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.
Imports of required medical supplies, COVID-19 devices continue

AS the Ministry of Commerce is making continuous efforts to make sure import of anti-COVID-19 medicines, equipment and necessary medical supplies are being shipped from overseas, loosening restrictions to facilitate imports, in collaboration with relevant ministries and providing continuous import on a daily basis.

The ministry is also reportedly making diplomatic arrangements with China, Thailand, Bangladesh and India to import the medicines and equipment through the border trade points.

Yesterday, a total of 2,507 oxygen concentrators were imported through the Yangon International Airport, while 81 tonnes of liquid oxygen, 9 tonnes of oxygen cylinders, 8,422 empty oxygen containers, one oxygen plant, 4,090 household oxygen concentrators, 49,030 PPE suits and 67 tonnes of masks were imported through Muse, Myawady, Chinshwehaw Kamanite and Tachilek border trade points.

A total of 449 tonnes of liquid oxygen, 62 tonnes of oxygen cylinders, 47,600 empty oxygen containers, 6 oxygen plants, 9 oxygen generators, 42,189 oxygen concentrators, 141,642 test kits, 280,932 PPE suits, 39 tonnes of gloves and 569 tonnes of masks have been imported thus far in August.

In July, a total of 1,294 tonnes of liquid oxygen, 114 tonnes of oxygen cylinder, 40,491 empty oxygen containers, 69,146 oxygen concentrators, 4 oxygen plants, 11 oxygen generators, four oxygen filling machines, 322,678 test kits, 1,104 tonnes of mask and 182,975 PPE suits were imported.

In addition to the cooperation with relevant ministries, the Ministry of Commerce has posted contact persons and department announcements on the Ministry’s website, Commerce.gov.mm, to access direct contact with relevant authorities if assistance is needed.—MNA
THE globe has overcome various pandemics in the past. Although various pandemics such as plague and smallpox diseases can be controlled in the advancement of medical technologies at present, respiratory disease COVID-19 may cause infections whenever breathing. If public cooperation lacks, it is sure to difficulty control the disease. It can be seen that even developed and developing countries are yet to perform control, prevention and treatment of the disease on the upper hand. Even in the United States, hospitals cannot give adequate accommodation to patients, facing shortages of ventilators and air fresheners. So, the patients are receiving treatments at home. The problem of oxygen is a difficulty for the countries facing the outbreak of disease. Myanmar’s neighbouring countries India and Indonesia are facing severe problems.

(Message excerpt to the occasion of six months on 1 August 2021 since the State Administration Council has taken the State’s responsibilities)

FROM PAGE-1

It is a timely opportunity for us to reflect on the journey of how far ASEAN has come to be where we are today. Today, ASEAN has evolved from an “association” of five countries to a “community” of full-fledged regional organization comprising ten Member States. Indeed, it did not come thus far easily. Along the arduous journey, ASEAN has passed through many difficulties and challenges, ranging from the financial crisis to the COVID-19 pandemic today.

After having passed over half a century, ASEAN has made many achievements despite obstacles. The collective effort of ASEAN has paved the way for ASEAN to overcome these challenges. But there remains many more to be done, and the unified will and collective effort among ASEAN Member States must continue to preserve the identity of ASEAN – “unity in diversity”.

Since its inception on 8 August 1967, ASEAN has successfully evolved into a rules-based regional organization, giving legal personality to the pursuit of its purposes and principles as enshrined in the ASEAN Charter. In this ever-evolving regional architecture with rising strategic competitions and diverse interests among countries, the fundamental principles enshrined in the ASEAN Charter and the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) remain important for the conduct of inter-state relations. Above all, the ASEAN spirit of unity and the ASEAN way of 2C – “consultation and consensus” must be preserved.

We are encouraged by the increasing number of parties to the TAC as well as growing number of interested countries to establish partnership with ASEAN. This reflects trust, confidence and respect on ASEAN’s norms and values by others. On the other hand, the enhanced partnership with its dialogue partners, for example, the elevation of ASEAN-EU dialogue partnership into a strategic level also proves that ASEAN treasures its relations with its partners. In engaging with external partners, we are committed to pursue our efforts to upholding ASEAN centrality and unity.

To expand ASEAN’s wings across the world, ASEAN has stationed the ASEAN Committees in Third Countries and International Organizations (ACTCs). To date, there are fifty-four ACTCs that have been formally established in the national capitals and other key cities across the world. These committees are functioning to promote ASEAN’s interests and identity and to facilitate in strengthening ASEAN’s relations with external partners through close engagement with respective host countries and in bridging ASEAN with the rest of the world.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic is the immediate challenge that we all are facing at hand, ASEAN will continue to prioritize its efforts in the fight against the virus from spreading in the region and swiftly recovery from its multiple impacts. We are confident that collective efforts will enable ASEAN to overcome the challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. As a responsible Member State of ASEAN, Myanmar has been working hand-in-hand with ASEAN as guided by the theme “We Care, We Prepare, We Prosper” formulated by 2021 ASEAN Chair. Myanmar has contributed USD 100,000 dollars to COVID-19 ASEAN Response Fund. Once all the tasks are completed, ASEAN will be able to deliver the benefits of this initiative to the peoples, at its earliest possible.

While staying focused on current challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, we must also continue our efforts on regional integration which is the key aspect for the success of ASEAN Community building effort as well as for a better future for international community at-large.

The far-reaching insights and aspirations of ASEAN founding fathers paved the way for ASEAN to become a rules-based, vibrant and thriving regional organization. Today, it is up to the people of ASEAN to see how the future of ASEAN will be written. For Myanmar, we remain firmly committed to work with ASEAN and its peoples to ensure a successful ASEAN Community building and regional integration. Now is the right time for ASEAN Community to care and to share for each other. With this, Iwould like to encourage our fellow citizens to actively join us in pursuing ASEAN’s aspirations.

Yangon receives liquid oxygen donated by Yunnan Province

The donation ceremony of 250 tonnes of liquid oxygen contributed by Yunnan social welfare association and residents of Yunnan Province from the People’s Republic of China was held at Waiwai Specialty General Hospital in North Okkalapa Township yesterday.

Yangon Region Chief Minister U Hla Soe, senior government officials and Deputy Director-General Dr Thida Hla of the Department of Medical Services of the Ministry of Health attended the ceremony.

The truck carrying an initial 250 tonnes of liquid oxygen arrived at Yangon yesterday under the supervision of Myanmar-China Chamber of Commerce. The region Chief Minister gave certificates of honour to Chairman of association U Aing Tun and permanent honorary chairman of Yangon’s Yunnan temple U Yone Mu.

Myanmar Fire Brigade and technicians filled the liquid oxygen into the high-pressure oxygen tank of the hospital and the Chief Minister, Ministers and district administration body chairman U Htoo Lwin inspected the filling process.

The liquid oxygen donated by Yunnan province will be distributed to general hospitals and COVID-19 treatment centres under the management of Yangon Region government and the liquid oxygen received yesterday was refilled into the oxygen tanks of North Okkalapa General Hospital, New Yangon General Hospital (JICA) and Yangon General Hospital.

