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Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Announcement of Central Committee on Prevention, Control and
Treatment of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)
7th Waning of Wagaung 1383 ME
29 August 2021

AS it is necessary to continuously control infection of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), it is hereby announced that public requests, orders, notifications and directives (except for easing the restrictions) released by the Union-level organizations and Union ministries up to 31 August 2021 have been extended until 30 September 2021 for prevention, control and treatment of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19).

Plans underway to implement 10 zones of
future water supply projects in Yangon City

YANGON City Development Committee is implementing 10 water supply project zones for ensuring water sufficiency of local people in the future.

Number of population in Yangon City is growing day by day. Depending on the current situation, population density will increase in the city. As such, the YCDC is implementing 10 water supply zones to be facilitated with the disinfection system for supplying drinking water to the local people through supervisory control and data acquisition system with the use of transmission pipe network.

Ten water supply zones will fulfill the needs of water deficiency areas by sharing water sources. Among these zones, No 1 zone covers Botahtaung, Pazundaung, Kyauktada, Pabedan, Mingala Taungnyunt, Tamway, Lanmadaw, Latha, Ahlon, Kyimyindine, Dagon, Bahan and Sangyoung townships.

Zone 2 comprises



Skilled workers are connecting water pipelines for supply of water being implemented by YCDC.

Thakayta, Dawbon and Thingangyun townships, Zone 3 Mayangon, Hline, Yankin and South Okkalapa townships, Zone 4 North Okkalapa, southern Mingaladon and southern Insein townships, Zone 5 Shwepyitha, northern Insein and central Mingaladon townships, Zone 6 northern Mingaladon township, Zone 7 Dagon Myothit (East) and (North) townships, Zone 8 Dagon Myothit (Seikkan) and (South) townships, Zone 9 Hlinethaya

and Zone 10 Dala, Seikkyi Khanaungto and western part of Kyimyindine townships. Townships from these zones start getting the water.

The water collection tank with 86 metres in length, 45 metres in width and 14 metres in depth and the water raising pump were built for supplying 27 million gallons of water to Dagon Myothit (Seikkan) and (South) township on a daily basis in the Zone 8. During the period

when Lagunbyin water supply project is being implemented, seven million gallons of water has been implemented to Thingangyun, Dawbon, Thakayta, Dagon Myothit(South) and (Seikkan) townships daily.

At present, Hlawga Dam supplies 90 million gallons of water, Gyobyu Dam 30 million, Ngamoeyeik Dam 90 million and Lagunbyin Dam 10 million totalling 220 million gallons of water.—Soe Myint Aung

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.

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Statement called for fight against terrorism, for rewarding whistle-blowers, informants

1. Terrorist groups, including the Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw-CRPH, National Union Government-NUG and the People's Defence Forces-PDF groups, which were formed under various names, are committing terrorist acts every day to disrupt the government administrative machinery to prevent it from implementing the five-point roadmap of the State Administration Council and to gain the support of the people by intimidating them.

2. As acts of violence are threatening the social security of the people and raising concerns, as well as degrading the dignity of the country and the people, it is essential for the people to work together to eradicate it.

3. Not only terrorists who involve in the terrorist acts personally, but also those who commit one of the following acts will be considered as terrorists and will be taken action under the Anti-Terrorism Law.

(a) Urging people to take part in terrorist activities, involved in recruitment, propaganda and mobilization.

(b) Hiding and letting a member of the terrorist group in the property in order to prevent them from being arrested.

(c) Allowing a terrorist or a member of a terrorist organization to use a building or a place to gather, to hold a meeting, to conduct terrorist training courses, as well as arranging transportation.
- (d) Providing financial support, collecting, accepting, transferring money, and participating in instructing to do so.

4. Under the Counter-Terrorism Act, the money and property of the accused will be confiscated and if convicted, it will be confiscated as a State treasury.

5. As information is crucial in fighting against terrorism, people are requested to inform respective police stations or security organizations about terrorists and terrorist organizations and social media users who spread fake news; Responsible citizens who report such information will be provided as follows: -

(a) Informant can report without mentioning name and address.

(b) Informant will be kept strictly confidential and will not be questioned or witnessing.

(c) Informant and related persons will be provided with security.

(d) Depending on the accuracy of the information, the informant and whistle-blower will be rewarded with a disclosed amount of money.

6. Therefore, in order for the people to have full security in their social life and to be free from fear, please identify members of any terrorist group around them.

Central Committee on Counter Terrorism

MoC conducts import processes for anti-COVID-19 devices daily



A truck is loaded with medical equipment.

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 29 August (Yesterday), anti-COVID-19 equipment, medical products including oxygen plants and concentrators were imported by 12 companies

with the use of 19 vehicles, including two bowzers.

A total of 39 tonnes of liquid oxygen, 0.25 tonne of liquid oxygen cylinders, two oxygen storage containers, 180 empty oxygen cylinders, 1,215 home oxygen concentrators, 2,500 sets of Covid-19 test kits, 42,200 sets of PPE suits, and 16 tonnes of masks were imported via Muse, Chinshwehaw, Lwejel, and Myawady trade centres and the Yangon International Airport.

One vehicle carrying liquid oxygen was transported to Yangon and another one to Mawlamyine respectively.

It is reported that the Ministry of Commerce is coordinating 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



Trucks are conveying medical supplies from border posts to regions and states.



A bowser carries liquid oxygen.



A bowser transports liquid oxygen for the people.

Preventive measures taken for damage and overflow of water from the dams

LAST year’s drought caused shortages of drinking water in the country. This year’s rainfalls can remove such worries of water scarcity. However, it is necessary to take preventive measures of damage and overflow of water from the dams.

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

Professionals of film industry urged to preserve the films reflecting Myanmar’s historical and cultural images

UNION Minister for Information U Maung Maung Ohn arrived at the Myanmar Motion Picture Museum and Film Studio under the Department of Information and Public Relations in Bahan Township, Yangon Region, yesterday morning.

At the Myanmar Motion Picture Museum, Director General of the Information and Public Relations Department U Aye Kywe explained the condition of the museum operation. The Union Minister said Myanmar’s films are invaluable heritage that can express historical events as well as cultural images, and must be systematically preserved.

The Union Minister said it is necessary to preserve the ancient films with digital technology, and technicians need to observe the international film preservation techniques not to damage the films in natural diseases. It is a matter of great



Union Minister for Information U Maung Maung Ohn views round systematic preservation of films in the film museum.

pride for all Myanmar people that Myanmar cinema is over 100 years old and that some of the great films have been recognized as the UNESCO World Heritage List, he continued.

He added that the Prime Minister of the State gave a guidance to provide necessary

assistance for the development of the film industry and have close discussion with artistes and assist them in meeting their needs in accordance with the procedures. Although there are a total of more than 3,000 films and documentaries in the museum, the number of digitally

preserved systems is still very few and more cooperation with relevant professionals is needed. Afterwards, the Union Minister inspected studios and film development centres in the Motion Picture Development Branch. The Ministry of Information

established the Motion Picture Museum on 22 June 1981 and, is maintaining more than 3,000 academy award-winning films and documentaries. Of them, “Mya Ga Naing”, “Pyoh Chit Lin”, “Japan Yin Thway”, “Nga Ba”, “Bathu Pyaing Loh Hla Par Tawt Naing” films are digitally preserved. “Mya Ga Naing” was regarded as an Asia- Pacific heritage of the UNESCO in 2018. A National Film Archive is being built to preserve film in a methodical way.

In the afternoon, the Union Minister had a close discussion with executives and patrons of the Myanmar Motion Picture Organization on COVID-19 vaccination plan for film artistes and technicians, current challenges and the resumption of film activities, pledging to provide aid to those from the film industry as much as he can in accord with the guidance of the Prime Minister of the State.—MNA

Yangon Region Chief Minister inspects arrival of oxygen machines at Yoma Yeiktha COVID-19 treatment centre

YANGON Region Chief Minister U Hla Soe and officials inspected the oxygen related materials and preparations for the oxygen need of patients at Yoma Yeiktha COVID-19 treatment centre in Dagon Myothit (Seikkan) Township yesterday.

Firstly, the Union Minister checked the arrival of a truck carrying the oxygen generator and other related materials that can fill 200 40-litre oxygen cylinders per day donated by U Tin Maung, Patron of Myanmar Arman Entrepreneurs Association and his wife Daw Si Si Moe (Xie Family) and the site chosen for

construction of the oxygen plant. Then, U Htoo Lwin, Chairman of District Administration Body and in charge of centre reported on their preparations for the positive patients and facilities.

Currently, the centre prepares oxygen for 50 patients who need oxygen therapy and will increase the numbers if necessary. Moreover, the centre offers proper medical treatment to 80 patients and 413 returnees from foreign countries who undergo quarantine and other secondary contacts.—San Kyaw Oo (IPRD)/GNLM



A truck carrying oxygen related materials arrives at Yoma Yeiktha COVID-19 treatment centre in Dagon Myothit (Seikkan) Township.

State Administration Council
Press Release

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

1. Some student youths, State service personnel and citizens, with worries, have evaded to areas of EAOs and foreign countries due to the incitements and intimidation of NLD members, extremist followers, unlawful associations and terrorist groups such as CRPH and NUG, stimulation of CDM, and persons and organizations at home and abroad not wishing to restore peace and stability of the State since Tatmadaw assumed the State responsibilities on 1 February 2021.

2. They are further worried about the dictatorship statement and speeches of unlawful association and terrorist group CRPH and NUG, and some relevant persons. As they face no security guarantee and difficulties in socio-economic life in those areas, they wish to return to their native lands.

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

4. As those who evade their native areas are also citizens, the State Administration Council will arrange their returns from the evaded areas to various parts of Myanmar.

