

THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

Vol. VIII, No. 87, 7th Waxing of Waso 1383 ME

www.gnlm.com.mm

Thursday, 15 July 2021

Five-Point Road Map of the State Administration Council

1. The Union Election Commission will be reconstituted and its mandated tasks, including the scrutiny of voter lists, shall be implemented in accordance with the law.
2. Effective measures will be taken with added momentum to prevent and manage the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. Actions will be taken to ensure the speedy recovery of businesses from the impact of COVID-19.
4. Emphasis will be placed on achieving enduring peace for the entire nation in line with the agreements set out in the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement.
5. Upon accomplishing the provisions of the state of emergency, free and fair multiparty democratic elections will be held in line with the 2008 Constitution, and further work will be undertaken to hand over State duties to the winning party in accordance with democratic standards.

Myanmar rejects the draft resolution tabled by OIC

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has observed that the resolution entitled “Situation of human rights of Rohingya Muslims and other minorities in Myanmar” was taken action on 12 July 2021 at the 47th Session of Human Rights Council in Geneva.

The said resolution was emphasized on so-called “Rohingya” which has never been recognized as the ethnic nationality by Myanmar. It was also based on false information and one-sided allegations as well as highlighted the roles of the international mechanisms which are not recognized by Myanmar such as mandate holders of Human Rights for Myanmar, the

Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar and the Fact-Finding Mission.

Myanmar has never accepted country-specific resolutions which are politically motivated and international mechanisms which interfere in internal affairs of the country. The said-resolution has been appeared as a duplicated action and has not reflected the Government’s endeavours on the Rakhine State. Accordingly, the term “Rohingya” which is invented with wider political agenda is also unrecognized and rejected by the Government and the people of Myanmar.

The Government is taking all inclusive and holistic approach in dealing with the Rakhine State. The repatriation process will be proceeded as per the bilateral arrangements with Bangladesh. Moreover, the citizenship verification process will be carried out in accordance with the 1982 Citizenship Law.

China and Russia also dissociated themselves from the resolution.

*Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Nay Pyi Taw
Dated. 14 July 2021.*

Union Minister participates in Special ASEAN-US Foreign Ministers’ Meeting via videoconference



UNION Minister for Foreign Affairs U Wunna Maung Lwin participated in the Special ASEAN-US Foreign Ministers’ Meeting which was held via videoconference on 14 July 2021, from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nay Pyi Taw.

The MoFA Union Ministers attends the online Special ASEAN-US Foreign Ministers’ Meeting yesterday.

The Meeting was co-chaired by Saleumxay Kommasith, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Lao PDR and Antony Blinken, Secretary of State of the United States, and was attended by ASEAN Foreign Ministers, Secretary-General of ASEAN and representatives from ASEAN and the United States.

The Meeting discussed matters pertaining to COVID-19 and public health, future direction of the ASEAN-US dialogue relations and regional and international issues.

SEE PAGE-3

INSIDE TODAY

NATIONAL

Union Minister U Chitt Naing provide lecture in MRTV, Nay Pyi Taw

PAGE-3

NATIONAL

Six million COVID-19 vaccines to be systematically jabbed in July and August: MOHS

PAGE-4

LOCAL BUSINESS

Egg, poultry prices surge on rising demand in COVID-19 crisis

PAGE-5

LOCAL BUSINESS

Watermelon price decreases by half as against last year

PAGE-5



Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Central Committee on Prevention, Control and Treatment for COVID-19
Notification

6th Waxing of Waso 1383 ME
14 July 2021

1. The State Administration Council declared public holidays from 17 to 25 July as continuous public holidays by Order No 211/2021 dated 14 July 2021.
2. To effectively prevent the spread of COVID-19 during these public holidays, the people must abide by the following rules: -
 - (a) reside at the homes or dormitories and not to travel at all except for duty and funeral services;
 - (b) only shops selling basic essential things like fuel, drinking water, meat, fish and foodstuffs are allowed to open;
 - (c) shops selling medicines and medical supplies to open;
 - (d) restaurants to adopt a take-away system;
 - (e) to continue healthcare services (government hospitals/private hospitals and clinics);
 - (f) to wear protective gears including masks if you go outside;
 - (g) must follow the COVID-19 health rules of the Ministry of Health and Sports and Central Committee on Prevention, Control and Treatment for COVID-19 without fail.
3. Action will be taken against those who fail to adhere to the afore-said orders under the existing laws.

Request to volunteers to take part
in COVID-19 prevention, control and
treatment activities

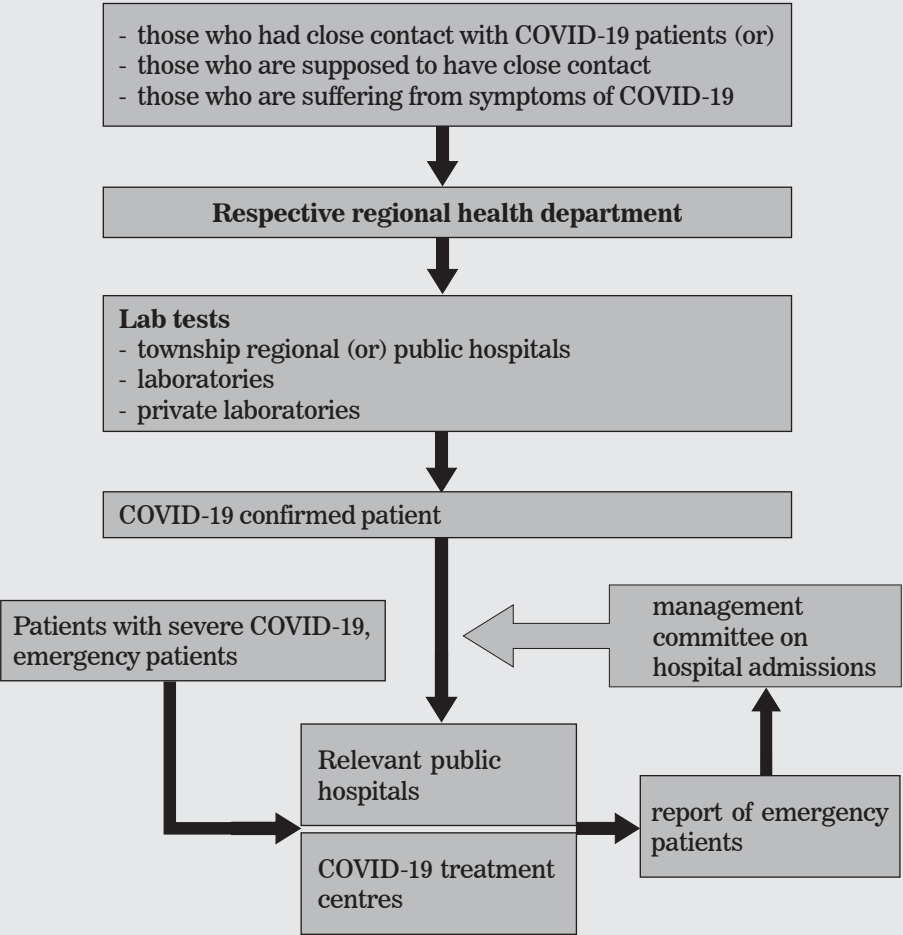
1. Health workers of the Ministry of Health and Sports are making their utmost efforts on the public health services as the numbers of COVID-19 suspected patients and confirmed cases are on the rise in regions/states during the Third Wave of COVID-19.
2. However, some health workers are absent and so, due to the lack of manpower and for the highly contagious disease, the workload and manpower become unbalanced and difficulties arise in prevention and control activities.
3. Therefore, those who want to volunteer in the under-mentioned sectors at the Public Hospitals, COVID-19 treatment centres and the places under travel restrictions are welcomed to participate: -
 - (a) COVID-19 treatment activities – doctors, nurses, experts;
 - (b) Medical equipment maintenance – Medical Engineering;
 - (c) Management of patient information – IT experts;
 - (d) Transfer of patients;
 - (e) COVID-19 vaccination – Computer experts and Data Assistants to register the data of persons who receive the vaccines;
4. The organizations or individuals who want to volunteer can contact the Call Centre (067-3411508, 067-3411509, 067-3411144) of the Ministry of Health and Sports. The officials will then connect with the Nay Pyi Taw, regions/states Public Health and Medical Services Departments and Superintendents. The government will provide accommodations, COVID-19 preventive activities and fuel used in transporting the patients for the volunteers.
5. Those who are providing medical services to families and friends are also requested here to participate in volunteer programmes.

Ministry of Health and Sports

7,083 new cases of COVID-19 reported
on 14 July, total figure rises to 208,357

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to **208,357** after **7,083 new cases** were reported on 14 July 2021 according to the Ministry of Health and Sports. Among these confirmed cases, **151,442** have been discharged from hospitals. Death toll reached **4,181** after **145** died. —MNA

Healthcare system for secondary COVID-19
contacts, suspected COVID-19 patients



Upon the symptoms of COVID-19 patients, decision will be made for treatment at respective centres.

Healthcare system for secondary COVID-19
contacts, suspected COVID-19 patients

1. Those who have had close contact or have been in contact with COVID-19 confirmed patients and those with COVID-19 symptoms must first inform the respective township health departments or hospitals.
2. Then, the swab tests will be conducted at township regional (or) public laboratories and private laboratories.
3. The confirmed COVID-19 patients must report to their respective township/region/state health committees and they will be sent to the relevant public hospitals and COVID-19 treatment centres under the arrangement of the management committee on hospital admissions.
4. However, patients with severe COVID-19 and emergency patients can directly go to the relevant public hospitals and COVID-19 treatment centres for medical treatment.
5. The public hospitals and COVID-19 treatment centres must report the emergency cases to the management committee on hospital admissions.

