

NATIONAL

Effective and successful implementation of socio-economic lives of farmers from the rural area, 70 per cent of the total population of the country, is very important current requirement of the State: Vice-Senior General

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State Administration Council Chairman Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing receives Minister of Foreign Affairs of Brunei Darussalam , ASEAN Secretary-General



Chairman of the State Administration Council Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing is posing for a documentary photo at the reception event with the Foreign Minister of Brunei Darussalam and ASEAN Secretary-General yesterday.

STATE Administration Council Chairman Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing received Minister of Foreign Affairs of Brunei Darussalam Dato Erywan Pehin Yusof and ASEAN Secretary-General Dato Lim

Jock Hoi at the parlour of the Diplomat Hall of the Office of the SAC Chairman yesterday morning.

They exchanged views on results in the summit of ASEAN leaders, efforts to establish the ASEAN Community, implementation of the recom-

mendation of initial survey of ASEAN, efforts of ASEAN to ensure availability of COVID-19 vaccine, Myanmar-Brunei bilateral relations, terror acts in Myanmar by associations and terrorist groups related to unlawful CRPH and NUG, errors in voter lists and findings

in inspection in the 2020 multiparty general election, plan to hold the election in peace and stability of the country, and cooperation of Myanmar in humanitarian aid.

Also present at the meeting together with the Senior General were Union Ministers

U Wunna Maung Lwin, U Ko Ko Hlaing and officials. The Minister of Foreign Affairs Brunei Darussalam and the ASEAN Secretary-General were accompanied by Deputy ASEAN Secretary-General Mr Garry Ramtee Bin Haji Ibrahim and officials. —MNA

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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.

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.

Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar Ministry of Health and Sports Order No 127/2021 10th Waning of Kason 1383 ME 4 June 2021

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

1. As the Ministry of Health and Sports is taking preventive measures against the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in real-time, people from some townships need to stay at home because the number of confirmed patients is on the rise in Chin State.
2. The people residing in the following townships of Chin State are inclusive of the stay-at-home programme:
 - (a) Tiddim Township
 - (b) Falam Township
 - (c) Thantlang Township
 - (d) Haka Township
3. The people inclusive of the Stay-at-Home programme of the township need to abide by the following disciplines:
 - (a) Reside at their homes only (except the persons going to government departments, organizations, companies, factories and workplaces for serving duties);
 - (b) Arrange only one person from each house to go out shopping;
 - (c) Arrange only two persons per house to go to hospitals and clinics;
 - (d) Wear masks if they go outside the houses;
 - (e) Allow ferries and the registered vehicles to transport the returnees from workplaces to pass the wards;
 - (f) Allow one person only in addition to the driver in a vehicle for shopping in the community and two persons except for the driver for going to hospitals or clinics.
4. The people need to inform relevant ward administration bodies about seeking approvals for going outside the houses if they have reasons to raise limited numbers of participants in the measures and other emergency issues mentioned in sub-paragraph (b), (c) and (f) of Paragraph 3, and the relevant administrative bodies need not allow ingoing and outgoing persons, except for officials and those returnees from duty.
5. Action will be taken against those under the existing laws for failing to abide by the order.
6. The order came into force at 4 am on 5-6-2021.

Dr Thet Khaing Win
Union Minister

Myanmar needs to apply modern techniques for developing agricultural task and manufacturing works in the agriculture and livestock sectors

AS an agro-based country, Myanmar needs to apply modern techniques for developing agricultural task and manufacturing works in the agriculture and livestock sectors to ensure food sufficiency. And surplus must be exported to improve the economy of rural people.

(Excerpt from the speech to the Management Committee meeting made by the Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council Chairman Senior General Min Aung Hlaing on 21 May 2021)

Effective and successful implementation of socio-economic lives of farmers from the rural area, 70 per cent of the total population of the country, is very important current requirement of the State: Vice-Senior General

Head of the Steering Body for Protection of Farmers' Rights and Enhancement for their Benefits Vice-Chairman of the State Administration Council Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Commander-in-Chief (Army) Vice-Senior General Soe Win delivered an address at the meeting 1/2021 of the Steering Body at the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

In his speech, the Vice-Senior General said that effective and successful implementation of socio-economic lives of farmers from the rural area, 70 per cent of the total population of the country, is the very important current requirement of the State. Successive governments have been protecting the farmers' rights and enhancing their benefits.

So, the Law for Protection of Farmers' Rights and Enhancement for their Benefits (2013) was enacted in 2013. The law comprises eight chapters with 29 sections. Section 3 in Chapter II mentions five objectives of the law. Sub-Section (a) is to support the farmers with the disbursement of suitable loans, Sub-section (b) to arrange smooth provision for techniques, inputs and production to farmers, Sub-section (c) to give assistance to farmers to get reasonable prices and market for agricultural products, Sub-Section (d) to effectively perform protection of rights of farmers who own small plots of farmlands and enhance of benefits and Sub-Section (e) to provide assistance to farmers for damage and loss in natural disasters as much as possible.

The law was added with two sub-sections. So, Sub-section (f)



is to help farmers not to lose in farmland confiscation and protect them for the safety of farming rights, and Sub-section (g) to carry out the emergence of a farmer organization law. The committee aims to ensure food sufficiency of the State, full nutrition of the citizens, more exportation of products from agricultural and livestock sectors, increase of income for farmers and development of socio-economic lives. As such, those attending the meeting are responsible for the protection of the rights of farmers who own small

farm plots and the enhancement of their benefits in accord with the essence of the law.

The government and the steering committee must reconstitute the work committees and task forces to implement the provisions of the law effectively. These work committees and task forces are to invite entrepreneurs to cooperate with them in the tasks. The Vice-Senior General further urged them to coordinate with relevant ministries in the transfer of agriculture and livestock techniques, quality control for quality seeds,

fertilizers, pesticides and agricultural machinery and systematic usage, reduction of natural disaster risks and rehabilitation tasks, enhancement of domestic crop productivity and seeking the reasonable prices and market of agricultural and livestock products. Region and state administration councils need to emphasize preparedness for reducing the risks of natural disasters, providing assistance for crops and supervision for data on loss of farmers.

The Vice-Senior General said the country must emphasize an increase of per-acre yield. Moreover, it is necessary to disseminate 14 points of systematic cultivation to the farmers. Those in charge in agricultural sector in regions and states need to have comprehensive knowledge about nurturing, cultivation, growing number of paddy plants in set plots, proper drainage and seeding, and harvesting process. They have to disseminate the knowledge to farmers. Model plots must be established in regions/states, districts and townships to increase the per-acre yield of crops. Their increased income will contribute

to the economic development of the State. Ministries and businesses were urged to distribute agricultural machinery to farmers at fair prices.

Secretary of the steering Body Union Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation U Tin Htut Oo reported on forming the steering committee and future plans.

Members of the Steer Body Union Ministers, the Union Attorney-General, the Governor of Central Bank of Myanmar, the Chairman of Nay Pyi Taw Council, region and state administration councils and officials discussed their respective sectors in protecting farmers' rights and enhancement of their benefits and future plans.

Union Ministers U Tin Htut Oo and Dr Pwint San and Vice President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry U Ye Min Aung discussed the needs to set the floor prices for other crops such as beans and onion similar to that of paddy.

In conclusion, the Vice-Senior General said Union ministries are to scrutinize the suggestions from the meeting. Arrangements must be made for thriving perennial crops and occupying the market. The growing of perennial crop plants contribute to the conservation of forests and reduce the climate change process. Union ministries and region and state authorities cooperate to distribute pedigree species of animals suitable for respective regions and increase products.

Then, the Vice-Senior General and party viewed round the displays of departments under the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation.—MNA

Model plots must be established in regions/states, districts and townships to increase the per-acre yield of crops. Their increased income will contribute to the economic development of the State.

