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Announcement of Union Election Commission

16 February 2021

THE Union Election Commission scrutinized the voter lists in 8 townships of Nay Pyi Taw Union Territory in relation to the multiparty democracy general elections which took place on 8 November 2020. According to the findings, the number of voters released by the previous UEC was 906,226, while the figure of Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population up to November 2020 confirmed 703,546 eligible voters with 18-year-old and above. The voter lists of 108,333

include citizens, associate citizens, naturalized citizens and those without any scrutiny cards, while the same national scrutiny card number of 6,900 voters was found three times and above in the voter lists and 76,222 voters two times. The findings from the respective townships are as follows:

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Working Committee to address impact of COVID-19 on the country's economy meets

THE meeting (1/2021) of Working Committee to address the impact of COVID-19 on the country's economy was held yesterday.

The meeting was chaired by U Aung Naing Oo, Union Minister for Investment and Foreign Economic Relations. Members of the working committee Deputy Ministers, from Ministry of Planning, Finance and Industry and Ministry of Commerce, Deputy Governor of the Central Bank of Myanmar, and representatives of the Ministries concerned took part in the meeting.

In the meeting, the Union Minister highlighted to continue the implementation of the ongoing activities in tackling the hardship as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, he underscored that the Committee will take the measures leading to economic recovery rather than the relief measures undertaken in the past. In doing so, the Committee will take an immediate action to review the COVID-19 Economic Relief Plan (CERP) and Myanmar



Union Minister U Aung Naing Oo presides over the Working Committee meeting 1/2021 to address the impact of COVID-19 on the country's economy in Nay Pyi Taw on 16 February 2021. PHOTO: MNA

Economic Recovery and Reform Plan (MERRP) for more realistic outcome. In addition, the Committee will draw up necessary action plans and the restructuring of the Task Force accordingly.

In the meeting, the Minister stressed the need of financial and regulatory reform measures to achieve the economic recovery in the country. Moreover, he highlighted that the Committee will work close-

ly with governments of States and Regions and private sector.

The meeting discussed matters relating to measures to address the negative impacts of the COVID-19 and current situation on the coun-

try's economy and other related matters reported to the Working Committee.

The meeting focus further measures and process of COVID-19 Fund to proceed expeditiously. — MNA

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Announcement of Union Election Commission

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Voter lists in respective townships

Sr	Township and polling station	Figure of Township Commission	Figure of MoLIP	Voter lists without any scrutiny cards	Same national scrutiny card found three times and above in voter lists	Same national scrutiny card found two times in voter lists
1.	Zabuthiri Township with 45 polling stations	95,047	67,409	3,070	60	3,702
2.	Dekkhinathiri Township with 20 polling stations	31,657	19,147	2,971	9	1,286
3.	Zeyathiri Township with 74 polling stations	82,214	57,168	4,725	88	2,338
4.	Pobbathiri Township with 79 polling stations	98,077	60,750	7,727	106	4,168
5.	Ottarathiri Township with 49 polling stations	58,649	51,921	7,539	69	2,136
6.	Tatkon Township with 134 polling stations	180,838	149,882	21,236	3,462	26,414
7.	Lewe Township with 144 polling stations	221,388	177,510	42,863	1,988	22,234
8.	Pyinmana Township with 101 polling stations	138,356	119,759	18,202	1,118	13,944
Total		906,226	703,546	108,333	6,900	76,222

Union Election Commission

Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council

Order No (66/2021)

5th Waxing of Tabodwe 1382 ME
16 February 2021

Appointment of Union Minister

The State Administration Council has appointed Dr Nyunt Pe as Union Minister for Education, as per Section 419 of the State Constitution.

By Order

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

Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council

Order No (67/2021)

5th Waxing of Tabodwe 1382 ME
16 February 2021

Appointment of Deputy Ministers

The State Administration Council has appointed the following personnel as the Deputy Ministers for Labour, Immigration and Population, as per Section 419 of the State Constitution.

- (a) U Win Shein
- (b) U Htay Hlaing

By Order

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

Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council

Order No (68/2021)

5th Waxing of Tabodwe 1382 ME
16 February 2021

Appointment of Chairman and Member for Chin State Administration Council

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

- (a) U Ngun San Aung Chairman
- (b) U Han Kyint Zan Member

By Order

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

Request to health workers

- 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).
- 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

COVID-19 Call Centre opens daily

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

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

I also urged all the health workers to return to their public healthcare services at the hospitals

IT is advised to all the national people that the pandemic is still occurring in the world. It is essential to follow the COVID-19 containment rules before getting vaccinated. People are found assembling in public areas at present. It is urged to all to avoid it as such assembly could increase the rate of COVID-19 infection. It is also required to accelerate the momentum of medical tests to be able to contain COVID-19. We are working to do so. Such work plans are needed for the recovery of businesses delayed by the pandemic. People are requested for their coordination, adherence to the rules and contribution to the programme. I also urged all the health workers to return to their public healthcare services at the hospitals.

(Excerpt from the speech to the Situation Report on the Country made by the Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council Chairman Senior General Min Aung Hlaing on 12 February 2021)

Union Defence Minister holds meeting on ethnic, public affairs



THE Ethnic Affairs, Public Affairs Management and Services Committee organized a coordination meeting yesterday.

At the meeting, Union Minister for Defence General Mya Tun Oo and the member of the State Administration Council, in his capacity as Chairman of the committee, discussed the establishment of five committees by State Administration Council, further work plans of committee without changing the policies, processes and ob-

jectives, and cooperation works.

Joint Secretary of Committee Deputy Minister of Border Affairs Maj-Gen Phone Myat presented appointment of local and foreign experts, collaboration processes between ministries, region/state governments and self-administered Division/Zones and decision-making processes. Then, Chairman of the committee coordinated the discussion and instructed the necessary things.—MNA/GNLM

Union Minister for Defence General Mya Tun Oo chairs the coordination meeting on ethnic and public affairs management and services in Nay Pyi Taw on 16 February 2021. **PHOTO: MNA**

MoSWRR discusses resettlement, closure of IDP camps



Union Minister Dr Thet Thet Khine chairs the coordination meeting on the resettlement of IDPs and closure of IDP camps yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

THE Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement organized a coordination meeting on the resettlement of internally displaced persons and closure of IDP camps yesterday.

During the meeting, Union Minister Dr Thet Thet Khine highlighted the work plans of ministries including procedures for the resettlement of internally displaced persons and assistances for IDPs while the State Administration Council focuses on such cases.

The resettlement of IDPs, mine-clearing programmes and peace processes are being carried out in proper momentum.

The Union Minister also stressed the need to cooperate for

an establishment of safe, independent and normal living styles for the local IDPs.

She also urged the participants to discuss frankly to solve the difficulties.

Then, the Permanent Secretary, Directors-General and Officials presented the strategic plans and procedures for the resettlement of IDPs and closure of IDP camps, the formation of national and state-level committees, work plans, action plans being carried out in Kachin, Kayin, Shan and Rakhine states in accord with the strategy, and hardships faced in work processes.

The Union Minister coordinated the meeting and instructed the necessary things.—MNA/GNLM

MoHS holds meeting for COVID-19 vaccination, healthcare programmes

THE Ministry of Health and Sports held a coordination meeting on the COVID-19 prevention and vaccination programmes and future healthcare services yesterday morning in Nay Pyi Taw.

Union Minister Dr Thet Khine Win, Deputy Minister U Myo Hlaing, the directors-general, deputy directors-general and officials participated in the coordination meeting.

At the meeting, Union Minister Dr Thet Khine Win discussed the return of health workers to their duties.

He also talked about COVID-19 vaccination programme and medical tests of relevant region/state Public Health and Medical Services Departments.

The Union Minister called on arrangements to provide timely treatment to the COVID-19 patients and the Food and Drug Administration to allow the import of COVID-19 vaccine for the private sector as soon as possible.—MNA/GNLM



Union Minister Dr Thet Khine Win presides over the coordination meeting on the COVID-19 prevention and vaccination programmes in Nay Pyi Taw on 16 February 2021. **PHOTO: MNA**

State Administration Council holds press conference

STATE Administration Council's Information Team Leader Brig-Gen Zaw Min Tun explained the ongoing political affairs of the country to the media yesterday.

During the press conference, Brig-Gen Zaw Min Tun talked about the release of findings on 2020 General Election and solving problems in line with rules, regulations and laws; holding the meeting of National Defence and Security Council on 1 February, announcing the State of Emergency as per Section 417 of the 2008 State Constitution, and transfer of legislative, administrative and judiciary powers to the Tatmadaw in line with Section 418 (a) of the State Constitution in order to prevent deviation from the path of multiparty democracy.

He also explained the report of Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, in his capacity of Chairman of the State Administration Council, to the public about situations



The State Administration Council's Information Team Leader Brig-Gen Zaw Min Tun is seen explaining the ongoing political affairs of the country at the press conference on 16 February 2021. **PHOTO: MNA**

of the country, the Council's five key stages of the roadmap, and discussions on development programmes with Union Ministers, officials from Union-level organizations, members of the State Administration Council, UMFCCI and its associates, patron, chairpersons and officials of private banks, administration councils from Nay Pyi Taw, region/state, and self-adminis-

tered division and zones.

The leader of Information Team also said orders of State pardon and remitting prison sentences, COVID-19 vaccination programme, the import of vaccine, medical services for the public transferred from the hospitals under the Ministry of Health and Sports, cleaning works at the pagodas after closures amid the pandemic, reo-

pening of pagodas on 8 February in line with COVID-19 preventive rules and providing basic household commodities of the Tatmadaw to the public in the areas under the COVID-19 restrictions.

