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THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

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Public request to continue cooperating in fight against terrorism

NUG, CRPH, PDF groups, designated as terrorist organizations, and extremist NLD members are inciting civil unrest intending to attack the State Administration Council which is temporarily in charge of the country according to the 2008 Constitution. They have been planning the CDM activities and assassinating administrators to stop the government machinery, as well as brutally killing innocent civilians who do not support the NLD party. The terrorist organizations are now carrying out acts of terrorism in some towns and villages to destabilize the country and pretend to be a civil war by the time the 76th United Nations General Assembly is going to be held in a short period.

SEE PAGE-2

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.

Myanmar's Pegyi, black sesame prices soar on Chinese demand

THE demand for Myanmar's Pegyi (lablab bean) and black sesame from China is high recently and the price is K200,000 per three-basket bag, according to Mandalay bean traders.

In early March, Pegyi fetched K100,000 per three-basket bag and now the price is K200,000 per bag due to the high demand of China in September. Moreover, the price of black sesame was K145,000 per three-basket bag in June and it is now K200,000, said U Soe Win Myint, owner of the Soe Win Myint Wholesale Centre in Mandalay.

"The local consumption of Pegyi is also high and it is produced as a value-added product called Pegyihlaw to export to Singapore. Moreover, the Chinese demand is also high this year and we get high prices. Chinese people use the black sesame in producing medicines and so they offer fair prices," he added.

In addition to Pegyi and black sesame, the Pe Zee Kwat, green gram and white sesame also fetch good prices.—Min Htet Aung (Mandalay Sub-Printing House)/GNLM

Public request to continue cooperating in fight against terrorism

The vehicle carrying anti-COVID-19 equipment was damaged in mine attack near Nantsiaung checkpoint.

FROM PAGE-1

The so-called "People's Defence Forces" PDF terrorists, extremist NLD members and professional saboteurs committed the following terrorist attacks under the directives of the terrorist organizations from February up to 9 September 2021.

(a) 2,390 times bomb attacks in public places;
(b) 304 times of shooting with small arms in public areas;
(c) A total of 799, including six monks, were killed and 726 people were injured in assassination attempts on innocent civilians;
(d) 386 arson attacks at government offices;
(e) 31 arson attacks on factories, workplaces and markets;
(f) 172 times of exploding public roads and bridges;
(g) 406 times arson attacks and explosions in educational buildings (schools, universities, colleges, education officer offices);
(h) 21 times of terrorist attacks on COVID-19 prevention, control, treatment centres and COVID-19 vaccination places;
(i) 68 times explosions on public telecommunication towers.

The above terrorist attacks did not include attacks on military targets or security forces' bases but targeted non-military civilian targets. The international community will not accept the terrorist attacks upon public places related to the education and health sectors, the assassination of innocent people who do not support NLD, especially terrorist attacks on COVID-19 vaccination sites are biological and inhumane crimes.

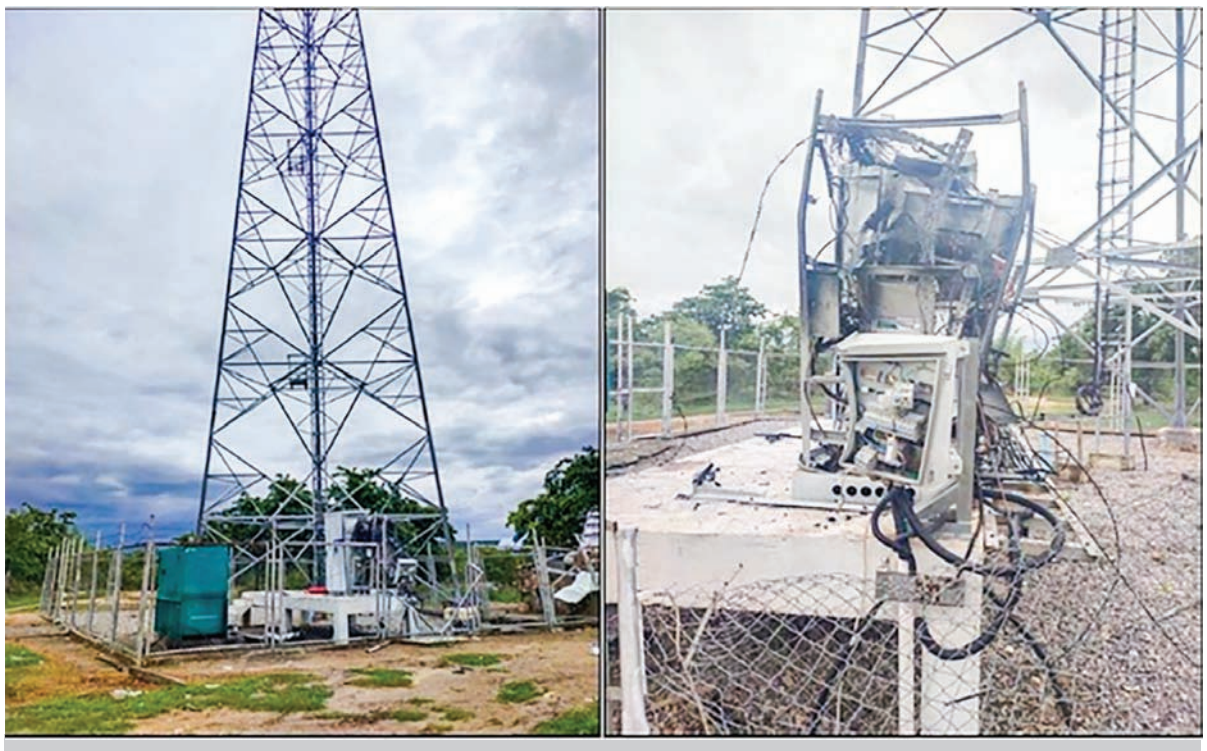
The NUG terrorist organization released a statement, aiming to accelerate the above acts of violence, on 7 September 2021. The statement said, "to target the main pillars of the State Administration Council; Administrator should resign immediately; People are not allowed to travel unnecessarily and employees are not allowed to go to work." Their statement worsens the socio-economic lives of the people who are responding to the COVID-19 crisis. In addition to undermining the stability and peace of the country, it is found that these acts of terrorism are causing fear and anxiety for the people who want to live in peace.

Local political parties, ethnic armed organizations (EAOs), and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) also protested against the statement, and it is found that the international community is criticizing that this is unacceptable.

As terrorism and terrorists which are not accepted in any society or global countries have been taking decisive actions, the State Administration Council is also taking effective actions in line with the international standards. We urge the international community to actively cooperate to prevent the spread of terrorism in Myanmar as their cooperation is required to effectively fight terrorism, which is unacceptable to any society.

In the fight against terrorism in various parts of the world, the people who do not want violence are cooperating with the governments of the countries. We urged the people of our country to continue to cooperate in covertly informing the relevant authorities in order to identify and arrest terrorists for the stability and peace of the country.

U Aung Zeya (dead).



Terrorists destory telecommunication towers and cabinets of devices in Yinmabin, Madaya and Thabeikkyin Townships.

A woman was injured in bomb attacks of terrorists at COVID-19 vaccination in Mayangon Township.

Goodwill for the country

HE urged to run the manufacturing, agriculture and livestock industries to ensure food security. It should make efforts for the better economic system of people and country. If the individuals have goodwill for the country, they can accomplish their works and it can also provide the development of the country and living standards of the public.

(Excerpt from the speech to the 9th coordination meeting on COVID-19 prevention, control and treatment activities made by Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister of the Provisional Government of Myanmar Senior General Min Aung Hlaing on 23-8-2021)

Union Minister U Ko Ko makes inspection tour to NyaungU

UNION Minister for Religious Affairs and Culture U Ko Ko, accompanied by Deputy Minister U Tun Ohn and officials, took five precepts from Sayadaw Baddhanta Pinya Thiri, Chair of the Township Sangha Nayaka from Maha Visuddha Rama Tike Thit, NyaungU Township on 10 September.

The Union Minister donated K5 million and offertories and presented religious affairs.

Afterwards, the Union Minister inspected the strength of Shwesigon Pagoda, King Bayint Naung's Bell which is one of the world's heritage items, a "Memory of the World", and King Kyansittha's Stone Inscription, and instructed requirements.

During his tour to NyaungU, the Union Minister met with the employees of the NyaungU District Department of Religious Affairs in Zabudipa Hall.

The Union Minister also held a meeting with the Deputy Minister, the Director-General of the Department of Archaeological and National Museum, Director of Bagan Sub-Department, officials of the NyaungU District Administration Council, and instructed to work together and coordinate for the conservation activities of Bagan archaeological site. — MNA

YCDC steps up efforts on double-layer paving of concrete on approach road of Bayintnaung Bridge-1

THE YCDC's (Yangon City Development Committee) Roads and Bridges Department conduced the double-layer paving of concrete on the approach road of Bayintnaung Bridge-1, which is the main trade gateway of Ayeyawady Region.

The government paved concrete road on No 5 Road in Hlinethaya Township area in 2018, and now paves 300ft long concrete road between the approach road of Bayintnaung Bridge-1 and No (532) infantry regiment.