5. As such, the information was released that if those who evaded to various areas, except for persons who committed any kinds of crime, wish to return to their native lands in Myanmar of their own accord due to multiple worries, the citizens abroad can contact nearby ward, village, township and district administration bodies and relevant embassies, military attaché offices and consulates in accord with the easing restrictions under the law.

Information Team
State Administration Council

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

Myanmar Team can be voted via online system

A cultural troupe representing the Myanmar Tatmadaw is competing in the International Army Games 2021 in Russia and voting for the People’s Choice Award can be done by voting online at <https://golosovanie-ac.mil.ru> until 3:30 am on Tuesday, 31 August.—MNA

3,166 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 29 August, total figure rises to 392,300

MYANMAR’S COVID-19 positive cases rose to 392,300 after 3,166 new cases were reported on 29 August 2021 according to the Ministry of Health. Among these confirmed cases, 346,408 have been discharged from hospitals. Death toll reached 15,183 after 106 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 28-8-2021, a total of 4,683,410 people have been vaccinated. Of them, 1,846,190 people have been vaccinated two times and 2,837,220 people once.—MNA

Public request by Ministry of Health

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

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

Ministry of Health (2-8-2021)

Shwebo District Agriculture Dept completes cultivation of over 1 mln acres of monsoon crops

MORE than 1,020,000 acres of various pulses, oil crops, sugarcane, cotton, kitchen crops and other crops have been cultivated in Shwebo District, Sagaing Region, said U Tin Maung Swe, head of Shwebo District Agriculture Department.

During the monsoon season of the 2020-2021 financial year, over 1.4 million acres of monsoon crops are projected for planting across the six townships of Shwebo District. The cultivation commenced in May 2021 and about 1,025,000 acres have been planted so far. The department has covered 73.09 per cent of projected acres.

Last FY 2019-2020, the district saw cultivation of 1,340,000 acres of rice, various pulses and beans, edible oil crops, sugarcane, cotton,



Photo shows thriving paddy saplings in the farm.

kitchen crops and other crops in the district.

“This year, the number of

the monsoon crop acres has increased as Thaphanseik dam can supply irrigated water for

250,000-300,000 acres of summer paddy crops. The projected acres are slated to finish by

September-end,” U Tin Maung Swe explained.

The projected monsoon acreage includes 221,493 acres in Shwebo Township, 288,468 in Wetlet, 285,054 in KhinU, 131,781 in YeU, 175,720 in Taze and 299,641 in Dabayin, totaling 1,402,157 acres in Shwebo District.

Last year, over 200,000 acres of monsoon crops in Shwebo, over 280,000 in Wetlet, over 270,000 in KhinU, over 120,000 in YeU, 170,000 in Taze and 290,000 in Dabayin townships were seen in the district.

Additionally, Shwebo District Agriculture Department is raising awareness of agriculture and distributing the pedigree crop seeds to the farmers. The farmers can contact the department for enquiry, the department stated.—Lulay/GNLM

Thailand ranks first among regional trade partners this FY

THE bilateral trade with the neighbouring Thailand, Myanmar’s major trading partner among ASEAN member countries, amounted to US\$3.84 billion in the past nine months (October-June) of the current financial year 2020-2021, the statistics issued by the Central Statistical Organization under the Ministry of Planning and Finance indicated.

Thailand has been Myanmar’s largest trade partner among the regional countries, followed by Singapore and Malaysia. Moreover, Myanmar’s exports mostly go to Thailand after the main trade partner outside region, China.

The ministry reported that exports surpassed imports in trade with Thailand, with exports reaching over \$2.442 billion and imports valued at over \$1.399 billion.

Thailand accounted for 18.48 per cent of total trade in 2016-2017 FY with estimated trade value of US\$4.6 billion, 19.17 pc in 2017-2018 FY with trade value of \$5.57 billion, 40.38 pc in 2018-2019 FY with \$5.46 billion and over 40 pc in 2019-2020 FY with \$5.117 billion respectively.

Exports of natural gas from Taninthayi Region contributed to the enormous increase in border trade with Thailand in the previous years. The corn exports to

Thailand has shown a significant increase since 2019, the Ministry of Commerce stated.

Myanmar primarily exports natural gas, fishery products, coal, tin concentrate (SN 71.58 per cent), coconut (fresh and dry), beans, corns, bamboo shoots, sesame seeds, garment, footwear, plywood and veneer, broken rice and other commodities to Thailand. It imports capital goods such as machinery, raw industrial goods such as cement and fertilizers, and consumer goods such as cosmetics, vegetable oil and food products from the neighbouring country.

Myanmar is carrying out border trade with the neighbouring country Thailand through Tachilek, Myawady, Myeik, Mawtaung, Hteekhee, Kawthoung and Meisei border areas respectively. Among them, Myawady handled the largest trade in border trade with Thailand, followed by Hteekhee. Nevertheless, the trading activity via border is sluggish amid the COVID-19 surge. Consequently, the trade via land border slightly declined in the current mini budget years of FY 2020-2021 as against last year.

Apart from its main trade partner China, Myanmar’s external trade was mostly carried out with the regional trade partners.—KK/GNLM

CMP garment exports plummet to US\$2.5 bln in current FY

EXPORTS of garments manufactured under the cut-make-pack (CMP) system touched a low of US\$2.5 billion between 1 October and 30 June in the current FY2020-2021, according to data from the Ministry of Commerce.

Myanmar’s garment exports witnessed a decline of over 20 per cent in the past nine months compared with a year ago period on the back of slump in demand by European Union market, the Ministry of Commerce stated.

The figures plunged from over \$3 billion in the corresponding period of last FY2019-2020.

The garment industry is facing cancellation of order and slump in output, new orders. However, The Swedish fashion retailer H&M is gradually placing orders from Myanmar again after it paused in March. Then, more international fashion retailers such as Primark and Bestseller started to resume new orders. Additionally, Germany will also continue its support for Myanmar garment businesses so that Myanmar women can continue their livings, Germany Embassy Yangon’s Facebook posted. Nonethe-

less, the COVID-19 infections are spiking in the country and all the CMP factories are temporarily closed down during the official public holidays.

The garment sector is among the prioritized sectors driving up exports. The CMP garment industry emerged as a promising one, with preferential trade from Western countries. But, we cannot expect normalcy for now due to the possible disruption in logistics and supply sector and other serious consequences amid the COVID-19 impacts, traders stressed.

Myanmar’s manufacturing sector is largely concentrated in garment and textiles produced on the Cutting, Making, and Packaging basis, and it contributes to

the country’s GDP to a certain extent. Myanmar mainly exports CMP garments to markets in Japan and Europe, along with the Republic of Korea, China, and the US.

The export value of CMP garments was only \$850 million in the 2015-2016 FY, but it has tripled over the past two FYs. In the 2016-2017 FY, about \$2 billion was earned from exports of CMP garments. The figure increased to an estimated \$2.5 billion in the 2017-2018 FY and \$2.2 billion in the 2018 mini-budget period (from April to September). It tremendously grew to \$4.6 billion in the 2018-2019 FY and \$4.8 billion in the 2019-2020 FY, according to the Commerce Ministry.—Htet Myat/GNLM



Female workers are producing various kinds of clothings at garment factory.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Japan to allow wider preimplantation genetic testing of eggs in IVF

TESTING of fertilized eggs during in-vitro fertilization treatment to identify genetic diseases before pregnancy will be expanded to cover conditions that develop after adulthood, the Japan Society of Obstetrics and Gynecology said earlier this year, in a decision already questioned by one disabled group.

Preimplantation genetic testing, first approved by the society in 2004, examines chromosomes and genes of fertilized eggs at the request of people concerned about the possibility of passing on a genetic trait. Applicants are required to be undergoing IVF treatment. But the testing has often met criticism since it could lead to only fertilized eggs without abnormalities being selected as worthy of life. — Kyodo News ■

Gun that killed Billy the Kid fetches \$6 mn at auction

THE pistol used to kill the notorious outlaw Billy the Kid in the days of the American Wild West has been auctioned for \$6.03 million, a world record for a firearm.

The Colt single-action revolver owned by sheriff Pat Garrett had been estimated at \$2-3 million and saw “lively bidding” on the phone, online and in the room in Friday’s sale, the auction house Bonhams said. “It stands as a relic of one of the most important and well-known stories of the Wild West,” Bonhams said.

It said the gun was in “very good” condition with “well worn grips.” Garrett used the .44-caliber gun to shoot Billy the Kid — who was born Henry McCarty but also went by William Bonney — in the chest on July 14, 1881 in New Mexico. The gunfighter died at the age of 21. The previous record for a firearm was \$1.98 million, set by Christie’s in 2002 for a pair of flintlock saddle pistols carried by George Washington during the Revolutionary War, Bonhams said. —AFP ■

Japan’s coast guard tests tech to automatically track suspicious ships



File photo taken in September 2012 shows the Japan Coast Guard’s patrol vessel. **PHOTO: KYODO NEWS**

JAPAN will begin testing an artificial intelligence-assisted system

next fiscal year to automatically detect and track suspicious

foreign vessels in its territorial waters, Japan Coast Guard of-

ficials said.

It is hoped the system will help ease the burden on maritime law-enforcement operations as Japan faces an increase in intrusions into its waters and illegal activities in its exclusive economic zone, particularly by Chinese vessels, they said. The AI-based integrated system, which will monitor satellite data, will enable early detection and prediction of intrusions by analyzing ships’ navigation data such as speed, location and direction. The system is expected to have the capability to process data from multiple ships at once, they said. Once a suspicious ship is detected, the coast guard will dispatch vessels. — Kyodo News ■

Finland’s evacuation operation in Afghanistan ends with 413 people flown out

FINLAND’S evacuation operation in Afghanistan ended late Friday night when persons responsible for the security of Finnish Embassy personnel were successfully sent to Kabul airport, the country’s Ministry for Foreign Affairs said on Saturday.

The total number of security guards and their family members is 83. The group got on a flight away from the Afghan capital early on Saturday morning, the ministry said in a press release.