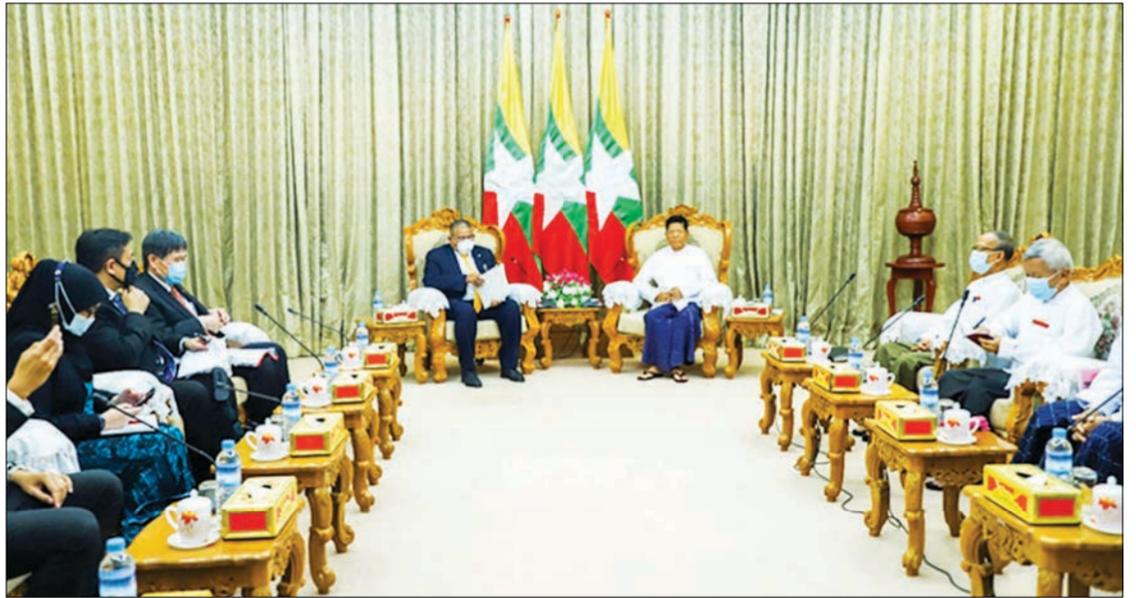
UEC Chairman receives ASEAN chairman and secretary-general

CHAIRMAN of the Union Election Commission U Thein Soe received the current ASEAN Chairman Dato Erywan Pehin Yusof, Foreign Affairs Minister of the Brunei Darussalam, and ASEAN Secretary-General Dato Lim Jock Hoi, yesterday afternoon in Nay Pyi Taw.

At the meeting, the Chairman of the Union Election Commission explained the formation of the Union Election Commission and its examination of ballot papers, publication of the findings, future activities and meeting with political parties.

The meeting also discussed matters pertaining to further plans regarding the upcoming election, ASEAN's cooperation when the election is held, five ASEAN Common Accords, the future five-point roadmap of the State Administration Council, the appointment of the ASEAN Ambassador to Myanmar and the possibility of cooperating in the declining business situation due to COVID-19, including Myanmar politics.

The meeting was also attended by UEC members and officials from the UEC office. — MNA



MIC meeting 4/2021 highlights on policy matters



MYANMAR Investment Commission (MIC) held its (4/2021) meeting yesterday morning at office No.18, Office of the State Administration Council. The meeting was chaired by member of the State Administration Council, Chairman of Myanmar Investment Commission, Lieutenant-General Moe Myint Tun and was attended by the members of the Myanmar Investment Commission.

The meeting was held only for discussing the investment policy matters and it is intended to sustain the economic development through the investment

facilitation, liberalization and promotion.

The MIC ratified the Standard Operating Procedures for scrutinizing investment projects by the State and Region Investment Committees and of the One Stop Service Departments of Myanmar Investment Commission. In addition, the policies on delayed investment projects, the education services and the seasonal crop were discussed and the supported policy measures for tackling them were laid down accordingly. —MNA

Deputy Minister U Ye Tint inspects IPRD, MRTV Retransmission Stations in Mandalay, Sagaing

DEPUTY Minister for Information U Ye Tint met the IPRD staff of Madaya, Singu and Kyaukmyaung Townships in Mandalay Region and other IPRD staff of YeU, KhinU and Wetlet townships of Shwebo District in Sagaing Region on 31 May.

The Deputy Minister met

the IPRD staff of Kanbalu District and inspected MRTV Retransmission Station on 1 June.

Then, he held a discussion with the IPRD staff of Kyunhla, Kawlin District and Pinlebu Township and in charge of MRTV Retransmission Station. After that, he inspected the station.

Then, he met the staff and head of the retransmission station at the IPRD office of Wuntho Township.

The deputy minister gave instructions regarding the reports and needs of employees and stressed the need to perform the duties with goodwill.

— MNA



The deputy minister meets the Shwebo IPRD staff on 31 May 2021.

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Due to limitation of space we are only able to publish "Letter to the Editor" that do not exceed 500 words. Should you submit a text longer than 500 words please be aware that your letter will be edited.

Union Minister U Wunna Maung Lwin receives Dato Erywan Pehin Yusof, Minister of Foreign Affairs II of Brunei Darussalam, Dato Lim Jock Hoi, Secretary-General of the ASEAN

AT the invitation of U Wunna Maung Lwin, Union Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, Dato Erywan Pehin Yusof, Minister of Foreign Affairs II of Brunei Darussalam and Dato Lim Jock Hoi, Secretary-General of the ASEAN arrived Myanmar by special flight at 4:55 pm on 3 June 2021 and the officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs welcomed them at the Nay Pyi Taw International Airport.

The Union Minister for Foreign Affairs received Dato Erywan Pehin Yusof, Minister of Foreign Affairs II of Brunei Darussalam and Dato Lim Jock Hoi, Secretary-General of the ASEAN, at 10:00 am on

4 June 2021 at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Nay Pyi Taw.

At the Meeting, they exchanged views on matters pertaining to Myanmar and Brunei relations, ASEAN Community Building efforts, follow up to the ASEAN Leaders' Meeting, cooperation between Myanmar and ASEAN and implementation of the recommendations of the Preliminary Needs Assessment.

Senior Officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs also attended the Meeting.

In the evening, Union Minister hosted dinner for Minister of Foreign Affairs II of Brunei Darussalam and Secretary General of the ASEAN.—MNA



Union Minister U Wunna Maung Lwin receives the Brunei Foreign Minister and ASEAN Secretary-General in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.



MoSWRR Union Minister receives Brunei Darussalam Foreign Minister, ASEAN Secretary- General

THE Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement received Brunei Darussalam's Foreign Affairs Minister Dato Erywan Pehin Yusof and ASEAN Secretary-General Dato Lim Jock Hoi yesterday.

The meeting discussed matters pertaining to the cooperation work with ASEAN in the reception of Rakhine

displaced persons, the implementation of 7 prioritized projects in Rakhine State together with ASEAN, works of ASEAN to communicate international donors for remaining projects, holding of 4th superiors' coordination meeting on repatriation by the end of June and receiving of humanitarian aid via ASEAN.—MNA

The inspection of prison and police detention by the MNHRC in May 2021

The inspection teams led by the Commission Members of the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission (MNHRC) made the inspection visits to the Sittway Prison and the Sittway Myoma police detention centre on 12 May 2021, Thandwe Prison and Thandwe Myoma police detention centre and Jade-Taw police detention centre on 19 May 2021 and Kyaukpyu Prison and Kyaukpyu Myoma police detention centre on 24 May 2021.

During the inspection visits, in accordance with the provisions of the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission Law, the inspection teams interviewed prisoners and detainees freely and privately group by group and asked them whether there is any problem to see their family members, the availability of appropriate facilities for them, whether there is health care or not, is there torture in prison and their living condition in the prison. The inspection teams also met with the prisoners and detainees who wish to meet with the team privately and recorded their reports.

While inspecting the prisons and police detention centres, the inspection teams inspected the sleeping quarters of the inmates, the kitchen, the food store, the water tanks, the latrines and the arrangement to prevent COVID-19 pandemic.

The finding and recommendations of the inspection teams will be put forward to the relevant departments to take necessary actions.—MNA

School attendance rate expected to be double in Yangon region

THE attendance rate in basic education schools in Yangon Region has increased significantly within four days after the countrywide reopening of the schools for the 2021-2022 academic year, and it is expected to be double in the coming week according to the Yangon Region Education office.

“We don’t want students to be affected anymore when it comes to education. We want parents to understand and send the children to schools,” said Yangon Region Education Officer Daw Hnin Kyi (Deputy Director-General).

Students had lost one year for the 2020-2021 academic year due to the COVID-19 outbreak, and the State Administration

Council has arranged to provide free education for the 2021-2022 academic year in line with the COVID-19 prevention and control guidelines.

Despite the reopening of schools, some parents are reportedly worried to send their children to schools. According to a junior assistant teacher from Bahan Township, they often come and check the school’s operation and safety.