"The operation started on 5 September. As the approach road section is lower than the bridge and so it can affect the deck. Therefore, we paved another layer of the concrete road up to 300ft in length. Now, we complete 50 per cent of processes. We estimated to complete it on 18 September.

Double-layer paving of concrete approach road to Bayintnaung Bridge-1 is stepped up.

The paving of concrete road on No 5 Road ends near No (352) military command. Therefore, there are about 1,500ft to be paved between that section and the currently paving section. We have a plan to pave that section to connect with No 5 Road," said a responsible person of the department.

Of the four bridges constructed over the Hline River, Bayintnaung Bridge-1 is the first one and facilitates the trade flows between Yangon and Ayeyawady regions.

Due to the high traffic, the surface of the bridge's road collapses. The paving of tar road completed on the Bayintnaung side while the double-layer paving of concrete road on Hlinethaya side.

The products from Ayeyawady are transported via Shwepyitha Bridge to Shwepyitha Township of Yangon, Aung Zeya Bridge to Insein Township, Bayintnaung Bridge -1 and 2 to Bayintnaung Wholesale Centre and Fish Market in Mayangon Township. Moreover, the industrial zones are concentrated in these areas. Therefore, the Ministry of Construction and YCDC cooperate to ensure the strength of four bridges. — Nyein Thu/GNLM

2,364 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 11 September, total figure rises to 429,880

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to 429,880 after 2,364 new cases were reported on 11 September 2021 according to the Ministry of Health. Among these confirmed cases, 378,265 have been discharged from hospitals. Death toll reached 16,451 after 98 died.—MNA

Public Notification on buildings where terrorists involved in terrorist attacks are staying

TERRORIST organizations such as CRPH, NUG, PDF, and their affiliates have been carrying out terrorist acts and arson attacks across the country to disrupt the cooperation of the people and the ethnic nationalities with the State Administration Council which has set future roadmaps for the development, stability and security of the State. In doing so, it is found that they rented apartments and houses to hide while committing destructive acts in the country.

On 8 June 2021, 25 assorted weapons, 72 hand grenades, 71 fuses, 14 assorted magazines, 156 TNT bars, 540 detonators, 2 bandoliers, more than 4,000 rounds of ammunition were found and seized from a one storey house rented by terrorists in Ywaysu (west) Village, Patheingyi Township, Mandalay Region.

On the morning of 22 June, according to the report, security forces inspected the house rented by terrorists at No 116/Pha-19, 111 (E) road and 54th street in Htuntone ward, Chanmyathazi Township, Mandalay. While inspecting, the security forces were attacked by homemade grenades and guns from the house, killing some of the security forces and 6 terrorists. A total of 8 armed terrorists were arrested with weapons and ammunition.

On the evening of 14 August, the perpetrators of the armed attack which killed 5 policemen on the Insein circular train, were arrested in houses and apartments temporarily rented by them in Yangon.

The above incidents were investigated and it was discovered that terrorists conspired to commit acts of violence by temporarily renting houses or apartments. Therefore, landlords are required to report the accurate information of the tenants with complete documents under Section 17 of the Ward/Village-Tract Administration Law, and to cooperate by notifying the relevant authorities in a timely manner if they find that their tenants are suspicious.

As landlords will be responsible if their tenants are found to have committed acts of violence, and no tenants list and information had been lodged with the relevant ward/village-tract administration office while renting the apartment, please be informed that they will be taken action under the existing law. In addition, the rented house or apartment will be confiscated as evidence under the Counter-Terrorism Law and will be confiscated as State Treasury as a result of the investigation.

Anti-Terrorism Central Committee

MoC allows import process of anti-COVID-19 devices, medical aids daily

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 11 September (yesterday), anti-COVID-19 equipment, medical products including oxygen plants and concentrators were imported by 16 companies and transported by 24 vehicles, including two Bowser vehicles.

A total of 40 tonnes of oxygen (liquid) carried by two bowsers, one oxygen storage container, one liquid oxygen distributor, 2,330 empty oxygen cylinders, four oxygen plants, six oxygen generators, one oxygen concentrator for home use, and 45 tonnes of masks were imported via Muse, Chinshwehaw, Myawady, and Tachilek trading posts and Yangon International Airport.

From 1 August to 11 September, 1,702 vehicles carrying 2,062 tonnes of liquid oxygen, 494 tonnes of oxygen gas, 20 tonnes of oxygen gas carried by oxygen bowser, 74 tonnes of oxygen gas tanks, 22 storage containers, 10 liquid oxygen distributors, 250,000 empty oxygen cylinders, 147 oxygen plants, 42 hospital oxygen generators, three oxygen refilling machines, 100,000 oxygen concentrators for home use, 200,000 test kits, 1,100,000 sets of PPE, 146 tonnes of gloves and 3,966 tonnes of the mask were allowed to be imported.

In the same period, a total of 94 oxygen bowsers were allowed to be transported.

Among the 94 vehicles, 74 vehicles were transported to Yangon, six to Mandalay, three to Nay Pyi Taw, four to Mawlamyine, three to Bago, one each to Pyay and Thanbyuzayat.

Importation of anti-Covid devices through Muse land border.

Importation of anti-Covid devices through Muse land border.

Out of 147 oxygen plants: 78 oxygen plants to Yangon, 17 to Mandalay, six to Lashio, four to Bago, another four to Myitkyina, three to Kyauk Padaung, four to Mawlamyine, two to Monywa, two to Magway, another two to Pakkoku, two to Hpa-an, another two to Minbu and one each to Nay Pyi Taw, Myingyan, Taunggyi, Myitta, Moegaung, Thanbyuzayat, Kyauktaga, Wakhema, Dawei, Kungyangon, Sittway, Dedaye, Myinmu, Mudon, Pyay, Meiktila, Maubin, Myaungmya, Wyne Maw, Tachilek and Tantyang were successfully transported.

Officials from the relevant departments are cooperating to facilitate and expedite the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) including online registration for the import process during the long public holidays.

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

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THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

CIRCULATION & DISTRIBUTION
(+95) (01) 8604532,
Hotline - 09 454237515
ADVERTISING & MARKETING
(+95) (01) 8604530,
Hotline - 09 251022355
marketing@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com
subscription@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

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gnlmnews@gmail.com
www.gnlm.com.mm
www.globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

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Rubber prices continue rising amid stronger foreign demand

Myanmar yearly exports over 200,000 tonnes of natural rubber to foreign countries, generating over US$200 million.

THE price of rubber has sustained its upward momentum in the rubber latex collection season due to stronger foreign demand, according to the rubber entrepreneurs.

Rubber plantations will resume starting from mid-September. Although the availability of raw rubber may increase in the rubber latex collection season, the rubber prices are expected to remain strong amid foreign market demand.

Currently, the market demand is rising when the global demands are on the high due to COVID-19. As a result, the rubber prices are inching upwards because there are many purchasing ways despite the closure of border crossings.

"Besides, the rubber products price has also nearly doubled in rubber latex collection season due to rising of foreign exchange currency and devaluation of Myanmar Kyat. The production cost may also hike," the rubber entrepreneurs pointed out.

The rubber products, which have been on an upward trend since last May, have been trading at a dealing price by buyers and sellers, rather than fixed prices due to lower supplies of raw rubber in the market until August when the rubber farmland closed.

The average price of local-3 rubbed smoked sheet is K1,100 per pound in the rubber market.

Mon State has the largest acreage of rubber in Myanmar with the production of over 240 million pounds of rubber, according to the 2020 official statistics of Mon State Agricultural Department.

Rubber is primarily produced in Mon and Kayin states and Taninthayi, Bago, and Yangon regions in Myanmar. As per the 2018-2019 rubber seasons' data, there are over 1.628 million acres of rubber plantations in Myanmar, with Mon State accounting for 497,153 acres, followed by Taninthayi Region 348,344 acres and Kayin State with 270,760 acres, according to the MRPPA.

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

Myanmar yearly exports over 200,000 tonnes of natural rubber to foreign countries, generating over US$200 million. — Nyein Nyein/GNLM

Rising input costs drop half chilli cultivation acres

Myanmar's fresh chilli pepper is shipped to Viet Nam via the sea route and primarily sent to China and Thailand via land borders.

THE acre of chilli plantation has dropped by half this year because of rising input costs, said Daw Ohnma Kyaw, chair of Myanmar Chilli Market and Technical Development Association.

Besides, the COVID-19 pandemic has put pressure on chilli demand due to uncertainty about foreign markets and restrictions on cash withdrawals from the banks, she added.

"50 per cent acreage of Chili was reduced due to the rising of fertilizers price and input costs. The restrictions of the banks are also one of the reasons. Consequently, chilli cultivation has dropped by 50 per cent compared to last year. The farmers can no longer afford to buy the fertilizers because the price is hiking these days. The input costs and chilli seeds are also expensive. Rapidly rising production costs related to farm input price inflation is a concern for agricultural producers," said Daw Ohnmar Kyaw.

The chilli from Kyaukse township could not be exported as the border checkpoint in Muse, one of the main border trading checkpoints for Myanmar-China border trade, were halted starting from 8 July. For that reason, Myanmar exported fresh chilli to Thailand via the Myawady border trade.

