

The Macao SAR Government urges:

- Let's all persist;
- Avoid crowd gathering;
- Wash hands frequently;
- Wear a mask properly;
- Declare health conditions;
- Reduce leaving Macao.

Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Centre

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A LAW ON FRAUDULENT MARRIAGES IS BEING REVIEWED BY THE OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY FOR ADMINISTRATION AND JUSTICE

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RISE IN BORDER CROSSING ACTIVITY MOSTLY DUE TO MACAU RESIDENTS

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AMENDMENTS TO SMEs AID SCHEME REGULATION INTRODUCED TODAY FALL SHORT OF TACKLING EXTREME FINANCIAL PROBLEMS

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AP PHOTO



Markets Global stock markets and oil prices plunged yesterday after a fight among major crude-producing nations jolted investors who already were on edge about the surging costs of a virus outbreak. Tokyo's Nikkei 225 fell to 19,698.76 after the government reported the economy contracted 7% in the October-December quarter, worse than the original estimate of a 6.3% decline. Markets last sentence incomplete. Should read: Both Hong Kong and Shanghai bourses recorded steep declines. More on p7

Saudi Arabia closed off air and sea travel to nine countries affected by the new coronavirus yesterday as Mideast stock markets tumbled over fears about the widening outbreak's effect on the global economy. The state oil giant Saudi Aramco led the financial losses, dropping by 10% on Riyadh's Tadawul stock exchange and forcing a halt to Aramco's trading.

AP PHOTO



Iran says the new coronavirus has killed another 43 people, pushing the death toll to 237 amid 7,161 confirmed cases. The Health Ministry announced the new figure at a news conference yesterday. There are over 7,640 confirmed cases of the virus across the wider Mideast. Some experts worry Iran may be underreporting its cases.

AP PHOTO



Iran continues to provide international inspectors access to its nuclear facilities, even after its announcement it was no longer bound by "any restrictions" of the landmark 2015 deal with world powers designed to prevent the country from producing a nuclear weapon, the head of the U.N.'s atomic watchdog, Rafael Grossi (pictured), said yesterday.

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ZHIMAI ZHANG

AP PHOTO

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RISE IN BORDER CROSSING ACTIVITY MOSTLY DUE TO MACAU RESIDENTS

ANTHONY LAM

THE number of daily crossings in and out of Macau is on the rise, the Public Security Police Force (PSP) told yesterday's daily press conference, despite the warnings of the local government about the dangers of congregating in busy places such as the Border Gate.

A total of 73,000 crossings were made last Sunday, with 37,000 inbound and 36,000 outbound crossings made. Local people topped crossing numbers, making a total of 25,000 outbound and 27,000 inbound crossings, and accounting for over 70% of all border crossings.

Tourism is also on the rise. The PSP reported yesterday that 9,100 tourist entries were recorded on Sunday, while 1,100 outbound crossings were recorded.

In the meantime, non-Macau residents who have been to a high risk area in the past 14 days are still advised to get medical checks within six to eight hours of entering. Although the measure is being managed by the Health Bureau (SSM), the PSP has been assisting with the delivery.

On Sunday, the PSP sent 2,285 people to the Macau Forum and 1,671 to the Taipa Ferry Terminal for medical checks. The law allows people to refuse being checked, but they will not be permitted to enter Macau. Accordingly, 258 people refused checks. Two local residents were sent to be checked due to their frequent border-crossings.



Yesterday was Macau's 34th day without a new Covid-19 infection, as counted from February 5. All confirmed patients have recovered and three local patients are now in recovery quarantine at the Public Health Clinical Center in Coloane.

Recovery quarantine measures raised some public concerns as to whether these recovered patients could be considered non-contagious.

Lo Iek Long, medical director of the Conde de São Januário Hospital, clarified at yesterday's

press conference that Macau is implementing stricter criteria for discharge compared to hospitals on the mainland.

The average length of hospitalization for a Covid-19 patient in Macau is 28 days. In the mainland, the average length is nine days, as guidelines issued by the National Health Commission suggest. However, there are other criteria for discharge from hospital.

The mainland guidelines require two negative test results 24 hours apart before a patient can be discharged. The Macau SSM is

lengthening the gap to 48 hours.

Additionally, the Tourism Crisis Management Office has commissioned Macau telecom companies to send messages to customers currently in Spain, France, Germany, and Japan. The messages are to notify users about new quarantine measures being implemented from noon today.

According to the office, 251 messages in total were sent to detectable mobile devices. Nineteen were in Spain, 15 in Germany, 38 in France and 179 in Japan.

On the other hand, the office

disclosed that there are currently 257 people in the quarantine facilities, with 18 Macau residents, six tourists and the remaining being mainland residents. Macau residents have the option to undergo quarantine at home should their households meet guidelines issued by the SSM.

Despite last weekend's rescue mission from the provincial capital of Wuhan, there are still 118 Macau residents scattered around the central Chinese province of Hubei.

When asked what criteria the government will use when deploying extra chartered flights to retrieve some or all the remaining Macau residents, the panel at the press conference pointed out that they were considering a series of factors, such as the condition of those being repatriated and the effect on the task force working on the rescue mission. It was too early, according to the government, to determine when the next rescue mission will be conducted, if there is any.

The 57 returnees from Wuhan were all in satisfactory condition after Sunday's negative test results. Two had coughs, which were found to be caused by other illnesses. An 11-year-old girl was coughing due to her pre-existing asthma.

Seven of the returned Macau residents, including the 11-year-old, suffer from chronic illnesses. A woman who suffers from a thyroid problem is the only patient to have had her illness attended to by non-government doctors. Due to the quarantine, her case is now being monitored by bureau doctors.

Lo said that the SSM has the ability to handle a maximum of 180 Covid-19 patients at one time.

Fraudulent marriage law amendment under review

A law related to fraudulent marriages is currently being reviewed by the Office of the Secretary for Administration and Justice. On January 6, the security authority delivered the latest amendment draft to the administration and justice authority for follow-up.

In a reply to lawmaker

Sulu Sou's interpellation on the topic, the director of the Office, Cheong Ioc Ieng, explained Macau's policies on tackling fake marriage.

According to Cheong, Macau has been strictly reviewing all applications for residency through marriage. The city's law ensures that any application con-

taining irregularities will be examined and made invalid if it is found to be fraudulent.

When reviewing applications submitted by mainland applicants, the police authority requires applicants to submit documents to prove that they are financially capable of supporting

their living in Macau.

Cheong said that the local security authority has specific measures already in force, from application reviews to investigations of violations. In addition, the police authority also communicates with its mainland and Hong Kong counterparts to regularly exchange information on fake marriages.

In the first 10 months of 2018, the Macau police authority recorded 113 fake marriage cases. **JZ**

RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY PRICE INDEX DROPS 0.9%

THE overall residential property price index for the three-month period extending from November 2019 to January 2020 decreased by 0.9% to 265.3 compared to the previous period from October to December 2019. The indexes for the Macau Peninsula (266.5) and Taipa and Coloane (260.3) dropped by 1% and 0.6% respectively. The index for existing residential units fell 1.1% to 283.7, with the index for those in the

Macau Peninsula falling by 1.1% and those in the islands falling 1.3%. Analyzed by year of building completion, the indexes for residential units built more than 20 years ago and for those built in the last 5 years fell by 1.5% and 0.5% respectively, whereas the index for residential units completed between 6 and 10 years ago rose by 1.6%. Meanwhile, the index for pre-sale residential units increased by 0.5%. **DB**

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Changes to SME Aid Scheme enter force by administrative regulation

RENATO MARQUES

THE government published a new administrative regulation in the Official Gazette yesterday, regarding a scheme that provides financial aid to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), first launched in 2003.

