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Relief supplies stockpiled in case of natural disasters in Mandalay



Packages and boxes of relief supplies are stored at warehouses of Disaster Management Department. **PHOTO: MAUNG AYE CHAN**

RELIEF supplies have been stockpiled to provide in the event of natural disasters in Mandalay Region, according to the region Disaster Management Department.

The supplies are stockpiled at nine townships and five districts as well as the region department with readiness for 2,550 households in the region. Official of the Mandalay Region Disaster Management Department U Aye Min Thu said many natural disasters are caused by overflow of rivers, adding a good preparation leads to a good response which will reduce the intensity of the disaster.

He urged the people to work together with relevant departments and administrative bodies to build a resilient society. In addition, the Region Fire Services Department is responsible for fire safety as well as natural disasters, search and rescue operations.

"There is a risk of floods right now, and search and rescue operations as well as public welfare measures are underway according to the situation of the Ayeyawady River," said Head of Pyigyidagun Township Fire Services Department U Kyaw Kyaw Oo.

The department is preparing itself to be ready for performing search and rescue works with the use of speed boats depending on the Ayeyawady River, he added.

In case of a fire or natural disaster, people are urged to notify to the Fire Department by reaching at 191. In the 2019-2020 Fiscal Year, there were 304 times of natural disasters in the Mandalay Region alone, causing nearly 640 million kyats in damage, and about 390 million kyats were able to be provided to the local people.— Maung Aye Chan/GNLM

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State Administration Council

Press Release

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

1. Some student youths, State service personnel and citizens, with worries, have evaded to areas of EAOs and foreign countries due to the incitements and intimidation of NLD members, extremist followers, unlawful associations and terrorist groups such as CRPH and NUG, stimulation of CDM, and persons and organizations at home and abroad not wishing to restore peace and stability of the State since Tatmadaw assumed the State responsibilities on 1 February 2021.
2. They are further worried about the dictatorship statement and speeches of unlawful association and terrorist group CRPH and NUG, and some relevant persons. As they face no security guarantee and difficulties in socio-economic life in those areas, they wish to return to their native lands.
3. **The State Administration Council will specifically ease restrictions for service personnel, intellectuals and intelligentsia, and persons from various arenas and citizens who, with worries, absconded from the country except for persons who committed murders, robberies, setting fires, mine explosions and intentional attacks on security troops, those who crowded to attack public service personnel and some people, those who destroyed government and private-owned buildings and those who are highly involved in the CDM activities by providing monetary assistance and other means.**
4. As those who evade their native areas are also citizens, the State Administration Council will arrange their returns from the evaded areas to various parts of Myanmar.
5. As such, the information was released that if those who evaded to various areas, except for persons who committed any kinds of crime, wish to return to their native lands in Myanmar of their own accord due to multiple worries, the citizens abroad can contact nearby ward, village, township and district administration bodies and relevant embassies, military attaché offices and consulates in accord with the easing restrictions under the law.

*Information Team
State Administration Council*

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One million units of COVID-19 vaccines arrive from China in second batch



One million units of Sinovac COVID-19 vaccine imported from China arrive at Yangon International Airport.

THE second batch of one million Sinovac COVID-19 vaccines out of two million vaccines purchased from China arrived at the Yangon International Airport yesterday.

Dr Aye Tun, Deputy Minister for Health, and region

health departmental officials received the vaccines at the airport.

The vaccines are kept at central cold chain of Public Health Department in Mayangon Township. The Ministry of Health distributes the vac-

cines across the nation depending on the population and infection rate, and the people will be vaccinated at the public hospitals and vaccination gathering points according to the National Development Plan.—MNA

Public request by Ministry of Health

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

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

Ministry of Health (2-8-2021)

Facing severe problems

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 difficultly 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.

(Excerpt from the speech to the occasion of six months on 1 August 2021 since the State Administration Council has taken the State's responsibilities made by the Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council Chairman Senior General Min Aung Hlaing on 2 August 2021)

Yangon Region Disaster Management Committee discusses natural hazards preparedness, response plan

THE Yangon Region Disaster Management Committee organized its 3rd coordination meeting yesterday.

Firstly, Region Chief Minister U Hla Soe, chairman of the committee, said the various disasters can occur in any season and so the lowland areas can face flooding during monsoon in August, and when the tide rises in the Yangon River. Therefore, the respective chairmen of working committees, secretaries and departmental officials should make preparations and responses to the natural disasters.



Yangon Region Disaster Management Committee holds meeting on response plan to disasters.

Then, Commander of Yangon Command Maj-Gen Nyunt Win Swe briefed them on the formation of seven groups for rescue works, stockpiling of

rescue equipment and coop-

eration work with the region government.

U Than Soe, secretary of committee and director of region natural disaster management department, made power point presentation for the plans responded to natural hazards.

Then, the officials of 12 working committees including natural disaster management working committee, international relations working committee and fund raising and fund management working committee discussed their respective work plans.—San Kyaw Oo (IPRD)/GNLM

Police arrest two suspects together with weapons in Madaya Township

THE terrorist groups CRPH and NUG transport the weapons from the armed insurgent groups to accelerate the acts of terrorism, and the security forces tightened the security and conducted the security measures for the public safety as the members received the information that those terrorist groups would commit violence and bombing attacks across the nation to mark Four Eights Day.

The security forces inspected the vehicle driven by Aung Ko Min from Tangataung Village together with Arkar Phyo in Panya Village of Madaya Township yesterday and seized the firearms including 60 K-22 guns, 11,000 bullets,

110 magazines, 85 Energa grenades, 80 hand grenades, 60 sets of equipment and 21 slings.

According to the confession of the suspects, the arms

and ammunition were transported via Udein Village near the Ayeyawady river from the



Photo shows arms and ammunition seized from two suspects in Madaya Township.

armed insurgent groups under the arrangement of of NLD member Min Min (former MP of Mandalay Region Hluttaw) to launch attack in any township/village of Sagaing Region. Other seven suspects including Byar Gyi, Daung Lan and Thiha took the arms to them.

Although the insurgents attempted to launch attacks to affect the lives of public, the officials could stop them in time due to timely exposing arms, ammunition and grenades.

The suspects will face severe action under Counter-Terrorism Law and other relevant laws, and the security forces will keep conducting further investigations.—MNA

Medical supplies, equipment imported via air, sea and border routes



Bowsers are carrying liquid oxygen and cargo trucks transport medical supplies and anti-COVID-19 equipment.

THE Ministry of Commerce is making continuous efforts to import the anti-COVID-19 equipment including liquid oxygen, oxygen gas, household oxygen concentrators, and medicines via sea, air and border routes on public holidays.

A total of 3,294 oxygen concentrators and 0.5 tonne of masks arrived at the Yangon International Airport yesterday, while 59 tonnes of liquid oxygen on bowsers, 38 tonnes of liquid oxygen cylinders, one tonne of oxygen cylinder, 8,910 empty cylinders, 3,745 home oxygen concentrators, one tonne of glove and 67 tonnes of masks were imported at Muse, Myawady, Chinshwehaw, Kan-paitee and Tamu border trade checkpoints. These materials were transported by 52 vehicles of 30 companies.

A total of 457 tonnes of liquid oxygen on bowsers, 89 tonnes of liquid oxygen cylin-

ders, 63 tonnes of oxygen cylinders, 56,790 empty oxygen containers, six oxygen plants, nine oxygen generators, 45,934 household oxygen concentrators, 141,642 test kits, 280,932 PPE suits, 40 tonnes of gloves and 636 tonnes of masks have been imported so 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 household oxygen



Oxygen cylinders are gathered in tank.



Medical supplies to be used in treatment of COVID-19 are unloaded from truck.

concentrators, eight oxygen plants, 11 oxygen generators, four oxygen filling machines, 322,878 test kits, 1,104 tonnes of mask and 182,975 PPE suits were imported.

The Ministry of Commerce also released a statement on 8 August that as the border trade camps will offer services for importation processes as usual even during the public holidays from 9 to 15 August, they will

allow the imports of anti-COVID-19 equipment in accordance with the SOP while the Department of Trade goes fully online for import and export licence.

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

3,027 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 8 August, total figure rises to 329,516

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to **329,516** after **3,027 new cases** were reported on 8 August 2021 according to the Ministry of Health. Among these confirmed cases, **243,731** have been discharged from hospitals. Death toll reached **11,776** after **250** died. —MNA

Marine product exports plummet to \$626 mln as of 23 July

EXPORT earnings from the fisheries sector nearly ten months (1 Oct-23 July) of the current Financial Year 2020-2021 plunged into US\$626.59 million, according to the statistics released by the Commerce Ministry.

Myanmar's marine product exports have dramatically declined this year, owing to the COVID-19 impacts and the transport difficulty.

Although some offshore and inshore trawlers started to go fishing from 15 July, they are battered by the high cost of fuel oil and fishing equipment and supplies. Additionally, the exporters companies pull down the price. The domestic fish industry flounders due to COVID-19 pandemic. The coronavirus pandemic shut down the wedding, donation events, festivities and restaurants. It also imposes difficulties on transportation. The restrictions caused slump in fish consumption in local market.