Further, the price of fresh chilli exported to Thailand is lower than the price registered last year. This year, the fresh chilli fetched only K1,300 per viss (a viss equals 1.6 kg). Last year, the price hit a record high of K5,000-6,000 per viss, the association stated.

Myanmar's fresh chilli pepper is shipped to Viet Nam via the sea route and primarily sent to China and Thailand via land borders.

Myanmar chillies are grown mostly in the Ayeyawady region and Kyaukse township of the Mandalay region. The export varieties of fresh chilli pepper are 692, 777, 999, Kartar, Demon, Sunshine and Lucky One. — NN/GNLM

Hteekhee, Mawtaung border crossings return to normality

HTEEKHEE and Mawtaung checkpoints, along the Myanmar-Thailand border, have been allowed to reopen and the trades are resuming as usual.

"So far, the trading is running as usual. The businessmen are facing a hard time because the border crossings are closed. Now, the checkpoints are reopened and the trade will be operated as usual, said a local trader from the Mawtaung border crossing.

The trading between Myanmar and Thailand were temporarily closed for about one month until the end of August to control the spread of coronavirus between the two countries. These border checkpoints are located in the Taninthayi region.

Myanmar exported aquatic products mainly to Thailand through Hteekhee and Mawtaung crossings.

"We have been faced many difficulties when the crossings were closed for one month. We are very glad to hear that and have been waiting to hear such good news like this.

Now, we can start our business operation," he added. Currently, the drivers are only allowed to drive the truck after detecting the COVID-19 test. The cold storage containers are also conducted in line with the guidelines of the Ministry of Health.

Thailand is the primary buyer of Myanmar aquatic products. Last FY, Myanmar shipped US$318 million worth of fishery products to Thailand, while the total fishery exports stood at $850 million. — ACM/GNLM

These border checkpoints are located in the Taninthayi region. Myanmar exported aquatic products mainly to Thailand through Hteekhee and Mawtaung crossings.

IDPs receive Sinopharm COVID-19 jabs in MraukU Township

HEALTHCARE officials gave COVID-19 vaccine (Sinopharm) to internally displaced persons over the age of 18, at the relief camps of MraukU Township, MraukU district, Rakhine State, at 8 am yesterday.

Public health staff from the township public health department; township administrators and officials and officials from the IDP camps assisted in the vaccination programme.

During the vaccination, healthcare workers and officials made records for the vaccinated people.

Next, volunteers and healthcare workers measured the body temperature before vaccination.

Vaccines were given systematically to internally displaced persons from Kyauk Yar Kay monastery IDP camp and Myo Oo Gaung IDP camp, and only those with normal health conditions are vaccinated, officials said.

After resting for about 30 minutes after being vaccinated, people were given healthcare education and then allowed to leave, officials said.

As of yesterday morning, 210 people over the age of 18 from two IDP camps in MraukU township have already received the Sinopharm COVID-19 vaccines. — Khin Maung Htun (IPRD)/ GNLM

Inoculation is underway at IDP camps in MraukU Township, Rakhine State.

148 IDPs receive 2nd COVID jabs in Buthidaung Township

THE second dose vaccination of Sinopharm COVID-19 vaccine was given to displaced elderly people aged 65 and over in the IDP camps at Gandari Philanthropic Monastery in Buthidaung Township, Rakhine State, from 8 am yesterday.

Before the vaccination, healthcare staff and officials made records for the vaccinated people during the vaccination.

Next, volunteers and healthcare workers measured the body temperature and blood pressure before the vaccination.

Vaccines were given systematically to elderly people, and only those with normal conditions are vaccinated.

Inoculation drive for IDPs.

An IDP gets the second COVID jab in Buthidaung Township, Rakhine State.

There is a total of 470 people from 87 households in the IDP camp and 206 people will receive the COVID-19 vaccination, officials said. — Hla Kyaw (IPRD)/GNLM

Laos transfers 200 Myanmar migrant workers via Tachilek

MYANMAR officials received 200 Myanmar migrant workers from Laos via Wanbon port in Mong Phone (Kagyi) Village-tract of Tachilek Township yesterday.

The returnees included 119 males and 81 females. The officials tested them using RDT Test Kit and five people-two males and three females were tested positive for covid-19. The positive patients are now under medical treatment at Wang Lone treatment centre of Tachilek Township. The remaining 195 negative patients will be tested for a second time after two days and they will be sent to their respective regions and states if their results show negative.

The tenth transfer of Myanmar migrant workers from Laos arrived yesterday and District Administrative Officer U Myint Naing and departmental officials warmly welcomed the returnees. — Yar Say (IPRD)/GNLM

Myanmar returnees from Laos are warmly welcomed.

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)

K170 million worth of ecstasy tablets confiscated in Kengtung, Shan State (East)

ACCORDING to the report, a joint team consisting of members of the Anti-Drug Police Force searched the house of Kya U, 37, who lived in Pan Kalar (Hwayphyan) village, Yanlaw village-tract, Kengtung Township, eastern Shan State on 10 September, reportedly resulting in the seizure of 170,000 ecstasy tablets worth K170 million.

He is being prosecuted under the law and investigations are underway to identify and arrest the related suspects, according to the Myanmar Police Force. — MNA

A drug dealer arrestee with seized ecstasy tablets.

Myanmar to extend school closing for 2 more weeks amid precaution against COVID-19

MYANMAR'S Central Committee on Prevention, Control and Treatment for COVID-19 announced an extension of the closure of schools for two more weeks to control the spreading of COVID-19.

The closure of basic education schools including private schools and Buddhist monastic schools was further extended until 24 September as part of the government effort to control the disease. The committee released the statement on 10 September.

Similarly, the public holidays have been also extended from 1 to 10 September to control the COVID-19 pandemic but there isn't any further notice about the extension of public holidays.

In the past, the committee stated closing of schools from 1 to 10 September.

As of 11 September, Myanmar has reported 427,516 COVID-19 cases, including 16,353 deaths and 375,813 recoveries. The COVID-19 infection was first detected in Myanmar on 23 March last year. — Aye Maung/GNLM

Myanmar to cover 50% of population for COVID-19 vaccine by 2021

MYANMAR is aiming for 50 per cent of the country's population to be vaccinated against COVID-19 by the end of 2021. So far, nearly 13 per cent of the population has completed COVID-19 vaccination, according to the Ministry of Health.

"The country has 36.9 million people over the age of 18 to be vaccinated. Among them, 4.8 million people have been vaccinated one dose or twice. The World Health Organization (WHO) targets to cover 20 per cent of the population at the end of September, 40 per cent at the end of 2021 and 70 per cent in mid-2022. However, WHO is planning to set 50 per cent of the population, though 40 per cent by the end of 2021," said an official from the Health Ministry.

According to the ministry's latest figures, about 2.981 million people have been fully vaccinated with COVID-19 vaccines nationwide as of 7 September.

Two million doses purchased from Russia will arrive this month and efforts are being made to get the remaining vaccines from India.

Currently, the country administrated 150,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccines to the target groups daily. The country launched the COVID-19 vaccination programme in January 2021, according to the Ministry of Health.

Sinopharm and Sinovac vaccines have been approved by the WHO for emergency use. The vaccine has been recommended for over 18 years old, according to the WHO's guidance.

Myanmar has recorded 155,697 COVID-19 cases and 3,320 deaths since the beginning of the pandemic, according to the health ministry data. — Aye Maung/GNLM

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News and Periodicals Enterprise

12 SEPTEMBER 2021
THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

Look after senior citizens with sympathy on their sunset days

EVERYBODY has to struggle for their survival during the days from the life of a baby to the days of the senior citizen. Those senior citizens have the accumulated experiences in many fields of society. It is because those older persons have passed through many challenges in various areas for more than 65 years.

They have passed a lot of events and taken lessons from them to be applied in their lives. They have experiences on the way of mundane world in which gain and loss, fame and dishonour, praise and blame, happiness and suffering are the facts of life. They have understood the deception of the mundane world and they have known things how to respond to the deception and how to overcome the challenges triggered by the ways of the mundane world. As such, those older ones are invaluable persons in society.

> Only when the good fortune supports the persons will they be lucky to have the chance for living along with the full of lifespan. But most of the people lose their lives for many reasons before the life of the aged. Necessary aid should be given to those older persons. Friendship relations and warmly care should be created for them. Significantly, all need to look after the older persons with sympathy for their sunset days.

New generations have lesser experiences to penetrate the exceptionable world. Hence, they need to seek the best ways and means how to overcome the barriers of deception from the senior citizens and then should do things they wish.

Many global countries are facing shortages of new generation population due to their strict population policies. In consequence, these countries face a growing number of senior citizens. Most of them do not have families for many reasons. As such, the country authorities are looking after those persons in their respective homes by spending a lot of money on the work process for them.

In fact, the aged are not a burden for society. They are indeed unable to physically build the nation but they have invaluable experiences which can be applied in nation-building endeavours. If they are healthy, they will be ready to share their experience with and give invaluable advice to new generations. In fact, the senior citizen's experiences are the treasury of the society.

Only when the good fortune supports the persons will they be lucky to have the chance for living along with the full of lifespan. But most of the people lose their lives for many reasons before the life of the aged. Necessary aid should be given to those older persons. Friendship relations and warmly care should be created for them. Significantly, all need to look after the older persons with sympathy for their sunset days.

