

Business

European Union eyes letting fully vaccinated travelers into bloc

'Digital green certificate' planned for travel within EU

BRUSSELS: The European Union's executive yesterday proposed that travelers who are fully vaccinated with EU-approved jabs be able to enter the bloc, a statement said. The European Commission urged the EU's 27 member countries - which make their own decisions on health matters - to "lift restrictions on non-essential travel for vaccinated persons travelling to the EU".

It also wants to see travelers from countries that have done a good job in keeping COVID-19 at bay to be able to enter, based on how many infections they register per 100,000 people averaged over a two-week period. The proposal would see that infection threshold raised from the "very severe" bar of 25 cases per 100,000 decided nearly a year ago to 100 cases, an EU official involved with drafting the proposal told journalists on condition of not being identified.

"So we will no longer have the choice among, let's say, 10 to 15 countries around the world, but member states will be able to pick up countries, international countries in a list of up to 100 countries, if the situation continues to develop in a positive way," he said.

Proof that an individual was fully vaccinated - at least two weeks before arriving in the EU, for full immunity to kick in - would not exclude member states also requiring COVID tests either before or after arrival, or quarantine if authorities deemed them warranted, he added. The proposal also says an "emergency brake" option should be kept in reserve to allow member states

to quickly close travel from countries where a "variant of concern or interest is detected".

EU-approved vaccines

The EU currently has four vaccines currently authorized by its European Medicines Agency: From BioNTech/Pfizer, Moderna, AstraZeneca and Johnson & Johnson. Others may be added later. The EMA is beginning to look at Russia's Sputnik V vaccine. So far, however, no assessment is being made of China's jabs, which are used in several countries. The statement said other vaccines may later be added to the list for approved EU travel if they feature on a World Health Organization emergency use list of jabs.

The EU at the moment recommends a general ban on travelers entering the bloc, except for those on essential business, and most member states are respecting this rule. Just six countries - Australia, New Zealand, Rwanda, Singapore, South Korea and Thailand - are on an EU list permitting member states to "gradually" lift travel restrictions on travelers coming from them. Their figures show COVID infections are under control.

China is on that list too, but travel restrictions will be eased only if it reciprocates and permits arrivals from the EU, which is not the case at the moment. The European Commission is keen to see Europe open its borders soon to travelers meeting its criteria, to save the continent's important summer tourism season.

A key component of that is a planned "digital green certificate" to prove that the bearer has been



NEW DELHI: A health worker inoculates a woman with a dose of the Covishield coronavirus vaccine in a school-turned-vaccination center yesterday. —AFP

vaccinated, has recent negative COVID test results, or has immunity after recovering from a COVID infection. It plans to launch that certificate next

month for travel within the EU, with the aim of eventually relying on such a document for travelers from countries outside the bloc. —AFP

'Alive again' as Greece reopens restaurant terraces

ATHENS: Greek restaurants and cafes reopened their terraces yesterday after six months of pandemic shutdown, with customers flocking to soak up the sunshine and a return to "normal life". "Today I feel like I'm alive again, like I've been revived," joked Andreas Riminiotis, a retiree savouring the ambiance at the Da Capo cafe in Athens.

"Before the cafes closed in November, I use to come here every day to drink a coffee and talk with my friends. It was my favorite way to pass the time, the remedy to all ills," he said, adding that he welcomed a chance to return to "normal life". The reopening was all the more poignant and joyous as it came a day after Orthodox Christians in Greece celebrated Easter, when believers mark the resurrection of Christ.

Greece has been under COVID-19 restrictions -

including a curfew of varying strictness - since November. The third wave of the pandemic has hit Greece particularly hard with the majority of the country's nearly 10,000 virus deaths occurring over the last few months. Non-essential businesses and schools reopened in early April.

Yesterday, the outdoor terraces in the capital's trendy Kolonaki district filled up with customers. "I haven't worked in six months," said Yannis Karagiannakis, a waiter. "I was going around in circles, was depressed." Some 330,000 people are estimated to work in the restaurant sector in Greece and yesterday only cafes and restaurants with outdoor seating were permitted to reopen.

"Twenty percent of businesses don't have terraces," said Yorgos Kavvathas, the president of the restaurant worker union. He added that the COVID-19 pandemic had forced the closure of dozens of establishments in Athens and Thessaloniki and that scores more were in danger of going out of business. Cafes reopening yesterday have to comply with the following guidelines - a maximum of six people per table, waiters wearing masks and testing once a week.