The amendments aim to adjust administrative regulation number 9/2003 to suit the current circumstances. Some of its articles have been updated so it can be used as part of the planned support measures for SMEs announced by Secretary Lei Wai Nong in mid-February.

The method of introducing the changes via administrative regulation means the government is not required to bring the proposal to the Legislative Assembly. This method reduces the scope of possible relief measures to mere alterations of those already in force.

Among the small adjustments made, the government now notes in Article 20-A that if a company has previously received support from the program and their interest-free loan has not yet been repaid, they still can apply for the new scheme. The maximum amount to be granted (usually 600,000 patacas) will be reduced according to the circumstances of the previous scheme in which the company has enrolled.

The scheme provides interest-free loans worth up to 600,000 patacas to be returned within eight years. The maximum amount will only be provided if the company has never been a beneficiary of the program in the past, or if the previous loan has been completely settled.

Changes regarding the requirements for companies applying

ANTHONY LAM



for the scheme are also being enforced, with the new administrative regulation amending the minimum operating time of companies from two years to just one.

The timing for payment of the first installment is also slightly different. In the previous regulation, payment was required 18 months after the date the loan was granted. However, this date has not been defined in the new administrative regulation. Instead, it will be established through an Order from the Chief Executive from now on, allowing more flexibility for future changes.

The new administrative regulation, coded as number 4/2020, was approved by Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng on March 4 with a

note that it would enter into force the day after its publication.

In a statement, the Executive Council clarified that the new rules also apply to applications that were lodged under the previous rules, fixing an implementation deadline of six months.

As the Times previously reported, the measures the government has presented to mitigate the difficulties related to the region's Covid-19 outbreak include several financial support programs for SMEs. These programs are not new and have been running for many years, making it easier for them to be enforced without the need to draft a new law. However, measures that involve changes to the annual budget or

the taxation regime, "need to be approved by the Legislative Assembly," according to lawyer and legal expert Sérgio de Almeida Correia, who added "there is no way to go around this."

Even if the government's method of issuing new administrative regulations for old programs significantly cuts down on the time required to enforce the programs, economics experts and lawmakers have previously said that this method is inefficient. It does not specifically address the current problems faced by local companies, or consider the very unique, special and never-before-seen circumstances that did not exist when the schemes were originally created almost 17 years ago.

122 residents of Hubei choose to remain in Macau

THERE are currently 122 residents of Hubei Province still in Macau, according to the Public Security Police Force (PSP), citing data last updated yesterday morning.

Hubei Province is home to the city of Wuhan, the epicenter of the Covid-19 coronavirus and from where 57 Macau residents were eva-

cuated over the weekend. Lei Tak Fai, head of Public Relations Division of the PSP, said that these Hubei people, who hold a variety of different visas, have been in Macau for longer than 14 days.

Normal Hong Kong and Macau tourist visas issued by the mainland are valid for seven days. Some other visas, such as

the relative-visiting visa, are valid for as long as three months. This may explain their length of stay.

Although the Hubei natives are still in Macau, the Health Bureau has reiterated that if no symptoms develop after 14 days (the most common incubation period for the disease), they are

considered healthy and should be allowed to remain in the city under the permitted conditions of their travel documents.

The Macau government implemented a measure in early February, requiring people from Hubei or who have been in Hubei in the last 14 days to present a medical certificate that confirms they are uninfected upon their arrival at any border checkpoint. Residents of Hubei who also hold Macau residency are not affected by the restriction.

Between late January and early February, about 150 people from Hubei were in Macau. Authorities said they searched all corners of the city to pinpoint and track them.

Measures requiring any Hubei people in Macau to either leave the city or undergo self-funded quarantine at the Pousada Marina Infante were later put in place.

As of February 9, some 100 people from Hubei had chosen to remain in Macau, after being released from quarantine facilities after 14 days. **AL**

MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS BUREAU REPORTS MARMOT DISCOVERY TO POLICE

The Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) reported to the police authority the discovery of a marmot, a large ground squirrel, at Parque do Reservatório on March 6. Macau's laws ban the import, acquisition, and breeding of marmots. Since it is not native to Macau and there is no record of the import of this particular marmot, the IAM suspects that someone illegally imported the marmot to Macau and discarded the animal in the public park. The IAM advised that the police authority would follow up on the case as the bureau suspects the city's laws have been violated. The marmot was healthy and was sent to the IAM's animal control facility. Currently, the marmot is being quarantined.

LAWMAKER WANTS 25,000 HOUSES RESERVED FOR SENIORS

Lawmaker Ng Kuok Cheong has urged the local government to build 25,000 houses exclusively for senior citizens on the former Pearl Horizon land plot. In his interpellation to the local government, Ng said that these houses should be designed to serve seniors, with features that are appropriate and suitable for them. Previously, the local government announced housing plans for this particular land plot, suggesting a house exchange plan. Ng hopes that the local government can help senior citizens exchanging their current houses for houses on the Pearl Horizon land plot. Ng believes that allowing senior citizens to participate in the exchange would help with Macau's urban renewal.

NONE INJURED BY PARTIALLY COLLAPSED BUILDING

An old building located at Praça da Ponte e Horta partially collapsed earlier this week. Nobody was injured in the incident. The building is located on Rua Francisco António and is empty and unoccupied. Some 15 square meters of the rooftop collapsed. According to a resident of the area, who lives across from the building, the building had already been severely damaged during Typhoon Hato and Mangkhut. The building's external wall is currently stable and will not endanger passersby. The Land, Public Works and Transport Bureau will issue a notice to the property owners to follow up on the situation.

Gaming employees grow as sector sees recruitment slowdown

THE number of full-time employees in Macau's gaming sector increased by 1.7% year-on-year in the fourth quarter of last year, according to the government. However, supplementary data released yesterday showed a general slowing in the demand for manpower.

Stemming from a survey of casino operators, junket operators and junket associates, the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC) said that the number of people employed by the industry had reached 58,225 in the final quarter of 2019. The number of dealers rose by 3% to 25,459 compared to last year, the data shows.

In December 2019, the average earnings (excluding bonuses) of full-time employees in the gaming sector was 24,640 patacas, up by 3.8% year-on-year, while the average earnings of dealers increased by 3.1% to 21,080 patacas.

There were 443 job vacancies in total at the end of the fourth quarter of 2019, down by 878 year-on-year. About one-third of the vacancies were



for clerk positions, while another third were for service and sales workers. In terms of recruitment criteria, just under half of the vacancies required work experience, while three-quarters required a senior secondary education or less. Of the total vacancies, 68.4% and 49.4% required knowledge of Mandarin and English respectively.

In the fourth quarter of 2019, a total of 1,294 new employees were hired, down by more than one-quarter from 1,737 in the same quarter of 2018. The job vacancy rate (0.8%) and the employee recruitment rate

(2.2%) fell by 1.5 and 0.8 percentage points respectively year-on-year. These indicators reflect a slowdown in the demand for manpower in the gaming sector.