— San Kyaw Oo (IPRD)
Tatmadaw will accept negotiation with any ethnic armed organizations except for organizations declared as terrorist groups: Senior General

Relevant departments are conducting the research to produce COVID-19 vaccine with the use of traditional medicinal plants. Efforts will be made for ensuring a half down of COVID-19 infection rate in August. And the people were urged to cooperate in reducing the disease infection rate.

The new Union Election Commission was assigned to scrutinize the voter lists in the 2020 general election in respective regions and states. Final findings were released on 26 July. Representatives from international community and diplomats will be invited to show the vote-rigging measures.

The Senior General said that he clarified situation of Myanmar at the ASEAN Leaders Meeting on 24 April. It declared the five-point consensus of ASEAN. Former foreign ministers from Indonesia and Malaysia and former deputy foreign minister from Thailand were proposed for appointment of ASEAN special envoy. The Senior General said he proposed the deputy foreign minister of Thailand. ASEAN Chair Brunei Sultan offered his foreign minister as ASEAN envoy, so he was approved.

Myanmar will take measures in the ASEAN framework on the correct international relations. Myanmar exercises the independent and active foreign policy based on five principles of peaceful co-existence and good relationship with all countries. Such standing will never change, and it will continue within the framework.

SAC members discussed soonest enactment of national security act, invitation to foreign investment for importing fuel, establishment of the plants to produce fuel in the country, assistance of Ministry of Co-Operatives and Rural Development for the people during COVID-19 period, production of traditional medicine which can fight against COVID-19, establishment of oxygen plants in respective townships, assistance for displaced persons, prioritized vaccination on medical doctors, nurses and their families, and appointment of medical doctors and nurses in Kayah State.

The Senior General said he will scrutinize the plan to draft the national security act. Rewards will be given to those who inform the authorities about the terrorists. Relevant departments are conducting the research to produce COVID-19 vaccine with the use of traditional medicinal plants. Efforts will be made for ensuring a half down of COVID-19 infection rate in August. And the people were urged to cooperate in reducing the disease infection rate.

Health personnel will be assigned for Kayah State. Development tasks depend on income of the State. At present, some trips of rail and aviation transportation were stopped and accompanied with the loss with the aim of ensuring proper connections among regions and states and for travelling the people. The sports sector plays a key role in uplifting morality of the citizens. So, arrangements are being made to build gymnasia, stadiums and swimming pools in all regions and states.

A plan is underway to vaccinate health staff and their families. The government emphasizes narrowing of the development gap between regions and states as well as urban and rural areas so as to encourage the ethnic people.

In his conclusion speech, the SAC Chairman Prime Minister said that they are carrying out the government tasks in a smooth process. It is necessary to consider extension of new sectors. The unrests and terror acts based on vote-rigging in the 2020 election are being combated. Emphasis must be placed on development tasks while prioritizing the peace and stability, especially political stability. The provisional government temporarily takes the responsibility of the country, and when the emergency period runs out, the election will be held under the law. Undertakings will be carried out to hand over the State duty to the government emerged by the election in accord with the Constitution.

The Senior General said the Provisional Government of Myanmar is implementing the policies adopted by the State Administration Council, primarily emphasizing the economic affairs. All the SAC members need to prioritize the interests of the State in carrying out the tasks based on their individual experiences.—MNA
Union Minister for Foreign Affairs U Wunna Maung Lwin participates in 28th ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF)

U WUNNA MAUNG LWIN, Union Minister for Foreign Affairs, participated in the 28th ASEAN Regional Forum via video conference at 5:30 pm on 6 August 2021 from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nay Pyi Taw.

The meeting was chaired by Dato Erywan Pehin Yusof, Minister of Foreign Affairs II of Brunei Darussalam and was attended by Foreign Ministers and representatives from ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) participating countries. The Secretary-General of ASEAN also attended the meeting.

During the 28th ARF, Ministers exchanged views on regional and international issues as well as on the future direction of the ARF.

In his meeting, the Union Minister emphasized that Myanmar attached great importance to the ARF as a primary forum to foster constructive dialogue and cooperation on political and security issues of common interest and concern in the region. He also said that he was happy to see the progress achieved in the implementation of the Hanoi Plan of Action to implement the ARF Vision Statement which is the future plan of ARF encompassing seven priority areas of cooperation and action lines on Institutional enhancement of the ARF. He was of the view that strengthening cooperation in these seven priority areas could help promote confidence building measures and preventive diplomacy that pave the way forward for the ARF to become more action-oriented forum at a pace comfortable to all.

He also informed the meeting on the successful convening of the 14th ARF Experts and Eminent Persons (EEPs) Meet ing on 6 July 2021 via video conference co-chaired by Myanmar and China.

On regional and international issues, he explained the reason why state of emergency was declared in Myanmar; implementation of the five-point consensus of the ASEAN Leaders’ Meeting; appointment of the special envoy on 4 August 2021 and Myanmar’s willingness to work closely with the special envoy. He pointed out that while ARF participating countries have had welcomed the appointment of the special envoy their support must complement the five-point consensus and the five-point roadmap because anything beyond the five-point consensus and the five-point roadmap would not help the special envoy nor Myanmar.

He also pointed out that a meaningful political dialogue should not include non-state actors and unlawful associations and terrorist group that are committing terrorist acts in the country. In this regard, he called on the ARF participating countries to condemn the violence and terrorist acts committed by the so-called People Defense Force (PDP) who were receiving support and financial assistance from unlawful associations and terrorist groups such as NUG and CRPH.

On the situation in Rakhine State, he reiterated Myanmar’s commitment to work with ASEAN in the implementation of the recommendations made under the Preliminary Needs Assessment (PNA), and stressed that a successful repatriation also needs close cooperation from Bangladesh, and requested the ARF participating countries to also encourage Bangladesh to work with Myanmar on the repatriation of displaced persons from Rakhine State.

The 28th ARF was also attended by senior officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.—MNA

Domestic gold market sees quiet trading

THE trading of the domestic gold market has been cool, said Chair U Myo Myint of Yangon Region Gold Entrepreneurs Association (YGEA).

It is a quiet day in the precious metal market, with the high record of the global gold price and US dollar exchange rate.

“The gold trading has been sluggish. But, the value of gold in Myanmar soared due to the rising of global gold price. People from gold market are no longer trading in this situation and they are trading only one or two pieces to prevent the shortage of stocks in the market,” said U Myo Myint.

Consequently, the daily business of 50 viss (a viss equals 1.6 kg) of gold was earlier done in the market. Now, about five or ten viss are only being traded daily.

Currently, global gold price was around US$1,800 per ounce and US dollar value against Kyat was equalized at K 1,665 per dollar.

With rising of global gold price and US dollar exchange rate, the domestic gold price is rising to K 1,576,500 per tical (0.578 ounces, or 0.016 kilogram).

In January 2021, the domestic gold fetched the highest price of K 1,336,000 per tical on 6 January. It reached the lowest price of K 1,316,000 per tical on 28 January. On 2 February, it got the lowest level of K 1,340,000 and the highest level of K 1,410,000 (3 February).