■ ■ ■

Useful protection or not warranted? Third jab debate rages

Should a third dose of Covid vaccine be recommended for the general population?

SOME say it's vital to boosting immunity as the Delta variant spreads, while others say precious vaccines should go to countries -- mostly in the Global South – where most people haven't even had their first jab.

France was among the first countries to start distributing third jabs to the elderly and people with compromised immune systems, among others.

Those eligible can get the shot six months after their second dose.

Countries who are offering the shots say the additional dose is justified because vaccines have reduced efficacy against the Delta variant that diminishes over time.

Other governments have gone even further or have plans to: children in Israel who are 12 and older can get a third dose five months after full vaccination.

The US plans to launch a booster shot distribution campaign for all Americans with Pfizer and Moderna shots.

But the World Health Organization (WHO) has more than once expressed its opposition to such measures.

A mobile pop-up vaccination station in Berlin's Neukoelln district. **PHOTO: STEFANIE LOOS/ AFP**

"We do not want to see widespread use of boosters for healthy people who are fully vaccinated," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told journalists Wednesday.

Speaking from WHO's headquarters in Geneva, he called on countries to avoid giving out extra Covid jabs until the end of the year, pointing to the millions worldwide who have yet to receive a single dose.

"I will not stay silent when the companies and countries that control the global supply of vaccines think the world's poor should be satisfied with leftovers," he said.

What are the benefits?

There is scientific consensus that the third dose is recommended for immunocompromised patients, including people fighting cancer or those who have received an organ transplant. Studies show that these patients' immune systems do not produce a significant amount of antibodies when they receive the standard vaccine dosage. While there is less data to back it up, the same principle applies to the elderly whose immune systems have been rendered less efficient by ageing.

What scientists are less convinced about is the usefulness of a booster shot for young people and people in good health. The data is just not there, say some.

"We aren't sure the benefits are significant," cardiologist Florian Zores told AFP.

"We could do studies or think about target populations instead of offering the third dose to everyone," he said, adding that tests could determine who might -- or might not -- need a booster.

"That might be a bit smarter in terms of science," added the doctor, who is a member of French scientific integrity watchdog, On the Side of Science.

'Boomerang effect'

The question of unequal vaccine access raised by the WHO is not only an ethical issue but a practical one, say experts.

"I am not at all convinced that rich countries ought to be giving a third dose before a large proportion of people on the planet get their first two," epidemiologist Antoine Flahault told AFP.

By allowing the virus to spread throughout a large part of the world, rich countries expose themselves to a "particularly severe boomerang effect". "Foreign epidemics could generate new variants that could be even more contagious, virulent, and resistant to current vaccines," he said.

Flahault, who heads up the Global Health Institute at the University of Geneva, says that Israel's widespread use of the third dose will act as an experiment for the rest of the world.

"If the benefits of a third dose there are substantial, experts will be more likely to back the idea of giving it out," he said.

"If the benefits are negligible then we have to ask ourselves what the best strategy is," he continued.

"Do we vaccinate the richest people on the planet, giving them a marginal benefit while leaving the poorest minimally protected?"

"Or first do we vaccinate the whole planet?"

SOURCE: AFP

■ ■ ■

Indonesians welcome COVID-19 PCR test exemption for vaccinated Java-Bali travels

Effective from 31 Aug, travellers in provinces on the islands of Java and Bali only require fast antigen test results instead of PCR tests for fully-vaccinated passengers.

INDONESIANS have welcomed the exemption of COVID-19 polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test for fully-vaccinated travellers between Java and Bali islands.

The Indonesian government announced recently that effective from 31 Aug, travelers in provinces on the islands of Java and Bali only require fast antigen test results instead of PCR tests for fully-vaccinated passengers.

For Amirul Tarsanto, a freelance photographer based in Jakarta and Bali, the exemption came as good news, as he usually flies three times a month.

"Before the pandemic, I flew around three to four times a year. However, during the pandemic, I am actually flying more, up to several times in a month for work. Not only are flights now cheaper with no PCR tests, but the booking process also becomes simpler," Tarsanto told Xinhua recently.

On 15 Aug, Indonesian President Joko Widodo asked relevant companies to limit the PCR test price from 450,000 rupiahs (about 31.5 U.S. dollars) to 550,000 rupiahs (38.5 U.S. dollars), down from around 900,000 rupiahs (63 U.S. dollars). And the result should be issued in no more than 24 hours.

On Monday, the government decided to extend its COVID-19 restrictions on public activities, locally known as PPKM, in Java and Bali until 13 Sept. For some regions outside the two islands, the restrictions were extended until 20 Sept.

Flora Karo, an editor at a news company in Jakarta, has only flown three times since the start of the pandemic, for working purposes. Fortunately, the company covered both her plane tickets and PCR tests. Despite already being vaccinated twice, she stopped all her vacation flights during the pandemic as a PCR test is expensive. But now, Karo considered traveling again.

The exemption also benefited students. "I am thinking of going to Bali to work on my thesis soon," said Fahry Pradipta, a postgraduate student in human resource management living in Banten Province. "Now travels became a little easier than before, and the test costs lowered, I want to go to another place and stay there for a while."

SOURCE: Xinhua

Bali is a popular island destination for travellers around the region. **PHOTO: AFP**

Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 7:00 pm Saturday 11 September 2021)

BAY INFERENCE: According to the observations at (18:30) hrs MST today, the low pressure area over the Eastcentral Bay and adjoining Northeast Bay of Bengal has moved West-Northwest and now lies over Central Bay and adjoining North Bay of Bengal still persists. It is likely to move Northwestwards and may further intensify into a Depression during next 48 hours. Monsoon is strong over the Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal.

SPECIAL FEATURES: According to the observations at (18:30) hrs MST today, the severe tropical storm "CONSON" over the South China Sea has moved Westwards and downgraded into tropical storm "CONSON". It is centred at about (80) miles Southeast Danang (Vietnam) and forecast to move westwards.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL MORNING OF THE 12 September, 2021: Rain or thundershowers will be isolated in (Northern and Eastern) Shan State, scattered in Lower Sagaing Region and Kachin State, fairly widespread in Upper Sagaing, Mandalay Regions and Southern Shan, Chin States and widespread in the remaining Regions and States with likelihood of isolated heavyfalls in Upper Sagaing, Mandalay, Bago, Yangon, Ayeyawady, Taninthayi Regions and Rakhine, Kayin, Mon States. Degree of certainty is (100%).

STATE OF THE SEA: Occasional squalls with rough seas will be experienced off and along Myanmar Coasts. Surface wind speed in squalls may reach (40-45) mph. Wave height will be about (9 -13) feet off and along Myanmar Coasts.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Increase of rain in Bago, Yangon, Ayeyawady, Taninthayi Regions and Rakhine, Kayin, Mon States.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 12 September, 2021: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 12 September, 2021: Some rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 12 September, 2021: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

Flood Bulletin

(Issued at 08:00 hrs MST on 11-9-2021)

FLOOD CONDITION OF NGAWUN RIVER

According to the (07:30) hrs MST observation today, the water level of Ngathaingchaung at Ngawun River has exceeded by about (1) inch above its danger level. It may fall below its danger level during the next (1) day.

According to the (07:30) hrs MST observation today, the water level of Thabaung at Ngawun River has exceeded by about (2) inches above its danger level. It may remain above its danger level during the next (1) day.

ADVISORY

It is advised to the people who settle near the river banks and low lying areas in Ngathaingchaung and Thabaung townships, to take precaution measure.

Biden admin. moves to block controversial Alaska gold mine

US authorities on Thursday said they intend to re-establish environmental protections to a bay in Alaska that would block a controversial gold and copper mine project.

The Bristol Bay watershed "is an Alaskan treasure that underscores the critical value of clean water in America," said Environmental Protection Agency chief Michael Regan.

"What's at stake is preventing pollution that would disproportionately impact Alaska Natives, and protecting a sustainable future for the most productive salmon fishery in North America," he said.

For over a decade, environmentalists and indigenous local residents fought to protect the salmon runs of Bristol Bay from the proposed Pebble gold and copper mine. **PHOTO: WATER KEEPER.COM/AFP**

Bristol Bay is home to a vast wild salmon run. The exceptional quality of the water in the rivers and marshy areas provide ideal habitat for the fish.

The EPA tried to block the mining project in 2014 under president Barack Obama, emphasizing the negative impact the mines would have on local fisheries.

But the Donald Trump administration authorized Pebble Limited Partnership, a subsidiary of the Canadian group Northern Dynasty Minerals, to apply for an operating license by lifting environmental protections.

Last year the US Army Corps of Engineers said the project is "against the public interest" and could not grant a mining permit as currently planned.

Thursday's EPA decision is aimed at ensuring that the project is stalled for the long term, including if a revised application is presented, by using a provision of the Clean Water Act.

The EPA said it has begun the process of cancelling the 2019 notice of withdrawal of the environmental protections that took place under Trump.

Bristol Bay supports commercial, subsistence, and recreational fisheries worth hundreds of millions of dollars, the EPA said, adding that it creates thousands of jobs.— AFP ■

Turn off the oil taps? Norway torn between climate and cash

Today the oil industry is a key industry in the Stavanger region and the city is widely referred to as the Oil Capital of Norway. **PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA/AFP**

IN Stavanger's harbour, the Petroleum Museum chronicles Norway's road to riches. Now, faced with the climate crisis, a growing chorus wants fossil fuels to be relegated to history for good.

