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THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

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Monday, 22 February 2021

Public Announcement (21-2-2021)

1. The Tatmadaw had to take over the State responsibilities effective 1 February by declaring the State of Emergency according to the 2008 State Constitution, due to the election frauds.
2. At present, NLD party members and its supporters have protested in various ways and pressured the civil service personnel to participate in the CDM and block public roads with breakdown cars. Some incidents and clashes occurred between the protestors and people who have not taken part in the protest. Due to some health workers participating in the CDM, public health services have ceased to an extent, and local protests against it also occurred.
3. Beginning from 8 February, the State Administration Council has imposed Section 144 of Criminal Procedure in 146 townships where violent acts and riots may happen and create disturbances to the public security, the rule of law, and community tranquillity. However, NLD party members and its supporters have incited the protestors to make hostile behaviours and clashes with the security force members, leading towards a confrontation path. It is found that such incidents as Thapyaygone Roundabout in Nay Pyi Taw, 76th and 38th streets, railway section near 34th street between 78th and 79th streets, and Gaw Wein Jetty in Mandalay, and Zaygyo ward in Mawlamyine indicated that the riotous protestors started physically attacking and clashing with the security forces, resulting into riots.

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Manufacturing sector attracts 20 foreign enterprises in Oct-Jan

THE majority of foreign enterprises eye the manufacturing sector for investments in the past four months (Oct-Jan) of the current financial year 2020-2021, pulling in US\$313.559 million from 20 projects, the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration stated. Myanmar has attracted foreign direct investments of more than US\$672.59 million in Oct-Jan of the current FY, including the expansion of capital by existing enterprises and acquisitions in the Special Economic Zones, DICA's statistics indicated.

Of 38 foreign enterprises permitted and endorsed by the Myanmar Investment Commission and the respective investment committees between 1 October and 31 January of the current FY, 20 enterprises pumped FDI into the manufacturing sector. The power sector received six projects, and the livestock and Fisheries sector attracted five projects. Other service sector drew four projects while the agriculture sector pulled two projects, and one foreign enterprise entered the hotel and tourism sector.

At present, labour-intensive enterprises face financial hardship, disputes between employers and employees, and factories' closure. The manufacturing enterprises and businesses that need a large labour force are prioritized, MIC stated. During the current FY2020-2021, Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC) will give the go-ahead to 24 proposals submitted in the previous FY2019-2020. The commission is carefully assessing the projects and will permit the ministries concerned, said U Thant Sin Lwin, Director-General of the DICA. Twenty-four foreign investment proposals have an estimated capital of over US\$3 billion. The commission is carefully reviewing 24 proposals due to large projects, he continued.

MIC intends to reach an FDI target of \$5.8 billion for the current FY2020-2021. According to data from the DICA, the country almost reached the FDI target of \$5.8 billion in the FY 2019-2020 due to the COVID-19 impacts, registering FDI inflows of only \$5.68 billion. — KK/GNLM

Reinforced bridge to benefit seven villages in Kyauktaw



The reinforced concrete bridge seen under construction in Min Tha Taung village, Kyauktaw Township. **PHOTO: TIN TUN**

WITH a supervision of Border Areas and National Races Development Affairs Department of Ministry of Border Affairs, reinforced concrete bridge in Min Tha Taung village, Kyauktaw Township, Rakhine State is under construction, according to the department.

A total of 256.553 million kyats from the 2020-2021 Fiscal Year has been injected to the construction of 120-feet long bridge.

The 120-feet-long wooden bridge was initially built in 2003 with the fund of Border Area Development of the Union.

Now the wooden bridge is upgraded to a reinforced concrete bridge for safety and better communication of the local people.

Officials from Rakhine State Development Supervision Office (Sittway) conducted a field inspection yesterday and attended to the needs

for timely completion of the bridge.

The bridge is currently 70 per cent complete and local people can travel to Kyauktaw in any season upon completion of the bridge.

When the bridge is completed, the bridge will help a lot for development of socio-economic life of 2649 people from 537 houses in 7 villages in Kyauktaw Township.—Tin Tun (IPRD)

Republic of the Union of Myanmar
State Administration Council
Order No (82/2021)

10th Waxing of Tabodwe 1382 ME
21 February 2021

Appointment of Chairman and Member for
Mon State Administration Council

The State Administration Council has appointed the following personnel as the Chairman and the Member of Mon State Administration Council, as per Section 419 of the State Constitution.

- | | |
|--|----------|
| (a) U Zaw Lin Tun | Chairman |
| (b) Nai La Yi Ta Ma (a) Nai Khin Maung Zin | Member |

By Order
Sd/Aung Lin Dway
Lieutenant-General
Secretary
State Administration Council

47-member leading committee of
the 8th State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee
to hold 6th, 7th meetings

THE pre-coordination meetings for the 6th and 7th meetings of the 47-member leading committee of the 8th State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee will be held on (4th, 5th, 6th, 7th) Waxing of Tabaung, 1382 ME, on (16th, 17th, 18th, 19th) March 2021 –Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. The 6th meeting of the 47-member leading committee of the 8th Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee will be on 8th Waxing of Tabauung 1382ME (20 March 2021) Saturday and the 7th meeting will be on Sunday.

The State Sangha Maha Nayaka Sayadaws were also invited with letters to come to Maha Nayaka monastery located at Thiri Mingalar Kabar Aye Hill in Mayangon Township of Yangon Region no later than 3rd Waxing of Tabaung 1382 ME, Monday 15 March 2021.

If the invitation letters have not reached in time, the Sayadaws are invited to come to Thiri Mingalar Kabar Aye Hill in Mayangon Township of Yangon Region on these significant days, according to the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture.—MNA

Press Statement of MOFA

RECENTLY, some embassies in Yangon, some foreign countries and the United Nations issued statements and expressed their concerns over recent developments in Myanmar.

In response to their concerns, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a press statement on 6 February 2021 on current situation of Myanmar and Union Minister for Foreign Affairs and Union Minister for International Co-operation have also briefed the recent developments of Myanmar to resident diplomats in Yangon via video conferencing on 5 February 2021.

It needs to objectively observe the evolving developments that compelled the Tatmadaw (Armed Forces) to assume State responsibilities in accordance with the State Constitution.

The Ministry would like to reiterate that the State Administration Council (SAC) will continue to abide by the provisions of the State Constitution and is determined to practise the genuine and discipline-flourishing multiparty democracy that suits the prevailing situation of the country. After completion of the assigned tasks in line with the provisions of the State Emergency, the free and fair general election will be held and responsibility of the State will be transferred to the winning political party in the election.

While implementing the duties assigned under the constitutional provisions during the period of State of Emergency, the SAC is exerting utmost

efforts for peace, stability, unity and socio-economic development of the country and people.

Despite facing the unlawful demonstrations, incitements of unrest and violence, the authorities concerned are exercising utmost restraint through minimum use of force to address the disturbances in order to maintain rule of law and public safety in line with domestic laws and international practices.

The Ministry views that some statements and remarks made by some embassies in Yangon and foreign countries are tantamount to flagrant interference in internal affairs of Myanmar.

Their statements and remarks also violated the Article 41 of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations of 1961 which implies that diplomats are to respect the laws and regulations of the receiving State and should not interfere in the internal affairs of that State.

In this regard, the diplomatic missions in Myanmar should strictly adhere to the well-established principles and norms stipulated in the Vienna Convention and the Charter of the United Nations.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Nay Pyi Taw
Dated, 21 February 2021

Public Announcement

FROM PAGE-1

- The security force members had to disperse the riotous protesters by following the prescribed crowd dispersal methods. Though the protesters dispersed, some notorious ex-criminals and their gangs used sticks, knives, stones, catapults, and other weapon-like materials to attack the security force members. Such doings turned to riots and anarchy mob as the security force members had to fire back.
- It is found that the protesters have raised their incitement towards riot and anarchy mob on the day of 22 February. Protesters are now inciting the people, especially emotional teenagers and youths, to a confrontation path where they will suffer the loss of life.
- Thus, youths are required to be vigilant for such wrongdoings of notorious ex-criminals and their gangs. Parents and the general public are also earnestly requested to safeguard the youths for the tranquillity of the nation.

Information Team
State Administration Council

State Administration Council's Announcement

Some unscrupulous persons are putting various forms of pressures and posing threats to civil service personnel in performing their duties at present. The civil service personnel who have encountered such pressures and threats shall contact the following phone numbers. Strong legal actions will also be taken against those who make such pressures and threats.

Contact phone numbers	-067 412 168	-067 412 246	-067 412 388	-067 412 598	-067 412 539
	-067 412 222	-067 412 387	-067 412 444	-067 412 066	-067 412 540

Democratic practices in the countries

SECURITY forces are hardly working in their duties in line with international rules; other countries, except the western states, have advised solving the internal problems in line with democratic practices; fraud voter lists are being scrutinized at present and will be announced worldwide; full cooperation of the council members is needed for democratic practices in the countries.

