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Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Centre

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NIGHTCLUB AND SAUNA STAFF 'LOSING HOPE' OVER UNSETTLED TERMINATION CASE AFTER DISAPPOINTING MEETING WITH DSAL

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TAX BENEFITS ON JOB INCOME TO PRODUCE MINIMAL EFFECT: ECONOMIST

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NON-RESIDENT WORKERS WHOSE BLUE CARDS HAVE EXPIRED SINCE THE CNY HOLIDAYS HAVE UNTIL FEB 29 TO SETTLE THEIR CASES

P2

AP PHOTO



Japanese officials have confirmed 99 more people infected by the new virus aboard the quarantined cruise ship Diamond Princess, bringing the total to 454. The Health Ministry has been carrying out tests on passengers and crew on the ship, docked in Yokohama, a port city near Tokyo. The 14-day quarantine for those on the ship was due to end tomorrow. More on p6,8

AP PHOTO



Cambodia The feel-good story of how Cambodia allowed a cruise ship to dock after it was turned away elsewhere in Asia for fear of spreading the deadly virus that began in China has taken an unfortunate turn after a passenger released from the ship tested positive for the virus. News over the weekend that an 83-year-old American woman who was on the ship and flew from Cambodia to Malaysia was found to be carrying the virus froze further movement of the passengers and crew of the MS Westerdam.

AP PHOTO



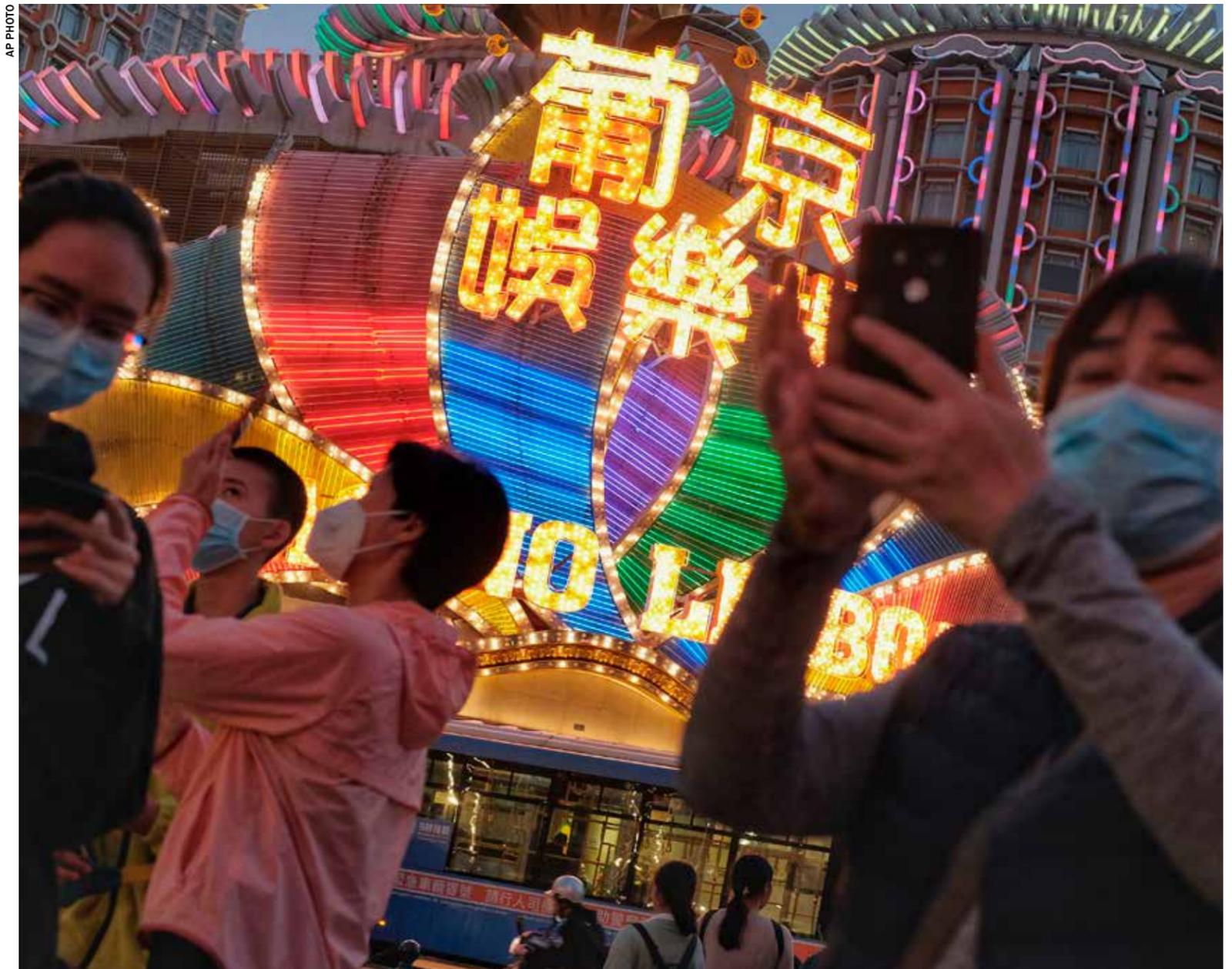
South Korea Two people were killed and 38 were injured yesterday in a highway pileup in snowy weather in southwestern South Korea. Police said the pileup involved about 30 vehicles, including a chemical truck carrying nitric acid that flipped over and caught fire inside a tunnel.

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CASINOS

SOFT REOPENING

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AP PHOTO

CHINA MAY POSTPONE ANNUAL CONGRESS BECAUSE OF VIRUS

AP PHOTO



P6

MEASURES ON FOREIGN WORKERS FROM MAINLAND TO TIGHTEN

ANTHONY LAM

FROM Thursday, all foreign workers who have been to mainland China in the past 14 days will be required to undergo 14 days of medical observation at designated venues in Zhuhai before they can enter Macau, Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng announced in an Executive Order.

Not only will they need to undergo medical observation, but after the observation period they will be issued with a medical certificate from Zhuhai's medical authority which states that they are free of the Covid-19 infection.

After they leave observation, they will be taken directly to the Gongbei Border by chartered vehicles. They will be required to cross the border and enter Macau immediately in order to minimize potential infection.

The decision was announced by the government at its daily press briefing yesterday. On the panel was Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture Elsie Ao Ieong U, Secretary for Administration and Justice André Cheong Weng Chon, and Secretary for Economy and Finance Lei Wai Nong, as well as the heads of several government bureaux.

Apart from this requirement, the Executive Order also stipulates that other measures will be applied to foreign workers seeking entry to Macau from Thursday onwards.

When foreign workers try to enter Macau from elsewhere or



are not able to obtain the medical certificate mentioned, they will either be sent back to the origin of their journey, be that through a flight or voyage, or undergo quarantine in designated venues in Macau under the monitoring of the Health Bureau.

If this occurs, the costs of quarantine will be borne by the foreign worker. These costs, according to the administration secretary, will cover accommodation and meals. Similar to other government charges, there are legal mechanisms to chase these costs should the foreign workers fail to settle their bills.

If these foreign workers cross the border and go back to mainland China, they will be required to undergo medical observation for 14 days again.

The two measures were implemented to discourage foreign workers from regularly crossing the border as this undermines epidemic prevention and control efforts in the city.

Contrary to prior reports by local Chinese media outlets, similar measures will not be administered to Macau residents for the time being. Ao Ieong noted that should the overall condition in and out of Macau worsen, similar

requirements might be levied on Macau residents.

However, Cheong referred to the Basic Law and stressed that restricting the freedom of movement of Macau residents would represent a violation of the Law.

The ending clause of the Executive Order states certain exemptions in the implementation of the new measures.

For instance, the Health Bureau has the liberty to exempt anyone from undergoing these measures based on public interests, especially in terms of disease prevention and control, emergency rescue, and maintaining the normal

operation of the Macau SAR and the basic livelihood of its people.

Yesterday saw the resumption of certain basic public services. At the same time, the government has changed the Chinese wording used in its public announcement from "strongly encouraging" people to stay home to "strongly warning." Questioned yesterday whether "warning" people to stay home while reopening public offices was contradictory, Cheong said there is no contradiction.