Brig-Gen Zaw Min Tun continued to say about violent attacks of protesters against security forces of Tatmadaw members, police forces, vehi-

cles from civil service society and drivers in Nay Pyi Taw, Mandalay, Yangon, Mawlamyine, Myitkyina and Patheingyi despite Article 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure to protect peace and stability of the State, security and the rule of law and to avoid possible chaos as the protests and demonstrations are taking place in major cities.

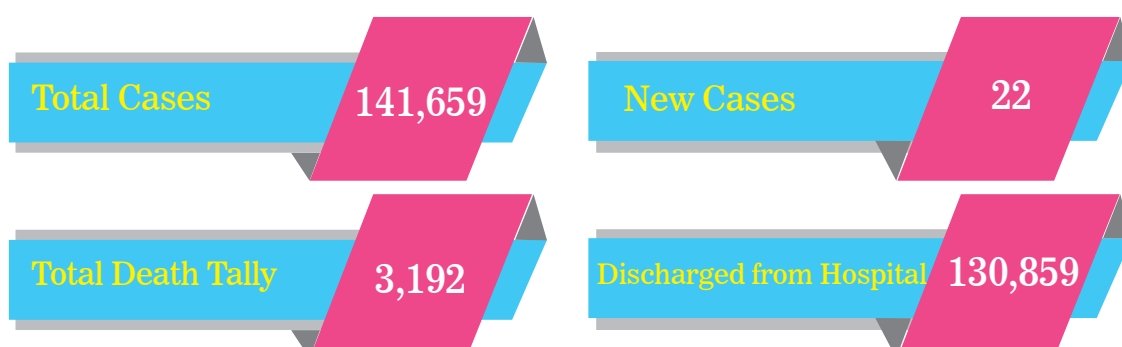
He added about round-the-clock duties of security forces for ensuring peace and stability in respective regions and states, the press release of Union Election Commission during the term of the State Administration Council, and notifications to the civil service personnel who are failing to perform their duties.

The press conference was attended by the members of State Administration Council's Information Team, officials from the Tatmadaw True News Information Team, and journalists from local media organizations, dailies, local TVs, foreign media organizations based in Myanmar.—MNA

22 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 16 February, total figure rises to 141,659

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to 141,659 after 22 new cases were reported on 16 February 2021 according to the Ministry of Health and Sports. Among these confirmed cases, 3,192 died, 130,859 have been discharged from hospitals.—MNA

Updated at 8 pm, 16 February 2021



Daily death toll until 8 pm 16-2-2021



Ministry of Health and Sports

Imports drop by \$1.47 bln as of 22 January, MOC reports

THE value of Myanmar's imports between 1 October and 22 January in the current financial year 2020-2021 stood at US\$4.968 billion, a sharp drop of \$1.47 billion from \$6.44 billion registered in the year-ago period, according to the data released by the Ministry of Commerce.

The value of imports in the consumer, capital, intermediate goods, and CMP businesses groups dropped in the current FY.

Over the past three months of the current FY, capital goods, such as auto parts, vehicles, machines, steel, and aeroplane parts, were brought into the country. Their import value was estimated at \$1.7 billion. The figure was \$629.6 million lower compared to the same period in the previous FY.

Meanwhile, Myanmar imported consumer products worth \$1.04 billion, including pharma-

ceuticals, cosmetics, and palm oil. The imports of consumer products showed a slight decrease of \$57.363 million compared with the same period in the previous FY.

Intermediate goods make up a large share of Myanmar's imports, with petroleum products and plastic raw materials being the main import items. This year, imports of raw materials plunged to \$1.588 billion from \$2.224 billion registered during the year-ago

period.

During the same period, raw materials worth \$613 million were also imported for the Cut-Make-Pack (CMP) garment sector, showing a decrease of \$148.363 million compared with last fiscal year.

At present, the CMP garment sector contributing to 30 per cent of Myanmar's export sector is struggling because of the cancellation of order from

the European countries and suspension of the trade by western countries amid the COVID-19. Therefore, import values of raw materials by CMP businesses have been dropping.

The top 10 import countries to Myanmar are China, Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, India, Viet Nam, Japan, the Republic of Korea and the US, as per data of the Ministry of Commerce. — GNLM

Domestic gold market sees bumpy ride for gold price

THE domestic gold market is facing price fluctuation in February. It was opened at K1,385,500 per tical (0.578 ounces, or 0.016 kilograms) on 16 February, the gold traders said.

The yellow metal fetched the highest of K1,330,000 per tical in January 2021. And now, it reached a new peak of K1,410,000 per tical on 3 February 2021.

Consequently, Yangon gold market was suspended from governing the volatile gold price on 5 February. The market was reopened on 10 February at K1,373,000 per tical. The prices stood at K1,369,000 per tical on 11 February, K1,363,000 on 12 February, K1,368,000 on 13 February and K1,378,000 on 15 February.

Following the emergency meeting held by Yangon Region Gold Entrepreneurs Association (YGEA) on 4 February, the association determined four factors on market volatility. It urged not



The yellow metal fetched the highest of K1,330,000 per tical in January 2021. And now, it reached a new peak of K1,410,000 per tical on 3 February 2021. PHOTO: GNLM

to trust in the rumour of withdrawing K5,000 and K10,000, to control the gold trading over concerns, to use cash down payment system and to follow the COVID-19 guidelines issued by the Ministry of Health and Sports.

Despite the bull market in Myanmar, the international gold price was sliding. The gold price

was pegged at around US\$1,856 per ounce on 2 February and \$1,823 on 16 February 2021.

At present, some retail gold outlets are opened. However, the local market sees more sellers outnumbering the buyers. Additionally, Kyat is gaining against the US dollar in the local forex market at K1,440. — NN/ GNLM

11 CNG stations reopened for YBS bus lines

ABOUT 11 CNG stations were reopened on 14 February for the YBS bus lines in Yangon region. Some of the YBS bus lines are also resuming their operations, according to the CNG Department, Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise (MOGE).

The 41 CNG stations were halted on 12 and 13 February because of the current situation in Myanmar. Therefore, the YBS operation in Yangon was also suspended in those days. Now, about 11 CNG stations are resuming their services for YBS bus lines starting from 14 February.

"Now, we have reopened 11 CNG stations. More CNG shops will also be reopened in the coming days. There are about 42 CNG stations in Yangon region. And, nearly half of the CNG stations were also

halted in the pandemic period," said an official from CNG department.

"The YBS buses are still having difficulties in filling up the gas in the CNG stations because only a few CNG stations are resuming their operation. Although YBS buses are running on the road, we have to wait for many hours to catch a bus. Also, the YBS bus drivers are asking for more money," said a passenger.

As per data provided by the CNG Division of the MOGE, Yangon Region has over 6,500 CNG buses, but only 4,000 buses come to fill the gas at the stations. Yangon's daily CNG consumption is 24.14 million cubic feet, and YBS buses account for 13.41 million cubic feet of the total consumption. — Aye Maung/ GNLM

Farmers expect success, high price from experimental grapevine cultivation

WITH an abundant yield of grape on a trial basis in the villages of Nyaung U township, Mandalay, the local farmers are expecting to have the good price in the local market and earn a high profit, said U Yan Naing Tun, a grapevine grower, who has grown one and a half acres of grape in Thit Taung village.

The grapevine grown in Myanmar are not Myanmar origin species but the foreign grape varieties. There are more than 40 grape species. The grapevine could be grown in every region where there has easy access to the water supply. Some areas, which grow the grape on an experimental basis, prioritize developing the robust grape species that can withstand

the healthy weather condition. Once the growers have experience in grape cultivation, they will share the farming methods to grow suitable quality grape species, said Ko Min Set Paing from Yamethin township, who shares the grape cultivation methods across the country.

To grow the grape, I started engaging with Ko Min Set Paing, who is sharing the cultivation methods in Yamethin township. Then, I have planted No.3 Italy grape in February. The grape in the nursery cost K 500 per plant and K 700 per plant to reach the farmland, said U Hla Ngwe, a local grape farmland owner.

After cultivating for ten months, it started to blossom

the fruit. For the first time, a grape tree has yielded only five visses of grape. The third-year-term trees or five-year-term trees can produce 15 or 20 visses fruit. Therefore, the farmland owners expect to get a high price for the grape.

The grapes are a hardy perennial, and it can live 20 or 30 years. After yielding, the branches of the grape tree are cut and sold. The grape could be picked up every four months. The tree needs to have sufficient water. Currently, five growers have started cultivating the grape on a trial basis. The grape price is different depending upon fruit size and species. The local growers from Latpachaypaw and Thit



The local growers from Latpachaypaw and Thit Taung village tracts are growing black queen (BQ) species and No. 3 Italy grape species on a trial basis. PHOTO: WIN HTEIN (IPRD)

Taung village tracts are growing black queen (BQ) species and No. 3 Italy grape species on a trial basis. Its trial grape

cultivation has succeeded, and it is expected to have a high price. — Win Htein (Nyaung U District - IPRD)/GNLM

Peru names 6th FM in under a year as vaccine scandal grows



Former president Martin Vizcarra is one of the people caught in a growing coronavirus vaccine scandal in Peru. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

PERU on Monday appointed its sixth foreign minister in less than a year following a fresh resignation over a growing coronavirus vaccinations scandal.