To date, Finland has evacuated a total of 413 people from Afghanistan, it said.

According to Finnish national broadcaster Yle, the evacuated include Finnish citizens, Finnish permanent residents and locally hired embassy workers as well as their families. Evacuees also include people working with the European Union and NATO missions.

The ministry noted that Finland’s evacuation operation in Afghanistan completed when the ministry’s relief team and the Defence Forces’ unit tasked in ensuring the efforts had left Kabul.

The Finnish Defence Forces announced that the Finnish



Civilians prepare to board a plane during an evacuation at Hamid Karzai International Airport, Kabul on 18 August 2021. **PHOTO: XINHUA**

troops who supported evacuation efforts in Kabul arrived in Finland on Saturday morn-

ing. The troops were sent to Afghanistan about one week ago. — Xinhua ■

Chicago Chinatown hosts 2021 dragon boat race



Nineteen teams competed in the race this year. With a drummer sitting at the bow and drumming the rhythm and a person standing at the stern steering the direction, the racers rowed concertedly toward the finish. **PHOTO: XINHUA/FILE**

THE 20th Chicago Dragon Boat Race kicked off in the Chicago River in Chicago Chinatown Saturday morning.

Nineteen teams competed in the race this year. With a drummer sitting at the bow and drumming the rhythm and a person standing at the stern steering the direction, the racers rowed concertedly toward the finish.

There were two teams competing at the same time. With time calculated, the team using the least time to finish the race would be the winner.

Addressing the audience before the race started, Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot thanked the Chinatown community for being

incredibly strong and resilient during the COVID-19 pandemic, saying Chinatown community is one of the most important communities in Chicago, and the Chinese American history is part of the Chicago history.

“You are the love of the city,” she told the visitors.

Chinese Consul Lu Xiaohui from the Consulate General of the People’s Republic of China in Chicago wished the race a success and everyone a good time.

During the race, entertaining performances were staged onshore in the park. Lion dance, Shaolin Kungfu, Cantonese Opera, and Tai Chi drew waves of applause. — Xinhua ■

Japan detects more Moderna vaccine contamination

TWO Japanese regions suspended use of some Moderna Covid-19 shots on Sunday after more cases of contamination were spotted, the local governments said.

The move came a day after the Japanese health ministry said it was investigating the death of two men who received doses from other tainted Moderna batches -- though the cause of death is unknown.

Okinawa prefecture, in southern Japan, said it had suspended use of Moderna shots at a major vaccination centre in the city of Naha, while Gunma prefecture, north of Tokyo, also said it had paused use of contaminated lots.

"We are suspending the use of Moderna Covid-19 vaccines as foreign substances were spotted" in some of them, authorities in Okinawa said in a statement.

In Gunma an official told AFP: "We continue use of Moderna lots that are not affected by the incident."

The contamination in Okinawa and Gunma follows the sus-



Japan has suspended the use of some batches of Moderna's Covid-19 vaccine because contamination was spotted. PHOTO: AFP

pension of 1.63 million doses across Japan on Thursday after the deaths of two men aged 30 and 38 in August following their second Moderna doses.

Those doses were drawn from one of the three batches suspended by the government on Thursday.

Japan's health ministry said however that it was investigating the cause of death and it is unknown if there is a causal link with the vaccine.

"At this time, we do not have any evidence that these deaths are caused by the Moderna Covid-19 vaccine, and it is important to conduct a formal investigation to determine whether there is any connection," Moderna and its Japanese distributor Takeda said in a joint statement on Saturday. The nature of the particles found in the vials, which were manufactured by a Moderna contractor in Europe, is also not known yet. — AFP ■

Australia's Melbourne extends sixth virus lockdown



A woman wearing face mask rides in Melbourne, Australia, 28 May 2021. PHOTO: XINHUA

A lockdown of Australia's second-biggest city Melbourne will be extended, authorities announced Sunday as they struggle to quash a stubborn coronavirus Delta variant outbreak.

Almost seven million people in Melbourne and surrounding Victoria state were scheduled

to exit a four-week lockdown on Thursday, but state premier Dan Andrews said it would no longer be possible with case numbers rising by 92 overnight.

It is the city's sixth lockdown of the pandemic, and includes a curfew, the closure of playgrounds and strict limits on exercise.

"We still have too many cases in the community for too long for us to be able to open up and give back... those freedoms that we cherish and those freedoms that we desperately want back," Andrews said.

Andrews did not reveal how long stay-at-home orders would remain in place, saying officials would "look at all the different options".

Meanwhile neighbouring New South Wales state, which includes Australia's most populous city of Sydney, posted 1,218 new cases on Sunday — pushing the country's overall daily caseload to a fresh all-time high. Almost 19,000 cases have been detected in the state of about eight million people since the Delta variant outbreak began in mid-June. But with vaccination rates now surging in New South Wales and authorities predicting 70 percent of adults there will be fully vaccinated by October, residents weary of prolonged restrictions have been promised some modest freedoms.—Xinhua ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Maldives' August tourist arrivals surpass pre-pandemic levels

TOURIST arrivals to the Maldives in August have surpassed pre-pandemic figures for the same month in 2019, local media citing data from the Ministry of Tourism reported Saturday. Tourism Ministry data showed that the Maldives received 120,529 tourists from 1 August to 25 August compared to 120,341 tourist arrivals in August 2019 before the COVID-19 pandemic struck. Data showed that arrivals in August were 18 per cent higher than arrivals in July.

Russia has been the Maldives' main source of tourists so far in 2021 with 157,876 arrivals, followed by India with 146,206 arrivals, and Germany with 42,078 arrivals.

The tourism sector, as one of the country's main sources of income, suffered setbacks due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 before being reopened to tourists in 2021. — Xinhua ■

Pakistan expands restrictions to control 4th wave of COVID-19

PAKISTAN on Sunday extended restrictions to 27 cities from the earlier 13 cities to control the serious fourth wave of COVID-19 in the country, the National Command and Operation Center (NCOC) said on Sunday.

The new restrictions will be imposed from Sept. 1 across the country, under which all commercial activities, except essential services including grocery stores and pharmacies, will be suspended by 8 p.m. local time, the department leading the country's campaign against the pandemic said in a statement. Under the restrictions, markets in all 27 cities will be closed twice a week, whereas indoor dining, indoor weddings, shrines and cinema halls, recreational parks and swimming pools will remain closed across the

country.

Sports activities including boxing, martial arts, rugby, water polo, and wrestling have also been banned by the NCOC. Outdoor weddings with a limited number of people and outdoor dining and takeaway are allowed across the country, according to the statement.

All public and private offices and public transport have been allowed to operate at a 50 percent capacity, and railways at a 70 percent capacity throughout the country.

Educational activities in schools will be allowed thrice a week at a 50 percent capacity, the statement added. The country has reported 3,909 new COVID-19 cases over the last 24 hours, raising the overall tally of the infected people to 1,152,481 across the country, the NCOC said.—Xinhua ■



All public and private offices and public transport have been allowed to operate at a 50 per cent capacity, and railways at a 70 per cent capacity throughout the country. PHOTO: AFP

Don't lessen vigorous efforts for survival in COVID-19 period

A LARGE volume of health devices to be used in fighting against COVID-19 has been flowing into Myanmar since 1 July 2021. Before that date, the inflow volume for protective gears for COVID-19 was very small in addition to lesser amounts of medicines and medical equipment under the restricted import rules amid the security tighten imposed by neighbouring countries at border areas because of the pandemic.

Before the outbreak of the third wave of COVID-19, everybody didn't take care of danger. Although the news on infection of COVID-19 in many countries spread across the nation through various media especially in social media, most of the Myanmar people did not look at the future prospect. The government repeatedly warned the

The government and the private sector are marching forward together. For the time being, the infection rate is remarkably declining. The two should not halt making concerted efforts to battle the pandemic. The ending of the third wave will be nearer and nearer.

take responsibility for treating the COVID-19 patients and import COVID-19 vaccines. Meanwhile, the government tried to purchase the vaccines from neighbouring countries so as to vaccinate the people with two doses.

The government and the private sector are marching forward together. For the time being, the infection rate is remarkably declining. The two should not halt making concerted efforts to battle the pandemic. The ending of the third wave will be nearer and nearer.



people to take care of prevention, protection and treatment against COVID-19 but people did not have frightening in their minds.

As of early July, the third wave of the pandemic started hammering Myanmar. The people woke up to commence preparation tasks but it was too late. The Saturn pandemic has completely gripped the neck of the people who were unable to struggle for survival.

During the two months in July and August, the terribly high infection rate of COVID-19 plucked many lives of the people. Hundreds of untimely lives are lost on a daily basis. The pandemic suppressed businesses, health conditions and social affairs of the people. Victims of COVID-19 poured out vigorous efforts to be able to secure the normal situation.

The period was the most important for the entire people to defy the brutal attacks of COVID-19. The government encourages businesspersons and various organizations to import useful medicines and medical equipment in curing COVID-19 patients by easing import restrictions. From then on, medical devices including oxygen cylinders and bowsters flow into Myanmar for saving many lives. The government has allowed private clinics and hospitals to

The First Three Minutes and A Brief History of Time

The theoretical physicist and Nobel laureate in physics Professor Steven Weinberg (3 May 1933 to 23 July 2021) has passed away. Just several hours before this writer learned of Weinberg's death, he was thinking that Steven Weinberg's book on cosmology *The First Three Minutes: A Modern View of the Origin of the Universe* (first published 1977) is, to me, a somewhat more difficult read than the (arguably if not actually) more famous book *A Brief History of Time* (first published 1988) also on cosmology authored by the renown late Stephen Hawking (8 January 1942 to 14 March 2018).