The "code red" sounded by the United Nations in early August has reignited debate about the future of the oil industry in Norway, the largest oil producer in western Europe, ahead of Monday's legislative elections.

The Green party, MDG, -- whose support the opposition centre-left, currently leading in the polls, may rely on in order to obtain a parliamentary majority -- has called for an immediate end to oil prospecting and a halt to production by 2035.

"Oil belongs in a museum. It served us very well for many decades but we can now see that it is destroying our climate," says Ulrikke Torgersen, the Greens candidate in Stavanger, Norway's oil capital where it is often said locals have oil running through their veins.—AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

The seismic zone worrying quake-hit Mexico

A 7.1-magnitude earthquake that struck southern Mexico this week originated near a section of a fault that experts worry has been building up tension for more than a century.

The powerful tremor that occurred on Tuesday near the Pacific resort city of Acapulco left at least one person dead and damaged hospitals, homes, shops and hotels.

Mexico sits in the world's most seismically and volcanically active zone, known as the Ring of Fire, where the Pacific plate meets surrounding tectonic plates.—AFP ■

Office air quality affects workers' cognitive function, study shows

FEELING sluggish at work? Poor ventilation and pollution might play a part. A new study by scientists at Harvard has found that the air quality inside an office can have a significant impact on employees' cognitive function, including response times and ability to focus.

"We have a huge body of research on the exposure to outdoor pollution, but we spend 90 per cent of our time indoors," Jose Guillermo Cedeno Laurent, a research fellow and lead author of the paper published Thursday in Environmental Research Letters, told AFP.—AFP ■

Radioactive rhino horns may deter poachers in S.Africa

SOUTH African scientists are studying ways to inject radioactive material into rhino horns to make them easier to detect at border posts, a move to discourage poaching, a researcher said on Friday.

Poachers killed at least 249 rhinos in South Africa during the first six months of the year -- 83 more than in the first half of 2020.

The animals are slaughtered for their horns, which are smuggled into Asia where they are highly prized for traditional and medicinal purposes.

Injecting rhino horns with a small amount of radioactive material might deter poachers by making smuggling easier to detect, said James Larkin, a nuclear researcher at the University of the Witwatersrand.

More than 11,000 radiation detectors are installed at ports and airports around the world, he told a webinar hosted by the World Nuclear Association.

Border agents often have handheld radiation detectors that could also detect the contraband, he added.

"We can radically increase the army of people who are capable of intercepting these horns... to push back against the smugglers," Larkin explained.

Two rhinos have already been injected with a non-radioactive isotope to ensure the material will not travel into their bodies or cause health problems for the animals or humans.

Computer modelling will then help determine what dose is appropriate for rhinos. A model rhino head will be built with a 3D printer to test the doses before the trial moves to real rhinos.

The programme, called The Rhisotope Project, has backing from Russia's state-owned nuclear company Rosatom, as well as researchers in the United States and Australia.— AFP ■

South African scientists are studying ways to inject radioactive material into rhino horns to make them easier to detect at border posts, a move to discourage poaching, a researcher said on Friday. **PHOTO: AFP**

UN chief calls for action on Covid-19, climate

THE United Nations chief warned Friday that the world is "moving in the wrong direction" and exhorted nations to take urgent action to fight the Covid-19 pandemic and climate change.

"Covid-19 is a wake-up call, and we are oversleeping," UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said at a press conference.

Speaking ahead the UN General Assembly that kicks off in New York on Sep. 21, Guterres lamented that vaccine-manufacturing nations have been unable to ramp up production toward the goal of vaccinating some 70 per cent of the world population by the first half of 2022. "The pandemic has demonstrated our collective failure to come together and make joint decisions for the common good, even in the face of an immediate, life-threatening global emergency," Guterres said. Guterres dismissed calls to delay a major UN climate summit, known as COP26, due to take place in Scotland in November. Climate activists have called for postponing the event due to vaccine inequality, the raging Covid pandemic and logistical difficulties in organizing the event.

Employees work on the production line of CoronaVac, Sinovac's vaccine against COVID-19, at the Butantan Institute in São Paulo, Brazil, on 14 Jan. **PHOTO: NELSON ALMEIDA/AFP/FILE**

"To delay the COP is not a good thing," Guterres said. "Delays have been so many and the issue is so urgent."—AFP ■

Denmark lifts all Covid curbs

With no masks in sight, buzzing offices and concerts drawing tens of thousands, Denmark on Friday ditches vaccine passports in nightclubs, ending its last Covid curb. **PHOTO: UNSPLASH/AFP**

WITH no masks in sight, buzzing offices and concerts drawing tens of thousands, Denmark on Friday ditches vaccine passports in nightclubs, ending its last Covid curb.

The vaccine passports were introduced in March 2021 when Copenhagen slowly started easing restrictions.

They were abolished at all venues on 1 September, except in nightclubs, where they will be no longer necessary from Friday.

"We are definitely at the forefront in Denmark as we have no restrictions, and we are now on the other side of the pandemic thanks to the vaccination rollout," Ulrik Orum-Petersen, a promoter at event organizer Live Nation, told AFP.

On Saturday, a sold-out concert in Copenhagen will welcome 50,000 people, a first in Europe.

Already on 4 September, Live Nation organised a first open-air festival, aptly named "Back to Live", which gathered 15,000 people in Copenhagen.

"Being in the crowd, singing like before, it almost made me forget Covid and everything we've been through these past months," said Emilie Bendix, 26, a concert-goer.—AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

US airlines warn of drag from latest Covid-19 wave

SEVERAL leading US airlines on Thursday cut their forecasts for the third quarter, citing lower bookings and increased cancellations due to the latest wave of Covid-19 infections.

After a better than expected July, American Airlines "experienced softness in August" in bookings and an increase in cancellations, attributed "to the rise in Covid-19 cases associated with the delta variant," the company said in a securities filing.

American now expects third-quarter revenues to be 24 to 28 per cent lower than the comparable period of 2019, worse than the July estimater for a drop of about 20 per cent.

United Airlines also lowered projections, saying it "has seen in the last few weeks a deceleration in customer bookings for travel compared to previous estimations due to the recent spike in Covid-19 cases associated with the Delta variant."

Despite the drag from the recent rise in infections, "the current spike in cases has been significantly less impactful to date than prior spikes and is expected to be temporary in nature," United said in a securities filing. "Based on demand patterns following prior waves of Covid-19, the Company expects bookings to begin to recover once cases peak."—AFP ■

Conflict-hit Ethiopia confronts new year

TESFAYE Hagos usually rings in the Ethiopian New Year by buying embroidered cotton dresses for his wife and young daughters, slaughtering a goat and inviting friends around for a feast. But not this time.

With war raging in the country's north and ethnic Tigrayans like himself fearing arbitrary arrest, Tesfaye plans to keep his head down during Saturday's holiday.

"The new year is coming, but it's far from my mind," he told AFP. "I'm just going to stay at home and pray for peace."

Africa's second most populous country adheres to a unique 13-month calendar that begins in September and runs seven to eight years behind the Gregorian version. Saturday will mark the first day of 2014 for Ethiopians. The celebrations are usually merry, with families singing and dancing as small children gather bouquets of the bright yellow daisies that bloom every year. But this year's festivities have been dampened by the conflict -- particularly for ethnic Tigrayans -- and related economic woes, notably inflation that exceeded 30 per cent last month for food. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed is trying to rally the country, with a five-day social media campaign in the run-up to the holiday highlighting such themes as heroism and victory.

Fearful Tigrayans

But for Tigrayans like Tesfaye, the life they knew was upended in November, when the acrimonious relationship between Abiy and the Tigray People's Liberation Front, the regional rulers of Tigray, erupted in violence.

Many thousands have lost their lives in a conflict marked by brutal massacres and mass rapes, and some 400,000 people face famine-like conditions, with a "de-facto aid blockade" choking humanitarian access, according to the UN.—AFP ■

Los Angeles makes Covid vaccines compulsory for schoolkids

CHILDREN aged 12 or over who attend public schools in Los Angeles will have to be fully vaccinated against Covid-19 by the start of next year, city education chiefs said Thursday, the first such requirement by a major education board in the United States.

The vote by the Los Angeles Unified School District -- the second biggest in the country -- comes as the United States grapples with surging coronavirus numbers, driven by the highly contagious Delta variant.

It also came as US President Joe Biden set out tough new nationwide rules designed to stanch the flood of new infections, ordering companies with 100 or more personnel to ensure all of them are vaccinated, and requiring that all federal employees and contractors also get the shots.

Around 600,000 students attend a public school managed by LAUSD, about 220,000 of whom are eligible for a vaccine.

The passage of the motion at Thursday's meeting could set a precedent for school boards across the country. Kelly Gonez, LAUSD board president, welcomed the vote: "The vaccine is safe, effective, & the best way to keep our students protected against the virus," she tweeted after the meeting. —AFP ■

Students and parents arrive masked for the first day of the school year at an elementary school in Los Angeles **PHOTO: ROBYN BECK /AFP/FILE**

Cybersecurity seen as rising risk for airlines after 9/11

AFTER remaking their security procedures following the 9/11 attacks to stop airline hijackings, carriers are now faced with rising threats targeting computers and electronic equipment critical to their operations and safety.

