tropical country with three sea-seasons namely hot season (gein hman), rainy season (wathan) and cold season (hei man). Wakhaung falls in the rainy season. The word 'Wakhaung' is a combination of two words 'Wa' and 'Khaung'. Wa means Buddhist lent and Khaung means middle or peak. So, Wakhaung implies the middle or the peak of the Buddhist lent that covers three months of the rainy season namely Waso (July), Wakhaung (August) and Taw-thalin (September). In the stone inscriptions of the Bagan Period, another word for Wakhaung was used. It was "Nan Kala" (နာကလာ) which means the time for ploughing, or the planting season, or the month for agricultural activities.



There is a Myanmar folk rhyme that aptly describes this season "ဝါဆို ဝါခေါင် ရေတောင်တောင်" (In Waso and Wakhaung there are billows of rainwater). As these two months are the peak of the rainy season the countryside is inundated with rainwater. The astrological name of Wakhaung is Simha (သိဟ) (Leo) and its zodiacal sign is a lion. In this month in the daytime the Sun and the Hpou Sha stars and at night the Moon and Tharawun stars rival in their radiance. Although all lilies and most trees and plants

burst forth into bloom, khat-tar or land lily (Crinum amoenum) is traditionally marked as the flower of Wakhaung.

Sayey Tan Pwe, which may best be rendered into English as "Casting lots Festival" was the traditional festival held in Wakhaung in the days of yore. Sayey Tans are lots to decide to choose the recipient of food or gift or alms in a religious offering. The custom of casting lots in religious charity originated in the lifetime of the Lord Buddha. While the lord Buddha was residing in the Weiluwn Vihara at the Capital of Yazagyo, famine hit the city and food was scarce. Buddhist devotees could no longer provide 'hswan' (food) for all monks of the Vihara. Some wanted to select ten or twenty monks to offer food. Some preferred to cast lots so as to de-

- (a) Sangha-bhat which is the food offered to all monks
- (b) Uddesa-bhat which is the food offered particularly to one or two monks.
- (c) Nimantana-bhat which is the food offered to the invited monks.
- (d) Salaka-bhat which is the food offered to the monks chosen by casting lots.
- (e) Pakkhika-bhat which is the food offered to the monks on the waxing and waning moon days.
- (f) Uposathika-bhat which is the food offered to the monks on the Sabbath day.
- (g) Patipadika-bhat which is the food offered to the monks on the day after the Sabbath day. The Lord Buddha then said

bias and prejudice, and being able to keep the correct list of allotted and unallotted monks. The first monk appointed in that charge during the lifetime of the Lord Buddha was Maha Thera Ashin Datba, the son of the Malla king. He discharged the duty of allotting Uddesa-bhat, Niman-tana-bhat and Salaka-bhat, with fairness and correctness.

The lots are either wooden sticks or bamboo slats or bamboo strips or palm leaves or pei leaves on which names and addresses of the donors of food are written. The lots are then put into the basket and the basket is shaken upside down many times so that the lots are thoroughly shuffled up. The monks queue up either according to their serial number if such numbers are given them or according to the seniority of their vasa (ordained age) to draw the lot. Then they go to the house as directed by their lots to partake of the food offered there. During the lifetime of the Lord Buddha, offering food to the monks by casting lots could be made at any place, on any date and in any month. There was no rule fixing its place, date and month. But Myanmar kings chose Wakhaung as the month for performing this religious function because the monks observing lent vows and residing together in the same monastery might have difficulty in getting sufficient food in Wakhaung. Originally casting lots was to provide food to the monks. But later, eight priestly utensils namely three pieces of the yellow robe, the girdle, the alms bowl, the adze, the water dipper, and the needle and other offertories are also donated by casting lots. Such articles are hung on a tree-shaped stand, which is called Pa-dei-thabin meaning the tree of plenty and variety, comparable to the mythical cornucopia.

In Myanmar, the earliest evidence of offering food to the monks by casting lots was found in the stone inscriptions of ancient Bagan. In lines 22 and 23 of Saw Hla Wun pagoda inscriptions of A.D. 1268, 1290 and 1291, there was mention of Sayey Tan (casting lots). There is one oral history, which tells how offering food by casting lots originated in Myanmar. During the reign of King



Crinum amoenum(Khatta).

Thihathu (A.D. 1298-1312) of the Pinya dynasty (A.D. 1298-1364) a big wooden monastery was built by the royal order, and the king decreed that 'he who hath the courage let him take possession of it' At that time there was one head monk named Soo Twin Pyit Sayadaw who was famous for his learning and knowledge. Hearing the royal decree, the monk took residence in the monastery. Later the monk advised the king that the best way to find the deserving occupant for the monastery was by casting lots. From that time began the casting lots festival. Later, in the reign of King Thalun (A.D.1629-48) of the Nyaung Yan dynasty (A.D. 1599-1752) there appeared two religious translations namely Culavapali nisaya and Culava-pali Athakatha nisaya by the most venerable monk Shwe Umin Sayadaw of Pakhan Gyi town. In them, he translated into Myanmar the two Pali words "Salaka" and 'bhatta' as 'Sayey Tan' and "Hswan". Salaka means wooden or bamboo sticks on which letters were written and bhatta means food (hswan). Letters written on the sticks mention the names and addresses of the donors of food.

Myanmar literature of later historic periods contained references to the casting lots festival. Different forms of the poem such as loot, lay cho, eh-chin, tay htat, tha hpyan etc. on twelve seasons composed by eminent bards like U Yar, Lu U Min, Hpo Thu Daw U Min, Mei Khwe, U Hpyey, U Ponnaya have mention of casting lots festival in Walchaung. On page 229 of one Myanmar Chronicle named Konbaung Set Maim Yazawun Tawgyi Volume 11, the holding of the casting lots festival at the palace of King Bagyidaw (A.D. 1819-37) was recorded as

follows: -

"On the 8th waning day of the month of Wakhaung, village monks (Ga ma wa thi) and forest monks (Arin nja wa thi) were invited to the palace. Eight priestly utensils and other offertories were hung on the two hundred and sixty Padeithabins. His Majesty the King and the Chief Queen donated them to the monks and poured the libation water. Their Majesties then offered Salakabhat Sayey Tan hswan (food offered by casting lots) to the monks."