Of one million students from a total of 2,700 basic education schools in the Yangon Region, 40% of them are attending schools as for the first week of school reopening for the 2021-2022 academic year, according to the Region Education Office.
— Maung Sein Lwin/GNLM



Children happily go to schools nationwide



Kyaikmaraw Township, Mon State. PHOTO: CHO MYAT MYAT HTWE (IPRD)



Nawngkhio Township, Shan State (North). PHOTO: HTWE NGE (IPRD)



Bago Township, Bago Region. PHOTO: MYO NYEIN (DISTRICT IPRD)



Kyaukpadaung Township, Mandalay Region. PHOTO: NAY AUNG (IPRD)



Mahaaungmyay Township, Mandalay Region. PHOTO: TUN TUN NAING



Chaungzon Township, Mawlamyine District, Mon State. PHOTO: TOWNSHIP IPRD



Monghset Town, Shan State (East). PHOTO MYINT MAUNG (MONGHSET)

Domestic black bean price jumps to over K1.08 mln per tonne

ACCORDING to the Yangon Region Chambers of Commerce and Industry, the domestic black bean price has jumped to over K1.08 million per tonne (Bayintnaung Commodity Depot).

Although the black bean price on 1 May was K888,500 per tonne, the price jumped to about K1,085,000 per tonne on 4 June, increasing around K200,000 per tonne in only over one month, according to the bean market data.

Black bean price has increased when India, the primary buyer of Myanmar pluses, has redefined black bean, green gram and pigeon pea bean from a restricted commodity to a free import commodity. However, the price has not reached the price



The black bean plantations yielded around 400,000 tonnes annually in Myanmar, and the bean is mainly exported to India.

that hit K1.3 million per tonne at the end of 2019.

Since 2017, India has been setting import quota on beans,

including black beans and pigeon peas, under the Indian government plus foreign trade policy for 2015-2020.

At present, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry of India has issued proclamation No. S.O.1858 (E) on 15 May 2021

that the three pluses have been changed from a restricted commodity to a free import commodity as of 31 October 2021.

The black bean plantations yielded around 400,000 tonnes annually in Myanmar, and the bean is mainly exported to India. Similarly, Myanmar has also produced about 50,000 tonnes of pigeon peas yearly and exported them chiefly to India.

The black bean, which is mainly bought from India, is grown primarily in Myanmar. Other pluses, including green gram and pigeon pea, are produced in Africa and Australia in addition to Myanmar, according to Myanmar Pulses, Beans and Sesame Seeds Merchants Association. — NN/GNLM

Lemon price constantly drops in Kya-in-Seikkyi



But this year, the price of lemon was K40 per fruit, a drop by half this year compared to last year.

THE lemon trees are widely grown in Kya-in-Seikkyi township, Kayin State, and the lemon cultivation is successful.

With the yield of lemons getting high in Kya-in-Seikkyi township, Kawkareik District, the local farmers grow the fruit

on a commercial scale and earn extra income for their family.

As the lemons have yielded abundantly, the price of lemon has dropped naturally in this monsoon. But, the price of lemon is on the rise in summer.

In the last monsoon, the lemon price hit K15 per one. But the price rose to K150 or K200 per fruit depending upon the size in summer.

But this year, the price of lemon was K40 per fruit, a drop by half this year compared to last year.

There are many lemon growers in Kya-in-Seikkyi township, and there are more than 10,000 acres of lemon plantations. The local growers send the fruit of the seasonal lemon annually to Mawlamyine town, Mon state and Yangon region through the fruit depots. — Myo Min Oo/GNLM

Agriculture Department projects to cover over 800,000 monsoon crop acres in Yangon southern district

A total of 801,843 acres of monsoon rice crops are planned to cultivate in the townships of Yangon southern district this year, the Department of Agriculture (Yangon southern district) stated.

The projected acres include 59,773 in Thanlyin Township, 107,934 in Kyauktan, 50,073 in Tada, 153,580 in Thongwa, 110,642 in Kayan, 82,032 in Twantay, 88,097 in

Kawhmu, 102,383 in Kungyangon, 46,742 in Dala and 587 in Yangon Myoma, totaling 801,843 acres. More than 20,000 acres are seen cultivated in those townships.

The Department of Agriculture produces quality rice crop both in monsoon and summer seasons in a bid to secure food self-sufficiency and generate foreign income. — Thet Khaing (Thanlyin)/GNLM

MADB to disburse K5 bln monsoon crop loans for over 6,000 farmers in Myeik District

THE Myanma Agricultural Development Bank (MADB) (Myeik branch) of the Ministry of Planning, Finance and Industry is implementing to provide K5 billion worth of agricultural loans for the monsoon rice crop season in order to cover 6,122 farmers in five townships in Myeik District.

The MADB Myeik branch will disburse a total of 6,122 farmers (36,671 acres) monsoon crop loans, paying out K150,000 per acre. The growers can take out loans for a maximum of ten acres. The interest is set at 5 per cent like the rate of the previous years. The respective township branch will pay out the loan. The loans will cover 3,141 farmers in Myeik Township, 1,194 in Kyunsu Township, 1,651 in Taninthayi

Township, 42 in Bokpyin Township, and 94 in Kawthoung Township.

Those farmers who have already paid off the previous loan will be prioritized in the loan application process. The MADB Myeik branch has provided K34.2 million worth of loans to the farmers with 228 acres so far.

MADB provides annual agricultural loans to small-scale farmers, intending to have food self-sufficiency and export competitiveness for Myanmar's agricultural products in order to boost exports, promote the interests of the farmers and enhance their socio-economy. — Khaing Htoo (IPRD)/GNLM



The MADB Myeik branch will disburse a total of 6,122 farmers (36,671 acres) monsoon crop loans, paying out K150,000 per acre.

Solve weakness in sanitation of the city with public participation

ALL parts of rural and urban areas require municipal performances of which supply of water and sanitation are of importance for dwellers on a daily basis.

The task of sanitation plays a key role in keeping the town and village neat and tidy. If so, local people can stay away from the outbreak of communicable diseases and daily life problems.

In Yangon City's municipal area, city dwellers are facing poor services of sanitation. The Yangon City Development Committee allots garbage bins in all townships of the municipal area, but most of the bins are damaged with a lack of lids and wheels and with rat-bite holes. So, solutions of garbage drain out from the bins on the ground with bad smell harming the health of nearby local people.

Officials need to check the work process of sanitation workers who collect garbage from each bin. Before collecting the garbage, some workers search for some objects in bins that can be sold to the old and faded object buyers. Moreover, garbage vans cannot collect waste from the bins on a daily basis. Consequently, a bad smell from the bins spread out. These are daily realities in the sanitation sector of the city.

On the other hand, the sanitation unit from the city faces shortages of labours because most of the people do not wish to do such works due to bad smell and dirtiness. Similarly, garbage vans are not adequate for use. Generally, sanitation of the city needs the fulfilment of many human resources and materials to operate the regular work process smoothly. Just systematic littering of the people amounts to help the sanitation workers.

As Myanmar is a developing country, all sectors of the development tasks face requirements. The authorities spend the allotted budgets on providing assistance to all sectors as much as they can, but sector-wise requirements can be seen till today.

In this regard, public participation plays a crucial role in city-building tasks. The city needs generous contributors and well-wishers for operating the development tasks. The city dwellers abiding by disciplines can shape the city better with concerted efforts.

Therefore, sanitation workers and city dwellers should conscientiously join hands in keeping the city neat and tidy.



Pandemic plunges 100 mn more workers into poverty: UN

The Covid-19 pandemic has pushed more than 100 million more workers into poverty, the UN said Wednesday, after working hours plummeted and access to good-quality jobs evaporated.

AND the labour market crisis created by the pandemic was far from over, the UN's International Labour Organization warned in a report.

Employment was not expected to bounce back to pre-pandemic levels until 2023 at the earliest, it said.

The ILO's annual World Employment and Social Outlook report indicated that the planet would be 75 million jobs short at the end of this year compared to if the pandemic had not occurred. And it would still have 23 million fewer jobs by the end of next year than would otherwise have been the case.

Covid-19 "has not just been a public health crisis, it's also been an employment and human crisis", ILO chief Guy Ryder told reporters.

"Without a deliberate effort to accelerate the creation of decent jobs, and support the most vulnerable members of society and the recovery of the hardest-hit economic sectors, the lingering effects of the pandemic could be with us for years in the form of lost human and economic potential, and higher poverty and inequality."



A devastating coronavirus wave has pushed millions of Indian families into poverty and hunger. PHOTO: AFP/PRAKASH SINGH

Working hours slashed

The report showed that global unemployment was expected to stand at 205 million people in 2022 — far higher than the 187 million in 2019.