In March, the rate fluctuated between the most elevated of K 1,391,000 (25 March) and the lowest of K 1,302,000 (4 March). In April, the rate touched the lowest level of K 1,389,000 (1 April) and the highest level of K 1,410,000 (3 April).

In May, the highest gold rate was recorded at K 1,709,000 (12 May) and the lowest price was K 1,447,000 per tical (3 May).

In June, the rate hit the lowest level of K 1,543,000 (19 June) and the highest level of K 1,575,500 (11 June).

In July, it priced the lowest level of K 1,562,300 (26 July) and the highest level of K 1,587,000 (9 July), gold traders said.

The local gold price reached the lowest level of K 1,310,500 (2 September) and the highest level of K 1,314,000 (1 September). In October, the rate ranged between K 1,307,800 (30 October) and K 1,316,500 (21 October).

The rate fluctuated between the highest of K 1,317,000 (9 November) and the lowest of K 1,270,000 (30 November). In December, the pure yellow metal priced moved in the range of K 1,280,000 (1 December) and K 1,332,000 (28 December).

With the global gold prices on the uptick, the domestic price hit fresh highs in 2019, reaching K 1,400,000 per tical between 17 January and 22 February, crossing K 1,100,000 per tical on 4 August, reaching K 1,300,000 on 5 September, according to the gold traders.—NN/GNLM

Lawsuits of 53 runways who return to the legal fold closed

APART from the those who committed murders, robberies, arson attacks, mine explosion and intentionally attacking security troops, citizens including civil servants, scholars and personnel from respective fields who have been on the run due to various concerns have been invited to return to the legal fold, following the closure and withdrawal of their lawsuits under the law.

The announcement has been released since 3 August, to contact the police stations in respective regions and states with trust. A total of 53 runaways from different backgrounds contacted the police forces in the regions and states between 4 and 7 August, and their cases have been reported closed by the law. Those wishing to return home of their own accord are encouraged to trustfully contact a nearby police station.—MNA

3,651 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 7 August, total figure rises to 326,489

MYANMAR’S COVID-19 positive cases rose to 326,489 after 3,651 new cases were reported on 7 August 2021 according to the Ministry of Health. Among these confirmed cases, 238,747 have been discharged from hospitals. Death toll reached 11,526 after 264 died.—MNA
Iran rejects G7 and US allegations over drone attack on ship

Iran on Saturday rejected Western allegations its drones were used in a deadly tanker attack, with accusing Israel of concocting the “scenario” in a bid to undermine the Islamic republic.

The MT Mercer Street, an oil products tanker operated by Israeli-controlled Zodiac maritime, was struck last week off Oman’s coast, killing two crew members – a Briton and a Romanian.

The incident on July 29 upped the stakes in what analysts have called a “shadow war” that has seen a spate of attacks on vessels linked to Iran and Israel.

G7 foreign ministers on Friday pointed the finger of blame for the latest attack at Iran, as the US military released the findings of an investigation alleging the republic was behind it.

Iran dismissed the allegations. “We strongly condemn the baseless statement by the foreign ministers of the G7 and the European Union’s high representative for foreign affairs in which they have directed baseless accusations at the Islamic Republic of Iran,” foreign ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said.

The tanker attack and the accusations against Iran were a “scenario” concocted with “notable” timing, he said, as they came days before Iran’s new ultraconservative President Ebrahim Raisi took the oath of office.

Raisi was inaugurated on August 3 by Iran’s supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, and sworn in by parliament two days later, taking over from moderate president Hassan Rouhani. — AFP

Second Afghan city falls as Taliban tighten noose over countryside

THE Taliban seized the stronghold of a notorious Afghan warlord Saturday, officials said, the second provincial capital to fall to the insurgents in less than 24 hours.

The deputy governor of Sheberghan city in Jawzjan said government forces and officials had retreated to the airport on the outskirts of the northern Afghan city, where they were preparing to defend themselves. “The city has unfortunately fallen completely,” Jawzjan deputy governor Qader Malia told AFP.

The city is home to notorious warlord Abdul Rashid Dostum, who only returned to Afghanistan this week from medical treatment in Turkey but is believed to be in Kabul.

The Taliban have gained vast parts of rural Afghanistan since launching a series of offensives in May to coincide with the start of the final withdrawal of foreign troops.

On Friday, Zaranj city in Nimroz fell to the Taliban “without a fight”, according to its deputy governor, becoming the first provincial capital to be taken by the insurgents.

There was more resistance in Sheberghan, several sources told AFP, but an aide to Dostum confirmed the city had been taken.

Dostum has overseen one of the largest militias in the north, which garnered a fearsome reputation in its fight against the Taliban in the 1990s – along with accusations that his forces massacred thousands of insurgent prisoners of war. — AFP

What now for Ennahdha after Tunisia political ‘earthquake’?

TUNISIAN President Kais Saied’s move to sack the government and dissolve parliament two weeks ago has triggered what experts say is an existential crisis for his nemesis, the Islamist-inspired party Ennahdha.

Despite remaining the most influential party in the decade since the North African country’s revolution, Ennahdha was already wrecked by internal divisions before last month’s “earthquake”. So can it survive, and how? How did July 25 affect Ennahdha?

Ennahdha was founded four decades ago by Rachid Ghannouchi, who has remained at the helm ever since despite years of exile under the dictatorship of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali.

After Ben Ali fell in Tunisia’s 2011 revolution, Ennahdha made a return to politics and has since been part of every parliamentary coalition backing the country’s string of short-lived governments.

Ennahdha is the most organised party in the country and the biggest bloc in the deeply fragmented 217-seat legislature, which is also headed by Ghannouchi.

But since 2014, the party’s share of the vote has plummeted. In elections two years ago it lost 36 of its 89 seats.

In total, since Tunisia’s first democratic elections in 2011, it has lost more than a million votes nationwide. The party has also seen internal fractures in recent years as younger members have demanded changes at the top, including replacing 80-year-old Ghannouchi himself.

Those divisions burst into the spotlight when Saied, a bitter critic of the party system, on July 25 sacked the Ennahdha-supported government and suspended parliament.

Coming after months of public outrage at the government’s mishandling of Tunisia’s grinding economic and health crises, Saied’s move was a crushing blow for Ennahdha.

Some party members have since accused its leadership of putting its existence in danger through their lack of political vision. — AFP

Venezuelans desperately ditching bolivars as inflation bites

Venezuelans have been rushing to offload their bolivars, creating concern for market stall holders who do not want to be burdened with the banknotes, either. PHOTO AFP

highest inflation: almost 3,000 percent in 2020.

That has created wild price swings and a move towards the US dollar, increasingly favored by customers and businesses alike in the country of 30 million. — AFP

Iran on Saturday rejected Western allegations its drones were used in a deadly tanker attack, with accusing Israel of concocting the “scenario” in a bid to undermine the Islamic republic.
White House says 50% of Americans fully vaccinated against Covid

HALF of the US population is now fully vaccinated against Covid-19, the White House said Friday, as inoculations rise in response to the surging Delta variant of the coronavirus.

“50% of Americans (all ages) are now fully vaccinated. Keep going!” Cyrus Shahpar, the White House’s Covid-19 data director, tweeted.