Citing the available data, as of 4 p.m. yesterday only 22 of the 48 offices that resumed public services were as busy as they would be on a normal day prior to the coronavirus outbreak. Twenty registered a large decrease in visitors, ranging from 40% to as high as 90%.

Cheong admitted that some bureaux, including the Financial Services Bureau, received approximately 20% more visitors than normal. He attributed this to the special work suspension period.

Many gathered at the Bureau's entrance yesterday morning, hoping to submit tax declaration forms, some of which were originally due at the end of February. Yesterday morning however, the finance secretary issued an Executive Order to extend the deadline to the end of March.

The social affairs secretary said that it was still too early to determine a date for school resumption. Ao Ieong added that the government was constantly monitoring the situation.

She stressed that a classroom setting is an enclosed space with a crowd, which poses concerns about the prevention of disease spread. Hence, schooling will only resumed when the outbreak conditions improve.

Grace period granted to migrant workers overstaying their visas

LYNZY VALLES

NON-RESIDENT workers whose blue cards have expired since the Chinese Lunar New Year have until February 29 to settle their cases with the immigration department without having to pay an "overstay" fine of 500 patacas per day. The exemption was made because of the suspension of certain immigration services as part of the government's plan to contain the spread of Covid-19.

Although the Public Security Police (PSP) urged the public to not crowd the Pac On Immigration Department, hundreds of people still queued at the government office yesterday when it reopened. Many migrant workers in particular were keen to have their outstanding visa matters resolved.

Many of them have expired visas and were unable to resolve their cases as government departments have not opened in weeks.

According to a non-resident worker whose visa expired on February 14, her employers were informed that even if her visa lapsed, it would not cause any issues.

"One of the people that I know whose visa expired on February 7 was told by her employment agency that they will be the one to solve the matter," said the worker, who asked not to be identified.

"It's good that we do not have to pay or else

that is another problem," said another non-resident worker, who also asked to remain anonymous.

Non-essential government offices have been closed since Chinese New Year, inconveniencing the public, including those who applying for or canceling domestic worker applications.

Some services at the Pac On Immigration Department were not open yet, suspending services for applications for new resi-

dence permits for mainland residents. Some residents complained that the government could have arranged their appointment system better.

Meanwhile, acting director of the Residence and Stay Affairs Department, Wong Kim Hong, said that there is no need for non-resident workers to rush to have their cases settled.

"For expired residence permits, expired visas of non-local workers and students, they just need to go

to the department before February 29. There is no need for them to rush to the department, and the same for non-emergency services," he said, according to public broadcaster TDM.

The PSP also communicated with employment agencies to arrange for non-professional workers to arrive at the building at different times, and in this way avoid the concentration of a large number of people in a small space.

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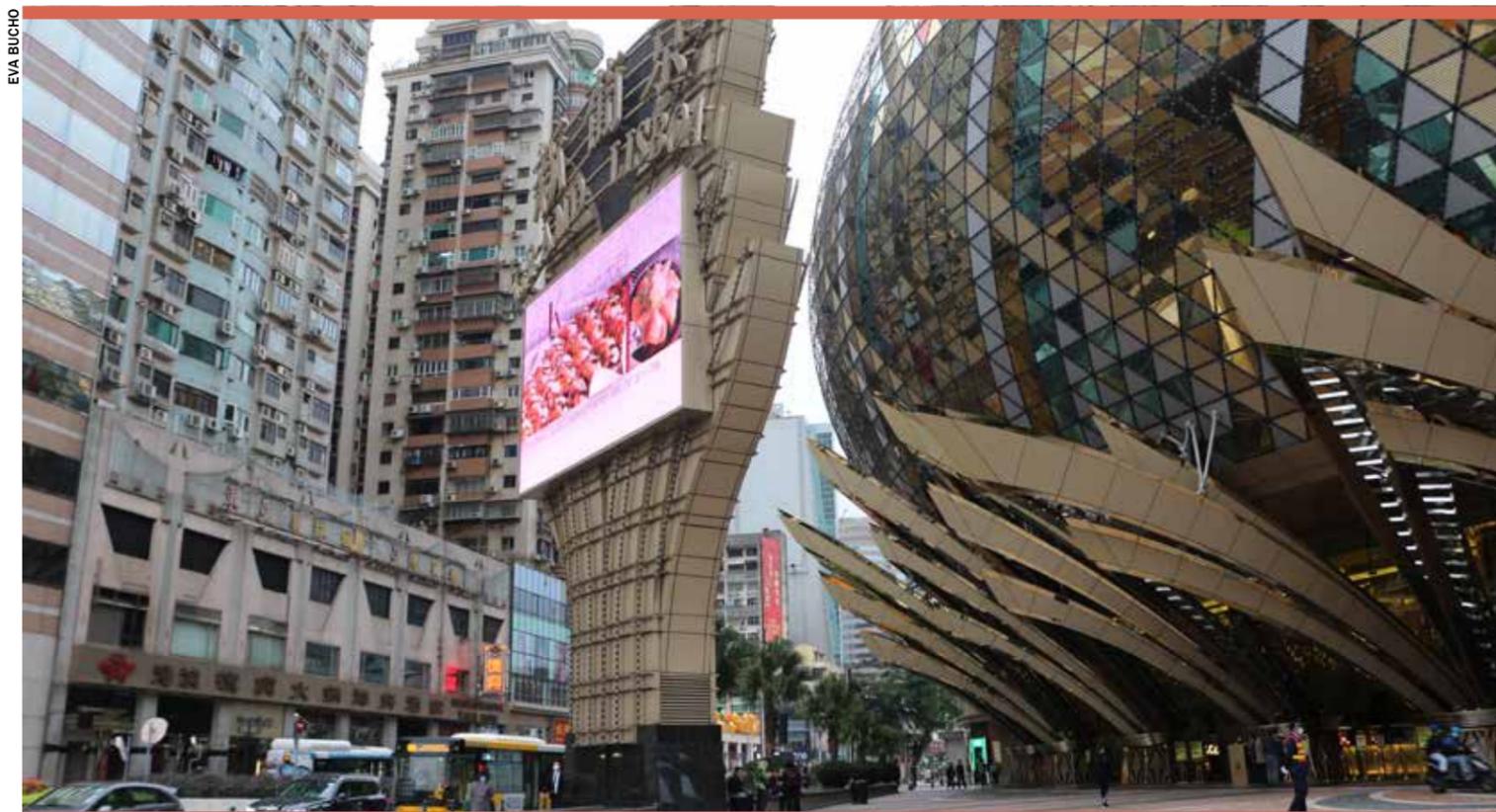
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Casinos permitted to apply for 30-day closure extension

DANIEL BEITLER

MACAU casino operators have been told to reopen at the stroke of midnight Thursday unless they apply for a grace period considering themselves not ready to resume operations.

That is according to a dispatch published yesterday in the government's Official Gazette, which affirms that the "special measure" introduced by the Chief Executive on February 4 will be lifted this Thursday.

On February 4, Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng ordered the suspension of all gaming and entertainment activities in the Macau SAR

for a period of 15 days, the longest such period since the liberalization of the sector nearly 20 years ago. The closure was designed to prevent a local outbreak of the infectious novel coronavirus, now known as Covid-19.

The Secretary for Economy and Finance, Lei Wai Nong, told the media yesterday that the decision to permit the reopening of casinos was made after extensive evaluation of the risk to the community regarding the novel coronavirus. He added that only casinos were allowed to reopen with other entertainment venues instructed to remain closed.

Lei said that the six casino concessionaires have been told they

"Diversification may be the politically correct narrative, but when it comes to the economic reality, we are no way near that."

BEN LEE
GAMING ANALYST

can apply to the government for a maximum 30-day closure extension period during which time they will not be required to operate. After the extension period elapses, the casino operators will be required to resume normal operation. The secretary said that some casino operators have already

expressed their intent to apply for the grace period during earlier meetings with the government. However, no official application had been received as of yesterday afternoon.

Several other precautionary measures were advanced by the government and representatives of

the six casino operators during the meetings. According to the government, they include a consensus on the need for thorough checks at all casino premises, the imposition of body-temperature checks at casino entrances, a requirement that all employees and patrons wear face masks and that the space between gaming tables be increased to prevent a large number of people from concentrating in a small area.