It is to be noted that unlike the Sayey Tan Pwe of the Lord Buddha's time, Myanmar Sayey Tan Pwe has the names of the recipient monks written on the lots, instead of the donors' names and addresses and it is the donors who draw the lots, not the monks. A list of names and addresses of the monks residing in the locality is made and these are written on the lots which are placed in the bamboo container called 'wa kyi-tauk'. At the assembly of the Buddhist devotees, names of the donors of food are called out according to their serial number to draw the lots. The following morning the donors either invite the monks of their lots to their houses to offer food or put food in the large bowl with a stand and cover (usually of lacquer) called 'hswan ok' and send it to the monks. Just like on other Myanmar religious functions, a festival atmosphere is created by the gathering of lay devotees dressed in their finery, and dainty damsels carrying offertories on their heads, followed by groups of merry-making youths who joyously dance, sing and play folk music of 'do-bat', 'ozi', and 'byaw' which befit the occasion.



MYANMAR GAZETTE

Appointment of Head of Service Organization

THE State Administration Council has appointed Deputy Director-General U Myo Nyunt Aung of the Department for the Promotion and Propagation of the Sasana under the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture as Director-General of the Department of Religious Affairs of the same ministry on probation from the date he assumes charge of his duties.



Myanmar Daily Weather Report (Issued at 7:00 pm Wednesday 25 August 2021)

BAY INFERENCE: Monsoon is moderate to strong over the Andaman Sea and South Bay and weak to moderate elsewhere over the Bay of Bengal.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL AFTERNOON OF THE 26 August 2021: Rain or thundershowers will be scattered in Nay Pyi Taw, Lower Sagaing, Magway Regions and Chin State, and fairly widespread in Upper Sagaing, Mandalay, Bago, Ayeyawady Regions and widespread in the remaining Regions and States with likelihood of regionally heavyfalls in Taninthayi Region and Kayin, Mon States and isolated heavyfalls in Upper Sagaing, Mandalay, Yangon Regions and Kachin, Rakhine States. Degree of certainty is (100%).

STATE OF THE SEA: Squalls with moderate to rough seas are likely at times Deltaic, Gulf of Mottama, off and along Mon-Taninthayi Coasts. Surface wind speed in squalls may reach (30-35) mph. Sea will be slight to moderate elsewhere in Myanmar waters. Wave height will be about (7 - 9) feet in Deltaic, Gulf of Mottama, off and along Mon-Taninthayi Coasts and about (4-7) feet in off and along Rakhine Coasts.

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

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 26 August 2021: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 26 August 2021: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 26 August 2021: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

EARTHQUAKE NEWS

(Issued at 12:45 hour MST on 25 August 2021)

A slight earthquake of magnitude (4.9) Richter Scale with its epicentre inside Myanmar (about (9) miles northwest of Taunggyi), latitude 20.88°N, longitude 96.95°E, depth (10) kilometres, about (9) miles northwest of Taunggyi seismological observatory was recorded at (12) hr (36) min (11) sec MST on 25 August 2021.

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Mountain biking rivals skiing in Austria as Alps warm

A village in the Austrian Alps known for its family-friendly ski resort has been forced to adapt to waning snow due to climate change, turning to a new downhill sport – mountain biking. Bikers as young as three ride over landscaped jumps and curved forest trails, breathing new life into Sankt Corona am Wechsel, around an hour's drive from Vienna, and offering a model for other struggling resorts.

"We used to be a 100 per cent winter destination. Now, we have to think about climate change, and summers are booming," said Karl Morgenbesser, who runs the adventure park in Sankt Corona. As the coronavirus pandemic increases enthusiasm for outdoor activities, many Austrians hope mountain biking and other summer sports can make up for winter losses in the Alpine nation, where skiing accounts for around three per cent of the GDP. Nearly a month of snow cover has been lost in the Alps at low and medium altitude



Sankt Corona now draws about 130,000 visitors per season thanks to its mountain-biking trails. **PHOTO: AFP**

in half a century, according to a March study published in *The Cryosphere* scientific journal.

And a recent report by the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) found that in the Alps the snow cover will decrease in areas below 1,500 metres (5,000 feet) throughout the 21st century.

Lift pulls bikers up

Situated at an altitude of

nearly 900 metres, Sankt Corona dismantled its winter infrastructure in 2014 after years of losses as annual visitor numbers fell to 25,000 from 70,000 some 20 years earlier.

A rollercoaster-like summer toboggan and climbing space soon opened, but the 400-resident village's fortunes truly turned when it devised a network of mountain-biking trails. —AFP ■

Thailand takes kratom off illegal drug list

THAILAND on Tuesday decriminalized kratom, a tropical leaf long used as a herbal remedy but which some health regulators around the world have criticized as potentially unsafe.

Kratom — scientific name *Mitragyna speciosa* — is part of the coffee family, used for centuries in Southeast Asia and Papua New Guinea for its pain-relieving and mildly stimulating effects.

It has become increasingly popular in the United States,

where the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has warned against its use, citing risks of addiction and abuse.

The change to Thai law means "the general public will be able to consume and sell kratom legally", government spokesman Anucha Burapachaisri said in a statement.

A Thailand Development Research Institute study estimated that decriminalization will save authorities about 1.69 billion baht (\$50 million) in pro-

secution costs.

Kratom stimulates the same brain receptors as morphine, though with much milder effects, and in Thailand it is mainly used in the deep south, where Muslim workers use it for pain relief after manual labour.