Veteran diplomat Allan Wagner, 79, was sworn in less than 24 hours after Elizabeth Astete became the second top official to step down over the scandal.

Peru has been gripped in recent days by the news that government officials received the Covid-19 vaccination weeks or even months before the South American country launched its immunization programme.

Health minister Pilar Mazzetti stepped down last week following a newspaper report

that former president Martin Vizcarra had received a shot of the Chinese Sinopharm vaccine in October.

Peru only began its immunization drive, starting with health-care workers, in early February after receiving 300,000 doses of vaccine.

But there is still no official start date for the immunization of the general population.

President Francisco Sagasti made a televised announcement late Monday to reveal that almost 500 people had been “irregularly” vaccinated, including the two ex-ministers and other government officials.

Sagasti said that “487 peo-

ple, including many public officials, took advantage of their position to be immunized with the Sinopharm vaccines that came in addition to those used in clinical trials.”

“I deeply regret that the list provided by the Universidad Peruana Cayetano Heredia,” which is in charge of the trial for the Chinese vaccine, “includes people who have been part of our government, including the former ministers Elizabeth Astete and Pilar Mazzetti.”

“They will understand that we are indignant and feel a deep sense of pain,” he added.

Peruvian media reported at the weekend that Attorney General Zoraida Avalos had opened a “preliminary investigation” against Vizcarra and others responsible for the early vaccination of senior officials.

Astete tweeted on Sunday that she received the shot last month, calling it a “serious mistake” and saying she would not get the second dose.

Vizcarra, who was impeached and removed from office in November on corruption charges, insists he took part in a vaccine trial and had kept the news quiet due to volunteer “confidentiality.” — AFP ■

Athens vaccinations cancelled after heavy snowfall

AUTHORITIES have warned residents to avoid leaving their homes on Tuesday morning after an unusually heavy snowfall caused chaos across the country.

It has had a knock-on effect for the nation’s vaccination plans. Health authorities announced they were postponing all coronavirus vaccinations across the greater Athens region of Attica for today.

Along with northern Greece where sub-zero temperatures are common at this time of year, snow blanketed Athens’ northern and eastern suburbs Monday, with traffic on the main motorway to northern hub Thessaloniki cut off for several hours.

Greece’s civil protection agency warned of “continuing dangerous weather conditions” as strong winds battered the

coast, forcing a halt to ferry services connecting Athens with Greece’s Aegean islands.

Some villages on the island of Evia near Athens were facing power cuts as well as blocked roads.



A man walks on a snow covered street during snowfall in a northern suburb of Athens on February 15, 2021. PHOTO: ARIS MESSINIS /AFP

Greece’s weather agency said the “low temperatures, ice and snowfall” would continue on Tuesday, with the civil protection agency recommending that people avoid travel. — AFP ■

Johnson & Johnson files for EU vaccine approval

US pharmaceutical giant Johnson & Johnson has applied for authorization for its coronavirus vaccine in the EU with a decision possible by the middle of March, Europe’s drugs regulator said Tuesday.

The single-shot vaccine would be the fourth jab to be approved for use across the 27-nation European Union if it gets the green light from the Amsterdam-based European Medicines Agency.

“EMA has received an application for conditional marketing authorization for a COVID-19 vaccine developed by Janssen-Cilag International”, J&J’s European subsidiary, the watchdog said.

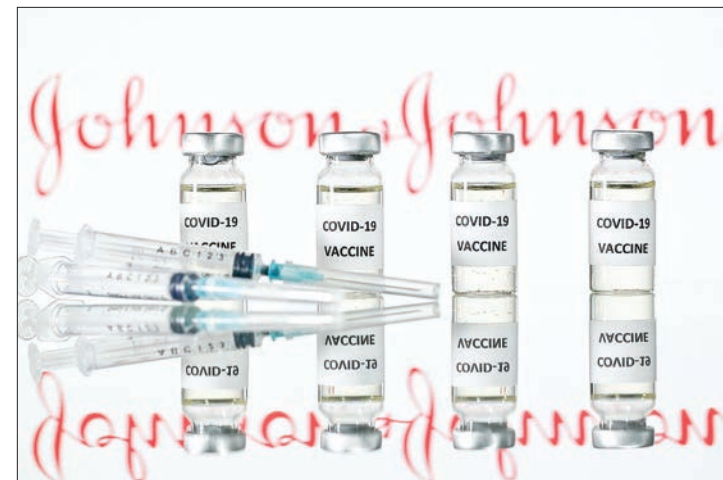
The regulator “could issue an opinion by the middle of March 2021, provided the com-

pany’s data on the vaccine’s efficacy, safety and quality are sufficiently comprehensive and robust.”

With delays to deliveries of three already-authorized vaccines by AstraZeneca, Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna, the EMA is under pressure from European capitals to speed more into service.

European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen hailed the news and said Brussels “will be ready to grant authorization as soon as EMA delivers a positive scientific opinion.”

“More safe and effective vaccines are on their way,” she added. J&J’s vaccine has been under a “rolling review” by the EMA since December 1. — AFP ■



US pharmaceutical giant Johnson & Johnson has applied for authorization for its coronavirus vaccine in the EU with a decision possible by the middle of March, Europe’s drugs regulator said Tuesday. PHOTO: AFP

WHO approves AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine for emergency use

THE World Health Organization (WHO) on Monday gave the green light to two versions of the AstraZeneca/Oxford COVID-19 vaccine for emergency use, allowing them to be rolled out globally via COVAX.

The two versions are produced by AstraZeneca-SKBio in South Korea and the Serum Institute of India, WHO said in a news release, noting that the vaccine shows 63.09 per cent efficacy and “is suitable for low- and middle-income countries due to easy storage requirements.”

The vaccine can now be used via COVAX, a WHO-led international initiative for equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines, said Dr Mariangela Simao, WHO assistant-direct-

tor general for Access to Medicines and Health Products.

“Countries with no access to vaccines to date will finally be able to start vaccinating their health workers and populations at risk,” said Simao.

“But we must keep up the pressure to meet the needs of priority populations everywhere and facilitate global access,” she said. And to this end, she sorted out two priorities: a scale-up of manufacturing capacity, and developers’ early submission of their vaccines for WHO review.

The AstraZeneca product is the second Covid-19 jab to have received WHO authorization, after Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine in late December. — AFP ■

Russian scientists probe prehistoric viruses dug from permafrost



The remains of prehistoric creatures like mammoths are found in the melting permafrost of Russia's Yakutsk region. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

RUSSIAN state laboratory Vektor on Tuesday announced it was launching research into prehistoric viruses by analyzing the remains of animals recovered from melted permafrost.

The Siberia-based lab said in a statement that the aim of the project was to identify paleoviruses and conduct advanced research into virus evolution.

The research in collaboration with the University of Yakutsk began with analysis of tissues extracted from a prehistoric horse believed to be at least 4,500 years old.

Vektor said the remains were discovered in 2009 in Yakutia, a vast Siberian region where remains of Paleolithic animals including mammoths are regu-

larly discovered.

Researchers said they would probe too the remains of mammoths, elk, dogs, partridges, rodents, hares and other prehistoric animals.

Maxim Cheprasov, head of the Mammoth Museum laboratory at Yakutsk University, said in a press release that the recovered animals had already been the subject of bacterial studies.

But he added: "We are conducting studies on paleoviruses for the first time".

A former centre for the development of biological weapons in Soviet times, the Vektor laboratory in Siberia's Novosibirsk region is one of only two facilities in the world to store the smallpox virus.

Vektor has developed a vaccine against the coronavirus, EpiVacCorona, which was licensed in October in Russia and is scheduled to begin mass production later this month.

Scientists say the Arctic is warming twice as fast as the global average, endangering local wildlife as well as releasing carbon stored in the melting permafrost. —AFP ■

Singer Raymond Levesque dies at 92 after contracting Covid-19

Canadian singer-songwriter Raymond Levesque, whose 1956 classic "Quand les hommes vivront d'amour" was an international hit, has died at the age of 92 after contracting Covid-19, Canadian media reported Monday.

Poet, novelist, playwright and actor, Levesque composed hundreds of songs that became part of the fabric of Quebec's cultural life.

His best-known work re-

mains the pacifist hymn "Quand les hommes vivront d'amour" ("When Men Live by Love"), which was written partly in reaction to the Algerian war that France was waging at the time, and which has been covered by a variety of Canadian and French singers including Celine Dion and Eddie Constantine.

"All my condolences to the family and loved ones of the great Quebecer Raymond

Levesque, author of one of the most beautiful songs of all time," Quebec Prime Minister Francois Legault said on Twitter.

Levesque had been committed to the idea of independence for Quebec and refused the Governor General's Award when it was offered to him in 2005 because it represented the British monarchy in Canada. —AFP ■

Strong 6.2-magnitude quake rocks Vanuatu capital

A strong earthquake struck Vanuatu's capital Port Vila on Tuesday (Feb 16), with eyewitnesses reporting violent shaking and the US Geological Survey measuring a shallow 6.2-mag-

nitude quake just off the coast.

"Wow, haven't felt one like that in years. My heart's still in my mouth," local journalist Dan McGarry posted on Twitter, "very large lateral movement".