(Excerpt from the speech to the coordination meeting of the State Administration Council
made by the Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council Chairman
Senior General Min Aung Hlaing on 16 February 2021)

Police vehicle attacked by rocks, slingshots and knife in Shwepyitha

A police vehicle transporting a patient to hospital was attacked and one civilian was killed during the shootout in Shwepyitha township on 20 February.

Upon the information received of U Ko Ko Naing lived in Aung Zay Yandanar street, Na/14 ward, Shwepyitha, who was injured from the quarrel for striking pan to make noise in the neighbourhood, police went to transport the injured to the hospital. When they arrived in front of the ward administration office on Bandulla road Ta/15 ward in Shwepyitha township, about 20 people stopped the vehicle and attacked with rocks, slingshots and knives. Two police officers were injured and the vehicle was also damaged. A police officer fired shots into the air to disperse the people and one was killed by a gunshot.

Shwepyitha township is one of the townships in Yangon Region which has been imposed under the Section 144 of Criminal Procedure which prohibits assembly of more than five people, protests, destroying and violent acts. People who involved in this attack will be taken into action in accordance with the law and the security force members are working day and night for the community peace.—MNA

Public Announcement

(21 February 2021)

THE 22nd February is the day for more than 900,000 pensioners to withdraw their pensions and they also rely only on their pensions. It is found out that the news are spreading on Facebook to conduct various ways to destruct or block the ways to banks by force to fail in pension withdrawals. Moreover, some people threatened others to participate in CDM movement and so the people who want to stay peacefully sent letters to the State Administration Council for many times to solve these cases. According to the culture of democracy, the people can stage a protest in accordance with the law. But now, the lawless actions like threats or use of force that affect the keeps and stability of people lead to occur Riot. Therefore, it is here announced that action will be taken against these moves in accordance with the law.

State Administration Council
Information Team

Trade Mark Ads

Call

09251022355,
09974424848

137 courses for diploma, postgraduate in medical education to be conducted

A total of 2,082 trainees will be allowed for 137 courses of diploma and postgraduate at medical universities and related universities under the Ministry of Health and Sports in 2021 academic year.

The applications for these courses shall be submitted commencing 2nd week of February.

Sr	University	Diploma	M.Sc	Doctorate	Total
1	Universities of Medicine	7	31	47	85
2	Universities of Dental Medicine	2	10	9	21
3	Universities of Nursing	1	9	1	11
4	Universities of Medical Technology	1	3	3	7
5	Universities of Pharmacy	-	4	4	8
6	University of Public Health	1	2	1	4
7	University of Community Health	-	1	-	1
Total		12	60	65	137

Ministry of Health and Sports

Thanaka trees selling well in Yesagyo Township

THANAKA trees produced by Shinmataung area in Yesagyo Township, Pakokku District of Magway Region are flooding the local market at a fair price, a trader from Pakokku Myoma market said.

There are over 100 Thanaka sellers in the compound of U Mayga monastery of Yesagyo Township. Varieties of Thanaka bark pieces and Thanaka trees are available there, said U Thein Lwin Oo, a broker.

Those Thanaka trees are over ten years old, and they are distributed to retail and wholesale markets across the country.

Thanaka trees are cut into 1.5 feet pieces in retail markets. It was worth K7,000 per piece earlier. Now, they are priced only K1,500-2,000 per piece. The price varies on the quality of Thanaka bark, Daw Soe Wai, a seller, explained.

Nevertheless, some two-three-year-old Thanaka trees are also commonly found in the mar-

ket. Most of them lack fragrance. The price of a Thanaka tree ranges between K10,000 to K12,000. The traders expect a market recovery in the post-COVID-19 era.

Thanaka market is sluggish amid the COVID-19 crisis and on the back of weak demand during winter, said U Kyaw Moe, chair of Myanmar Thanaka Planters and Producers Association.

Thanaka, a yellowish-white cosmetic paste made from ground bark, is a natural cosmetic in Myanmar.

“Thanaka exports to Bangkok have come to a halt. The COVID-19 pandemic triggered the domestic production slowdown”, a producer from Ayadaw Township pointed out.

Thanaka produced by Ayadaw Township is sent to wholesale depots in Pakokku, Yesagyo, Bago and Kyonpyaw towns. The demand from the Thanaka value chain is relatively low in the meantime. — Wati (IPRD)/GNLM



Customers evaluate the price of Thanaka at a roadside shop in Monywa. **PHOTO: MYO WIN TUN**

Manufacturing export plummet to \$2.45 bln in 2020-2021FY

Exports of finished industrial goods drastically fell to US\$2.45 billion between 1 October and 5 February in the current financial year 2020-2021, an extreme drop of \$1.18 billion compared with the corresponding period of the previous FY, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

As per the ministry figures, the exports of finished industrial goods totalled \$3.63 billion during the same period in the 2019-2020FY.

Myanmar's manufacturing sector is largely concentrated in garment and textiles produced on the Cutting, Making, and Packaging basis, contributing to the country's GDP to a certain extent.

Myanmar's garment export has dropped by over 25 per cent as of the first quarter of the current FY compared with a year-ago period on the back of a slump in demand by the European Union market, the Ministry of Commerce stated.

“Myanmar's garment indus-

try has been facing challenges such as raw material supply disruption and cancellation of orders amid the pandemic. Additionally, the current political conditions would drag down the sector,” a market observer shared his opinion.

At present, over 100 CMP garment factories temporarily shut down the reason for the lack of raw materials and a slump in demand due to the coronavirus negative impacts, leaving thousands of workers unemployed. Sixty-four factories have been permanently closed down during the pandemic, compensating about 25,000 workers. The data does not include those factories that have not resolved worker payments, the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, and Population stated.

The coronavirus impacts badly batter the labour-intensive enterprises, according to the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration.

Under the EU Myan Ku

Fund, we have now distributed K5.2 billion in support across 67,810 payments to unemployed garment factory workers as of 12 October 2020. Workers in all the states and regions of Myanmar have received this financial assistance, Jacob A. Clere, Team Leader for EU Myan Ku Fund, said.

Next, foreign direct investments flow into many businesses, including the garment enterprises, the Myanmar Investment Commission stated.

Of the investment proposals, the manufacturing and labour-intensive businesses are prioritized by the commission.

Myanmar mainly exports CMP garments to markets in Japan and Europe, along with the Republic of Korea, China, and the US.

“The garment sector is among the prioritized sectors driving up exports. The CMP garment industry has emerged as a promising one, with preferential trade from Western countries.

Yet, the country's current political situations are likely to aggravate the garment industry,” traders stressed.

Myanmar's garment factories operate under the CMP system, and those engaged in this industry are striving to transform CMP into the free-on-board (FoB) system. As the factories cannot enter into a contract for FoB, Own Design Manufacturing (ODM) and Own Business Manufacturing (OBM), the income is limited, according to the MGMA.

Exports of garments manufactured under the cut-make-pack (CMP) system were valued at US\$4.798 billion in the last financial year 2019-2020, according to data from the Ministry of Commerce.

Although the sector is struggling because of the cancellation of order from the European countries and suspension of a trade by western countries amid the pandemic, export values rose in the previous FY (1 October 2019-30 September 2020).

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

Since an outbreak like COVID-19 might happen in the future, it is necessary to prepare for a sufficient supply of raw materials. The public and private sectors will cooperate in setting up the supply chain on our own sources, including weaving, knitting, dyeing, and sewing factories.

The MGMA has more than 500 members and garment factories in Myanmar, employing more than 400,000 workers. Investors prefer to invest in countries with inexpensive labour, such as Myanmar. — KH/GNLM

COVID-19 Call Centre opens daily

In efforts to speed up the prevention, containment and treatment of the COVID-19 disease, the call centre (phone number 2019) is established by four communications operators and the Blue Ocean Company with the coordination of the Medical Research Department of the Health and Sports Ministry and Post and Telecommunications Department from 9 am to 5 pm daily at the Medical Research Department in Yangon.

Over 43 staff from the Medical Research Department and 17 volunteers from the Myanmar Medical Association totally 60 workers have been working at the centre since 8th April.—MNA

Notice to civil services personnel

THOSE who are participating in the CDM movement and all governmental employees who are carrying out their duties faithfully for the State and the people are urged to do their duty at their respective units without fail at 9:30 am on 22 February.

Request to health workers

1. It is appreciated for the strenuous efforts of the medical doctors, nurses, medical experts and other health works at the respective departments under the Ministry of Health and Sports at the front-line in the fight against prevention, containment and treatment of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19).
2. As the vaccination programme of COVID-19 is being conducted for the public and the real-time healthcare services are required for the people, all the staff members at the respective departments under the Ministry of Health and Sports are strongly urged to return to their duties with taking the well-being of patients into consideration.

Ministry of Health and Sports
8 February 2021

Announcement to the civil servants who fail to perform their duties for various reasons

1. Civil servants are the people who are working to make the whole state machinery function well. No matter how much the political, economic or government changes, civil servants must perform the duties to function the state machinery. They must abide by the rules and regulations regarding working hours, performance, and conduct in the workplace in accordance with the Civil Service Law and Employee Ethics. Those who breach the employee ethics and misconduct can be taken action in accordance with the provisions of the Civil Service Law. If an employee's act or fail to serve is a possible offence, legal action will be taken.
2. Therefore, it is announced to the civil servants who fail to perform their duties for various reasons to return to work as soon as possible while urging employees to return to work.