It has not been subject to international restrictions, though the World Health Organization announced last month that it was examining whether kratom should be considered for control. —AFP ■

'Catastrophic' pollution plagues Libya beaches

WITH untreated sewage in the water and rubbish piled on the sand, pollution on Tripoli's Mediterranean coast is denying residents of the war-torn Libyan capital a much-needed escape.

The environment ministry last month ordered the closure of a number of beaches along the 30-kilometre (18-mile) Greater Tripoli coastline, despite the roasting summer heat.

"The situation is catastrophic," said Abdelbasset al-Miri, the ministry official in charge of monitoring the coast.

"We need quick solutions for this problem because it harms the environment just as much as it harms people."

Daily discharges of untreated sewage from the capital's two million population make this the most polluted section of the North African country's 1,770-kilometre coastline.

Cans, plastic bags and bottles plague the water and shore.

On one beach, near a large hotel, open-air rivulets channel untreated wastewater into the sea, where a few young men brave the contaminated waters

in search of cool.

Libya's infrastructure has been devastated by a decade of conflict, state collapse and neglect since the 2011 overthrow and killing of dictator Moamer Kadhafi in a NATO-backed rebellion.

But Tripoli's only sewage works closed years before that, like many industrial facilities shuttered for lack of maintenance or funding.

As a result, all of Tripoli's wastewater goes directly into the Mediterranean.

"Huge amounts of sewage gets dumped in the sea every day," said Sara al-Naami of Tripoli city council.

'Summer prison'

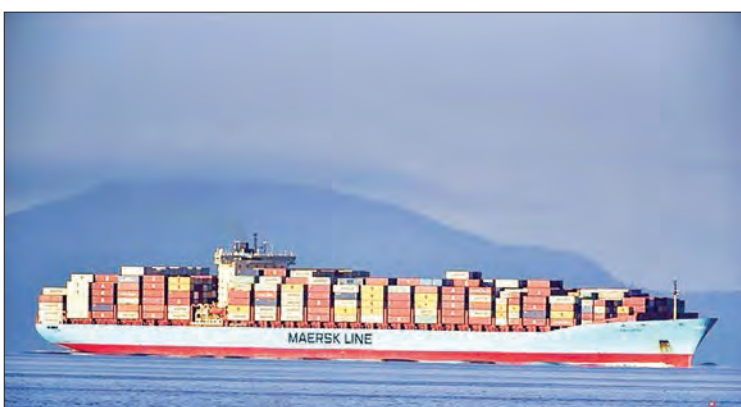
Laboratory tests have found "a high concentration of bacteria, 500 per cent more than normal", including *E. Coli*, at five sites along the capital's coastline, she added.

"We have raised the issue of pollution in Tripoli's seawater with the former and current governments, and emphasized the urgent need for a sanitation facility," Naami said. —AFP ■



Libyans swim in the Mediterranean at the capital Tripoli's waterfront. Libya's infrastructure has been devastated by a decade of conflict, state collapse and neglect since the 2011 overthrow and killing of dictator Moamer Kadhafi. **PHOTO: AFP**

Maersk orders eight carbon-neutral container ships



Global maritime transport accounts for almost three per cent of greenhouse gas emissions, according to the International Maritime Organization. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

DANISH shipping giant AP Moller-Maersk said Tuesday it was speeding up plans for an environment-friendly fleet with the order of eight carbon-neutral container vessels, a pioneering project in the highly-polluting industry.

Danish shipping giant AP Moller-Maersk said Tuesday it was speeding up plans for an environment-friendly fleet with the order of eight carbon-neutral container vessels, a pioneering project in the highly-polluting

industry.

Maersk said in a statement that it will introduce the "groundbreaking" ocean-going vessels, capable of operating on carbon-neutral methanol, in the first quarter of 2024.

The ships, built by Hyundai Heavy Industries (HHI) and equipped with dual fuel engines, will be able to each transport 16,000 containers, and will account for about three per cent of the company's fleet. The deal with HHI includes an option for

four more vessels in 2025.

According to Maersk, the new ships will enable the company to reduce its annual CO2 emissions by about one million tonnes. Global maritime transport is more polluting than the aviation sector, according to the Higher Institute of Maritime Economics (Isemar).

It is responsible for 2.98 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions, 2018 figures from the International Maritime Organization (IMO) show. —AFP ■

European football giants to take 2 billion euro Covid hit

MATCHDAY revenues across the five major European football leagues took a nearly 2 billion euro hit last season (\$2.35 billion) after spectators were largely barred from attending matches due to the pandemic, a report by consultancy KPMG said Tuesday.

The projected revenue losses dwarf the 500 million euros that clubs in the leagues suffered in the 2019/20 season, when the virus first affected Europe and led to sport being suspended in March 2020, only resuming months later without spectators.

The continent's top five leagues are England's Premier League, Italy's Serie A, Spain's La Liga, Germany's Bundesliga and the French Ligue 1.

"It is expected that clubs in the big 5 leagues will make little-to-no income from this source in 2020/21, potentially losing out



Clubs across the five major European leagues are projected by KPMG to lose 2 billion euros in matchday revenues from the 2020/21 season having had no fans in due to the coronavirus pandemic.

PHOTO: POOL/AFP

on over 2bn euros of matchday revenues combined," the report said.

For the 2019/20 season the Bundesliga, which has the aver-

age highest attendance, was the most impacted (an estimated 157 million euros drop in revenues) while Ligue 1 suffered the least (48 million euros).

The report stated that of five big clubs, Barcelona saw the biggest dip, registering a 39-million euros contraction in matchday revenues.—AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Sri Lanka's former foreign minister dies of COVID-19

SRI Lanka's former Foreign Minister Mangala Samaraweera died on Tuesday after being infected with the COVID-19 virus, local media reported here.