Authorities said the quake occurred 90km west of the city at a depth of just 10km. According to the Pacific warning centre, there was no immediate tsunami threat. —AFP ■

Malta leads EU vaccinations but wary of virus variants

THE leading EU country for Covid vaccinations, Malta, on Tuesday credited the bloc's joint procurement for its success, but stressed moves need to be made to counter worrying virus variants.

Health Minister Chris FEARNE, a former surgeon who is also the small Mediterranean country's deputy prime minister, told AFP in an interview the "unprecedented" pooled purchasing by Brussels of vaccine doses had prevented competition that would have left Malta out in the cold.

"Imagine the situation had we not done this together: had member states gone their own

way... there would have been a race between member states, so the larger member states would have probably had access to the vaccines while the smaller member states would have lagged behind, possibly not even having had access at all," he said.

As of Tuesday, Malta had given at least one jab to 10 per cent of its population of 515,000 people, with more than three per cent of those over 16 now fully vaccinated with two doses from BioNTech/Pfizer or Moderna.

As of last week, it also started vaccinating with AstraZeneca doses, though only for those aged between 18 and 55. —AFP ■

Airport reports 70% fall in passenger numbers amid pandemic



Dubai International Airport reported on Monday a 70 per cent drop in traffic last year amid global closures and travel restrictions due to the coronavirus. **PHOTO: AFP**

DUBAI International Airport reported on Monday a 70 per cent drop in traffic last year amid global closures and travel restrictions due to the coronavirus.

The number of travellers that passed through the major transit hub fell from more than 86 million in 2019 to 25.9 million in 2020, according a statement from the Dubai Media Office.

"In the past year we have witnessed the most difficult circumstances the travel industry has ever faced," Paul Griffiths, CEO of Dubai Airports, said in the statement.

"The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has been felt not only in our sector, but across the entire world."

The emirate of Dubai -- one of the seven that make up the United Arab Emirates -- temporarily closed its airport and suspended flights in early 2020 to curb the spread of the coronavirus.

According to the Interna-

tional Air Transport Association (IATA), global air passenger traffic plunged by an unprecedented 66 per cent last year owing to travel restrictions imposed during the pandemic.

India accounted for the largest number of passengers at the Dubai airport last year, with 4.3 million Indians travelling through the hub.

The United Kingdom came in second, with 1.89 million people entering the airport, narrowly ahead of Pakistan's 1.86 million.

Dubai International Airport had seen its first dip in traffic in 20 years in 2019, when the number of travellers fell by 3.1 per cent, but the hub remained the world's busiest for international passengers.

The emirate, one of the first destinations to reopen to tourism last year, became a magnet for visitors escaping dreary winter weather and stringent Covid-19 restrictions. —AFP ■

Better management, investment key to dealing with drought in rural areas

As climate change threatens a doubling of the impact of extreme drought and fire within a generation, researchers are uncovering the influence of human activity on both these growing risks.

One study has found that human numbers exposed to the hazard of extreme drought are likely to double in the decades to come, as global heating bakes away the groundwater.

The average temperature in south Asia, including Myanmar, have been rising, and rainfall has become more erratic. These changes are projected to continue accruing over the coming decades.

The summer of 2021 will be arriving soon, and it promises to bring searing heat to most parts of the country.

The Department of Rural Development under the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation has been taking preparatory measures to supply drinking water to villages that are expected to face drought in the summer.

Due to warmer temperatures in the summer, droughts and depleting water supply will likely become more common in Myanmar. The water crisis in rural areas every summer highlights the need for better urban planning and management.

The number of villages facing a water shortage will rise from the expected number year by year.

The problem of water shortage, which strikes rural areas every year, has alerted us of the need to prepare not only short-term but also mid-term and long-term solutions to resolve the crisis.

With a medium-to-high level of global warming the betterment of water management is playing an important role in dealing with water shortage problems to cope with the increasing number of people who will suffer from extreme droughts.

When it comes to curbing water shortage in rural areas, urban planners and engineers need to learn from changing rainfall patterns and take future demand into account to build more resilient infrastructure.

Existing long-term plans to formulate the irrigation systems and utilization of pumping irrigation from rivers streams and underground water should be effective.

Meanwhile, private investments are welcomed to develop the water-related sectors, such as water supply and water treatment, sanitation, personal hygiene and clean environment, agriculture, livestock and hydropower sectors.



The problem of water shortage, which strikes rural areas every year, has alerted us of the need to prepare not only short-term but also mid-term and long-term solutions to resolve the crisis.

Downward COVID-19 trend shows 'simple public health measures work' - UN health chief

“Last week saw the lowest number of reported weekly cases since October”, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO) told journalists at a regular press briefing in Geneva.

Noting a nearly 50 per cent drop this year, he stressed that “how we respond to this trend” is what matters now.

While acknowledging that there is more reason for hope of bringing the pandemic under control, the WHO chief warned, “the fire is not out, but we have reduced its size”.

“If we stop fighting it on any front, it will come roaring back”.

‘All the pieces in place’

WHO gave the green light for two versions of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine to be rolled out globally under an emergency listing, which assesses and assures the quality, safety and efficacy of COVID-19 vaccines and is also a distribution prerequisite under the UN-led vaccine initiative COVAX.

One of the vaccines was produced by SKBio in Korea, the other by the Serum Institute of India.

Following the Pfizer-BioN-

The number of reported cases of COVID-19 globally has declined for the fifth consecutive week, the head of the UN health agency said on Monday, underscoring that “simple public health measures work, even in the presence of variants”.

Tech inoculations, these are the second and third vaccines to receive emergency use listing.

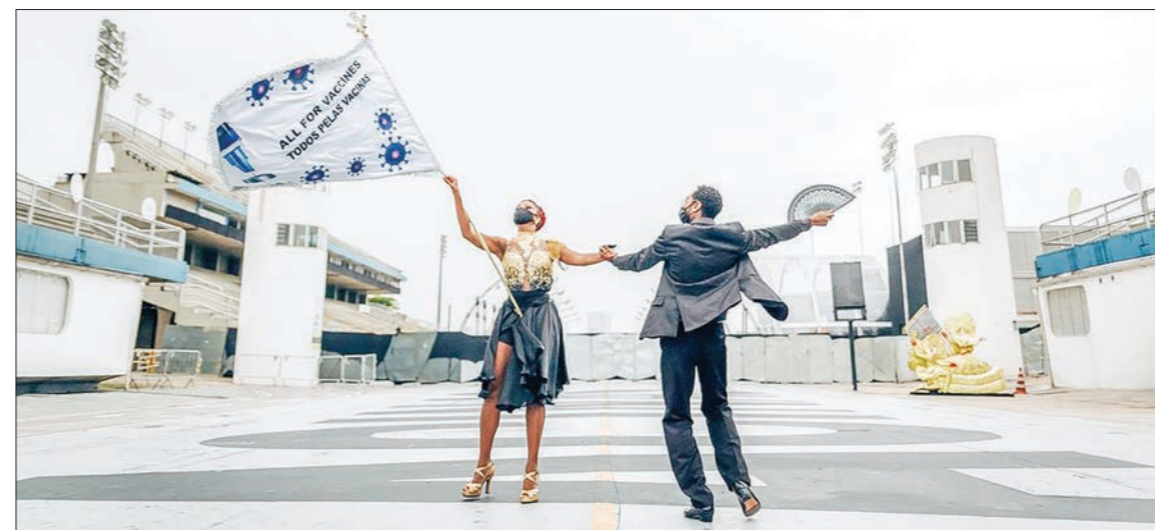
“We now have all the pieces in place for the rapid distribution of vaccines”, said Tedros.

However, he reiterated the need to scale-up production along with his call for vaccine developers to send their dossiers to WHO for review when they submit them to regulators in high-income countries.

Upcoming G7 meeting

Ensuring the rapid and equitable rollout of vaccines globally is essential for saving lives, stabilizing health systems, protecting livelihoods and steadying economies, according to the WHO chief.

“Fully funding COVAX represents the greatest possible stimulus and is a rounding error compared with the trillions of dollars that have been mobilized in G7



A woman waves a giant "All for Vaccines" flag in São Paulo's Sambadrome, Brazil. PHOTO: LUCAS HILAL/UN

countries to support their economies”, he said.

The WHO chief looked forward to an upcoming meeting of the G7 industrialized countries on Friday to discuss vaccine equity.

And he underscored the need to continue building the demand

for vaccines by ensuring people have the right information, recalling that a year ago, “we were not only fighting a pandemic, we were fighting an infodemic”.

The solution is to fight misinformation, delete false or misleading statements, listen to con-

cerns and questions and provide answers with good information, Tedros upheld.

Combating Ebola

Drawing attention to last week's spate of Ebola cases in Democratic Republic of the Congo, the WHO chief emphasized

that having the right information is “essential in every outbreak situation”.

“Four cases have now been reported, and two people have died”, he updated, adding that yesterday, authorities in Guinea declared a separate Ebola outbreak in the town of Gouéké, in the country's southeast.

“So far, three cases have been confirmed, among six people who reported Ebola like-symptoms after attending a funeral in late January”, he said. “Two have since died, while the other four are being treated in hospital”.

He informed the journalists that although both outbreaks are in hard-to-reach, insecure areas with mistrust of outsiders, WHO is working closely with health authorities to engage affected communities to enhance trust and acceptance in both countries.

While Ebola and COVID-19 are “two very different diseases”, Tedros said that “both thrive on misinformation and mistrust” and can both be stopped with proven public health measures, engaged communities, accurate information and vaccines.