The reopening of casinos comes amid the steepest drop in visitor arrivals in Macau's history and an overall challenging moment for the local economy. Last week, immigration services indicated that the city was receiving about 2,000 daily visitors. That suggests tourist arrivals are down more than 98% in year-on-year terms and spells bad news for entire sectors of the Macau economy that rely on tourism.

It also spells bad news for casino floors, whose operators have been shifting to mass market gambling models to appease the local government's drive for diversification and to insulate their businesses better after the 2014 gaming depression.

"Diversification may be the politically correct narrative, but when it comes to the economic reality, we are no way near that," said gaming analyst Ben Lee, managing partner of IGamiX Management & Consulting.

Lee told the Times that the recovery will be fueled by the VIP market, which has historically been the first segment to recover after economic downturns in Macau. That threatens to overturn a milestone achieved in the industry last year, when the mass market overtook the VIP segment in terms of gross gaming revenue market share for the first time.

"When the situation normalizes – possibly in the third or fourth quarter of this year – we expect VIP to recover first," said Lee. "We saw that happen post-SARS in 2003, post-financial crisis [of 2008] and post-depression in 2014."

Workers 'losing hope' over unsettled termination case

LYNZY VALLES

A group of workers from a night club and sauna were disappointed yesterday after going to the Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL) to present complaints that their employer tricked them into signing termination letters.

As reported by the Times, Fortuna Night Club and Supreme Sauna, both located inside the Hotel Fortuna in Macau's ZAPE area, terminated the employment of a group of non-resident workers earlier this month

amid the temporary shutdown of their facilities as mandated by the government to deter the spread of Covid-19.

In response, a group of the workers approached the DSAL yesterday, hoping they would get assistance settling their case, as it is still unclear whether the company will terminate their local work permits, known colloquially as blue cards.

However, they were informed by the bureau to go to their workplaces with the matter, as the company would hold a meeting with

the workers.

"We're losing hope. I think DSAL and our company are just playing tricks with us. I think they are in favor of our company," said a worker, who asked to remain anonymous.

"The DSAL asked us to go to our workplaces at 3 p.m. There were 16 of us as there were also local residents who presented similar complaint cases to the bureau," a migrant worker added.

According to the Times' sources, upon arriving at the work premises, the workers were divided according to

those who had signed the "termination letter" and those who had not.

A worker said that two managers spoke with the groups, but they were disappointed as they were only given vague responses.

"They could not answer us properly when we asked about our compensation. They said it is only the accounting department that would know about it. We also asked about our visa situation," the worker said.

"They said that they will still open their sauna and night club facilities but they

were not sure when. If so, why did they ask us to sign a termination letter? Why are they tricking us?" he asked.

The workers said they were informed that their blue cards would not be terminated, implying that they still have the right to stay in the SAR despite their lack of work. However, they also said they were hesitant to trust the company after they were tricked into signing the letter.

Earlier this month, the company responsible for the two venues allegedly told workers that they would

be going on leave for two months because of the suspension and the expected disruption in the period following the two-week closure.

The workers were issued letters in Chinese, a language they could not read, and were told it said that they had accepted the terms of the two-month leave of absence from work. However, contrary to what was said by the company, the letter in fact terminates the worker and states they have already received all compensation due.

CROWDS FORM AFTER LIMITED PUBLIC SERVICES RESUME

Members of the public assembled at various public service buildings yesterday, despite the local government clearly advising people not to gather in large numbers. Yesterday, members of the public were seen forming long queues in front of the Financial Services Bureau and the Pac On Public Security Police Force immigration building, and other public department buildings, where they sought public service procedures. Last week, the local government suggested that the public avoid forming crowds once public services resume. The Health Bureau even suggested that 1 to 2 meters of distance should be kept between people. However, crowds were still closely packed. The resumption of basic public services is only until this Friday. The local government has not made a decision about further periods yet.

5,200 HOUSING UNITS UNDER CONSTRUCTION IN LAST QUARTER OF 2019

In the fourth quarter of 2019, Macau had a total of 73 housing projects under construction, expected to provide 5,274 housing units in total. According to a statement released yesterday by the Land, Public Works and Transport Bureau (DSSOPT), during the same period, the DSSOPT issued approvals of utilization to eight private housing projects involving 812 housing units. In the fourth quarter of 2019, 127 residential housing projects were being designed. These projects will provide 9,039 housing units to Macau. Additionally, during this period, 16 hotel developments were under construction. They will provide 6,814 rooms in total when finished. A total of 25 hotel project projects, which will provide 4,368 rooms, are under construction.

ASSOCIATION PROPOSES GOV'T RENOVATE PARKS DURING SLOW PERIOD

The Women's General Association of Macau has suggested the local government upgrade children's playgrounds during this slow season. Wong Leong Kuan, deputy director of the association's women's policy research department, first pointed out that Macau's public gardens and recreational zones require maintenance. In particular, many floors are severely damaged. Due to epidemic prevention measures, these spaces are not being used by the public as children are staying home. Wong recommended that the relevant departments take advantage of this to renovate the parks and improve their image to parents and children. She also hopes that the relevant government department can maintain the hygiene of all public spaces while they remain closed.

CRIME

SUSPECTS STAND FIRM AGAINST EVIDENCE OF LIES, SAY POLICE

JULIE ZHU

TWO suspects in two unrelated cases have refused to cooperate with law enforcement agencies, maintaining their innocence even after they were found to be lying. The Judiciary Police (PJ) reported the two cases during yesterday's joint press conference of police authorities.

One of the cases involves a local man in his 60s surnamed Ng. On February 15, Ng met with several friends at a restaurant located in the Fai Chi Kei area, where he became drunk during dinner. Despite this, Ng rode his motorbike immediately afterwards and collided with a truck.

The Public Security Police Force (PSP) tested Ng and found he had a blood alcohol level of 1.54 g/l. Ng disputed the results of the PSP's test and was then sent to the Conde S. Januário Hospital (CHCSJ) for another test. However, the CHCSJ test found he had an even higher blood alcohol level of 1.85 g/l. Only when the results of the hospital's test were presented to him did Ng finally admit he had consumed alcohol. He was passed on to the prosecution authority that the same day.

The second case involves a local Macau man who claimed to have a diagnosed mental health condition and Covid-19 in order to avoid legal responsibilities. Reported yesterday by the Times, the PJ offered more information during yesterday's press conference.

On February 25, the suspect, an unemployed man and Macau resident surnamed Chow, visited a supermarket in the Toi San area. There, he stole some fruit, and frozen and canned foods, hiding

DANIEL BEITLER



the food inside a white shopping bag he carried with him. The products were worth a total of 150 patacas.

Supermarket security staff noticed Chow was behaving suspiciously. Security tried to stop him when he was leaving the supermarket without paying for the products.

Chow attempted to run but was apprehended by a security staff member and a nearby police officer.

Upon being detained, Chow told the police authority he had recently been to Hubei, and that he was infected with the novel coronavirus in addition to having a mental illness. Later, the police authority visited his wife at his home. The wife said that Chow had no recent record of visiting Hubei, and that he was

lying about his novel coronavirus infection as well as his mental health.

The police authority took Chow to CHCSJ, where it was confirmed he was not infected with the virus. The police also said that

yesterday he was not found to be under the influence of drugs.

Chow denied the accusations of theft and refused to speak to police. He was sent to the prosecution authority that the same day.

FAKE CRIME REPORT FILED

A mainland man filed a fake crime report to the police authority, hoping to use police powers to track down his investment partner. The man, surnamed Jian, is a 28-year-old unemployed mainland resident. On January 21, Jian reported to the Judiciary Police (PJ) that he had lost 210,000 Hong Kong dollars in a fraudulent scheme involving a casino investment opportunity. He accused a specific man of

tricking him into investing money in Macau's casinos. The PJ found Jian's report suspicious because he had failed to provide further details about the scam. Later, Jian revealed to the PJ that he had faked the report because the unknown man had promised to absorb half of any eventual losses resulting from the investment. However, after Jian lost half of his money to the investment, the man disappeared.