Ministry of Health and Sports

It is concerned with the whole country

It is necessary to understand the Burma Defence Army is concerned not only with Tatmadaw members but also the entire Bamar nationals and the whole country. Actually, there is no comprehensive independence camp because no encouragement is given to soldiers of the Burma Defence Army. It is important for defending the country in the establishment of a new era. All should not work for just Myanmar but take lessons from other countries and nearby countries.

(Excerpt from the speech delivered by War Minister Colonel Aung San at the special meeting of Burma Defence Army held in Yangon on 2 December 1942)



Union Minister participates in Special ASEAN-US ...

FROM PAGE-1

During the Meeting, Union Minister U Wunna Maung Lwin appreciated the United States’ support to ASEAN’s effort in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, encouraged the United States to further support ASEAN’s COVID-19 response initiatives, and to continue to support Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI).

With regard to developments in Myanmar, Union Minister explained on matters relating to the security condition in the country, the five-point roadmap of the State Administration Council and the five-point consensus of the ASEAN Leaders’ Meeting.

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

Republic of the Union of Myanmar
State Administration Council
Order No 211/2021

6th Waxing of Waso 1383 ME
14 July 2021

There are public holidays on Saturday, Sunday and Martyrs’ Day (17, 18 and 19 July 2021), and Eid-ul-Adha (Qurbani Eid) on 21 July as well as 23, 24, and 25 July are full moon of Waso (Dhammacakka Day), Saturday and Sunday, consequently.

The State Administration Council has designated the two weekdays — 20 and 22 July as public holidays in order to effectively conduct the COVID-19 prevention, control and treatment activities, and it is here announced that from 17 to 25 July will be the long public holidays under Section 25 of the Offices Holidays and Transferable Contracts Act.

By order,
Aung Lin Dwe
Lieutenant-General
Secretary
State Administration Council

Union Minister U Chitt Naing provide lecture in MRTV, Nay Pyi Taw

UNION Minister for Information U Chitt Naing provided the discussion and lecture yesterday morning at “New Staff Capacity Training” in Myanmar Radio and Television, Nay Pyi Taw.

The Union Minister briefed on the activities, policies, basic principles, rules and regula-

tions of the Ministry of Information and matters related to good spirit, compliance with disciplines and capacity building.

The training covers Civil Service Law, office manual structure, duties and responsibility of the department and media and television, and 128 employees have been trained

since 5 July for two weeks in line with the COVID-19 guidelines.

Afterwards, the Union Minister inspected the broadcasting processes of Myanmar Radio, Ethnic Language Programme and Thabyay Radio and cordially met with the staff. — MNA



Public holiday announcement on Eid-ul-Adha Qurbani Eid day

According to the State Administration Council Notification No. 210/2021, Eid-ul-Adha Qurbani Eid day on 13th Waxing Day of Waso 1383 ME (21 July 2021), Wednesday is a public holiday under Section 25 of the Offices Holidays and Transferable Contracts Act of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.—MNA

Personal preventive practices against COVID-19 infection

- (1) Wear the mask systematically when going out in public.
- (2) Keep a proper physical distance.
- (3) Avoid the crowd.
- (4) Wash your hands for 20 seconds frequently.
- (5) Avoid entering unventilated closed spaces as much as possible.

Politicians and media should not commit incitements and spread fake news

POLITICIANS and media should not commit incitements and spread fake news. The peacemaking process goes on as it is necessary to cease armed conflicts among the ethnic nationals for restoring peace and stability based on security measures.

(Excerpt from the speech to the State Administration Council meeting made by the Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council Chairman Senior General Min Aung Hlaing on 25 May 2021)

Six million COVID-19 vaccines to be systematically jabbed in July and August: MOHS

THE Ministry of Health and Sports held the coordination meeting on prevention and control activities of COVID-19 yesterday morning in Nay Pyi Taw and attended by Union Minister Dr Thet Khaing Win.

The meeting discussed matters in connexion with the systematic administering of six million COVID-19 vaccines — four million purchased and 2

million donated from the People's Republic of China — which will arrive in the last week of July and the first week of August according to the target groups and priorities, improving immunization information and making immunization cards nationwide, human resources invoiced in immunization, and arrangements for cold storage and distribution of vaccines that

will arrive before the end of this year.

The Union Minister discussed the full function of the oxygen plants in hospitals to prevent oxygen deficiency and plans to purchase and install them, portable oxygen concentrators and oxygen cylinders. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has eased restrictions on the import of

oxygen generators. Liquid oxygen will arrive in Myanmar through the Myawady route. Plans are underway to import them through Muse, Shan State to fulfil the need for oxygen in public hospitals and private hospitals across the country.

He also expressed thanks to respective ministries and private entrepreneurs since

they strive to import the oxygen generators.

The meeting also discussed matters pertaining to the plans to expand quarantine centres for COVID-19 positive patients and beds in regions and states, prioritizing public hospitals to receive and treat emergency patients and issues for increased acceptance of the positive patients. —MNA

Kalay town facing severe oxygen shortage as self-help oxygen plant cannot run at full capacity

ALTHOUGH the local residents in Kalay town of Sagaing Region set up an oxygen plant under a self-help scheme, the production rate still cannot meet the requirements, local residents stressed.

This oxygen generator plant was located at Mingyi Hotel with a generous contribution of K140 million. It started to run in the first week of July.

“Oxygen shortage is happening. The oxygen plant can fill only 40 cylinders (40L). There is also one oxygen generator in Kalay General Hospital. This plant can also produce 30 cylinders (40L). The government also provided one oxygen generator plant and it is reported to run soon. The local people have ordered another oxygen generator to ramp up the production and this oxygen plant will be built in the compound of Tat Oo monastery,” said U Htay Aung,

secretary of Kalay town elder.

Earlier, the current self-help oxygen plant was expected to generate oxygen for 78 cylinders (40L). Due to the shortage of volunteers, the plant cannot run at its full capacity. It operates only 16 hours (6 am to 8 pm) for now.

The severe oxygen shortage prompted the local people to take orders from Yangon and Mandalay cities. The devastating oxygen shortage is a crisis for now,” he said.

Next, Kalay town Sitagu Hospital made an initial donation of K50 million to build the oxygen plant at the hospital.

The town’s civil service organizations and other philanthropical organizations are striving to deal with the oxygen shortage. Kalay General Hospital is providing treatment to the COVID-19 patients.

There are 1,855 COVID-19



positive cases, with 1,577 recovered, 278 under treatment and 84 died, Kalay District General Administration Department stated.

The COVID-19 cases are daily rising in Kalay town and over 20 people died per day, said a local resident. —Lu Lay/ GNLM

Egg, poultry prices surge on rising demand in COVID-19 crisis

THE prices of poultry meat and egg have dramatically jumped as demand grew amid the COVID-19 cases spiking in the country, said the buyers from Dagon Myothit (North) Township.

The prices of eggs rose from K130 to K220 per piece, while chicken prices surged to K12,000 per viss.

Myanmar is battling against the COVID-19 in the third wave, and the demand for eggs and chicken is rapidly growing due to the immunity-boosting benefits.

The COVID-19 surge sparked the concerns of the

people, hiking the commodity price on the rising demand. I want price stability in the difficult times, said a buyer.

Livestock and poultry production in Myanmar has been growing 10-15 per cent annually. Most breeders are using traditional methods, and some have shifted to modern techniques. Moreover, integrated poultry and fish farming is widely seen in Myanmar.

According to the MLF, at present, 1.35 million broilers are being raised for meat, about 1.465 million semi-broilers, and more than 2.9 million layers for eggs at integrated



poultry and fish farms.

MLF has affirmed in the second wave of the COVID-19

that there is no need for people to concern with a possible shortage of poultry meat and

eggs in the internal market during the pandemic. Yet, the rising demand drove the price up.

Additionally, the local producers are now also facing pressure from foreign investors entering the sector. Local poultry breeding is primarily carried out on a small scale by farmers. But now, investments from China, Thailand and India have entered the industry. Therefore, the local breeders need to shift to modern breeding methods and increase the production rate to keep up with the foreign investors. — Ko Khant/GNLM

Watermelon price decreases by half as against last year



Watermelon growers flooded markets with excess supply this year and led to a market failure. They are suggested to reduce the production acres by 50 per cent for the coming season. As a result, the traders are encouraged to keep market balance and maintain the quality.

THE price of the watermelon dropped by half compared to the corresponding period last year as China shut down the border in the first week of July due to the COVID surge in Myanmar, exporters from Muse said.

Myanmar's watermelon is primarily sent to China. The closure of Sino-Myanmar border posts resulted in the price drop amid excess supply.

A truckload of watermelon (855 variety) fetched 36,000 Yuan this time last year. The price drastically plunged to 13,000 Yuan this year, and it does not even cover the truck freight rate.

"The price of watermelon climbed up last month due to purchase order. The current border shutdown prompted the traders to return home. Muse border market is completely stopped. The low demand amid

the excess supply led to the watermelon price plunge", said an official of Myanmar Melon Growers, Producers and Exporters Association.