But the situation is worse than official unemployment figures indicate.

Many people have held onto their jobs but have seen their working hours cut dramatically.

In 2020, 8.8 per cent of global working hours were lost com-

pared to the fourth quarter of 2019 — the equivalent of 255 million full-time jobs.

While the situation has improved, global working hours are far from having bounced back, and the world will still be short the equivalent of 100 million full-time jobs by the end of this year, the report found.

Global employment is expected to recover more quickly in the second half of 2021 — provided the overall pandemic situation

does not worsen. But that recovery would be highly uneven, the ILO warned, due to inequitable access to Covid-19 vaccines. So far, more than 75 per cent of the jobs have gone to just 10 countries.

'Working poverty'
The limited capacity of most developing and emerging economies to support strong fiscal stimulus measures will also take its toll, the ILO said. In those countries, it said, the quality of

newly created jobs would likely deteriorate.

The fall in employment and hours worked has meanwhile translated into a sharp drop in labour income and a rise in poverty.

Compared to 2019, 108 million more workers around the world were categorised as poor or extremely poor, meaning they and their families live on less than \$3.20 per person per day, the study showed.

"For many millions of people, the working hour losses combined with a lack or absence of social protection" had sparked an "absolutely dramatic" increase in working poverty, Ryder said.

Five years of progress towards eradicating working poverty had been undone.

Tragically, he said, the crisis also appeared to have reversed decades of progress battling child labour and forced labour.

The report highlighted how the Covid-19 crisis had worsened pre-existing inequalities by hitting vulnerable workers harder.

Economic 'long Covid'
For many of the two billion people who work in the informal sector, where social protections are generally lacking, the disrup-

tion has had catastrophic consequences for family incomes and livelihoods.

The crisis has also disproportionately hit women, who have fallen out of the labour market at a greater rate than men, even as they have taken on more of the additional burden of caring for out-of-school children and others.

This, the report warned, had created the risk of a "re-traditionalisation" of gender roles.

Youth employment meanwhile fell 8.7 per cent last year — more than double the 3.7 per cent for older workers.

"The consequences of this delay and disruption to the early labour market experience of young people could last for years," the ILO said.

Ryder cautioned that without decisive action, the Covid-19 crisis could scar the global labour market long-term, just as the disease appears to have devastating, drawn-out health consequences for some people.

"Long Covid could become an economic and social phenomenon, not just a medical one," he warned.

Source : AFP



Pressing COVID-19 situation urges world to rethink priorities: think tank

COVID-19 is the twenty-first century's Chernobyl moment — a catastrophe so significant it must force us to wake up and rethink our priorities, according to an opinion piece recently published by a pan-European think tank.

LIP service and inaction of some countries have "exacerbated inequalities and undermined the effectiveness of the pandemic response," David McNair, executive director for global policy at the ONE campaign, a movement of millions of people fighting to end extreme poverty, commented in the article published on the website of the European Council on Foreign Relations.

"And yet, throughout the crisis, the piecemeal nature of the United States' and the European Union's engagement with the rest of the world has fallen far short of the commitment now needed," he warned.

McNair explained that

throughout 2020, the U.S.-chaired Group of 7 was largely missing in action, the Donald Trump administration actively blocked international economic support in the form of International Monetary Fund special drawing rights, and Britain dismantled its highly reputable Department for International Development and drastically cut aid. While the United States has vaccinated half its population and is considering calling up children for their shot, in Africa frontline health workers and the elderly and infirm may have to wait until 2022, he wrote.

ONE's COVID-19 Africa tracker data shows that rich countries have hoarded 1.3 billion doses more than they need, with 80 per cent of doses having been administered in high-income and upper-middle-income countries, compared to just 0.4 per cent in low-income countries. As a result, there could be a worsening situation with twice as many total deaths from COVID-19 due to a monopoly of first doses of vaccines by rich countries, he wrote.

Economically, the IMF has warned of a "great divergence." High-income countries will recover to 4.3 per cent growth in 2021 while in many African countries a return to 2019 economic growth levels will not occur until 2022-24, he added.

Source : Xinhua



Pedestrians walk past graffiti urging people to 'wash their hands' in the Grafton Street area of Dublin City centre, on Mar 13, 2020. PHOTO: AFP/PAUL FAITH

Myanmar Daily Weather Report
(Issued at 7:00 pm Friday 4 June, 2021)

BAY INFERENCE: Monsoon is weak to moderate over the Andaman Sea, South Bay, Eastcentral Bay and Northeast Bay of Bengal. Weather is a few cloud elsewhere over the Bay of Bengal.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL NOON OF THE 5 June, 2021: Rain or thundershowers will be fairly widespread in Mandalay Regions and (Northern and Southern) Shan State, scattered in Nay Pyi Taw, Sagaing, Mandalay, Magway, Taninthayi Regions and Kachin, Eastern Shan, Chin, Rakhine, Kayah, Kayin, Mon States and isolated in Bago, Yangon, Ayeyawady Regions. Degree of certainty is (80%).

STATE OF THE SEA: Sea will be slight to moderate in Myanmar waters. Wave height will be about (4-6) feet off and along Myanmar Coasts.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Likelihood of increase of rain in Upper Sagaing, Taninthayi Regions and Kachin, Kayin, Mon States.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 5 June, 2021: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (80%).

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 5 June, 2021: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (80%).

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 5 June, 2021: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (80%).

WEATHER OUTLOOK FOR WEEKEND: Scattered rain or thundershowers in Nay Pyi Taw, Yangon and Mandalay Regions.

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Tatmadaw provides treatments to over 233,000 outpatients

TATMADAW keeps providing healthcare services for patients at the military hospitals and temporary treatment hospitals in the townships of regions and states.

Tatmadaw medical teams, which comprise Tatmadaw doctors, specialists, medical assistants and nurses, have given medical treatments to the people to solve their difficulties in healthcare services. A total of 233,311 outpatients and 69,735 in-

patients reached these hospitals from 5 February to date.

Senior medical experts, medics, medical assistants and nurses have conducted 10,893 major operations and 5,597 minor operations. The senior doctors gave intensive treatments to the severe cases.

These hospitals managed the birth of 13,643 babies to date. Of those, 5,564 cases are done in the caesarean section and 8,079 cases in ordinary delivery.

In addition to providing medical care to patients in need of hospitalization, Tatmadaw is making arrangements for the well-being of hospitalized patients and caregivers.

Commanders of Northern Command, Yangon Command, South-West Command, North-West Command and Southern Command comforted the patients—monks, local people, military officers, other ranks and their families—at the respective



station military hospitals. The commanders also gave food-stuffs to the patients yesterday. — MNA

Police arrest suspects together with explosives



THE police arrested the suspects, who committed mine attacks in some wards of Myaungmya Township in Ayeyawady Region, together with the explosives.

On 3 June, a bag was found in the house compound of U Naw Mai Hla Kyi, township administrator who lives in 11th street of No (8) Ward of Myaungmya Township. The security forces

examined the bag and found a handmade bomb similar to the mine size from suspect Chit Ko Ko (aka) Chit Ko.

According to the words of Chit Ko Ko (aka) Chit Ko, the suspects who made the bombs were Phoe Di (aka) Thit Lwin Thant, who lives in No (5) Ward of Myaungmya township and another man. The police arrested Phoe Di (aka) Thit Lwin Thant



at the house of U En Hoke in Nyaung Chay Htauk village. The security members then arrested U En Hoke together with the arms used in riots.

Moreover, the police arrested Nay Myo Aung (aka) San Shay, who lives in No (9) Ward of South Okkalapa Township of Yangon Region and Ma Zar (aka) Tin Zar Nway in Shwe Chi Ward of Pyinmana Township together



with handmade guns, magazine and other explosives.

The police also found a bag containing pistol, bullets and bomb discarded by two men riding a motorcycle in Pa La Na Village-tract of Myitkyina Township of Kachin State. Similarly, the police seized the explosives in a house in which two men, including Chit Min Htwe located in Thingangyun Township of

Yangon Region yesterday.

Moreover, the security members arrested Zaw Myo Tun (aka) E Ti in Nyaung Pin village of Dagon Myothit (Seikkan) Township together with the explosives.

The officials will take actions against those who keep or use homemade mines, firearms and explosives in accordance with the law.—MNA

Mine attacks kills 3 men with 5 teachers being wounded in Nattalin

A mine exploded at a basic education post-primary school, killed three men and injured five teachers yesterday afternoon in Sangyi village, Nattalin Town-

ship of Bago Region.