Moreover, the marine product exports through Sino-Myanmar border has ground to a halt following the consequences and safety measures on the imported seafood amid the COVID-19 pandemic, traders stressed.

Myanmar's fishery export was experiencing a downturn due to the import restrictions triggered by the detection of the COVID-19 on fish imports in China.

China was the second largest buyer of Myanmar's ma-



Employees are working at marine product processing site in cold storage.

rine products, accounting for US\$254 million out of overall marine product export value of \$850 million in the past financial year 2019-2020.

At the present time, China shut down the border areas in wake of the COVID surge in Myanmar. The fishery sector is dependent on maritime trade only.

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and World Health Organization (WHO) issued guidelines to ensure food safety during the COVID-19 pandemic in April, 2020.

The permitted companies are advised to carry out food safety plans, follow the guidelines of WHO and FAO, formulate the safety management system and suspend the exports if any suspicious food-borne virus or virus infection

risk are found in the products. The export is likely to resume once the products meet food safety criteria set by the General Administration of Customs of the People's Republic of China (GACC).

The Myanmar Fisheries Federation stated that only G2G pact can tackle problems faced in the export of farm-raised fish and prawn, and ensure smooth freight movement between countries to bolster exports.

During the last FY 2019-2020, MFF expected to earn more than \$800 million from marine product exports against the target.

Myanmar exports marine products such as fish, prawn, and crab to markets in 40 countries, including China, Saudi Arabia, the US, Japan, Singa-

pore, Thailand, and the countries in the European Union.

The MFF is making concerted efforts to increase the marine product export earnings by developing fish farms which meet international standards and adopting the advanced fish farming techniques.

To ensure food safety, the foreign market requires suppliers to obtain Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) and Good Aquaculture Practices (GAqP) certificates.

To meet international market standards, the marine products must be sourced only from hatcheries that are compliant with GAqP. The MFF is working with fish farmers, processors, and the Fisheries Department under the Minis-

try of Agriculture, Livestock, and Irrigation to develop the GAqP system.

Processors can screen fishery products for food safety at ISO-accredited laboratories under the Fisheries Department.

Myanmar's economy is more dependent on agricultural sector to a large extent. Also, fisheries sector contributes a lot to the national gross domestic product (GDP). Its marine product production including shrimps and saltwater and freshwater fish are far better than the regional countries. If the country can boost processing technology, it will contribute to the country's economy and earn more income for those stakeholders in the supply chain, Yangon Region Fisheries Department stated.

There are 480,000 acres of fish and prawn breeding farms across the country and more than 120 cold-storage facilities in Myanmar.

Myanmar exported 340,000 tonnes of marine products worth \$530 million in the 2013-2014 FY, 330,000 tonnes worth \$480 million in the 2014-2015 FY, 360,000 tonnes worth \$500 million in the 2015-2016 FY, 430,000 tonnes worth \$600 million in the 2016-2017 FY, 560,000 tonnes worth \$700 million in the 2017-2018 FY and 580,000 tonnes worth over \$730 million in the 2018-2019 FY respectively, according to the Commerce Ministry.—KK/GNLM

Myanmar imports surpass exports in trade with Indonesia

MYANMAR trade deficit in goods with Indonesia was estimated at US\$542.639 million in the past seven months (Oct-Apr) of the current financial year 2020-2021, the statistics issued by the Ministry of Commerce indicated.

Indonesia takes the position of the fourth largest trade partner in Myanmar, after Thailand, Singapore and Malaysia. In the current FY, the value of Myanmar's bilateral trade with Indonesia in normal trade and border trade topped \$718.435 million.

The Ministry of Commerce reported that imports surpassed exports in trade with Indonesia, with exports reaching over \$87.89 million

and imports valued at over \$630.537 million.

Myanmar exports pulses, rice, broken rice, garment, turmeric, tamarind, prawn, sesame seeds, fish, timber and plywood to Indonesia, whereas it imports edible oil, paper, paperboard, transport equipment, mechanical appliance, pharmaceuticals, soap and similar articles, cements, plastic, fertilizer and other products.

Myanmar's bilateral trade with Indonesia yearly stood at around \$1 billion, as per the statistics released by the Central Statistical Organization under the Ministry of Planning and Finance.—Htet Myat/GNLM

13 Chinese companies put \$172 mln of FDI into Myanmar this FY

THIRTEEN Chinese-listed enterprises brought in US\$172 million into Myanmar between October 2020 and June 2021, according to the data released by the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA).

The UK-listed enterprise brought in large investments of \$2.5 million in May 2021 and became the top source of FDI in Myanmar. Singapore is placed as the second largest investor of Myanmar. China is the third largest investor in Myanmar this year.

Those enterprises listed from Brunei, China, Thailand, India, Malaysia, Republic of Korea, Viet Nam, Marshall Is-

land, Samoa, Hong Kong (SAR) and China (Taipei) also made investments this year. Chinese companies primarily made investment in manufacturing sector.

Most of the Chinese businessmen from China's mainland as well as those in Myanmar are keen to invest in projects in Myanmar. As they have a wider scope of business knowledge, they seek various ways and means for expanding their businesses in global countries.

Myanmar has drawn foreign direct investment of more than US\$3.76 billion during Oct-Jun period, including expansion of capital by existing enterprises and investments

in the Thilawa Special Economic Zone, DICA's statistics indicated.

Of 44 foreign enterprises permitted and endorsed by MIC and the respective investment committees between 1 October and 30 June of the current FY, 23 enterprises pumped FDI into the manufacturing sector.

Electricity sector received six large projects whereas livestock and fisheries sector attracted six projects. Other service sector drew five projects while agriculture sector pulled two projects and one foreign enterprise each entered industrial estate and the hotel and tourism sectors.—KH/GNLM

Iran nuclear talks could resume in September: EU



Delegates attend a meeting of the Joint Commission of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in Vienna, Austria, on 28 July 2019. **PHOTO: XINHUA**

Alibaba says working with China police on sex assault allegation

CHINESE e-commerce giant Alibaba said on Sunday that it was cooperating with a police investigation into sexual assault allegations aired by a company employee.

A statement by Alibaba said the company also had suspended “relevant parties suspected of violating our policies and values,” asserting that it had a “zero-tolerance policy against sexual misconduct.”

An unidentified female employee made the allegations in a lengthy internal posting quoted by Chinese media, which AFP is unable to verify.

She accused her manager and a client of sexual assault during a work trip to the city of Jinan in Shandong province, according to media reports.

A hashtag for the allegation was among the top-viewed items on Chinese social media plat-

form Weibo on Sunday.

Sexual misconduct has garnered increasing attention in China especially since the country’s own #MeToo movement was sparked by Chinese feminists in 2018.

In one of the biggest cases so far, Beijing police earlier this month said Chinese-Canadian pop star Kris Wu had been detained on suspicion of rape. — AFP ■

Tunisia ‘state of exception’ hits halfway with no government in sight

HALFWAY into Tunisia’s 30-day “state of exception” announced by President Kais Saied last month, he has yet to lay out a road map or appoint a government.

Despite naming several ministers to replace those in the sacked administration of Hichem Mechichi, Saied is facing calls to pick a prime minister quickly and explain his next steps. And while many have welcomed his moves to strip MPs of their immunity, some worry his powers could easily go too far, with a suspended parliament unable to rein him in.

“There needs to be a road map, for the current situation and of what comes next, to show how we’re going to return to the constitution,” said Aymen Bensallah, an analyst at parliamentary monitor Bawsala. The uncertainty is

weighing on an economy already in tatters following a decade of political unrest and stalemate, exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic which has brought the health system to the edge of collapse and dealt a severe blow to the vital tourism sector. — AFP ■



Tunisian soldiers cordon-off the Parliament in Tunis, following a move by the president to suspend the country’s parliament and dismiss the Prime Minister. **PHOTO: AFP**

IRAN is ready to resume talks reviving the nuclear deal with world powers under new president Ebrahim Raisi, and meetings could take place in Vienna from early September, an EU official said on Saturday.

The senior official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the EU’s negotiator on the file, Enrique Mora, attended Raisi’s swearing-in in Tehran Thursday and spoke with the Iranian official designated to take charge of the nuclear talks, Hossein Amir-Abdollahian.

Amir-Abdollahian “is supposed to be the new foreign minister” in Raisi’s cabinet, but that has not yet been announced, the EU official said in a statement.

He added that it was unclear whether the nuclear talks would remain under the responsibility

of the Iranian foreign ministry or be taken over by another body, such as Iran’s National Security Council.

Raisi is a hardliner expected to consolidate the ultraconservatives’ power during his four-year term.

He succeeds the relatively moderate Hassan Rouhani whose landmark achievement during his own two-term presidency was the 2015 nuclear agreement between Iran and six world powers: the five permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany.

Former US president Donald Trump pulled out of the deal in 2018 and reimposed sanctions that have choked Iran’s oil-dependent economy. Iran responded by walking back measures it had agreed to abide by. — AFP ■

UN climate report ‘starkest warning yet’ warns COP26 chief



This file photo shows rescuers evacuating flood-affected residents following heavy rain in Neijiang in China’s southwestern Sichuan province on 18 August, 2020. **PHOTO: AFP**

AN upcoming UN report on climate change gives the international community its clearest ever warning about the dangers of accelerating climate change, Britain’s COP26 President Alok Sharma said on Sunday.