Economist questions impact of tax benefits on job-related income

RENATO MARQUES

THE support measures presented by the Secretary for Economy and Finance to address the taxation of work income are likely to have a negligible effect on most local residents, according to economist Albano Martins.

Announced by Secretary Lei Wai Nong, the measures include a 70%

rebate on 2018 professional income taxes with a maximum rebate of 20,000 patacas, and an increase in the standard deduction on taxable income granted under the Professional Tax Law from 25% to 30%. These two measures may benefit as many as 170,000 and 180,000 residents respectively, according to Lei.

Economist Martins

does not refute the number of people that stand to benefit from the measures, but questions their impact on the general population. He calculates that such benefits might, in the majority of cases, constitute savings of between a few hundred patacas to an estimated maximum of 2,000 patacas.

"All measures that benefit [the people] are

always worthy of praise, but for those that are not self-employed, it is no big deal," Martins said to Hoje Macau, explaining that that taxation for people with "average" salaries in Macau is already very low.

According to the economist, it would be more efficient for the government to simply put an end to taxing those working for a company

or entity, as the income that such taxation generates for the government is almost irrelevant.

"The government should end all taxes [paid by workers and companies]. In 2018, these taxes were accountable for only 14 billion patacas, [which is] less than the 20 billion patacas that they are going to forgo now," he said.

Casino taxes, which were worth 134.2 billion patacas in 2018, accounted for almost 80% of the government's revenue that year, according to official data.

Financial measures to face delay at closed Legislative Assembly

RENATO MARQUES

THE government's raft of financial measures designed to stimulate the economy in the coming months will first need to be discussed and approved by the Legislative Assembly (AL), Macau's parliament, which has been suspended since before the Chinese Lunar New Year. Lawmakers told the Times yesterday that there is still no date set for the resumption of legislative duties.

The financial measures, which seek to shore up the spending power of individuals and the cashflow situation of small businesses, come in response to the significant disruption to business activity in the three weeks since the Lunar New Year.

Because a large number of these measures are based on tax benefits and financial support measures, they must first be discussed and approved by the AL.

If this bureaucratic process is normally lengthy, there is now the added aggravating factor of

AP PHOTO



most of the Assembly's work having been stalled due to the outbreak of the coronavirus known as Covid-19.

According to the latest public notice published on Saturday, only the AL Support Services are due to resume work before February 21. The notice says that all resident reception services by lawmakers will continue to be suspended until further notice. Residents are instead encour-

aged to share their opinions by telephone, email or fax instead.

Contacted by the Times, lawmaker José Pereira Coutinho confirmed that there is no tentative date for plenary sessions and the closed-door committee meetings to resume. All legislators have been informed that such duties have been suspended until further notice.

Lawmaker Sulu Sou confirmed that the AL has been com-

pletely closed during the coronavirus crisis, following the orientation given by the government to all public services.

With civil servants returning to work yesterday, it is likely that more information about the organization of work at the AL will soon be released.

According to the AL meeting and event schedule, at least three committee meetings have been canceled – two from the

Follow-up Committee of Public Administration Affairs on the programming of the work of the committee on January 30, and a follow up meeting on the enforcement of the Macao Heritage Protection Law on February 6.

The Follow-up Committee for Land and Public Concession Affairs has also canceled a meeting that was adjourned for February 6 to follow up on matters related to the service contracts for public bus operators.

Currently, the three Standing Committees of the AL are analyzing a total of 20 pieces of legislation covering topics that range from public housing, consumer rights, civil protection, cybercrime, employment agencies, the Labor Law, and the law on the hiring of non-resident workers.

Besides the aforementioned bills being discussed at the Standing Committee, the AL has also acknowledged reception of a new bill regarding the establishment of a Trade Union Law, and an application for a hearing that was requested by lawmakers José Pereira Coutinho and Sulu Sou on November 21, 2019, which has not been scheduled and is yet to be addressed.

If the raft of financial measures announced by the government becomes the legislative body's priority upon resumption, these other matters may be stalled further.

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CHINA MAY POSTPONE ANNUAL CONGRESS BECAUSE OF VIRUS

YANAN WANG, BEIJING

CHINA said yesterday it may postpone its annual congress in March, its biggest political meeting of the year, as the military dispatched hundreds more medical workers and extra supplies to the city hit hardest by a 2-month-old virus outbreak.

Japanese officials, meanwhile, confirmed 99 more people were infected by the new virus aboard the quarantined cruise ship Diamond Princess, bringing the total to 454.

The standing committee for the National People's Congress said it believes it is necessary to postpone the gathering to give top priority to people's lives, safety and health, the official Xinhua News Agency reported.

It noted that one-third of the 3,000 delegates are provincial and municipal-level cadres with important leadership roles working on the front line of the battle against the epidemic.

The standing committee said it would meet on Feb. 24 to further deliberate on a postponement. The meeting is due to start on March 5.

Health authorities reported 2,048 new cases of the virus and 105 more deaths. Another 10,844 people have recovered from COVID-19, a disease caused by the new coronavirus, and have been discharged from hospitals, according to Monday's figures. The death toll is 1,770.

With fears of the virus spreading further, Chinese and residents of nearby countries and territories have begun hoarding su-

AP PHOTO



Health authorities reported 2,048 new cases of the virus and 105 more deaths

plies of everything from masks and other personal protective gear to instant noodles, cooking oil and toilet paper.

In Hong Kong, local media reported that police had arrested two men and were seeking three others who allegedly stole a load of 60 packs of toilet paper at knifepoint early yesterday morning. Supplies of the commodity have become extremely scarce, with often only low-quality imports still available. Police were expected to discuss the matter later.

Another 1,200 doctors and nurses from China's military began arriving in Wuhan the latest contingent sent to help shore up the city's overwhelmed health care system with more than 32,000 additional personnel. The city has rapidly built two prefabricated hospitals and converted

gymnasiums and other spaces into wards for those showing milder symptoms, but residents still say they are being wait-listed for beds and even ambulance rides.

Wuhan has accounted for the vast majority of mainland China's 70,548 cases. Some 60 million people in that area and other parts of China are under lockdown in a bid to prevent the virus from spreading further.

At a daily news briefing, National Health Commission official Guo Yanhong said attempts to contain the virus appeared to be bearing fruit, with the number of new cases reported daily outside of Hubei province, of which Wuhan is the capital, falling for 13 days straight, and growing numbers of recovered people.

"These are all extremely good signs that show our prevention

work is very effective," Guo said, citing early detection and treatment alongside quarantines and travel restrictions as largely responsible for the result.

Japan's Health Ministry has been carrying out tests on passengers and crew on the Diamond Princess, which is docked in Yokohama, a port city near Tokyo. Officials said they Monday they had confirmed 99 more cases on the ship, bringing the total to 454. The 14-day quarantine for those on the ship was due to end Wednesday.

Outside China, the ship has the largest number of cases of COVID-19.

The Health Ministry said it has now tested 1,723 people on the ship, which had about 3,700 passengers and crew aboard.

Two chartered planes flew 340

Americans who were aboard the Diamond Princess out of Japan late Sunday. About 380 Americans had been on the ship.

The State Department announced later that 14 of the evacuees were confirmed to have the virus in tests given before they boarded their planes. They were taken to the U.S. because they did not have symptoms, and were being isolated from other passengers, it said.

Australia, Canada, Hong Kong and Italy were planning similar flights for their citizens.

New cases in other countries are raising more concern about containment of the virus. Though only a few hundred cases have been confirmed outside mainland China, some recent cases lacked obvious connections to China.

Taiwan on Sunday reported its first death from COVID-19, the fifth fatality outside of mainland China. Taiwan's Central News Agency, citing health minister Chen Shih-chung, said the man who died was in his 60s and had not traveled overseas recently and had no known contact with virus patients.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe convened an experts meeting to discuss containment measures in his country, where more than a dozen cases have emerged in the past few days without any obvious link to China.

"The situation surrounding this virus is changing by the minute," Abe said.

Japanese Health Minister Katsunobu Kato said the country was "entering into a phase that is different from before," requiring new steps to stop the spread of the virus.