SOURCE: AFP

Coronavirus origin-tracing mission in Wuhan is independent: WHO

WHO Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus stressed that it's an independent study which is composed of independent individuals from ten institutions.

THE World Health Organization (WHO) said Monday that the international expert team on the COVID-19 origin-tracing mission in Wuhan was “independent” and had no affiliation.

“So many times I hear that this is a WHO study or investigation. It's not,” WHO Director-General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told a virtual press conference from Geneva, stressing that it's an independent study which is composed of independent individuals from ten institutions.

At Monday's press conference, Dr Peter Ben Embarek, head of the international expert team in Wuhan, said that their report would be a “consensus document”.



World Health Organization (WHO) Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus gives a speech via video link during the second and final day of the UN General Assembly's special session on COVID-19, on Dec. 4, 2020. PHOTO: MANUEL ELIAS/UN PHOTO/HANDOUT VIA XINHUA

“The international teams and the Chinese counterparts have already agreed on the summary reports,” he said.

The expert team, composed of 17 international scientists and 17 Chinese counterparts, are working together to publish an interim joint report, in which they would “make recommendations for future studies,” said Embarek.

He said that longer studies would be needed to “explore some of the hypotheses and advance our understanding about the origin of the virus.”

In this respect, Dr Mike Ryan, executive director of WHO Health Emergencies Program, warned of the difficulty to find complete consensus at the press conference.

“Achieving an absolute consensus around every point is almost an impossibility in science. What we can do is reach conclusions based on the evidence before us,” he said.

Earlier last week, the international team concluded their month-long research in Wuhan and presented their initial findings at a press conference in China, ruling out the hypothesis that the virus escaped from a laboratory.

A WHO source said that the team is working on a summary report which is expected to be published this week, and that a full final report will come out in the coming weeks.

SOURCE: Xinhua



Myanmar Daily Weather Report (Issued at 4:00 pm Tuesday 16 February, 2021)

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

FORECAST VALID UNTIL MORNING OF THE 17 February, 2021: Light rain or thundershowers are likely to be isolated in Taninthayi Region and kachin State. Degree of certainty is (60%). Weather will be partly cloudy in Upper Sagaing Region and Shan, Chin, Kayah, Kayin, Mon states and generally fair in the remaining regions and states.

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

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Likelihood of isolated rain or thundershowers in Upper Sagaing, Taninthayi regions and Kachin, Shan, Kayah States.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 17 February, 2021: Generally fair weather.

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 17 February, 2021: Generally fair weather.

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 17 February, 2021: Generally fair weather.

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Russia prepares €2.2bn virus recovery plan for businesses: reports

RUSSIAN officials are preparing new relief measures for the business sector, which has received little state support since the start of the pandemic, a pro-Kremlin newspaper reported Monday.

The *Izvestia* daily, citing notes from a meeting hosted by Deputy Prime Minister Andrei Belousov, published a general outline of a new government programme that could cost up to 200 billion rubles (€2.25 billion).

Measures include interest-free loans to cover salaries, tax cancellations for businesses in hard-hit sectors and loan subsidies for small- and medium-sized businesses provided they hire new staff. The finance ministry, the ministry of economic development and the tax agency will develop the new measures.

The Russian government did not respond to AFP's request for comment on the *Izvestia* report. Russia has provided businesses much leaner support measures



Women buying clothes from a street vendor in Moscow. PHOTO: AFP

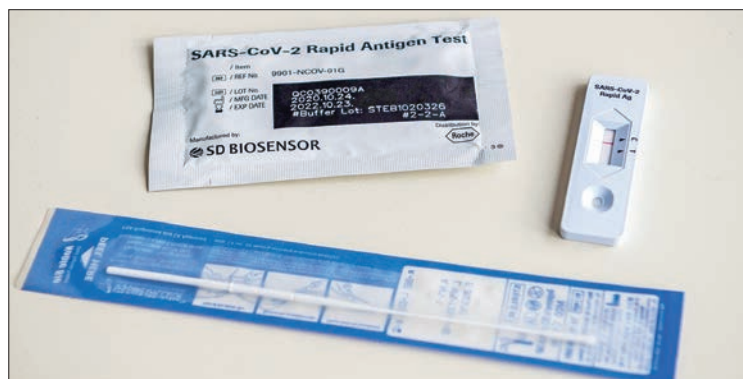
than many European countries, introducing targeted tax cuts, for example, but withholding direct financial aid. Earlier this month, Economy Minister Maxim Reshetnikov voiced concern about the possibility of a new wave of

workers being laid off in March, when several business support measures established at the start of the pandemic expire.

"We are concerned that in March some companies may cut staffing, especially in those

sectors that have not yet fully recovered," said Reshetnikov, according to the RBK business daily. Those sectors at risk include catering, entertainment and the hospitality and services sectors, he said.—AFP ■

Germany plans free antigen tests for all from March



A COVID antigen test. PHOTO: AFP

GERMANY is to offer free Covid-19 antigen tests for all from March, Health Minister Jens Spahn said Tuesday, as the country cautiously began allow-

ing some children to return to schools.

"From 1 March, all citizens will be able to be tested free of charge by trained personnel"

with the tests, Spahn said in a tweet. They will be available at pharmacies, doctors' and dentists' offices as well as Covid-19 testing centres, according to the *Bild* daily.

Unlike PCR (polymerase chain reaction) tests that must be analysed in a lab, antigen testing can be done from saliva with a result given on the spot within 30 minutes. That makes it easier and faster to test large numbers of people, though antigen tests are less reliable in detecting Covid-19 in people who are not showing symptoms.

Germany is also planning to roll out self-administered antigen tests after their approval by national drug regulator BfArM, which "is expected soon", Spahn added.

Germans will be asked to pay one euro (\$1.20) each for the home tests, according to media reports.

Chancellor Angela Merkel's government agreed last week to continue the partial lockdown until at least March 7, but left it to the country's individual states to decide when to reopen schools.—AFP ■

Dutch court orders government to lift COVID curfew that sparked riots

A Dutch court on Tuesday told the government to immediately lift a nationwide coronavirus curfew that sparked the worst riots in the Netherlands for decades. The government wrongly used emergency powers to bring in the first curfew since the Nazi occupation in World War II, a judge at The Hague district court ruled. The case was launched by the Viruswaarheid (Virus Truth) group, which has led a series of protests against coronavirus measures in the Netherlands.

"The curfew must be lifted immediately," the court said in a statement. "The

curfew is a far-reaching violation of the right to freedom of movement and privacy." The Dutch government swiftly challenged the decision to lift the 9:00 pm to 4:30 am curfew, and the court of appeal was due to hear the case at 1500 GMT on Tuesday.

Prime Minister Mark Rutte called on people to "keep respecting the curfew" even if the appeal failed. "If the curfew was not based on the correct legal basis at this time... that does not mean that this measure is not necessary," Rutte told a news conference.

'People feel liberated'

Viruswaarheid group founder Willem Engel – a dancing teacher whose social media posts raise questions about vaccines and the origins of coronavirus – hailed the ruling. "I've had hundreds, thousands of messages of congratulations. People are very happy, they feel liberated," Engel told AFP. "Of course we're not there yet, we have many more steps to go, but I think that there will be some joyful demonstrations here and there this evening." The curfew began on January 23 and was extended last week until March 2.—AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

'Keep to the curfew', Dutch PM argues,

PRIME minister Mark Rutte has appealed to the Dutch to stick to the 9pm curfew, while the legal situation is clarified. Judges in Den Haag (The Hague) ruled on Tuesday morning that the curfew must be lifted immediately because of its impact on personal freedom. The case was brought by anti-coronavirus campaign group "Viruswaarheid", which has instigated a string of court cases against government policy since the pandemic began. "We really need the curfew. If the legal basis for the curfew is wrong, that does not mean we don't need one," Rutte told reporters at a hastily arranged press conference. "The curfew is a means to an end, and that is to keep the virus under control as much as possible." —AFP ■

South Africa offers AstraZeneca jabs to AU

SOUTH AFRICA will give its doses of the Oxford/AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine to the African Union after scrapping their use due to efficacy concerns, the country's health minister said Tuesday.

The country suspended its vaccine rollout -- which was meant to be begin with the AstraZeneca shots earlier month -- after a study found the jab failed to prevent mild and moderate illness caused by a new variant discovered in South Africa. "The doses we purchased have been offered to the African Union to distribute to those countries who have already expressed interest in acquiring the stock," Health Minister Zweli Mkhize told the country's parliament.

"There will be no wasteful and fruitless expenditure," he said. The continent's hardest-hit country by the pandemic had secured a million doses of the vaccine from the Serum Institute of India and was set to receive an additional consignment of 500,000. But South Africa has now settled for the yet-to-be-approved Johnson & Johnson vaccine, securing nine million doses including 80,000 expected to be delivered this week.—AFP ■

Australia parliament rape scandal prompts PM apology



Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison apologized after a former staffer said she was raped in a minister's office and failed by her bosses. **PHOTO: POOL/AFP**

A former Australian government staffer has said she was raped in a minister's office in parliament and failed by her bosses after coming forward, prompting an apology from the prime minister Tuesday.

Brittany Higgins alleged she was sexually assaulted by a

male colleague in now-Defence Minister Linda Reynolds' office in 2019, after a night out drinking with conservative Liberal Party colleagues.

Higgins told news.com.au that, after reporting the incident to a superior, she was asked to attend a formal employment

meeting in the same room the alleged rape occurred.