Meanwhile, the government has indicated that the amount of gaming taxes collected in the first two months of the year dropped 12.2% year-on-year to 17.2 billion patacas. The news follows the 87.8% collapse in gross gaming revenue last month.

Gaming taxes are a major component of government revenue, accounting for about 80% of total revenue. **DB**

STUDENTS MAKE POSITIVE EVALUATION OF REMOTE LEARNING

JULIE ZHU

THE majority of Macau residents who are currently university students are satisfied with the e-learning and remote study being offered during the coronavirus outbreak, according to the latest survey conducted by the Macau Youth Summit.

In late January, Macau recorded its first two Covid-19 cases. As part of the city's response to the epidemic, the local government promoted the use of an e-learning platform to help students of non-tertiary education to resume their studies.

In the first half of February, local universities also started teaching courses on e-learning platforms.

Recently, the Macau Youth Summit sent questionnaires out to local students. The respondents were Macau local residents enrolled in programs

in either local Macau universities or overseas universities.

The survey intended to learn about Covid-19's influence on Macau's higher education. In total, 68 valid responses were collected, 62 of which were from students at local Macau universities. The rest were from students at mainland and Taiwanese universities.

According to the survey results, 55% of respondents spent more than six hours on e-learning per week.

Most respondents made positive evaluations of their schools' arrangements amid the Covid-19 outbreak. The respondents endorsed e-learning for its flexibility regarding time and location, but considered the learning experience inferior compared to traditional teaching in physical classrooms.

Forty-seven percent of respondents believe

that e-learning is helping students keep up with the pace of study.

The association submitted the survey results to the local government, hoping that it would improve e-learning software and hardware.

Based on the results of the survey, the association made four proposals: set up a real-time communication platform; train teaching staff in online teaching; improve hardware; and provide online translation.

As of today, the city's education authority has not decided on a school reopening date. Previously, the Education and Youth Affairs Bureau had stated that schools would resume only if two criteria were met: there must be no new infections in the neighboring Guangdong province for a period of 14 days, and the cities of Zhuhai and Zhongshan must both resume classes.

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Thai tourism authority confirms Macau travelers to face quarantine

RENATO MARQUES

AFTER last week's conflicting statements from Thai health authorities on the need for people arriving in Thailand from nine countries and two regions to undergo a 14-day quarantine period, the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) has now released a new statement reaffirming the need for such restrictions, and contradicting the clarification made last Friday by the health ministry.

In the new statement from the TAT, the Thai government says that the country "has now enhanced precaution and prevention measures for Covid-19," explaining that "all travelers are asked to fill in the public health declaration form and those traveling from the People's Republic of China (including Hong Kong and Macau Special Administrative Regions), Republic of Korea, Republic of Italy, and the Islamic Republic of Iran will undergo 14 days [of] quarantine when they enter the kingdom."



Flight crew wear protective masks as they arrive at the Suvarnabhumi Airport in Bangkok

Details about the quarantine procedure will be revealed in an announcement to be published shortly.

Travel to Thailand has already slumped, but the overall stance is set to further deter tourists from the six territories while the measures are in place.

Other countries have imposed

restrictions on people coming from China, the epicenter of the outbreak, but few are as reliant on Chinese tourists as Thailand. They spent more than \$17 billion in the Southeast Asian nation last year, over a quarter of all foreign-tourism receipts, and the industry as a whole accounts for about a fifth of the economy.

On Friday the Thai health ministry said that while a two-week self-quarantine period was not compulsory, it was recommended, contradicting comments made the day before. Public Health Ministry spokesman Rungrueng Kiphati told Reuters that "people arriving from those six places [South Korea, China, Ma-

cau, Hong Kong, Italy, and Iran] would be fined 20,000 baht if they did not self-quarantine for 14 days at home or in a hotel room, where they have to report themselves to the authorities every day or officials will come to check on them."

The new statement adds to the confusion over whether the government is ordering or recommending travelers quarantine for 14 days.

In comments to several media outlets, Thailand government officials have rushed to clarify that the first statement from Public Health Ministry spokesman contained a "mistake" since laws in Thailand do not allow for forced quarantine, or establish penalties for non-Thai nationals.

Tanarak Plipat, deputy director-general of the Department of Disease Control, told the media that the health ministry was preparing regulations requiring all arrivals from the six regions to report their health condition daily, noting that the unpublished new rules include a fine (potentially up to 20,000 baht) for those that fail to comply or issue false reports about their condition.

The new warning by TAT has sparked controversy and conversation, especially on the TAT HK Facebook page, with dozens of Hong Kong citizens grilling Thai authorities about the measures.

SHUN TAK, CTII TO CREATE NEW COMPANY FOR PEARL RIVER DELTA TRANSPORT

RENATO MARQUES

THE board of Shun Tak Holdings Limited has announced a restructuring of its operations with China Travel International Investment Hong Kong Limited (CTII) to create a new company that will be responsible for all cross-border transportation services in the Pearl River Delta and in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area.

The information was released through an announcement Shun Tak made to the Hong Kong Stock Exchange last Friday after trading hours.

In the statement, the company announced that it had entered the agreements to "implement the Proposed Restructuring for transforming the Target Company into a new transportation platform for the provision of cross-boundary transportation services."

Furthermore, Shun Tak explained that this Target Company would combine



the existing ferry and coach businesses being operated by Shun Tak and CTII in a joint-venture.

The notice also explains that upon the completion of the restructuring, "the Target Company will be held as to 50% by Interdragon (a non-wholly owned subsidiary of Shun Tak) and 50% by Dalmore (a wholly-owned subsidiary of CTII)."

In the process, China Travel Tours Transportation Development - HK - Limited (CTTT), a subsidiary of CTII and Jointmight Investments Ltd., an indirect wholly-owned subsidiary of Shun Tak will be wholly-owned by the Target Company.

The agreement sets out the acquisition by Dalmore of 21% of the shares of Shun Tak - China Travel Shipping Investments Limited (the operator of TurboJet) for a sum of HKD437 million.

The stock was in the possession of Interdragon, a non-wholly owned subsidiary of Shun Tak Group.

At the same time, Shun Tak - China Travel Shipping Investments Limited will acquire the entire issued share capital of CTTT, the cross-border land transportation service company that operated the Hong Kong-Macau-Zhuhai Bridge Coach and was held by CTII. This acquisition was valued at HKD508 million.

AIR MACAU SOON TO INCREASE FLIGHTS TO SOME MAINLAND CITIES

JULIE ZHU

Search results on Air Macau's official website suggest that the local airline is preparing to increase the number of flights to some mainland cities starting March 16.

As reported by mainland newspaper Chengdu Daily, these cities include Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai, Hangzhou and Chengdu, capital of Sichuan province.

After the outbreak of Covid-19, Air Macau reduced the number of flights to mainland cities, completely suspending direct flights to Wuhan and Changsha, among other cities.

This week, Air Macau will operate three flights to Chengdu, with one additional weekly flight joining the schedule from March 16.

Currently, the airline offers three trips per week to Hangzhou, the

capital of Zhejiang: one on Tuesdays, one on Saturdays and one on Sundays. The frequency will increase to one trip to Hangzhou per day on March 16.