When I write that Hawking's *A Brief History of Time* is more famous than *The First Three Minutes*, I write with great respect vis-à-vis these late scientists' sterling achievements. In addition, both of them were effective popularizers of science. I bought the 1977 edition of *The First Three Minutes* in 1982 in Ann Arbor while I was studying at the University of Michigan Law School in the United States. That book together with, among others, William Shakespeare's *King Lear* and *The Possibility of Altruism* (first published 1970) by philosopher Thomas Nagel (born 4 July 2017) were among the books in the course 'The One, the Many and the Good' offered by Professor Donald Regan at Michigan Law School for Fall semester 1981 (a course which this writer was not able to take). I did read *King Lear* and *The Possibility of Altruism* and the other books in the course. I gave up reading *The First Three*

Minutes, in 1982, after about 40 pages since it was quite difficult for me (at least then).

Fast forward to 2011. I bought *The First Three Minutes* again and this time I did finish reading it. Around the same time, I bought and read *A Brief History of Time* and deliberately by design (pun intended another of Hawking's books with Leonard Mlodinow was titled *The Grand Design*) finished reading it on 8 January 1942 which was Stephen Hawking's 70th birthday. From my recall, I can say that I understood around 70% and up to 90% of what Hawking wrote in *A Brief History of Time*. In contrast, from what I recall, when I re-read around 2011 or 2012 *First Three Minutes*, I can say that I understood only around 65% to 80% of what Weinberg wrote.

It is due to my small understanding that I grasp only partly (though I should say a fairly significant part) of the presentations of these two scientists in their two books for the general audience on what can be called cosmological science. I thank them for educating me through their books. (Though I have read at least 4 books by Hawking I have only read *The First Three Minutes* by Weinberg).

Stephen Hawking's *A Brief History of Time* has been translated into Burmese by the late Kyaw Zay Yar (Pathein) as အချိန်၏ သမိုင်း-အကျဉ်း and published around 1997. The blurb of the book states that Burmese is the 38th language in which Hawking's book has been translated. As far as this writer is aware Steven Weinberg's *The First Three Minutes* has not been

translated into Burmese. **Nobel Prize in Physics for Steven Weinberg but not for Stephen Hawking**

The late Steven Weinberg was the co-recipient of the Nobel prize in physics together with the late Abdus Salam (29 January 1926 to 21 November 1996) and Sheldon Glashow (born 5 December 1932) in 1979. Stephen Hawking never received a Nobel prize in Physics. Physicists and others have commented as to why Hawking never received the Nobel prize. I am only mentioning this fact and not critiquing nor endorsing the Nobel Committee's decision not to award the Nobel Physics prize to Stephen Hawking.

An avowed Atheist and a professed Muslim being the co-recipient of the 1979 Nobel prize in Physics

It is fairly well-known that the late Steven Weinberg was an atheist. While Stephen Hawking (not Weinberg), for some time, hid (so to speak) or was 'coy' about his atheism, sources indicate that Steven Weinberg (not Hawking) did not show such reticence.

Stephen Hawking 'teased' the readers of his phenomenal best-seller *A Brief History of Time* with 'We would know the mind of God' in the last sentence of his book. Hawking later wrote that he initially considered cutting the last sentence before publication but he decided against it. I recall Hawking writing that if he had done so the sale of his book would have been 'halved!' Yet unlike Weinberg who was unabashed in his espousal of atheism from the 1990s if not earlier Hawking only 'revealed' (pun

-not quite- intended) that he was an atheist, around 2010, I think, in the book *The Grand Design* mentioned above.

Diametrically (as a figure of speech not in physics) opposite to the views of both Hawking and Weinberg was that of Weinberg's co-laureate Abdus Salam who declared that he was a devout Muslim. Indeed, in his Nobel prize banquet speech, Salam quoted a passage from the Quran. Still and in a sense ironically and sadly on his tombstone in Pakistan the phrase 'the first Muslim Nobel laureate' was obscured by the authorities based on the authorities' stipulation that the sect to which Salam belonged is not considered to belong to the Islamic religion.

Why did four eminent scientists with great achievements in the physical and medical sciences have different (non) theistic views?

Steven Weinberg and Abdus Salam

Why did two eminent physicists who shared the Nobel prize in physics in the same year have different views regarding the existence or otherwise of a Creator? To be more specific apart from their scientific achievements what educational, cultural, personal, (non) religious or other causes, grounds or reasons can be attributed to Steven Weinberg's atheism and Abdus Salam's theism? Salam belonged to the Ahmadi 'sect' within the particular theistic Abrahamic religious tradition. (I write 'Abrahamic religion' since Hinduism can be considered as a theistic religion although not an Abrahamic one).

Sir Peter Medawar and Sir John Eccles

As an extension, I might add that not only in the field of physics but also in the field of medicine two eminent Nobel laureates have had different views regarding atheism/theism.

Sir Peter Medawar (28 February 1915 to 2 October 1987) was a Nobel laureate in Medicine for 1960. In one of his books Medawar wrote:

QUOTE

I believe that a reasonable case can be made for saying, not that we believe in God because He exists but rather that He exists because we believe in Him.

UNQUOTE

From Peter Medawar, *The Limits of Science* (Oxford University Press, 1988).

Contrast this with the following statement of Sir John Eccles (27 January 1903 – 2 May 1997), a 1963 Nobel laureate in Medicine:

QUOTE

We have to recognize that we are spiritual beings with souls existing in a spiritual world as well as material beings with bodies and brains existing in a material world.

UNQUOTE

From John Eccles, *Evolution of the Brain. Creation of the Self* (first published 1989).

What would the junior (in age by about 13 years but predeceased Eccles by 10 years) Sir Peter have said about Sir John's theistic view and Sir John's postulate about the existence of 'souls'?

In a short article, I can only provide snippets of the two medical scientists' statements in relation to their (non)theistic views.

U Tin Yu concurrently accredited as Ambassador of Myanmar to the State of Qatar

CHAIRMAN of the State Administration Council, Prime Minister of the Provisional Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has appointed U Tin Yu, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, concurrently as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar to the State of Qatar.—MNA



Myanmar Daily Weather Report (Issued at 7:00 pm Sunday 29 August 2021)

BAY INFERENCE: According to the observations at (18:30 hrs MST today, the low pressure area over the Northwest Bay and adjoining Westcentral Bay of Bengal off North Andhra Pradesh-South Odisha - coasts has crossed off North Andhra Pradesh-South Odisha - coasts (India). Monsoon is weak over the Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal. **FORECAST VALID UNTIL NOON OF THE 30 August 2021:** Rain or thundershowers will be fairly widespread in Nay Pyi Taw, Mandalay, Magway Regions and Northern Shan, Chin, Rakhine, Kayah States and widespread in the remaining Ragions and States with likelihood of isolated heavyfalls in Lower Sagaing and Mandalay, Magway Regions. Degree of certainty is (100%).

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

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Weak monsoon.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 30 August 2021: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 30 August 2021: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 30 August 2021: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

FLOOD WARNING

(Issued at 08:00 hrs MST on 29-8-2021)

According to the (07:30) hrs MST observation today, the water level of Ayeyawady River is observed as about (1) foot at Seiktha, about (1½) feet at Hinthada and about (1½) feet at Zalun below their respective danger levels. It may reach their respective danger levels during the next (3) days. It is alerted to the people who settle near the river banks and low lying areas at Seiktha, Hinthada and Zalun townships to take precaution measure.

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India gave out more than 10 million Covid-19 jabs on Friday, breaking the country's previous daily record of 9.2 million. **PHOTO: MANJUNATH KIRAN/AFP/FILE**

India vaccinates 10 million in one day

India's daily infection count has dropped dramatically since the devastating surge in April-May which overwhelmed its creaking health infrastructure.

INDIA has given more than 10 million Covid-19 jabs in a single day for the first time, authorities said Saturday, as the South Asian giant bolsters its defences for a predicted new surge. The health ministry said the 10 million landmark was passed on Friday, beating the country's previous daily record of 9.2 million. The government has been stung by criticism after a brutal coronavirus wave in April and May killed more than 200,000 people.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi hailed the milestone as a "momentous feat" for the nation of 1.3 billion people. "Kudos to those getting vaccinated and those making the vaccination drive a success," he said on Twitter.

The government had aimed to vaccinate about 1.1 billion adults by the end of the year but shortages, admin-

istrative confusion and hesitancy have held back numbers. Only around 15 percent have had two doses since the drive began in January.

India's daily infection count has dropped dramatically since the devastating surge in April-May which overwhelmed its creaking health infrastructure.

Almost all restrictions on movement and activity have been lifted even though experts have warned of a new wave hitting as early as next month as the festival season starts.

Daily case numbers have started rising again above 40,000 and more than 500 deaths were reported on Saturday. The 46,000 new cases reported Saturday was the highest figure in two months. Much of the spike has been blamed on a surge in the southern state of Kerala. **SOURCE: AFP**

Japan protests against US Marines dumping toxic water in Okinawa

ENVIRONMENT Minister Shinjiro Koizumi said Friday that he has strongly protested to U.S. forces based in Okinawa Prefecture, southern Japan, for dumping treated water containing dangerous chemicals into the local sewage system.

"It is extremely regrettable that (U.S. Marines) unilaterally dumped the water despite discussions still taking place between Japan and the United States on how to deal with the water," Koizumi said at a press conference.

Referring to an incident Thursday involving the U.S. Marine Corps Air Station Futenma in Ginowan, Defense Minister Nobuo Kishi said separately that he has asked the U.S. Marines to stop any future dumping of contaminated water.

Following the leakage of water containing toxic materials from the U.S. Army oil storage facility in Uruma and other nearby locations in June, the U.S. military informed local authorities and the Japanese



The U.S. Marine Corps Air Station Futenma, located in the heart of a residential area in Ginowan, Okinawa Prefecture, in July 2021. **PHOTO: KYODO NEWS**

government in July of its intention to release treated water into the local sewage system to prevent another unexpected leak, according to the Okinawa prefectural government.