As a result, the fruits such as watermelon and mango rely on the domestic market for now, and the traders do not receive a reasonable price. If China extends its closure for a long time, the growers will suffer mounting losses.

Watermelon growers flooded markets with excess supply this year and led to a market failure. They are suggested to reduce the production acres by 50 per cent for the coming season. As a result, the traders are encouraged to keep market balance and maintain the quality, Khwar Nyo Fruit Depot stated.

This year, about 30,000 trucks of watermelon and 12,000

trucks of muskmelons were conveyed to China via the land border. Nevertheless, a thousand trucks went in vain as they were stranded in the road part, affecting the quality of the fruits. Some watermelons have been disposed of as well.

Additionally, some watermelon trucks returned from the Myanmar-China North-East border checkpoint as the watermelon was not traded well. In addition, the truck drivers were no longer bear the cost and tariff on the China border.

Starting from 20 April 2021, the coronavirus test is mandatory for cross-border traders. Following detection of the coronavirus cases in border Ruili, China restricted border access at the Man Wein checkpoint. Ruili-Kyalgaung river crossing has also been closed. Only Ky-insankyawt post was available for cross-border trade, causing delays and long queues. At present, all the border posts between Myanmar and China were shut down.

That is why the cross-border fruit depots suggest that the growers harvest the watermelon depending on the market condition to avoid a mismatch between supply and demand. Myanmar yearly exports over 800,000 tonnes of watermelon and about 150,000 tonnes of muskmelons to China, the association stated. — KK/GNLM

Domestic gold price likely to remain high: YGEA reports

THE price of precious pure yellow metal is expected to remain on the rise in the domestic market, said Chair U Myo Myint of the Yangon Region Gold Entrepreneurs Association (YGEA).

The domestic gold price stays in the bull market tracking the dollar gain and increasing the price in the international gold market. It touches a high of K1,581,000 per tical (0.578 ounces, or 0.016 kilogrammes) in mid-July.

The price is possible to continue rising as the global rally happens yearly in the coming months, U Myo Myint elaborated.

The global gold price stood at above US\$1,800 per ounce, while the Central Bank of Myanmar set a US dollar exchange rate at an auction rate of K1,625-1,640, resulting in the gold price gain in the domestic market.

"The gold market sees global rally in September-December period due to the festivals. The price is, therefore, expected to remain the upward trend," said U Myo Myint.

In January 2021, the gold price was ranged between the minimum of K1,316,000 per tical (28 January) and the maximum of K1,336,000 per tical (6 January). It reached an all-time high of K1,410,000 per tical on 3 February and hit the minimum of K1,340,000 per tical

on 2 February. In March, the rate fluctuated between the highest of K1,391,000 (25 March) and the lowest of K1,302,000 (4 March). The price has registered the highest of K1,455,000 (30 April) and the lowest of K1,389,000 (1 April). The price reached an all-time highest of K1,709,000 (12 May) and the lowest of K1,447,000 in May. Last month, the price moved in the maximum of K1,575,500 (11 June) and the minimum of K1,543,000 (19 June), the gold traders said.

According to gold traders, the local gold reached the lowest level of K1,310,500 (2 September) and the highest level of K1,314,000 (1 September). In October, the rate ranged between K1,307,800 (30 October) and K1,316,500 (21 October). The rate fluctuated between the highest of K1,317,000 (9 November) and the lowest of K1,270,000 (30 November). In December, the pure yellow metal priced moved in the range of 1,280,000 (1 December) and 1,332,000 (28 December).

With global gold prices on the uptick, the domestic price hit fresh highs in 2019, reaching K1,000,000 per tical between 17 January and 21 February, crossing K1,100,000 (22 June to 5 August), climbing to over 1,200,000 (7 August-4 September), and then reaching a record high of K1,300,000 on 5 September 2019. — NN/GNLM

Southeast Asia COVID surge hits Japanese firms’ supply chains

SURGING coronavirus cases in Southeast Asia, in such countries as Malaysia and Indonesia, have started affecting the supply chains of Japanese companies, with the possibility of regional production disruption becoming more real.

In Malaysia, where lockdown has been in place since June 1, plants belonging to Toyota Motor Corp. and Honda Motor Co. remain closed. That is largely because of regulations that limit factory workers reporting to work to 10 per cent or less.

The lockdown has already been extended twice, with more stringent restrictions imposed 5 July on Malaysia’s capital region, where Japanese companies operating in the country are concentrated.

Mitsui Mining & Smelting Co., which makes smartphone



A road is blocked in central Jakarta on 6 July 2021, as the Indonesian capital sees a rapid spread of the Delta coronavirus variant. PHOTO: KYODO

materials in Malaysia, announced a production halt on 5 July. Even though the government has since allowed the electronics industry

to resume work, a press representative of the company says production will not return to earlier levels until sometime between

late July and early August.

Japanese companies have also been hit hard in Indonesia, where daily new infections

surpassed 40,000 on Monday. A survey conducted by the Japan External Trade Organization showed manufacturer after manufacturer decrying the increase in infections and the impact on their operations. One company reported having 18 per cent of its workforce infected, creating problems for its operations. Also finding it difficult to operate at full capacity due to restrictions imposed on people’s movements, many Japanese companies operating in Indonesia are considering sending their Japanese expatriates back home. An official of a Japanese automaker posted in Southeast Asia said the difference between the coronavirus pandemic and natural disasters lies in the former having a long-term impact on supply chains and hitting multiple areas simultaneously. — Kyodo News ■

‘Increased risk’ of rare nerve disorder after J&J Covid vaccine: US



The new US FDA warning label is a further blow for Johnson & Johnson, which was granted an emergency use authorization for its shot in February 2021 but has played a minor role in America’s coronavirus immunization campaign. PHOTO: AFP

THE US Food and Drug Administration updated its warning labels Monday for the Johnson & Johnson Covid-19 vaccine to include information about an

observed “increased risk” of a rare neurological disorder called Guillain-Barre Syndrome (GBS). The news is a further blow for the company, which was

granted an emergency use authorization for its shot in February but has played a minor role in America’s coronavirus immunization campaign.

Based on analysis of a federal vaccine safety monitoring system, officials have identified 100 preliminary reports of GBS after approximately 12.5 million doses administered, people familiar with the matter said.

Of these reports, 95 of them were serious and required hospitalization. There was one reported death.

GBS is a neurological disorder in which the body’s immune system damages nerve cells, causing muscle weakness or, in the most severe cases, paralysis. — AFP ■

London mayor calls to retain face coverings on public transport

LONDON Mayor Sadiq Khan on Wednesday called for use of face coverings to remain compulsory on public transport in the British capital after government plans to relax Covid curbs begin on July 19.

Under the plans passengers on Transport for London (TfL) services -- which include the city’s tube, bus, tram and rail networks -- would be required to wear a face covering after an England-wide requirement ends under plans set out by Prime Minister Boris Johnson’s government.

“I’ve repeatedly made clear that the simplest and safest option would have been for the government to retain the national requirement for face coverings on public transport,” Khan said in a statement.

“I’m not prepared to stand by and put Londoners, and our city’s recovery, at risk. This

is why, after careful consideration, I have decided to ask TfL to retain the requirement for passengers to wear a face covering on all TfL services,” he added.

Johnson and his Health Secretary Sajid Javid have said all virus curbs in England will be removed on July 19 in a transition from enforceable Covid rules to personal responsibility.

But the move has driven concern among scientists who have warned the decision to unlock has been made too quickly and could lead to a dramatic rise in infections.

“By keeping face masks mandatory we will give Londoners and visitors the reassurance and confidence to make the most of what our city has to offer, while also protecting our heroic transport workers,” Khan said. — AFP ■



All virus curbs in England will be removed on 19 July. PHOTO: AFP

Virus fears haunt Spain’s transplant patients despite vaccines

FOR more than three decades, Spain has been carrying out more organ transplants than anywhere else in the world.

It has a highly developed network, with a transplant coordinator present in every hospital.

Over 116,000 transplants have been carried out since 1989, in what is a source of national pride. There were 48.9 organ donors per million inhabitants in Spain in 2019, its highest num-

ber ever. That compared to 29.4 million in France and 36.1 million in the United States, according to the Spanish health ministry’s National Transplant Organization. However, organ transplant patients who have been vaccinated against Covid-19 cannot be certain of their immunity.

A study published in May by the Journal of the American Medical Association found that only 54 per cent of 658 transplant

patients who received two doses of either the Moderna or Pfizer vaccine produced Covid-19 antibodies.

“A significant percentage of transplant patients develop absolutely no antibodies or defensive cells after being vaccinated against the coronavirus,” said Estela Paz Artal, head of the immunology department at Madrid’s Hospital 12 de Octubre. — AFP ■

Pope Francis returns to Vatican after operation

POPE Francis on Wednesday left the Rome hospital where the head of the world's 1.2 billion Catholics had undergone an operation on his colon on July 4.

The 84-year old was whisked away from the Gemelli University Hospital in a car with tinted windows and was later spotted returning to his home within the Vatican's walls.

He stopped off on the way at the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore for a quick prayer to "express his gratitude for the success of his surgery", Vatican spokesman Matteo Bruni said in a statement.

The pope also prayed at the central Rome church for "all the sick, especially all those he had met during his stay in hospital," Bruni said.

Francis had been admitted to hospital after suffering from a type of diverticulitis, an inflammation of pockets that develop in the lining of the intestine.

The Vatican initially said he would be in hospital for about a week, and the pope led the Angelus prayer from his hospital window on Sunday.