Three of the four direct-administered municipalities of China - namely Beijing, Shanghai, and Tianjin - will have daily flights to Macau, operated by either Air Macau and/or other airlines. The fourth direct-administered municipality, Chongqing, will be the only one for which the reduced number of flights to Macau will continue.

Although the number of flights is planned to increase from next week, the frequency will still be far lower than before. Previously, Air Macau alone operated more than one trip per day to cities including Beijing, Shanghai, Chengdu and Hangzhou.

Yesterday, many of the capital-level cities of mainland provinces partially resumed work.

On March 6, a total of 6,403 civil aircraft took off at mainland airports, 271 more than on March 4.

Flight recovery is likely to benefit the re-booting of Macau's tourism industry, but the gain may not be significant immediately.

On January 31, mainland China suspended travel visa applications for mainland residents, including the important Individual Visit Scheme. As of today, Beijing has not yet revealed or indicated when the visa application program will resume. Analysts suggested last week that the mainland authority could lift the restrictions suddenly, or in a phased approach starting as early as next month.



Medical workers discuss patients' treatment near a Communist Party flag at the "Wuhan Living Room", a converted temporary hospital in Wuhan

CHINA TURNS TO PROPAGANDA TO RIGHT IMAGE IN VIRUS 'WAR'

KEN MORITSUGU, BEIJING

As the rest of the world grapples with a burgeoning virus outbreak, China's ruling Communist Party has deployed its propaganda playbook to portray its leader as firmly in charge, leading an army of health workers in a "people's war" against the disease.

The main evening news on state TV regularly shows President Xi Jinping and his underlings giving instructions on the outbreak or touring related facilities. Coverage then segues to doctors and nurses on the front lines, drawing on a tradition of upholding model workers and the importance of sacrifice on behalf of the people and the party.

For the Communist Party, the epidemic is both a risk and an opportunity. It seeks to avoid blame for any mishandling of the outbreak, notably a slow initial response that allowed the virus to take hold. Conversely, it seeks credit for overcoming the crisis, enhancing the legitimacy of its rule.

State media, a tightly controlled internet and mass mobilization campaigns have all been harnessed for the effort.

"Upbeat, if emotional, state messaging leaves the impression that self-sacrificing citizens, national unity, and enlightened leadership will inevitably triumph in China, as the fight against the

virus shifts beyond the country's borders," said Ashley Esarey, a specialist on the Chinese media at the University of Alberta.

The tried and true formula appears to remain effective at promulgating the party's version of events, though the rise of social media is an ever-present challenge. A growing minority has long questioned the party line, but even many of them accept it out of habit or a lack of alternatives.

Most passively embrace a narrative that is repeated over and over, said Steve Tsang, director of the China Institute at the University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies.

Li Desheng, a 22-year-old student who said news webcasts are his main source of information, commended the response of the party and the government, saying they had proven effective at stopping the spread of the virus.

"There is a Chinese idiom that says, 'Point to a deer, call it a horse,'" the philosophy major said in an interview conducted via instant message. "If you say a deer is a horse, then that is a distortion of fact. When watching a news webcast ... at least at present, I think a deer is still called a deer, and a horse is called a horse, so I believe the report."

It's not just a matter of what's

shown, though — it's also what's omitted. State media trumpeted the throwing up of new medical facilities in a fortnight without reporting on the woes of people unable to find a hospital bed that necessitated the Herculean effort.

The tried and true formula appears to remain effective at promulgating the party's version of events, though the rise of social media is a challenge

It touted crackdowns on wild animal markets and plans to shut them down, without questioning why they hadn't been sufficiently regulated since SARS, a similar virus outbreak in 2002-03.

June Teufel Dreyer, a China expert at the University of Miami, said the party may have lost credibility with what she called "engaged public opinion," but that it's difficult to know what portion of China's 1.4 billion people that represents.

Zhou Songyi, another 22-year-old student, said she doesn't find any useful information on

the epidemic from the official People's Daily newspaper or state broadcaster CCTV, citing stories that, even if true, have a PR agenda rather than seeking to inform the public.

Social media has given her digital-savvy generation almost instant feedback on some state-media reports, though critical comments are often removed by the country's internet censorship.

"The battle for truth-telling on the internet is another sign that people do not simply trust in the government," said Elizabeth Economy, director of Asia studies at the Council on Foreign Relations in New York. She added, though, that the propaganda works on those who believe in the party and want to be comforted and persuaded.

The core of the approach is to stifle any criticism while providing positive role models and showing the party as China's only real hope.

China has barred citizen journalists from popular social media platforms after they reported on overcrowded hospitals and other problems. Non-state media outlets such as the magazine *Cai Xin* have done some independent reporting but stopped short of criticizing the leadership.

"The medics are portrayed as

heroes not because of their dedication as health professionals, but because they are party members," said Anthony Saich, a China expert at Harvard University. He believes the crisis has damaged confidence in Xi's leadership to a degree but won't have a lasting impact.

The health workers form the basis of the people's war, a term adopted early on by Xi. A recent CCTV evening news broadcast showed him visiting military health units. Everyone maintained a safe distance from each other, following the government-ordered protocol, their mouths and noses covered by protective masks.

"Wars invite people to cast aside their squabbles and dissent and to come together," said David Bandurski of the China Media Project at the University of Hong Kong. "Wars make heroes — and heroes are the stuff propaganda thrives upon."

Nationalist campaigns have worked before, channeling anger away from the party in the SARS outbreak, territorial disputes with Japan, last year's Hong Kong protests and the ongoing trade war with the U.S.

This time, the official coverage of the virus may help blunt any lasting political damage to Xi and the party's authority, even as the social and economic costs of the outbreak exact a rising toll. More than 3,000 people have died in China from the virus.

"The leadership has been very eager to write the happy ending to this story before anyone really knows what the world is dealing with," Bandurski said. AP

NORTH KOREA

Kim fires weapons after threatening 'momentous' action

HYUNG-JIN KIM, SEOUL

NORTH Korea fired three short-range projectiles off its east coast yesterday, South Korea's military said, two days after the North threatened to take "momentous" action to protest outside condemnation over its earlier live-fire exercises.

Seoul's Joint Chiefs of Staff said the multiple kinds of projectiles fired from the eastern coastal town of Sondok flew as far as 200 kilometers at a maximum altitude of 50 kilometers before landing in the waters between the Korean Peninsula and Japan.

A JCS statement said South Korea expressed "strong regret" over the launches that it said violate a past inter-Korean agreement aimed at lowering military animosities. South Korea's national security director, defense minister and spy chief held an emergency video conference and agreed the North Korean action were not helpful to efforts to establish a peace on the Korean Peninsula, according to South Korea's presidential Blue House.

Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga said North Korea fired suspected ballistic missiles. He said the multiple North Korean



projectiles traveled 100 to 200 kilometers (62 to 125 miles) but none landed inside Japan's exclusive economic zone.

"North Korea's latest action, on top of its repeated firings of ballistic missiles, is a serious threat to the peace and safety of Japan and ... a grave problem for the entire international society," Suga said.

In the past 10 days, North Korea has said leader Kim Jong Un supervised two rounds of live-fire artillery exercises in its first wea-

pons tests since late November. Kim had entered the new year with a vow to bolster his nuclear deterrent and not to be bound by a major weapons test moratorium amid a deadlock in a U.S.-led diplomacy aimed at convincing Kim to abandon his nuclear program in return for economic and political benefits.