The chief for the November summit due to be held in the Scottish city of Glasgow told the Observer newspaper a report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) due on Monday would show the world was on the brink of potential disaster.

“This is going to be the starker warning yet that human behaviour is alarmingly accelerating global warming and this is why COP26 has to be the moment we get this right,” Sharma said.

“We can’t afford to wait two years, five years, 10 years – this is the moment,” he added, explaining that unless nations “act now, we will, unfortunately, be out of time”.

Sharma was forced to de-

fend British fossil-fuel projects that include plans to license new oil and gas fields in the North Sea, which have proven embarrassing for Britain as it seeks to galvanise international action on climate change.

The Paris-based watchdog, the International Energy Agency (IEA), has warned all fossil fuel development and exploration must cease this year if the goal of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius is to be met.

“Future (fossil fuel) licences are going to have to adhere to the fact we have committed to go to net zero by 2050 in legislation,” the COP26 president said.

“There will be a climate check on any licences,” he added. A series of catastrophic emergencies in recent weeks including floods in Europe and China, record temperatures in North America and forest fires around the world have focused minds on global warming, Sharma said. — AFP ■

Saudi Arabia to reopen borders for vaccinated umrah pilgrims

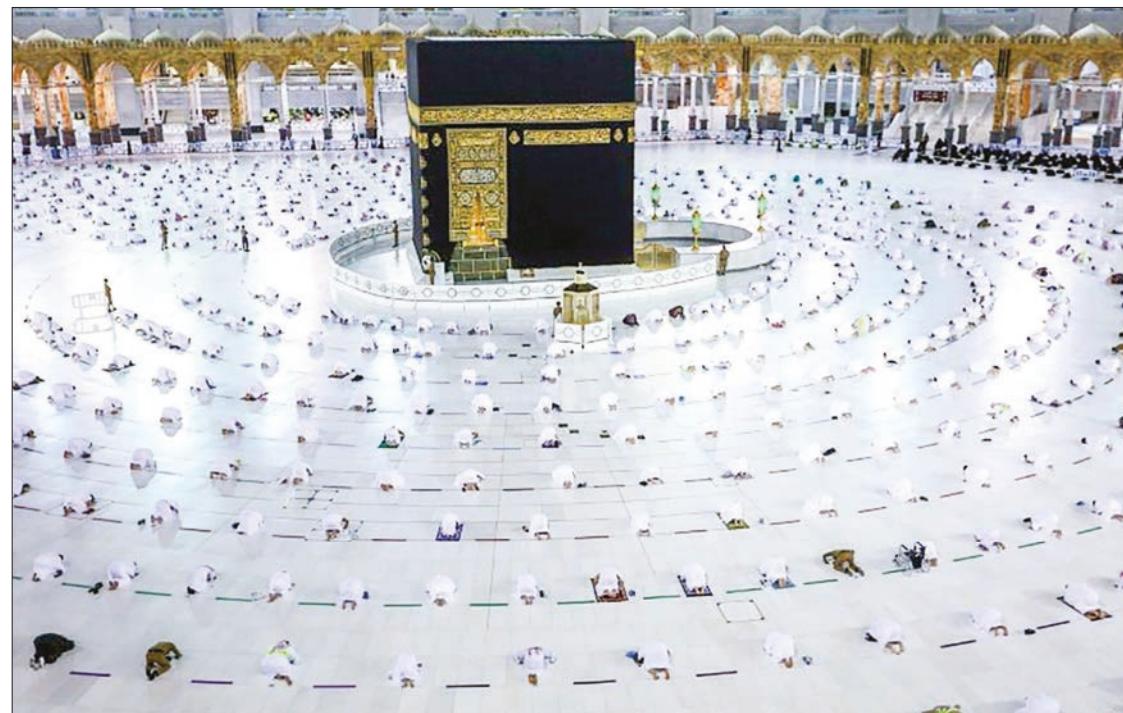
SAUDI ARABIA will begin accepting vaccinated foreigners wanting to make the umrah pilgrimage, authorities said Sunday, a move that will boost an economy hit by the Covid pandemic.

Nearly 18 months after it closed its borders to battle coronavirus, Saudi Arabia will from Monday begin "gradually receiving umrah requests from various countries", the Saudi Press Agency (SPA) reported.

The umrah can be undertaken at any time and usually draws millions from around the globe, unlike the annual hajj, which abled-bodied Muslims who have the means must perform at least once in their lifetime.

The Covid-19 pandemic hugely disrupted both Muslim pilgrimages, which are usually key revenue earners for the kingdom that rake in a combined \$12 billion annually.

Before Sunday's announcement, only immunised pilgrims



The Covid-19 pandemic hugely disrupted the annual hajj and year-round umrah pilgrimages to Muslim holy sites in Saudi Arabia. **PHOTO: AFP**

residing in Saudi Arabia were eligible for umrah permits.

And last month only around 60,000 inoculated residents were allowed to take part in a scaled

down form of the annual hajj.

But the kingdom is slowly opening up, and has started welcoming vaccinated foreign tourists since August 1.

Foreign pilgrims must be immunised with a Saudi-recognised vaccine -- Pfizer-BioNTech, AstraZeneca, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson -- and

agree to undergo quarantine if necessary, the SPA said quoting deputy hajj minister Abdulfattah bin Sulaiman Mashat.

He added that the kingdom was working on determining the destinations from which pilgrims can come and their numbers on a "periodic basis according to the classification of preventive measures" in those countries.

Relief

Barring overseas pilgrims has caused deep disappointment among Muslims worldwide, who typically save for years to take part.

"I feel relieved about the resumption of the umrah pilgrimage," Ahmed Hamadna, 33, a sales manager in Egypt, told AFP. But he added that he was "concerned about the complex procedures and measures during the pandemic".

Engineer Mohamad Ragab, an Australian resident, said he too was still "hesitant" to perform the umrah pilgrimage. — AFP ■

Covid variant 'no joke'

WHEN Diego started going out again to meet friends he never expected to be among a growing number of young Mexicans hospitalized by a highly contagious Covid-19 variant driving another wave of infections.

"I let my guard down thinking that I wasn't going to catch it, but in the end I did," the 20-year-old student told AFP at a private clinic in a suburb north of Mexico City.

"This is no joke. It's a pret-

ty cruel disease," said Diego, who did not want to give his full name.

He is one of 16 coronavirus patients being treated in the same hospital in Coacalco.

Unlike during the first two waves of the pandemic, most of the sick are in their 20s and 30s.

Mexico's official Covid-19 death toll of more than 244,000 is the fourth highest in the world, and the actual figure is believed to be significantly higher. — AFP ■

Brunei: Clamp downs after first local virus cases

BRUNEI imposed strict curbs to halt the spread of Covid-19, after finding its first locally transmitted cases in the country in over a year.

Seven community infections were found, the health ministry said Saturday, leading the government to close all places of worship and postpone social events for two weeks.

Mass events were also limited to groups of 30 people over this period as school classes were moved online and restaurants barred from serving

dine-in.

The tiny Islamic sultanate has largely remained coronavirus free, logging only three deaths since the pandemic began.

More than half of its 347 infections so far were imported, with tight border controls and quarantine measures keeping the virus's spread in check.

Five of the oil-rich nation's first local infections since May last year were linked to a government-run virus monitoring centre. — AFP ■

Stricter COVID-19 steps introduced in 8 more prefectures in Japan



People wearing face masks walk in front of JR Nagoya Station in Aichi Prefecture, central Japan, on 5 August 2021. **PHOTO: KYODO**

TOUGHER measures against the coronavirus pandemic were introduced Sunday in eight prefectures newly placed under a quasi-state of emergency, with restaurant operators requested to cut opening hours and suspend serving alcohol.

The eight prefectures—Fukushima, Ibaraki, Tochigi, Gunma, Shizuoka, Aichi, Shiga and Kumamoto—joined five prefectures such as Kyoto and Fukuoka already subject to such restrictions effective for all the 13

areas until the end of the month.

More stringent steps have been imposed in Tokyo, hosting the Olympics, and five other prefectures under a state of emergency, as Japan faces the spread of the highly contagious Delta variant of the coronavirus.

Under the quasi-state of emergency, dining establishments not serving liquor are requested to close at 8 pm. When the number of infections indicates a downward trend, serving alcohol may be allowed with a

governor's approval until 7 pm at establishments taking anti-virus steps.

Japan's cumulative total of confirmed coronavirus cases topped 1 million on Friday amid a recent surge that has seen daily cases continue to rewrite all-time highs, reinforcing fears that the medical system could collapse.

The nationwide tally hit a record for the fourth straight day Saturday with 15,753 new infections. — Kyodo ■

Let's cut off infection chains of COVID-19 during successive holidays

Nowadays, the government is making strenuous efforts to cut off the infection chains of COVID-19 for ensuring safety of Myanmar.

As such, the State Administration Council has set the successive public holidays for three times to mitigate the infection rate of the pandemic among the people but they need to abide by the restricted health guidelines issued by the Ministry of Health during the successive public holidays.