That means more than 165 million people have received either the two-dose Moderna or Pfizer vaccine, or the one-and-done Johnson & Johnson shot.

The threshold of half of all adults Americans fully vaccinated was reached in late May.

President Joe Biden has been pressing hard for Americans to get vaccinated ever since he took office in January but has faced stubborn resistance, especially in conservative parts of the country, with inoculations dropping off sharply in April.

The aggressive vaccination program had raised hopes of a return to some semblance of normal life this summer, but the plan was hindered by the Delta variant.

In an increasingly assertive approach, the Biden administration has asked all federal employees to get vaccinated or face Covid testing twice a week.

Biden hinted Friday there would be further measures, saying, “There will be more to come in the days ahead.” White House spokeswoman Jen Psaki said there were “early conversations, early discussions about a range of options.” — AFP

Hip-hop dream thrives in India’s largest slum

AFTER India’s largest slum defeated the pandemic, some of its young residents pulled out their phones to write, shoot and release a triumphant rap video.

“At first we were afraid, what would happen to us? But we stood with the doctors... now it’s your turn,” rapped the young men in the video.

“We Did It” -- “Kar Dikhaya” — India's largest slum - Dharavi - showcased new talent and won acclaim from celebrities, but its creators' abiding goal was to fight the stigma dogging this densely-populated corner of Mumbai.

The Dharavi slum is home to around one million people, many of whom live in single-room shanties and share communal toilets.

Its labyrinthine alleys have long been associated with filth and disease despite its remarkable success in the battle against Covid-19, and its residents battle constant discrimination. But Ayush Tegar Renuka, one of the star students of the Dharavi Dream Project hip-hop academy, told AFP he feels “so proud” of belonging to the community.

“The Dharavi shown on TV channels and the real Dharavi are very different places,” the 16-year-old said.

Ayush began breakdancing three years ago, brushing off his widowed mother’s pleas to give up a pursuit she feared would result in a trip to the hospital.

She was not alone. Many parents were initially reluctant to enrol their children in the school’s free classes, dismissing hip-hop as dangerous, a distraction from homework or simply a waste of time. The Dharavi Dream Project’s co-founder Dolly Rateshwar was determined to change their minds.

The daughter of a Hindu priest, Rateshwar was nervous about venturing into the neighbourhould, but the teenagers she met struck a chord with her.

“I was raised in a very conservative family... I never knew there was a bigger world out there,” the 38-year-old told AFP.

“And I was worried that these kids might lose out on life because they didn’t know the possibilities open to them.”

The school opened its doors in 2015, offering free classes in breakdancing, beatboxing and rapping to around 20 students, with digital media start-up Qyuki – Rateshwar’s employer – and US entertainment titan Universal Music Group footing the bill. — AFP

Tourists caught short as Italy ushers in Covid ‘green pass’

“DO you have your green pass?”

Visitors across Italy were being asked the question on Friday as new coronavirus rules for museums and indoor dining came into force – with those answering ‘no’ left frustrated.

At the Vatican Museums, a number of tourists were turned away despite having pre-booked tickets, after failing to provide proof of a Covid-19 vaccine, previous infection or a negative coronavirus test.

“We were looking forward to it, so we are kind of disappointed. But it is what it is,” said Tereza Poganyova, 20, on holiday with a friend from the Czech Republic.

However, she admitted having received an email reminding her of the requirement, and most of the visitors lining up to see the Sistine Chapel on Friday morning were prepared.

Hugo Munoz, 48, from Texas, used his US vaccination card to gain entry and welcomed the new checks, even though they caused some longer queues.

“I know there are mixed feelings... but we did it back at home and to us at least it gives us a little bit of a peace of mind that we probably are more protected,” he told AFP.

But tourists are not the only ones caught short. Millions of Italians are still not vaccinated and therefore those who have not recently recovered from coronavirus can only get a green pass by taking a test.

There have been pockets of protests, most recently on Thursday night, when thousands of people gathered in Turin’s main plaza, Piazza Castello, in an event dubbed ‘No Fear Day’.

Most were without masks and some held signs saying “Freedom” and “State Discrimination.” — AFP

India approves J&J’s single-shot Covid-19 vaccine for emergency use

INDIA gave emergency approval to Johnson and Johnson’s single-shot coronavirus vaccine Saturday to ramp up its flagging immunisation campaign as fears grow of a new wave of infections.

Health minister Mansukh Mandaviya said the approval would boost the fight against the pandemic in India, where at least 200,000 people died in a brutal two-month wave up to mid-June.

“India expands its vaccine basket: Johnson and Johnson’s single-dose COVID-19 vaccine is given approval for Emergenc- cy Use in India,” the minister said on Twitter.

No indication has been given as to when the US company’s doses will reach India.

The nation of 1.3 billion people has administered 500 million vaccine doses so far, but barely eight percent of the population has had two shots.

Johnson and Johnson’s vaccine is the fifth to be approved after Oxford-AstraZeneca’s Covishield, the home developed Covaxin, Russia’s Sputnik V, and the US-made Moderna jab.

India remains the second worst-hit nation after the United States, with more than 32 million confirmed cases and 427,000 deaths. Because of under-reporting experts say the real toll is much higher. — AFP

A customer shows her Green Pass on a mobile phone in a central Rome bar. PHOTO: AFP
Beware of flooding and strong winds in monsoon

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preserves should be undertaken since early monsoon. Every monsoon brings various kinds of natural disasters such as flooding, cyclonic storms as well as strong winds. This may cause heavy rains to all parts of Myanmar.

Especially, the people need to beware of flooding and strong winds in the monsoon. Because the flooding may cause landslides, erosion and inundation, and strong winds can destroy public buildings such as Tatmadaw garrisons and blowing off of roofs in wards and villages and falling off and breaking of tree branches to block transportation routes.

Hence, the local authorities should seek the safer places on higher lands in advance for the local people to take shelter during the period of natural disasters. If there are cyclone shelters, local people are lucky for easily taking shelter. If not, the local authorities need to arrange safe accommodation for them with full preparations. Moreover, it is necessary to collect pharmaceu-
ticals for treatments as well as for prevention of the diseases which may cause in the monsoon and during the flooding period. If drinking water is not available, the people need to boil medicines before disas-
sing set too high and has ridiculed the Tatmadaw. Since that the Tatmadaw didn’t hold the concept of modern developed democratic nation‘ asks questions of both the Tatmadaw and the people. Can the Tatmadaw and the people work as a “package” through the ap-
peal of demonstrations. Demo-
science should not come in packages. It is something that is achieved gradually. Can we give an example of this: Japan had a system to listen to the people even when the summer held all three types of power (judiciary, administrative, and legislative) (1945-1957), and after Japan opened to the world in 1868, the system shifted to one based on a Western-style constitutional de-
mocracy. Still, there was a bitter history of war caused by a runa-
way way. Following World War II, the system collapsed. Now, the dialogue was established between the government at each respective level. The result of this dialogue is that the Japanese feel the value of democracy that has been obtained from blood.

documentary cannot be at-
tained through worshiping it as a “godhead” in the same way as a praying within to Buddha.