A curfew of 11:00 pm is still in effect in the coun-



ATHENS: People sit at a cafe in Thiseio yesterday as restaurants and cafes in Greece open after six months of lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic. —AFP

ty. Greece, whose economy relies heavily on tourism, has sped up its vaccination drive ahead of the summer season, with people over 30 currently eligible for the jab. The country currently has some 345,000 cases of coronavirus and more than 10,400 deaths in a population of 10.8 million. —AFP

Health crisis as Jordan light up in lockdown

AMMAN: Already saddled with one of the world's highest rates of smoking, Jordan has seen the numbers lighting up soar since coronavirus restrictions began last year, sparking fears of a double epidemic. Mounir Shana, who sells hookah waterpipes in the capital Amman, was rarely seen without a cigarette dangling from his lips even before the crisis.

But draconian restrictions imposed by the government have increased his intake. "I've been smoking more and more for the past year because of the psychological pressure of lockdowns," said 24-year-old Shana, lighting a fresh cigarette from the butt of his previous smoke as he talked. "From one to two packs a day before the epidemic, I went to four to five today."

A survey by the University of Jordan's Center for

Strategic Studies in April 2020 found 52 percent said they were smoking more since pandemic restrictions began. Shana spends some 300 dinars (\$425) each month just to fuel his smoking addiction. "I know the dangers and I suffer from chest pains," he said. "But what do you want me to do? When I am locked between four walls at home, tobacco gives me psychological comfort."

Passive smoking danger

Jordan has one of the highest rates of tobacco smokers in the world, with 70 percent of men lighting up, according to the World Health Organization in 2015 - second only to Indonesia, at 76 percent. Eight out of 10 men aged 18 to 69 smoke, according to government statistics. Jordanians smoke an average of 23 cigarettes per day.

But medics fear the situation has grown worse since then. "With the pandemic, tobacco consumption has increased because of the psychological state of the population," said Abeer Mowassas, a health ministry information official. Since the coronavirus pandemic broke out, Jordan has imposed a series of restrictions, including curfews.

As the COVID-19 pandemic drags on in Jordan -



AMMAN: A Jordanian man smokes a cigarette as he checks his computer on March 26, 2021. —AFP

recording over 700,000 cases including 8,800 deaths in a country of 10 million - smoking adds to the worries. The WHO warns that since smoking impairs lung function - making it harder for the body to fight off respiratory diseases - smokers are likely "at higher risk of developing severe COVID outcomes and death". —AFP

Australia reviewing controversial Chinese lease on Darwin port

SYDNEY: Australia yesterday said a Chinese company's controversial 99-year-lease on Darwin Port is under review and could be scrapped, opening a new point of friction in relations between Beijing and Canberra. The lease deal - brokered by local authorities in Australia's Northern Territory - had raised serious concern in Canberra and in Washington, where it was seen as a strategic liability.

Darwin is the most important port on Australia's north coast, the closest to Asia and a base for US Marines who rotate in and out of the country. Newly minted defense minister Peter Dutton told the Sydney Morning Herald his department had been asked to "come back with some advice" about the 2015 deal and refused to rule out forcing Chinese firm Landbridge to divest on national security grounds. The defense review will be carried out and "we can look at options that are in our national interests after that" he said. Landbridge is owned by Chinese billionaire Ye Cheng. Following the Darwin port deal, Australia introduced legislation giving Canberra a veto over future sensitive deals and launching a review of those already signed. That review is due to be concluded by the end of the year and had been expected to include Darwin.

But in his comments to the Herald, Dutton stated explicitly for the first time that the Darwin agreement is under review. Any move to scrap the deal is sure to further strain relations between Australia and China which are already in deep crisis. Last month, Prime Minister Scott Morrison's government scrapped a Belt and Road deal made between Beijing and the state of Victoria.

That prompted a furious response from China, which warned of "serious harm" in the already fractured relationship. The Belt and Road initiative is designed to deepen China's ties across Asia and the world. But critics say its projects and the companies involved are used as geopolitical levers by Beijing.

Enjoy all kinds of music with Huawei FreeBuds 4i and Huawei Music

KUWAIT: Music has always been an important part of our everyday life. Knowingly or unknowingly, the right kind of tunes can help raise emotions, calm us down, or even motivate us with a potential to do a lot more. This is why there is always a demand for audio products and music services which bring together a musical experience like never before. Taking this into consideration is Huawei, who not only has a range of audio products but also shows off Huawei Music which packs some of the top chartbusters.