In order to soonest turn into the normal situation with placing the infection of COVID-19 under control, the government issued a notification to set further successive public holidays from 9 to 15 August 2021. It aims to reduce the infection rate of the pandemic among the people.

As such, all walks of life of the people should join hands with the government for promotion of their health conditions by driving out the COVID-19 from Myanmar's mother land as early as possible.

In addition, the Central Committee on Prevention, Control and Treatment of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) issued an announcement on one more week closure of basic education schools including private schools and monastic education schools till 15 August.

Primarily, their moves lead to reduce the infection rate of COVID-19 as much as possible. Hence, the people need to cooperate with the authorities in their efforts without going outside the houses if possible. They need to systematically wash their hands for many times a day. Likewise, they need to receive anti-COVID-19 vaccines.

At present, some basic education schools are opened as camps to vaccinate the people. Hence, officials need to sterilize all parts of the schools before opening for ensuring safety of students and teachers in daily academic measures. Moreover, private schools and monastic education schools need to make necessary preparations for resumption of teaching and learning during the successive holidays.

Meanwhile, workplaces being operated during the holidays should be run under the health guidelines. Other offices which suspended the work procedures should be sterilized for disinfection regularly before reopening. Employees from the running workplaces should be facilitated with full protective equipment for their survival as well as for avoiding the decrease of productivity.

The government set an aim to ensure a half down of infection rate in August. As such, all walks of life of the people should join hands with the government for promotion of their health conditions by driving out the COVID-19 from Myanmar's mother land as early as possible. Let's firmly join hands to overcome challenges in facing impacts of COVID-19 pandemic.



Vaccines: Two Centuries Of Scepticism

Wariness and outright hostility to vaccines did not start with COVID-19, they date back to the 18th century when the first shots were given.

FROM real fears sparked by side-effects, to fake studies and conspiracy theories, we take a look at anti-vax sentiment over the ages:

1796: First Jab, First Fears

Smallpox killed or disfigured countless millions for centuries before it was eradicated in 1980 through vaccination.

In 1796 the English physician Edward Jenner came up with the idea of using the milder cowpox virus on a child to stimulate immune response after he noticed milkmaids rarely got smallpox.

The process – coined “vaccinus” by Jenner (from cow in Latin) – was successful, but from the outset it provoked scepticism and fear.

Before Jenner a riskier method of inoculation known as “variolation” existed for smallpox, introduced to Europe from Ottoman Turkey by the English writer and wit Lady Mary Wortley Montagu.

1853: Mandatory Shot

In Britain the smallpox vaccine became compulsory for children in 1853, making it the first-ever mandatory jab and triggering strong resistance.

1885: Pasteur And Rabies

Opponents objected on religious grounds, raised concerns over the dangers of injecting animal products, and claimed individual freedoms were being infringed.

1920s: Vaccines Heyday

A “conscience clause” was introduced in 1898 allowing sceptics to avoid vaccination.

1998: Fake Autism Study

Vaccines flourished in the 1920s – shots were rolled out



A woman receives the Sinovac COVID-19 coronavirus vaccine in Malang, East Java on 7 August, 2021 during a mass vaccination program. PHOTO: AFP

er mandatory jab and triggering strong resistance.

At the end of the 19th century, the French biologist Louis Pasteur developed a vaccine against rabies by infecting rabbits with a weakened form of the virus. But again, the process sparked mistrust and Pasteur was accused of seeking to profit from his discovery.

Measles killed 207,500 people in 2019, a jump of 50 percent since 2016 with the World Health Organization (WHO) warning that vaccine coverage is falling globally.

2009: Swine Flu Scare

The discovery in 2009 of “Swine flu”, or H1N1, caused by a virus of the same family as the deadly Spanish flu, caused great

alarm.

But H1N1 was not as deadly as first feared and millions of vaccine doses produced to fight it were destroyed, fuelling mistrust towards vaccination campaigns.

Matters were made worse by the discovery that one of the vaccines, Pandemrix, raised the risk of narcolepsy. Of 5.5 million people given the vaccine in Sweden, 440 had to be compensated after developing the sleep disorder.

2020: Polio Conspiracy Theories

Eradicated in Africa since August 2020 thanks to vaccines, polio is still a scourge in Pakistan and Afghanistan where the disease, which causes paralysis in young children, remains endemic.

Anti-vaccine conspiracy theories have allowed it to continue to destroy lives. In Afghanistan, the Taliban banned vaccine campaigns, calling them a Western plot to sterilise Muslim children.

SOURCE: AFP

called macrophagic myofasciitis thought to be caused by them.

1998: Fake Autism Study

A study published in the top medical journal The Lancet in 1998 suggested there was a link between autism and the measles, mumps and rubella shot known as the MMR vaccine.

The paper by Andrew Wakefield and colleagues was revealed years later to be a fraud and retracted by the journal, with Wakefield struck off the medical register. Despite subsequent studies demonstrating the absence of any such link the bogus paper is still a reference for anti-vaxxers and it left its mark.

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2009: Swine Flu Scare

The discovery in 2009 of “Swine flu”, or H1N1, caused by a virus of the same family as the deadly Spanish flu, caused great

Japan studying giving 3rd coronavirus vaccine shots next year

The government struck a contract in July to receive an additional 50 million doses of Moderna Inc's coronavirus vaccine from the beginning of 2022. Discussions are also under way to secure 150 million doses of the vaccine developed by Novavax Inc. starting in early 2022.

JAPAN has begun a study on whether it should administer third shots of the coronavirus vaccine next year, officials said Friday.

Spurred by the likelihood of vaccine efficacy waning over time and the need to respond to highly infectious virus variants, the government will proceed with the study while trying to secure the supply of at least 200 million doses next year, the officials said. Tokyo will reach a decision on the matter after taking into consideration the situation of virus infections and how other governments are dealing with COVID-19 booster shots.

Overseas, Israel's booster shots have already been in full swing for people aged 60 or older, while Germany is scheduled to start providing third COVID-19 shots for the elderly in September.

Sweden has also decided to do likewise, possibly in the fall, with Britain preparing to start offering booster shots in September.

Japan's vaccination program was launched in February, initially for health care workers. It was expanded to the elderly in April and later to other members of the public. The country's minister in charge of vaccination efforts, Taro Kono, said July 30 Japan "will likely administer next year" third doses of COVID-19 vaccine.

The government struck a contract in July to receive an additional 50 million doses of Moderna Inc.'s coronavirus vaccine from the beginning of 2022. Discussions are also under way to secure 150 million doses of the vaccine developed by Novavax Inc. starting in early 2022.

Meanwhile, World Health Organization chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus on Wednesday called on some advanced countries to suspend their ongoing or planned administration of third shots until at least the end of September;

ty of booster shots varies among nations, Japan will collect data on clinical trials conducted abroad and study not only on the necessity but also whether it should allow a person's third dose to be from a different company than the one that developed their first and second doses, the officials said. On Thursday, Moderna said its coronavirus vaccine maintained 93 percent efficacy through six months after the second shot, but pointed to the likelihood of the need for a third booster shot afterward to protect against new variants, citing a decline in antibody levels.

Meanwhile, World Health Organization chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus on Wednesday called on some advanced countries to suspend their ongoing or planned administration of third shots until at least the end of September;



Senior citizens wait to receive a coronavirus disease (COVID-19) vaccine at a large-scale coronavirus disease (COVID-19) vaccination centre in Osaka, western Japan May 24, 2021. PHOTO: KYODO

saying fair access to COVID-19 vaccines among all countries is a higher priority.

Noting that many people must

work to make a living even amid the pandemic, the WHO chief told a press conference, "While hundreds of millions of people are still waiting for their first dose, some rich countries are moving towards booster doses."

SOURCE: Kyodo



(Issued at 7:00 pm Sunday 8 August 2021)

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

FORECAST VALID UNTIL MORNING OF THE 9 August, 2021:

Rain or thundershowers will be isolated in Magway Region and Eastern Shan State, scattered in Lower Sagaing, Mandalay Regions and Southern Shan, Kayah States, fairly widespread in Nay Pyi Taw, Upper Sagaing, Bago Regions and Northern Shan, Chin States and widespread in the remaining Regions and States with likelihood of isolated heavyfalls in Upper Sagaing Region and Kachin, Rakhine, Mon States. Degree of certainty is (100%).

STATE OF THE SEA: Seas will be slight to moderate in Myanmar waters. Wave height will be about (4 - 7) feet off and along Myanmar Coasts.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Weak to moderate monsoon.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 9 August, 2021: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 9 August, 2021: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 9 August, 2021: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (80%).

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News and Periodicals Enterprise

Drop in the bucket: US infrastructure plan may fall short on water

OUT of sight, out of mind: Problems with decades-old pipes and sewers across American cities and towns are largely hidden and tend to be neglected for years before exploding into public crisis.

Last month, the Clarksburg Water Board in West Virginia announced that children from three homes were diagnosed with high lead levels, prompting the municipal authority to immediately replace pipes and launch a testing program throughout the system.

"I don't think they know the magnitude of the problem," said James Griffin of the West Virginia Black Heritage Festival, who organized a community meeting earlier this week with water officials.

"There's just a whole lot of not knowing."