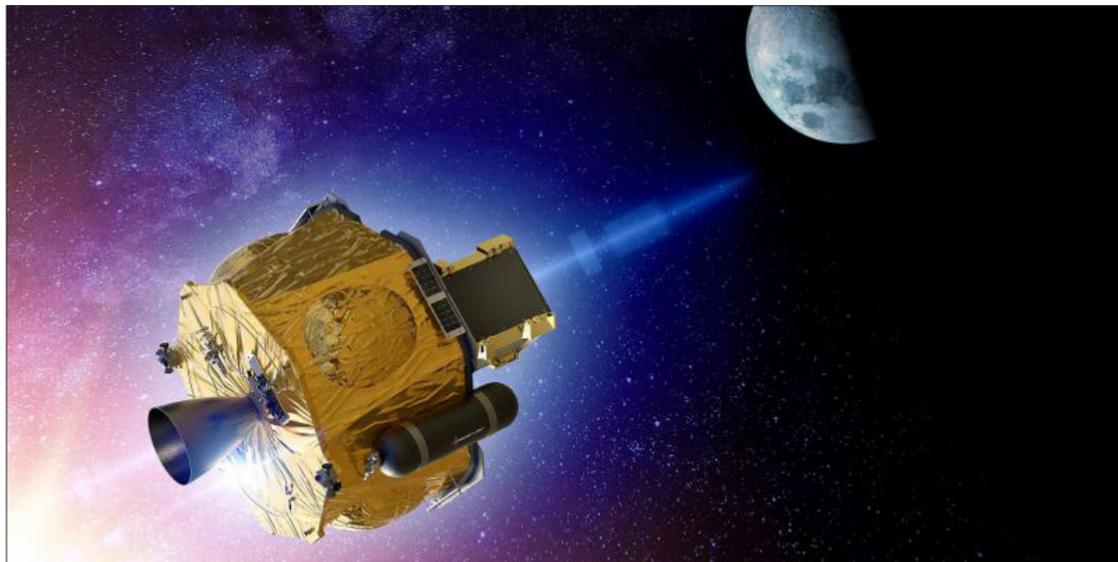
While six villagers and five teachers were looking around the construction site in the school compound, they found a

black plastic bag on the bamboo pile near the school fence. The mine in the bag exploded when villager U Myo Oo dragged it, killing both him and U Than Win at

the scene. U Zaw Moe Aung, severely injured, died while being taken to his home for treatment.

It is reported that innocent civilians have died due to terror

acts perpetrated by terrorist groups who want to disrupt the regular schooling of students, and people are disgusted with terrorist organizations. — MNA



The interplanetary variant of the Photon spacecraft developed by Rocket Lab is pictured in an undated artist's render received on Thursday. The image depicts the moon as a destination, but the spacecraft would be very similar for a Venus mission. **PHOTO: AFP / ROCKET LAB / HANDOUT**

NASA announces two new missions to Venus

NASA announced two new missions to Venus on Wednesday that will launch at the end of the decade and are aimed at learning how Earth's nearest planetary neighbour became a hellscape while our own thrived.

"These two sister missions both aim to understand how Venus became an inferno-like world, capable of melting lead at the surface," said Bill Nelson, the agency's newly-confirmed administrator.

"They will offer the entire science community the chance

to investigate a planet we haven't been to in more than 30 years."

The missions have been awarded about \$500 million under NASA's Discovery Programme, and each is expected to launch in the 2028-2030 timeframe.

Both missions were picked from a competitive, peer-reviewed process based on their scientific value and feasibility of their plans.

DAVINCI+, which stands for Deep Atmosphere Venus Investigation of Noble gases, Chemistry, and Imaging, will gather

more detail on the composition of Venus' primarily carbon dioxide atmosphere, to learn how it formed and evolved.

The mission also seeks to determine whether the planet once had an ocean.

A descent sphere will plunge through the dense atmosphere which is laced with sulfuric acid clouds.

It will precisely measure the levels of noble gases and other elements to learn what gave rise to the runaway greenhouse effect we see today. — AFP ■

Arctic sea ice thinning faster than expected, new study shows

SEA ice in the Arctic's coastal regions may be thinning up to twice as fast as previously thought, according to a new study, with worrying implications for climate change.

The analysis, led by researchers at Britain's University College London (UCL), concluded the ice in the coastal regions was thinning at a rate 70 to 100 per cent faster than the established consensus.

The dramatic reassessment comes after the team used more up-to-date maps of snow depth on the ice, which has been retreating for decades as the planet warms.

"We believe our new calculations are a major step forward in terms of more accurately interpreting the data we have from satellites," said UCL professor Julienne Stroeve, who co-authored the study published in *The Cryosphere* journal.

"We hope this work can be used to better assess the

performance of climate models that forecast the effects of long-term climate change in the Arctic," she said.

The region, home to millions of square kilometres of ice essential for keeping the planet cool, is warming at three times the global rate, Stroeve said.

Sea ice thickness is estimated by measuring the height of the ice above the water. But that measurement is distorted by snow weighing the ice floes down.

Scientists had adjusted for this using a map of snow depth in the Arctic that UCL said did not account for the impact of climate change.

"Previous calculations of sea ice thickness are based on a snow map last updated 20 years ago," said Robbie Mallett, a PhD student who led the study.

"Because sea ice has begun forming later and later in the year, the snow on top has less time to accumulate.

— AFP ■

No evidence mystery UFOs are alien spacecraft, report finds: NYTimes

THERE is no evidence that unexplained aerial phenomena spotted in recent years by US military personnel are aliens, an upcoming government report quoted by *The New York Times* Thursday said, but officials still can't explain the mysterious aircraft. The newspaper, which cited senior administration officials briefed on the findings of the highly anticipated report, said they were able to confirm the unusual vessels were not the product of secret Pentagon technology.

But the review of more than 120 incidents over the past two decades was unable to explain the mysterious movements of the craft, which include unusual acceleration, direction changes and the ability to rapidly submerge.

And while senior officials told the *Times* the lack of clear findings means that while there's no evidence of alien technology behind the phenomena, it's also impossible to

rule out.

One senior official briefed on the report said intelligence and military officials increasingly worry the phenomena could be China or Russia experimenting with hypersonic technology.

The upcoming report — expected to be released to Congress by June 25 — will have a classified annex, officials told the *Times*, which will likely fuel speculation that aliens are actually behind the encounters.

The Pentagon last year released videos taken by US Navy pilots showing in-flight encounters with the unusual aircraft. And the mystery was further drummed up by former officials with access to classified intelligence.

"What is true — and I'm actually being serious here — is that there's footage and records of objects in the skies that we don't know exactly what they are," former president Barack Obama told "The Late Late Show" last month. — AFP ■

Virgin Galactic to send up well-known researcher

SPACE tourism company Virgin Galactic announced Thursday it will send researcher Kellie Gerardi, a well-known figure on TikTok, into space to conduct experiments for several minutes while weightless.

The move presents an ideal opportunity for the company to flaunt its ambitions not only to send wealthy tourists on pleasure rides costing \$200,000 or more, but also to advance science.

The 32-year-old bioastronautics researcher, who is affiliated with the International Institute for Astronautical Sciences (IIAS), said she always believed the space tourism industry's success could also "help open up opportunities for researchers like myself."

The first experiment conducted by Gerardi, who has more than 400,000 TikTok followers and some 130,000 on Instagram, will involve "astro skin," in which sensors are placed under her flight suit to



Kellie Gerardi, a researcher with the International Institute for Astronautical Sciences (IIAS), experiences weightlessness on a zero gravity plane. **PHOTO: AFP**

collect biometric data.

While the process has already been used aboard the International Space Station, data has never before been collected during landing and takeoff.

Virgin Galactic, founded by British billionaire Richard Branson, hopes to begin regular commercial suborbital flights in early 2022, with eventual plans for 400 trips a year.

The flights are far from the classic rocket experience, with a carrier plane taking off from a runway then dropping the spacecraft once in the air, which then ignites its engines.

Asked whether just a few minutes in space was sufficient, Gerardi said "uninterrupted consecutive minutes of time in space in microgravity to do my research" was "really the dream." — AFP ■

Senior British judge to quit top Hong Kong court: media

A senior British judge has announced she will quit Hong Kong's top court when her term ends, stating there were "all sorts of question marks" over Beijing's new national security law, media reported Friday.

Baroness Brenda Hale, the first female president of Britain's Supreme Court, is one of 13 foreign judges currently sitting as non-permanent members of Hong Kong's Court of Final Appeal.