Then aged 24 and a few months into her "dream job", she described feeling forced to choose between her career and making a formal report to police.

The revelation follows a string of scandals over the mistreatment of women in Australian politics in recent years, including bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct.

Higgins told Channel 10 that she felt like a "political problem" that needed to be solved, with her bosses appearing "uncomfortable" if she brought up the issue again. The government initially defended its approach, saying Higgins had been encouraged to speak to the police and would be supported in her decisions, though an official conceded the choice of meeting location had been a mistake. —AFP ■

A year after 'Diamond Princess', cruise industry eyes return

MR DAVID Abel and his wife Sally might have had the cruise from hell last year on the coronavirus-hit Diamond Princess, but they cannot wait to get back to sea.

A year after the ill-fated ship went into quarantine off Japan, the cruise industry is hoping passengers like the Abels will help steer them to calmer waters.

Analysts say smooth sailing is not likely before the second half of 2021 at the earliest, but bookings are already picking up.

The Abels both caught Covid-19 on the Diamond Princess, but they have booked five cruises

for late 2021 and early 2022, and are eyeing a sixth.

"We can't wait to get back to sea," Mr Abel told subscribers to his YouTube page in an early February video.

"There's nothing better than waking up in the morning in the world's most exciting and interesting cities. We love the sound of the ocean."

He acknowledged that some people "have concerns" but insisted he believes "cruises will be one of the safest types of vacations human beings could ever take".

When the Diamond Prin-

cess arrived off the Japanese city of Yokohama on Feb 3, 2020, the global death toll from the mysterious "new coronavirus" was around 400 and Japan had registered a handful of infections.

Carrying 2,666 passengers and 1,045 crew, the Diamond Princess was supposed to be meandering around Asia, but things quickly changed when a passenger tested positive after leaving the boat.

By Feb 4, Japanese authorities quarantined the ship and all on board. Testing showed the virus had spread widely. —AFP ■



Journalists gather near the Diamond Princess luxury cruise ship as it docks in Yokohama port on Thursday. Ten more people on the ship have tested positive for the coronavirus, raising the number of infections detected aboard to 20. **PHOTO: AFP**

UN warns battle for Marib threatens millions of Yemenis

THE UN's humanitarian chief said Tuesday he was "very alarmed" by a Huthi rebel advance on the Yemeni government's last northern stronghold of Marib, saying the assault could endanger millions of civilians.

The Iran-backed Huthis this month resumed an offensive to seize oil-rich Marib, some 120 kilometres (75 miles) east of the rebel-held capital Sanaa. The city's loss would be a major blow for Yemen's gov-

ernment, which is backed by a Saudi-led coalition, but would also threaten catastrophe for civilians, including hundreds of thousands of displaced people sheltering in desolate camps in the region.

"I'm very alarmed about the military escalation in Marib and its impact on the humanitarian situation," said Mark Lowcock, the UN undersecretary general for humanitarian affairs. —AFP ■



The UN calls Yemen the world's worst humanitarian crisis, leaving civilians desperate and dependant on aid to stave off starvation. **PHOTO: AFP**

NEWS IN BRIEF

EU tries to prevent Covid border chaos

The European Commission urged better coordination between EU members on Monday, a day after Germany imposed border measures to stem the spread of new coronavirus variants.

The EU executive said it was sending letters to all 27 members to highlight travel recommendations they had agreed to last October to prevent the chaos seen at the start of the pandemic, when unilateral closures snarled traffic and freight.

Germany has been filtering crossings from Austria and the Czech Republic since Sunday in a bid to slow the spread of coronavirus variants that emerged in the UK, South Africa and Brazil.

And Germany said on Monday it would not rule out doing the same on its border with France, where the South African variant is gaining ground in the eastern Moselle region. —AFP ■

New Zealand-Australia row erupts over 'terrorist' dual national

New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern angrily accused Australia Tuesday of shirking its responsibility for a dual national arrested in Turkey with alleged links to the Islamic State militant group.

Ardern said the woman had been a dual Australian-New Zealand citizen until authorities in Canberra cancelled her passport, leaving her situation to Wellington to deal with.

In an unusually blunt message to her counterpart Scott Morrison, Ardern said Canberra was "wrong" to expect New Zealand to accept the woman, who she said had strong ties to Australia.

"Any fair-minded person would consider this person an Australian and that is my view too," Ardern said in a statement. "We believe Australia has abdicated its responsibilities."

The 26-year-old woman was arrested with her two children near the Syrian border this week by Turkish authorities, and identified as a member of the Islamic State Group. Local media reported the woman had been taken to a Turkish court in the southeastern province of Hatay for interrogation. —AFP ■

Nigeria's Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala becomes first female head of WTO



Okonjo-Iweala, 66, was appointed director-general of the World Trade Organization by representatives of the 164 member countries, according to a statement from the body. **PHOTO: AFP**

NIGERIA'S NGOZI OKONJO-IWEALA was appointed Monday to head the leading international trade body as it seeks to resolve disagreements over how it

decides cases involving billions in sales and thousands of jobs. Okonjo-Iweala, 66, was appointed director-general of the World Trade Organization by

representatives of the 164 member countries, according to a statement from the body. She said in a statement that her first priority would be quickly

addressing the economic and health consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and to "implement the policy responses we need to get the global economy going again."

"Our organization faces a great many challenges but working together we can collectively make the WTO stronger, more agile and better adapted to the realities of today," she said.

The appointment came after new U.S. President Joe Biden endorsed her candidacy, which had been blocked by former President Donald Trump.

Biden's move was a step toward his aim of supporting more cooperative approaches to international problems after Trump's "America first" approach that launched multiple trade disputes. —AFP ■

Mitsubishi Electric to open FA products service centre in Malaysia



Mitsubishi Electric Corp.'s subsidiary, Mitsubishi Electric Sales Malaysia Sdn. Bhd., will house the new FA products service centre. **PHOTO: KYODO**

MITSUBISHI Electric Corp. will open a factory automation products service centre in Malaysia on March 1 to cater to the growing needs of Japanese and local corporate clients in the Southeast Asian country.

The new FA service outlet will be Mitsubishi's first in Malaysia and located at its subsidiary, Mitsubishi Electric Sales Malaysia Sdn. Bhd., in Selangor state, the Tokyo-based company said in a press release Mon-

day. Mitsubishi hopes for solid demand for its FA services in Malaysia from expanding local customer bases in electrical, electronic, automotive, food and beverage and other industrial sectors.

The company currently runs FA centres in five of the 10 Association of Southeast Asian Nations countries – Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam and the Philippines. —KYODO ■

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE
M.V HANSA HOMBURG VOY. NO. (104S/106N)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V HANSA HOMBURG VOY. NO. (104S/106N)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **15-2-2021** 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 BOX ENDEAVOUR VOY. NO. (105W/106E)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V BOX ENDEAVOUR VOY. NO. (105W/106E)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **17-2-2021** 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.

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Myanma Port Authority

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M/S SEALAND MAERSK ASIA PTE LTD

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE
M.V ANNATTE

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V ANNATTE VOY. NO. (104)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **17-2-2021** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **AIPT** 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: **2301928**

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:
M/S BEN LINE AGENCIES (SINGAPORE) PTE LTD

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M.V PATRIOT SW

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V PATRIOT SW VOY. NO. (115)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **16-2-2021** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **WILMAR** 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: **2301928**

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:
M/S BEN LINE AGENCIES (SINGAPORE) PTE LTD

Germany's Adidas to sell long-struggling Reebok unit



Adidas shareholders have been pushing for a sale of Reebok for years. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

GERMANY sportswear group Adidas said Tuesday it will sell off its US subsidiary Reebok after struggling for years to lift the brand's fortunes.

As part of a new five-year turnaround plan, Adidas "has now decided to begin a formal process aimed at divesting Reebok", the group said in a statement.

It did not name any potential buyers, but said further details

would be announced at a meeting on March 10.

The group said it would in future focus its efforts on strengthening the eponymous Adidas brand.

"After careful consideration, we have come to the conclusion that Reebok and Adidas will be able to significantly better realise their growth potential independently of each other," said CEO Kasper Rorsted. —AFP ■

Singapore unveils new package to help economy recover from COVID-19



People are seen during lunch time on the walkway at Raffles Place in the financial business district in Singapore on Tuesday. **PHOTO: AFP**

SINGAPORE on Tuesday unveiled an S\$11 billion (\$8.3 billion) financial package to continue extending a lifeline to an economy that has been grappling with its worst recession since independence more than five decades ago due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, Deputy Prime Minister Heng Swee Keat

said. The package comes on top of a series of economic rescue packages amounting to nearly S\$100 billion already dispensed last year. The latest package also aims to keep workers and companies afloat, Heng, who is also finance minister, told parliament when he unveiled his budget pro-

posal for this financial year that begins on April 1. Heng said some S\$53.7 billion contained in rescue packages for this year and last year will be drawn from Singapore's past accumulated reserves. The Southeast Asian city-state is expected to suffer a budget deficit for the second consecutive year

this year at S\$11 billion following last year's deficit of S\$64.9 billion, or nearly 13.9 per cent of gross domestic product, the biggest since independence in 1965.

Singapore's Ministry of Trade and Industry released fresh data on Monday that showed the economy contracted 5.4 per cent last year, also the worst performance since independence.

Nearly half of the latest financial package will be used for "public health and safe reopening measures," Heng said, adding that it also aims "to provide more targeted support for the worst-hit sectors, which continue to be adversely affected in 2021."