On Monday, Vatican spokesman Matteo Bruni said he would stay for a "few more days".

It was not immediately clear whether Francis's schedule would immediately return to normal.

The pope managed to do some work from hospital, and retained all his powers as pontiff while away.

A special chamberlain, known as "the cardinal camerlengo", stood ready to take over in the event of death, as he does at all times, according to the Catholic News Service.

More tired

As if to ward off questions about his stamina, the Vatican announced on the day Francis was admitted to hospital that he would travel to Hungary and



Pope Francis led the Angelus prayer from his hospital window on Sunday. PHOTO: VATICAN MEDIA/AFP

Slovakia later this year.

He also hopes to attend the COP26 climate conference in Glasgow in November, according

to Scotland's bishops, and there is a reported trip to Greece also being planned.

The pontiff, who suffers from

sciatica, confessed however after a trip to Iraq earlier this year that travelling made him "a lot more tired" these days. — AFP ■

Olympics chief vows to minimize virus risk to Japan



IOC president Thomas Bach (C) bows to Japan's Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga (R). PHOTO: POOL/AFP

OLYMPICS chief Thomas Bach pledged Wednesday "not to bring any risk" to Japan with the Games, seeking to reassure a sceptical public as virus cases surge just over a week before Tokyo 2020 begins.

Fans have been banned from Olympic events in the capital, which is under emergency virus restrictions to curb rising infection numbers that on Wednesday hit highs not seen since January.

As more athletes arrive in the country and move into the Olympic Village, International Olympic Committee chief Bach promised a safe summer Games.

"We are making all our ef-

forts and the Japanese people have all our commitment to contribute in the best way to fight this virus and not to bring any risk to the Japanese people," Bach told reporters after meeting Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga.

He said "85 per cent of all the residents in the Olympic Village and almost 100 per cent of the IOC members and staff coming here to Tokyo arrive vaccinated.

"This is why I'd like to humbly ask the Japanese people to warmly welcome the athletes from all around the world who have overcome, like the Japanese people, so many challenges."

He thanked Japan for hosting the Games despite the coronavirus, calling Tokyo 2020 "historic" and praising the public's efforts to overcome both the pandemic and the country's deadly 2011 earthquake, tsunami and nuclear disaster.

While Japan has seen a less severe Covid-19 outbreak than many other countries, with around 15,000 deaths overall, only around 20 per cent of the population are fully vaccinated and Tokyo's emergency measures will be in place throughout the Games.

In opinion polls, the Japanese public have consistently expressed apprehension about Tokyo 2020, which was postponed by a year due to the pandemic and will finally open on July 23.

Organizers announced the decision to ban spectators from almost all Olympic events last week, following repeated warnings from experts about rising virus cases and the risk of crowds gathering.

The US softball team moved into the Olympic Village on Wednesday, public broadcaster NHK reported, the day after the compound opened without any of the welcome ceremonies or media opportunities often seen at the Games. — AFP ■

Ethiopia PM vows to repel 'enemies' after Tigray rebel assault

PRIME Minister Abiy Ahmed on Wednesday vowed to repel attacks by Ethiopia's "enemies" after rebels in Tigray launched a fresh offensive to regain territory in the war-torn region.

Tigrayan forces this week claimed a series of battlefield gains in a renewed assault that comes two weeks after the federal government declared a unilateral ceasefire in the face of rebel advances.

The latest rebel push followed the stunning recapture of the regional capital Mekele last month from federal forces, a turning point in a brutal eight-month conflict that has killed thousands of people and left many hundreds of thousands facing famine.

Abiy said he remained committed to peace — even if it came at a "cost" — but these latest attacks would not go unanswered.

"We will defend and repel these attacks by our internal and external enemies, while working to speed up humanitarian efforts," he said in a statement posted on Twitter.

Abiy, the winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, sent troops into Tigray last November

after accusing the region's once-dominant ruling party of orchestrating attacks on Ethiopian military bases.

He said Ethiopia had demonstrated its willingness to end hostilities in the mountainous northern region.

"We've undertaken a unilateral ceasefire to avoid further conflict, to provide the people with a reprieve during the farming season, and to allow aid operations to proceed without excuse," he said.

"Even though we knew peace would exact some cost on us, we have taken the peaceful option."

Resist provocation

But he said Ethiopia's enemies were "unable to rest without conflict" and accused them of using child soldiers.

He urged Ethiopians to remain united and stand behind the Ethiopian army and resist "outside pressure and internal provocation". A spokesman for the Tigray Defence Forces (TDF) told AFP on Tuesday they had seized Alamata, the main town in southern Tigray, and pushed into the western part of the region where fertile farmlands have long been contested. — AFP ■

Restore peace and tranquillity for all walks of life

EVERYBODY wishes to enjoy peace and tranquillity in society. They aspire to restore peace and stability with tranquillity for having a safe living standard in trying to fulfil the basic needs of their families. They do not wish to face any barriers based on the situation due to a lack of peace and tranquillity.

If the society lacks peace, stability and tranquillity, participants of the society will not enjoy the fruits of safe lives. They will always encounter the impacts of deteriorated society. Consequently, they cannot possess happy souls with the open mind to associate with others. Gradually, everybody cannot lose the mutual trust with

each other with thoughts on who would impose danger and threat and who would attack in addition to how to defend danger and attacks of others. That is why their invaluable time runs out for the inappropriate thoughts and they struggle in the misery days.

In fact, those from the society are ethnic nationalities of Myanmar. They all have been residing in the same country since time immemorial sharing their future. Nobody should attack each other. All the people should seek the best solution for building the nation with peace and tranquillity so as to enjoy the fruits of the brighter future.

each other. All the people should seek the best solution for building the nation with peace and tranquillity so as to enjoy the fruits of the brighter future.

Let's join hands to restore peace and tranquillity in unison for ourselves and for prosperity.



Covid triggered biggest increase in hunger in decades: UN

The Covid pandemic caused an estimated 18 per cent increase in the number of people facing hunger, a UN report released on Monday found, dealing a massive setback to efforts to ensure everyone has access to food.

THE world was already off track to achieve its goal of eradicating hunger by 2030, but the report warned that Covid had now sent it back in the wrong direction.

The “economic downturns as a consequence of Covid-19 containment measures all over the world have contributed to one of the largest increases in world hunger in decades,” said the annual food security and nutrition report compiled by several UN agencies.

Although the full impact of the pandemic cannot yet be determined, the report estimated around 118 million more people faced hunger in 2020 than in 2019, an increase of 18 per cent.

The rise in moderate or severe food insecurity was equal to the previous five years combined.

“Nearly one in three people in the world (2.37 billion) did not have access to adequate food in 2020 – an increase of almost 320 million people in just one year,”



More people needed to turn to soup kitchens and food banks as pandemic restrictions forced them from their jobs. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

the report said.

One in 10 people were undernourished. The increase in hunger

was widespread as the economic downturn affected almost all low- and middle-income countries.

But the biggest impact was in countries where there were also climate-related disasters or con-

flict, or both.

More than half of the people who were malnourished lived in Asia (418 million), more than one third in Africa (282 million) and eight percent or 60 million in Latin America, the report said.

In some countries, “in particular the poorest,” measures to fight the pandemic hampered circulation and prevented subsistence farmers from selling produce on local markets, noted Dominique Burgeon, a director of the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

Meanwhile in cities, “there were problems with supply, which meant that prices rose,” he said in comments to AFP. According to the report: “The Covid-19 pandemic is just the tip of the iceberg.

“More alarmingly, the pandemic has exposed the vulnerabilities forming in our food systems over recent years as a result of major drivers such as conflict, climate variability and extremes, and eco-

nomie slowdowns and downturns.”

The UN agencies said there is a unique opportunity to reverse the dynamic this year however, thanks to two major food and nutrition summits plus the COP26 meeting on climate change.

The report was jointly published by the FAO, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), the UN World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

“In a world of plenty, we have no excuse for billions of people to lack access to a healthy diet. This is unacceptable,” UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres said in a statement. “We are running out of time to make the urgent shifts we need to limit global temperature rise,” he added. “This is why I'm convening a global Food Systems Summit this September. We must come together to urgently make a change.”—AFP ■

Managing coronavirus at the pandemic Olympics

Tokyo's Olympics will be like no other Games, with the spectre of coronavirus hanging over every part of the event, and organizers determined to prevent an outbreak.

HERE'S a look at some of the ways they'll try to prevent infections among some 11,000 athletes, and what will happen if cases do emerge at the Games, which open 23 July.

What safety measures are there?

The latest rulebook for athletes and sports officials is 70 pages long, and the requirements start before they get to Japan.

Athletes must test negative for the virus twice within 96 hours of travel, and again when they land.

They'll be tested daily while in the country, and they have to leave the Olympic Village with- in 48 hours of their competition ending.

And there won't be any soaking up the atmosphere: they aren't allowed anywhere except their

accommodation and competition venues, with a ban on using public transport.

Masks will be mandatory, even on the medal podium, with exceptions only for eating, sleeping, training and competing.

What about vaccines?

Olympic officials say 85 per cent of the athletes and teams staying in the Village will be vaccinated. Getting jabbed is not a requirement, but has been strongly encouraged.

The anti-coronavirus rules will be the same for those taking part in the Games, whether they're vaccinated or not.

Tokyo 2020 has organized vaccinations for 38,000 officials, the volunteers, local media and airport staff, among others.

What happens if there's an infection?