Since the tragedy 20 years ago on Saturday, airlines and airports have fortified cockpits, barred sharp objects in carry-on luggage and improved technology to detect explosives.

"We are more secure," said Willie Walsh, director-general of the International Air Transport Association.

Many of today's security risks are now viewed as targeting the networks and hardware planes and airlines rely on.

From the gradual shift to electronic tickets to the management of jet fuel, even more aspects of aviation go through digital channels now than they did two decades ago.

"We must stay ahead of emerging security threats," Walsh said. "To do this effectively, we need to take a more integrated approach on things like cyber risks, drones, and insider threats."

New entry points

Beyond new airline security rules mandated by governments worldwide, security experts say potential hijackers face an additional challenge: other passengers.

Twenty years after 9/11, airlines are increasingly focused on cybersecurity risk. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

"Because of 9/11, if you're sitting in the airplane, and someone jumps up and tries to enter the cockpit, the passengers themselves are going to fight back and prevent that from happening," said Dan Cutrer, an expert in aviation safety at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University. However the embrace of digital technology has created new opportunities for trouble, with hackers able to penetrate systems through suppliers' software, online services or WiFi offered to passengers.

Experts consider the potential for a hacker to take control of the plane itself as unlikely, since flight controls are separate from systems used by customers.

Even if plane systems "may exhibit cybersecurity weaknesses, they're not an attractive target for most actors because of the required access and expertise, plus the risk of loss of life," said Katelyn Bailey of cybersecurity company FireEye.—AFP ■

Japan to raise prices of imported wheat by 19%, 2nd highest markup

Photo shows loaves of bread made in Japan. **PHOTO: KYODO**

THE prices of five major wheat brands imported by the Japanese government and sold to private milling companies will be raised by an average of 19 per cent for the October-March period from the previous six months, according to the farm ministry.

The move, which marks the sharpest price hike after the 30 per cent jump in the April-September period of 2008, comes as international market prices have soared due to robust demand from China for livestock feed and poor production in North America caused by unfavourable weather.

The selling price, which is reviewed every six months by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, will increase to 61,820 yen ($562) per tonne, exceeding 60,000 yen for the first time since the April-September period of 2015. —Kyodo ■

Foreign investors exempt from tax on bitcoin profits: El Salvador

A woman shops in a store that accepts bitcoin in El Zonte, El Salvador, the first country to recognize the cryptocurrency as legal tender. **PHOTO: AFP**

EL Salvador will exempt foreign investors from taxes on profits on bitcoin speculation in the country, a government adviser said Friday, after it became the first to recognize the cryptocurrency as legal tender. "If a person has assets in bitcoin and makes high profits, there will be no tax. This (is done) obviously to encourage foreign investment," Javier Argueta, legal adviser to President Nayib Bukele, told AFP.

"There will be no taxes to pay on either the capital increase or the income." El Salvador introduced bitcoin as legal tender on Tuesday alongside the dollar, which has been the official currency for 20 years.

Experts and regulators have highlighted concerns about the cryptocurrency's notorious volatility, its potential impact on price inflation in a country with high poverty and unemployment, and the lack of protection for users.—AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Kenya suffers huge job losses as Covid pummels economy

Kenya's economy shrank for the first time in three decades last year as the country was battered by the coronavirus pandemic, and almost 740,000 people were thrown out of work, a new government survey said.

Gross domestic product in the East African powerhouse dropped by 0.3 per cent -- the first contraction since 1992 -- after expanding five per cent in 2019, according to the report issued Thursday.

However, Treasury Secretary Ukur Yatani said that the economy was set for a "significant rebound" in 2021, with forecast growth of around six percent.

Overall GDP fell to 10.75 trillion Kenyan shillings ($98 billion/83 billion euros) last year.

A total of 738,000 jobs were shed, with informal workers such as small traders and artisans bearing the brunt, bringing the total number of people employed to 17.4 million.

"Disruption in labour supply brought about by restriction of movement and social distancing meant to contain the spread of Covid-19 reduced demand for goods and services," the report said. The key tourism sector -- usually the biggest foreign exchange earner -- was the hardest-hit as revenue dropped almost 44 per cent.—AFP ■

Cash is king in Venezuela property market as loans elude would-be buyers

Gustavo Martinez has a stable job as an engineer at an oil company in Caracas, but he can only dream of buying an apartment because Venezuela's inflation, the highest in the world, has crippled real estate financing.

Gustavo Martinez has a stable job as an engineer at an oil company in Caracas, but he can only dream of buying an apartment because Venezuela's inflation, the highest in the world, has crippled real estate financing.

With banks not offering loans, would-be homeowners are expected to pay for property in a single or handful of installments, using wire transfers, checks and even briefcases full of US dollars.

The national currency, the bolivar, has lost 73 per cent of its value to the dollar so far this year, and a single US dollar now costs 4 million bolivars.

The greenback, though not official currency, is widely used to pay for goods and services across Venezuela and it is the only accepted means of payment in real estate transactions.—AFP ■

Toyota cuts FY 2021 global output outlook to 9 mil. units amid COVID

Toyota Takaoka Assembly Plant, also known as Takaoka Plant, in Toyota City, Aichi, Japan. **PHOTO: TOYOTA/KYODO**

TOYOTA Motor Corp. on Friday slashed its global production outlook for the current fiscal year through March by about 300,000 units from its initial plan to around 9 million vehicles due to the spread of COVID-19 and a semiconductor crunch.

Toyota has been forced to curb output as it has faced difficulties in securing parts as the pandemic has affected suppliers in Southeast Asia, a manufacturing hub for the Japanese auto industry, adding to the chip woes already hitting automakers hard.

In September, Toyota is expected to manufacture around 470,000 units, down from the earlier planned 540,000. In October, it plans to make around 550,000 cars, down from 880,000.

Toyota said the outlook from November remains "unclear" but maintained its current output plan.

The production cuts come amid robust demand in its key markets like China and North America that has lifted Toyota's bottom line. The automaker maintained its earnings forecasts for fiscal 2021.

Through its supply chain control, Toyota, the world's biggest automaker by volume, is seen as having weathered the impact of the pandemic and the chip crunch relatively well.

But surging COVID-19 cases in Southeast Asian nations such as Malaysia and Vietnam have led the company to review its production plan. Other automakers like Nissan Motor Co. and Honda Motor Co. have been similarly cutting output to cope with the shortage of semiconductors. Chips are used in a variety of products including laptops and game consoles and the pandemic has boosted their demand.—Kyodo ■

China's first drone test base commissioned

People view an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) displayed at the Fifth Silk Road International Exposition in Xi'an, capital of northwest China's Shaanxi Province, 11 May 2021. **PHOTO: XINHUA/ZHANG BOWEN**

CHINA'S first professional test base for unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) has been put into service in Jingbian County, northwest China's Shaanxi Province, filling a gap in the country's UAV industry chain.

The test base is expected to be built into a national UAV industry comprehensive demonstration area and public service platform. Construction of the base, also known as the Jingbian general aviation airport, started in 2015. As China's first airport featuring UAV testing, it covers an area of 5,063 mu (337.5 ha.) and boasts 5,000 square km of testing airspace and a runway of 2,400 metres long and 45 metres wide. The airport has passed the examination of the aviation authority and obtained an airport use licence. It is currently in full operation. The base also serves for UAV scientific research, appraisal, airworthiness certification, product display, emergency maintenance and rescue as well as UAV operation and maintenance personnel training, conference and exhibition. —Xinhua ■

Faded internet pioneer Yahoo gets new boss

One-time internet giant Yahoo, which has undergone recent ownership changes and strategic pivots, announced Friday that Tinder CEO Jim Lanzone will be its new chief as the company looks for new opportunities.

One-time internet giant Yahoo, which has undergone recent ownership changes and strategic pivots, announced Friday that Tinder CEO Jim Lanzone will be its new chief as the company looks for new opportunities.

When Lanzone takes over as chief executive officer on 27 September, he will inherit a company that once contended to be the main global internet portal.

However, Yahoo has been gradually supplanted by titans like Google and was bought this year by private equity firm Apollo Global Management in a deal for Verizon's media properties.

"With our unique assets, resources, and lineage, we are one of the few companies positioned to tap into the many new opportunities appearing in the categories where we're strongest," Lanzone said in a statement.

Yahoo remains popular with internet users, particularly for its financial and sports news, and claims 900 million monthly users.—AFP ■

Yahoo has named Tinder CEO Jim Lanzone as its new chief. **PHOTO: AFP**

NEWS IN BRIEF

Blackstone scraps $3bn takeover of property giant Soho China

A US private equity firm has abandoned a planned $3 billion purchase of Chinese property developer Soho China, with antitrust authorities yet to approve the deal.

Blackstone had hoped to expand its presence in the country through acquisition of Soho China, which holds prime real estate in cities like Beijing.