Japan has 518 confirmed cases, including the 454 from the cruise ship, and one death from the virus. AP

Automakers gradually reopen after virus shutdown

AUTOMAKERS are reopening factories in China that were idled by anti-virus controls as they try to reverse a sales slump in their biggest market.

Local officials have orders from the ruling Communist Party to get businesses functioning again while still enforcing anti-disease curbs that shut down much of the world's second-largest economy.

"Local governments are putting their full weight behind helping businesses open," the president of the American Chamber of Commerce in Shanghai, Ker Gibbs, said in a statement.

Toyota Motor Co. said two factories reopened yesterday with one of

AP PHOTO



the usual two daily shifts working. Volkswagen AG, Ford Motor Co., Mercedes Benz and Chinese brand Geely resumed some operations last week. General Motors Co. said a "staggered start" across its factories began Saturday. Nissan

Motor Co. plans to restart this week.

Automakers say they are checking employees for the virus's telltale fever, barring visitors and telling employees to stay home if they have been in Wuhan, the city at the center of the ou-

tbreak, or other areas that have imposed travel curbs.

The outbreak prompted the government to extend the Lunar New Year holiday to keep factories and offices closed and workers at home.

The government has told employees who can work from home to stay there, but China's vast manufacturing industries that supply the world with smartphones, toys and other goods need workers in factories.

Obstacles include a requirement for workers who return from other areas — as millions are doing after the holiday — to make sure they are virus-free by staying at home for its 14-day incubation period.

"Most factories have a severe shortage of workers, even after they are allowed to open," said Gibbs. "This is going to have a severe impact on global supply chains that is only beginning to show up."

Automakers are under pressure to reverse a 2-year-old sales decline in a Chinese market they hope will propel global revenue.

Sales of SUVs, minivans and sedans hit an annual peak of 24.7 million in 2017 and have declined since then. Last year's sales tumbled 9.6% to 21.4 million.

The virus "adds to the challenges that the sector is already facing," said Fitch Ratings in a report.

Groupe Renault said one of its factories in the sou-

thern city of Guangzhou, near Hong Kong, reopened Monday but the French automaker gave no indication of the status of another factory in Wuhan.

Sales of vehicles are likely to be depressed through April, Fitch said. It said production might fall by the high single digits in the first half of 2020 compared with a year earlier.

GM, Toyota and others said the pace of production depends on how fast they can restart the flow of components from thousands of Chinese suppliers that also shut down.

That disruption could have global repercussions: UBS estimates China supplies 8% of auto parts exports worldwide. AP

AP PHOTO



PAKISTAN

Afghan refugees tell UN: 'We need peace, land to go home'

KATHY GANNON,
KABOBAYAN CAMP

HUKAM Khan isn't sure how old he is, but his beard is long and white, and when he came to Pakistan 40 years ago fleeing an earlier war in Afghanistan, his children were small, stuffed onto the backs of donkeys and dragged across rugged mountains to the safety of northwestern Pakistan.

Back then the war was against the former Soviet Union and Khan was among more than 5 million Afghans forced to become refugees in Pakistan, driven from their homes by a bombing campaign so brutal it was referred to as a "scorched earth" policy.

After four decades of war and conflict, more than 1.5 million Afghans still live as refugees in Pakistan, feeling abandoned by their own government, increasingly unwelcome in their reluctant host country and ignored by the United Nations.

Now, for the first time in years, there's a faint possibility they might eventually return home. The United States and the Taliban appear to have inched closer to a peace deal, agreeing as a first step to a temporary "reduction in violence."

If that truce should hold, the next step could be a long-sought-after agreement between Washington and the Taliban to end Afghanistan's current war, now in its 19th year. The agreement would return American troops home and start negotia-

tions between the warring Afghans to bring peace to their shattered country.

Against the backdrop of a possible peace deal, Pakistan is hosting a conference today [Macau time], attended by U.S. peace envoy Zalmay Khalilzad and U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, and meant to recognize 40 years of Afghans living as refugees.

"It is a terrible war ... and it needs to be brought to an end," Khalilzad, who brokered the breakthrough with the Taliban, said at the conference. "We've made progress in the sense that we ... are talking about the reduction of violence leading to the signing of an agreement between the United States and the Taliban that will open the door to Afghans sitting across the table, one side by the government of Afghanistan and on the other by the Taliban of Afghanistan."

Also attending the conference is U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi, whose job would be to help the Afghans return home.

It won't be easy.

Many refugees have already tried going back — lured by promises of help and hope from the international community and from Afghan President Ashraf Ghani — only to find there was neither food nor shelter for them. Many also discovered they were no longer welcome in the villages they had left decades earlier.

Disillusioned, they returned to

Pakistan and to Iran, while tens of thousands of other Afghans paid smugglers and risked their lives to escape to Europe. From there, many were later loaded on planes and returned to war-ravaged Afghanistan.

After four decades of war and conflict, more than 1.5 million Afghans still live as refugees in Pakistan

Grandi called the forced return of refugees from Europe "shameful" in an interview with The Associated Press on Sunday.

"I do ... fervently hope that the countries like Iran and Pakistan, who have hosted so generously ... don't take their example from much richer countries that are shutting borders, not only to Afghans, but to many other refugees," he said.

While the specter of a U.S.-Taliban peace deal raises hope that the refugees will eventually return home, Grandi said, "I think this time around, the people who are still left outside will be very cautious in their judgment. They would want to have guarantees that it can be sustainable."

Another challenge will be raising the vast sums of money needed to help return home not only refugees abroad, but also the millions of Afghans who are internally displaced inside their own

country. The world has grown tired of sending money to a country with such endemic corruption, which has driven poverty levels up despite billions of dollars in aid since 2001.

Just last month, a U.S. government watchdog said the Afghan government was more interested in ticking off boxes to demonstrate compliance than making real inroads to curb corruption.

Poverty levels in Afghanistan are climbing. In 2012, 34% of Afghans were listed as below the poverty level, living on \$1 a day. Today, that figure has risen to 55%.

Khan, the Afghan refugee in Pakistan, now has grown children who have children of their own. He said he blames the overwhelming poverty in his homeland on a corrupt leadership.

"To tell you the truth, lots of money came to Afghanistan and every influential person, even the mullahs, stole that money," said Khan. "The leaders are all traitors, they betrayed Afghans. The children of poor people got killed, while no leader lost his son."

Khan said he had a message for Guterres and for Grandi.

"We don't ask for much," he said, looking out over the sunbaked mud and straw homes in the camp where he's lived for 40 years. Located on the edge of Peshawar, the capital of Pakistan's Khyber Pukhtunkhwa province, the refugee camp is only about 30 kilometers (20 miles) from the

border with Afghanistan.

Among locals, the camp is known as Kabobayan Camp, named for the many kabob shops that sprung up around it, most of which have long since disappeared.

"First we ask for peace," said Khan, surrounded by dozens of children dressed in tattered clothes. None were wearing socks despite the chilly February morning, their feet and hands caked in mud.

"When there is peace, we should be provided with land on which we can build our homes first. Then we need to have food, and then we need to be able to build our schools, our shops and our mosques," he said.

Indrika Ratwatte, the U.N. human rights organization's regional director for Asia, told the AP in an interview last week that Afghan refugees have little faith in their government or international organizations.

Khan's request for land is reasonable, Ratwatte said, explaining how the U.N. wants to set up 20 zones throughout Afghanistan that would offer returning refugees land to start anew, as a kind of prototype.

"We know how resilient Afghans are," Ratwatte said. "If you give them that small opportunity, they will make it work. They will make it work. So we have to really 'walk the talk' on the land allocation."

Shah Wali, another elderly refugee, left his home in Surkhrud in Afghanistan's eastern Nangarhar province almost 40 years ago. He tried returning, but found nothing left. What wasn't destroyed by war had been taken by neighbors and thieves.

But even the faint chance of peace has him hopeful.

"Give us peace and then we will go back," he said. "Who doesn't want to back to their homeland?" AP

AP PHOTO



US passengers who were evacuated off the quarantined Diamond Princess cruise ship and officials on a flight to California

USA

Trading quarantines, Americans from cruise back home

TWO charter flights carrying cruise ship passengers from Japan landed at military bases in California and Texas overnight, starting the clock on a quarantine period to ensure passengers don't have the new virus that's been spreading in Asia.