The latest device in this lineup is the HUAWEI FreeBuds 4i, which brings not only high quality sound but when paired with Huawei Music, creates an immersive music experience that rivals many. When buying the HUAWEI FreeBuds 4i, you will also get three months of HUAWEI Music Premium for free as an added bonus so you can enjoy high quality sound with all your favorite tunes!

The secret behind the HUAWEI FreeBuds 4i's high quality sound actually stems from the custom components that are all built into its compact body. The main part of this customized setup is the large 10mm dynamic driver which allows for a wider range of amplitudes when it comes to overall sound effects. Another component is the actual tuning from Huawei's specialized teams, who optimized the components of the earphone for pop music, ensuring that all details produced are completely accurate, be it from instru-



ments, rhythms or vocals. Huawei achieved this by paying close attention the details, while also simulating various types of music and scenarios. By using digital tools to fine tune sound quality, Huawei's audio experts have more control over the sound during the design phase for optimal acoustic performance, which is further tested with extensive research to ensure top-notch sound quality. This tuning also includes enhanced bass, reduction of soundstage distortion and realistic imaging, all of which finally results in a well-balanced sound signature. To get the most out of those features, simply select the special sound effect you want from Huawei Music, making it easy and convenient to enjoy high quality sound.

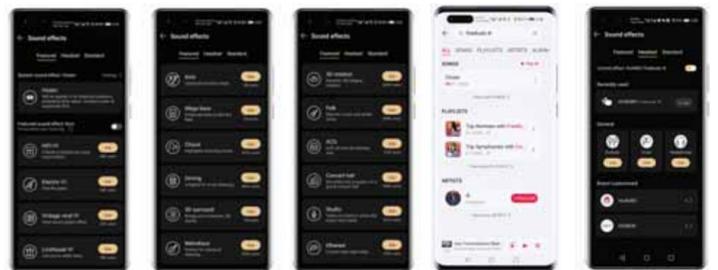
But what does this mean for the user? Let's take for instance a few thumping and booming remixes available on Huawei Music, like Enzo by DJ Snake or Why Do You Lie To Me by Topic or Love Myself by Hailee Steinfeld, which have strong beats, fast paced music and various details that just cannot be missed. Thanks to its high quality sound capabilities, listening to these tracks is completely immersive with every beat, vocal and tune heard perfectly.

Even while listening to the hit That's What I Like by

Bruno Mars, you can enjoy a very balanced sound mix with great treble extension while also getting an 80's vibe from the drums which is what the song was intended to sound like. Overall, you also get a spacious soundstage complete with precise localization. The vocals on Shakira's Empire also has controlled mid-treble complete with good clarity that makes it pleasant to listen to for extended periods.

But that's not all, you can also take something a little more classical and harmonious, like Halle Orchestra from the Halle! Encore! Album or the Classical Gold - 25 Favourites album which has classics like Mozart/Mantovani Orchestra, and you can sit back and enjoy every bit of the tracks the way it was meant to be heard complete with sharp details of instruments, possibly even awakening a newfound love for classical music! Curious on where you can get these tracks? It's quite simple, just open Huawei Music and search for HUAWEI FreeBuds 4i, and you will get two music playlists full of amazing tracks for you to listen to. One list will give you the Top Remixes while the other will give you the Top Symphonies.

When using HUAWEI Music with the HUAWEI FreeBuds 4i, you also get a wide range of sound effects to



choose from. This includes Kirin, which complements Huawei audio devices with the Kirin chip to simulate more details in digital mode, 3D surround sound which restores space and orientation sense of the 3D sound field for maximum immersion, HiFi for a more virtual sound reality experience, Mega Bass for boosting bass effect akin to a subwoofer, Choral to highlight human voices, Nostalgic for classic warm sounds, Concerts and many more, all of which can be easily selected with a simple tap.

Listening to good quality music is not something that should be difficult or complicated. In fact, the only hard part that should be there is selecting the right song. With the HUAWEI FreeBuds 4i high quality sound is a guarantee, which means that no matter what song you choose, it can be enjoyed perfectly. Meanwhile, when it comes to song choices, Huawei Music has all of the tracks mentioned above and a whole lot more, giving you a huge library of songs to choose from, depending on your mood, scenario or just what you want to listen to.