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 the livestock and Fisheries sector attracted five projects. Other service sector drew four projects while the agriculture sector pulled two projects, and the livestock and Fisheries sector attracted five projects.

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 reviewing 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/GNLN

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 protesters 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 protesters started physically attacking and clashing with the security forces, resulting into riots.

Reinforced bridge to benefit seven villages in Kyauktaw

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 (Sitway) 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

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

4. 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.

5. 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.

6. 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 Yandamar 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

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.

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</table>

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 Mya Gy 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, a seller, explained.

Nevertheless, some two-three year-old Thanaka trees are also commonly found in the market. 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 Bangladesh 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 (PRD)/GNLM

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 2019-2020 FY.

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 industry 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 hinder 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 $560 million in the 2015-2016 FY, but it has tripled over the past two FYS. In the 2016-2017FY, about $82 million 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. — SNA
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 workers 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

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 law. 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 -09 797 144 144

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

People had to show a medical pass, according to the health ministry and two university clinics on Friday as part of the government’s vaccination strategy.

Hundred of Peruvians wait for oxygen amid virus

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 north-east 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.

As Israel reopens swathes of its economy, continuing to lift restrictions, the demand for medical oxygen grew by 200 percent in Lima, people line up for up to four days for a refill. Company officials -- including former president Pedro Castillo Terrones -- have been rocked by charges of corruption and financial irregularities.

Panama's Minister of Health, Francisco Sucer, 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.

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.

Lifting weights at gym where a “Green Badge” is required upon entry, as Israel reopens swathes of its economy, continuing to lift restrictions.

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Germany should remain vigilant: Jens Spahn

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

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

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 Chinese 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

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.

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 hard-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, 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

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 high- way. 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 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

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

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 Chinese 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

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.

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.

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Preventing impacts of chemical farming is called key to saving farmers

A bout 15 million acres of rain-fed field in the 2010 monsoon season in our country will produce over 15 million tons of rice. And, the summer plastreet has been put under over 1.5 million acres so far with the use of irrigation water and river water pumping system. With river production in surplus every year, our country has prospects for regaining the status as the top rice export country.

In 2018, our rice export reached more than 8 million tons, the most in over 70 years. To bring the past glo-
y of rice production back to the country, the farmers and stakeholders in the rice in-
dustry need to learn and prac-
tise new agricultural meth-
ods which are environmental friendly and can guarantee a sustainable way.

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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 conse-
quencies of using chemical inputs and the impact of climate change.

This is a turning point because new, more contagious variants are circulating in the United States, said Perlman.

In this regard, we need to actively efforts for providing training to farmers on using organic inputs and new sustainable ways 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, aboli-
ishing poverty, and promoting inclusive and sustainable agricultural development operations.

Now, time has come to boost the farmers’ livelihood and develop our agriculture sector, which will contribute to economic growth, by encouraging farmers to use the good agricultural practices.

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 upick in coronavirus variants infections.

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.

WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, speaking during his routine press conference on Monday said that the world was “in a better place” after a year of COVID-19, but warned that the world’s battle against the pandemic is not yet over.

The WHO’s Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan for COVID-19 outlines how the agency will respond to future pandemics, and how it will support countries to better respond to any future outbreaks.

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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 re-
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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 Benjamina, 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 10 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 ($1,080) a month, according to the Observatoire des Inégalités, 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 Benjamina-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

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).

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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 1,400 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 Becatti 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

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

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 Mou-

hammad Javad 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 Vi-


“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 Razem Gharibabadi wrote on Twitter.

Grossi was due to hold a press conference when he re-

turns to Vienna in the evening.

Iran’s conservative-domi-

nated parliament months ago demanded that, if the US does not lift sanctions by this Sunday, Iran suspend some IAEA inspec-

tions from Tuesday.