Request to Public

1. Democracy practices have granted the public freedom of speech, practices and living. Such freedoms should not harm others. Diverse views of others should be understood, but should not be disturbed or harassed. However, with the reason for human rights, some persons are now under pressure, harassed and threatened in breaching the laws. Undisciplined acts could lead to tarnishing the image of democracy.
2. For preventing destructive actions against the stability of the State, the safety of the public and the rule of law, it is also required to take proper actions in line with the law.
3. All the people who favour justice, freedom, equality and safety are requested to oppose breaching the laws and prevent such actions for the benefit of country and people.

Mandalay Region Administration Council's Announcement to Public

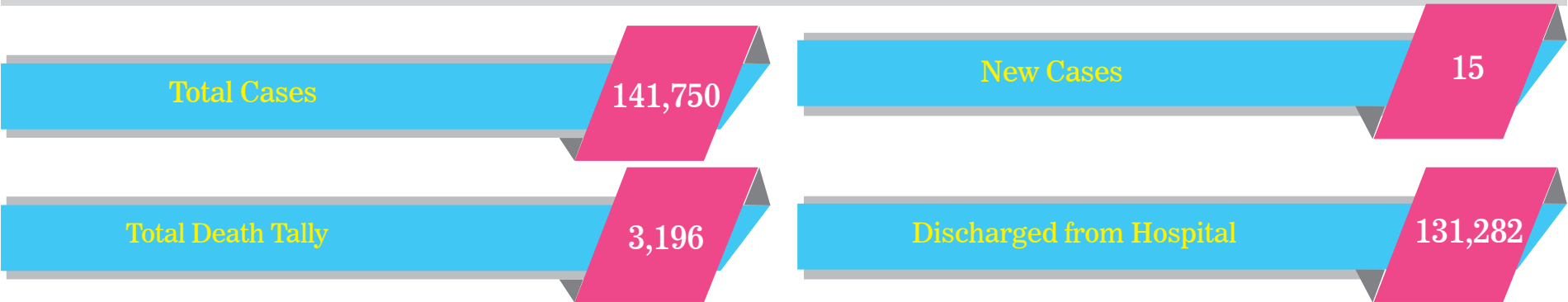
Some unscrupulous persons are putting various forms of pressures and posing threats to civil service personnel in performing their duties at present. The civil service personnel who have encountered such pressures and threats shall contact the following phone numbers. Strong legal actions will also be taken against those who make such pressures and threats.

Contact phone numbers	-02 403 9635	-02 403 6869	-09 797 144 144
	-02 403 7199	-02 403 6978	-09 694 740 311

15 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 21 February, total figure rises to 141,750

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to 141,750 after 15 new cases were reported on 21 February 2021 according to the Ministry of Health and Sports. Among these confirmed cases, 3,196 died, 131,282 have been discharged from hospitals.—MNA

Updated at 8 pm, 21 February 2021



Ministry of Health and Sports

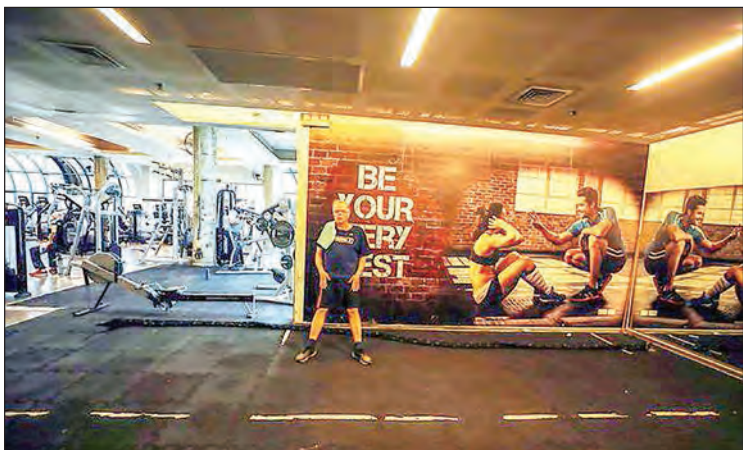
Israel re-opens further with ‘green pass’ for vaccinated

ISRAEL took a step toward normalcy Sunday, re-opening a raft of businesses and services following its third national lockdown, with some sites only available to those who have been vaccinated.

Nearly three million people, almost a third of Israel’s population, have received the two recommended doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech coronavirus vaccine, the world’s quickest inoculation pace per capita.

With a steady flow of data proving the Pfizer vaccine’s efficacy in stopping serious illness from Covid-19, Israel’s government has begun gradually easing restrictions.

Shopping malls and



A man exercises at a gym where a “Green Badge” is required upon entry, as Israel reopens swaths of its economy, continuing to lift restrictions of a national lockdown to fight the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), in Jerusalem February 21, 2021. PHOTO: POOL/AFP

stores with street access re-opened Sunday, with certain limitations on crowd size. But gyms, swimming pools, hotels and some cultural facilities are re-opening only to those who have been fully vaccinated and obtained

the so-called green pass. Israel’s green pass scheme is being closely-watched as a possible model for how other economies might re-open once a substantial part of the population is vaccinated, while stirring controversy over unequal access for those who opt out of the jab.

Lifting weights at gym in Petah Tikva near Tel Aviv late Saturday, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu insisted Israel was moving ahead “with caution,” while imploring “everyone to get vaccinated.” Standing at the entrance of a posh Tel Aviv gym, 90-year-old Ora Davidovicz said she “couldn’t wait” to go swimming. “It’s been almost a year since I

went to the pool,” she told AFP.

“I’ve been counting the days.” “All I have to do is put on my swimsuit,” she said, before heading in. As of Sunday, nearly 3.2 million Israelis are eligible for the green pass, according to the health ministry.

That includes 2.5 million people who had their second shot more than a week ago as well as nearly 700,000 people who have recovered from Covid-19. At the family-owned Katalina shoe store in central Tel Aviv, Mordechai Nazarian said his business had been closed for eight of the last 12 months, with “little openings here and there” as Israel lifted restrictions between lockdowns. — AFP ■

Warmer winters threaten Canada’s seasonal ice roads



Gilbert Cardin, owner of the ice road connecting the towns of Pointe-Fortune and Saint-Andre-d’Argenteuil, uses his chainsaw to check the depth of the ice in Pointe-Fortune, Quebec on February 17, 2021. PHOTO: AFP

CANADIAN Gilbert Cardin worries about the future of the ice road he maintains every winter on a frozen river west of Montreal.

continue,” he tells AFP.

Since February 14, the 900-meter-long path, cleared of snow and marked with fir trees, has allowed motorists to travel between two villages on opposite sides of the Ottawa River without having to drive 40 kilometres (25 miles) roundtrip to the nearest bridge. Such ice roads -- or “winter crossings” as they’re called by Quebec locals -- were once commonplace in these parts.

In the 1800s one even carried the weight of locomotives on a temporary rail line across the Saint Lawrence River between the island of Montreal and South Shore communities

on the mainland -- although one steam engine sank into the river.

In southern parts of Canada, seasonal ice roads are now increasingly scarce due to wide swings in winter temperatures -- from deep freeze to balmy -- that make it harder to maintain them.

Only a few dozen of these vestiges of winters of yesteryear remain today in all of Canada and just a handful in Quebec.

Cardin’s ice road between Pointe-Fortune and Saint Andrew d’Argenteuil is the only one of three in the Montreal area to open this year. — AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Panama Govt. announces weekend lockdown end

PANAMA’S Minister of Health, Francisco Sucre, announced Friday that as of Saturday, March 6, the total quarantine will end on weekends.

On Monday, February 22, gyms, massage rooms, spas, beauty salons, marinas and sport fishing will be reactivated, taking into account the capacity of the facilities that are going to open.

In the case of gyms the capacity should be 50%, including employees. — AFP ■

Peru suffering medical oxygen crunch amid Covid spike

HUNDREDS of Peruvians waited in long lines Saturday to get medical oxygen for loved ones with Covid-19, amid a shortage of the gas in the pandemic’s second wave.

In San Juan de Lurigancho, a largely poor area just northeast of the capital, more than 200 people waited in front of a new plant opened by the San Marcos parish and the municipality of Lima, which provides free medical oxygen.

People had to show a medical order and a photocopy of the patient’s identity document. There was tight police surveillance at the plant, as in almost all medical oxygen sales spots around the country. The first person in line had arrived Friday afternoon, sleeping on the street.

At the same time, local television showed a line of more than 70 vehicles -- including cars, vans, trucks, minibuses and motorcycle taxis -- on the side of a highway in the port city of Pisco, waiting to buy oxygen.

According to the government, the demand for medical oxygen grew by 200 percent in Peru with the second wave of Covid-19, which saw infections and deaths quadruple compared to rates in December. Outside the Criogas company in Callao, the neighboring port city of Lima, people line up for up to four days for a refill. Company owner Jose Luis Barsallo has established strict sales controls to cut out resellers and began refilling tanks only halfway to serve more people.