South Korea and some European countries protested against the second North Korea drills on March 2, which they believe invol-

ved ballistic missile launches in a violation of U.N. Security Council resolutions.

North Korea insists it has the right to conduct military drills in the face of U.S. and South Korean forces on its doorstep.

The U.N. Security Council didn't issue any statement after discussing North Korea's March 2 drills, but five European members condemned what they called "provocative actions." Belgium, Estonia, France, Germany and the

United Kingdom said afterward that the tests undermine regional and international peace, security and stability.

The North's Foreign Ministry on Saturday accused the five European countries of "repeating an absurd argument of condemnation and violation resolutions of the U.N. whenever we conducted military drills."

"The reckless behavior of these countries instigated by the U.S. will become a fuse that will trigger our yet another momentous reaction," a ministry statement said.

Last week, Kim Jong Un's younger sister leveled diatribes and crude insults against South Korea for criticizing its earlier live-fire exercises, but her statement was followed by Kim sending a letter to South Korean President Moon Jae-in expressing condolences over its coronavirus outbreak.

Some experts say North Korea may intend to catch South Korea off balance before seeking help in reviving its dilapidated economy, since the U.S. has said sanctions on North Korea will stay in place unless it takes significant steps toward denuclearization.

"The coronavirus is likely exceeding North Korea's public health capacity, so Kim Jong Un is playing a two-level game. At the domestic level, his regime claims to protect the people with drastic quarantine measures and military exercises against external threats," said Leif-Eric Easley, associate professor at Seoul's Ewha Womans University. "Pyongyang may be seeking international assistance, but remains obsessed with not appearing in an inferior position to Seoul." AP

JAPAN

Economy shrinks 7% in last quarter, risks recession

JAPAN'S economy contracted at a dismal 7.1% annual rate during the October-December period, worse than the initial estimate, raising fears the world's third largest economy could be headed to a recession.

The contraction was the first for Japan in more than a year and followed an Oct. 1 increase in the sales tax, which hit retail spending. The Cabinet Office data, released yesterday, were a revision from last month's estimate of a 6.3% decline.

The data do not reflect the steep downturn in tourism and other business activity related to the virus outbreak that has spread from China to much of the world. Most economists are forecasting another contraction in the current quarter, and possibly for the year, for the world's



third largest economy.

An "Economy Watchers" survey also released by the Cabinet Office showed a sharp decline in all kinds of business activity to levels last seen nine years ago just after the devastating March 11, 2011 earthquake, tsunami and nuclear plant meltdowns in

northeastern Japan.

Preliminary data from the Finance Minister also showed imports falling nearly 17% in the first 20 days of February from a year earlier.

Economist Harumi Taguchi of IHS Markit forecasts that the economy may contract by an annual rate

of 0.3% in 2020, recovering to 0.9% growth in 2021.

Consumers did boost spending on some items as they stockpiled toilet paper, surgical masks and other supplies out of concern over the virus outbreak. But such spending won't fully offset the impact of absent tourists and empty sta-

diums, amusement parks and other venues as Japanese heed calls to avoid big gatherings to help prevent the spread of the virus, she said.

On a quarterly basis, the economy shrank 1.8% in October-December from the previous quarter. The earlier estimate was of a 1.6% contraction.

Domestic demand, including investments and consumption fell 2.4%. Government spending was flat.

A technical recession is defined as two consecutive quarters of contraction.

Yoshimasa Maruyama, analyst with SMBC Nikko Securities, called the situation "serious."

"The recession could be more than just technical and the economy could really decline," he said.

Japan's benchmark

Nikkei 225 has dropped over the news of the virus outbreak, which began in central China late last year and has now spread to about 100 nations, sickening people from Italy to Washington state in the U.S. The Nikkei plunged again in Monday trading, losing 5.1% to 19,698.76, its lowest level since late 2018.

Japan has been trying to wrest itself out of the economic doldrums by encouraging lending and public works projects. The government has announced various stimulus measures to counter the slowdown.

The central bank has promised to do whatever needed to support financial markets and businesses, but having kept the main interest rate at minus 0.1% for several years, it has limited room to maneuver, analysts say. AP

AP PHOTO



USA

Thousands prepare to get off ship hit by virus in California

OLGA R. RODRIGUEZ & CHRISTOPHER WEBER, SAN FRANCISCO

FEDERAL and state officials in California were preparing yesterday to receive thousands of people from a cruise ship that has been idling off the coast of San Francisco with at least 21 people aboard infected with the coronavirus.

Fences were being installed at an 11-acre site at the Port of Oakland, as authorities readied flights and buses to whisk the more than 2,000 passengers aboard the Grand Princess to military bases or their home countries for a 14-day quarantine. More than 3,500 on the ship hail from 54 countries.

"We're making every effort to get them off the ship as safely and quickly as possible," said Dr. John Redd of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, who urged passengers to remain in their rooms.

As the U.S. death toll from the virus reached at least 21 and the number of cases worldwide soared above 110,000, California Gov. Gavin Newsom and the mayor of Oakland sought to reassure the public that none of the Grand

Princess passengers would be exposed to the U.S. public before completing the quarantine. The number of infections in the United States climbed above 500 as testing for the virus increased.

The Port of Oakland was chosen for docking because of its proximity to an airport and a military base, Newsom said. U.S. passengers will be transported to military bases in California, Texas and Georgia, where they'll be tested for the COVID-19 virus and quarantined.

About 1,100 crew on the ship, 19 of whom have tested positive for the new virus, will be quarantined and treated aboard the ship, which will dock elsewhere, Newsom said.

"That ship will turn around — and they are currently assessing appropriate places to bring that quarantined ship — but it will not be here in the San Francisco Bay," he said.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, the National Institutes of Health's infectious diseases chief, said Sunday that widespread closure of a city or region, as Italy has done, is "possible." U.S. Surgeon General Jerome Adams said communities will need to start thinking about can-

celing large gatherings, closing schools and letting more employees work from home, as many companies have done in the Seattle, Washington, area amid an outbreak at a care home that has killed 17.

Oregon Gov. Kate Brown declared a state of emergency Sunday because of the virus.

On the Grand Princess, passengers Steven and Michele Smith of Paradise, California, said they hope their time spent on the ship in quarantine will count toward the 14 days they are expected to isolate themselves. But they said officials have not yet provided an answer.

"We would love to get credit for the three or four days we've spent in our cabin," Steven Smith said.

The Department of State was working with the home countries of several hundred passengers to arrange their repatriation, including nearly 240 from Canada.

The ship was held off the coast amid evidence it was the breeding ground for a cluster of at least 20 cases from a previous voyage.

Meanwhile, another cruise ship, the Regal Princess, pulled into a Florida port late Sunday night, af-

ter being held off the state's coast for hours while awaiting coronavirus test results for two crew members, who did not have symptoms consistent with COVID-19.

Another Princess ship, the Diamond Princess, was quarantined for two weeks in Yokohama, Japan, last month because of the virus. Ultimately, about 700 of the 3,700 people aboard became infected in what experts pronounced a public-health failure, with the vessel essentially becoming a floating germ factory.