In this file photo taken on 23 November 2015, a huge tank full of wastewater is seen at DC Water's Blue Plains plant in Washington, DC. **PHOTO: AFP**

The latest local water crisis surfaced as the Senate moves closer to passing the \$1.2 trillion

bipartisan package to address neglected maintenance on traditional infrastructure, as well

as spending on clean energy and broadband internet.

Environmentalists have

welcomed the bill, but say funding for water projects falls far short given the scale of the problem.

They are holding out hope that further funding will be provided in the \$3.5 trillion budget package backed by President Joe Biden, which could be enacted later this year, despite Republican opposition. "It's a start," Tracy Brown, regional director for water protection at Save the Sound, said of the Senate bill.

An 'overwhelmed' system

Brown's group, which focuses on the Long Island Sound and other waterways in the states of New York and Connecticut, has been pressing local officials to address wastewater problems that regularly force local beaches to close after heavy rains. — AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Iraqi PM says gov't determined to hold elections as scheduled

IRAQI Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi announced on Saturday that his government and the political parties are determined to hold the parliamentary elections as scheduled on Oct. 10. Al-Kadhimi's comment came during his meeting with leaders of the political parties in the presence of Parliament Speaker Mohammed al-Halbousi, head of the Supreme Judicial Council, the country's electoral commission, and the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq, the prime minister's media office said in a statement. — AFP ■

Jan. 6 Capitol riot probe shadowed by Washington's bitter partisanship

THE U.S. House select committee probing the Jan. 6 riot is preparing to send a flurry of subpoenas to start gathering evidence, amid bitter partisanship and sharply different narratives of the event. On Jan. 6, supporters of former U.S. President Donald Trump, after a rally he had held, descended on the Capitol in a protest, against the backdrop of a vicious political battle in which Trump accused then-President-elect Joe Biden of stealing the election. — Xinhua ■

Hundreds of families homeless as Greek fires rage, Turkey saved by the rain

HUNDREDS of firefighters fought fires that have devoured record numbers of woodlands in Greece on Saturday (Aug 7) and left hundreds of families homeless, but heavy rains brought some respite to hard-hit Turkey.

More than 1,450 Greek firefighters backed by at least 15 aircraft were battling the wildfires and flare-ups, with reinforcements arriving from other countries, the fire service said.

"We are sending a team of experienced firefighters to support Greek firefighters currently battling the huge blazes," UK Home Secretary Priti Patel tweeted Saturday.

Egypt is also expected to send two helicopters and Spain one Canadair firefighting plane.

With strong winds and temperatures of up to 38 degrees Celsius forecast in some regions on Saturday, the blazes in Greece are expected to continue for some time yet. And this year's fires have already been far more destructive than in previous years.

In the last 10 days, 56,655 hectares have been burnt in Greece, according to the European Forest Fire Information System. The average number of hectares burnt over the same period between 2008 and 2020 was 1,700 hectares.

"When this nightmarish



A Sikorsky S-64 Skycrane helicopter drops water over Thrakomakedones, near Mount Parnitha, north of Athens, on 7 August 2021. **PHOTO: AFP**

summer ends we will reverse the damage as soon as possible," Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis pledged on Saturday. In Pefkofyto, in the north of Athens, pensioner Tasos Tsilivakos struggled to contain his tears.

"This is a horrible disaster," he told AFP. "I'm really afraid that maybe only our great-grandchildren will have the chance to walk again in these areas." — AFP ■

A drought-hit California town finds itself sinking into the ground



A sign just outside the California town of Corcoran proclaims it as the state's 'farming capital'; drought has caught its farms in a vicious cycle. **PHOTO: AFP**

"YOU'VE got too many farmers pumping all around," complained Raul Atilano. This octo-

to make sense of the strangest of phenomena: his already suffering town is sinking, ever so gradually, into the ground. A constant stream of trucks carrying tomatoes, alfalfa or cotton outside this town of 20,000 shows just how inextricably Corcoran's fate is tied to the intensive farming practiced here.

To irrigate its vast fields and help feed America, farm operators began in the last century to pump water from underground sources, so much so that the ground has begun to sink -- imagine a series of giant straws sucking up groundwater faster than rain can replenish it, as hydrologist Anne Senter explained it to AFP.

Like a 2-story house

Strangely, signs of this subsidence are nearly invisible to the human eye. There are no cracks in the walls of the typical American shops in the town's center, nor crevices opening up in the streets or fields: to measure subsidence, Californian authorities had to turn to NASA, which used satellites to analyze the geological change. And yet, over the past 100 years, Corcoran has sunk "the equivalent of a two-story house," Jeanine Jones, a manager with the California Department of Water Resources, told AFP. The phenomenon "can be a threat to infrastructure, groundwater wells, levees, aqueducts," she said. — AFP ■

Olympics: Coronavirus Costs

THE pandemic affected almost every part of Tokyo's Olympics, forcing a historic postponement, the banning of almost all spectators, and ending the dreams of more than a few athletes.

From 1 July to Sunday, the final day of the Games, Tokyo 2020 says it identified 430 positive cases in a population of 52,000 overseas participants and athletes and many more Japanese volunteers and security. For the most part, teams stuck to the rules and got on with their sport. But there were a few notable exceptions.

Members of the Georgian judo team had their Olympic passes removed after an unauthorised sightseeing trip.

And five members of Australia's mens hockey team were reprimanded for breaking out of the bubble to buy beer.



The organizers have vowed to stage a safe and secure Olympics and Paralympics, with quarantine rules and testing to curb the spread of the coronavirus. **PHOTO: KYODO**

Cases were already on the rise before the Games, and Tokyo has been under a state of emergency for weeks. But the

explosive growth, driven by the more contagious Delta variant, has worried experts in a country where only around a third of the

population is fully vaccinated. Japan has recorded just over 15,200 deaths during the pandemic. — AFP ■

Brisbane to lift coronavirus lockdown while Sydney outbreak grows



Residents queue up outside a shopping centre in eastern Brisbane on 31 July 2021, as Australia's third-largest city Brisbane and other parts of Queensland state will enter a snap Covid-19 lockdown. **PHOTO: AFP**

AUSTRALIA'S third-largest city of Brisbane will lift a lockdown on Sunday (Aug 8) after containing a virus cluster, while an

outbreak that has kept Sydney paralysed for weeks continues to grow. Millions of people in Brisbane and surrounding ar-

eas have spent just eight days under stay-at-home orders after an outbreak of more than 100 cases spread among several school communities.

Deputy Queensland premier Steven Miles said the region had achieved "something quite incredible" by seemingly bringing the outbreak under control.

"It looks like we may have been able to contain a Delta outbreak in just eight days of lockdown, just 10 days from when the first case was notified," he told reporters.

Restrictions on leaving the city and gatherings will remain in place for at least two weeks.

Authorities also announced a snap three-day lockdown for the northern city of Cairns, af-

ter a taxi driver spent 10 days infectious in the 150,000-strong community.

They will join millions of people in Melbourne and Sydney under stay-at-home orders, with Australia's biggest city about to enter a seventh week of lockdown.

New South Wales state recorded 262 new cases on Sunday, taking the outbreak that began in Sydney in mid-June to more than 5,000 cases.

State premier Gladys Berejiklian urged Sydney residents to get jabbed, with supermarket and fast-food workers taking priority in a fresh vaccination drive on Sunday. "This is a race. We're keen to sprint to get those vaccination rates up," she said. — AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Sky News Australia faces Senate grilling over Covid videos

SKY News Australia will face a Senate inquiry after serving a week-long suspension by YouTube over Covid-19 misinformation concerns, the senator in charge of the hearing said Friday.

The Rupert Murdoch-owned news channel faces a Senate panel hearing on August 13.

Senator Sarah Hanson-Young, chair of the upper house's media diversity committee, said her panel had called Sky News Australia executives, YouTube, and the Australian media regulator to appear.

"Australians are rightly worried about the promotion and dissemination of Covid lies and conspiracy theories that put lives at risk and undermine public health," she said. YouTube temporarily cut Sky News Australia from its 1.87 million subscribers last week, saying it had removed some videos and "issued a strike" against the channel. — AFP ■

Chile continues to register below 1,000 daily cases of COVID-19

CHILE continued to register below 1,000 daily cases of COVID-19 after reporting 940 infections in the last 24 hours.

"940 new cases have been reported, with a positivity of 1.4 percent in the last 24 hours nationwide," Health Minister Enrique Paris told the press on Saturday. However, the official stressed the importance of continued vigilance against the virus. The total number of people who had been diagnosed with COVID-19 in the South American country reached 1,622,509 and the death toll rose to 35,951, after 71 deaths from the disease were registered over the past day. In recent weeks, Chile has reported the lowest numbers of infections and hospitalizations of the pandemic.

More than 80 percent of the population had been vaccinated against COVID-19, Chilean President Sebastian Pinera said. — Xinhua ■

Libya imposes 24-hour curfew to stem spread of COVID-19

LIBYA has imposed a 24-hour curfew from Saturday to Monday to curb the spread of COVID-19.

The government announced the decision on Thursday. When the curfew ends, the previous prevention measures will continue. In late June, the government imposed a curfew from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. (1600-0400 GMT) for two weeks, and ordered that those who violate the restrictions be punished.