Unlike mainland China, where the courts are beholden to the Communist Party, Hong Kong's judicial system remains independent and based on common law -- a major reason for its position as a global business hub. Lawyers from common law jurisdictions are able to operate in the city, while senior judges are invited to sit on the city's top court.

But China's imposition of a sweeping national security



Baroness Brenda Hale (centre), with Prince Charles at the Supreme Court. PHOTO: POOL/AFP/FILE

law last year has sparked concerns in some legal circles about whether judicial independence can be maintained. Britain's government is currently reviewing whether to bar UK judges from serving on the Court of Final Appeal.

The Times of London said Hale mentioned the impact of the security law as she an-

nounced she would not seek a second term on the Hong Kong court when her tenure ends in July.

"The jury is out on how they will be able to operate the new national security law. There are all sorts of question marks up in the air," the Times quoted Hale as telling an online conference on Thursday. — AFP ■



An artist rendering released by Boom Supersonic shows the company's supersonic airplane with the United Airlines logo. PHOTO: AFP

United Airlines unveils plan to revive supersonic jet travel

UNITED Airlines announced plans Thursday to buy 15 planes from airline startup Boom Supersonic in a move that could revive the high-speed form of air travel.

Under the commercial agreement, United would purchase Boom's "Overture" aircraft once the planes meet "United's demanding safety, operating and sustainability requirements" with an aim to start passenger travel in 2029, the

companies said in a joint press release. The agreement covers 15 planes and includes an option for United to obtain another 35 aircraft. The companies did not disclose financial terms.

Boom's plane is capable of flying at twice the speed of leading aircraft now on the market, with the potential to fly from Newark to London in three and a half hours and San Francisco to Tokyo in six hours, the companies said.

The jets will also be "net-zero" in carbon use because they will employ renewable fuel.

Commercial supersonic jet travel was introduced in the 1970s with the Concorde, but the jets were retired in 2003 due in part to the high cost of meeting environmental restrictions on sonic booms.

The Concorde's demise also followed a 2000 Air France accident that killed 113 people. — AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Australia media fined for breaching Pell trial gag order

A dozen major Australian news organisations were fined Friday for breaching court orders that banned reporting on Cardinal George Pell's 2018 conviction on child sex abuse charges, which was later overturned.

The news outlets were found guilty of 21 counts of contempt of court for ignoring the gag order in the case of Pell, a top Vatican official who was convicted of abusing two choirboys but later cleared on appeal after spending a year in prison.

They were fined a total of Aus\$1.1 million (US\$855,000) and ordered to pay an additional Aus\$650,000 in court costs.

The news organizations had already pleaded guilty in a deal with the court that led to contempt charges being dropped against 18 individual journalists and editors who had faced possible jail time if they were also convicted. — AFP ■

Facebook to bar politicians from posting deceptive content: report

FACEBOOK plans to eliminate an exemption for politicians that allows them to post content deemed deceptive or abusive, and will hold them to the same standards as other users, news website The Verge reported Thursday.

The controversial exemption, given to politicians under the auspices of their posts being newsworthy, could end as soon as this week on the leading social network, the news site said.

Facebook did not immediately respond to an AFP request for comment on the matter.

The policy reversal would come after an independent oversight board said Facebook was right to oust former president Donald Trump for his comments regarding the deadly January 6 rampage at the US Capitol. — AFP ■

Race against time to relocate NATO's Afghan translators

LIKE thousands of Afghan translators who served with NATO forces, Nazir Ahmad fears for his life as the US-led alliance scrambles to pull out of the country in the coming weeks. "The situation is deteriorating now as foreign forces leave," he told AFP in Kabul. "We are scared of the insurgents. They know our faces." Afghans who worked for international armed forces face a threatened wave of Taliban reprisals and fear that resettlement plans by alliance members will leave many of them and their relatives still vulnerable. Ahmad, 35, who is now in the Afghan capital, worked with British forces for two years in the restive southern province of Helmand, and has applied for relocation to the UK to escape the increased threats to former local staff.

"The insurgents, especially the Taliban, will take revenge and cut off our heads," he said, explaining the Islamist militia considers

former local staff "spies" and "foreign allies".

Accelerated relocation

Over the past two decades, dozens of Afghan translators have been killed and tortured in targeted assaults by the Taliban.

Many more have been injured in attacks on foreign troops during patrols in armoured vehicles. Britain announced on Monday that it would accelerate relocation for its Afghan staff who worked with the military, offering priority to any current or former locally employed staff deemed at risk. The UK has relocated 1,360 locally employed Afghan staff throughout the whole of the 20-year conflict, and says more than 3,000 Afghans are expected to be resettled under the accelerated plans.

But Ahmad's contract with the British Army was terminated in 2012, for an alleged security breach, making his right to relocation in the UK uncertain. — AFP ■



The Tokyo Motor Show opened to the public on Oct 25, 2019 at Tokyo Big Sight, with more than 180 companies and organizations showcasing concept cars, latest model electric vehicles and other products. Toyota's e-Care concept vehicle. PHOTO: KYODO/FILE

Tokyo Motor Show to be held in 2023 under theme of green, digital

THE Tokyo Motor Show will be held in 2023 under a theme of "green and digital," organizers said Thursday after cancelling it this year due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Akio Toyoda, president of Toyota Motor Corp. who serves as chairman of the Japan Automobile Manufacturers Association, said in an online press conference the theme represents "a medium- to long-term message (for the coun-

try) to realize the carbon neutrality target in 2050."

Toyoda said the auto industry welcomes the government's new economic growth strategy featuring plans to set up 30,000 fast-charging stations and increase by sixfold the number of hydrogen stations for electrified vehicles.

But Toyoda said that just aiming for the targets is insufficient to cut carbon emissions significantly.

He suggested that the industry can help by deciding where to install them most efficiently and enhance usability, such as by using data collected by "connected cars" equipped with telecommunication systems to analyze where electrified cars are used frequently.

The biennial auto show for 2021 was canceled for the first time since its start in 1954. In 2019 the show drew around 1.3 million people. — Kyodo News ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

French 'bug farm' thrives on demand for pesticide-free fruit

FARMERS in western France are doubling down on an unusual crop: breeding millions of tiny predatory bugs and wasps to protect tomato plants without resorting to the insecticides that consumers are shunning.

"Here, we're in one of the greenhouses for a bug that's called the macrophus," says Pierre-Yves Jestin, as clouds of the pale green insects swarm around his hands. Jestin is president of Saveol, the Brittany cooperative that is France's largest tomato producer, cranking out 74,000 tonnes a year. For several years the cooperative has promoted "pesticide-free" harvests in response to growing concerns about the impact of harsh chemicals on humans and the environment.

It does so thanks to its own bug farm, launched in 1983, that now stretches across 4,500 square metres (just over one acre) outside Brest, where the tip of Brittany juts out into the Atlantic. Plans are in the works to add 1,200 square metres more this year, producing macrophus as well as tiny wasps that feed on common tomato pests such as whiteflies and aphids. Every week the insects are packed up in plastic boxes and shipped to the cooperative's 126 growers. — AFP ■

US may have seen massive rehiring in May despite labor troubles

THE key US government jobs report Friday is expected to show American businesses added hundreds of thousands of jobs last month as vaccines helped the economy return to normal -- but with Covid-19 still keeping some people away from the workplace, strong rehiring is no sure thing.

Economists expect the Labor Department data will show the world's largest economy added 720,000 jobs and the unemployment rate ticked down to 5.9 per cent in May, a consensus supported by positive data released this week.

Payroll services firm ADP boosted the upbeat sentiment when it said private employers added a huge 978,000 jobs last month, while the Institute for Supply Management (ISM) reported its index gauging the health of the service sector, a key employer, hit an all-time high in May.

In addition, weekly data from the Labor Department showed new unemployment aid applications dropped below 400,000 last week for the first time since the pandemic sent them soaring into the millions in March 2020. — AFP ■

Chinese Taipei boosts coronavirus testing for tech industry

CHINESE Taipei is ramping up testing and vaccinations for tech industry workers in a bid to stop a sudden surge in coronavirus cases hitting its semiconductor industry at a time of global shortages.

In the science parks of northern Hsinchu city, where the world's largest contract microchip maker Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC) is based, local officials have set up rapid testing sites.

"The Hsinchu Science Park is home to some very important global semiconductor factories," mayor Lin Chih-chien told AFP. "Hsinchu city has to protect not only its residents, but also importantly protect the home base of the world's most important semiconductor industries."