Samaraweera had been admitted to the Intensive Care Unit of a private hospital in capital Colombo last week after he contracted the virus.

Local media quoting medical officers said Samaraweera had developed complications and suffered a cardiac arrest.

He succumbed to the virus on Tuesday morning.

Samaraweera, 65, had served as the Foreign Affairs Minister and Finance Minister in previous governments but stepped down from politics last year. At the time, he was a member of the opposition Samagi Jana Balawegaya political party.

Sri Lanka is in the midst of a rapid third wave of the COVID-19 which has infected over 390,000 people to date and caused 7,560 deaths.—Xinhua ■

Indonesia's COVID-19 cases surpass 4 mln

INDONESIA has registered more than 4 million COVID-19 cases since the first case was confirmed in the country in March last year.

On Tuesday, the country's Health Ministry reported that the coronavirus cases across the archipelago country rose by 19,106 within the past 24 hours to 4,008,166 with the death toll adding by 1,038 to 128,252.

To date, more than 3.6 million have recovered from the disease, the ministry reported.

Indonesia has the highest number of COVID-19 cases and deaths in the Southeast Asia region.

The coronavirus has spread to all the country's 34 provinces with the national capital Jakarta having the most cases, while Central Java has the highest number



People wearing face masks walk at a train station following the implementation of "large scale social restrictions" in Bogor in West Java on 10 April 2020, amid the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic

PHOTO: AFP/FILE

of deaths.

The government is currently implementing four-tiered restrictions on community activities (locally abbreviated as PPKM) on the most populated island of Java and the resort spot of Bali as well as a number of provinces

outside the two islands, which is set to end on 30 Aug.

Official numbers from the Health Ministry showed that the number of new cases of coronavirus in the last few weeks are declining, suggesting that Indonesia's devastating second

coronavirus wave has passed its peak. The country's Health Minister Budi Gunadi Sadikin made a statement relating to that in early August.

Driven by the highly transmissible Delta variant, the country in July has seen an upsurge of cases which overwhelmed health workers, and has seen coronavirus-related deaths soaring to record levels. On Monday, President Joko Widodo said during a live-streamed briefing that several areas on Java and Bali, such as Greater Jakarta, Bandung in West Java and Surabaya in East Java, which were previously implementing PPKM Level 4, can now lower the level of the restrictions to Level 3. Since last week, the government has started to ease the restrictions in several major cities.—Xinhua ■

Controversial Peruvian PM gets vaccinated

IN Lima, Peru, 42-year-old Prime Minister Guido Bellido, alongside Environment Minister Ruben Ramirez, has been vaccinated against COVID-19.

Despite having been eligible for the vaccine for some time, Bellido had pushed back his vaccination for unknown reasons. He, like Minister Ramirez, were both inoculated with a SinoPharm vaccine.

As he was vaccinated, Bellido also commented on several issues pertaining to the embattle Pedro Castillo administration – chief among which is the President's historically low approval rating just a few weeks into his government and the controversy over Bellido's own appointment.—AFP ■

Ecuadorian authorities launch vaccination drive in Amazonian region

IN Orellana, Ecuador, authorities are carrying out mass COVID-19 vaccination drives in this relatively isolated area as part of a wider plan to immunize the communities of the Amazonian region.

Local reception to the vaccine drive has generally been positive, as Orellana has already reported nearly 3000 cases of COVID-19 over the span of the pandemic, though fortunately no deaths.

In the province of Amazonia, authorities say that 85,000 successful vaccinations have been reported in total since the start of the drive. —AFP ■



File photo of an Amazonian women getting a Covid-19 jab in Brazil's Amazonas State. PHOTO: AFP

NEWS
IN BRIEF

China reopens world's third busiest port after partial virus halt

CHINA reopened a key terminal at the world's third-busiest cargo port on Wednesday, after a shutdown to control the coronavirus caused major backlogs elsewhere and worsened export already extended delays caused by the pandemic.

The halt at the eastern Ningbo-Zhoushan port started two weeks ago, when a worker at its Meishan terminal tested positive for the disease.

The terminal handles a fifth of the container volume at Ningbo-Zhoushan and the hold-up forced ships to other Chinese ports, which were left facing their worst levels of congestion in seven years, reported Chinese media outlet Caixin this week.

The closure added stress to an already stretched global shipping network, with soaring demand for goods from Western consumers in the pandemic piling pressure on Chinese exporters who face strict domestic virus controls.

The Ningbo-Zhoushan port handled almost 1.2 billion tonnes of goods in 2020. But Ningbo authorities said late Tuesday that restrictions will be lifted from Wednesday morning. "All units in the zone must comprehensively do a good job in epidemic prevention and control, as well as resumption of work and production," said a notice republished by state broadcaster CCTV.—AFP ■

Biden's nearly \$5 trillion spending plans win key House vote

US President Joe Biden's plans to spend nearly \$5 trillion to change the world's largest economy advanced in the House of Representatives on Tuesday, after Democratic leaders reached an agreement with centrist lawmakers to end a dispute threatening the bills.

Biden and his Democratic allies controlling the chamber are pushing for passage of both a \$1.2 trillion infrastructure overhaul and a bill costing \$3.5 trillion over 10 years that would pay for improvements to education, healthcare and climate change resiliency.

The dispute erupted when centrist Democrats in the House said the infrastructure bill, which the Senate already approved, must be voted on first.

On Tuesday, those lawmakers backed a compromise resolution that allowed both bills to advance, while guaranteeing a date to vote on the infrastructure bill near the end of September.

"Today the House of Representatives has taken significant steps toward making historic investment that's going to transform America, cut taxes for working families and position the American economy for... long-term growth," Biden said following the vote.—AFP ■

Indonesia seizes tanker wanted over Cambodian oil heist



The MT Strovolos was picked up by the Indonesian navy off the coast of Sumatra. **PHOTO: HANDOUT/INDONESIAN NAVY/AFP**

INDONESIA'S navy said Wednesday it has seized a tanker and its crew who were wanted on charges of stealing nearly 300,000 barrels of crude oil from Cambodia's reserves.