People wait in long lines to get medical oxygen in San Juan de Lurigancho, near Lima, Peru. PHOTO: AFP

With 33 million people, Peru has about 1.3 million confirmed cases of Covid-19 and 44,690 deaths, according to official data.

Meanwhile, the government has been rocked by charges against some 500 government officials -- including former president Martin Vizcarra and top ministers -- accused of getting vaccinated ahead of their turn.

Police raided the health ministry and two university clinics on Friday as part of the investigation into what has been termed “Vacunagate.” — AFP ■

59 million vaccine doses administered to date

MORE than 59 million doses of Covid-19 vaccine have been administered in the United States, according to data published Friday by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The CDC reported that 59,585,043 total doses have been administered -- about 76% of the 78,152,495 doses distributed. That’s 1.8 million more administered doses reported since yesterday.

More than 41.9 million people have now received at least one dose of the vaccine and more than 17 million people have been fully vaccinated, CDC data shows. — AFP ■

Germany should remain vigilant: Jens Spahn

JENS Spahn, Germany's Minister of Health, said in a press conference on Friday that the government must remain cautious with regards to easing measures.

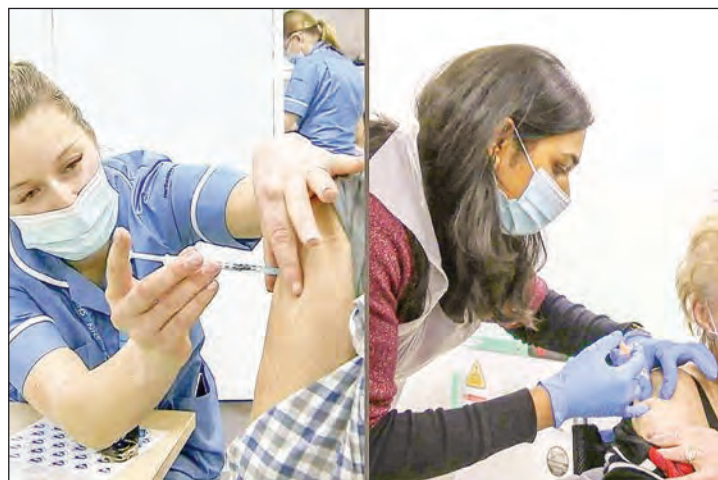
"The virus does not give up easily, we see that very clearly in these days", Spahn said. "On the one hand, we see in the last two weeks decreasing numbers of cases and increasing numbers of vaccinations. On the other hand, this week

we see an increasing number of worrying virus mutations also here in Germany. As the numbers go down, we see more of a sideways movement. That calls for caution."

He went on to say: "The RKI's (Robert Koch Institute, ed. note) analyses show that the virus variant discovered in GB is now widespread in Germany.

About one in five people who test positive is infected with this virus variant." —AFP ■

UK accelerates vaccine rollout as end of lockdown in sight



The UK government on Sunday vowed to offer a first coronavirus vaccine dose to every adult by the end of July, as it readied to announce a gradual easing of its third lockdown. **PHOTO: AFP**

THE UK government on Sunday vowed to offer a first coronavirus vaccine dose to every adult by the end of July, as it readied to announce a gradual easing of its third lockdown.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who will outline the lockdown review in parliament on Monday, said the faster inoculation campaign would seek to offer a first dose to everyone aged over 50 by mid-April.

The previous targets in the world-first campaign were to inoculate over 50s by May, and all adults by September.

"We will now aim to offer a jab to every adult by the end of July, helping us protect the most vulnerable sooner, and take further steps to ease some of the restrictions," Johnson said, while adding the exit would be "cautious and phased".

Britain, one of the hardest-hit countries in the world by the Covid-19 pandemic with more than 120,000 deaths, was also the first nation to begin a mass vaccination campaign, in December.

More than 17 million people have now received at least a

first dose -- one-third of the UK population.

But with infection rates and hospitalisations soaring after an easing of restrictions over Christmas, the government imposed a third lockdown at the start of January, including the closure of schools, non-essential businesses and hospitality venues.

Case numbers are falling again and early evidence suggests the vaccinations are helping to reduce serious illness, while pressure is building on the government to return to normality.

Johnson's cabinet was meeting on Sunday to finalise his House of Commons statement, which is expected to endorse the reopening of schools on March 8 - although teaching unions say allowing all pupils to return on the same day is "reckless".

"All of us understandably want to go back to normal, but it is right to be cautious," Health Secretary Matt Hancock told Sky News on Sunday, noting that nearly 20,000 people remain in hospital with Covid. —AFP ■

UN Security Council to meet on global warming impact on world peace



The chamber of the UN Security Council seen on September 20, 2017. **PHOTO: POOL/AFP/FILE**

THE UN Security Council will hold a summit of world leaders Tuesday to debate climate change's implications for world peace, an issue on which its 15 members have divergent opinions.

The session, called by British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and conducted by video-conference, comes just days after the United States under President Joe Biden formally rejoined the Paris climate change accord.

Johnson, whose country now holds the Security Council's rotating presidency, will address the forum, as will US climate czar John Kerry, French President Emmanuel Macron, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang

Yi and the prime ministers of Ireland, Vietnam, Norway and other countries, diplomats say.

The meeting will serve as a test for US-China relations, one UN ambassador said on condition of anonymity, alluding to one of the few issues where the two big powers might agree. But this is not a given.

"We should watch how the Chinese position themselves with the Americans," this ambassador said.

Traditionally, the ambassador said, "you know that the Russians and the Chinese will immediately say (climate change has) 'nothing to do' with the council's issues."

Today, however, "the Chi-

nese are more liable to be slightly open to that discussion," which "leaves the Russians pretty much on their own."

Russia does not see climate change as a broad issue for the Security Council to address. Moscow prefers dealing with climate questions on a case-by-case basis, diplomats told AFP.

Tuesday's meeting "will be focused on the security aspects of climate change," a second ambassador said, also on condition of anonymity.

Some non-permanent members of the council including Kenya and Niger have clearly expressed their concerns about climate change's impact on national security. —AFP ■

Libya's interior minister escapes assassination attempt

THE powerful interior minister of Libya's unity government survived an assassination attempt Sunday on a highway near the capital Tripoli, an official from his inner circle told AFP.

Fathi Bashagha's convoy "was fired on from an armoured car while he was on the highway. His police escort returned fire. Two of the assailants were arrested and a third is in hospital," the source said, adding that "the minister is fine". Bashagha, a heavyweight in Libyan politics, was returning from a routine visit to a new security unit overseen by his department, the same source said.

The 58-year-old has served as interior minister in the North African country's UN-recognised



Fathi Bashagha. **PHOTO: AFP**

Government of National Accord since 2018 and has staked his reputation on battling corruption.

Libya has been riven by violence since a 2011 NATO-backed uprising that toppled and killed dictator Moamer Kadhafi. Two rival administrations, backed by an array of militias and foreign powers, have vied for control of the

oil-rich country. Bashagha had been seen as a favourite to lead a new interim government under UN-led peace efforts following an October ceasefire last year. The post finally went to businessman Abdul Hamid Dbeibah, a 61-year-old engineer, who has called for reconstruction, democracy and reunification in Libya. —AFP ■

Preventing impacts of chemical farming is called key to saving farmers

About 15 million acres of rain-fed field in the 2020 monsoon season in our country will produce over 13 million tones of rice. And, the summer paddy have been put under over 1.8 million acres so far with the use of irrigation water and river water pumping system.

With rice production in surplus every year, our country has prospects for regaining our past status as the top rice export country.

In Myanmar, most of the farmers in our country are small and they struggling for livelihood, battling in vain against the consequences from the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides.

less farming inputs, water-intensive/water-pollutive, lethal and ecologically harmful farming practices (all of which emanate from chemical farming) do no good to agricultural advancement, and to public health.

Agricultural experts are obliged to conduct research and disseminate knowledge to farmers who are dealing with the consequences of using chemical inputs and the impact of climate change.

We need to set a target of producing safe and nutritious food using Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) to penetrate foreign markets.

In this regard, we need to intensify efforts for providing training to farmers on using critical inputs in an economic and sustainable way to obtain higher yields and follow a pattern of sustainable agriculture in the future.

We should not forget the fact that small farmers play a crucial role in ensuring food sufficiency and nutritional content, abolishing poverty, and promoting inclusive and sustainable agricultural development operations.

Now, time comes to boost the farmers' livelihood and development our agriculture sector, which will contribute to economic growth, by encouraging farmers to use the good agricultural practices.

WHO seeks \$1.96 billion for 2021 Strategic Plan for COVID-19 Response

The 2021 plan will have six objectives: suppressing transmission, reducing exposure, countering misinformation and disinformation, protecting vulnerable people, reducing death and illness, and accelerating equitable access to new tools against COVID-19 such as vaccines, diagnostics and therapeutics.