Work For the people’s relations with each other in both nation and international community and the people will be established, such as through earning income from abroad and receiving international aid. The horizons of the people have expanded, and many people can understand the Tatmadaw military gives explanations. The Tatmadaw is not the only body capable of governing state affairs. On the other hand, the people are also under the impression that democracy can be obtained only if the Tatmadaw leaves power. A “package” of demonstrations. Demo-
ciences should not come in packages. It is something that is achieved gradually. Can we give an example of this: Japan had a system to listen to the people even when the summer held all three types of power (judiciary, administrative, and legislative) (1945-1957), and after Japan opened to the world in 1868, the system shifted to one based on a Western-style constitutional dem-
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way way. Following World War II, the system collapsed. Now, the dialogue was established between the government at each respective level. The result of this dialogue is that the Japanese feel the value of democracy that has been obtained from blood.

Toward a relationship between the people and the Tatmadaw which common understanding and suffering are shared

By Suzuki Yoshia (Researcher, China University)

A group of U.S. virologists reported “the design, synthesis, and recovery of the largest synthetic replicating-like life form,” a 2.17 lb SARS-like coronavirus in an article published in the U.S. scientific journal Nature, on 23 October 2021.

The article reported the creation of laboratory of the coronavirus, which was not only infectious in mice, but also in human airway epithelial cell cultures. Researchers have the ability to infect human-like cells and the virus can be made to reproduce itself as rapidly as SARS. SARS-like coronavirus in an article published in the U.S. scientific journal PNAS as early as October 2008.

He has been doing the analysis, manipulation and creation of SARS-like coronavirus, with his own experience at the University of North Carolina and leading author of the article published in the scientific journal Nature.

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In 2006, after an unknown number of suspected takeover cultures of viruses by Baric’s team, a mutation that could successfully infect human-like cells appeared, and this new virus can infect humans to cause severe pneumo-

SOURCE: Xinhu

(email address of the author only).

U.S. virologists synthesize infectious SARS-like coronavirus in 2008: PNAS

Myanmar Daily Weather Report

Myanmar is a failed state

The problems that Myanmar currently faces are common chal-

Toward a relationship between the people and the Tatmadaw which common understanding and suffering are shared

By Suzuki Yoshia (Researcher, China University)

A group of U.S. virologists reported “the design, synthesis, and recovery of the largest synthetic replicating-like life form,” a 2.17 lb SARS-like coronavirus in an article published in the U.S. scientific journal Nature, on 23 October 2021.

The article reported the creation of laboratory of the coronavirus, which was not only infectious in mice, but also in human airway epithelial cell cultures. Researchers have the ability to infect human-like cells and the virus can be made to reproduce itself as rapidly as SARS. SARS-like coronavirus in an article published in the U.S. scientific journal PNAS as early as October 2008.

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U.S. virologists synthesize infectious SARS-like coronavirus in 2008: PNAS
The Dixie Fire is now the third-biggest in California history. PHOTO: AFP

An artist’s depiction of NASA’s Mars 2020 rover, Perseverance, storing samples of Martian rocks in tubes for future delivery to Earth. PHOTO: NASA/JPL-CALTECH/AFP

A huge wildfire tearing through northern California became the third-largest in the state’s history Friday, and looked set to continue growing.

A long-term drought that scientists say is driven by climate change has left the western United States parched — and vulnerable to explosive and highly destructive fires.

The Dixie Fire, which this week razed the Gold Rush town of Greenville, has torched more than 1,700 square kilometers (650 square miles) since it erupted in mid-July.

Plumas County Sheriff Todd Johns, who is helping to coordinate the fight against the fire, said the destruction was devastating. “I am a lifelong resident of Greenville. My heart is crushed by what has occurred there,” he told a briefing on Thursday.

“To the folks that have lost residences and businesses... their life is now forever changed.

“All I can tell you is: I’m sorry.”

The town of Greenville stood charred and in ruins Friday, with timber structures gone completely and some stone buildings reduced to rubble. —AFP

Portuguese discover mechanism that predicts severity of COVID-19

The research team also demonstrated that, in asymptomatic patients, blood mononuclear cells exhibit an “increased expression of a specific protein,” capable of efficiently recognizing the virus. —Xinhua

Pinho explained that this reaction “can be detected at diagnosis,” and therefore constitutes a “new biomarker of COVID-19 progression and severity, as well as a new therapeutic target.”

The research team also demonstrated that, in asymptomatic patients, blood mononuclear cells exhibit an “increased expression of a specific protein,” capable of efficiently recognizing the virus. —Xinhua

PHOTO: MAHMUD TURKIA / AFP

Mediterranean faces fiercer heatwaves, drought, fires: UN draft report

The Mediterranean will be hit by ever fiercer heatwaves, drought and fires supercharged by rising temperatures, according to a draft United Nations assessment seen exclusively by AFP that warns the region is a “climate change hotspot”.

The assessment from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) — to be published next year — details the future impacts that carbon pollution will have on the region, which this week sweltered in above-average temperatures while Greece and Turkey battled record-breaking blazes.

The Mediterranean’s more than half-a-billion inhabitants face “highly interconnected climate risks,” says a chapter dedicated to the region in a draft of the IPCC’s Working Group II report on climate impacts, due for official release in February 2022.

“Reasons for concern include sea-level rise related to drought, wildfires, alterations of water cycle, endangered food production, health risks in both urban and rural settlements from heat, and altered disease vectors,” is its grim assessment.

The draft predicts that temperatures across the Mediterranean are likely to rise faster than the global average in the decades to come, threatening the region’s vital agriculture, fisheries and tourism sectors.

Tens of millions more inhabitants will face heightened risk of water shortages, coastal flooding and exposure to potentially deadly extreme heat, it warns. —AFP

PHOTO: MAHMUD TURKIA / AFP

People bathe in the Mediterranean sea water off Libya’s capital Tripoli on August 18, 2020, amid a heatwave.
Japan’s cumulative COVID cases top 1 mil. as Delta variant surges

Japan’s cumulative total of confirmed coronavirus cases topped 1 million on Friday as the highly contagious Delta variant continues to spread in many parts of the country. PHOTO: KYODO

Japan’s cumulative total of confirmed coronavirus cases topped 1 million on Friday as the highly contagious Delta variant continues to spread in many parts of the country. PHOTO: KYODO

FRANCE’S top constitutional authority on Thursday approved a COVID pass that limits access to cafes, restaurants and inter-city trains and planes to people who have been vaccinated or tested negative for the virus.

The controversial pass, which will become ubiquitous from Monday, drew several hundred protesters outside the Council of State in Paris.

“All this undermines fundamental freedoms... Freedom is, first of all, the choice to be vaccinated or not,” said Marie Jose Libeiro, 48. “We are falling into an authoritarian state.”

But the Constitutional Court said the restrictions put forward by President Emmanuel Macron and approved by parliament last month represented a “balanced trade-off” between public health concerns and personal freedom.

Prime Minister Jean Castex welcomed the court ruling, saying it “will allow the full deployment of our battle strategy against COVID-19”. The biggest change concerns restaurants which will now have to turn away patrons who fail to produce the health pass.