The Bahamian-flagged MT

Strovolos was picked up on 27 July off the coast of Sumatra, they said, days after Phnom Penh issued a red notice on Interpol to seize the ship over claims it stole the kingdom's crude.

Indonesia's navy said it was questioning the crew of 13 Indians, three Bangladeshis and a trio from Myanmar at its base near Singapore.

The 183-metre (600-foot) tanker, sailing from Thailand to Indonesia's Batam island, had turned off its identification system and anchored illegally in the archipelago's waters, naval authorities said. Its Bangladeshi captain could face up to a year in prison and a \$14,000 fine if convicted on maritime violation charges, they added. "The Indonesian navy will not hesitate to take action against any type of crimes committed within Indonesia's jurisdictional territory," First Fleet commander Arsyad Abdullah said in a statement.—AFP ■

Surging COVID cases delay emergence of pent-up demand: BOJ member



Toyoaki Nakamura, who sits on the Bank of Japan Policy Board, holds a virtual meeting at the BOJ headquarters in Tokyo with local business leaders in Miyazaki Prefecture on 25 Aug. 2021. **PHOTO: KYODO**

THE Japanese economy remains in a "severe" situation amid the coronavirus pandemic,

and the surging number of COVID-19 cases is causing a delay in the emergence of pent-up de-

mand, a Bank of Japan board member said Wednesday.

Toyoaki Nakamura, who sits on the BOJ's Policy Board, said the Japanese economy is picking up as a trend but cautioned against downside risks due to the spread of the highly contagious Delta variant during a virtual meeting with local business leaders in Miyazaki Prefecture, southwestern Japan. "Due to the resurgence of infections, the timing for pent-up demand (to emerge) is likely to have been slightly delayed," Nakamura told the meeting. "Thereafter, it is possible that we will see economic activity picking up more than anticipated."—Kyodo ■

Australian national science agency calls for embracing advanced recycling



Scientists have measured bag impacts taking into consideration materials, manufacturing, use, and disposal or recycling.

PHOTO: AFP/FILE

AUSTRALIA'S national science agency has called on the nation to embrace advanced recycling to convert plastic bound for landfills into valuable resources.

In a report published on Wednesday, the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization (CSIRO) evaluated how advanced recycling technologies, also known as feedstock, molecular and chemical recycling, could boost the Australian economy.

It found that less than 12 per cent of Australia's plastic waste is recycled while 85 per cent ends up in landfills.

The Australian government

has set a target of 70 per cent of plastic packaging materials recycled or composted by 2025.

Sarah King, a CSIRO researcher, said that embracing new technologies was critical to boosting the recovery and recycling of plastics.

"Advanced recycling technologies could turn hard-to-recycle plastics, such as mixed, multi-layer, flexible or contaminated plastics back into food-grade recycled plastics or other products through chemical, thermal or biological processes," she said in a media release.

"It is suitable for flexible or soft 'scrunchable' plastics used

for food packaging, such as food pouches and chocolate wrappers. When collected, these types of plastics may be contaminated with food, or mixed with other materials so currently can't be recycled.

"Advanced recycling could process this plastic waste to increase opportunities for the polymer manufacturing and waste sectors by supporting new industries. The North American market is estimated at 120 billion Australian dollars (86.8 billion U.S. dollars), demonstrating there is economic potential for adopting advanced recycling in Australia."—Xinhua ■

Business sentiment among S.Korean manufacturers worsens in August

SENTIMENT among South Korean manufacturers over economic situation worsened this month amid the continued COVID-19 resurgence here, central bank data showed Wednesday.

The business senti-

ment index (BSI) for manufacturers declined to 95 in August from 97 in the prior month, according to the Bank of Korea (BOK).

It came as the COVID-19 pandemic resurged here in early July. In the latest tally, South Korea

reported 2,155 more cases of COVID-19 for the past 24 hours, hovering above 1,000 for 50 straight days.

The BSI among non-manufacturers gained 2 points over the month to 81 in August as people spent more on travel-related services during the summer vacation season.

The BSI in all industries stood unchanged at 87 in August compared to the previous month.

The index is based on a survey of 1,634 manufacturers and 1,180 non-manufacturers conducted between Aug. 10 and 18. The reading below 100 indicates pessimists outnumbering optimists.

—Xinhua ■



Visitors look at industrial robots during a smart logistics demonstration event organized by South Korea's Land, Infrastructure and Transport Ministry at Hyundai robot logistics demo centre in Gwangju on 30 March 2021.

PHOTO: AFP

Walmart opens delivery services for all businesses

US shopping giant Walmart on Tuesday announced it was opening a delivery service for businesses, including other

retailers, in its latest push to reposition itself and fend off Amazon's rise.

The chain announced it will make its logistics and

transportation infrastructure, in which it has invested heavily in recent years, available to other stores through a service called Walmart GoLocal.

"We've worked hard to develop a reliable last-mile delivery programme for our customers. Now, we're pleased to be able to use these capabilities to serve another set of customers — local merchants," Tom Ward, a senior vice-president for Walmart's US location, said in a press release.—AFP ■



US retail giant Walmart's new shipping service is the latest move in its competition with Amazon.

PHOTO: AFP/FILE

Thai cabinet keeps VAT rate at 7 pct for another two years



Employees prepare to close a grocery shop in Bangkok on 19 July 2021, ahead of a night-time curfew restriction implemented to reduce the spread of the Covid-19 coronavirus.

PHOTO: AFP / CANDIDA NG

THE Thai Cabinet on Tuesday decided to keep the current 7 per cent rate of Value Added Tax (VAT) for at least another two years, hoping to reduce the financial burden of consumers and businesses wrought by COVID-19 pandemic.