But the U.S. military only notified the prefectural gov-

ernment on Thursday morning that it would begin releasing the water less than an hour before going ahead with the plan.

The Okinawa prefectural government demanded the U.S. forces stop such actions immediately.— Kyodo News ■

Thousands rally to 'hug' Spain's dying Mar Menor lagoon

TENS of thousands of people formed a human chain around Spain's crisis-hit Mar Menor lagoon on Saturday in a show of mourning after tonnes of dead fish washed ashore, organisers and officials said.

One of Europe's largest saltwater lagoons, the Mar Menor has long been a draw for tourists but is slowly dying as a result of agricultural pollution, with millions of fish and crustaceans dying over the past fortnight.

Images of dead fish have traumatised this southeastern coastal region, with locals and tourists turning out to join the mass mourning. Footage from the scene showed huge lines of people, many in beachwear, holding hands along the waterfront on Alcazares beach, which stretches six kilometres and other part of the lagoon's 73-kilometre (45-mile) shoreline.

"It was an act of mourning for the death of the animals... we wanted people to somehow

ask their forgiveness for the barbarity we've inflicted on them," Jesus Cutillas, one of the organisers told AFP.

"For days, we've witnessed the death of millions and millions of fish and seeing all that unnecessary death hurts.

"The aim was to express our regret for what has happened and show our determination that it never happens again." Many people wore black, others held up banners reading: SOS Mar Menor. Organisers estimated up to 70,000 people joined the protest.

15 tonnes of fish, algae

Experts say the fish suffocated due to a lack of oxygen caused by hundreds of tonnes of nitrates from fertilisers leaking into the waters, causing a phenomenon known as eutrophication which collapses aquatic ecosystems.

On Monday, regional officials said they had removed 4.5-5.0 tonnes of fish, but by Saturday that had risen threefold to 15 tonnes of fish and algae.— AFP ■



A man hangs a sign against pollution in the Mar Menor lagoon in Puerto Bello de la Manga on 25 August 2021, in La Manga del Mar Menor, Murcia, Spain. **PHOTO: AFP**

Nagqu in Tibet tackles difficulties in high-altitude afforestation

IT is an easy task to grow a tree. But it is not in Nagqu, a city with an average altitude of 4,500 meters in China's Tibet autonomous region. "The permafrost is thick here and there are only two prime growing months for the trees each year," said Hao Wei, general manager of an eco-technology firm based in the city under the Elion Resources Group. According to him, the long snow season and soil freezing period would cause freezing injury for saplings, which makes it hard for them to root and always leads to low lignification.

However, afforestation must be advanced there despite difficulties, as the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, where the city locates, is the "water tower of Asia" that works as an important ecological safety barrier. In 1998, the city's first test base of tree planting was built by forestry technicians. The base covered only two mu, or 0.13 hectares, and was planted with *Salix cupularis*, *Myricaria prostrata* and sea-buckthorn. However, the results were not satisfying. Nine years later, forestry technicians had another try and introduced dragon spruces and some other *Salix cupularis*, and finally 14 of them survived, which are the oldest trees in Nagqu today.— Xinhua ■



Photo shows the Namtso Lake in Nagqu. **PHOTO: PEOPLE'S DAILY /HAN JIAJUN/XINHUA**

Indian researchers discover 3 supermassive black holes merging

INDIAN researchers discovered three black holes from three galaxies merging to a triple active galactic nucleus, the federal ministry of science and technology said Friday. "It's a compact region at the center of a newly discovered galaxy that has a much-higher-than-normal luminosity," the ministry in a statement said. "This rare occurrence in our

nearby universe indicates that small merging groups are ideal laboratories to detect multiple accreting supermassive black holes and increases the possibility of detecting such rare occurrences." According to the ministry, a team of researchers from the Indian Institute of Astrophysics while studying a known interacting galaxy pair, NGC7733, and NGC7734, detected unusual emissions from the center of NGC7734 and a large,

bright clump along the northern arm of NGC7733.

"Their investigations showed that the clump is moving with a different velocity compared to the galaxy NGC7733 itself. The scientists meant that this clump was not a part of NGC7733; rather, it was a small separate galaxy behind the arm. They named this galaxy NGC7733N," the statement said.

The researchers used data from the Ultra-Violet Imaging Telescope (UVIT), the European integral field optical telescope called MUSE in Chile and infrared images from the optical telescope (IRSF) in South Africa. The ministry said supermassive black holes are difficult to detect because they do not emit any light. But they can reveal their presence by interacting with their surroundings.— Xinhua ■

Western attempts to blame China for COVID-19 a geopolitical conspiracy, says Kazakh research center

THE hypothesis hyped up by Western countries that the novel coronavirus was deliberately leaked by a Chinese lab is a geopolitical conspiracy, according to the China Studies Center in Kazakhstan.

The U.S. zeal trying to pin the blame of the pandemic on China is a result of rising economic competition between the two countries, said a report by the center.

Earlier this year, a World Health Organization (WHO) report suggested it was most likely that the virus spread to humans from bats through an unspecified intermediary animal.

However, the United States criticized the report as incomplete and lacking crucial data, and a U.S. intelligence report recently finished but not yet released to the public reportedly found “a lab leak in Wuhan plausible.”

The report by the Kazakh leading research institute on China questioned these Western theories, saying this is a purposeful work for their domestic audience and an attempt to divert their citizens’ attention from the governments’ failure in containing the COVID-19 epidemic and the inefficiency of their political systems.

“If the Chinese govern-



Researchers subpackage 2019-nCoV detection reagents at a company in Wuqing District, north China’s Tianjin Municipality, 27 January 2020. PHOTO: XINHUA

ment really were so ‘insidious’ and would release an artificially grown virus from the laboratory, then why would it be done on their territory ... with its 1.4 billion people and a high population density, which is a very favorable environment for the spread of any virus in principle?” said the report.

Such Western hypotheses do not hold water, because considering China’s years of efforts to lift hundreds of millions of people out of poverty and so much effort put in human capital, it would be “a suicide to imagine some kind of laboratory games with a dangerous little-studied

virus, and also unpredictable threat to national security,” according to the report.

At the end, the report noted that the country where an epidemic originated does not have to make compensation.

“If we recall the global epidemics and deadly diseases of the past, no one in history has paid any compensation. Various epidemics of plague, smallpox, cholera, Spanish flu - were they less deadly? Or if you recall the country from which AIDS began to spread in 1981, to whom and what did it pay for the 25 million deaths?” concluded the report. — Xinhua ■

Judge backs Florida school mask mandate, snubbing conservative governor



Several school districts in Florida have decided to make masks—such as the one worn by this woman in South Beach, Florida in May 2021—mandatory because of a rise in cases fueled by the Delta coronavirus variant. PHOTO: AFP

A judge overruled Florida’s conservative, pro-Trump governor Friday and said the state’s schools can make mask-wearing mandatory.

Judge John Cooper sided with a group of parents who had filed a lawsuit challenging an executive order by Governor Ron DeSantis that barred schools from making students

and school staff wearing masks to fight Covid-19.

DeSantis, a faithful Republican ally of former president Donald Trump, opposes such a measure on grounds it violates people’s individual liberties. He signed an order 30 July prohibiting schools from imposing mask mandates.

During the court proceed-

ings, lawyers for the governor and the state department of education argued that parents have the right to decide what is best for the health of their children under a state law passed this year.

Cooper rejected that argument, saying the law does not bar public institutions from taking measures to protect people’s health, so long as they show that such measures are reasonable and necessary.

The judge also barred the state education department from punishing school districts that defy the executive order from DeSantis. Last week, the state government had threatened two school districts that ignored the governor, saying it would withhold funding equal to the monthly salary of the school board members. — AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Japan: Probe into two deaths after jab from tainted Moderna batch

JAPAN is investigating the death of two men who received jabs from batches of Moderna’s Covid-19 vaccine suspended from use due to contamination, the health ministry said Saturday. The men aged 30 and 38 died earlier this month after getting their second Moderna doses from one of three manufacturing lots suspended by the government on Thursday after several vials were found to be contaminated, the ministry said in a statement. The ministry said the cause of death was still being investigated and “currently, causal relations with the vaccinations are unknown”. — AFP ■

New Covid-19 curfew in Guinea-Bissau

GUINEA-BISSAU’S government said Friday it would reinstate a curfew and other coronavirus infection control restrictions for two weeks to bring an outbreak of the more transmissible Delta variant under control. Ministers agreed a ban on going out between 8:00 pm and 5:00 am to last until September 10, the government said in a statement. The west African country last imposed a coronavirus curfew for around a month in March 2020. Other new restrictions include bans on mass gatherings like religious services, weddings and funerals, also for two weeks, while clubs, restaurants and other leisure venues will also be closed. One of the lowest-ranked countries on the UN Human Development Index, Portuguese-speaking Guinea-Bissau was already under stress before coronavirus hit. It has reported more than 5,600 cases and 110 deaths from Covid-19, while only 31,000 of its more than two million people are vaccinated. — AFP ■

Over 50,000 Covid deaths in Russia last month

RUSSIA’S Federal Statistics Agency Rosstat said Friday that the country saw 50,421 coronavirus deaths in July—more than double the official government figure.

Rosstat’s figure—released late on Friday—painted a far darker picture of the pandemic’s toll in the country than official figures suggest, with a government tally saying 23,349 Russians died as a result of Covid-19 in July.

Government figures only take into account fatalities where the virus was established as the primary cause of death after an autopsy. Rosstat, however, publishes figures under a broader definition for deaths linked to the virus.

According to the agency, more than 350,000 people have died in Russia as a result of coronavirus. The government figure is far lower, at 180,041.

Russian authorities have been accused of downplaying the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic in the country.

While the number of daily infections is now on the decline, Russia has hit record daily deaths several times in August.