The World Health Organization (WHO) is seeking nearly \$2 billion to fund its 2021 Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan (SPRP) for COVID-19 response which, was launched on Thursday in Geneva.

The strategy follows the initial plan last year that outlined the path countries should take to suppress transmission of the new coronavirus.

"Fully funding the SPRP is not just an investment in responding to COVID-19, it's an investment in the global recovery and in building the architecture to prepare for, prevent and mitigate future health emergencies", said WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, speaking during his routine press conference.

ence.

Six main objectives

The 2021 plan will have six objectives: suppressing transmission, reducing exposure, countering misinformation and disinformation, protecting vulnerable people, reducing death and illness, and accelerating equitable access to new tools against COVID-19 such as vaccines, diagnostics and therapeutics.

WHO is looking to raise \$1.96 billion to fund the SPRP

Tedros said \$1.2 billion will go to the agency's component of the Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator, a landmark global collaboration to make these medicines accessible to people everywhere.

Another \$643 million will go

towards supporting people who require humanitarian assistance due to conflict, insecurity or other crises.

Report on 2020 plan

The WHO chief also provided details about the first SPRP, which raised \$1.58 million. Some 90 per cent of the funding was allocated to countries and regions, supporting those on the frontlines of the pandemic.

"It also enabled WHO and our partners to ship millions of tests and items of personal protective equipment, and to support thousands of ICU beds around the world", Tedros said.

The funding was also used to deploy some 191 Emergency Medical Teams, support sero-epidemiological studies in 58 countries, and provide online training



A young boy in Sofala Province, Mozambique. Families were temporarily rehoused at a relocation centre after their homes were destroyed by Cyclone Eloise in January. PHOTO: UNICEF

that reached nearly five million people.

Declaration on vaccine equity

Tedros also announced that WHO will launch a new declaration on Friday focused on the equitable distribution of COVID-19

vaccines, which calls for action from several groups, such as political leaders, manufacturers and governments.

"Vaccine equity is especially important for fragile and vulnerable groups, and for small island states like those in the

Pacific and Caribbean with small populations who can miss out on vaccines because they have less bargaining power than big countries", he said, stressing that no country should be left behind.

SOURCE: UN NEWS

Key COVID-19 indicators in U.S. continue to fall

Key indicators of COVID-19 transmission in the United States continue to fall, but health experts warn the public not to let down guard as the country sees uptick in coronavirus variants infections.



A citizen rides a bicycle near the railway station in Burlingame, California, the United States, Feb. 16, 2021. PHOTO: XINHUA

sharply for five weeks, hospitalizations for four, and deaths for two, according to the tracking project.

The current 7-day average increase of cases is 77,385, a 68.9

percent decline from the highest 7-day average of 249,048 on Jan. 11, data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) show.

Hospital admissions

The numbers of new hospital admissions of patients with confirmed COVID-19 decreased from the national peak of 18,006 on Jan. 5 to 6,841 admissions on Feb. 16, a 62 percent decrease, according

to the CDC.

The average number of daily admissions fell by 21.8 percent compared to the previous week.

The 7-day average number of new COVID-19 deaths also decreased by 9 percent to 2,708 per day compared to the previous 7-day period, CDC data show.

The drop of cases, hospitalizations and deaths are encouraging, said Stanley Perlman, professor of microbiology and immunology at the University of Iowa.

"It may mean that we are over the holiday bump," he told Xinhua in an interview on Saturday.

"It is too early to know if this is a turning point because new, more contagious variants are circulating in the United States,"

Perlman noted.

Coronavirus variants

A total of 1,549 infection cases of coronavirus variants had been reported in the United States as of Thursday, according to the CDC.

The vast majority of these cases, 1,523, were caused by the variant known as B.1.1.7, which was originally detected in Britain.

There were 21 cases of a new strain initially discovered in South Africa, called B.1.351, and five cases of the P.1 strain first discovered in Brazil.

Modeling data suggest that B.1.1.7 could become the predominant variant in the United States in March.

"We hope that the vaccine rollout will outweigh the variants spread," Perlman told Xinhua.

SOURCE: Xinhua



Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 7:00 pm Saturday 21 February 2021)

BAY INFERENCE: Weather is a few cloud over the Andaman Sea, Southeast and Eastcentral Bay and partly cloudy elsewhere over the Bay of Bengal.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL AFTERNOON OF THE 22 February 2021: Rain or thundershowers will be scattered in Shan State and isolated in Sagaing, Mandalay, Magway, Bago, Yangon regions and Kachin, Chin, Rakhine, Kayah states. Degree of certainty is (80%). Weather will be partly cloudy in the remaining regions and states.

STATE OF THE SEA: Seas will be moderate in Myanmar waters. Wave height will be about (4-8) feet off and along Myanmar Coasts.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Likelihood of slight decrease of night temperatures in Nay Pyi Taw, Sagaing, Mandalay, Magway regions and Shan, Chin, Rakhine states.

FORECAST FOR NAYPYITAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 22 February 2021: Partly cloudy..

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 22 February 2021: Likelihood of isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (60%).

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 22 February 2021: Partly cloudy to cloudy.

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In gritty Paris suburb, virus sparks 'social tsunami'



Residents of the poor southern Paris suburb of Grigny are desperate to get back to work and earning, amid what the town's mayor describes as a "social tsunami" unleashed by the pandemic. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

IN a gritty Paris suburb, Zineb, Danielle and even Benjamin, who is in his late 70s, say they only want one thing: to desperately get back to work.

Like towns all over the world, residents of Grigny, about 30 kilometres (19 miles) south of the French capital, are struggling after losing jobs in the pandemic.

But this downtrodden town, with its sprawling high-rise,

low-cost housing estates, was already known as the poorest in mainland France. Nearly half its 30,000 residents, many of them immigrants, live below the poverty line, surviving on less than 900 euros (\$1,086) a month, according to the Observatoire des Inegalites, a non-governmental body that studies inequality in France.

Grigny mayor Philippe Rio said he fears the percentage has

only increased further since the virus outbreak, given the number of people signing up for state aid. One of them is Benjamin Rajoharison.

Despite being aged 77, he used to do manual work which he said paid well.

But he has been out of a job for nearly a year and now he and his wife scrape by on welfare payments.

Once the monthly rent of 580 euros is paid, the couple is left with 300 euros to make ends meet until the end of the month.

"That's nothing at all," Rajoharison told AFP.

He hopes to find odd jobs to survive once all the Covid-19 related restrictions are lifted, he said.

The couple lives on the 10th floor of a tower block in Grigny 2, one of Europe's biggest housing complexes and also one of the most run-down in France. —AFP ■

Dutch beaches are getting cleaner, says North Sea Foundation

DUTCH beaches are getting cleaner but debris from fishing is still number one on the list of pollutants, environmental organisation 'Stichting De Noordzee' (North Sea Foundation) said.

The organisation, which has been monitoring the Dutch beaches since 2001 on behalf of the government's waterways department, analysed data gathered over the last twenty years

and found that the amount of debris collected on the beaches has gone down by over a quarter compared to a decade ago.

Tourist beaches were not included in the analysis because the rubbish left by visitors is cleaned up every day during the summer and this would distort the results, the organisation said.

Fishing-related items still head the top five of pollutants,

followed by pieces of plastic, plastic bottle tops and snack wrappings.

One of the program leaders said people are becoming more aware of the threat plastic poses to the ocean and national and international policies, such as a ban on balloons on the beach, free plastic bags and international laws on dumping waste, have been effective —AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

San Marino to use Russian Covid vaccines

SAN Marino, a tiny independent republic in northern Italy, said Friday it would use the Russian Sputnik vaccine to inoculate its population against Covid-19.

The country, with around 34,000 citizens, has yet to start its vaccination campaign. To date, it has reported around 3,400 coronavirus cases and 72 deaths.

Before turning to Russia, it had agreed a vaccines deal with Italy, but this has been undermined by the supply shortages faced in many European countries.

"The fight against coronavirus must not have any geopolitical connotations and must know no borders," Foreign Minister Luca Beccari said in a statement.

"Small European states like San Marino must be able to ensure a uniform vaccination campaign across their territory," he added.

San Marino authorities said they expected to start administering the first doses of the vaccine "in the coming days".

The Russian vaccine has not been authorised by European Union authorities, but since San Marino is not a member of the bloc, it is not bound by its rules. —AFP ■

'Green pass' for vaccinated introduced

ISRAEL took a step towards normalcy Sunday, re-opening a raft of businesses and services following its third national lockdown, with some sites only available to those who have been vaccinated.

Nearly three million people, almost a third of Israel's population, have received the two recommended doses of the Pfizer / BioNTech coronavirus vaccine, the world's quickest inoculation pace per capita.

With a steady flow of data proving the Pfizer vaccine's efficacy in stopping serious illness from Covid-19, Israel's government has begun gradually easing restrictions.

Shopping malls and stores with street access re-opened Sunday, with certain limitations on crowd size.

But gyms, swimming pools, hotels and some cultural facilities are re-opening only to those who have been fully vaccinated and obtained the so-called green pass.