‘Not police’

“There will be a cost, in terms of time spent checking the pass, and in terms of sales because we will lose customers,” as Herve Becam, vice president of the UMIH hotels and restaurants association, told AFP.

A demonstrator carries a French flag past a line of gendarmes during protests against the compulsory COVID-19 vaccination for certain workers and the mandatory use of the health pass. PHOTO: AFP

Cyril Wafik, manager of the Indiana Cafe in central Paris, said the pass presented yet another challenge for many restaurant owners who were already having trouble getting customers to wear masks. —AFP

French constitutional court backs Macron’s COVID-19 pass

Equatorial Guinea: Drugs shortage struggles as pandemic strikes

In medical terms, the country is suffering from a perfect storm, in which years-long shortages of drugs have been compounded with the coronavirus pandemic.

“We have received almost nothing for the past three years,” Francisco Ondo Nsue, director of Centramed, a government agency that supplies Equatorial Guinea’s hospitals and pharmacies, said in early July.

“We lack many drugs here,” said a sales assistant at a hospital in Malabo.

The health ministry has an annual drug budget of around two million CFA francs ($3.6 million / three million euros) but “only three percent is spent,” said Ondo Nsue.

The meagre sum allocated for drugs is also under pressure to help meet other needs, including the Covid pandemic.

The situation could soon worsen if the ministry fails to buy drugs quickly. Ondo Nsue said. —AFP

Philippine capital back in lockdown over Delta fears

The Philippine capital Manila returned to lockdown Friday as authorities sought to slow the spread of the hyper-contagious Delta variant and ease pressure on hospitals while trying to avoid crushing economic activity.

Police checkpoints across the National Capital Region, where more than 13 million people live, caused long queues as officers in camouflage uniforms inspected vehicles to ensure only essential workers were on the road. Experts warned that an explosion in Delta cases could overwhelm the health system if restrictions were not tightened in the crowded capital, which accounts for about a third of the country’s economy. The stay-at-home order announced last week was expanded Thursday to include neighbouring Laguna province. Restrictions were also tightened in other regions where coronavirus infections have spiked.

The Philippines has detected more than 330 Delta cases in recent weeks and there are fears the strain could tear through the nation as it has in neighbouring countries. Successive lockdowns and other restrictions, including a ban on children going outdoors, have shattered the economy and left millions jobless. There are concerns the new lockdown will deepen the misery, with government assistance limited to 4,000 pesos ($80) per household. —AFP

THE Philippine capital Manila returned to lockdown Friday as authorities sought to slow the spread of the hyper-contagious Delta variant and ease pressure on hospitals while trying to avoid crushing economic activity. PHOTO: AFP

Police checkpoints across the Philippines’ National Capital Region caused long queues. PHOTO: AFP
India scraps ‘tax terrorism’ rule that spooked foreign firms

INDIAN lawmakers approved Friday the scrapping of a tax rule that allowed huge retroactive claims, badly hurt its image for foreign investors, and led to embarrassing attempted asset seizures from Paris to New York.

The 2012 legislation, which the then-opposition — now in power — dubbed “tax terrorism”, sought to claw back billions from foreign firms from past deals that involved Indian assets.

This reportedly included the 2013 acquisition of Foster’s India by brewing giant SAB Miller and the purchase of an Indian vaccine maker by French drug group Sanofi.

Two firms, Britain’s Vodafone and Cairn Energy, successfully challenged the tax claims in international arbitration courts — rulings that India refused to accept.

Cairn this year moved to seize properties in Paris and Manhattan owned by the Indian state in an attempt to get back the $1.2 billion that the arbitration tribunal ruled it was owed by New Delhi. —AFP

UK’s Johnson under fire over ‘crass’ coal closure quip

OPPOSITION leaders and former mining communities on Friday lashed out at Prime Minister Boris Johnson for joking that former leader Margaret Thatcher’s coal mine closures had given Britain a head start in fighting climate change.

Thatcher, in power from 1979 to 1990, fought a bitter battle with coal miners in the 1980s, delivering the unionised industry’s death knell by closing over 100 mines, devastating communities in northern England, South Wales and Scotland.

A year-long walkout against closure plans by miners in 1984-85 was one of the defining moments of her premiership, eroding union power and accelerating her free-market reforms.

Johnson made the comments on a visit to an offshore wind farm in Scotland on Thursday, as he talked about the changes in Britain’s energy mix ahead of convening the UN’s COP26 climate summit in Glasgow in November. “Thanks to Margaret Thatcher, who closed so many coal mines across the country, we had a big early start and we’re now moving rapidly away from coal altogether,” he said.

Johnson’s spokesman on Friday refused to apologise, saying “the prime minister recognises the huge impact and pain closing coal mines had in communities across the UK.”

But the quip required backfiring with voters in former mining heartlands of northern England, who switched from Labour to his Conservatives in the last general election in 2019, largely over Brexit. —AFP

China exports robust in July as port activity rebounds

CHINA’s exports remained robust in July despite losing some steam, customs data showed Saturday, with analysts noting a rebound in port activity but warning that the recent spread of the Delta variant could act as a drag on growth.

Outbound shipments from the world’s second-largest economy have remained resilient this year, boosted by demand for goods like medical gear and electronics needed to work from home. —AFP

US job gains pick up speed in July as economy reopening

THE recovering US economy scored a big jobs gain in July, which President Joe Biden said Friday was further evidence his policies have been successful.

“What is indisputable now is this: the Biden plan is working. The Biden plan produced results and the Biden plan is moving the country forward,” he said at the White House after government data showed 943,000 new jobs added last month. Despite progress in recovering from “the economic mess we inherited,” the president acknowledged that the recovery is “far from complete, and …doubtless will have ups and downs along the way” as the Delta variant of the coronavirus casts doubts on the outlook. —AFP

French wine production faces historic low after frost disaster

FRANCE’S wine output this year will go on record as one of the worst in history, if not the worst, after severe spring frosts devastated vines, the agriculture ministry said on Friday.

France, the world’s second-largest wine producer after Italy, is likely to see its production drop between 24 and 30 percent in 2021, taking it to a “historically low” level, the ministry said.

It is already certain to fall below output seen in 1991 and 2017, the two most recent years of disastrous harvests amputated by bouts of late frost. —AFP
A strike by Canadian border agents has ended with an agreement on raises and other issues, a union announced.

Thousands of agents joined the work-to-rule strike Friday, three days before the land crossing reopened to Americans fully vaccinated against Covid-19, according to the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC).

Inoculated US citizens and permanent residents will be allowed to enter Canada for non-essential travel from Monday without any quarantine requirements for the first time since March last year.

But operations were deliberately slowed at the border on Friday as strikers complained of a “toxic work environment at the agency” and demanded more robust protections against harassment and discrimination. “Travelers and commercial carriers entering Canada can expect long lines and delays at border crossings and airports starting Friday, August 6, as 9,000 members of the Canada Border Services Agency go on strike across the country,” the union said earlier this week in a statement. By evening, the hours-long collective action had ended as the union signed an agreement with the authorities, according to PSAC. “After three years of negotiations, we have finally managed to resolve long-standing issues, which will go a long way to helping our members feel valued and safe at work,” said Mark Weber of the Customs and Immigration Union. The agreement includes average salary increases of two percent per year and a meal allowance for staff. — AFP

APPLE’s announcement that it would scan encrypted messages for evidence of child sexual abuse has revived debate on online encryption and privacy, raising fears the same technology could be used for government surveillance.