According to Rachada Dhanadirek, a deputy government spokeswom-

an, this extension will not impact the state revenue collection during fiscal year of 2022 and 2023, as it has already been incorporated in the revenue projection.

The VAT has been at 7 per cent since the Asian financial crisis in 1997.

The Ministry of Finance revealed that the Revenue Department has

also extended the deadline for online tax filing and payments, in order to give the general public and business operators more financial liquidity.

Moreover, penalties for late filing or failure to file taxes by both general public and businesses will also be waived or charged at a reduced rate.—Xinhua ■

ओएनजीसी विदेश



ONGC VIDESH

ONGC VIDESH LIMITED

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Pyay Rd., Sanchaung Township, Yangon Region
Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Tel: +95 (1) 536 573
Website : www.ongcvidesh.com

Expression Of Interest (EOI)

ONGC Videsh Ltd., Myanmar, hereby invites Expression of Interest (EOI) from the prospective and potential firms for:-

1. Civil work in EP3 and B2 blocks Myanmar.

Detail of Expression of Interest for the contract can be viewed and downloaded from <https://www.ongcvidesh.com/tenders/?q=overseas>

Interested firms having experience of civil work as per EOI are hereby requested to submit their request along with credential of their company before 06.09.2021.

Country Manager

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V PRESIDIO VOY.NO. (065N)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V PRESIDIO VOY.NO. (065N)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **26-8-2021** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **HPT** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

Phone No: **2301185**

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S NEW GOLDEN SEA SHIPPING PTE., LTD.

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V ECO DESTINY

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V ECO DESTINY VOY.NO. (76L)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **26-8-2021** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **IBTT** 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 BEN LINE AGENCIES (S'PORE) PTE LTD

THE REPUBLIC OF THE UNION OF MYANMAR
MINISTRY OF ELECTRICITY AND ENERGY
ELECTRIC POWER GENERATION ENTERPRISE
GROUND MOUNTED SOLAR POWER PROJECTS
IN MYANMAR

(Tender No. EPGE PV 02/2021-2022)

In accordance with section 8 2 "AMENDMENTS" of Request for Proposals RFP of **EPGE PV 02/2021-2022**, EPGE herewith would like to announce that Bid Submission Date shall be amended as **1st October 2021** and the Addendum No.2 shall be issued.

The Global New Light of Myanmar

www.gnlm.com.mm

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NEWS
IN BRIEFTwo injured in
acid attack at
station in Tokyo

TWO people suffered burns in an acid attack at a Tokyo subway station with the perpetrator still at large, police and local media said Wednesday.

The attack took place at Shirokane Takanawa station in an upscale part of Tokyo on Tuesday night, while the Paralympics opening ceremony was being held under tight security in the capital.

One of the victims, a 22-year-old businessman, sustained burns to his face after the suspect sprayed liquid at him on an escalator, a police spokesman told AFP.

Public broadcaster NHK said the man was severely injured by the liquid, which it named as sulphuric acid.

A 34-year-old woman also fell and reportedly suffered minor burns to her legs.—AFP ■

Palestinians
forge 'grassroots'
campaign against
wildcat settlement

Using laser pointers and noisy horns to torment Jewish settlers across the valley, Palestinians in Beita have set themselves apart from others demonstrating against Israel's occupation of the West Bank.

But beyond attention-grabbing tactics, protesters in the Palestinian town near Nablus insist their weeks-long campaign against the wildcat settlement of Eviatar is distinct for another reason.

They describe it as a grassroots movement, not inspired or directed by Fatah secularists who control the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank, or their rivals from the Islamist Hamas that runs the Gaza Strip.

"Here there is only one flag: That of Palestine. There are no factions," Said Hamayel told AFP. "We are doing from below what Palestinian leaders cannot do from above," argued Hamayel, who said his 15-year-old son Mohammed was killed by Israeli army gunfire in a mid-June protest. The army said it had opened fire to suppress "rioters" who posed a grave threat to troops.—AFP ■

G-7 vows to ensure safe Afghanistan evacuation,
keep Taliban on watch

THE Group of Seven industrialized nations on Tuesday vowed to work to safely evacuate their citizens from Afghanistan following the unexpectedly swift takeover by the Taliban, while urging the militant group to respect human rights in the country and prevent terrorism.

During a virtual meeting of the G-7 leaders to discuss Afghanistan, U.S. President Joe Biden conveyed his intention to stick to his self-imposed deadline of 31 Aug. for completing the withdrawal of American troops there as he seeks to end the war that started following the terror attacks of 11 Sept. 2001 on the United States.

His remarks came as U.S. allies such as Britain and France have reportedly been calling

on Washington for easing the timeline amid the ongoing international airlift operations from Afghanistan to help people flee from the Taliban rule.

A joint statement issued by the G-7 leaders following their meeting did not mention the U.S. troop withdrawal deadline, only emphasizing that their "immediate priority is to ensure the safe evacuation of our citizens and those Afghans who have partnered with us and assisted our efforts over the past twenty years."

Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga told reporters that Tokyo will work closely with the other G-7 members on efforts to evacuate people from Afghanistan and that his country is prepared to help support



Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga participates in an online summit meeting of the Group of Seven industrialized nations at the prime minister's office in Tokyo on 24 Aug. 2021. **PHOTO: CABINET PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICE/(KYODO)**

refugees who flee Afghanistan to neighbouring countries. Biden said during the meeting that the United States is "currently

on pace" to finish pulling out its troops by the end of the month, according to White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki.—Kyodo ■

Voice of jihad: Taliban spokesman in spotlight
after shadowy fight

Days after the Taliban captured Kabul, spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid presented himself to the public for the first time. **PHOTO: AFP**

FOR years the Taliban's top spokesman shunned the public eye, even as he amassed hundreds of thousands of followers

online where he live-tweeted the insurgency.