Technicians working at a microchip making factory in Taiwan. PHOTO: TAO-CHUAN YEH / TAO-CHUAN YEH/ AFP

Chinese Taipei's microchip factories have been struggling to plug a pandemic-driven global shortage of chips that power essential electronic devices. The water-intensive facilities are running at full capacity,

even as Chinese Taipei suffers its worst drought in decades.

And now Chinese Taipei is battling a sudden outbreak of the coronavirus, with officials keen to spot any clusters in the tech sector before they

spread.

Hsinchu City Medical Association said it has organized rapid testing teams with 120 volunteer doctors and plans to set up four community vaccination sites in the coming days. — AFP ■

Parking lots: Car space sells for \$1.3m in Hong Kong

A single car parking space has been sold for a whopping HK\$10 million (\$1.3 million) at a luxury Hong Kong apartment complex, local media reported on Friday.

The 12.5 square-metre (135 square-foot) spot is part of a development on The Peak, a swanky area that has attracted some of the city's richest residents since colonial times.

Boasting breath-taking views over Victoria Harbour, the hilltop has eye-watering property prices -- including some of the world's most expensive real estate.

While Hong Kong's wealthy think nothing of dropping millions of dollars for their homes, millions of the city's residents struggle to afford the rent on shoe-box apartments — many smaller than the parking space. — AFP ■

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

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Corporate tax deal tops agenda at G7 finance meet



Britain's Chancellor of the Exchequer Rishi Sunak (L, with US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen) is hosting the G7 meeting on plans for a minimum global level of corporate tax. PHOTO: POOL/AFP

GROUP of Seven finance ministers are set to kick off talks on Friday, with the spotlight on ambitious plans for a minimum global level of corporate tax.

British finance minister Rishi Sunak will host the meeting – which is being held in person after an easing of Covid restrictions – with counterparts from Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States.

The talks will prepare the ground for a broader summit of G7 leaders in Cornwall, south-

west England starting on June 11, which will be attended by US President Joe Biden on his first foreign tour since taking office in January.

According to a draft communique seen by AFP, the finance chiefs and central bankers of the world's seven richest nations will express “strong support” and a “high level of ambition” over a global minimum corporate tax. They then hope to reach broader agreement at a G20 finance meeting scheduled for July.

Ministers also plan to commit to “sustain policy support”, or stimulus, for “as long as necessary” to nurture economic recovery, while addressing climate change and inequalities in society, according to the document. Furthermore, they will urge “equitable, safe and affordable access to Covid-19 vaccines” everywhere in order to fully overcome the deadly pandemic. And the thorny topic of the regulation of digital currencies such as bitcoin will also be on the agenda. — AFP ■

European air lobbies fear summer chaos at airports

A year after the coronavirus pandemic emptied airports, air travel associations fear chaos during Europe's summer holiday season as travellers could wait hours before boarding planes due to health checks. Strict controls are still in place at most European airports even though vaccination campaigns are making progress and infection rates are falling. The International Air Transport Association (IATA) reported last week that on average, people travelling at peak times now stay twice as long at airports — three hours —

compared with 2019.

That time is generally spent checking in, passing security and immigration controls, picking up checked bags and making it through customs. And there's the new reality: Airlines having to check passengers' Covid tests, temperature and other health documents.

The wait time has in-

creased even though the volume of traffic is “only about 30 per cent of pre-COVID-19 levels”, an IATA statement said. The sector lobby group warned that time spent in airports could swell to five hours and 30 minutes if traffic rebounds to 75 per cent of its pre-pandemic level, and even longer “without process improvements”. — AFP ■



A specialist noted that extra health safety measures “have wiped away years of progress” in terms of passenger flow. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

Biden to overhaul Trump's China investment blacklist: report

JOE BIDEN intends to this week overhaul a list of Chinese firms that US investors are allowed to own shares in, as the president re-evaluates the world powers' post-Trump relationship while maintaining pressure on Beijing.

Donald Trump prohibited Americans from buying stakes in 31 Chinese companies that were deemed to be supplying or supporting China's military and security apparatus. The list included major telecoms, construction and technology firms such as China Mobile, China Telecom, video surveillance firm Hikvision, and China Railway Construction Corp. It was among a series of measures by the White House aimed at quelling the Asian giant's rise and which has left ties between the two severely strained.

Biden's new order will see the Treasury Department create a list of firms that would be hit with financial penalties for

their links with China's defence and surveillance technology sectors, Bloomberg News reported without citing sources. The president is expected to sign the order this week, it added. Previously, the sanctions and choice of targets were tied to a congressionally mandated Defence Department report. The review came after two Chinese companies successfully challenged the order in court, and Biden said it was needed to be sure it was legally watertight and sustainable.

While the Biden administration has pledged to take a more diplomatic line with China following the upheaval of his predecessor, he has said he will keep to a strict line on several issues, including defence and technology. He is expected to keep the list largely intact, while the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control will add new firms after consulting the departments of Defence and State. — AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

China deepens reform of business permits to boost market entities

A full-coverage listing-management system will be adopted for enterprise-related business licencing items nationwide starting from July 1, said a State Council circular released Thursday.

At the same time, more reforms of the examination-and-approval system will be launched in pilot free trade zones (FTZs), the circular said. A digital-licence system for businesses will be available nationwide by the end of 2022, with paper materials no longer needed if the target information can be obtained via the digital-licence system.

By the end of 2022, a simplified, highly efficient, fair and transparent industry-access rule with a low threshold and strict management will be established in an effort to make administrative operations more convenient and predictable for market entities. — Xinhua ■

Japan eyes cooperation with foreign firms to boost chip output

JAPAN will encourage domestic companies to cooperate with foreign semiconductor makers to build factories in the country to boost output capabilities amid a global computer chip shortage, the government said Friday.

The plan to revive the country's vulnerable sector comes when the importance of securing semiconductors increases amid robust global demand for the key products used in automobiles and other various electronic devices, including computers and smartphones.

Describing semiconductor and other digital industries as an “indispensable foundation for the people's lives,” industry minister Hiroshi Kajiyama told a news conference, “We will tackle (the issue) as a national project that will go beyond supporting private businesses or a single sector.” — Kyodo News ■

Legal woes facing Netanyahu as opposition readies to unseat him



Netanyahu, 71, was formally charged in 2019 over allegations he accepted improper gifts and sought to trade regulatory favours with media moguls in exchange for positive coverage. **PHOTO: AFP**

ISRAEL'S longtime premier Benjamin Netanyahu is set to lose power after a diverse coalition united in an 11th-hour deal against him, raising questions about the next steps in

his ongoing corruption trial.

Here's a look at what could lie ahead for the first Israeli prime minister to have been indicted in office:

Immunity?

If Netanyahu loses the premiership, it "wouldn't change anything in the case itself, because he didn't have immunity anyway", Amir Fuchs, an analyst at the Israel Democracy Institute, told AFP.

Under Israeli law, a sitting prime minister does not have automatic immunity from prosecution. But he or she is not obliged to resign when charged, only when convicted and after all avenues of appeal have been exhausted.

Netanyahu, 71, was formally charged in 2019 over allegations he accepted improper gifts and sought to trade regulatory favours with media moguls in exchange for positive coverage.

He is also accused of accepting cigars, champagne and jewellery worth 700,000 shekels (€180,000) from wealthy personalities in exchange for favours. Netanyahu says there is no problem with receiving gifts from friends, and denies having acted inappropriately in return.

He has lambasted the charges as part of a witch-hunt to drive him out of office. — AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

US pledges support for whoever leads Israel

ISRAELI Defence Minister Benny Gantz received a pledge of US support for whoever is Israel's next leader Thursday as he met with top officials in Washington while Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was facing ouster back home. US security and defense officials also told Gantz they would help replenish its "Iron Dome" missile defense system after it was used heavily in the recent conflict with Gaza, but also pressed Israel to reduce tensions with Palestinians.

"We're not going to speak to government formation while it's in process," State Department spokesman Ned Price said after Gantz met with Secretary of State Antony Blinken. "Regardless of what happens, regardless of what government is in place, our stalwart support, our ironclad support for Israel will remain," he said. — AFP ■

Canada-led nations demand reparations from Iran for Ukraine flight's downing

A group of countries led by Canada said Thursday they've made a claim for reparations against Iran over its downing of a Ukraine jetliner, on behalf of victims' families.