The iPhone maker said its initiative would “help protect children from predators who use communication tools to recruit and exploit them, and limit the spread of child sexual abuse material.” The move represents a major shift for Apple, which has until recently resisted efforts to weaken its encryption that prevents third parties from seeing private messages. Apple argued in a technical paper that the technology developed by cryptographic experts is “secure, and is expressly designed to preserve user privacy.”

The company said it will have limited access to the violating images which would be flagged to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, a nonprofit organization. Nonetheless, encryption and private specialists warned the tool could be exploited for other purposes, potentially opening a door to mass surveillance.

“This sort of tool can be a boon for finding child pornography in people’s phones. But imagine what it could do in the hands of an authoritarian government?” said a tweet from Matthew Green, a cryptographer at Johns Hopkins University.— AFP

A Russian court on Friday handed US investor Michael Calvey and French banker Philippe Delpal suspended sentences after convicting them of embezzlement with the authorities, such as microchips, and cut it off from using Google’s Android operating system. PHOTO: STR / AFP

People try Huawei products using the HarmonyOS operating system. The US has barred Huawei from acquiring technologies crucial to its operations, such as microchips, and cut it off from using Google’s Android operating system. For the first half of the year, Huawei’s overall revenues were 320.4 billion yuan (€41.7bn), down 29 per cent on year on year, the Shenzhen-based firm said. Its net profit margin was 9.8 per cent, up slightly from the same period last year.

Huawei’s consumer products division, which includes smartphones, achieved first-half sales of 135.7 billion yuan, down 47 per cent from a year earlier.

A company spokesperson said the decline was due in part to the loss of Honor, which was sold by Huawei late last year to help it maintain access to components and survive. Huawei’s travails have forced it to quickly pivot into new business lines, including enterprise computing, technology for intelligent vehicles, and software.— AFP

US investor Michael Calvey said it is “simply outrageous to be convicted of a crime that never happened.” PHOTO: AFP

A Russian court on Friday handed US investor Michael Calvey and French banker Philippe Delpal suspended sentences after convicting them of embezzlement with the authorities, such as microchips, and cut it off from using Google’s Android operating system.

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Apple revived the encryption debate when it announced plans to scan encrypted messages for evidence of child sexual abuse as part of its new child safety features.

The move has sparked concerns about privacy and government surveillance, with experts warning that the tool could be exploited for other purposes.

Apple said its initiative would help protect children from predators who use encryption tools to recruit and exploit them, and limit the spread of child sexual abuse material. The company said it would have limited access to the violating images, which would be flagged to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, a nonprofit organization.

Nonetheless, encryption and privacy experts have raised concerns about the potential for abuse, with some arguing that the move could set a dangerous precedent for government surveillance.

On the other hand, Apple has argued that its new features are designed to help protect children and prevent abuse. The company said it would use encryption to protect user data and ensure that only law enforcement agencies with a warrant could access the information.

The move has sparked a debate among privacy advocates and government officials about the balance between protecting children and safeguarding personal privacy. Some have questioned whether the new features go far enough in protecting users, while others have expressed concerns about the potential for misuse.

Apple is not the only company facing pressure to address child safety issues. In recent years, other tech giants have also come under scrutiny for their role in enabling illegal activity online.

For example, Facebook has faced criticism for its handling of sexual content on its platform, while Twitter has struggled to deal with the proliferation of bots and other automated accounts.

These debates highlight the complex challenges that tech companies face when it comes to managing content and enforcing their community guidelines.

As technology continues to evolve, it is likely that we will see more heated discussions about how to balance privacy and safety online. It remains to be seen how these debates will play out, and what steps companies and governments will take to address the concerns at hand.
India, China disengage from another part of disputed border

INDIAN and Chinese troops have disengaged from another area of their contested border where they had been in a face-off situation for nearly 15 months, the Indian army said on Friday.

The army statement said the disengagement process in Eastern Ladakh’s Gogra area was carried out over last Wednesday and Thursday, and the both sides’ troops are now in their permanent bases.

“All temporary structures and other allied infrastructure created in the area by both sides have been dismantled and mutually verified. The landform in the area has been restored by both sides to pre-stand off period,” the army said. It also said that the two sides’ agreement ensures that the Line of Actual Control in the Gogra area will be strictly observed and respected by both sides, with “no unilateral change in the status quo.”

The disengagement from the area is the second phase of the process.

In February, both sides completed withdrawal of troops and military hardware from the north and south banks of Pangong Lake.

Tensions began escalating in Ladakh in May last year, with India and China accusing each other of crossing the Line of Actual Control that separates the two sides.

The confrontation became violent on June 15 last year when 20 Indian soldiers and an unknown number of Chinese ones were killed in a physical altercation at Galwan Valley in Ladakh. —Kyodo

German prosecutors launch probe over deadly floods

GERMAN prosecutors said on Friday they have launched an investigation against the district chief of the flood-hit region in western Germany in a city that was hit by the historic floods.

Waste is piled up on August 3, 2021 in a street in Stolberg, western Germany, a city that was hit by the historic floods. PHOTO: AFP

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Indian and Chinese troops at a Himalayan mountain border outpost. PHOTO: AFP

Gaza incendiary balloons spark fires in Israel

INCENDIARY balloons launched from the Gaza Strip on Friday caused four fires in southern Israel’s Eshkol region, Israeli firefighters said.

The balloons are basic devices intended to set fire to farmland surrounding the Israeli-blockaded Palestinian enclave.

The last time such an attack took place was on July 25, setting off brush fires in the same region. The Israeli army at the time retaliated with air strikes on targets of the Islamist movement Hamas, which rules the Palestinian enclave.

The Israeli fire department did not immediately provide details about Friday’s blazes but said firefighters were trying to extinguish them.

Israeli media reports said fires broke out in forests in the Eshkol region. —AFP

Thai police probe death of Swiss woman found near waterfall

THAI police are investigating the suspected murder of a Swiss woman whose body was found near a waterfall at a popular beach resort.

Police found the woman, named as Nicole Sauvain-Weisskopf, lying face down covered in a black sheet, in water among rocks near a beauty spot on Phuket island on Thursday.

The case casts a shadow over Phuket’s so-called “ Sandbox” scheme, a pilot project to reopen Thailand’s Covid-devastated tourism sector after more than a year of draconian travel curbs.

The 57-year-old victim had travelled to Phuket under the scheme, which allows vaccinated travellers to visit the island without going through Thailand’s otherwise mandatory two-week hotel quarantine.

Results of an autopsy to determine the cause of death are expected later on Friday, but officials believe Sauvain-Weisskopf died at least three days ago.—AFP

A knife-wielding man attacked passengers in a running Odakyu Electric Railway commuter train in Tokyo on Friday evening, injuring 10 people, and was arrested the next day after he fled the scene, police said.