The government also continued to support the battered aviation sector due to ongoing global border controls and restrictions. — Kyodo News ■

Bitcoin surges past \$50,000 for first time

BITCOIN soared above \$50,000 for the first time on Tuesday as an increasing number of corporate heavyweights back the world's most popular virtual currency. At around 1235 GMT, Bitcoin hit an all-time high of \$50,547.70, marking a 4.4-per cent gain since Monday.

Bitcoin, once the preserve of internet geeks and hobbyists, has since exploded in

popularity and has now rocketed by almost 75 per cent in value so far this year.

"The crypto king has crossed the 50K price level for the first time as institutions are all over it," said AvaTrade analyst Naeem Aslam.

"There is a lot of FOMO (fear of missing out) among traders as the price is going through the roof and we have limited supply." —AFP ■



Bitcoin soared above \$50,000 for the first time on Tuesday as an increasing number of corporate heavyweights back the world's most popular virtual currency. **PHOTO: AFP**

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V AEGEAN EXPRESS VOY. NO. (204N/S)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V AEGEAN EXPRESS VOY. NO. (204N/S)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **17-2-2021** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **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 CONTINENTAL SHIPPING LINES

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V EVER CHANT VOY. NO. (0229-026N)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V EVER CHANT VOY. NO. (0229-026N)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **14-2-2021** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **HPT** 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 EVERGREEN MARINE (S'PORE) PTE., LTD.

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V SINAR BINTAN VOY. NO. (704N/S)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V SINAR BINTAN VOY. NO. (704N/S)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **14-2-2021** 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 SAMUDERA SHIPPING LINE

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V MATHU BHUM VOY. NO. (273W)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V MATHU BHUM VOY. NO. (273W)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **17-2-2021** 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 REGIONAL CONTAINER LINES

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V ISEACO GENESIS VOY. NO. (115N/S)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V ISEACO GENESIS VOY. NO. (115N/S)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **17-2-2021** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **HPT** 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 NEW GOLDEN SEA LINES

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V OLIVIA VOY. NO. (105S/106N)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V OLIVIA VOY. NO. (105S/106N)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **14-2-2021** 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

NASA wants to fly a helicopter on Mars for the first time

MORE than a century after the first powered flight on Earth, NASA intends to prove it's possible to replicate the feat on another world.

Transported aboard the Mars 2020 spacecraft that arrives at the Red Planet on Thursday, the small Ingenuity helicopter will have several challenges to overcome – the biggest being the rarefied Martian atmosphere, which is just one percent the density of Earth's.

Ultralight

It might be called a helicopter, but in appearance it's closer to mini-drones we've grown accustomed to seeing in recent years.

Weighing just four pounds



Ingenuity has four feet, a box-like body, and four carbon-fiber blades arranged in two rotors spinning in opposite directions. It comes with two cameras, computers, and navigation sensors. **PHOTO: NASA/AFP/FILE**

(1.8 kilograms), its blades are much larger and spin about five times faster -- 2,400 revolutions per minute -- than would be

required to generate the same amount of lift back on Earth.

It does however get some assistance from Mars, where the gravity is only a third of that on our home planet.

Ingenuity has four feet, a box-like body, and four carbon-fiber blades arranged in two rotors spinning in opposite directions. It comes with two cameras, computers, and navigation sensors.

It's also equipped with solar cells to recharge its batteries, much of the energy being used for staying warm on cold Martian nights, where temperatures fall to minus 130 degrees Fahrenheit (minus 90 degrees Celsius).

The helicopter is hitching

a ride on the belly of the Perseverance rover, which will drop it to the ground once it has landed then drive away.

90 second flights

Up to five flights of gradual difficulty are planned, over a window of one month, within the first few months of the mission.

Ingenuity will fly at altitudes of 10-15 feet (3-5 meters) and travel as far as 160 feet (50 metres) from its starting area and back.

Each flight will last up to a minute and half -- compared to the 12 seconds the Wright brothers achieved with the first powered, controlled flight in Kitty Hawk, North Carolina in 1903.

—AFP ■

Frigid Arctic air, winter storms grip much of US

ARCTIC weather that already killed 10 people and left millions without power in the United States was set to continue into Tuesday, after dumping deep snow and bringing perilous conditions across swathes of the country.

The National Weather Service (NWS) warned of an "unprecedented and expansive area of hazardous winter weather" from coast to coast, with more than 150 million Americans under winter weather advisories.

"Hundreds of daily low maximum and minimum tempera-

tures have been/will be broken during this prolonged 'polar plunge,' with some February and even all-time low temperature records in jeopardy," it said.

The grim conditions particularly afflicted regions unaccustomed to snow and sleet.

US reported more than 2.7 million people were without power in Texas, where temperatures in the major metropolis of Houston dipped to 16 degrees Fahrenheit (-9 degrees Celsius), well below average February lows of 34.

A number of deaths were

linked to the bad weather, and authorities urged residents to exercise caution in navigating the perilous conditions.

"We did not make it through almost a year of a pandemic to lose people to a snow or ice storm," said Governor Andrew Beshear of Kentucky, where CBS reported a man had died after icy weather caused him to lose control of his vehicle and crash.

The storm has caused havoc in parts of Texas, including a 100-car pile-up on Interstate 35 near Fort Worth that killed at least six people last week. —AFP ■

At least three dead in North Carolina tornado

A TORNADO killed at least three people when it ripped through the state of North Carolina, officials said Tuesday, while elsewhere much of the US remained gripped by a record cold snap.

The twister tore into the southern part of the state late Monday, particularly impacting two coastal communities in Brunswick County.

"At this time, there are three confirmed fatalities and 10 confirmed injuries," Brunswick County Emergency Services said in a statement.

"It is estimated that at least

50 homes were affected in the incident and several power lines were damaged, causing power outages."

Photos and video broadcast by US media showed downed trees, flattened homes and smashed cars.

Sheriff John Ingram told a press conference there would "be a long recovery process".

"This is something unlike I've ever seen," he said, cited by US media.

Elsewhere across the United States, much of the country remained gripped by a deadly

cold snap fueled by frigid Arctic air that has brought record low temperatures.

The National Weather Service (NWS) said a new winter storm was emerging in the Southern Plains area -- which includes parts of Texas, Oklahoma and Kansas.

The NWS on Monday warned of an "unprecedented and expansive area of hazardous winter weather" from coast to coast, with more than 150 million Americans under winter weather advisories. —AFP ■

Kenya's locust hunters on tireless quest to halt ancient pest



Hunter: Helicopters are sent out to spot swarms in the early morning as the locusts are roosting in trees and bushes. Pilots then call in pesticide-spraying aircraft to kill the insects. **PHOTO: AFP**

AS dawn breaks in central Kenya, a helicopter lifts off in a race to find roosting locusts before the sun warms their bodies and sends them on a ravenous flight through farmland.

Pilot Kieran Allen begins his painstaking survey from zebra-filled plains and lush maize farms, to dramatic forested valleys and the vast arid expanses further north, his eyes scouring the landscape for signs of the massed insects.

The chopper suddenly swings around after a call comes in from the locust war room on the ground: a community in the foothills of Mount Kenya has reported a swarm.

"I am seeing some pink in the trees," his voice crackles over the headphones, pointing to a roughly 30-hectare (75-acre) swathe of desert locusts.

Reddish-pink in their immature -- and hungriest -- phase, the insects smother the tips of a pine forest.

Allen determines that nearby farms are at a safe distance and calls in a second aircraft which arrives in minutes to spray the swarm with pesticide.

On the ground, having warmed to just the right temperature, the thick cloud of locusts fills the air with a rustling akin to light rainfall. But a few hours from now, many will be dead from the effect of the poison.

Last month alone, Allen logged almost 25,000 kilometres (15,500 miles) of flight -- more than half the circumference of the world -- in his hunt for locusts after a fresh wave of insects invaded Kenya from Somalia and Ethiopia. —AFP ■

France to step up effort to 'decapitate' Sahel Qaeda groups: Macron



Macron, pictured speaking to the G5 Sahel summit via video link, is under pressure at home to reduce France's anti-jihadist mission. **PHOTO: POOL/AFP**

FRANCE will intensify its efforts to help "decapitate" Qaeda-linked groups in the Sahel, President Emmanuel Macron told regional leaders via video conference on Tuesday.

He also urged the so-called G5 Sahel nations -- Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger -- to expand their own anti-terror fight and work on restoring government control and services in areas where jihadist fighters operate.

"We are re-engaging our forces in order to decapitate these organizations," Macron said during a two-day summit in the Chadian capital of N'Djamena.

He did not mention any drawdown of France's 5,100-troop Barkhane operation in the region, after French losses in jihadist attacks prompted calls for a review of the mission.

Macron said the efforts would focus on combatting the

Group to Support Islam and Muslims (GSIM) and in particular one of its main armed groups, Katiba Macina.

The aim is "to strengthen actions against terrorism" while also carrying out a "political jolt... give the people of the Sahel something to hope for," he said.

He said it was essential for states fighting jihadists to win public support for counter-insurgency efforts. —AFP ■

Spanish police arrest rapper holed up in university

SPANISH police on Tuesday arrested a rapper who barricaded himself inside a university after he was controversially sentenced to nine months in jail over a string of tweets, a case that has sparked debate over free speech in the country.

"They will never make us give in, despite the repression," Pablo Hasel said, his fist raised as he was escorted down a staircase by police in protective gear.