On Sunday, the U.S. State Department urged U.S. citizens against travel on cruise ships as officials said there was "increased risk of infection of COVID-19 in a cruise ship environment."

Private companies and some public venues in the U.S. have been taking safety measures in an effort to limit the virus' spread. Several universities have begun online-only courses, including the University of Washington, Stanford University and Columbia University. The largest school district in Northern California, with 64,000 students, canceled classes for a week when it was discovered a family in the district was exposed to COVID-19. **AP**

this day in history



1969 MARTIN LUTHER KING'S KILLER GETS LIFE

James Earl Ray has been jailed for 99 years by a court in Memphis, Tennessee, after admitting he carried out the murder of the American civil rights leader.

His guilty plea was made on the understanding he was spared the electric chair. It also brought a swift end to the trial, which otherwise might have lasted weeks.

Ray will not be eligible for parole until he is 90.

The verdict is unlikely to silence the speculation that Dr King's murder was the result of a conspiracy.

Until now, it had been assumed Ray's defence would be that he was involved in a plot to assassinate the civil rights leader, but did not fire the fatal shot.

Dr King, who preached non-violence, was shot dead by a sniper in the southern city of Memphis in April 1968 as he stood on a hotel balcony. He was in the city to lead a civil rights march.

He had come to Memphis to support striking dustmen, the majority of whom are black. The unresolved dispute meant feelings between black and white were running high in the city.

Immediately after the shooting, the Federal Bureau of Investigation was ordered to begin an investigation.

Ray had escaped from Missouri State Penitentiary in April 1967 where he was serving a 20 year sentence for armed robbery.

He was eventually traced to London in June 1968, where he was travelling under a false identity. He was arrested at Heathrow airport and charged with possessing a loaded firearm and false passport.

Today, Ray appeared in court wearing a dark suit. He spoke only to admit his guilt and in a brief statement he hinted there may have been some kind of plot to murder Dr King.

He showed little sign of emotion as sentence was passed.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

The trial verdict was seen by some as a cover-up for a politically motivated conspiracy. However, federal authorities insisted there was no evidence of a cover-up.

Ray agreed to plead guilty so he could be spared the electric chair.

Ray was known to have a fanatical hatred of black people. Even while serving his sentence in Missouri, he rejected a move to an open farm prison where conditions were better on the grounds he could not live with black inmates.

Three days after his jailing, Ray recanted his guilty plea. He claimed he had been set up by a gun dealer in Montreal known only as Raoul.

He spent the next 29 years fighting for the trial his guilty plea had forestalled - and won the support of the King family.

New forensic tests in 1997 on the gun said to have been used in the assassination proved inconclusive.

Ray died on 23 April 1998.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
 Mar. 21-Apr. 19
 It's time to roll up your sleeves and dive into something new. Your energy is higher than it has been in a long while, and today is a great day to make the most of it.

TAURUS
 Apr. 20-May. 20
 Are you ready for a progress report? It's good news! You're looking very good. You're one step closer to a bright existence and miles away from the unproductive habits of your past.

GEMINI
 May. 21-Jun. 21
 The role that money plays in your life is going through a transition, and it's beginning to seem like there are a few things in the world that are more important than account balances and shiny new things.

CANCER
 Jun. 22-Jul. 22
 Some people may accept things at face value, but not you! You're much too intellectually curious to buy into the latest craze, so don't worry that you're out of sync with others.

LEO
 Jul. 23-Aug. 22
 Why be shy about how you feel? It's always a good time to show your affection for someone else. Even if you barely know somebody but you like the spark in their eye, let 'em know!

VIRGO
 Aug. 23-Sep. 22
 When you help out other people today, you'll actually be helping yourself. Surrender that excellent parking space to someone else, and you'll probably end up finding an even better one later in the day.

LIBRA
 Sep. 23-Oct. 22
 Fast thinking on your part could make all the difference today, so keep looking at things from different angles. Prepare a few suggestions just in case you're asked for your input.

SCORPIO
 Oct. 23-Nov. 21
 One of your oldest relationships may be reaching an important turning point. This is the time to admit that it's now or never and make the choice you've been afraid to make.

SAGITTARIUS
 Nov. 22-Dec. 21
 Today, stay loose and relaxed on the inside and composed and formal on the outside. The first impression you make is going to be key, and you'll want to err on the side of ambition.

CAPRICORN
 Dec. 22-Jan. 19
 There are two sides to every story, and two sides to every relationship. Today, pay close attention to every relationship you take part in, no matter how trivial.

AQUARIUS
 Jan. 20-Feb. 18
 If you're involved in a task that isn't as easy as you thought it would be, good! That means you're on the right track. Challenges are the only thing in life that teach you just how capable you are of doing amazing things.

PISCES
 Feb. 19-Mar. 20
 It's all about endurance today. Can you sit through that boring meeting without falling asleep? Can you handle the traffic on your way home from work? Can you stick with your diet one more day?

The Born Loser by Chip Sanson



SUDOKU

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

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

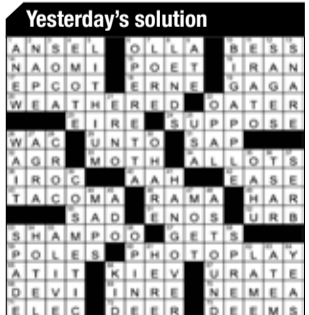
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	-1	12	clear
Harbin	-8	2	cloudy
Tianjin	1	13	clear
Urumqi	-8	2	clear
Xi'an	2	15	cloudy
Lhasa	-1	14	cloudy
Chengdu	9	18	cloudy
Chongqing	11	19	cloudy
Kunming	10	17	overcast
Nanjing	8	14	overcast
Shanghai	9	13	overcast
Wuhan	5	16	cloudy
Hangzhou	11	16	cloudy
Taipei	15	22	moderate rain
Guangzhou	17	22	cloudy
Hong Kong	20	25	cloudy
WORLD			
Moscow	2	7	drizzle
Frankfurt	5	10	drizzle
Paris	8	11	moderate rain
London	8	11	drizzle
New York	5	16	overcast

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS: 1- E.g., e.g.; 5- Bridal path; 10- Wheel parts; 14- Gallic girlfriend; 15- Unties; 16- Between ports; 17- Weed whackers; 18- Observes Ramadan; 19- Sisters; 20- Move down the computer screen; 22- Legendary king of Thebes; 24- Baton Rouge sch.; 25- Editor Wintour; 26- Submerged to the mid-leg; 30- Tears down; 35- Dr. Dre's genre; 36- Born, in France; 37- Chaplin persona; 38- See-through material; 41- Spirit; 43- Let go; 44- Hole-punching tool; 45- Green or black, e.g.; 46- Unit of magnetic induction; 47- Caribou; 50- Rabble; 53- Animal foot; 54- Place in order; 58- Increase; 62- Kit item; 63- God of Islam; 66- Actress Olin; 67- Just right; 68- Aristotle's teacher; 69- Den of wild animals and dragons; 70- Bushy hairstyle; 71- Relaxed; 72- Lady of Sp.