The Islamic republic shot down Ukraine International Airlines flight PS752 shortly after take-off from its capital Tehran on January 8, 2020, killing all 176 people aboard, including 85 Canadian citizens and permanent residents. Three days later, it admitted that its forces had mistakenly targeted the Kiev-bound Boeing 737-800 plane.

Britain, Canada, Sweden and Ukraine said in a joint statement that the two missile strikes on the plane, as well as Iran's "omissions" in an investigation report on the crash, "amount to breaches of inter-

national law".

"Our claim states that our respective countries, nationals and residents on board flight PS752 were seriously and irreversibly harmed by the tragedy and Iran must fulfill its legal responsibility to make full reparations to the group of states," they said, calling on Iran to formally begin negotiations on reparations. In a separate statement, the group also announced that Afghanistan would not take part in the upcoming talks as it focuses on domestic strife.

In a final report in March, the Iranian Civil Aviation Organisation (CAO) pointed to the "alertness" of its troops on the ground who shot the missiles amid heightened tensions between Iran and the United States at the time. — AFP ■



People hold signs with images of the victims of the downed Ukraine International Airlines flight PS752, which was shot down near Tehran by the IRGC, as family and friends gather to take part in a march to mark the first anniversary, in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, on January 8. **PHOTO: COLE BURSTON/AFP**

Peruvians face choice for 'lesser evil' in presidential vote



Peru's presidential candidates Keiko Fujimori (left) and Pedro Castillo represent polar opposite economic models but share similar views on gay rights issues. **PHOTO: X07403/AFP**

PERUVIANS will be faced with choosing the "lesser evil" between rightwing populist Keiko Fujimori and radical leftwing unionist Pedro Castillo when voting for their new president on Sunday.

Scandal-tainted Fujimori, 46, has reached the second-round runoff for the third election in a row, and is running level with schoolteacher Castillo in the most recent opinion polls.

However, 18 per cent of voters remain undecided between the two polar opposite candidates.

"For the majority of the population it's more about the election of the lesser evil," Peruvian political scientist Jessica Smith told AFP, adding that the vote pits "anti-Fujimorism" against "anti-communism."

It's a choice between Fuji-

mori's neoliberalism and Castillo's socialism; between the status quo and change.

Fujimori draws her support from the capital Lima while Castillo is a bulwark of the rural deep interior.

Battle lines were drawn between the two camps last Sunday, with Fujimori accusing Castillo of stoking violence in the electoral campaign, and the leftist firing back that corruption "is synonymous with Fujimorism" in Peru.

Castillo's opponents have tried to link him to the political arm of the Maoist Shining Path rebels defeated by Fujimori's father Alberto when he was president from 1990-2000, but the unionist says he was actually part of the "peasant patrols" that resisted the communist guerrillas. — AFP ■

France halts joint military operations with Mali over coup

FRANCE said Thursday it would suspend joint military operations with Malian forces after the West African country's second coup in nine months, adding to international pressure for the military junta to return civilians to positions of power.

The decision comes after Mali's military strongman Assimi Goita, who led last year's coup, ousted the country's civilian transitional president and prime minister last week.

The move sparked diplomatic uproar, prompting the United States to suspend security assistance for Malian security forces and for the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to suspend Mali.

France's armed forces said Thursday that "requirements and red lines have been set by ECOWAS and the African Union to clarify the framework for the political transition in Mali". — AFP ■

AFC announce squad missed out in 2022 World Cup Qualifiers

THE ASEAN Football authorities recently announced a squad was missing out in the 2022 World Cup Qualifiers in June.

The list includes ASEAN football stars, including star strikers: Aung Thu and Dangda.

The missing-out squad list for the month of June is Goal-keeper Neil Etheridge of the Philippines (surgery), Defender Theerathon Bunmathan of Thailand (withdraw), Elkan Baggott of Indonesia (withdraw), Yanto Basna of Indonesia (withdraw), Patrick Strauss of the Philippines (injury), Midfielder Chanathip of Thailand (injury), striker Aung Thu of Myanmar (withdraw), Hariss Harun of Singapore (withdraw), Hung Dung of Viet Nam

(injury), Striker Dangda of Thailand (withdraw), and S. Firki of Malaysia (injury).

The 2022 FIFA World Cup qualifiers are series of tournaments organized by the six FIFA confederations to decide 31 of the 32 teams that will play in the 2022 FIFA World Cup, with Qatar qualifying automatically as hosts.

The opening two rounds of qualifying also serve as qualification for the 2023 AFC Asian Cup. Therefore, Qatar, the 2022 FIFA World Cup host, only participates in these first two rounds of qualifying.

ASEAN teams are included in eight groups separately with world-class and Asian giant teams. —GNLM

PHOTO: ASEAN FOOTBALL



Sabalenka beaten at French Open to open door for Serena

THIRD seed Aryna Sabalenka was dumped out of the French Open in the third round on Friday by Russia's Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova, leaving Serena Williams as the highest-ranked player left in her half of the draw.

Russian 31st seed Pavlyuchenkova won 6-4, 2-6, 6-0 and will meet Victoria Azarenka for a place in the quarter-finals. Sabalenka joins top seed Ashleigh Barty and second-seeded Naomi Osaka in exiting the tournament in the first week. Williams, chasing a record-equalling 24th Grand Slam title, tackles Danielle Collins later Friday in her third round tie. Sabalenka had defeated 29-year-old Pavlyuchenkova just a month ago in the Madrid quarter-finals on clay.

However, on Friday she was undone by 39 unforced errors as her poor record at the majors continued. Sabalenka is yet to make a quarter-final at the Slams. The women's competition this year has seen 2019 champion Barty retire injured in the second round. Reigning US and Australian Open champion Osaka withdrew after the first round having been fined and threatened with expulsion for refusing to honour media commitments.

Simona Halep, the world number three and 2018 champion, didn't even make it to Paris after suffering a calf injury. Pavlyuchenkova was a quarter-finalist in Paris in 2011 while her win on Friday was her 37th over a top 10 player. — AFP ■

Premier League quartet set to boost misfiring Germany



The late arrival of a quartet of Premier League stars is set to give Germany a timely boost as head coach Joachim Loew looks to fix his misfiring side in their final preparations for Euro 2020. PHOTO: AFP

THE late arrival of a quartet of Premier League stars is set to give Germany a timely boost as head coach Joachim Loew looks to fix his misfiring side in their final preparations for Euro 2020.

The Chelsea trio of Champions League winners Timo Werner, Kai Havertz and Antonio Ruediger, as well as Manchester City midfielder Ilkay Gundogan, had all joined the squad by Thursday.

They were given extra time off after Saturday's European final. Their arrival boosts the Loew's side, who hit the woodwork twice with 16 shots on goal as Wednesday's friendly against Denmark finished in a disappointing 1-1 draw.

Loew is running out of time to get Germany ready to face world champions France on June 15 in their opening game

of the European Championship before facing holders Portugal four days later in Group F.

"The problem has been with us for a long time," Loew said after Germany's lack of finishing was again an issue Wednesday.

"We create a variety of opportunities, but we don't reward ourselves. We have to work on that." Loew has praised Havertz, who showed his "enormous quality" with the goal which decided Chelsea's win in the Champions League final.

The 21-year-old attacking midfielder gives an extra option up front, while City's top-scorer Gundogan is a potent attacking threat in central midfield. However, Werner joins the camp having often struggled to take his chances this season, yet Germany's lack of finishing also remains an issue. — AFP ■

Arsenal confirm David Luiz among four players to leave

ARSENAL have confirmed Brazil defender David Luiz will leave the club when his contract expires, while Martin Odegaard, Dani Ceballos and Mat Ryan are also set to depart the Emirates Stadium.

Luiz opted not to accept Arsenal's offer of a new contract as

he called an end to his two-year stay in north London.

The former Chelsea centre-back endured some difficult times with the Gunners as he struggled with inconsistent form before missing the end of this season due to injury.

Luiz, 34, helped Mikel Arte-

ta's side win the FA Cup in 2020 and gave an emotional speech to his team-mates before their last game of the Premier League season.

"If, in some moments, I did something bad with you guys, sorry, but it was always my intention to give my best for you

guys," Luiz said. "It was always my intention to help you guys. I think you understood a bit that I am a collective person, so my happiness is to see the others happy. So I try my best."

Australian keeper Ryan made three appearances during his loan spell but will now return

to Brighton. Real Madrid duo Odegaard and Ceballos returning to the La Liga side following the end of their loan spells.

Denmark midfielder Odegaard joined the Gunners in January, while Spanish midfielder Ceballos spent two years with the club. — AFP ■