But its offer had been conditional upon clearance from China's competition authorities, and the parties concluded that the pre-conditions would not be satisfied within a designated time frame, according to a filing to the Hong Kong exchange dated Friday.—AFP ■

SBI begins tender offer for Shinsei Bank, buy orders pour in

JAPANESE online financial firm SBI Holdings Inc. launched Friday a tender offer to make smaller rival Shinsei Bank a subsidiary as part of SBI's attempts to become a "fourth megabank" in Japan, with buy orders pouring in for the bank's shares. SBI's offer through 25 Oct announced Thursday was not approved by the Shinsei Bank board in advance and could end up in a hostile takeover. Shinsei Bank shares soared 300 yen, or 20.8 per cent, to close at 1,740 yen on Friday.

SBI already owns roughly a 20 perc ent stake in Shinsei Bank and plans to increase it to a maximum of 48 per cent. It offers 2,000 yen ($18) a share, nearly a 40 per cent premium to Thursday's closing price of 1,440 yen. The deal could total around 116.4 billion yen.—Kyodo ■

The 84-year-old Pope Francis faces a packed schedule in Budapest and Slovakia. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

Pope heads to Budapest and Orban talks, then Slovakia

JUST weeks after major surgery and despite the coronavirus pandemic, Pope Francis embarks Sunday on his 34th international trip with visits to Slovakia and Budapest, including talks with populist leader Viktor Orban.

The 84-year-old has a typically packed schedule -- half a day in Budapest for a religious event and then three days in Slovakia -- during which his physical health will be closely scrutinised.

In July, the pontiff spent 10 days in hospital after undergoing an operation for a type of diverticulitis, an inflammation in the intestine that required removing part of his colon.

The operation sparked rumours the Argentine might step down, but he laughed these off, insisting resigning never crossed his mind.

However, on his return from a historic visit to Iraq in March, the pope admitted it had been more tiring than other trips. As usual, his doctor will be on board Sunday.

Francis will begin his trip with a short stop in Budapest, presiding over mass at the International Eucharistic Congress, a week-long Catholic event.

It is not a state visit but a spiritual one, the Vatican emphasised, although the pope will have a meeting with Hungarian President Janos Ader and Prime Minister Orban.— AFP ■

Climate change dominates elections in oil-rich Norway

OIL-RICH Norway goes to the polls on Monday in elections dominated by climate change that the ruling Conservative party is widely expected to lose to a Labour-led coalition.

Labour Party leader Jonas Gahr Store is hoping to wrest power from centre-right Prime Minister Erna Solberg, who has headed the wealthy Scandinavian nation for eight years.

Polls suggest Solberg is unlikely to win again, and the key question is whether Store's hoped-for coalition with the Centre and Socialist Left parties will get enough votes for a parliamentary majority. If not he may have to seek the support of other small parties.

"Something really dramatic would have to happen for the right-wing to win," political scientist Johannes Bergh of the Norwegian Institute for Social Research told AFP.

The campaign has largely focused on the future of the oil industry in Norway, western Europe's biggest producer.

Norway owes its riches to black gold, enabling it to amass the world's biggest sovereign wealth fund.

The country has embraced environmentally-friendly policies to tackle climate change in recent years, but Store says it's not been enough.

He has vowed to introduce "fair" climate policies and narrow socioeconomic divides.

"We haven't done nearly enough in our climate transition and our welfare state has in many areas been cut back, privatized or carved up," the 61-year-old told AFP. "After eight years of right-wing politics, inequalities have increased in Norway."— AFP ■

Norway's Prime Minister Erna Solberg has been in power for eight years. **PHOTO: NTB/AFP**

NEWS IN BRIEF

Japan, U.S., S. Korea to hold talks on N. Korea in Tokyo on Tues.

SENIOR diplomats from Japan, the United States and South Korea will meet in Tokyo on Tuesday to discuss ways to resume denuclearization negotiations between the United States and North Korea, the Japanese Foreign Ministry said.

They will also compare notes on the latest situation in North Korea, the ministry said Friday, a day after the country staged a military parade in Pyongyang to celebrate the 73rd anniversary of the North's founding.

The meeting will bring together Takehiro Funakoshi, director-general of the Japanese Foreign Ministry's Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau, Sung Kim, U.S. special representative for North Korea, and Noh Kyu Duk, South Korea's special representative for Korean Peninsula peace and security affairs.—Kyodo ■

Councillors swear new Hong Kong loyalty oath after hundreds quit

DOZENS of local community politicians in Hong Kong swore a newly required loyalty oath to China on Friday after hundreds of their colleagues quit in protest as authorities try to purge the city of "unpatriotic" elements. District councils are the only political office in Hong Kong where all seats are directly elected by residents.

They deal with bread and butter local issues like bus routes, trash collection and playgrounds. But they have also become a symbol of residents' urge for a greater say in how their city is run.—AFP ■

Japan's vaccine chief Kono jumps into ruling party leadership race

Administrative Reform Minister Taro Kono (right) speaks to reporters Friday in Tokyo after Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga said he would not run in the 29 Sept Liberal Democratic Party leadership election. **PHOTO: KYODO**

JAPAN'S Taro Kono, a former foreign and defence minister currently leading the vaccine rollout, announced his run for the leadership of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party on Friday.

One of the country's most recognisable political figures, Kono is a top contender for the post, up for grabs after Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga said he would not stand.

Whoever wins on 29 September will lead the party into general elections in October or November, and Kono said he was running to "move Japan forward". "Japan may seem to be standing still, while other countries are trying to actively move forward. Maybe once Japan was in a top position, but unfortunately now we are maybe no longer a front-runner," he said.

"We must push the heavy door in front of us and open up our path forward."

Kono, currently minister for administrative reform, said he wanted to boost Japan's tech prowess through smart grids and 5G, and hit out at government bureaucracy that he said had slowed vaccination.

He also said the country needs to wean itself off coal and petroleum to achieve its 2050 goal of carbon neutrality, upping renewables and keeping the option of nuclear if necessary.

The 58-year-old minister, believed to have Suga's support, has two rivals so far: former foreign minister Fumio Kishida and hawkish female LDP member Sanae Takaichi.—AFP ■

Morocco's king names businessman Akhannouch to head government

MOROCCO'S King Mohammed VI on Friday named businessman Aziz Akhannouch to lead a new government after his National Rally of Independents (RNI) thrashed the long-ruling Islamists in parliamentary elections.

The king appointed Akhannouch "head of the government and tasked him with forming a new government", following Wednesday's polls, a statement from the palace said.

The RNI won 102 of parliament's 395 seats, trouncing the moderate Islamist Justice and Development Party (PJD), which had headed the governing coalition for a decade but took just 13 seats, according to results released by the interior ministry.

Akhannouch hailed the results as "a victory for democracy".

The billionaire businessman -- worth $2 billion according to Forbes -- has led the RNI since 2016.

His party is considered close to the palace and has been part of all coalition governments for the past 23 years, except during a brief period between 2012 and 2013. Following his win, Akhannouch pledged to improve conditions for citizens of Morocco, where entrenched social inequalities have been exacerbated by the pandemic. "The main commitment of the party is to work seriously as long as we enjoy the confidence of citizens, to improve their daily lives, to achieve their aspirations and regain confidence in their representatives," he said.— AFP ■

Moroccan businessman Aziz Akhannouch has been tasked with forming a new government after his party won the elections. **PHOTO: AFP**

Prince Andrew served with papers in US sexual assault lawsuit

Prince Andrew has vehemently denied claims he had sex with Virginia Giuffre, and said he has no recollection of meeting her. **PHOTO: AFP**

BRITAIN'S Prince Andrew has been served legal papers in a US lawsuit brought by a woman who says he sexually abused her when she was a teenager, a court filing showed Friday. The complaint was delivered to the royal's home in Windsor, England, on 27 August, according to an affidavit filed in the Southern District of New York. Virginia Giuffre says she was "lent out" for underage sex by late US financier Jeffrey Epstein who killed himself in a New York prison in 2019 while awaiting trial on sex trafficking minors. Giuffre sued Andrew last month, alleging he sexually abused her at the London home of socialite Ghislaine Maxwell more than 20 years ago, when she was under 18. Giuffre also claims Andrew abused her at Epstein's New York mansion and on Little St. James, Epstein's private island in the US Virgin Islands. Andrew, 61, has vehemently denied claims he had sex with Giuffre, and said he has no recollection of meeting her, but the allegations have damaged the British royal family. An agent for Giuffre said in the affidavit that he handed the papers to a police officer at the main gates of Andrew's property and did not meet Queen Elizabeth II's second son.

A spokesperson for Andrew refused to comment when asked to by AFP. Andrew, a divorced father of two and former Royal Navy helicopter pilot who flew in the 1982 Falklands War against Argentina, was forced to step back from frontline royal duties in late 2019.—AFP ■

Crisis-hit Lebanon gets cabinet after 13-month wait

A Lebanese government has been formed, the presidency announced Friday, ending a 13-month impasse as the country grapples with one of the worst crises in its history.

Lebanon ended a 13-month wait for a new government Friday with the unveiling of a lineup that faces the daunting task of rescuing the country from economic meltdown. A new cabinet was a condition for much-needed international assistance but its ability to deliver the required reforms remains to be seen.

Billionaire Najib Mikati, Lebanon's prime minister for the third time, made an emotional statement from the presidency vowing to leave no stone unturned in efforts to save the country from bankruptcy.