Athletes will be given daily saliva antigen tests, and if they come back positive or unclear, they'll have a follow-up saliva PCR test, which is more sensitive.

If that test is positive, they'll have a nasal and throat swab PCR test. A third positive result will mean the athlete is out of the Games.

They'll have to isolate or be hospitalized, with no chance of rejoining the competition.

What if you're a close contact?

Things are a bit more complicated for “close contacts” of an infected person.

The term only applies to people who have spent 15 minutes or more within one metre of the infected person without wearing a mask.

That might include a roommate, or a dining companion but probably not a tennis partner, for

example.

Those considered close contacts will face a nervous wait to hear whether they are judged safe to continue participating in the Games.

Rulings will be made “case-by-case” and consider whether the close contact is likely to spread infection.

If close contacts are allowed to compete, they may face additional restrictions, including being moved to a separate room and eating meals alone.

What if someone gets really sick?

Medical staff and facilities are key at any Games, but the stakes are higher given the pandemic.

Organizers say there will be some 7,000 medical staff, including doctors and nurses, but have declined to specify the number of



Japan's new national stadium (Tokyo 2020 main stadium) and Tokyo 2020 flag in Tokyo, Japan. PHOTO: CFP/KYODO

beds available.

The push to find these resources has been controversial in Japan, given a recent surge in infections that stretched the local healthcare system.

To head off that criticism, the International Olympic Committee has pledged to bring additional medical staff from outside to reduce pressure on resources.

Is everyone insured?

Olympic participants from overseas, including athletes, team officials and media, are required to have insurance that will cover medical treatment and repatriation.

Olympic rulebooks specify that the insurance must include cover for Covid-19.—AFP ■

Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 4:00 pm Wednesday 14 July 2021)

BAY INFERENCE: Monsoon is moderate over the South Andaman Sea and South Bay and weakover the North Andaman Sea and elsewhere Bay of Bengal.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL MORNING OF THE 15 July, 2021: Rain or thundershowers will be widespread in Kachin State, fairly widespread in Upper Sagaing, Taninthayi Regions and Chin State, scattered in Bago, Yangon Regions and Shan, Rakhine, Kayin, Mon States and isolated in the remaining Regions and States with likelihood of isolated heavyfalls in Kachin State. Degree of certainty is (100%).

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

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Likelihood of slight increase of rain in Taninthayi Region and Kayin, Mon States.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 15 July 2021: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (80%).

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 15 July 2021: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (80%).

FORECAST FOR Mandalay AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 15 July 2021: Likelihood of isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (60%).

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Ransomware gang goes offline, prompting questions

A Russian-based hacker group blamed for a massive ransomware attack went offline Tuesday, sparking speculation about whether the move was the result of a government-led action.

The “dark web” page of the group known as REvil disappeared some two weeks after an attack which crippled networks of hundreds of companies worldwide and prompted a ransom demand of \$70 million.

“REvil has seemingly vanished from the dark web, as its website has gone offline,” tweeted Allan Liska, a security researcher with the firm Recorded Future, who noted that the site had been unresponsive from around 0500 GMT.

The news comes after US President Joe Biden repeated a warning to his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin late last week about harbouring cybercriminals while suggesting Washington could take action in the face of growing ransomware attacks.—AFP ■

13 killed, including 9 Chinese nationals, in Pakistan bus blast

NINE Chinese workers were among 13 people killed on Wednesday when a blast on a bus sent it careering down a ravine in north-western Pakistan, government and police officials said.

China described it as a “bombing” and an “attack”, although Pakistani authorities said the nature of the blast was under investigation.

The bus was carrying Chinese engineers, surveyors and mechanical staff to the Dasu dam construction site in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, a local government official who did not want to be named told AFP.

“The blast sparked a fire in the engine plunging the vehicle into a ravine,” he said, adding a further 28 Chinese nationals were injured.

A senior local police official, who also asked not to be named, confirmed the incident and said: “It was a heavy blast but its nature is not known yet.”

The security of Chinese workers has long been an issue of concern in Pakistan. Large numbers of them are based in the country to supervise and build infrastructure projects.—AFP ■

Taliban back to old ways in newly seized Afghan territory



An Afghan security personnel guards at the site of a car bomb attack in Kandahar on 6 July. Afghan authorities vowed to retake all the districts lost to the Taliban. **PHOTO: AFP**

DAYS after the Taliban captured a remote district in Afghanistan’s north, they issued their

first orders in the form of a letter to the local imam.

“It said women can’t go

to the bazaar without a male companion, and men should not shave their beards,” said Sefatullah, 25, a resident of Kalafgan district.

The insurgents also banned smoking, he added, and warned that anybody violating the rules “will be seriously dealt with”.

The Taliban are making huge advances across the country as they capitalise on the final withdrawal of foreign troops — capturing districts, seizing key border crossings, and encircling provincial capitals.

In some areas they are again introducing the harsh interpretation of Islamic rule that earned them notoriety until

being overthrown by the US-led invasion that followed the September 11 attacks.

Last month they took Shir Khan Bandar, a northern customs post that connected the country to Tajikistan over a US-funded bridge that spanned the Panj river.

“After Shir Khan Bandar fell, the Taliban ordered women not to step out of their homes,” said Sajeda, who told AFP she worked in a local factory at the time. “There were many women and young girls doing embroidery, tailoring and shoe-making... The Taliban’s order has now terrified us,” she told AFP by phone.—AFP ■

More than 160 unmarked graves found near indigenous Canadian school

THE western Canadian Penelakut Tribe says it has found more than 160 unmarked graves near the site of a former indigenous boarding school, Canada’s fourth discovery of this kind in recent weeks.

In the last month, discoveries of more than 1,000 graves prompted a nationwide reckoning over Canada’s painful past and its policies of forced assimilation toward indigenous communities.

“We are at another point in time where we must face the trauma because of these acts of genocide,” said Penelakut Tribe Chief Joan Brown in a July 8 statement confirming “160+

undocumented and unmarked graves” newly-uncovered on the British Columbia reservation.

“It’s the tip of the iceberg,” said Bob Chamberlin, former vice president of the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs. Chamberlin estimates dozens of other unmarked graves have not yet been found. “My heart breaks for the Penelakut Tribe and for all the indigenous communities across the country,” Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau told reporters Tuesday.

“We cannot bring back those who were lost, but we can and we will continue to tell the truth, just like we will continue to work in partnership with indigenous



The find was the latest in a series of grim discoveries of the graves of indigenous students that have led to protests across Canada, including this recent demonstration in Toronto. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

peoples to fight discrimination and systemic racism with real, concrete actions,” Trudeau added.—AFP ■

Death toll in South Africa unrest climbs to 72 as violence spreads



Suspected looters haul away goods from the Game Warehouse in Durban. **PHOTO: AFP**

STORES and warehouses in South Africa were hit by looters Tuesday for a fifth day running

despite the troops President Cyril Ramaphosa deployed to try to quell unrest that has claimed

72 lives.

As pillaging erupted in the economic capital of Johannesburg and the southeastern province of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa’s main opposition accused radicals of stoking the unrest.

The armed forces were sending 2,500 soldiers to help the overwhelmed police.

But these numbers are dwarfed by the more than 70,000 troops deployed to enforce last year’s coronavirus lockdown, and only a handful of soldiers were seen at some shopping centres.

The raging unrest first erupted last Friday after former

president Jacob Zuma started serving a 15-month term for contempt, having snubbed a probe into the corruption that stained his nine years in power.

By the weekend, it started spreading to Gauteng province.

“The total number of people who have lost their lives since the beginning of these protests ... has risen to 72,” the police said in a statement late Tuesday.

Most of the deaths “relate to stampedes that occurred during incidents of looting of shops”, it said.

Others were linked to shootings and explosions of bank ATMs. — AFP ■

Seoul bans fast gym music, blaming COVID-19

South Korean mega-hit Gangnam Style may be taken off gym playlists in the greater Seoul region – but K-pop giants BTS can stay – under new rules aimed at stemming a rising tide of coronavirus infections.

The regulations, aimed at stopping gym-goers breathing too hard or splashing sweat on others, ban gyms from playing music with a faster tempo than 120 beats per minute during group exercises like zumba and spinning.

They come as tighter social distancing rules – such as small-

er gatherings and shorter store hours – begin to bite this week.

The musical diktat has prompted ridicule and fury, and a list of ‘safe’ K-pop songs is circulating online, which includes the latest hits from BTS including Dynamite (114 bpm) and Butter (110 bpm).

But Psy’s Gangnam Style, at 132 bpm, will have to stay off the workout playlist for now.

South Korean infection rates remain low by global standards at little more than 1,000 a day, but are at their highest of the pandemic, with new records set on

three consecutive days recently.

That has alarmed authorities in a country where the vaccine rollout has been slow and convoluted, hampered by a failure to obtain supplies.

And while the restriction allows businesses to remain open, gym owners and users alike poured scorn on the measure.

“Now I have to worry about the bpm of the song I’m playing,” wrote a user in an online club of gym owners. “I guess the virus spreads faster depending on the tempo of the music,” another added.—AFP



South Korean singer Psy performing his hit single ‘Gangnam Style’ during a concert in Istanbul in February 2013. **PHOTO: OZAN KOSE/AFP**

Italy bans large cruise ships from Venice centre



Scenes like this will soon be a thing of the past in Venice. **PHOTO: AFP**

LARGE cruise ships will be banned from sailing into the centre of Venice from August 1, Italy announced Tuesday after years of warnings they risk causing irreparable damage to the lagoon city.