Israel's green pass scheme is being closely-watched as a possible model for how other economies might re-open once a substantial part of the population is vaccinated, while stirring controversy over unequal access for those who opt out of the jab. —AFP ■

EU doubles Covax vaccine funding to one billion euros

THE European Union announced on Friday it is doubling its contribution to the Covax global Covid-19 vaccination programme to one billion euros (\$1.2 billion).

EU chief Ursula von der Leyen declared the increased funding from the bloc's budget, and pledged a further 100 million euros in aid to support the fight against the virus in Africa, in a videolink appearance at a G7 summit.

The move comes as world powers look to ramp up support for poorer nations in the face of accusations that rich countries are hoarding vaccines against the coronavirus and leaving other parts of the globe behind.

US President Joe Biden was set to pledge \$4 billion in aid to Covax during the virtual meeting with other leaders from the

Group of Seven major industrial nations.

Covax is a global project to procure and distribute coronavirus vaccines for at least the most vulnerable 20 percent in every country, allowing poorer states to catch up with the vaccination rush by dozens of wealthy countries. French President Emmanuel Macron proposed that Western countries transfer three to five percent of their stock of Covid-19 vaccines to Africa, in an interview with the Financial Times published on Thursday.

The push to bolster vaccine programmes in developing nations comes despite a slow start to the inoculation rollout across the EU that has left the bloc lagging behind countries like the United States, Britain and Israel. —AFP ■



European Council President Charles Michel (L) and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen are seen for a virtual meeting of the leaders of the Group of Seven in Brussels, Belgium, on Feb. 19, 2021. The European Union (EU) announced on Friday to double its contribution to COVAX, an international program devised to help low and middle-income countries to have more access to COVID-19 vaccines. **PHOTO: EUROPEAN UNION/HANDOUT VIA XINHUA**

Iran says talks with IAEA chief 'fruitful' as deadline looms



Head of the International Atomic Energy Agency Rafael Grossi, on the right, meets the chief of the Atomic Energy Organisation of Iran, Ali Akbar Salehi, in Tehran. **PHOTO: AFP**

IRAN said Sunday it had held "fruitful discussions" with UN nuclear watchdog chief Rafael Grossi in Tehran, ahead of a deadline when it is set to restrict the agency's inspections unless the United States lifts painful sanctions.

Grossi's visit comes amid stepped-up efforts between US President Joe Biden's adminis-

tration, European powers and Iran to salvage the 2015 nuclear deal that has been on the brink of collapse since Donald Trump withdrew from it.

Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javaf Zarif, who was to later meet Grossi, signalled that the Islamic republic wants to avoid an "impasse" but also warned that it could step fur-

ther away from its commitments if Washington does not lift the sanctions. Grossi, head of the Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), arrived in Tehran late Saturday and met with the head of the Iran Atomic Energy Organisation, Ali Akbar Salehi, early Sunday.

"Iran and the IAEA held fruitful discussions based on mutual respect, the result of which will be released this evening," Tehran's ambassador to the UN agency Kazem Gharibabadi wrote on Twitter.

Grossi was due to hold a press conference when he returns to Vienna in the evening.

Iran's conservative-dominated parliament months ago demanded that, if the US does not lift sanctions by this Sunday, Iran suspend some IAEA inspections from Tuesday.

But Iran has stressed it will not cease working with the IAEA or expel its inspectors. —AFP ■

US deports former Nazi concentration camp guard to Germany



Survivors of the Buchenwald concentration camp, relatives and US veterans take part in celebrations marking the 67th anniversary of the liberation of the Buchenwald Nazi concentration camp outside Weimar, eastern Germany, 15 April, 2012. **PHOTO: AFP**

THE United States on Saturday deported a 95-year-old former Nazi concentration camp guard to Germany, the Justice Department said.

The deportation of Friedrich Karl Berger, who had been living in Tennessee, was "possibly the last" such US expulsion of a former Nazi, given the dwindling number of war survivors, one US official said.

Berger, who had retained German citizenship, was deported for taking part in "Nazi-sponsored acts of persecution" while serving as an armed guard at the Neuengamme concentration camp system in 1945, the department said.

Berger's deportation demonstrated "that the United States is not a safe haven for those who have participated in Nazi crimes against humanity,"

Acting Attorney General Monty Wilkinson said in a statement.

The Justice Department drew evidence from both US and European archives, "including records of the historic trial at Nuremberg of the most notorious former leaders of the defeated Nazi regime," Wilkinson said.

Nuremberg anniversary

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the Nuremberg trials, in which jurists from the Allied powers tried prominent Nazis under international law. Twelve defendants received death sentences and were hanged.

The deportation of Berger, who had lived in the US since 1959, was first ordered in March of last year by a US immigration judge. —ANI ■

Argentina has new health chief after vaccine line-jumping scandal

ARGENTINA'S new health minister took office on Saturday following the resignation of her predecessor after he was caught helping friends skip the line for Covid-19 vaccinations.

Carla Vizzotti, an internal medicine specialist, was sworn in by President Alberto Fernandez at the presidential residence in a brief ceremony broadcast on television.

She did not issue a statement afterward or take questions from the media.

As a former deputy minister, Vizzotti, 48, was responsible for securing the Russian Sputnik V vaccine for Argentina.

Former health minister Gines Gonzalez Garci resigned late Friday after it emerged that the 75-year-old doctor had aided acquaintances in getting vaccinated ahead of their turn.

The scandal broke after a 71-year-old journalist, Horacio Verbitsky, announced on the radio that, owing to his longstanding friendship with the minister, he had been able to get vac-



Carla Vizzotti, pictured in August 2020, has been sworn in as Argentina's new health minister. **PHOTO: AFP**

nated in his office ahead of the general population.

So far only health workers have been vaccinated in Argentina and vaccinations for people aged over 70 only began on Wednesday in the province of Buenos Aires.

Local media reported that other people close to the gov-

ernment were also vaccinated at the health ministry.

The Public Prosecutor's Office has opened an investigation, local press reported.

So far Argentina has received 1.2 million doses of the Sputnik V vaccine and 580,000 of Covishield from the Serum Institute of India. —AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Trump to give comeback speech at conservative summit

Former US president Donald Trump will give a speech later this month to a gathering of political conservatives in Orlando, Florida, a source familiar with the plans said on Saturday, his first extended public address since leaving the White House on 20 January.

The appearance is scheduled for Sunday, 28 February at the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC), one of the country's largest annual gatherings of political conservatives. Trump will be "talking about the future of the Republican Party and the conservative movement", the source told AFP. He is also expected to challenge the "disastrous amnesty and border policies" of his successor, President Joe Biden, the source added.

Trump, who was impeached for an unprecedented second time for his role in fomenting the 6 January assault on the US Capitol, nevertheless remains a potent force in US politics. Three-quarters of Republicans want Trump to play a prominent role in the party, according to a poll from Quinnipiac University this week. —AFP ■

Locked-down pub becomes Ireland's first wildlife hospital

A pub that closed its doors during lockdown is now serving a menagerie of very different clientele after transforming into Ireland's first wildlife hospital.

The bar of the Tara Na Ri pub in County Meath to the northwest of Dublin is now deserted, the blinds pulled down, the Guinness taps dry and the till empty. But the pub's outbuildings are a hive of activity.

In one, a member of staff bottle-feeds Liam, a two-week-old wild Irish goat who was found on a mountainside.

Three swans nest on straw in former stables, a skittish fox settles in a new enclosure, and a wide-eyed buzzard is being nursed back to health.

"We were very much accustomed to just one singular way of living," said James

McCarthy, whose family have owned the pub for more than a decade.

"When that's taken away you're just kind of left with a void. It takes some time before it starts getting replaced with other things that you never would have thought were possible before." McCarthy has turned the outbuildings over to the government-backed agency Wildlife Rehabilitation Ireland (WRI) and instead of pulling pints, now serves drive-through customers with takeaway coffees at the front of the pub.

Locals muck in

The WRI facility, which opened Friday, is the first animal hospital in Ireland capable of caring for animals of any species, size or medical needs. —AFP ■



Animal Manager of Wildlife Rehabilitation Ireland, Dan Donohue, said the hospital is preparing for 'orphan season'. PHOTO: AFP

Niger political veterans face off in presidential vote

NIGER voted Sunday in a presidential run-off between two political heavyweights that is set to bring about the first democratic transition of power in the coup-prone country's history.

The world's poorest nation according to the UN's development benchmark covering 189 countries, Niger is also struggling with jihadist insurgencies that have spilled over from Mali and Nigeria.

Only 7.4 million of the country's 22 million population are eligible to vote on Sunday -- the rest are under-age.

Thousands of soldiers are deployed nationwide for the vote, which is on track to usher in a peaceful handover between elected presidents, its first since independence from France in 1960.

Outgoing President Mahamadou Issoufou's decision to voluntarily step down after two five-year terms was welcomed in a region where many leaders have tried to cling on to power.

"I'm proud to be the first democratically elected president in our history to be able to pass the baton to another democratically elected president," Issoufou said as he voted at city hall in capital Niamey.