A plane carrying American passengers touched down at Travis Air Force Base in Northern California just before 11:30 p.m. Sunday, local time. A second flight arrived at Lackland Air Force Base in Texas around 2 1/2 hours later, early yesterday.

Japan's Defense Minister Taro Kono had tweeted earlier that Japanese troops helped transport 340 U.S. passengers on 14 buses from Yokohama port to Tokyo's Haneda airport. About 380 Americans were on the cruise ship.

The U.S. said it arranged the evacuation because people on the Diamond Princess were at a high risk of exposure to the virus. For the departing Ameri-

cans, the evacuation cuts short a 14-day quarantine that began aboard the cruise ship Feb. 5.

The State Department announced later that 14 of the evacuees received confirmed they had the virus but were allowed to board the flight because they did not have symptoms. They were being isolated separately from other passengers on the flight, the U.S. State and Health and Human Services said in a joint statement.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases at the National Institutes of Health, said Sunday that an infected person who shows minimal symptoms could still pass the virus to someone else.

After arriving in the U.S., all of the passengers must go through another 14 days of quarantine at the military facilities — meaning they will have been under quarantine for a total of nearly four weeks.

Australia, Canada,

Hong Kong and Italy were planning similar flights of passengers. Other governments, including Canada and Hong Kong, also will require the passengers to undergo a second 14-day quarantine.

Americans Cheryl and Paul Molesky, a couple from Syracuse, New York, opted to trade one coronavirus quarantine for another, leaving the cruise ship to fly back to the U.S. Cheryl Molesky said the rising number of patients on the ship factored into the decision.

"We are glad to be going home," Cheryl Molesky earlier told NHK TV in Japan. "It's just a little bit disappointing that we'll have to go through quarantine again, and we will probably not be as comfortable as the Diamond Princess, possibly."

She sent The Associated Press a video of her and her husband boarding the plane with other Americans.

"Well, we're exhausted, but we're on the plane and that's a good feeling.

Pretty miserable wearing these masks though, and everybody had to go to the bathroom on the bus," she said.

Some American passengers said they would pass up the opportunity to fly to the United States because of the additional quarantine. There also was worry about being on a long flight with other passengers who may be infected or in an incubation period.

One of the Americans, Matthew Smith, said in a tweet Sunday that he saw a passenger with no face mask talking at close quarters with another passenger. He said he and his wife scurried away.

"If there are secondary infections on board, this is why," he said. "And you wanted me to get on a bus with her?"

He said the American health officials who visited their room was apparently surprised that the couple had decided to stay, and wished them luck.

"Thanks, but we're fine," Smith said he told them. **AP**

this day in history



2005 BAN ON HUNTING COMES INTO FORCE

Fox hunting with dogs is now illegal in England and Wales after a ban on the activity came into force overnight.

The law faces a stiff test this weekend, with the Countryside Alliance saying many hunts will be out in force.

Chief police officers spokesman Nigel Yeo said he expected most people would obey the law - by drag hunting or chasing foxes then shooting them.

He said police would challenge the "one or two isolated hunts" which are threatening to break the law.

The Attorney General, Lord Goldsmith, has so far issued no instructions to police on how they should deal with hunters who violate the law.

He said he will consult the Director of Public Prosecutions and the police "in the near future" to decide what measures to take with regards to hunting prosecutions.

He has rejected a "blanket policy" of not enforcing the ban until the House of Lords has considered its legality.

Anti-hunting activists are celebrating the introduction of the ban.

Hounds can be used to follow a scent and to flush out a fox and foxes can still be shot, or killed by birds of prey, after being tracked by a pair of hounds.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

A year after the ban came into force hunt supporters continued to call for it to be repealed. The Countryside Alliance described the legislation as "derided, discredited and damaged beyond repair". Countryside Alliance chairman and Labour MP Kate Hoey warned that more foxes were being killed now than when hunting was legal.

She told the Daily Telegraph newspaper that the law was broken inadvertently as dogs continued to kill foxes.

But animal welfare groups and ministers praised the law, saying there were no loopholes or grey areas.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
 Mar. 21-Apr. 19
 Be gentle, and try not to rub the loser's face in the fact that you're right. Bragging isn't cool. Plus, keep in mind that you won't always be the person who's right!

TAURUS
 Apr. 20-May. 20
 Your self-discipline is stronger than ever, so you're in the best frame of mind to start a new fitness routine, join a gym, or invest in some new exercise equipment.

GEMINI
 May. 21-Jun. 21
 No matter what your current situation is, your life is your own business! Remember that today when busybodies try to bury you in unsolicited and inappropriate advice.

CANCER
 Jun. 22-Jul. 22
 If you're not quite sure what you want to make happen today, the day itself will come up with something for you. A trail of coincidences may lead you someplace very interesting.

LEO
 Jul. 23-Aug. 22
 If you shop around a bit, you'll find some great bargains. Don't worry that you're wasting your money. From time to time, you have to invest in things now that will help you earn more tomorrow.

VIRGO
 Aug. 23-Sep. 22
 Think fast! When was the last really great day you had? If it was more than a month ago, you need to start focusing on how you can create another one as soon as possible.

LIBRA
 Sep. 23-Oct. 22
 You can't understand the right way to move forward until you examine these situations more thoroughly. Giving up what you want in an effort to compromise should not be your automatic reaction.

SCORPIO
 Oct. 23-Nov. 21
 Today isn't the day to try to push a relationship to a deeper level. You have many secrets at your disposal, but if you use them to connect with someone else, you could be sorry.

SAGITTARIUS
 Nov. 22-Dec. 21
 This person is ready to talk to you and work with you. There's going to be a great deal of positive collaboration overall. Every idea will lead to another, more exciting idea. Keep going!

CAPRICORN
 Dec. 22-Jan. 19
 Your energy is in tiptop shape, and you have a group of supportive people around you who are ready, willing, and eager to participate in your next excellent adventure!

AQUARIUS
 Jan. 20-Feb. 18
 Despite what you might think, the people you're dealing with right now definitely know that you're serious about what you're doing. No one thinks you're a pushover.

PISCES
 Feb. 19-Mar. 20
 Despite the high level of drama that's creeping into your life right now, nothing too upsetting should develop by the end of the day. No great changes will occur before tomorrow.

The Born Loser by Chip Sanson



SUDOKU

EASY					EASY+					
3		6				5	9	2	8	
	6	4		2		6	9	2		
1			5	3	4	8		4	7	
	1		9	3	8			5	7	
		9	8	4	7	3				
8	2	7		5		1	6		1	
7	5	4			1		1	2		4
	8		1	6			7	5	2	
			7		3	2	3		9	

MEDIUM					HARD						
			7		2		4	5	7	6	
1		5		3	8				4		
	7		8	4							
		1	3	2	6	1				2	9
4					6	3		4			
	3	5	1				1				
	2	4		6	9		2				
3			5	4			9	8			
9	6				4					3	

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	-5	10	clear
Harbin	-21	-10	cloudy
Tianjin	-3	10	clear
Urumqi	-8	-1	clear
Xi'an	-1	12	clear
Lhasa	-1	12	cloudy
Chengdu	4	11	overcast
Chongqing	7	11	overcast
Kunming	3	13	cloudy
Nanjing	-2	9	clear
Shanghai	1	10	clear
Wuhan	-1	14	clear
Hangzhou	0	11	clear
Taipei	9	14	overcast
Guangzhou	5	18	clear
Hong Kong	10	17	clear
WORLD			
Moscow	2	4	drizzle
Frankfurt	3	10	cloudy
Paris	4	12	clear
London	5	11	drizzle
New York	-1	6	cloudy