The decision comes just days before a meeting of the UN’s cultural organization UNESCO, which had proposed to add Venice to its list of endangered heritage sites. “The decree adopted today represents an important step for

the protection of the Venetian lagoon system,” Prime Minister Mario Draghi said after the decree was approved at a cabinet meeting. He added that there would be money to mitigate the impact on employment.

The move will see the biggest ships diverted to the city’s industrial port of Marghera.

However, this is viewed as only a temporary solution, with ministers calling for ideas on a

new permanent terminal.

The passengers aboard cruise ships provide a huge economic boost to Venice, but many residents say the giant floating hotels should not sail past the iconic St Mark’s Square.

They warn the ships cause large waves that undermine the city’s foundations and harm the fragile ecosystem of its lagoon.

The debate was reignited by the return last month of cruises after the coronavirus pandemic, when the throngs of tourists that normally fill the streets stayed away. Venice was put on UNESCO’s heritage list in 1987 as an “extraordinary architectural masterpiece”, but the body warned last month of the need for a “more sustainable tourism management”.

After years of debate, Italian Culture Minister Dario Franceschini said the government had decided to act now “to avoid the real risk of the city’s inclusion on the endangered world heritage list”.—AFP

New Covid rules spark France vaccination rush and online backlash

A record number of French people booked appointments for Covid-19 jabs after President Emmanuel Macron announced restrictions on the unvaccinated, including mandatory tests to enter restaurants.

The head of the main website to book vaccination appointments said traffic was at an all-time high following Macron’s televised speech on Monday night.

“We recorded 20,000 appointments per minute, an absolute record since the start of the campaign, and it’s continued during the night and into this morning,” Doctolib boss Stanislas Niox-Chateau told BFMTV.

A total of 926,000 people had booked a jab on the site, with 65 per cent of them under 35, he added.

Macron announced that from August anyone wanting

to go out to eat or drink, take a long-distance train or visit a shopping centre would need to show a “health pass”, which means either proof of vaccination or a negative test.

The pass will also be needed to attend a festival, a theatre show or a cinema screening as part of the government’s strategy to tackle the surging number of new cases linked to the Delta variant.—AFP

Australian apartment blocks placed in hard lockdown

An Australian apartment block was placed under strict lockdown with police posted outside Tuesday, as authorities stepped up efforts to curb a fast-growing coronavirus outbreak.

Police guarded both the front and rear exits of an apartment block in Sydney’s Bondi neighbourhood, where nine people have tested positive for Covid-19, with movement in and out of the building restricted.

A sign taped to one apartment window read “Send Beer” while another asked, “where is the vaccine?”

Sydney is currently in its third week of a partial lockdown as authorities try to stamp out the spread of the virus in the community.

Most residents of Australia’s largest city are allowed to leave home for exercise, essential shopping, work or health reasons, but are encouraged to remain at home.

Tougher restrictions are

placed on people who have visited locations that are declared a virus hotspot, which may include mandatory 14-day quarantine.

Australia’s latest Covid-19 outbreak began in mid-June and has since grown to 767 cases.

An entire apartment block in Melbourne was also placed under isolation for 14 days, after removal workers who visited from Sydney tested positive.

Authorities are now asking Australians living in other apartment buildings to wear a mask when in common areas.

“When you’re in apartment buildings, we’re not wanting you to congregate in any shared spaces,” said New South Wales chief health official Kerry Chant.

“We are really requiring under a public health order that you wear masks when you’re transiting through common areas.”—AFP



Sydney’s five million residents are currently in their third week of a partial lockdown. **PHOTO: AFP**

UAE opens Israel embassy after normalization deal



Israeli President Isaac Herzog greets the UAE's first ambassador to Israel Mohamed al-Khaja outside the new embassy in Tel Aviv's stock exchange building. **PHOTO: AFP**

THE United Arab Emirates opened an embassy in Israel Wednesday, housed in Tel Aviv's new stock exchange building, in the latest normalization move under a deal brokered by Washington last year. The venue in the heart of Israel's financial district highlighted the central role economic cooperation has played since the UAE became only the third majority-Arab country to recognize the Jewish state.

At the ceremony, attended by new Israeli President Isaac Herzog, Emirati ambassador Mohamed al-Khaja called the embassy opening "an important

milestone in the growing relationship between our two countries".

"The UAE and Israel are both innovative nations, we can harness this creativity to work towards a more prosperous and sustainable future for our countries and our region," he said.

Herzog called for the "historic agreement" with the UAE to be "extended to other nations seeking peace with Israel." Israel and the UAE have signed a raft of deals — ranging from tourism to aviation to financial services — since normalizing ties as part of the so-called Abraham Accords brokered by former US president

Donald Trump's administration.

Wednesday's ceremony, held in the lobby of the stock exchange building two floors below the embassy, came after Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid made a landmark visit to the UAE last month, opening an embassy in Abu Dhabi and a consulate in Dubai.

The Palestinians were outraged by the UAE's decision to establish ties with Israel, which broke with decades of Arab consensus that there should be no normalization of ties without a comprehensive and lasting peace between Israel and the Palestinians.—AFP ■

News In Brief

Germany's Lufthansa opts for gender-neutral plane greeting

EUROPE'S largest airline group Lufthansa said on Tuesday it was retiring "ladies and gentlemen" as an on-board greeting in favour of gender-neutral alternatives.

A spokesman for the German company told AFP the move was intended to make all passengers on board feel welcome, including those who do not identify as male or female.

"Crews are being instructed to choose a greeting that includes all passengers," he said, adding that "dear guests" or a simple "good morning/good evening" would be used instead.

The new policy, which will be phased in gradually, applies to German flag carrier Lufthansa as well as the group's Swiss, Austrian, Brussels and Eurowings airlines.

The company said it was responding to a "discussion that is rightly being held in society" about non-binary gender identification and a desire "to value all guests on board".

Germany has joined the international debate about more inclusive language to take into account diverse gender identities and an increasingly multicultural society.

In recent days major cities, including Berlin, Munich and Hamburg said that their transport networks would stop using the word "Schwarzfahren" (black riding) to describe travel without a ticket in response to complaints the word had a racist taint.— AFP ■

US Democrats agree on \$3.5 trillion budget target

TOP US Senate Democrats agreed late Tuesday on a \$3.5 trillion package to implement President Joe Biden's vast plans to fund climate initiatives, health insurance and human infrastructure programmes like child care, social welfare and housing.

The huge proposal would direct federal funds to a sweeping array of projects over the coming decade that Biden has outlined as his top priorities but which have encountered fierce pushback from opposition Republicans.

All 11 Democrats on the Senate Budget Committee emerged from an evening meeting with Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer to announce they had decided on a budget number.

"Tonight the Senate Budget Committee reached an agreement on a fully paid-for \$3.5T topline budget which includes funding for climate, education, Medicare expansion, family programmes, and more," Senator Mark Warner said on Twitter.

Schumer added to reporters: "Every major programme that President Biden has asked us for is funded in a robust way."— AFP ■

Covid case cuts short Singapore 'cruise to nowhere'

An ocean liner on a "cruise to nowhere" was forced to make an earlier-than-scheduled return to Singapore Wednesday after a coronavirus case was detected on board, reports said.

The cruises — starting and ending in Singapore, with no stops — were launched last year as part of the travel industry's attempt to bounce back from a pandemic-induced crunch.

They have proved popular among those seeking an escape from the tiny city-state, which has only had a mild outbreak but largely kept its borders closed.

The Dream Cruises ship returned to Singapore early Wednesday, several hours earlier than planned, after the case was found.

Passengers on board were informed in the early hours that



A 'cruise to nowhere' was cut short in Singapore on Wednesday after a coronavirus case was detected on board. **PHOTO: AFP**

a guest had tested positive and told to return to their rooms, broadcaster CNA said, quoting a passenger.

The individual, who returned a positive PCR test, was believed to have been in close

contact with another case before boarding, the report added.

Local newspaper the Straits Times said the passenger was fully vaccinated and had tested negative before boarding.—AFP ■

UK inflation accelerates close to three-year peak

BRITAIN'S annual inflation rate has jumped close to a three-year peak as consumer prices accelerate on easing coronavirus restrictions, official data showed Wednesday, fanning global inflationary fears. The Consumer Prices Index hit 2.5 per cent in June from 2.1 per cent in May, the Office for National Statistics revealed in a statement one day after news of spiking US inflation.

That marked the highest rate since August 2018, with prices lifted by the economy's phased reopening as well as soaring motor fuel and oil prices. Market expectations had been for a rate of 2.2 per cent.

'Widespread' rise in prices
"Inflation rose for the fourth



Britons have gone on a shopping spree as Covid restrictions have been relaxed, but that has helped push inflation to its highest level in nearly three years. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

consecutive month to its highest rate for almost three years," said ONS statistician Jonathan Athow.