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

Argentina has new health chief after vaccine line-jumping scandal

ARGENTINA’S new health minister took office on Satur-

day 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 state-

ment afterward or take ques-

tions 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 Garcia resigned late Friday after it emerged that the 75-year-old doctor had aided acquaintances in getting vacci-

nated ahead of their turn.

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

nated in his office ahead of the general population.

So far only health workers have been vaccinated in Argen-

tina and vaccinations for peo-

ple 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 Of-

fice has opened an investigation, local press reported.

So far Argentina has re-

ceived 1.2 million doses of the Sputnik V vaccine and 580,000 of Covishield from the Serum Institute of India. —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 Sat-

urday deported a 96-year-old for-

mer Nazi concentration camp guard to Germany, the Justice Department said.

The deportation of Frie-

drich Karl Berger, who had been living in Tennessee, was “possibly the last” such US ex-

pulsion of a former Nazi, given the dwindling number of war survivors, one US official said.

Berger, who had retained German citizenship, was de-

ported for taking part in “Na-

zi-sponsored acts of persecu-

tion” 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, “in-

cluding 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 Berg-

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

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 Par-

ty 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 promin-

ent role in the party, according to a poll from Quinnipiac University this week. —AFP ■

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Locked-down pub becomes Ireland’s first wildlife hospital

A pub that closed its doors during lockdown is now serving as 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 in 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

World Jewish Congress hails Pope’s visit to Holocaust survivor

Pope Francis opened the Vatican archives to historians researching Pope Pius XII, long criticized 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 “high-lighted 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 bigotry 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 remembering 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 211 passengers and 18 crew onboard - showed the right engine ablaze and wobbling on the wing of the Boeing 777-200, its cover entirely removed, the blinds pulled down, the Guinness taps dry and the till empty.

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

“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

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 truck 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 anoint-ed 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

PHOTO: 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.

Photo: 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 has encouraged 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 conducted by the Institute of Economic Research, found that if around 40 percent of firms adopted two days of remote working per week following the pandemic, they could reuse 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 IEIP research institute.

- ‘Mythical creature’
  - “The conversion of offices into housing is a bit of a mythical creature”, said IEIP’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.

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.

But he promised to present various options to do 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 noted.

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).

- “Ready for Work” program
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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 mitigate the spread of the novel coronavirus. PHOTO: AFP

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 smartphones.

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.

Fibit, 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. Fibit 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 ProtecWell app which includes a daily symptom screener; and Amazon has deployed a “distance assistant” in itswarehouses to help employees maintain safe distances.

- “During the Brexit transition period, fintech companies began to search for an alternative to the 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.

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UK fintechs seek ‘cure for Brexit’ in Lithuania

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

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 250 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 after 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.

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Slovakia to invest in health pass system

Slovakia has launched an app that will be mandatory for people visiting the country, in a bid to reduce the risk of virus infections.

The app will include a digital health pass which will be used to verify whether a person has been vaccinated or tested negative for Covid-19.

The app will be mandatory for people visiting Slovakia from other countries.

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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 Banya 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-Thayet Chaung junction on the left side of the road.

- **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.

- **Kaung Mhu Taw pagoda**
  - 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.

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- **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 Boon San Hlut Phone Thar Khaung Yan Myo Aung Pagoda and Shwe Thar Laung Pagoda inside at the entrance.

- **Gyo Phyu Reservoir**
  - Some also visit Gyo Phyu Reservoir, which was excavated 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-19 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.
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 vast area. You can even take a day to visit this monastery.

As soon as you enter the temple grounds and turn left, 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 Hma 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 Tha is from Magwe Football Club has joined the football squad for a two-year agreement, according to the team’s statement.

Thia 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”, Thia 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, Tha 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

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, Asian Karatsev, Djokovic reported he felt fitter than at any time during the Melbourne fortnight. —AFP

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

LAS VEGAS — Mexico’s Oscar Valdez captured the WBC 130-pound belt with a brutal 10th round knockout of champion Miguel Berchelt in Las Vegas. —AFP

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 nostrils, 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

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. —AFP

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

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

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