The government has recently launched an "exceptional" vaccination campaign to set up temporary vaccination centers, where people above the age of 18, Libyans or foreigners, can get vaccinated.

According to the National Center for Disease Control, the country has registered more than 260,000 cases so far, with nearly 200,000 recoveries and 3,689 deaths. — Xinhua ■

Police officers check vehicles during curfew hours in Tripoli, Libya, on 7 August 2021. Libya has imposed a 24-hour curfew from Saturday to Monday to curb the spread of COVID-19. **PHOTO: XINHUA**



China's pursuit of green recovery paves way for carbon-neutral pledge

THE outbreak of the global health emergency has propelled the world to take further strides toward a green revolution.

China has announced that it will be increasingly embracing green and inclusive development, with a slew of eco-friendly measures taken amid its "V-shaped" recovery. The country has also vowed to strive to bring carbon emissions to a peak before 2030 and become carbon-neutral before 2060. In announcing such measures, China is not simply paying lip service to environmental concerns.

A report published last month by global ratings agency Moody's showed that China, along with wealthier countries, took the lead in spending on green recovery in the Asia-Pacific region.

GREEN-ENERGY MARKET



Aerial photo taken on July 30, 2018 shows an electric bus running on the Yanggongdi Causeway in the West Lake scenic area in Hangzhou, capital of east China's Zhejiang Province. **PHOTO: XINHUA**

THRIVES

Coal-fired power remains a major energy source in China,

which has long pursued clean power and has become the world's largest producer and user

of renewable energy.

During the post-epidemic recovery, the country has intro-

duced a package of green stimulus measures, and has seen a surge in the installed capacity of clean energy. In the fourth quarter of 2020, the installed capacity of photovoltaics in China reached 29.5 million kilowatts, while that of wind power increased by 57.75 million kilowatts, both far exceeding the combined installed capacity in the first three quarters, data from the National Energy Administration (NEA) showed.

China's clean-energy consumption accounted for 24.5 percent of the total energy consumption in 2020, up 1.1 percentage points compared with that in 2019, data from the NEA showed. According to a Deutsche Bank report, by 2030, China is expected to see its output of solar power increase tenfold, while that of wind power will be three or four times the level in 2020. — Xinhua ■

Economic woes set to weigh heavily on high-stakes vote

SOARING food prices and economic hardship could sway this week's tightly-contested Zambian presidential vote in favour of the opposition, as citizens grapple with the fallout from rampant financial mismanagement.

President Edgar Lungu, who is vying for re-election in the August 12 poll, stands accused of borrowing unsustainably to splurge on infrastructure

projects.

The copper-rich southern African nation last year became the first country on the continent to default on its debt in the coronavirus era.

The value of the kwacha currency plummeted to record lows and inflation surged past 20 percent during Lungu's presidency, which also saw investor confidence decline as external debt ballooned to around \$12

billion last year.

"Mismanagement at the macro level is affecting common people," said Zambian economist Trevor Simumba.

"The poor don't have mechanisms to adjust their living costs". With tensions rising ahead of the elections next week, Lungu ordered an unprecedented deployment of the military to clamp down on violence. — AFP ■

India: Tourism has highest job creating potential across sectors

UNION Minister of Culture, Tourism and Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER), G Kishan Reddy on Friday said tourism has one of the highest job-creating potentials across all sectors.

Speaking at the E-Conclave-Resilience and The Road to Recovery, the minister stated, "Tour-

ism has always been a strong driver for economic growth in the country.

In 2019, the industry contributed USD 194 billion to the Indian economy and created about 40 million jobs, which is 8 per cent of its total employment."

Reddy said that tourism is

not just about attractive destinations and leisure activities, but has emerged as one of the fundamental pillars of economic development and has one of the highest job-creating potentials across all sectors.

"For Rs 10 lakh of investment, tourism can provide 78 jobs, as compared to 45 jobs in the manufacturing sector," Reddy stated.

The minister also said that the tourism industry has a unique impact on a country as it not only acts as a massive growth engine but also enhances the soft power of a nation.

Further, he said that the onslaught of the COVID-19 pandemic has thrown unprecedented challenges upon the tourism industry, hence there is a need to innovate and rethink the travel, tourism and hospitality sector. — ANI ■



Tourists visit the Taj Mahal in Agra, India, on Sept 21, 2020. **PHOTO: AFP**

Libya's wildlife treasure island at risk of ruin



Libya's Farwa island. **PHOTO: AFP**

ONCE famed for its exceptional wildlife, Libya's Farwa island risks becoming just another victim of lawlessness in the war-ravaged North African nation, activists struggling to save it warn.

An uninhabited 13-kilometre-long sandbar cut off at high tide in far western Libya, Farwa appears picture-postcard idyllic, with scattered date palms on white sandy beaches and ringed by the sparkling Mediterranean Sea. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has said

Farwa is potentially the "most important coastal and marine site in western Libya, in terms of its high marine and coastal biodiversity". But it faces a long list of threats, said Fawzi Dhane from local environmental group Bado, identifying illegal fishing and pollution as key worries.

Climate change is also exacerbating the situation, mak-

ing Farwa more vulnerable to the pressures already heaped on its fragile environment. For decades there were few visitors, apart from occasional school trips to the island. Libya's former dictator Muammar Ghaddafi dreamt of building a luxury seaside resort there, complete with "floating" villas and a golf course. But Ghaddafi was ousted and killed in a 2011 NATO-backed uprising, and Libya has struggled to contain violence and political turmoil ever since.

Explosive fishing

In a country awash with weapons, some find lobbing grenades into the water an easy way to fish - a destructive method killing everything in the blast zone.

"The fishermen do not respect anything," Dhane said, blaming boats from the port of Zuwara, some 40 kilometres to the east. — AFP ■

Major US business groups urge Biden to cut tariffs on China, resume talks

MORE than 30 US business groups call for the Biden administration to restart trade talks with China and cut tariffs on Chinese products, calling the measures dragging on the U.S. economy.

In a Thursday letter to US Trade Representative Katherine Tai and Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen seen by media, the trade groups asked the US administration to take into account the burden of the tariffs on importers.

The business groups representing retailers, chipmakers and farms

acknowledged that China had met "important benchmarks and commitments" in the phase-one trade agreement signed in 2020 while calling for a resumption of negotiations between the two countries, the Wall Street Journal reported.

Many US retailers chose to absorb the cost of US imposed duties on more than \$300 billion Chinese goods or passing them to consumers.

"Due to the tariffs, US industries face increased costs to manufacture products and provide services



A container ship arrives at the Port of Los Angeles, California, US, 1 April 2020. PHOTO: XINHUA

domestically, making their exports of these products and services less competitive abroad," a Bloomberg report quoted the letter as saying.

of Commerce, the National Retail Federation, the American Farm Bureau Federation and the Semiconductor Industry Association. In the first half of 2021, Chinese exports to the US jumped by 31.7 percent, while its imports from the US surged by 43.9 percent, Chinese customs data showed.

China reiterated in July the call for the implementation of the phase-one trade deal with the US, noting the agreement is good for both countries and the wider world. — Xinhua ■

Saudi Aramco Q2 profits nearly quadruple compared to 2020



Saudi Arabia's state-owned oil and gas company's Dhahran oil plants, seen here in this 2018 photograph, provided by Saudi Aramco, which reported higher profits on Sunday. PHOTO: AFP

ENERGY giant Saudi Aramco said Sunday its second quarter profits for 2021 had nearly quadrupled compared to the same period last year on the back of higher oil prices.

Aramco said its net profit rose to \$25.5 billion in the second quarter of

the year, compared to \$6.6 billion in the same quarter of 2020, owing to a stronger oil market and higher refining and chemicals margins, and with the easing of Covid-19 restrictions.

"Our second quarter results reflect a strong rebound in worldwide energy demand and we are heading into the second half of 2021 more resilient and more flexible, as the global recovery gains momentum," Aramco chief executive Amin Nasser said in a statement.

The announcement comes approximately two months after the company

said it raised \$6 billion from its first dollar-denominated Islamic bond sale, posting earlier this year a 30 percent jump in first quarter profits. Aramco -- the kingdom's cash cow -- posted a 44.4 percent slump in 2020 net profit, piling pressure on government finances as Riyadh pursues its multi-billion dollar projects to diversify the economy.

The company's debt has climbed as Saudi Arabia was hammered last year by the double whammy of low prices and sharp cuts in production triggered by the coronavirus pandemic. — AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

China's lithium-ion battery output soars over 60 pct in H1

CHINA'S lithium-ion battery output surged over 60 percent year on year in the first half of 2021 as the country strives to peak carbon dioxide emissions and achieve carbon neutrality, official data shows.

The output topped 110 GWh in the period, and the industry's total production value exceeded 240 billion yuan (about 37.1 billion U.S. dollars), according to the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology.

The country's lithium-ion battery exports jumped nearly 70 percent year on year to 74.3 billion yuan in the first half, customs data shows.

Product quality and technology saw continuous improvement in the sector, with battery safety receiving increasing attention and protective measures such as temperature measurement, heat insulation and water cooling applied at a faster pace.