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS: 1- Coup d'___; 5- Shelter; 8- Arthur Ashe's alma mater; 12- Classic soda; 13- Schoolbooks; 15- Dirty; 16- Jutting rock; 17- Blessed ___; 18- Pentathlon need; 19- Needed to borrow books; 22- Compass pt.; 23- Neighbor of Leb.; 24- Algerian seaport; 26- Purify; 29- Cochise, for one; 31- Honshu honorific; 32- Under way; 34- ___ Amore; 36- Assortment; 38- Gossipmonger; 40- Mild oath; 41- Extremely; 43- Sharp pain; 45- Center starter; 46- Cedex; 48- Like a dog; 50- Jai ___; 51- Paving material; 52- Feline; 54- Do the deal again; 61- Put down; 63- Emblem; 64- Croat, e.g.; 65- Buck follower; 66- Rocklike; 67- Outer limit; 68- Took off; 69- Pantry pest; 70- Cheek;

DOWN: 1- Business letter abbr.; 2- Polo of "Meet the Parents"; 3- Gregory Peck role of 1956; 4- River in SW Asia; 5- Tax; 6- Corp. VIP, briefly; 7- Europe's highest volcano; 8- Exploit; 9- Capital of Denmark; 10- Falsehoods; 11- Sheltered, nautically; 13- Scare; 14- Razor sharpener; 20- Nick and Nora's pooch; 21- Fiddlesticks!; 25- Twinge; 26- Loiter; 27- Formal admission into society; 28- Silt deposit; 29- Room at the top; 30- Military camp; 31- Former coin of France; 33- N.Y. neighbor; 35- Star Wars letters; 37- Hurler Hersheiser; 39- Animal structure science; 42- Chemical used on trees; 44- Midge; 47- Eats to a plan; 49- Van Gogh masterpiece; 52- Cat's nail; 53- Swiss river; 55- ___ bene; 56- Kind of collar; 57- Lady's man; 58- Pierce portrayer; 59- License plates; 60- Nights before; 62- Morse "E";

Yesterday's solution

A	G	O	G	O	K	R	A	S	S	R				
L	A	V	A	R	A	I	T	T	C	O	N	E		
D	R	A	B	I	T	A	L	O	A	R	A	T		
O	B	L	O	N	G	L	A	N	G	U	A	G	E	
U	P	S	N	A	I	L	S	E	E	S				
N	E	T	F	A	S	E	S	R	I	C	E	R		
C	R	O	C	L	E	T	U	P	C	L	A	Y		
A	L	P	H	A		R	A	G	E	S	A	S		
D	E	B	E	T	A	L	A	C	Y	T	I	G		
H	I	N	D	M	O	S	T	L	E	A	N	T	O	
O	N	E	A		H	A	N	O	I	R	O	A	N	
S	C	A	R		A	R	U	B	A		P	O	L	K
T	A	T			S	T	I	R		S	N	I	P	

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Emergency calls 999	Taxi 28 939 939 / 2828 3283
Fire department 28 572 222	Water Supply - Report 2822 0088
PJ (Open line) 993	Telephone - Report 1000
PJ (Picket) 28 557 775	Electricity - Report 28 339 922
PSP 28 573 333	Macau Daily Times 28 716 081
Customs 28 559 944	
S. J. Hospital 28 313 731	
Kiang Wu Hospital 28 371 333	
Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) 28326 300	
IAM 28 387 333	
Tourism 28 333 000	
Airport 59 888 88	



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Noel Quinn, interim group chief executive officer of HSBC Holdings

HSBC BRACES FOR HUGE OVERHAUL AS QUINN'S FUTURE IN BALANCE

JAN-HENRIK FÖRSTER, HARRY WILSON & STEFANIA SPEZZATI

FROM its headquarters near the Thames to its Asian hub by the South China Sea, HSBC Holdings Plc is abuzz.

Trading desks and back offices are bracing for scenarios that could see the announcement of another reshuffle of senior management, a surprise new chief executive, withdrawals from businesses and job reductions across the globe. It will be the London-based lender's third major overhaul in a decade, and it will be announced today.

"The current strategy is in no man's land," said Lutz Roeh-

meyer, chief investment officer at Capitulum Asset Management in Berlin, which holds HSBC shares and has been cutting its exposure. "HSBC should stop being so prudent, take risk and expand - or otherwise shrink, and shrink fast."

HSBC's biggest market - Hong Kong - is also suffering through serial crises: anti-government protests in the former British colony, followed by coronavirus on the Chinese mainland. Then there's the record low interest rates in many countries, which are hampering lenders around the globe.

Measures announced today are likely to include billion-

-dollar writedowns, cuts at trading desks, and a reduction in exposure to countries ranging from Turkey and Greece to Oman, people familiar with the matter say. Efforts to sell HSBC's French retail business are progressing, and an overhaul of the underperforming U.S. business is underway, the people said.

Since he was tapped to succeed the ousted John Flint last year, interim head Noel Quinn is battling fires on many fronts, including uncertainty about his own future. Last fall, Quinn told staff he was "certainly not intending, and was not asked, to be a caretaker." Some analysts had expected he would have been

confirmed as the full-time chief by now.

"There may be controversial elements within the strategy that Quinn will outline on Tuesday, and the board may want to gauge the market reaction before anointing him successor," said John Cronin, a banks analyst at Goodbody in Dublin. "Of course, it could also be the case that other CEO candidates could be in the mix. The bottom line is that the odds on Quinn getting the top job have reduced."

Most non-Quinn speculation had focused on Stephen Bird, Citigroup Inc.'s former top executive in Asia, but he's ruled himself

out of the running, according to the Sunday Times.

HSBC is seriously considering external candidates, one of the people said. HSBC declined to comment on any of the reporting of this story.

Hands-on Chairman Mark Tucker, who has said the hunt for a CEO could take as long as a year, wants to appoint someone with a broad mix of experience, including a background in asset management and investment banking, Bloomberg has reported.

As part of a broader reshuffle, HSBC also picked executive Andrew Fullam to carry out a new strategy in its underperforming U.S. business, according to a memo this month. Fullam, who joined HSBC 15 years ago, took on the newly created role of U.S. head of strategic execution. Europe's biggest bank by market value is also setting up a "central office" in the U.S. to implement its new goals, said the memo dated Feb. 10.

The North American unit has been a source of problems for several years. Its profit has declined for the past three quarters, and Quinn said in October that in several markets, including the U.S., performance of some businesses was "not acceptable."

HSBC is forecast to report an adjusted pretax profit of \$21.8 billion for the full year, according to the company-compiled estimate of 18 analysts. Its shares are little changed over the past 6 months, compared with a broad advance by most other European lenders.

"Investors have highlighted the risk of high, upfront restructuring costs the group might incur while undertaking a new strategic plan," said Goldman Sachs Group Inc. analysts in a note this month. "This could adversely impact capital levels and make buybacks less likely."

BLOOMBERG

AD



anima

澳門愛護動物協會
SOCIIDADE PROTECTORA DOS ANIMAIS DE MACAU
SOCIETY FOR THE PROTECTION OF ANIMALS (MACAU)

Anima is recruiting a Veterinary

Job: Veterinary
Local: Anima' shelters
Experience: At least five years experience in Surgery for small animals like cats and dogs.
Requirements: Resident, well organized, dedicated, friend of animals and capable to leader, fluent in Portuguese or Chinese and English (written and orally)
Working Days: 5 (five) days per week, 8 hours per day
Annual leave: 15 calendar days or 11 working days
Salary: MOP 25,000 to MOP 35,000, net of taxes, according to experience, 13 salaries per year and housing allowance of 5 thousand patacas per month.

If you are interested, please send your CV in English to info@animamacau.org up to the end of March.



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ATHLETICS

Tokyo Marathon limited to elite runners because of virus

STEPHEN WADE, TOKYO

TOKYO Marathon organizers drastically reduced the number of participants for this year's race yesterday out of fear of the spread of the virus coming from China.

The general public is being barred from the race on March 1. It will now be limited to a few hundred elite participants, organizers said in a brief statement.

"We cannot continue to launch the event within the scale we originally anticipated and we regret to inform you the following: The Tokyo Marathon 2020 will be held only for the marathon elites and the wheelchair elites," organizers said.

The Tokyo Marathon is the city's annual race and not to be confused with the Olympic marathon that will take place during the 2020 Tokyo Games. Those races are to be held in the northern city of Sapporo.

The marathon is the latest lar-



AP PHOTO

Runners, some wearing masks, compete in a Kumamoto castle marathon in Kumamoto city, western Japan, on Sunday

ge sports event to be impacted by the virus. Almost all sports events in China over the next few months have been called off, including next month's world indoor track

and field championships and a Formula One race in April.