But days after the Taliban captured Kabul following the

collapse of the US-backed government, Zabihullah Mujahid presented himself to the public for the first time in a surprise press conference in the Afghan capital. At first glance, there was little that distinguished the Taliban spokesman from its other leaders — the middle-aged jihadist sported a black turban and full black beard framing a stoney demeanour carved from decades of war: "We have expelled the foreigners," he proclaimed in his opening remarks.

Just days earlier, Mujahid announced via social media the assassination of leading government spokesman Dawa Khan Menapal, boasting that the killing had been orchestrated "in

a special attack" carried out by the Taliban.

The spokesman is now sitting in Menapal's old seat, seeking to allay concern about how the Taliban will rule. "All those on the opposite side are pardoned from A to Z," said Mujahid as he fielded questions from the remnants of the Afghan press corps.

"We will not seek revenge."

For years, there was a debate as to whether Mujahid was even a single person — his moniker serving as cover for the Taliban's sprawling information wing.

But Mujahid was real and relaxed in his public debut, delivering assurances in a live broadcast on behalf of a group that once banned television.—AFP ■

Two French travellers detained for perching atop iconic statue

BRAZILIAN authorities have detained two French men for watching the sun rise over Rio de Janeiro from the top of the iconic Christ the Redeemer statue while the monument was closed.

Clement Dumais, 28, and Paul Roux-dit-Buisson, 27, entered the site of the 38-metre (125-foot) monument Sunday night and stayed there after the statue was closed for the day.

The two men snuck inside before dawn, climbed a long spiral staircase and came out

through a hatch on one of the arms to enjoy the view of the city and Guanabara Bay. The statue's outstretched arms span 28 metres.

The adventure ended when one of the security guards at the site noticed the men. "We were standing on the arms and the head and a security officer saw us," Roux-dit-Buisson told AFP.

The two men were detained on Monday and released after posting 10,000 reais (\$1,900) in bail. The two will now have to appear before a judge.—AFP ■



The Christ the Redeemer statue is one of the most visited site in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil's tourism capital. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

Putin gifts pensioners cash payments ahead of polls



Russian President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday ordered pensioners get \$135 in a bid to drum up support ahead of parliamentary elections next month that could see the unpopular ruling United Russia party struggle. **PHOTO: RAMIL SITDIKOV / SPUTNIK / AFP**

RUSSIAN President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday ordered pensioners get \$135 in a bid to drum up support ahead of parliamentary elections next month that could see the unpopular ruling

United Russia party struggle. The cash handouts come as part of a litany of social spending sweeteners Putin has proposed ahead of September's lower house State Duma polls, with United Russia's ratings dented by rising prices and falling wages. According to a Kremlin statement, the Russian president ordered payments of 10,000 rubles (\$135) to be handed out in September, effectively doubling the monthly state pension which is roughly the same amount. In a meeting with United Russia officials on Sunday, Putin said that pensioners had been hit hardest by this year's soaring inflation. Annual inflation has reached 6.5 per cent, according to the cen-

tral bank, which in June hiked its key interest rate to the same figure -- its biggest increase since a 2014 currency crisis. Putin on Sunday also proposed giving 15,000-ruble bonuses to military staff. In June he promised to spend billions on repairing roads and developing public transport, infrastructure and healthcare. United Russia's ratings started falling steeply in 2018 after the government passed a controversial pension reform plan that raised the retirement age. The move came as Russia's economy had been stagnating, battered by waves of Western sanctions after Moscow annexed Crimea in 2014.

Ahead of next month's election, United Russia is polling around 30 per cent, according to state-run pollster VTsIOM -- a 10-point drop from the last lower house elections in 2016. The party currently controls 75 per cent of seats in the State Duma, with the rest held by parties widely seen as doing the Kremlin's bidding. In the run-up to the elections, Russian authorities have waged a crackdown on the opposition and independent voices. Jailed opposition leader Alexei Navalny has seen his organizations declared "extremist" and banned in the country. His top allies have fled the country or been placed under house arrest.— AFP ■

German police launch 'attempted murder' probe over university poisoning

GERMAN police launched an investigation into "attempted murder" on Tuesday after a poisoning at a university left one student in a critical condition and six others in need of medical attention. German police launched an investigation into "attempted murder" on Tuesday after a poisoning at a university left one student in a critical condition and six others in need of medical attention. The victims at the Technical University Darmstadt had consumed food or drink, to which a "harmful substance" had been introduced, notably via packets of milk and containers of water. Police say packets of milk and water containers were among the items spiked over the weekend with the chemical, which they described as having a noticeably "pungent smell". The affected building was closed off by police and any foodstuffs on site taken away for investigation. No further victims have yet to present themselves, although one 30-year-old student was in a critical condition as of Monday, police said. Authorities recommended anyone displaying potential symptoms or whose "extremities turn blueish" should seek medical help immediately. "We are shocked by the apparent offence that happened at our university," the institution's president Tanja Bruehl said in a statement. "I wish the affected all the best, a quick recovery and can assure them my full support," Angela Dorn, the science minister for the state of Hesse, which includes Darmstadt, said in a statement.—AFP ■



German police launched an investigation into "attempted murder" on Tuesday after a poisoning at a university left one student in a critical condition and six others in need of medical attention. **PHOTO: AFP**

Philippines' Duterte to run for vice-president, says party



Rodrigo Duterte is barred under the constitution from seeking another term as president. **PHOTO: POOL/AFP**