"It is the fascist state which is arresting me. Death

to the fascist state!" added the 32-year-old, who wore a sweatshirt and was carrying a duffel bag, as he looked directly at TV cameras.

Hasel had been given until last Friday night to turn himself in to begin serving his sentence after being convicted for glorifying terrorism, slander and libel against the crown and state institutions. At issue was a series of tweets attacking the monarchy and accusing police of torturing and killing demonstrators and migrants, with his case sparking protests in Madrid and Barcelona.

But Hasel, who is known for his hard-left views and whose real name is Pablo Rivadulla, on Monday barricaded himself inside the University of Lleida, in the northeastern Catalonia region, with dozens of supporters to avoid arrest. —AFP ■



Hasel had been given until last Friday night to turn himself in to begin serving his sentence. **PHOTO: AFP**

NEWS IN BRIEF

What's in France's draft law against 'Islamist separatism'?

After months of controversy and 135 hours of parliamentary debate, MPs in France are set to approve a draft law to crack down on what has been termed "Islamist separatism" on Tuesday.

AFP examines what is, and what isn't, in the new legislation.

Why a new law now?

French President Emmanuel Macron laid the groundwork with a much-anticipated speech on October 2 about what he called the "fight against separatism."

Macron denounced a trend of "Islamist separatism" that sought to create a "counter-society" rejecting the country's strict form of secularism, equality between the sexes, and other parts of French law.

Macron was accused by critics at the time of pandering to the far-right ahead of 2022 presidential elections and one line in particular -- "Islam is a religion that is in crisis all over the world" -- drew fierce criticism overseas.

The discussion severely intensified two weeks later when school teacher Samuel Paty was beheaded in the street by a radicalised teen of Chechen origin after showing his class cartoons lampooning the Prophet Mohammed.

For supporters of the new law, Paty's killing underlined the need for firmer action.

But critics saw the legislation as further stigmatising millions of French Muslims and pushing them to cling more closely to their religious or community identities.

What will the legislation do?

The most significant articles attempt to crack down on speech and actions by religious figures or organisations which are seen as subverting core values of the French republic.

—AFP ■

Belarusian police mount raids on journalists, activists

Police in Belarus raided the homes and offices of 25 journalists, rights defenders and trade union members on Tuesday, investigators and activists said, as part of a probe into mass protests.

Belarus was gripped by months of demonstrations against the rule of President Alexander Lukashenko after he claimed an overwhelming victory in an August election the opposition said was rigged.

The authorities snuffed out the protest movement in the ex-Soviet country by detaining thousands of people in a crackdown that left at least four demonstrators dead and several independent journalists facing years behind bars.

Law enforcement officers on Tuesday raided the homes of at least 25 people across the country, human rights group Viasna said, including Belarusian Association of Journalists (BAJ) chief Andrei Bastunets, the leaders of several trade unions and members of Viasna itself.

Belarus's Investigative Committee, a body charged with probing major crimes, said the searches were part of a probe into the "organization and preparation of actions that grossly violate public order".

"As part of a preliminary investigation to establish the circumstances of the financing of protest activities, investigators initiated searches on organizations positioning themselves as human rights defenders," the Investigative Committee said in a statement.

Bastunets was briefly detained and taken to the group's offices for a search before being released, he said on BAJ's Telegram channel, providing no further details due to a warning over "divulging the investigation's secrets".

In addition to searches at the homes of several members, Viasna reported that police also came to its offices. —AFP ■

Final world boxing qualifier for Tokyo Games to be scrapped

TOKYO — The final global boxing qualifier for the Tokyo Olympics is being scrapped, the Japan Boxing Federation said Tuesday, with places at this summer's pandemic-delayed Games likely to be determined by rankings.

The qualifier was due to take place in Paris in June, but coronavirus travel restrictions and the rescheduling of the final European qualifier from April to June have forced organizers to pull the plug.

Boxing qualification events for the Games are being organised by a special taskforce formed after the IOC stripped the International Boxing Association of its right to run the sport at the Olympics.

The decision in June 2019 came after an investigation into



The final global boxing qualifier for the Tokyo Olympics is being scrapped, the Japan Boxing Federation said Tuesday, with places at this summer's pandemic-delayed Games likely to be determined by rankings. **PHOTO: KYODO**

alleged serious mismanagement at boxing's crisis-ridden ruling authority.

Qualification from the final

world event is now likely to be decided by rankings created by the task force, depriving some boxers of their chance to fight

for a place at the postponed 2020 Games.

Japan Boxing Federation spokeswoman Mayumi Imaeda

told AFP that the body was informed of the move on Tuesday.

"Athletes from some countries can travel to Paris but not from others, so it's unfair," she said.

"The athletes have to come first, and they have to be safe and secure. It also has to be open and honest. The athletes have to be treated equally."

Qualification for the Games was supposed to be split between four continents, with a further final global qualifier taking place in Paris in June.

The International Olympic Committee appointed Morinari Watanabe, an IOC member from Japan and president of the International Gymnastic Federation, to run the taskforce to organise qualification and the event itself at the Games. —AFP ■

Arsenal to investigate Aubameyang over alleged tattoo breach

LONDON — Arsenal will remind captain Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang of his responsibilities after a video emerged of the forward getting a tattoo, which could be a breach of coronavirus restrictions. Tattoo artist Alejandro Nicolas Bernal posted the

social media clip on February 9 where Aubameyang is seen to get a new tattoo on his hand.

England has been under a national lockdown for nearly two months to try and bring down Covid-19 infection rates.

It is unclear when the in-

cident took place, but Arsenal confirmed they had spoken to Aubameyang about it.

"We will speak to the player to remind him of his responsibilities and establish what has taken place," said an Arsenal spokesperson. —AFP ■

Williams to face 'incredible' Osaka after statement win over Halep

MELBOURNE — Serena Williams said she aimed to keep lifting her level after she stepped up a gear to destroy Simona Halep and set up an Australian Open semi-final with an "incredible" Naomi Osaka on Tuesday.

The seven-time champion, in her 20th Australian Open and 77th Grand Slam, raised her intensity and accuracy to beat the Romanian second seed 6-3, 6-3 on Rod Laver Arena.

"Definitely think this is the best match I have played

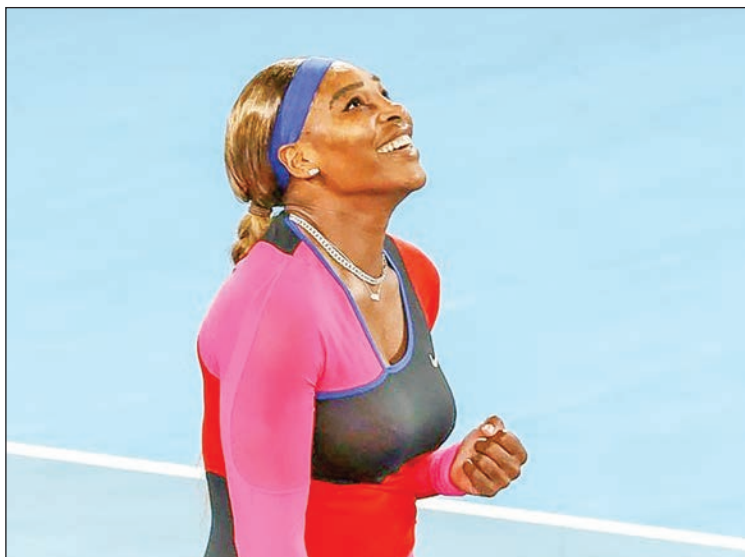
this tournament, for sure," said 10th seed Williams, who is another step closer to a record-equalling 24th Grand Slam title.

"Obviously I had to be going up against the number two in the world, so I knew I had to do better, and that's what I did and I'm excited."

The 39-year-old, 23-time major winner has lost four Slam finals while chasing Margaret Court's all-time mark since her last major victory at Melbourne Park in 2017 while pregnant.

Japan's Osaka stands between Williams and a place in another decider after the third seed crushed Taiwanese veteran Hsieh Su-wei 6-2, 6-2.

"I feel good. I feel like, you know, I'm here and I'm happy to be here," said the veteran, after reaching her 40th Grand Slam semi-final. —AFP ■



Serena Williams is into a 40th Grand Slam semi-final. **PHOTO: AFP**

Who's for the drop? Premier League relegation battle set to be cliffhanger



Newcastle United's 2-0 defeat by Chelsea keeps them firmly in the relegation battle which for the three that go down will be very costly. **PHOTO: POOL/AFP**

LONDON — The Premier League title may be Manchester City's to lose but down at the bottom the relegation battle looks set to go to the wire.

The dogfight to avoid the drop has serious financial consequences.

Clubs dropping out of the elite take an immediate £60 million (\$84 million).

Although they receive a £40 million parachute payment when they drop into the Championship, it falls well short of the £100 million Premier League clubs receive each year.

The relegated club's losses in revenue can reach as much as £70-80 million once

sponsorship deals and fans coming through the turnstiles in normal non-coronavirus times are taken into account.

Third-from-bottom Fulham look the only side of those in the relegation places capable of escaping the drop.

Newcastle's 2-0 loss to Chelsea on Monday makes them favourites to replace Fulham if the latter can extricate themselves from the relegation spots.

A fine 2-0 away to high-flying Everton on Sunday showed Fulham have both the fight in them and the quality to do so.

The bottom two, though, are floundering. —AFP ■