"The rise was widespread,

for example coming from price increases for food and for second-hand cars where there are reports of increased demand.— AFP ■

China exports post surprise 32% spike in June



Employees at a car accessories factory in Huaibei, China. PHOTO: STR / AFP

CHINA'S exports spiked more than expected in June as countries around the world pushed towards a pandemic recovery, official data showed on Tuesday, while imports spiked on the back of rising commodity costs. Demand for China's goods has risen with the global rollout of vaccines and as economically painful lockdowns to curb the spread of COVID-19. Supply disruptions happening sporadically with virus resurgence elsewhere have also increased reliance on products from China, where the outbreak

is largely under control, analysts say. Chinese shipments overseas surged 32.2 per cent on-year last month, the Customs Administration said, much better than the 23 per cent forecast and also well up from May. Imports also exceeded expectations, rallying 36.7 per cent as the cost of key commodities such as iron ore, oil and copper surge. However, growth was below the more than 50 per cent jump seen in May, which was the fastest in more than a decade. While both figures show robust

growth, recent months' trade numbers have been bolstered by last year's low base of comparison when the coronavirus forced parts of the country to shut down. "As the world's major factory, China continues to enjoy a competitive advantage from its control measures," said Tommy Xie of OCBC Bank. "Given uncertainties in different parts of the world and resurgence of the virus, supply disruptions are still on and off... that points to an increasing reliance on China's products," he told AFP — AFP ■

Boeing announces Q2 deliveries

THE Boeing Company announced on Tuesday major programme deliveries across its commercial and defence operations for the second quarter of 2021. In commercial airplane programs, Boeing has delivered a total of 79 aircraft in the second quarter of 2021. The year-to-date delivery reached 156, including five 737s to China's ICBC Leasing. In its defense, space and security programs, a total of 43 aircraft were delivered in the second quarter. "We continue the work to deliver on our commitments to our commercial, defense, space and services customers, while positioning our business for a stable and strong recovery from the pandemic. In the second quarter, we made progress in safely returning the 737 MAX to service in more international markets and increasing the pace of 737 deliveries," the company said. Boeing delivered 50 537s in the second quarter, adding the year-to-date number to 113. The company has been engaged in detailed discussions with the Federal Aviation Administration on verification methodology for 787 fuselages, and conducting associated inspections and rework. It has identified additional rework that will be required on undelivered 787s.—Xinhua ■

US sees biggest annual inflation jump since 2008

The United States saw its biggest surge in inflation in more than a decade last month, according to government data released Tuesday, hitting consumers and challenging the White House and Federal Reserve narrative that the price spike will fade in the coming months. As widespread Covid-19 vaccinations allowed the world's largest economy to relax pandemic restrictions, Americans have resumed spending and travelling but have faced rising prices for used cars, gasoline, hotels and airline fares. That trend could undermine already-tentative support for President Joe Biden's economic plan, including his mas-



The jump in used cars prices accounted for one-third of the rise in the US consumer price index in June compared to May. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

sive jobs and infrastructure proposals. The consumer price index (CPI) spiked 5.4 per cent in the 12 months ended in June, not seasonally adjusted, the highest rate

tors that has hampered auto production, and also surges in demand, including from rental car companies rushing to rebuild their fleets. After sinking in the midst of the pandemic shutdowns, energy prices have rebounded, aided by the failure of OPEC+ oil producers to boost output. Gasoline shot up by an unadjusted 45.1 per cent over the past year and 2.5 per cent in the month of June, the report said. Those eye-popping gains will intensify pressure on Fed Chair Jerome Powell, who faces two days of questioning by congressional lawmakers on Wednesday and Thursday.—AFP ■

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V HADDOCK VOY.NO. (126N)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V HADDOCK VOY.NO. (126N)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **15-7-2021** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **MITT** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

Damaged cargo will be surveyed daily from 8 am to 11:20 am and 12 noon to 4 pm to Claim's Day now declared as the third day after final discharge of cargo from the Vessel.

No claims against this vessel will be admitted after the Claims Day.

Phone No: **2301185**

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S SEALAND MAERSK ASIA PTE LTD

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V MAERSK NARVIK VOY.NO. (127W)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V MAERSK NARVIK VOY.NO. (127W)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **15-7-2021** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **MITT/MIP** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

Damaged cargo will be surveyed daily from 8 am to 11:20 am and 12 noon to 4 pm to Claim's Day now declared as the third day after final discharge of cargo from the Vessel.

No claims against this vessel will be admitted after the Claims Day.

Phone No: **2301185**

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S SEALAND MAERSK ASIA PTE LTD

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V TCI ARJUN VOY.NO. (100182021)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V TCI ARJUN VOY.NO. (100182021)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **15-7-2021** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **AWPT** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

Damaged cargo will be surveyed daily from 8 am to 11:20 am and 12 noon to 4 pm to Claim's Day now declared as the third day after final discharge of cargo from the Vessel.

No claims against this vessel will be admitted after the Claims Day.

Phone No: **2301185**

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S BAY LINE SHIPPING

NEWS IN
BRIEF

Rebel forces in Tigray region launch new offensive

TIGRAYAN forces claimed Tuesday to have launched a new offensive in the conflict-torn northern region of Ethiopia, two weeks after the federal government declared a unilateral ceasefire in the face of rebel advances.

A spokesman for the Tigrayan forces told AFP they had seized Alamata, the main town in southern Tigray, after launching the offensive on Monday.

Getachew Reda said fighting was also taking place in western Tigray.

The claims could not be independently confirmed because communications were largely down in the area, while an Ethiopian military spokesman did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The Tigray Defence Forces last month swept across large parts of Tigray and seized the regional capital Mekele after eight months of brutal conflict with federal troops.—AFP ■

Taliban say do not want to fight inside Afghanistan's cities

THE Taliban do not want to battle government forces inside Afghanistan's cities, a senior insurgent leader said Tuesday, as the militants also warned Turkey against extending its troop presence.

The insurgents have swept through much of northern Afghanistan in recent weeks, and the government now holds little more than a constellation of provincial capitals that must largely be reinforced and resupplied by air.

On Tuesday, the head of a Taliban commission that oversees government forces who surrender to the insurgents urged the residents of cities to reach out to them.

"Now that the fighting from mountains and deserts has reached the doors of the cities, Mujahiddin don't want fighting inside the city," Amir Khan Muttaqi said in a message tweeted by a Taliban spokesman, using another term for the group.

"It is better... to use any possible channel to get in touch with our invitation and guidance commission," he said, adding this would "prevent their cities from getting damaged".—AFP ■

EU wades into battle over its green revolution



The EU unveils a plan Wednesday to meet its bold green pledge of carbon neutrality by 2050, at the risk of triggering an epic political clash over electric cars and fuel prices. **PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/AFP**

THE EU unveils a plan Wednesday to meet its bold green pledge of carbon neutrality by 2050, at the risk of triggering an epic political clash over electric cars and fuel prices.

The dozen draft legal texts are intended to transform the European economy from fossil

fuel dependency to a world of net-zero emissions, low pollution and battery-powered transport.

Drawn up by the European Commission, the EU's executive, the plan effectively bans the sale of new petrol-driven cars from 2035, one of the boldest moves against gas-guzzlers ever, and

one that has already raised concerns in Paris and Berlin.

The proposals, to be announced by the European Commission's environment supremo Vice President Frans Timmermans, will also seek to breathe new life into the EU's flawed Emissions Trading System (ETS), the world's biggest carbon market, where industry pays for the right to pollute.

Once announced, the laws will snake their way through the EU's legislative system amid high-stakes horse-trading in the European Parliament and among the bloc's 27 member states, egged on by industry lobbyists and green activists.

The jockeying has already begun, with powerful interests fighting hard to win special treatment - or extra time - before the constraints of a greener Europe come into force.

Environmentalists will de-

nounce the laws as not going far enough - with Greenpeace already decrying "a fireworks display over a rubbish dump" if they go through as proposed.

Some corporations, meanwhile, are careful to say they would welcome some of the plans.

Bernard Looney, the CEO of energy giant BP says that "changes are necessary" and that his company will do its part.

Others fear resistance from the general public, even a continent-wide replay of the "yellow vests" protests that erupted in France when the government pushed through a new fuel tax in the name of defending the environment. The mammoth legislative push is officially known as the "Fit for 55" package, as its central aim is to align existing EU laws and targets with a deepened 55% net emissions reduction by 2030.—AFP ■

17 die in China hotel collapse

Seventeen people have died in the collapse of a budget hotel in eastern China as state media on Wednesday announced the end of search and recovery efforts.

Six others were earlier rescued from the rubble of the Siji Kaiyuan hotel, which crumbled in a heap of shattered concrete and bent metal beams two days earlier in the picturesque city of Suzhou. All of those rescued were in stable condition, state-run television said.

It added that an unspecified number of people linked to the hotel had been detained and an

investigation into the cause of the disaster was under way.

The hotel opened in 2018 and had 54 guest rooms, according to its listing on the travel site Ctrip. Suzhou, a city of more than 12 million people roughly 100 kilometres west of Shanghai, is a popular destination for tourists drawn to its canals and centuries-old gardens.

Building collapses or accidents are not uncommon in China and are often blamed on lax construction standards or corruption. The collapse of a quarantine hotel in south-



Seventeen people have died in the collapse of a budget hotel in eastern China as state media on Wednesday announced the end of search and recovery efforts. **PHOTO: AFP**

ern China's Quanzhou city last March killed 29 people, with authorities later finding that three floors had been added illegally to the building's original four-storey structure.

And authorities in May evacuated one of China's tallest skyscrapers, the SEG Plaza in the southern city of Shenzhen after it shook multiple times over several days.—AFP ■

Commuters escape Mexico City gridlock in new cable car



Passengers travel over Mexico City on the new Cablebus aerial tramway. **PHOTO: AFP**

COMMUTERS soared over one of the world's biggest and most traffic-clogged cities as a new cable car system went into operation in the Mexican capital on Monday. The 9.2-kilometre (5.7 miles) aerial tramway, comprising 377 cars that can each carry 10 passengers, promises to cut travel times for thousands of people in northern Mexico City.