PHILIPPINE President Rodrigo Duterte will run for vice-president in next year's elections, his party said Tuesday, after months of speculation about whether he would seek to stay in power. Duterte, who was elected to the top job in 2016 and is barred under the constitution from seeking another term, has previously

flagged the possibility of contesting the country's second-highest office. "President Rodrigo Duterte agreed to make the sacrifice and heed the clamour of the people, and accepted the endorsement of the PDP Laban Party for him to run as vice-president in the 2022 national elections," the

party said in a statement. The party is also expected to endorse Duterte's top aide, Senator Christopher Lawrence "Bong" Go, to be their presidential candidate. Duterte has not said publicly yet that he will run, but PDP-Laban president Alfonso Cusi told AFP: "He confirmed he is running for VP in 2022." The vice-president and president are elected separately in the Philippines, with the former assuming the top job if the latter dies, becomes incapacitated, or resigns while in office. During his term Duterte has waged a brutal war against drug users and dealers that rights groups say has killed tens of thousands of people. International Criminal Court prosecutors are seeking to launch a full-blown investigation into the anti-narcotics crackdown, raising the stakes for next year's elections.—AFP ■

Free housing offered to 20,000 Afghan refugees

ONLINE accommodation platform Airbnb offered on Tuesday to house 20,000 Afghan refugees for free around the world, as people flee Kabul following the Taliban takeover. "The displacement and resettlement of Afghan refugees in the US and elsewhere is one of the biggest humanitarian crises of our time," Airbnb chief executive Brian Chesky wrote

on Twitter. "We feel a responsibility to step up," he said. Airbnb has made it possible for hosts to offer temporary housing to people fleeing conflict and natural disasters through its Open Homes platform since 2012. The cost of the stays for Afghan evacuees will be funded through contributions from Airb-

nb and Chesky as well as donors to the Airbnb.org Refugee Fund, the company said in a statement. "I hope this inspires other business leaders to do the same. There's no time to waste," Chesky said. About 50,000 foreigners and Afghans have fled the country from Kabul's airport since the Taliban swept to power on 15 August, according to the US government.—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.

Myanmar MMA star Tial Thang's fight to be launched on 27 August



Myanmar MMA starfighter Tial Thang celebrates the victory after beating Paul Lumini in Singapore on 5 February 2021. **PHOTO: ONE CHAMPIONSHIP**

Min Jong of South Korea in the Men's Bantamweight category of the ONE Championship event.

In the main card or Featherweight Men's Muay Thai bout, Sittichai of Thailand will fight against Tawanchai of Thailand.

In the Men's Catchweight bout, Dejdarnong of Thailand will face Banma Duoqi of China.

Next in the Men's Flyweight fight, Dae Hwan Kim of South Korea will take on Xie Wei of China.

In the Women's Atomweight fight, Binguyen of Viet Nam will meet against Jenelyn Olsim of the Philippines. In another Men's bout of Bantamweight, Purev Otgonjargal of Mongolia will fight with Ben Royle of the United Kingdom.

The event does not include the World Championships, but

it will be a good match because of the participation of famous fighters, and thus it will be an important fight for Tial Thang.

This is Song Min Jong's 20th bout, winning 11 of 19 bouts and has faced eight matches losses. Tial Thang has won three straight wins in the ONE history with no loss record.

The Myanmar fighter lives in the United States and trains with well-known Burmese Python Aung La N Sang. Tial Thang joined ONE Championship in 2019 for the fourth time in a row.

The Myanmar star has beat Saroth, a Cambodian national in March 2019, Kim, a South Korean national in December 2019, and also won Paul Lumini in February 2021 respectively. —Ko Nyi Lay/ GNLM

Paralympics: 14-yr-old swimmer Yamada wins Japan's 1st medal in Tokyo

MIYUKI Yamada won the host nation's first medal of the Tokyo Paralympics on Wednesday, in the process becoming the youngest Japanese to reach the podium in the history of the Summer Games at just 14 years of age.

Yamada won silver in the women's 100-metre backstroke S2 class, touching the wall in 2 minutes, 26.18 seconds, finishing 9.57 behind reigning Paralympic and world champion Yip Pin Xiu of Singapore.

Fabiola Ramirez of Mexico claimed the bronze medal.

Yamada got off to a blazing start thanks to a great push off the wall but was overhauled by Yip by the end of the first lap.

Yip extended her lead in the second 50 to win her fourth Paralympic gold medal in her fourth games. Yamada has a shot at a second medal in the 50 backstroke on 2 Sept.

Later Wednesday, fellow Japanese Takayuki Suzuki swam to bronze in the men's 50 breaststroke SB3, taking his sixth Paralympic medal and first since 2012. — Kyodo News ■

Australia's Greco grabs first gold at Tokyo Paralympics

AUSTRALIAN cyclist Paige Greco scooped the first gold medal of the Tokyo Paralympics on Wednesday, as the sport got under way a day after a high-energy but poignant opening ceremony.

Despite a year-long postponement and with the shadow of Covid-19 hanging over the event, records began falling almost immediately in both cycling and swimming as the competition heated up. Greco took gold in record-breaking fashion in track cycling's C1-C3 class 3,000 metre individual pursuit, beating China's Wang Xiaomei. The Australian had smashed her own world record by nearly eight seconds to qualify fastest from the morning heats.

She then lowered that time by another second and a half to 3min 50.815sec in the final just over two

hours later. Silver medallist Wang — who had also beaten Greco's old world record in the heats — had no answer to the Australian's power, finishing more than four seconds adrift. In the wheelchair rugby pool stage, defending gold medallists Australia suffered a shock setback in their bid to become the first team to top the podium at three consecutive Games, losing 54-53 to Denmark. Meanwhile, British swimmer Reece Dunn set a new Paralympic record in the men's 100m butterfly S14 category.

The Games were declared open on Tuesday night by Japan's Emperor Naruhito, with International Paralympic Committee chief Andrew Parsons paying tribute to the grit of the athletes who made it to Tokyo. — AFP ■



Australian cyclist Paige Greco scooped the first gold medal of the Tokyo Paralympics on Wednesday, as the sport got under way a day after a high-energy but poignant opening ceremony. **PHOTO: AFP**