Yusuke Tsushima, 36, was charged with attempted murder for allegedly stabbing a woman in her 20s with a knife. The woman was seriously injured with multiple stab wounds to her back and chest. Tsushima has admitted to the assault, telling the police, “I have been wanting to kill a happy-looking woman for the past six years. Anyone would have been okay.”—Kyodo

Tropical storm to hit Tokyo on last day of Olympics

A tropical storm is forecast to hit Tokyo on the last day of the Olympics, organisers said Friday, but did not announce any changes to competition.

Japan’s weather agency warned of strong winds, high waves and the risk of landslides and floods along the eastern coastline from Saturday afternoon to Sunday, when Tropical Storm Mira inae is expected to pass over the capital.

The Olympics closing ceremony is on Sunday evening, with medal events including water polo and rhythmic gymnastics taking place at indoor venues in the city during the day.

Cycling track races are also scheduled in Shizuoka, southwest of Tokyo, while the men’s marathon will kick off early Sunday in the far northern city of Sapporo.—AFP

An Israeli firefighter extinguishes a fire caused by incendiary balloons launched from the Gaza Strip. PHOTO: AFP

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G7 fingers Iran in deadly tanker attack; US releases ‘evidence’

G7 foreign ministers said Friday that Iran was behind the deadly July 29-30 attack on a tanker; while the US military released details of the explosive drone and said it was produced in Iran.

Meanwhile, the UN Security Council agreed to discuss the incident off the coast of Oman on Monday as pressure mounted on Tehran.

"All available evidence clearly points to Iran" in the attack on the Israeli-linked tanker that killed a former British soldier and a Romanian national, the G7 said in a statement.

"This was a deliberate and targeted attack, and a clear violation of international law. There is no justification for this attack," the ministers from the seven developed nations said in a statement.

Iran has strongly denied having any link to the attack on the M/T Mercer Street, which came as tensions grow in the region and with talks to revive the 2015 deal on the Iranian nuclear program at a standstill.

The G7 ministers said "vessels must be allowed to navigate freely in accordance with international law," and vowed to "do our utmost to protect all shipping, upon which the global economy depends."

"Iran's behaviour, alongside its support to proxy forces and non-state armed actors, threatens international peace and security," they said, calling on Tehran to stop all activities inconsistent with UN Security Council resolutions.

Main Nicaragua opposition party disqualified ahead of elections

The Government of Nicaragua's Supreme Electoral Council blocked the CXL's participation by ordering the cancellation of the legal status of the Citizens for Liberty party, according to a court ruling read before official media by the body's secretary, Luis Luna.

The move is another step in the latest move in an escalating political crackdown in the Central American country. The Citizens Alliance for Liberty bloc, which is spearheading opposition to the reelection of President Daniel Ortega in November 7 polls.

But the Central American country's Supreme Electoral Council blocked the CXL's participation by ordering the "cancellation of the legal status of the Citizens for Liberty party," according to a court ruling read before official media by the body's secretary, Luis Luna.

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Hezbollah rocket attack on Israel draws retaliation

LEBANON'S Hezbollah fired a volley of rockets at Israeli positions on Friday, prompting retaliatory shelling, in an escalation between the Iran-backed Shiite movement and the Jewish state.

A flare-up along the border this week has seen Israel carry out its first air strikes on Lebanese territory in seven years and Hezbollah claim a direct rocket attack on Israeli territory for the first time since 2019.

The exchanges coincide with rising tensions between Iran and Israel since a deadly attack on an Israeli-managed tanker in the Gulf of Oman last week.

Following Friday morning’s exchanges, Israel said it did "not wish to escalate to a full war", as the United Nations peacekeeping force in the border region, UNFIL, warned of "a very dangerous situation."
Japan’s Kiyuna confident karate will return to Olympics

AFTER winning Japan’s first gold medal in karate, Ryo Kiyuna said Saturday the sport’s debut at the Tokyo Olympics was a big step forward in introducing its attractions to the world and believes one day it will return to the sports program at the major global event.

A day after capturing the men’s kata title, Kiyuna told a press conference he was excited to compete in karate’s Olympic debut, but he knew the games were different from any other tournament because of the attention he would receive.

“Participating in the Tokyo Olympics, I noticed the Olympics are a wonderful place,” said Kiyuna, who is a native of Okinawa Prefecture, karate’s birthplace.

“We showed that the tradition of Okinawa has spread and there are karate athletes around the world,” he said, adding that the athletes’ “golden history” by promoting the sport to a wide audience at the Tokyo Games.

The combat sport is said to have originated in Okinawa during a 450-year period from 1429 under the Ryukyu Kingdom. There are now over 130 million practitioners, according to the World Karate Federation, and it is also popular in Europe and European countries like France.—Kyodo ■

Israel’s Ashram ends Russian Olympic reign with shock rhythmic win

ISRAEL’S Linoy Ashram claimed a shock victory in the rhythmic gymnastics individual all-around final on Saturday, edging out three-time world champion Dina Averina to end two decades of Russian Olympic dominance.

Ashram clung on despite a mistake in her closing ribbon routine to win with 107.800 points overall, just 0.150 ahead of Averina.

The 22-year-old becomes just the third Israeli Olympic champion, following in the footsteps of sailor Gal Fridman and Artem Dolgopyat, who won men’s floor gold in the artistic gymnastics in Tokyo.

It is the first time a Russian has failed to win the title since 1996 Atlanta Olympics and is arguably one of the biggest surprises in the sport’s history. Russian gymnasts have also won 12 of the past 14 world championship all-around golds. One of the two times they missed out was in 2001, when Alina Kabaeva was stripped of her title after testing positive for a banned diuretic.—AFP ■

Britain’s Yafai wins flyweight boxing gold, Ukrainian KO’d

BRITAIN’S Galal Yafai defeated Carlo Paalam to win the Olympic flyweight title on Saturday, denying the Philippines a first boxing gold medal in the country’s history.

The men’s middleweight final produced a shock as Ukrainian top seed Oleksandr Khyzhniak was knocked out in the third round of his bout by Brazil’s Hebert Sousa.

The 28-year-old Yafai, a former car-factory worker, won on split points in an enthralling contest against Paalam to earn Britain’s first boxing gold in Tokyo.

Yafai, cheered on from the stands by his British teammates – many of them with the country’s flag draped over their shoulders – had the Filipino down in the first round of the scheduled three after an incisive three-punch combination.

Paalam was always playing catch-up after that against Yafai, whose two older brothers are both professional boxers.

Britain, who like the Philippines have a proud boxing history, have now won one gold, two silvers and two bronze in the sport in the Japanese capital.

Despite the disappointment for 23-year-old Paalam, the Philippines have enjoyed a breakthrough fortnight in boxing at the Games.

Nenth Petecio won women’s featherweight silver and Eumir Marcial took men’s middleweight bronze.

Ukraine’s Khyzhniak was ahead on the judges’ scorecards and appeared destined for middleweight gold but out of nowhere the unfancied Sousa floored him with a left flush on the cheek.—AFP ■

Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council

Nine Objectives

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

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

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

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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.