DOWN: 1- Contented sighs; 2- Univ. hotshot; 3- Coffin stand; 4- Fix, as a shoe; 5- Wealthy; 6- A Gershwin; 7- Paris possessive; 8- Admit; 9- Ruhr city; 10- Wife of a rajah; 11- The jig ___; 12- Course list?; 13- Disrespectful back talk; 21- Acid; 23- Bar game; 25- Gibbon, e.g.; 26- Kool-Aid maker; 27- Mother-of-pearl; 28- Sporting blades; 29- Extra-wide shoe size; 31- 100 square meters; 32- Greek island; 33- Host; 34- Chucked weapon; 39- ___ Aviv; 40- I don't give ___; 41- Female sheep; 42- Untidy; 44- Comics bark; 48- Rebellious Turner; 49- Resides; 51- Godly love; 52- Gal's guy; 54- Kofi ___ Annan; 55- Mouth part; 56- Din; 57- Singing voice; 59- Fleshy fruit; 60- Apartment, e.g.; 61- Graph prefix; 64- ___ Cruces, NM; 65- Had a little lamb;



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	



<p>FOR SALE</p> <p>Kinglight Carpark, Taipa HK\$1,450,000 1 🚗</p>	<p>FOR RENT</p> <p>Spacious Apartment, Ocean Gardens \$35,000/mth 3,700 ft² 4 🛏 4 🚿</p>	<p>FOR SALE</p> <p>[Taipa] Two Units connected 4 🛏 2 🚿 1,404 ft² \$8,380,000 (ref: 19096006)</p> <p>[Macau] Lakeview Tower 3 🛏 2 🚿 1,344 ft² \$11,000,000 (ref: 19126001)</p> <p>[Taipa] Nova City 3 🛏 2 🚿 1,515 ft² \$11,750,000 (ref: 19106001)</p> <p>[Macau] One Central 2 🛏 2 🚿 1,349 ft² \$14,839,000 (ref: 19096004)</p>	<p>FOR RENT</p> <p>[Taipa] One room apartment 1 🛏 1 🚿 740 ft² \$10,900/mth (ref: 19101006)</p> <p>[Coloane] Hellene Garden 1 🛏 3 🚿 3 🚿 1,663 ft² \$14,000/mth (ref: n/a)</p> <p>[Taipa] Nova Grand 2 🛏 1 🚿 935 ft² \$17,800/mth (ref: 19091005)</p> <p>[Cotai] One Grantai 3 🛏 3 🚿 2,122 ft² \$23,000/mth (ref: 19030001RT)</p>
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ANAMOURA



AP PHOTO

GOLF

PGA Tour media deal aimed at more video for bigger audience

DOUG FERGUSON,
PONTE VEDRA BEACH (FLA.)

THE PGA Tour announced an expansive media rights deal YESTERDAY that brings ESPN back into the fold with its streaming service, joining two networks as part of a package designed to deliver more video content and reach a broader audience.

For regular television, the nine-year deal that begins in 2022 looks the same.

Network coverage stays with CBS and NBC, with CBS getting roughly twice as many events, just like the current nine-year deal that ends next year. Golf Channel stays on as the cable partner providing weekday and early weekend coverage, along with fall events and a few tournaments at the start of the year.

The change is in digital, the first time the tour negotiated such rights. ESPN+ won the rights to "PGA Tour Live," the popular subscription video service the tour began five years ago. It will have four live content channels, including the featured pairings that shows the entire round of star players.

The deal comes about 18 months after the PGA Tour signed a 12-year agreement with Discovery for direct-to-consumer content in international markets. With the domestic

deal, the tour now has partnerships with Comcast (NBC and Golf Channel), Viacom (CBS), Disney (ESPN+) and Discovery (GolfTV).

"As we went to the marketplace and looked at all the options and all the potential outcomes and thought about what it was we wanted for our fans and our athletes ... our desire was to produce more content, to evolve and innovate in all our broadcasts, to work more closely with partners, to build the tour and our sport and to reach a broader audience," PGA Tour Commissioner Jay Monahan said. "We're in a good position."

Terms were not disclosed. Sports Business Journal, which first reported in December that CBS and NBC had agreed to a new deal, put the rights fee at around \$700 million. That was before digital rights were awarded to ESPN+, which The Associated Press first reported in late January. Two people involved in player meetings estimated the combined rights at more than \$7 billion over nine years. They spoke on condition of anonymity because terms are private.

One change for the networks was alternating the FedEx Cup playoffs, three events with some of the strongest fields in golf as players chase a \$15 million bonus. Previously, CBS had the first event and NBC had the last two, concluding with the

Tour Championship. Starting in 2022, each network will get all three events in alternating years, with NBC getting five of those years and CBS the other four, not always in order.

CBS Sports has been a mainstay for the PGA Tour, broadcasting its first event in 1951 and televising the tour consecutively for 63 years (its Masters coverage dates to 1956). President Sean McManus described the rights increase as "significant," but that it was a "very fair deal for CBS and the PGA Tour."

"Our goal was to maintain our position in golf," McManus said. "From the time we finish March Madness to the time we come on the air with college football and the NFL, it's the most prestigious programming we have. We were committed to protect our position."

Comcast maintains its position by showing the most PGA Tour product, primarily through Golf Channel. NBC has the Florida swing and two World Golf Championships as part of the road to the Masters. Golf Channel also has the LPGA Tour in a separate rights deal, PGA Tour Champions and the developmental Korn Ferry Tour.

"We'll continue to do what we do best, to bring golf to the viewer, to continue to push the envelope, exploring new areas in partnership with the tour," said Pete Bevacqua, president

of NBC Sports Group.

Most intriguing in the new media contract is ESPN+, which used to televise PGA Tour events through 2006. ESPN has weekday coverage of the Masters and PGA Championship, and it had the British Open until NBC won those rights starting in 2016.

Now it's back on a regular basis with its powerful streaming service, which has 7.6 million subscribers.

"Most interesting to us is this is not just a commitment to be on ESPN+," Monahan said. "ESPN is committed to the tour, the tournaments and the athletes. Think about the tour being promoted on ESPN and their digital families, which is north of 50 million unique viewers from what we have today."

That's one element golf was missing. Golf fans typically watch Golf Channel. Sports fans watch ESPN. The hope is that through promotional efforts across ESPN's platforms, more eyeballs will make their way to golf.

"We feel confident our platforms reach a broad range of sports fans on a regular basis," said Russell Wolff, executive vice president and general manager of ESPN+. "We're quite excited about the expanded golf offering. ... It's a place golf fans are going to want to spend time."

The tour will continue to pro-

duce "PGA Tour Live."

As part of the contract, the PGA Tour takes over the television compound at tournaments instead of it being the responsibility of the host network for the week. The host network still calls the shots in producing live golf. The arrangement allows for the tour to better aggregate and distribute content for all its platforms.

The objective is more content. That starts this week at The Players Championship, where fans will have access to watch every player and every shot over four days, a first-of-its-kind production for golf.

"Right now, if we have 30,000 shots hit a week, we're only capturing 30% of those shots," said Rick Anderson, the tour's executive vice president of global media. "If you're capturing 100% you have so much more content. That's what people will feel. Linear television might be the same. But there's a ton more opportunity for the artists (network producers) to make great shows."

The PGA Tour negotiated on behalf of the LPGA Tour and secured a nine-year deal that keeps it as the anchor programming of Golf Channel, along with expanded exposure for at least seven tournaments each year on the two networks. Those events have not been determined. The LPGA, the most international of all tours, maintains control of all its media rights outside the U.S. and gets expanded digital content rights.