His successor will either be his right-hand man and anointed successor Mohamed Bazoum or Mahamane Ousmane, who became the country's first democratically-elected president in 1993, only to be toppled in a coup three years later.

Ousmane, 71, is running for president for the fifth time since his ouster. —AFP ■

World Jewish Congress hails Pope's visit to Holocaust survivor



Pope Francis opened the Vatican archives to historians researching Pope Pius XII, long criticised for failing to speak out about the Holocaust that happened while he was pontiff. PHOTO: AFP

THE World Jewish Congress (WJC) on Sunday hailed Pope Francis' "tremendous compassion" after he visited a Holocaust survivor in Rome, praising his "moral integrity and sense of history".

Francis spoke with Hungarian-born poet Edith Bruck for around an hour, with the Vatican saying their conversation "highlighted the value of memory and the role of the very oldest in nurturing it and passing it on to the

very youngest".

"At a time when neo-Nazism, antisemitism, and other bigotries are resurgent in many parts of the world, Pope Francis' moral integrity and sense of history set the standard for other faith, political and community leaders," WJC president Ronald S. Lauder said in a statement.

Bruck, now 88, has been settled in Rome for many years and is now an Italian citizen.

She has spent her life re-

counting the atrocities committed during the Holocaust, in which around six million Jews and hundreds of thousands belonging to other groups were systematically exterminated by Nazi Germany.

She recalled the last words of two inmates in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, where 52,000 people were killed or died in 1939-45.

"Tell the story," they urged her. "They won't believe you, but if you survive, tell the story, tell it for us too!"

The Vatican said the pope and Bruck also spoke of "moments of light that brightened the hellish experience of the camps and the fears and hopes that define our own era".

Vatican authorities last year opened to historians the archives of Pope Pius XII, pontiff from 1939 to 1958.

Pius has been the subject of decades of controversy and debate about why he never spoke out about the slaughter of six million Jews in Nazi concentration camps across Europe. —AFP ■

United plane suffers engine failure, scatters debris over US city

A United Airlines plane suffered a fiery engine failure Saturday shortly after taking off from Denver for Hawaii, dropping massive debris on a residential area before a safe emergency landing, officials said.

A video shot from inside the aircraft - which had 231 passengers and 10 crew onboard - showed the right engine ablaze and wobbling on the wing of the Boeing 777-200, its cover entirely missing as the aircraft flew over a barren landscape.

There were no injuries on the plane or on the ground, authorities said.

"I can honestly say I thought we were going to die at one point - because we started dropping altitude right after the explosion," passenger David Delucia told The Denver Post.

"I grabbed my wife's hand and said, 'We're done.'"

Delucia said his stepdaughter tweeted the online video, which was shot by another passenger.

"Flight UA328 from Denver to Honolulu experienced an en-



A United Airlines plane suffered a fiery engine failure Saturday shortly after taking off from Denver for Hawaii, dropping massive debris on a residential area before a safe emergency landing, officials said. PHOTO: AFP

gine failure shortly after departure, returned safely to Denver and was met by emergency crews as a precaution," United Airlines said in a statement.

"The majority of customers originally on UA328 are currently on their way to Honolulu on a new flight," it added, saying those who did not wish to travel immediately had been provided with hotel accommodation.

'Mayday, mayday'

In a recording of the distress call obtained from the website LiveATC, which broadcasts air traffic communications, the pilot requested emergency permission to turn back to Denver.

"Three-twenty-eight, uh, heavy. We've experienced engine failure, need to turn. Mayday, mayday," he said, without obvious panic in his voice. —AFP ■

Covid-19: Could empty office buildings help solve France's housing crisis?

COVID-19 has emptied office buildings and business districts, and with working from home expected to be the norm after the pandemic, some want to convert them to residential use to help solve inner city housing crises.

France has already begun to experiment with such conversions and "the significant rise in remote working encourages scaling up" such projects, French Housing Minister Emmanuelle Wargon said recently.

She wants to accelerate the transformations to respond to both the need for housing and to fight against urban sprawl.

A recent study con-



France has already begun to experiment with office-to-home conversions. PHOTO: AFP

centrating on the Paris region, home to nearly a fifth of France's population, found that if around

40 percent of firms adopted two days of remote working per week following the pandemic, they could re-

duce the office space they occupy by almost 30 percent, or 3.3 million square metres, over the coming

decade. Such a scenario is a nightmare for the commercial real estate industry -- a favourite of investors as it is easier to manage, with slower turnover of clients and fewer unpaid rent bills.

But even before the pandemic more than six percent of Paris region office space was vacant, according to the study from the IEIF research institute.

- 'Mythical creature' -

"The conversion of offices into housing is a bit of a mythical creature", said IEIF's director Christian de Karangal. Although years of discussion have never amounted to concrete actions this time

may be different, said de Karangal -- even if the extent of remote working's impact on office space occupancy is still unclear.

That is because -- in addition to public authorities encouraging such conversions -- some buildings are becoming obsolete for use as offices, and institutional investors are now interested. But the changes are not always straightforward.

"Not all buildings can be converted," said Sebastien Lorrain, a senior director for residential, healthcare and investment properties at international commercial real estate group CBRE in France. —AFP ■

Swiss spooked by using debt to prop up economy

GERMANY, which is known for strict budgets, has tapped debt markets to prop up its virus-hit economy, while neighbouring Switzerland has consistently curbed borrowing despite calls to change course.

With Swiss firms struggling through another lockdown, the federal government last week finally loosened its purse strings a bit, doubling emergency aid to 10

billion Swiss francs (\$11.2 billion, 9.3 billion euros) as part of a programme to boost the economy.

But when he presented the package for companies worst hit by the latest Covid restrictions, Finance Minister Ueli Maurer again lamented that Switzerland had to borrow to boost the economy.

Some 10 billion francs in debt will have to be paid off within six

years according to a constitutional debt brake rule, Maurer warned.

He promised to present various options to do so as soon as the economic outlook cleared a bit.

Despite mounting criticism that the wealthy Alpine nation isn't doing enough to support companies, Maurer has repeated time and again that the Swiss government has "no money".

The government is already borrowing "150 million francs a day, or six million per hour, or 100,000 a minute," he notes.

In 2020, Switzerland's federal government spent 15 billion francs (\$16.7 billion, 13.8 billion euros) to support the economy, and preliminary data shows it ended the year with a deficit of 15.8 billion (\$17.6 billion, 14.5 billion euros). —AFP ■

UK fintechs seek 'cure for Brexit' in Lithuania



Invest Lithuania estimates that fintech employs more than 4,000 people in the country. PHOTO: AFP

THANKS in part to Brexit, Lithuania is becoming a fintech hub as a growing number of UK-linked digital financial companies are getting licences there so they can continue to operate in the European Union.

The Baltic eurozone state with a population about a third the size of London is now leading the EU in fintech with over 230 companies, according to the Invest Lithuania government agency.

Some two dozen have links to Britain. One of the first to come after the 2016 Brexit referendum was London-based Revolut bank. "Lithuania is currently a hub for our European operations after Brexit," Virgilijus Mirkes, CEO of Revolut Bank in Lithuania, told AFP.

"We opened our Vilnius office in 2017 af-

ter considering the fintech-friendly business environment," he said, pointing to a speedy licensing process and good local talent. Invest Lithuania estimates that the sector employs more than 4,000 people in the country -- an increase of more than 18 percent in the past year.

"During the Brexit transition period, fintech companies began to search for an alternative EU harbour and thus Lithuania has become one of their primary options," said Jekaterina Govina, a senior official in charge of supervision at Lithuania's central bank.

- 'Continue to scale' -

Lithuania says it can process licence applications in as little as three months, more quickly than anyone else in the EU. —AFP ■

Privacy faces risks in tech-infused post-Covid workplace



A member of staff at the University of Bolton in northern England has his body temperature checked by an automatic walk-through scanner to help to mitigate the spread of the novel coronavirus. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

PEOPLE returning to work following the long pandemic will find an array of tech-infused gadgetry to improve workplace safety but which could pose risks for long-term personal and

medical privacy.

Temperature checks, distance monitors, digital "passports," wellness surveys and robotic cleaning and disinfection systems are being deployed in

many workplaces seeking to reopen.

Tech giants and startups are offering solutions which include computer vision detection of vital signs to wearables which can offer early indications of the onset of Covid-19 and apps that keep track of health metrics.

Salesforce and IBM have partnered on a "digital health pass" to let people share their vaccination and health status on their smartphone.

Clear, a tech startup known for airport screening, has created its own health pass which is being used by organizations such as the National Hockey League and MGM Resorts.

Fitbit, the wearable tech maker recently acquired by Google, has its own "Ready for Work" program that includes daily check-ins using data from its devices.

Fitbit is equipping some 1,000 NASA employees with wearables as part of a pilot program which requires a daily log-in using various health metrics which will be tracked by the space agency.

Microsoft and insurance giant United Healthcare have deployed a ProtectWell app which includes a daily symptom screener, and Amazon has deployed a "distance assistant" in its warehouses to help employees maintain safe distances. —AFP ■

Forget the crowded downtown parks of Yangon for a moment to cope with the suffocating days of the big city. Taikkyi, a small township in Yangon Region, is also a tourist destination full of attractions such as lush green forests, wildlife sanctuary, historical pagodas and waterfalls.