Authorities have struggled with a vaccine-sceptic population, with independent polls showing that a majority of Russians do not plan to get inoculated. — AFP ■



Authorities have struggled with a vaccine-sceptic population, with independent polls showing that a majority of Russians do not plan to get inoculated. PHOTO: AFP

London's City finance hub mulls post-Covid future

LONDON'S once bustling City finance district is grinding back to life, but it bears the scars of the deadly pandemic, sparking fresh questions over the future of the so-called "Square Mile".

The Covid-19 health crisis erupted in April last year, sparking a nationwide lockdown that turned the global financial hub into a ghost town. City workers were forced to work remotely and some have since adopted hybrid or flexible work that splits time between home and the office. Britain fully exited lockdown last month, buoyed by speedy vaccination, but many workers appear in no hurry to return to the office amid fears over the Delta Covid variant.

'Reluctance to risk exposure'

"There remains an underlying reluctance of many to risk exposure to the virus, either in the workplace or on the journey to work," Remit Consulting's



Britain fully exited lockdown last month, but many workers appear in no hurry to return to the office. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

corporate real estate specialist Lorna Landells told AFP.

School holidays and the government's Covid policy have impacted the return to office life, but fully vaccinated Britons are no longer required to self-isolate after coming into contact with an

infected person.

Nevertheless, central London office occupancy is just 10.3 percent of its total capacity in the week ending August 20, according to data compiled by Remit.

"When I'm looking out of my office window, the streets look

fairly empty," said Nigel Wilson, the head of insurer Legal & General, in a recent interview with The Guardian newspaper.

"We are still very early days into (the reopening) and I do expect more people to be back in September." — AFP ■

UAE says to resume visas for tourists vaccinated against Covid

THE United Arab Emirates announced it will resume issuing visas to all tourists fully vaccinated against Covid from Monday, a month before Dubai hosts the delayed Expo 2020 trade fair.

The move comes amid a drop in coronavirus infections in the oil-rich Gulf country, after it reported less than 1,000 cases per day last week for the first time in months. The UAE's decision to

reopen its doors to tourists from all countries was taken in order "to achieve sustainable recovery and economic growth", the official WAM news agency reported on Saturday. Those eligible would have to be fully inoculated with one of the Covid-19 vaccines approved by the World Health Organization, which include AstraZeneca, Johnson & Johnson, Moderna, Pfizer/BioNTech, Sinopharm and Sinovac.

"The decision applies to citizens of all countries, including those arriving from previously banned countries," WAM said.

"Passengers arriving on tourist visas must take a mandatory PCR test at the airport," it added.

The UAE is made up of sev-

en emirates including the capital Abu Dhabi and Dubai. While life in the country has largely returned to normal amid the Covid pandemic, it continues to enforce strict rules on wearing masks and social distancing. Dubai was last year counting on the six-month Dubai Expo 2020 – delayed a year by the health crisis and now set to open in October – to attract millions of visitors and boost the economy. Heavily reliant on tourism, the emirate was one of the first destinations to open its doors to travellers, accepting tourists in July last year, just a few months after the pandemic took hold. Abu Dhabi, meanwhile, has been more cautious, opening up to some visitors only in December. — AFP ■



A visitor walks past a Dubai billboard at the Arabian Travel market exhibition in the Gulf emirate, on 17 May 2021. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

China's electronic information manufacturing sector further expands

CHINA'S electronic information manufacturing sector posted steady expansion in the first seven months of 2021, data from the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT) showed.

The added value of electronic information manufacturers with annual operating revenues of at least 20 million yuan (about 3.08 million U.S. dollars) rose 18.7 percent year on year during the period, according to the MIIT.

In July alone, the added value of those manufacturers grew 13 percent year on year, accelerating by 1.2 percentage points from the growth during the same period in 2020, the data showed.

The export delivery value of major enterprises in the sector rose 15 percent year on year in the January-July period. In comparison, fixed-asset investment into the sector jumped by 25.4 percent from a year ago.

MIIT data also showed that the operating revenue of major electronic information manufacturers went up 22.1 percent year on year to 6.33 trillion yuan in the first half of the year. At the same time, their combined profits in the period totaled 345.2 billion yuan, surging 45.2 percent year on year.

In July, China's production of integrated circuits jumped 41.3 percent to 31.57 billion pieces, according to the ministry.—Xinhua ■



Visitors look at descriptions of Huawei products during an expo in Beijing. **PHOTO: CHINADAILY/XINHUA**

NEWS IN BRIEF

UN reaffirms support to East Africa's industrialization drive

THE United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) has reaffirmed its support to industrialization drive in the East African Community (EAC) region, the EAC said in a statement on Saturday. The statement issued by the EAC headquarters in the northern city of Arusha said the reaffirmation was made by UNIDO representative to Tanzania, Mauritius and the EAC, Stephen Kargbo, when he held talks with EAC secretary general, Peter Mathuki, on Thursday. Kargbo said UNIDO will continue to play its role by supporting relevant institutions in capacity building activities for strengthening industrial policy making capacities in the region, said the statement.—Xinhua ■

China sees progress in building e-commerce demonstration bases: ministry

CHINA has made solid progress in building e-commerce demonstration bases in recent years, data from the Ministry of Commerce showed.

By the end of 2020, the country had formulated 127 such bases, which housed a total of 73,500 e-commerce companies. The number of companies increased by 12.9 percent from a year earlier, said the ministry. The total e-commerce transaction volume at these bases reached 6.37 trillion yuan (about 982 billion U.S. dollars) last year, up 13.3 percent year on year, according to the ministry.

Emphasizing the demonstration bases' role in creating jobs and reducing poverty, the ministry said that these bases had over 1.51 million employees by the end of 2020, with 97,600 of them being migrant workers. More than 90 percent of these bases have dedicated themselves to poverty alleviation through e-commerce, it added.—Xinhua ■

Japanese shochu distilleries branch out into absinthe, gin

ON the island of Kyushu, the center of production for Japan's shochu distilled liquor, long-established breweries have started to branch out into the Western spirits of absinthe and gin, making use of the rich variety of local fruits, herbs and other potential ingredients to produce carefully crafted drinks. While honoring traditional production techniques, the challenge has been to adapt distilling equipment to reach the required level of purity for the alcohol and to select the right raw materials.

Munehiro Sata, 51, president of Sata Souji Shoten, a brewery founded in 1908 in Minamikyushu, Kagoshima Prefecture, has developed a fascina-

tion with absinthe, which was once banned in a number of European countries and the United States due to rumors, which proved unfounded, about its hallucinogenic properties.

"The complex herbal aroma (of absinthe) attracted many cultural figures, such as (Vincent) Van Gogh and others," Sata said, referring to the Dutch 19th-century painter.

An aniseed-flavored drink, absinthe's main ingredient is wormwood. Sata Souji uses sweet-potato shochu as the base while infusing the drink with a total of more than 40 botanicals in all, also including Sakurajima tangerines, kelp, and Japanese "ume" apricots. — Kyodo News ■



Photo taken on 10 June 2021, at the Sata Souji Shoten company in Minamikyushu, Kagoshima Prefecture, shows Absinthe Kusushiki turning milky white when water is added to it. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

TRADEMARK CAUTION

KAO KABUSHIKI KAISHA (also trading as Kao Corporation), a company incorporated and existing under the laws of Japan, and having its registered office at 14-10, Nihonbashi Kayabacho 1-Chome, Chuo-ku, Tokyo, Japan, hereby declares that the Company is the Owner and Sole proprietor of the following Trademarks:

media Luxe

The above Trademarks are used in respect of "Facial creams; skin lotions; skin toners; milky face lotions; lip creams; skin whitening serums; skin whitening creams; skin whitening lotions; sun care creams and lotions; skin nourishing creams; body creams; sun care gels; lash gels; eyes gels; facial gels; skin gels; lip gels; skin care tonics; skin nourishment moisturizers; skin care lotions; skin care creams; skin care gels; skin care balms; skin care milk; UV protection creams; UV protection lotions; body care creams; body care lotions; body care gels; skin whitening serums for body; skin whitening creams for body; skin whitening lotions for body; cotton balls for cosmetic purposes; cotton puffs for cosmetic purposes; perfumes; eau de colognes; eau de toilette; make-up creams; make-up gels; foundation creams; liquid foundation; powder foundation; foundation oils; face powders; eye shadows; eyeliners; mascaras; eye brow pencils; lipsticks; cheek colour; gel foundation; eye liner gels; gel eye shadows; cheek gels; eye brow gels; concealers; lip rouge; cheek rouge; false eyelashes; adhesives for affixing false hair; adhesives for affixing false eyelashes; skin cleansing creams; skin cleansing gels; skin cleansing lotions; make-up remover gels; make-up remover creams; make-up remover lotions; facial cleansing gels; facial cleansing oils; facial wash foams; facial wash lotions; non-medicated soaps; non-medicated toilet soaps; non-medicated soaps for personal use; cleaning preparations (for use with body); non-medicated perfumery cakes of toilet soaps; bath powder; non-medicated bath salts; bath gels; non-medicated dentifrices; face masks for cosmetic purposes; facial gel scrubs; skin gel scrubs; facial gel packs; facial massage lotions; nail creams; nail lotions; nail colour and cuticle coat; nail varnish; false nails; hand creams; non-medicated shampoos; hair colour rinses; hair conditioners; hair lotions; hair creams; hair-dyes; hair styling sprays; hair gels; hair mousses; hair oils; hair serums; hair treatments; hair care creams; hair care lotions; hair care gels; hair care tonics; hair styling gels; hair styling waxes; hair styling mousses; hair styling creams; hair styling lotions; hair styling foams; hair grooming oils; hair color creams; hair color gels; hair color oils; hair bleaches; hair cleansing lotions; hair cleansing creams; non-medicated scalp care shampoos; non-medicated scalp care tonics; non-medicated scalp care oils; hair curling creams; hair curling lotions; hair curling gels; hair tinting creams; hair tinting lotions; hair tinting gels." in **Class 3**; "Nail brushes; cosmetic brushes; shaving brushes; face makeup brushes; face powder brushes; powder puffs; powder compacts; face-powder cases; eye shadow brushes; eye shadow brush handles; mascara combs; eyebrow brushes; combination brow brushes and combs; eye lash combs; cheek brushes; lip brushes; vanity cases; compacts sold empty; perfume atomizers sold empty; perfume sprayers sold empty; perfume sprayers; perfume atomizers; combs; hair brushes; scalp care brushes; tooth brushes; abrasive sponges for scrubbing the skin; toilet brushes; toilet cases; toilet sponges; towel rings; containers for household or kitchen use, made from glass; containers for household or kitchen use, made from plastic; dispensers for liquid soap; soap holders; soap trays; sponge holders; sponges for household purposes; bath sponges; sponges for cosmetic purposes; scrubbing brushes for cleaning purposes; steel wool for cleaning purposes; mops; handy mops; duster cloths; brooms and cloths for cleaning; boxes made from glassware, porcelain and earthenware; non-electric hair curling brushes." in **Class 21**.