"We will make use of every second to call international bodies and ensure the basic everyday life needs," he said, adding his cabinet would turn to Arab countries for help.

Lebanese received the news with scepticism bordering on indifference while the EU and the UN stressed it was just a step on a long path to addressing the country's woes.

Mikati was designated as prime minister in July after his two predecessors failed to clinch an agreement on a new lineup.

His cabinet of newcomers include technocrats but each minister was endorsed by one or several of the factions that have dominated Lebanese politics since the 1975-1990 civil war.

The country's hereditary political barons have so far appeared impervious to international pressure, which intensified after a deadly explosion at Beirut port in August last year.— AFP ■

PM-designate Najib Mikati signing a decree for the formation of a new Lebanese government after a meeting with the President at the presidential palace on 10 September 2021. **PHOTO: AFP**

NEWS IN BRIEF

US honours 9/11 dead on 20th anniversary of attacks

AMERICA marks the 20th anniversary of 9/11 Saturday with solemn ceremonies given added poignancy by the recent chaotic withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan and return to power of the Taliban.

Heart-wrenching commemorations will unfold at each of the three sites where 19 Al-Qaeda hijackers -- mostly from Saudi Arabia -- crashed packed airliners, striking the cultural, financial and political hearts of the United States and changing the world forever.

The memorials come with US troops finally gone from Afghanistan, but national discord -- and for President Joe Biden, political peril -- are overshadowing any sense of closure.

In a video posted on the eve of the anniversary, Biden urged Americans to show unity, "our greatest strength."—AFP ■

Israel captures four of six Palestinian jail breakers

ISRAEL has recaptured four of the six Palestinian militants who escaped from a high-security prison earlier this week in one of the most spectacular breakouts in the country's history, police said Saturday.

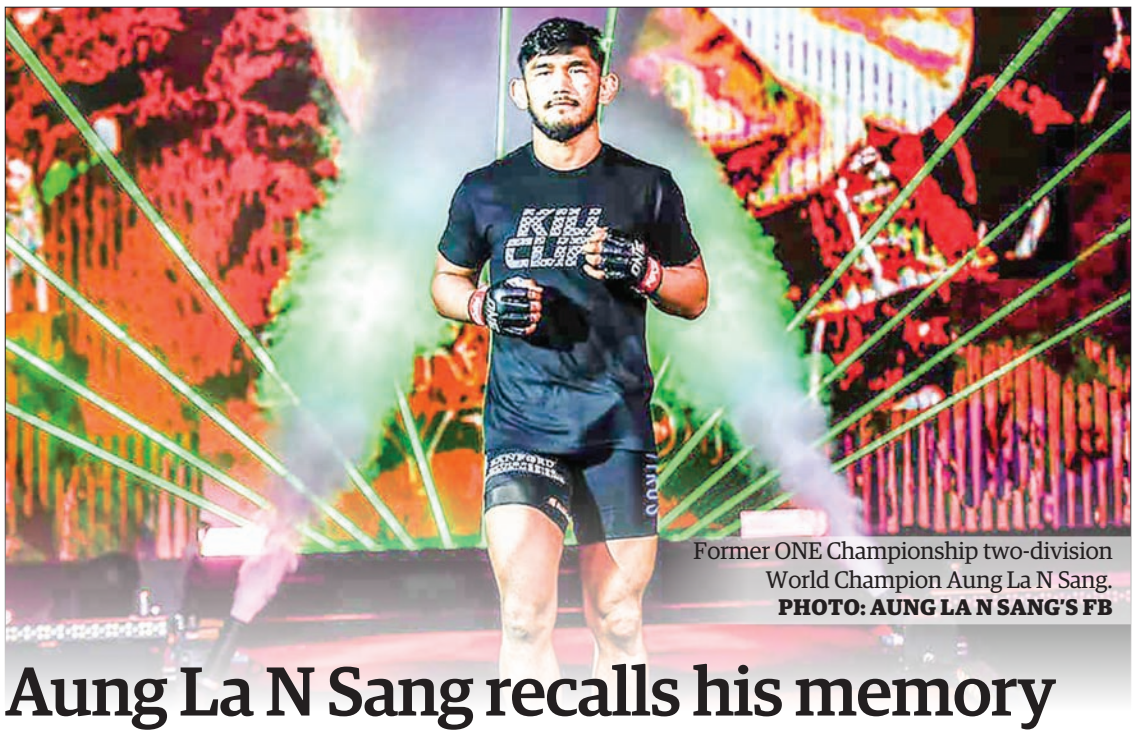
Since Monday's breakout, the army has poured troops into the occupied West Bank for a massive manhunt.

But the two latest fugitives to be recaptured, who include both a prominent former militant leader and the alleged mastermind of the escape, were found hiding in a lorry park just outside Nazareth in northern Israel, police said.

Zakaria Zubeidi is a former militant leader of the Fatah movement of Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas in the West Bank town of Jenin, while Mahmoud Ardah was sentenced to life in prison in 2002 for his role in Islamic Jihad's armed wing.

"Two more prisoners who escaped were captured a short time ago... while they were hiding in a parking lot for trucks," the police said.

"The hunt for the other two fugitives continues."—AFP ■



Former ONE Championship two-division World Champion Aung La N Sang. **PHOTO: AUNG LA N SANG'S FB**

Aung La N Sang recalls his memory amid special training

MYANMAR'S sports icon, former ONE Championship two-division World Champion Aung La N Sang has recalled his unforgettable memory during his training and leisure time on his social media.

Aung La said that he tried his best to get through his ups and downs. "In 2005, after school at Andrew's University where I was learning to be a farmer. I would drive down to South Bend, Indiana to train MMA. On the day when I got there for training, my coach asked me if I would be interested in driving up to Battle Creek, Michigan to take a fight.

The crazy 20-year-old me drove up immediately for this fight. This fight never made it on my MMA record but I made $100, $40 for gas and a good story to tell my grandkids", Aung La said.

"Anyways, the moral of the story is that if you stick with something for 16 years and work hard, you are bound to get better", Aung La added.

Aung La also expressed his gratitude to his coaches and teammates to support him.

"We can't always win but can always prepare ourselves the best we can. This camp was full of hardship and trial but I thank God for giving me the strength to go on. Thank you to my team at Sanford MMA and a big thank you to Henri Hooft for flying all the way to Singapore three times with me. Thank you to my family and friends for always being there for me. When times are hard, keep going and keep doing what's right. Love you all and see you guys soon in the One Championship circle", Aung La said. — GNLM ■

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.

Djokovic to play for Grand Slam against Medvedev in US Open final

NOVAK Djokovic will play Daniil Medvedev to try and complete the first men's singles calendar-year Grand Slam since 1969 after defeating Tokyo Olympic champion Alexander Zverev in Friday's US Open semi-finals. Top-ranked Djokovic outlasted the German fourth seed 4-6, 6-2, 6-4, 4-6, 6-2 to reach Sunday's championship match at Arthur Ashe Stadium against Russian second seed Medvedev.

"I'm going to treat the next match like it's the last match of my career," Djokovic said.

One more victory will give the 34-year-old Serbian star the first calendar-year Slam since Rod Laver accomplished it 52 years ago.

"There's only one more match left. All in. Let's do it," Djokovic said. "I'm going to put my heart and my soul and my body and my head into that one."

Djokovic seeks his fourth career US Open title and his 21st overall Slam crown, which would lift him one above the all-time record he shares with Rafael Nadal and Roger Federer, both absent with injuries.

"These are the moments we live for," Djokovic said. "These are the kind of unique opportunities we dream of when we are looking for motivation."

Australian legend Laver, 83, was in the stands to watch as Djokovic took a measure of revenge for Zverev, 24, beating him in an Olympic semi-final, denying Djokovic's bid for a "Golden Slam" with a Tokyo gold medal. — AFP ■

Veteran Indian sports chief takes over at Asia Olympics body

Raja Randhir Singh has taken over as chief of the Olympic Council of Asia. **PHOTO: AFP**

VETERAN Indian sports administrator Raja Randhir Singh on Saturday took over as head of the Olympic Council of Asia after its former Kuwaiti leader was sentenced to jail in a forgery case.

Sheikh Ahmad al-Fahad al-Sabah, a member of Kuwait's ruling family, stepped aside as Asia's top sports official after the Geneva court found him guilty on Friday over a plot against political rivals in the Gulf state.

Singh, 74, said in a statement he was taking over as interim president as the longest serving member of the OCA executive.

"I have every confidence that Sheikh Ahmad will be successful in his appeal," Singh said, adding that he would seek "to ensure the continued smooth running of the organization in the critical period ahead."

Asia will host the 2022 Winter Olympics in China in February and has just started the one-year countdown to the Asian Games in the Chinese city of Hangzhou.

Singh, a former Olympic shooter, was a member of the International Olympic Committee executive until 2015 and helped bring events such as the 2010 Commonwealth Games to India.

Sheikh Ahmad had been one of the most powerful sports bosses in the world until his court troubles erupted. He was handed a 30-month prison sentence for the alleged plot, half of which was suspended. Five defendants, including Sheikh Ahmad, were found guilty over a forgery scheme linked to efforts to show that Kuwait's former prime minister and parliament speaker were guilty of coup-plotting and corruption.—AFP ■