Taikkyi Town

It has been noted as one of the main source of drinking water in Yangon. Located in the far north of Yangon, the city is made up of eight wards. During the colonial period, Taikkyi was an insignificant village in Hantharwady District. Still, in 1877 it became a station village on the Yangon-Pyay Railway and is now part of the Northern District of Yangon Region.

On 29 December 1908, Taikkyi was declared as a town. Therefore, on 29 December 2020, it will be 112 years since it became as a town.

Tourist attractions in Taikkyi

For those who want to travel near Yangon, there are various places to visit around the town. Even though it is located in Yangon Region, it has less urban style and can give you the feeling of being in a new area.

Kyeik Pun Thar Lun Pagoda

Kyaik Pun Thar Lun Pagoda, which is very busy during the pagoda festival (Ta Paung La), is said to be a historical pagoda. It is said to have been built in 1410 by the Mon MP Banyar Kyantaw. To get to this pagoda, take a short walk from the Toll Gate at the entrance to Taikkyi, and you will see the Targwa-Tarsone junction on the left side of the road.

That road is the Targwa-Thayet Chaung road that extends to Thayet Chaung. It is a concrete road between villages with nice fields along the road. Kyaik Pun Thar Lun Pagoda is located in Thitsu Village. It is visible from the right side of the road. At the back of the pagoda, you can also visit the tomb of the former chief monk.

Min Kyaung

On Yangon-Pyay Road, you can also visit Min Kyaung on the left side of the road. Inside, you can still see an ancient monastery. You can see Aung Myay Bon San Htut Phone Thar Khaung Yan Myo Aung Pagoda and Shwe Thar Laung



Kaung Mhu Taw pagoda

A visit to **Taikkyi**, a tour destination with many attractions (1)

Thiha Lu Lin (Thiha, the Traveller).
Photos : Min Hsann, Thiha Lu Lin
Translated by Ei Phyu Phyu Aung,
Khine Thazin Han

Pagoda inside at the entrance.

The ancient monastery inside is more than a hundred years old, and the Department of archaeology has identified the site as an archaeological site.

Taikkyi Goldfish pond

Tourists are drawn to the Goldfish pond in Taikkyi, which

was said to have moved to a bigger lake due to an unexpected increase in the number of fish. Feeding a colourful clustered goldfish can be quite daunting.

The pond is on the road to the cemetery behind the Nirvana Free Funeral Service Association building. The car can

be parked in that compound. There are vendors who sell fish foods. You have to pay 1000 kyats for 4 small bottles, which is a good amount to feed, and some people buy by the sack.

Gyo Phyu Reservoir

Some also visit Gyo Phyu Reservoir, which was excavat-

ed between 1938 and 1939 and completed in 1940 to supply millions of gallons of water to Yangon daily. In fact, outsiders are not usually allowed to enter. It is said that security is tighter during the COVID-29 period. But for a variety of reasons, some can visit. Although it is not easily accessible to the



Taikkyi was recognized as a city on 29 December 1908. Therefore, it was 112 years on 29 December 2020.



Replica statue of Japan Kamakura



The poles at the pagoda are decorated with small colourful Buddha statues



Aphoe Kyaung is a must whenever you arrive at Gyo Phyu reservoir

public, there are places to visit along the way to the reservoir.

The water pipes are also very dignified, so if you find the scenery along the way is beautiful, you can take a souvenir photo with big water pipes.

Phoo Gyi Lake

It takes quite a long time to go to Phoo Gyi Lake from Taikkyi. Like the Gyo Phyu Reservoir. Although Phoo Gyi Lake is in a restricted area, some are allowed to visit.

Aphoe Kyaung (grandfather monastery)

One of the must-see places during the visit to Gyo Phyu Reservoir is Aphoe Kyaung, where pagodas and temples, ponds and Buddhist life stories can be seen in the vest area.

You can even take a day to visit this monastery.

As soon as you enter the temple grounds and turn left,



Khin Pon Kyi Sal Par pagoda

you will first see a very beautiful pagoda and the statue of a saint.

You can explore the inside

and outside of the pagoda and visit the upper part of the pagoda. Behind the pagoda is a two-story tower, from there,

you can fully see the pagoda. Inside the pagoda, you can see statues carved with real gems locked with glass doors. You

will also see a statue of the former chief monk as well as the relics of the saints.

There is also a fish pond in the monastery where you can feed the fishes. Since the area is quite large, you can walk around from one place to another.

It is carefully designed for children and young people to learn about the Buddha's life stories and teachings. You can also see a replica of the Sagaing Kaung Hmu Taw pagoda, as well as a statue of the Kamarkura in Japan.

Moreover, Thamee Taw Myar pagoda, Khin Pon Gyi Sal Par pagoda, Amyo Khaw Oh Paw pagoda and Sal Taung pagoda can be seen in the compound. The sizes and shapes of Buddha statues are different, and so it is sure you will have a certain feeling like travelling to the far-flung areas



YUFC sign Magwe Midfielder on two-year loan

IN preparation for a new football season of the Myanmar National League, Yangon United Football Club recently confirmed that Midfielder Thiha from Magwe Football Club has joined the football squad for a two-year agreement, according to the team's statement.

Upon joining the domestic football league, Thiha has expressed his hope.

"It was beyond my pleasure when I received the offer from this great team. I know this is one of the strongest teams in Myanmar National League, I do my best for the team and the fans", Thiha

said.

The 25-year-old midfielder began his professional life with junior team of Ayeyawady United in 2014. Next, he moved to Dagon FC of Myanmar National League-II in 2015. The midfielder played for the Dagon FC for one year

and showed his brilliant skill.

The youth player transferred to Yangon FC in 2017. Next, Thiha joined Magwe FC in 2018 and played for the team till 2020 season of the Myanmar National League. —GNLM ■

Djokovic beats Medvedev to win ninth Australian Open



World number one Novak Djokovic beat Russia's Daniil Medvedev in straight sets to win his ninth Australian Open title and extend his record-breaking reign at Melbourne Park Sunday. **PHOTO: AFP**

MELBOURNE — World number one Novak Djokovic beat Russia's Daniil Medvedev in straight sets to win his ninth Australian Open title and extend his record-breaking reign at Melbourne Park Sunday.

Djokovic demolished the fourth seed 7-5, 6-2, 6-2 in front of 7,400 fans on Rod Laver Arena to end the Russian's unbeaten run at 20 matches.

In winning his third straight Australian Open, the Serb claimed his 18th Grand Slam title to move within two of Roger Federer and Rafael

Nadal who have 20 each, while denying Medvedev his first.

The Serbian world number one has had to battle injury and extract new levels of determination just to get to the final.

An abdominal injury in the third round put him on the brink of an early exit and left him unable to train between matches.

But after his semi-final win over another Russian, Aslan Karatsev, Djokovic reported he felt fitter than at any time during the Melbourne fortnight. —AFP ■

Real Madrid close on top spot after Atletico stumble again

MADRID — Real Madrid are back within touching distance of the top of La Liga after they punished another Atletico Madrid slip against Levante on Saturday by beating Real Valladolid 1-0.

Atletico had the chance to stretch their lead to 11 points this week by winning back-to-back games against Levante but instead they followed a 1-1 draw on Wednesday with

a surprise 2-0 loss, meaning a five-point advantage became only six.

Real Madrid cranked up the pressure again by edging to a win over struggling Real Valladolid, Casemiro's second-half header cutting the gap to just three points, albeit with Atletico still owning a game in hand. "It's not because Atletico lost. We believe we can win the league," said Casemiro. —AFP ■



Casemiro scored the winner as Real Madrid beat Real Valladolid on Saturday. **PHOTO: AFP**

Mexico's Valdez upsets Berchelt with stunning 10th round KO



Mexico's Oscar Valdez captured the WBC 130-pound belt with a brutal 10th round knockout of champion Miguel Berchelt in Las Vegas. **PHOTO: AFP**

LAS VEGAS — Mexico's Oscar Valdez dethroned Miguel Berchelt on Saturday, knocking him out with one second left on the 10th round in a stunning upset, to claim the World Boxing Council junior lightweight title in Las Vegas.

Valdez, who scored two knockdowns earlier in the fight, landed a vicious left hook to the head that sent Berchelt crumbling to the canvas at the MGM Grand Hotel.

Valdez brutally overpowered Berchelt in a battle between the two Mexican warriors that lived up to its pre-fight hype.

"I have a list of people who doubted me," said the undefeated Valdez. "I proved them wrong.

"There is nothing better in life than proving people wrong. Don't ever let anyone tell you that you can't do something."

Bleeding from both nos-

trils, Berchelt remained motionless on his back for two minutes after the knockout before being helped to his feet by the ring doctors.

He sat on a stool with his head down, while Valdez, who improved to 29-0 with 23 KOs, celebrated the victory with his corner. Valdez is a former featherweight world champion who made six straight defences before moving up to 130 pounds in 2019. —AFP ■