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Daw Yee Mon Aung, (Advocate)
For **KAO KABUSHIKI KAISHA (also trading as Kao Corporation)**
c/o **Baker & McKenzie Limited**
Level 18, Unit 18-03, Sule Square, 221 Sule Pagoda Road, Kyauktada Township,
Yangon, The Republic of the Union of Myanmar.
Dated: **30 August 2021**

beaute media

Japanese giant wants soy sauce to be the 'ketchup of India'

EVERY dish tastes better with a dash of soy sauce, even dessert: that's the ambitious pitch of Japanese food giant Kikkoman, hoping to persuade Indians to use it in curries, sweets and everything in between.

Convincing 1.3 billion people to add a staple of East Asian cuisine to their butter chicken and samosas is no cakewalk but it will likely be easier than the brand's 1960s push into the United States.

"When we entered the US, people thought we were selling bug juice because of its dark colour," Harry Hakuei Kosato, Kikkoman's India representative, told AFP. — AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

CBOT agricultural futures go higher on demand

CHICAGO Board of Trade (CBOT) agricultural futures closed higher in the past week as the world's agricultural demand is shifting to the United States, Chicago-based AgResource noted.

Weaker U.S. dollar will pull fresh funds into the U.S. agricultural futures markets into yearend, as a sliding U.S. dollar would boost purchasing capacity of other nations. — Xinhua ■

Crypto money gains traction in adult industry amid OnlyFans drama

PORN stars, sex workers and others in adult entertainment were taking a closer look at cryptocurrency payments in the wake of a series of troubles with the mainstream financial system, potentially propelling digital currencies into wider use.

The latest problem came earlier this month when OnlyFans announced it would ban sexually explicit content on the sex-friendly creator site, only to reverse course days later following a backlash.

Nonetheless, the drama could accelerate a move to cryptocurrency to allow anonymous payments to performers outside the banking system.

With stricter rules from payment processors and the recent issues with OnlyFans, "it's obvious crypto will be the solution," said British performer Adreena Winters, who is also a brand ambassador for an upcoming crypto-friendly adult content marketplace. — AFP ■

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V SPIRIT OF DUBAI VOY.NO. (17W/18E)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V SPIRIT OF DUBAI VOY.NO. (17W/18E)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **30-8-2021** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **MITT/MIP** 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 GOLD STAR LINES

France, UK to urge UN for creation of "Safe Zone" in Kabul: Emmanuel Macron



France and Britain will on Monday urge the United Nations to work for the creation of a "safe zone" in the Afghan capital Kabul to protect humanitarian operations, French President Emmanuel Macron said. **PHOTO: AFP**

FRANCE and Britain will on Monday urge the United Nations to work for the creation of a "safe zone" in the Afghan capital Kabul to protect humanitarian operations, French President Emmanuel Macron said. "This is very important. This would provide a framework for the United Nations to act in an emergency," Macron said in comments published in the weekly *Journal du Dimanche*.

Above all such a safe zone would allow the international community "to maintain pressure on the Taliban," who are now in power in Afghanistan, the French leader added. The five

permanent members of the UN Security Council – France, Britain, the US, Russia and China – will meet on Monday to discuss the Afghanistan situation. Paris and London will take the opportunity to present a draft resolution which "aims to define, under UN control, a 'safe zone' in Kabul, that will allow humanitarian operations to continue," Macron said. His comments come as international efforts to airlift foreign nationals and vulnerable Afghans out of the country comes to an end. France ended its evacuation efforts on Friday and the United Kingdom followed suit on Satur-

day US troops have been scrambling in dangerous and chaotic conditions to complete a massive evacuation operation from the Kabul airport by an August 31 deadline. Macron announced on Saturday that discussions had been "started with the Taliban" to "protect and repatriate" Afghan nationals at risk beyond August 31. Speaking to reports in Iraq, where he was attending a meeting of key regional leaders, Macron added that with help from Qatar, which maintains good relations with the Taliban, there was a possibility of further airlift operations. — AFP ■

Resistance forces in Afghan province reject Taliban's claim of advances: Report

THE resistance forces in the Panjshir province on Saturday rejected the Taliban claims that their forces entered Panjshir province from various directions.

Ahmad Massoud supporters rejected the claims of a Taliban advance toward Panjshir and say no one has entered the province, reported Tolo News.

"There is no fight in Panjshir and no one has entered the province," said Mohammad Almas Zahid, head of the Resistance Front delegation.

Earlier, the Taliban claimed that their forces entered Panjshir province.

"No fighting occurred, but the mujahideen of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan ad-



An armed Afghan man supporting the Afghan security forces against the Taliban stands next to humvees at Parakh area in Bazarak, Panjshir province, on 19 August 2021. **PHOTO: AHMAD SAHEL ARMAN/AFP**

vanced from various directions without facing any resistance. The Islamic Emirate forces have entered Panjshir from different

directions," said Anaamullah Samangani, a member of the Taliban's Cultural Commission, reported Tolo News. — AFP ■

Las Vegas roars back to life with record gambling win

BARELY a year after the Las Vegas Strip was shut down by Covid-19, its world-famous casinos have roared back to a record-breaking summer thanks to a remarkable winning streak.

Nevada pocketed an all-time record \$1.36 billion last month from gamblers, who are flooding back to the city nicknamed Lost Wages after months confined at home with little to spend their money on.

"We weren't anticipating these type of numbers," said Michael Lawton, senior analyst for Nevada Gaming Control Board.

"In Nevada, a billion dol-

lars in gaming win is kind of a bellwether number. And we've recorded a billion dollars in gaming win in five consecutive months."

July was something of a "perfect storm," thanks to the presence of major events including a Conor McGregor fight, a Garth Brooks concert at the gleaming new Allegiant Stadium, and the return of musical residencies such as Usher and Bruno Mars at swanky casino theaters.

The month also contained five weekends, including the bonanza Fourth of July holiday.

— AFP ■



The major new Resorts World Las Vegas hotel and casino opened in June 2021, during a summer that has seen Nevada gambling revenues soar. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

NEWS IN BRIEF

Senegal navy searches for dozens lost after migrant boat capsizes

THE Senegalese navy was carrying out a search and rescue mission on Saturday after a boat carrying about 60 migrants capsized earlier in the week, according to a military statement and a local official.

The boat flipped over about 15 kilometres (nine miles) off the northern city of Saint-Louis, said the official, who asked not to be identified. The accident happened on Wednesday night, the navy statement said. Those on board were trying to reach Spain, naval spokesman Ameth Sow told local TV. Senegal is a popular jumping-off point for migrants trying to make the hazardous journey to the Spanish-owned Canary Islands—a gateway to the European Union. — AFP ■

Taliban takes over 3 gates of Kabul's airport: media

THE U.S. and coalition forces have handed over control of three gates, including the entrance to the military section, of Kabul's airport, to Taliban members, a Taliban official told local media Sunday. "The U.S. troops are in control of a small part of the airport, including an area where the radar system of the airport is located," Enhamullah Samangani told Tolo News TV. Taliban deployed a unit of special forces at the main gate of the airport about two weeks ago.

"We are ready to take over the security and technical responsibility of the airport," he said. The takeover came after a deadly suicide bomb blast and gun firing claimed by ISIS-K, a local affiliate of the Islamic State, killed 170 Afghans and 13 U.S. troops at an eastern gate of the facility on Thursday. — Xinhua ■

NEWS
IN BRIEF

Israel strikes Gaza after fire balloons, border clashes

THE Israeli air force attacked two sites in Gaza on Sunday, the army said, after Gazans clashed with forces on the border and launched incendiary balloons into southern Israel. Israeli “fighter jets struck a Hamas military compound used for manufacturing weapons and training as well as an entrance to a terror tunnel adjacent to Jabalia,” the Israeli army said.

“The strikes were in response to Hamas launching incendiary balloons into Israeli territory and the violent riots that took place yesterday,” it said in a statement.

The army said both incidents were “examples of how Hamas continues to employ terror tactics and target civilians.” There were no reports from the Gaza Strip of any casualties caused by the Israeli strikes.

Speaking in Washington, where he had met with US President Joe Biden, Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett said he held Gaza’s Islamist rulers Hamas responsible for any unrest from the Palestinian enclave.

“As I have already said, our actions in Gaza will serve our interests,” he told reporters before boarding a plane back to Israel. — AFP ■

Final UK plane carrying military leaves Kabul

THE UK on Saturday flew out the last of its military from Afghanistan, concluding its pull-out while leaving hundreds of Afghans eligible for resettlement behind.

The defence ministry tweeted that the “final flight carrying UK Armed Forces personnel has left Kabul”, posting photos of drawn and tired-looking soldiers entering a plane.

In a tribute to the troops, the ministry wrote: “To all those who served so bravely under enormous pressure and horrendous conditions to safely evacuate the most vulnerable of civilians: Thank you.”