The cancellations in China have a domino effect on Olympic qualifying, both in China and el-

sewhere, and muddle the picture for thousands of hopeful Olympians, families, and their travel plans.

The Tokyo Marathon was ex-

pected to attract about 38,000 participants. Only one death in Japan has been attributed to the virus. The latest death toll in mainland China is 1,770.

Organizers of the Tokyo Olympics and the International Olympic Committee have said repeatedly they will not cancel or postpone the games and are following the advice of the World Health Organization.

"Certainly the advice we're receiving externally from the WHO is that there's no case for any contingency plans or cancelling the games or moving the games," John Coates, the head of an IOC inspection team, said Friday in Tokyo.

The Olympics open on July 24 with about 11,000 athletes participating. About 7.8 million tickets are available for Olympic events, which draw hundreds of thousands of tourists. There are another 2.3 million tickets for the Paralympics.

Much of the focus is now on China. It will further intensify with the next Olympics — the 2022 Winter Games — taking place in Beijing.

The spreading virus has already forced organizers to cancel World Cup ski races this month in Yanqing, China, which were also to serve as test events. Also called off was a biathlon test event in Zhangjiakou. AP

AD

WELCOME TO Playmate's Club
花心公子俱樂部

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OPINION

Our Desk

Anthony Lam



STILL ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

At the time of writing, the government has just resumed most public services.

The government had announced the suspension of non-essential services due to the outbreak of Covid-19, also referred to as novel coronavirus.

The outbreak began right around the Lunar New Year period, so the government acted promptly to suspend services. The exact Cantonese phrasing used by the government was that it was merely an extension of the Lunar New Year holiday for all "non-essential" civil servants.

The government also suspended casino operations for 15 days, which was, according to some veteran journalists, unprecedented. It also "recommended" that casino bosses consider the shutdown period as special paid leave for their employees. No wonder 90% of residents were satisfied with the government's work against the epidemic, according to a recent survey.

Another reason the government's work was applauded was the introduction of basic IT (eventually!) to aid the government's work. An undeniably good example of this is the live monitoring of facemask stocks. Many were surprised that the system was set up in just a couple of days.

My reasoning is that the Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture, Ao Ieong U, who is handling epidemic control, holds an IT degree and the engineers in the field cannot deceive a supervisor holding the same degree, right?! The secretary would probably say, "I write programs too, so don't lie to me."

Even when viewed through a layman's eyes, inventory tracking and monitoring is not that difficult. It is a game of addition and subtraction. Yet I am impressed by the work of the government.

Information technology, computer science, or whatever it is called, requires a strong capability for logical or step-by-step thinking. When writing a computer program, the procedure or the flow must be clear and not contradict itself, or the program will crash. It will just not work.

As a contrast, the announcement of the suspension and then resumption of public services was made in a rather different manner.

When the announcements were made, the daily press briefing of the government indicated "emergency services," such as those provided by the 999 hotline, would run as normal.

The other suggestion that the government gave was that residents should not rush to government offices if their request was not urgent, but did not define what it would regard as "urgent."

Everybody thinks their matter's urgent in some ways, the same way a patient would consider their follow-up medical consultation urgent. In fact, many patients were unsure about what they should do when the Health Bureau announced the suspension of non-critical services.

When the government announced the resumption of work, the same problems arose again.

The first quarter is the season of making income declarations for tax evaluation. Although they could have made an early decision, the Financial Services Bureau acted slowly and announced that the deadline for income declaration had been postponed to the end of March only after people had started gathering in front of its doors.

Let's hope the government will learn from this and maintain its efforts to further improve.

Director Bong Joon-ho smiled and waved at a waiting crowd as he arrived home in South Korea, his first trip back since he won four Oscars for his movie "Parasite," including the award for Best Picture.

The crowd clapped and cheered as Bong walked out of the arrivals gate at Incheon International Airport.

"It's been a long journey in the United States and I'm pleased that it got wrapped up nicely," Bong said, speaking in Korean. "Now, I

am happy that I can quietly return to creating, which is my main occupation."

He also joked that he would wash his hands to join the movement to defeat a new virus that has sickened tens of thousands, mostly in China.

"I'll diligently wash my hands from now on and participate in this movement to defeat coronavirus," he said.



HE'S STILL STANDING: ELTON JOHN TO FINISH DOWN UNDER TOUR

ELTON John intends to play his remaining shows in New Zealand and Australia, his tour promoters said yesterday, a day after illness caused the singer to lose his voice and cut short a performance.

Video clips posted online by fans at Sunday night's performance showed John breaking down in tears as he told the cheering crowd he couldn't go on any longer. The 72-year-old singer said he had walking pneumonia and was assisted off stage.

Tour promoters Chugg Entertainment said John was resting and doctors were confident he would recover. They said a concert planned for Tuesday in Auckland would be delayed until Wednesday on the advice of doctors.

"Elton John was disappointed and deeply upset at having to end his Auckland concert early last night," the promoters said in their statement.

The concert was part of John's Farewell Yellow Brick Road tour. As well as the delayed performance on Wednesday, John is scheduled to play again in Auckland on Thursday and then seven performances in Australia before travel-

ling to the U.S. and Canada.

He thanked the concert attendees via an Instagram post and apologized for ending the show early.

"Elton John was disappointed and deeply upset at having to end his Auckland concert early last night."

PROMOTERS

"I want to thank everyone who attended tonight's gig in Auckland. I was diagnosed with walking pneumonia earlier today, but I was determined to give you the best show humanly possible," John wrote. "I played and sang my heart out, until my voice could sing no more. I'm disappointed, deeply upset and sorry. I gave it all I had."

New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said she watched the show and got to meet John for about five minutes before he started playing.

"You could tell that he wasn't feeling well and he said he wasn't feeling well," Ardern said. "So I think you could see that on the stage last night, which

I think is just a credit to his commitment to his fans."

Ardern said the pair discussed politics and how her toddler daughter Neve loves to dance to his music. John has previously expressed his admiration for the New Zealand leader.

The New Zealand Herald reported that John told the crowd he was ill but that he didn't want to miss the show. He slumped on a stool and required medical attention after performing

"Someone Saved My Life Tonight," but recovered and continued to play, the newspaper reported. Later, as he attempted to sing "Daniel," he realized he had no voice left and was escorted off stage.

John had just returned to New Zealand after performing at the Academy Awards in Los Angeles. He won an Oscar for best original song for his theme song for the movie "Rocketman."

According to the Mayo Clinic, walking pneumonia is an informal term for a milder form of pneumonia that isn't severe enough to require hospitalization or bed rest. It affects the respiratory tract and is most often caused by bacteria. AP



Pakistan Hukam Khan isn't sure how old he is, but his beard is long and white, and when he came to Pakistan 40 years ago fleeing an earlier war in Afghanistan, his children were small, stuffed onto the backs of donkeys and dragged across rugged mountains to the safety of northwestern Pakistan. More on p9

India's top court ordered the federal government to grant permanent commission and command positions to female officers in the army on par with men, asserting that the government's arguments against the policy were based on gender stereotypes. Currently, female officers can serve for only 10 to 14 years in the army.



India Officials denied a British lawmaker entry after she landed at New Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport, according to an accompanying aide. Debbie Abrahams, a Labour Party Member of Parliament (pictured) who chairs a parliamentary group focused on the disputed region of Kashmir, was unable to clear customs after the Indian visa she presented was rejected, the aide, Harpreet Upal, told The Associated Press.

Australia The Federal Court ruled yesterday that a police raid last year on the country's national broadcaster was legal, prompting fears of increasing secrecy in institutions. The police raided the state-backed Australian Broadcasting Corporation's Sydney headquarters last June over the leaking of classified documents. The raids sparked public outrage and were condemned as media intimidation.

Portugal The president and the prime minister of Portugal added their voices to a national outcry yesterday over racist abuse aimed at a black FC Porto soccer player who walked off the field after hearing monkey chants. Prime Minister Antonio Costa said the incident was "unacceptable" and urged police and soccer authorities to make an example of those responsible by handing down tough punishment.