"How much time was wasted. They should have done this much earlier," said 46-year-old electrician Marco Antonio Garcia, delighted that what was a journey

of more than an hour now takes 20 minutes. "Are we in France or Switzerland?" he said, laughing along with the other passengers. In contrast to the buses and metro where pickpockets and thieves operate, passengers aboard the new Cablebus system enjoyed comfortable seats, legroom, air conditioning and Wi-Fi. "It reduces my travel time a lot," 21-year-old psychology student Karen Leon said, traveling with family members who gazed down on the city with a mixture of astonishment and amusement.—AFP ■

Biden says US democracy threatened by Republican ‘subversion’



President Joe Biden spoke in Philadelphia, where the US Constitution was signed. PHOTO: AFP

PRESIDENT Joe Biden said Tuesday that protecting voting rights from what he called Republican “election subversion” poses a historic “test” for the United States in the wake of the 2020 election.

“It’s up to all of us to protect that right. It’s a test of our time,” he said in a speech in Philadelphia, birthplace of the US Constitution. Referring to attempts led by Donald Trump to overturn the

result of the presidential election, as well as pile on new voting rules in the name of security, Biden said “this is election subversion”. “It’s the most the most dangerous threat to voting and the integrity of free and fair elections

in our history,” he said in a fiery speech.

Biden noted that in response to Republican allegations of fraud in 2020, more than 80 courts -- right up to the Supreme Court -- held hearings and in every case found nothing significantly wrong.

The 2020 presidential and congressional election saw the highest turnout in history, despite the Covid-19 pandemic, and was subsequently “the most scrutinized election ever in American history,” he said.

Without naming Trump, he made clear what he thought of the Republican’s unprecedented campaign to overturn the results.

“The big lie’s just that: a big lie,” he said. “In America if you lose you accept the results, you follow the constitution. You try again. You don’t call facts ‘fake’ and then try to bring down the American experiment just because you’re unhappy.”—AFP ■

Veteran Nepal lawmaker sworn in as PM for fifth time after court ruling

NEPAL’S main opposition leader Sher Bahadur Deuba was sworn in as prime minister on Tuesday after the country’s highest court ousted his predecessor following months of political turmoil.

K.P.Sharma Oli, who came into power in 2018, was removed as PM by the Supreme Court on Monday after it rejected his latest effort to dissolve the bicameral parliament.

The 69-year-old first tried to dissolve parliament in December, but that attempt was also

overturned by the court. “I, in the name of God, the country and people, pledge that I will be committed and honest to the nation and its people to fulfil my duty as prime minister,” Deuba said as officials looked on.

Deuba, the head of the opposition Nepali Congress, had claimed to have the support of 149 members of the 275-seat lower house.

He is the third Nepali lawmaker to become prime minister of the country for the fifth



Sher Bahadur Deuba (R, pictured February 2018) replaced K.P.Sharma Oli (L) as Nepal’s prime minister following months of political turmoil. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

time. The 74-year-old leader has to win a vote of confidence in the lower house within a month to retain the prime ministership.

Political analyst Lok Raj Baral said Deuba might struggle to retain the required support among lawmakers.—AFP ■

Relatives of Lebanon blast victims scuffle with police



Protestors brought coffins as symbols of their loved ones lost in last year’s enormous August 4 explosion. PHOTO: AFP

LEBANESE police fired tear gas on Tuesday during scuffles with demonstrators outside the home of caretaker interior minister Mohammad Fahmi, accused of stalling a probe into last summer’s huge port explosion.

The protests, called for by relatives of the victims of the August 4 blast, swelled by the evening, with dozens of demonstrators streaming in to join families storming Fahmi’s heavily guarded Beirut home.

The angry crowd, demanding accountability as the anni-

versary approaches of Lebanon’s worst peace-time disaster, were pushed back by riot police who swung batons and fired tear gas to disperse them.

AFP correspondents saw a man with a bleeding wound on his head after he was beaten by security forces, and paramedics treating protesters for tear gas suffocation.

The detonation of a huge stockpile of fertiliser at the port last summer killed more than 200 people and wrecked huge swathes of the capital.—AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Washington warns Haitians, Cubans not to try to flee to US

WASHINGTON warned Haitians and Cubans Tuesday against trying to flee to the United States as they endure domestic unrest, saying the trip is dangerous and they would be repatriated.

“The time is never right to attempt migration by sea,” Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas said. “This risk is not worth taking.”

“Allow me to be clear. If you take the sea, you will not come to the United States.”

Mayorkas made the remarks as political turmoil struck both Caribbean countries.

Haitian President Jovenel Moise was assassinated last week, leaving the country’s leadership in disarray. And Cuba experienced broad and unprecedented protests over economic and social conditions over the weekend.

Mayorkas said there is not yet evidence of an increase in attempts to cross into the United States by boat from the two countries south of Florida.—AFP ■

US to seek global rules on AI misuse, Blinken says

THE United States will seek global rules on how to prevent misuse of artificial intelligence, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Tuesday, as he renewed warnings against Russia over hacking.

Speaking at a conference on emerging technologies, the top US diplomat voiced alarm that a growing number of authoritarian states led by China are using the internet as well as new technologies to curb dissent and exert greater control.

“So the world is at a tipping point. And our choice is between giving up on our vision for the internet -- or stepping up the fight. We will step up the fight,” Blinken said.

“We’ll defend the principles of an open, secure, reliable and interoperable internet across the full spectrum of our engagement -- from trade agreements to governance to hardware.” His remarks come amid mounting concern about hacking for ransom, including an attack that shut down a major fuel pipeline in the United States. US officials say many such attacks come from Russia, although the extent of ties with the government is murky.—AFP ■

Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council Nine Objectives

1. Political affairs

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

2. Economic affairs

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

3. Social affairs

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

ASEAN Football Federation concludes third Digital Learning Webinar

ASEAN Football Federation, in partnership with the Qatar Football Federation and Josoor Institute, yesterday concluded the third webinar through the “Digital Learning” aimed to focus aspects of major sporting events to be held in the post-covid era.

The online event was held from 12 to 14 July.

ASEAN Football Federation president Major-General Khiev Sameth said, “Like the previous instalments, this third webinar has armed the participants from our respective

national associations with critical information and in-depth knowledge that will benefit them in their football operations. I thank the speakers and experts who delivered insightful presentations and shared their experiences with us over the last three days”.

“On behalf of the AFF, I would like to express our thanks to the Qatar FA, officials from QFA and AFF involved with organizing this event. We also record our appreciation to Josoor Institute for developing this webinar series”, the ASE-

AN Football Federation president added.

Next, Mr Saoud Al-Mohannadi, QFA's Vice-President said, “Building on a common understanding of the importance to extending capacity in the football industry across the ASEAN region, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, we were delighted to collaborate with the ASEAN Football Federation and partner with the Josoor Institute, within the spirit and framework of the Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2019.”— GNLM

Wolves' keeper Rui Patricio becomes Mourinho's first Roma signing



Wolverhampton Wanderers' goalkeeper Rui Patricio has joined fellow-Portuguese Jose Mourinho at Roma. **PHOTO: POOL/AFP**

United's Rashford faces 12 weeks out – reports



Manchester United forward Marcus Rashford could be sidelined for up to three months after deciding to have surgery on a shoulder issue following Euro 2020, according to reports on Tuesday. **PHOTO: AFP**

MANCHESTER UNITED forward Marcus Rashford could be sidelined for up to three months after deciding to have surgery on a shoulder issue following Euro 2020, according to reports

on Tuesday.

Rashford, 23, had a scan earlier in the day on the issue which has hampered the England striker since the end of the club season, the Daily Tel-

egraph and the BBC reported.

He will only be able to have the operation at the end of July due to the surgeon's availability.

Rashford played five times for England in Euro 2020 and missed a penalty in the shoot-out loss to Italy in the final.

Earlier in the day, anti-racism demonstrators gathered at a mural of Rashford in Manchester after it was vandalized amid a deluge of abuse against England players.

Throughout the day, hundreds gathered at the wall painting which had been defaced with racist abuse as Rashford and his black teammates Jadon Sancho and Bukayo Saka were targeted online over the side's defeat to the Azzurri.— AFP ■

PORTUGAL international goalkeeper Rui Patricio has signed a three-year contract with Serie A club Roma from Premier League side Wolverhampton Wanderers, the Italian club announced.

The 33-year-old becomes new Portuguese coach Jose Mourinho's first signing in a deal which runs until June 2024 and is worth an initial 11.5 million euros (\$13.5 million) plus bonuses, the club said.

“In Jose Mourinho we are talking about one of the greatest coaches in the world and I am excited to start working with him and doing everything I can to help the team,” said Patricio.

“Roma is a big club and a new challenge and I'm excited

to try and help the club achieve its targets.”

Euro 2016 winner Patricio, who has 97 caps for Portugal exited in the last-16 of Euro 2020 to Belgium.

He joined Wolves in 2018 from Sporting Lisbon.

“Rui Patricio brings with him a huge amount of success with the Portuguese national team and a number of successful seasons in the Premier League in which he only underlined his quality,” said Roma general manager Tiago Pinto.

“We are certain that our group of players will benefit from the arrival of a goalkeeper with such an array of international experience to call upon.”— AFP ■