Earlier Saturday, the UK sent out a final plane carrying only civilian evacuees as it wound up its operation to airlift civilians, diplomats and troops ahead of the August 31 deadline agreed with the Taliban for US troop withdrawal.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson thanked those behind the rescue operation, saying they had helped over 15,000 people in less than two weeks.

“I want to thank everyone involved and the thousands of those who served over the last two decades. You can be proud of what you have achieved,” Johnson said in a message posted on social media.

Defence Minister Ben Wallace said UK troops had “helped thousands to get to a better future and safety”.

- ‘Heartbreaking’ -

The head of the UK armed forces, General Sir Nick Carter earlier Saturday told the BBC the evacuation operation had “gone as well as it could do” but admitted it was “heartbreaking” that “we haven’t been able to bring everybody out”.

The armed forces chief estimated the number of eligible Afghans who had not been evacuated as “in the high hundreds”. — AFP ■



British troops disembark after a flight from Kabul to Brize Norton air force base in Oxfordshire. PHOTO: AFP

Thousands protest curbs on minority voting rights in US



Some states, mainly in the south, have passed often technical changes that make it harder for African Americans, who tend to be Democrat voters, to cast a ballot. PHOTO: AFP

TENS of thousands of people took to the streets in Washington, Houston, Atlanta and other US cities to protest against laws in several Republican-led states that critics say will make it harder for minorities to vote.

The date selected for the rallies was not picked at random: It was on August 28, 1963 that a quarter-million people descended on Washington for a massive civil rights rally highlighted by the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr.’s famous “I have a dream” speech.

Addressing a much smaller crowd on Saturday, his son Martin Luther King III spoke of the need to safeguard American democracy and to guarantee voting rights for everyone.

“You are the dream, and this is our moment to make it true,” he said. Since January, at least 18 states have adopted a total of 30 restrictive election laws, with dozens of others under consideration, according to the Brennan Center for Justice, a nonprofit public policy institute.

Those laws range from a requirement to have a fixed address in order to register to vote to a ban on the drive-through voting that was popular in some states last year amid the Covid-19 pandemic. Carrying signs that read “Voting rights for all” and “Your vote matters,” the protesters marched in Washington’s humid heat from the White House to the Capitol, the seat of the US Congress. About 20,000 people were in attendance, according to organizers.

“I just feel like we just kind of went backwards,” said Rikkea Harris, 25, an African American university student who had traveled from Colorado. — AFP ■

US warns of more terror attacks at Kabul airport



Western allies that helped with the airlift have mostly already ended their evacuation flights, as seen in this British Ministry of Defence photo. PHOTO: AFP

SUICIDE bomb threats hung over the final phase of the US military’s airlift operation from Kabul Sunday, with President Joe Biden warning another attack was highly likely before the evacuations end.

More than 112,000 people have fled Afghanistan via the massive US-led airlift since the Taliban movement swept back into power a fortnight ago, and the operation is winding down despite Western powers saying thousands may be left behind.

What had already been a chaotic and desperate evacuation turned bloody on Thursday when a suicide bomber from the local chapter of the Islamic State group targeted US troops stopping huge crowds of people from entering the airport.

More than 100 people died in the attack, including 13 US service personnel, slowing down the airlifts ahead of Biden’s deadline for evacuations to end by Tuesday. The Pentagon said Saturday retaliation drone strikes had killed two “high-level” IS jihadists in eastern Afghanistan, but Biden warned of more attacks from the group. “The situation on the ground continues to be extremely dangerous, and the threat of terrorist attacks on the airport remains high,” Biden said.

“Our commanders informed me that an attack is highly likely in the next 24-36 hours.”

The US embassy in Kabul later released an alert warning of credible threats at specific areas of the airport, including access gates. — AFP ■

Myanmar teams participating AFC Cup to set new format

THE Asian Football Confederation (AFC) is planning to change the format of the AFC Cup, which is a football tournament of Asia in which Myanmar football clubs participating.

The new format will come into force starting from next year, Asian football authorities said.

Due to the COVID-19 epidemic, it is not possible to hold the AFC Cup in the same way as before. It will no longer be a long-distance event including home and away basic, but a one-way system, officials added.

The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) has decided to host all matches in the 2022 AFC Cup tourney at once, with group matches being chosen by the host

country for each group.

Myanmar clubs will compete in the ASEAN Zone, and champion teams from each group will be able to compete directly from the group stage and the runners-up will compete in the play-offs.

The 2022 AFC Cup ASEAN Zone pre-match will be held on 22 April.

The play-off stage will be held on 17 May and group stage from 24 to 30 June.

The ASEAN Zone semi-finals will be held on 9 and 10 August and the final on 23 and 24 August.

Champion team of ASEAN Zone will advance to the finals, with the semi-finals taking place in September and the final in

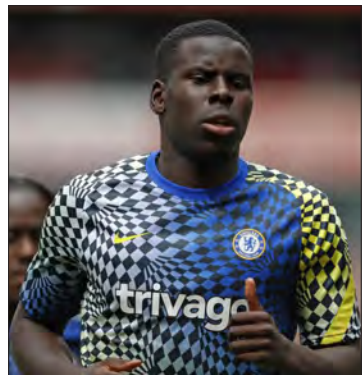
October.

The AFC Cup was cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 during the group stages, and this year the ASEAN zone matches and other zone matches have been cancelled.

This year, Myanmar football clubs Shan United and Hanthawaddy United were allowed to compete but withdrew before the ASEAN Zone matches were cancelled. Myanmar clubs have been allowed to compete in the AFC Cup since 2012.

From 2012 to 2016, one Myanmar team from the group stage was allowed to compete directly while another team is eligible to compete in the play-offs.—Ko Nyi Lay/GNLM

West Ham sign Zouma from Chelsea to bolster leaky defence



West Ham on Saturday completed the signing of French defender Kurt Zouma from Premier League rivals Chelsea in a deal worth a reported £25 million (29.1 million euros). **PHOTO: AFP**

WEST HAM on Saturday completed the signing of French defender Kurt Zouma from Premier League rivals Chelsea in a deal worth a reported £25 million (29.1 million euros).

The 26-year-old has agreed a four-year contract after leaving Stamford Bridge where he won two Premier League titles and a Champions League winners' medal. "I'm very happy and very proud," Zouma told West Ham TV. "My conversation with the manager went very fast. I just felt like he really wanted me to come and join the team, especial-

ly a good team that's started the season very, very well."

West Ham lead the Premier League table but have conceded five goals in their three matches so far after Saturday's 2-2 draw with Crystal Palace.

"I am delighted to welcome Kurt to West Ham United," said West Ham boss David Moyes.

"He is a player we have tracked for some time, and we have taken great care and diligence to make the transfer happen. He was always our first choice and I am very happy that he is now our player." — AFP ■

Osaka defends US Open crown with Barty leading top rivals

DEFENDING champion Naomi Osaka seeks her third US Open title in four tries as the year's final Grand Slam begins Monday with top-ranked Wimbledon winner Ashleigh Barty leading a host of rivals.

What's uncertain is whether New York will see Osaka rediscover the dominant form that saw her win the past two Grand Slam events she played to the finish.

The 23-year-old Japanese star lit the flame in the Olympic cauldron at the Tokyo Games, but has played only two matches since Japan ahead of the Open.

"I know I haven't played that many matches. I know that I haven't even gotten to a quarter-final," Osaka said.

"Actually I feel pretty happy with how I'm playing... I feel pretty confident with where I am right now. Of course I'm not declaring that I'll do amazing here. I'm the one-match-at-a-time like person. "Hopefully it will work out in the end."

Osaka pulled out of the French Open after being fined for not talking to reporters after her first match, saying it hurt her mental health. She then skipped Wimbledon but spoke with the media after matches in her US Open tuneup at Cincinnati.— AFP ■

Paralympics: Japan's Yamaguchi wins men's SB14 100 breaststroke gold

SWIMMER Naohide Yamaguchi won the men's SB14 100-meter breaststroke gold for Japan on

Sunday to take the host nation's second Paralympic title in the Tokyo Games pool.



Naohide Yamaguchi of Japan swims in the men's SB14 100-meter breaststroke heat at the Tokyo Paralympics on 29 August 2021, at Tokyo Aquatics Centre. **PHOTO: KYODO NEWS**

Yamaguchi improved his own world record with a 1-minute, 03.77-second time to beat Australian Jake Michel by 0.51 at the Tokyo Aquatics Centre. Scott Quin of Britain won bronze.

Yamaguchi is a world champion in the event and this is the 20-year-old's first gold at the Paralympic Games. Before winning gold on Sunday, Yamaguchi had finished fourth in both the men's S14 100 butterfly and in the 4x100 freestyle relay. In the former, he missed a medal by just 0.21. The gold is the host nation's third of the Tokyo Games. Takayuki Suzuki won Japan's other swimming gold in the men's S4 100 freestyle.—Kyodo News ■

Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council Nine Objectives

1. Political affairs

- (a) To build a Union based on democracy and federalism, through a disciplined and genuine multiparty democratic system that is fair and just.
- (b) To emphasize the achievement of enduring peace for the entire nation in line with the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA).
- (c) To continue implementing the principle of peaceful co-existence among countries through an independent, active and non-aligned foreign policy.

2. Economic affairs

- (a) To enhance production based on agriculture and livestock through modern techniques and strengthen all-round development in other sectors of the economy.
- (b) To develop a stable market economy and promote international investment in order to enhance the economic development of the entire National people.
- (c) To promote and support local businesses to create employment opportunities and increase domestic production.

3. Social affairs

- (a) To ensure a strong and dynamic Union spirit, the genuine spirit of patriotism.
- (b) To respect and promote the customs and traditions of all National peoples and preserve and safeguard their cultural heritage and national characteristics.
- (c) To enhance the health, fitness and education quality of the entire nation.