The development of China's photovoltaic power generation also boosted the production of energy-storage lithium batteries. In the January-June period, the output of energy-storage lithium-ion batteries surged 260 percent year on year to 15 GWh, the ministry said. — Xinhua ■

Global supply snags could mean fewer toys under the Christmas tree

IT'S always "better to shop a little early" for the holidays, but this year, says Judy Ishayik, co-owner of a New York toy store, "We are telling people to shop for Christmas in September."

Global shipping snags are causing shortages, delivery delays and price increases -- all headaches for toy stores and manufacturers.

Ishayik's store, Mary Arnold Toys, has been selling toys for 90 years in the upscale Upper East Side section of Manhattan.

At first glance, the

shelves appear well stocked. But at the back of the store and in the basement where the inventory is stored, there is a lot of empty space.

Struggling to adapt

Like many other sectors of the US economy working to get back to normal following the upheaval caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, toy-makers and specialty stores have been trying to adapt, while struggling to replenish their supplies.

Some factories were forced to shut down during coronavirus outbreaks, impacting man-

ufacturing.

And shippers have been overwhelmed by demand from online sales, exacerbated by a shortage of shipping contain-

ers, while in some ports, boats wait several days to unload their goods. In the United States, trucking firms are struggling to recruit drivers. — AFP ■



Mary Arnold Toys in New York is one of thousands of US retail stores suffering low supplies amid snags in the global supply chain linked to Covid. PHOTO: AFP

IT services industry to accelerate by 9 to 12 pc in FY22: ICRA

THE USD revenue growth of sample IT services companies is expected to be 9 to 12 per cent in FY2022, driven by robust demand for digital technologies resulting in higher awards of contracts, according to investment information agency ICRA.

Further, the growth will be supported by pent up demand of FY2021 which was lower due to the initial impact of Covid-19. For FY2023, the ratings agency estimates the growth to be 6 to 9 per cent.

In Q1 FY2022, the ICRA sample of eight companies recorded a revenue growth of 18.1 per cent in rupee terms and 16.2 per cent in USD terms, primarily led by low base of last year (Covid-19 impact) and acceleration of digital outsourcing deals amid the pandemic.

The rupee appreciated by 2.8 per cent vis-a-vis the US dollar on a Y-o-Y basis which negatively impacted the revenue growth of IT services companies in rupee terms in Q1 FY2022. — ANI ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Ex-PM Conte voted leader of Italy's Five Star Movement

FORMER premier Giuseppe Conte officially began work Saturday as the new leader of Italy's Five Star Movement (M5S), the biggest party in parliament now deeply divided and trailing in opinion polls.

The former law professor, who stepped down as prime minister in January, was tapped for the job months ago but in-fighting led to delays in holding a formal membership vote. An online poll, in which Conte was the only candidate, confirmed him overnight as leader with almost 93 per cent, with more than 62,000 votes.

Conte promised to continue supporting Mario Draghi, who took over in February at the head of a national unity government tasked with guiding Italy out of the devastation of the coronavirus pandemic. He told *Il Fatto Quotidiano* newspaper that the party would "all work to offer loyal cooperation to the government of a country that has yet to emerge from a health emergency". — AFP ■

Afghan air force pilot killed in targeted Taliban attack

AFGHAN Air Force pilot Hamidullah Azimi was killed in a bomb attack on Saturday.

Officials said that the bomb had been attached to his vehicle and detonated. The explosion wounded five other civilians.

Azimi flew U.S.-made UH60 Black Hawk helicopters and has been in the force for four years, Reuters reported.

The Taliban said in a statement that they carried out the attack. He was the eighth Afghan pilot to be killed in recent weeks.

The killing appears part of a Taliban plan targeting and killing pilots with the aim of leveling the playing field as they continue ground offenses to seize territory, Reuters reports. The Taliban have no air forces. On Friday, the Taliban shot and killed Dawa Khan Menapal, the Director of Afghanistan's Government Information Media Center.

Just a few days prior there had been an attempt to kill the acting defense minister. — Xinhua ■

No. 10 tunnel of Jakarta-Bandung high speed railway completed



The No. 10 tunnel of the Jakarta-Bandung High Speed Railway (HSR) is seen in West Bandung Regency, West Java province, Indonesia, 6 August 2021. The No. 10 tunnel of the Jakarta-Bandung HSR in Indonesia was completed, the railway's operator said on Saturday. **PHOTO: XINHUA**

THE No. 10 tunnel of the Jakarta-Bandung High Speed Railway (HSR) in Indonesia was com-

pleted, the railway's operator said on Saturday.

A statement released by

KCIC, a joint venture consortium between Chinese and Indonesian state-owned firms that

runs the 142.3-km HSR, said the completion on Friday laid a solid foundation for the completion and opening of the whole railway line.

The tunnel, located in West Bandung Regency's Padalarang, West Java province, has a total length of 1,230 meters and maximum buried depth of 37 meters.

KCIC said the construction, which started in March 2019, has faced many difficulties and risks including challenging geological conditions in the area and shallow burial depth, among others.

With a design speed of 350 km per hour, the high-speed railway built with Chinese technology will cut the journey between Jakarta and Bandung, the capital of West Java province, from more than three hours to around 40 minutes. — Xinhua ■

Haiti still seeking judge to probe president's assassination

HAITI'S justice system is still struggling to find a judge willing to investigate the assassination of President Jovenel Moise a full month after he died, as magistrates fear for their lives if they take on the murky and explosive case.

"It is a sensitive, political dossier. Before agreeing to investigate it, a judge thinks about his own safety and that of his family," one judge told AFP.

"For this reason, investigating magistrates are not too enthusiastic about accepting it," this judge told AFP, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Several magistrates have told the dean of the Court of First Instance in Port-au-Prince that they are not interested in working on the shocking July 7 assassination of Moise at the presidential

residence by a commando team, this judge said. Moise's wife Martine was wounded but survived.

Senior magistrate Bernard Saint-Vil has sought to reassure these judges, telling them he has asked the government to guarantee their safety and has requested bodyguards.

Saint-Vil said early this week he would announce Thursday the name of the investigating magistrate chosen to take on the case, but in the end he could not because no judge wanted the job.

Police say they have arrested 44 people in connection with the killing, including 12 Haitian police officers, 18 Colombians who were allegedly part of the commando team and two Americans of Haitian descent.

The head of Moise's security detail is among those detained in



A portrait of late Haitian president Jovenel Moise is seen at a ceremony in his honor in Port-au-Prince on 20 July 2021. **PHOTO: AFP**

connection with the plot allegedly organized by a group of Haitians with foreign ties.

Moise, an unpopular leader, had been ruling the impoverished and disaster-plagued nation by decree, as gang violence spiked

and Covid-19 spread.

Police have issued wanted-persons notices for several other people, including a judge from Haiti's highest court, a former senator and a businessman. — AFP ■

Hundreds of migrants find safe port in Sicily

MORE than 250 migrants rescued from an overcrowded wood-

en boat in the Mediterranean have been finally allowed to dis-



The Sea Watch 3 rescue boat carrying 257 migrants was allowed to dock in Sicily on Saturday. **PHOTO: AFP**

embark in Sicily, after nearly a week on a rescue boat.

The group, which included children, were rescued by the German NGO rescue ship Sea-Watch 3 on August 1.

They had tried to cross the Mediterranean on a wooden vessel carrying 394 people. The Sea-Watch 3, with the help of another boat run by the French NGO SOS Mediterranee, spent six hours rescuing them.

The German ship took 257 people on board, while the French boat took the rest.

The crew on the German

ship said they were facing a "critical" situation on Thursday, and they added that some of the rescued migrants were showing signs of dehydration. They were eventually given permission

to dock in Italy. The rescued migrants took COVID-19 tests when the boat docked at the port of Trapani. They are now on a quarantine ship where they will stay for the next two weeks. The other French boat, the Ocean Viking, will be allowed to dock on Sunday. It is now carrying 549 passengers, including 118 minors. — AFP ■

Key to success of Beijing Olympics lies in China-Japan relations

THE key to the success of the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics and Paralympics lies in how China-Japan ties will develop after the Tokyo Summer Games, with the Asian powers recently at odds over major issues including Taiwan and Xinjiang.

The leadership of Chinese President Xi Jinping, who has been keen to use the Beijing Olympics to enhance national prestige, is expected to be forced to manage a well-balanced diplomatic strategy toward Japan until the sports events in February next year.

A deterioration of bilateral relations may prompt Japan to deepen cooperation with the United States in containing China's global and regional influence, probably thwarting Xi's efforts to host the Winter Games in a complete form.

Should China intensify tensions with the United States



Fireworks are set off on 22 June 2021, over Beijing National Stadium, also known as the Bird's Nest, during a rehearsal for events to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Chinese Communist Party on 1 July. **PHOTO: KYODO**

and its close ally Japan, the two democratic countries could boycott the Beijing Olympics, which would take a heavy toll on the mainland government, diplomatic sources say.

In Japan, ordinary citizens have become more unfavorable

to China due largely to discomfort with Communist one-party rule and cyberbullying apparently by Chinese people against Japanese athletes during the Tokyo Olympics.

Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga, who has been

eager to gain public support ahead of a House of Representatives election that must be held by this autumn, could dare to decide to boycott the Beijing Games if anti-China sentiment grows at home, the sources say. — Kyodo News ■

At least 5 injured as Thai protesters clash with police in Bangkok



Anti-government protesters gather in Bangkok on 7 August 2021. **PHOTO: KYODO**

AT least five people were injured as Thai protesters

clashed with police in Bangkok on Saturday as they demanded

the resignation of Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha over his handling of the COVID-19 response, according to reports by local media.

The clash occurred while the protesters set out on a 3-kilometer march from the Victory Monument to the residence of Prayut located inside the camp of the First Infantry Regiment in northern Bangkok.

Police fired tear gas to stop the people who joined the protest by ignoring a ban on gathering by more than five people amid the coronavirus outbreak. The injured—three policemen

and two protesters—were sent to hospitals in the capital, according to the reports.

Around 1,200 people joined the march, police said.

The protesters led by student groups called for the government led by Prayut to resign, and cut budgets of defense and the palace for use in vaccination procurement.

They blamed the government for failing to contain a surge in coronavirus cases and purchasing Chinese vaccines which they claim are inefficient in tackling the virus.—Kyodo News ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Hezbollah chief vows 'proportionate' response to any Israel air strike

THE head of Lebanon's powerful Hezbollah movement, Hassan Nasrallah, Saturday vowed a "suitable and proportionate" response to any Israeli air strikes on Lebanon after a flare-up at the border this week.

Israel carried out its first air raids on Lebanese soil in years on Thursday, prompting Hezbollah to fire rockets back at the Jewish state the following day.

"Our response was linked to the Israeli strikes that occurred in south Lebanon for the first time in 15 years," he said in a televised speech ahead of the anniversary of the end of the last war with Israel in 2006.

"We wanted to tell the enemy... that any air strike by the Israeli air force on Lebanon will inevitably draw a response, though in a suitable and proportionate way, because we want to serve the purpose of protecting our country," he added.

Nasrallah described the air strikes this week as a "very dangerous development", but said Hezbollah did not want war.—AFP ■

Election has 'lost all credibility': US

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Saturday said Nicaragua's November election had "lost all credibility" accusing President Daniel Ortega of an autocratic campaign to crush opponents.

Nicaragua's electoral council on Friday disqualified the country's main opposition party from the upcoming presidential polls, in an escalating political crackdown in the Central American country.

"The United States views the regime's latest undemocratic, authoritarian actions -- driven by Ortega's fear of an electoral loss -- as the final blow against Nicaragua's prospects for a free and fair election later this year," Blinken said in a statement.

"That electoral process, including its eventual results, has lost all credibility." — AFP ■

Fighting rages in centre of major Afghan city Kunduz

AFGHAN forces and the Taliban were fighting fiercely Sunday in the centre of Kunduz, officials and residents said, after the insurgents captured two other provincial capitals in the last 48 hours.

The fall of the northern city would be a major blow for the central government, which has largely abandoned fighting in the countryside to defend urban centres against Taliban attacks.

"Fierce street-to-street fighting is ongoing in different parts of the city," Amruddin Wali, a member of the Kunduz provincial council, told AFP.

"Some security forces have

retreated towards the airport.

The Taliban have taken two provincial capitals since Friday, but Kunduz would be the most significant to fall since the insurgents launched an offensive in May as foreign forces began the final stages of their withdrawal.

On Friday the Taliban seized their first provincial capital, Zaranj in Nimroz, and followed it up a day later by taking Sheberghan in Jawzjan. Fighting was also reported on the outskirts of Herat, in the west, and Lashkar Gah and Kandahar in the south.

The pace of Taliban advances has caught government forces



Afghan forces were fighting the Taliban in northern city Kunduz, a day after the insurgents took their second provincial capital. **PHOTO: AFP**

flatfooted, but they had some respite late Saturday after US warplanes bombed Taliban positions in Sheberghan, the Jawzjan province capital seized earlier in the day.

"US forces have conducted several airstrikes in defence of our Afghan partners in recent days," Major Nicole Ferrara, a Central Command spokesperson, told AFP in Washington.—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.

King Kipchoge retains men's Olympic marathon title

KENYA'S Eliud Kipchoge underlined his credentials as the undisputed king of the marathon with a totally dominant run to retain his Olympic title on the streets of Sapporo on Sunday.

The world record holder clocked 2hr 08min 38sec to win gold, becoming only the third man to win consecutive marathon titles.

Abdi Nageeye of the Netherlands claimed silver in 2:09.58, just ahead of Belgium's Bashir Abdi in the final event of the ath-

letics programme at the Tokyo Games.

Kipchoge's victory margin of 1min 20sec was the biggest since Frank Shorter's win in the 1972 Munich Games.

The 36-year-old's triumph, his 13th win in the 15 marathons he has raced since 2013, came a day after teammate Peres Jepchirchir secured back-to-back women's Olympic marathon titles for Kenya's women.

"I think I have fulfilled the legacy by winning the marathon

for the second time, back-to-back. I hope now to help inspire the next generation," Kipchoge said. "It means a lot for me, especially at this time," he added of winning his second gold medal.

"It was really hard last year, it (Olympic Games) was postponed. I am happy for the local organising committee who made this race happen. It is a sign that shows the world we are heading in the right direction—we are on the right transition to a normal life." — AFP ■

Women delivered the goods for Japan at Tokyo Olympics



Japanese swimmer Yui Ohashi poses for photos on 1 August 2021, at Tokyo Aquatics Centre in the capital with her gold medals in the women's 200- and 400-meter individual medleys at the Tokyo Olympics. PHOTO: KYODO

AS Japan flew past its previous best single-games Olympic gold medal total with its 17th on the eighth day of the Tokyo Games, its female athletes were hauling their share of the load. By the end, the

women carried the day.

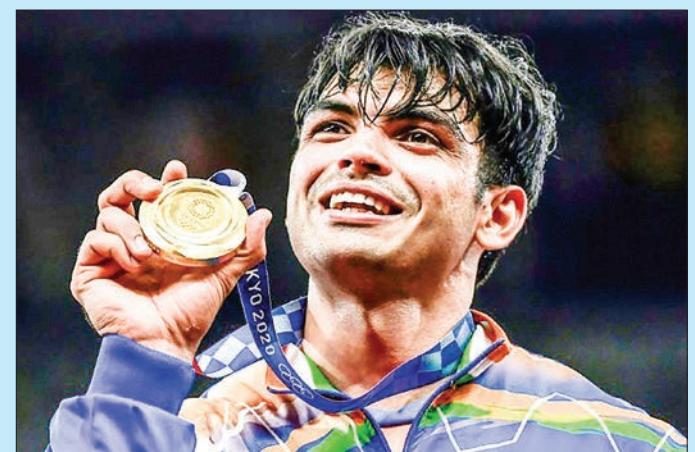
Japan won gold medals in 14 women's, 12 men's events and one mixed event, and of the 58-medal total, female-only events resulted in 30 podiums.

This is quite a shift for Japan as compared to previous games and poignant considering what took place at the head of the Olympic organizing committee. Sexist remarks by the original organizing committee president, Yoshiro Mori, caused an outcry and led to him being replaced in February by Seiko Hashimoto, a 1992 women's 1,500-meter speed skating bronze medalist.

The episode brought gender issues to the forefront of discussions around Japan's hosting of the event. Since 2004, Japan has seen no more than 48 percent of its Olympic medals won by female athletes at a single games, and in Rio de Janeiro in 2016 the percentage fell to 43.9 percent, the lowest over the period, according to Gracenote Sports.

In comparison, the United States and China – the only two nations to finish above Japan on the Tokyo Games medal table – had more than 50 percent of medals coming from women in Brazil, with China leading the way with 58.6 percent. That trend has continued in Tokyo, at least with gold medals. Twenty-two of China's 38 gold medals, or almost 58 percent, were won by women and for the United States the figure is 23 of 39. —Kyodo News ■

India showers cash on golden boy Chopra



India's Neeraj Chopra celebrates his country's first Olympic track and field gold medal after winning Saturday's javelin. PHOTO: AFP

INDIAN companies and governments promised cash and gifts worth more than two million dollars to javelin star Neeraj Chopra after he won India's first ever Olympic athletics gold medal.

The 23-year-old, who two years ago underwent surgery on a career-threatening elbow injury, threw 87.58 metres in the Tokyo Olympic stadium on Saturday to send his country into raptures.

Chopra led India's most successful Olympics ever with a gold, two silver medals and four bronze. He will also lead a cash bonanza for the winning athletes.

The government in his home state of Haryana said it would give a 60 million rupee (\$800,000) bonus to Chopra.

Other state governments offered another \$400,000 between them and a leading ed-

ucation company promised \$270,000.

India had to make its athletes "heroes so that we transform ourselves from a sport loving nation to a sport-playing nation," said Byju Raveendran, owner of the Byju's education tech company.

The Indian cricket board, the BCCI, and the Chennai Super Kings Indian Premier League team vowed to give \$135,000 each and Chopra will also get \$100,000 from the Indian Olympic Association.

Other firms offered free air travel, luxury cars and cash gifts that took Chopra's bonus over two million and more was expected before he returns to India.

All of the medal winners can expect big cash rewards

for their return, with the IOA offering \$53,750 for a silver, and \$33,500 for a bronze. — AFP ■