"The last 10 years haven't been the easiest," LPGA Commissioner Mike Whan said. "We've had to prove ourselves on the Golf Channel, and I'm glad they're willing to invest in a bigger way." AP

OPINION

Our Desk

Renato Marques



COVID-19 IS NOT LIKE TYPHOON HATO

Although epidemics are seen as natural disasters in the eyes of the law, the response from society could not be more conflicting.

The best example that I can remember goes back to when Typhoon Hato hit in August 2017. At the time, the population was united in facing the consequences of the severe storm and joined hands to help those that suffered the most.

For days, even weeks, I saw neighbors helping each other, offering or sharing resources, cleaning, and rebuilding in good spirits that I had never seen before.

However, the response has been the complete opposite during the Covid-19 outbreak. Instead of helping others, people have found refuge in greed, rushing to hoard every possible essential item (as well as some that are not essential).

This time, the neighborly friendliness and helping hands have given way to suspicion and fear.

Unlike Hato, Covid-19 is not a physical catastrophe but a mental one, a challenge to our capacity for reasoning instead of our rationalization skills.

The fact is, in both cases the catastrophes hit the population in very different ways, some in a very light manner and others more severely affected. Only the response is different.

Still, both events highlighted the government's inability to deal with the unexpected, and the flaws of a system that is absolutely dependent on the mainland.

For sure, the recent effects of Typhoon Hato and Mangkhut were less severe than Covid-19 as the government has learned some lessons – namely regarding the supply of essential goods and keeping people informed about the situation. But even if we do well in the short term, in the long run the consequences might be dramatic as the side-effects accumulate and reaching a tipping point.

With the closure of the region's only source of income and nine of the 10 pillars of all economic activity of the region – the casinos – the economy has nearly come to a complete halt in all sectors, just like a snowball rolling off a mountain slope knocking over everyone in its path.

Well, almost everyone. As always, the public sector has been shielded, and most civil servants have been able to stay home (as recommended by the government) without losing their jobs and benefits, and without ever having to question their wages (and people still wonder why a job in the government is the ultimate goal in Macau).

Unfortunately, this is the only sector that is risk-free. All the others are battling the severe economic consequences of the outbreak. Across the region, it is difficult to find a single household that does not have a story to tell about layoffs, (forced) unpaid leave, salary cuts or company bankruptcy.

Local companies have switched their rhetoric from “we cannot find enough manpower to develop our business,” to “we do not know what to do to keep our staff employed and paid while there is no business.”

I would say the government has learned how to crash-land the metaphorical plane in the middle of the desert, causing minor injuries during the emergency landing. Now, the issue is how long it will take them to learn what to do with the survivors, some injured, some not; all growing hungrier and thirstier in the days that have passed since the crash.

Maybe now that we don't have any more new cases of disease, we can also start looking after the healthy.

Tensions in Italy's overcrowded prisons erupted yesterday over new coronavirus containment measures, with riots in at least two dozen lock-ups and the deaths of six inmates who broke into an infirmary and overdosed on methadone.

Italy's national prisoner rights advocate urged wardens to take immediate measures to calm the situation and mitigate the new regulations, which include a suspension of family visits as a way to prevent transmission of the virus.

“The difficulty of accepting extreme measures is accentuated in

places where people don't have any freedom,” the advocate said in a statement, urging wardens to provide inmates with greater access to information and phone calls to family members.

The Italian government has issued sweeping measures to try to contain the virus, limiting travel into and out of Lombardy and parts of Veneto, canceling schools nationwide, barring gatherings of people and urging Italians to keep a meter (about three feet) apart. With more than 7,300 infected, Italy has more virus cases than any country outside Asia.

MASK-CLAD CHINESE WORKERS CAUTIOUSLY RETURN TO THE OFFICE

YANAN WANG, BEIJING

RIDING the subway for the first time after weeks of working remotely from home, Zhuang Xue felt a sense of calm, outfitted in a blue surgical mask and protective goggles as she headed for the office.

The 29-year-old purchasing agent joined other office workers finally allowed back to their cubicles yesterday in Beijing, where virtually no new Covid-19 cases have been reported in recent days.

Authorities extended the Lunar New Year holiday that began in late January, ordering most workers in the city to stay home to help curb the spread of the virus that has infected more than 110,000 people worldwide, most of them in China.

Zhuang, her goggles fogged up in the morning chill as she left the subway station, said she had been preparing for this moment for weeks, exercising at home and trying to eat as healthily as possible to strengthen her immune system. She was carrying disinfectant wipes and a personal water bottle.

“Everyone is pretty conscientious,” Zhuang said.

It's not exactly life as usual, though. Fearing a resurgence in cases, the government is taking a gradual approach.

Beijing's city government is requiring that the number of people in each office be limited to no more than 50% of usual staffing levels. Protective face masks are required, and office workers must be seated at least 1 meter apart. Workers are not supposed to face each other when eating.

Similar measures have been implemented to varying degrees across the country, as the number of new cases has dwindled.

China reported 40 new cases of the virus yesterday. Last month, the number of



new daily cases was in the thousands. A total of 58,600 people in mainland China have recovered from the disease, according to the National Health Commission, while more than 3,000 have died.

The recovery may come too late for some business owners struggling to stay afloat after venues were ordered to close

While Chinese cities experiment with slowly reviving activity, other countries are canceling public gatherings, encouraging remote work and — in the case of Italy — following China's lead with a lockdown on affected regions.

“It might be more serious now overseas,” said Yang Tianxiao, a finance worker who has been back at his office for a couple of weeks.

“I think in China it's OK,” Yang said. “Things are slowly returning to normal.”

Chinese factories that make the world's smartphones, toys and other consumer goods are gradually reopening but aren't expected to reach normal production until at least

April. Travel curbs are still in place in many areas, making it difficult for employees to get back to work.

That is disrupting imports of components and raw materials from China's Asian neighbors as well as shipments from China. On Saturday, the government reported that exports fell 17% and imports were off 4% from a year earlier in January and February.

The recovery may come too late for some business owners struggling to stay afloat after restaurants and entertainment venues were ordered to close and consumers opted to avoid the risk of catching the virus by staying home.

The street food stand run by Cheng Sheng and his brother at one intersection in Beijing's usually bustling central business district used to stay open from 5 a.m. to 9 p.m. every day, selling their savory fried pancakes stuffed with egg, lettuce and sausage and covered with a sweet-and-spicy sauce. Now they close at 10 a.m., he said, since the area empties out after morning commuters have passed through.

They need to make at least 1,000 yuan a day to break even, but struggle now to sell more than 500 yuan worth of food even on their busiest days. AP



Russia A special North Korean flight believed to be carrying dozens of diplomats and other foreigners arrived in Russia's Far East yesterday, as the North tightens a lockdown intended to fend off the coronavirus. North Korea has not publicly confirmed a single case of the COVID-19 illness, but its state media have reported that thousands of people have been quarantined as part of strict prevention measures. More on p7

France The Six Nations rugby match between France and Ireland was postponed in a move aimed at preventing the coronavirus from further spreading. The decision was taken after discussions with tournament organizers and the French rugby federation. The match was due to take place on Saturday at the Stade de France. A new date for the game has yet to be announced.



British supermarket chain Tesco has agreed to a \$10.6 billion deal to sell all its stores in Thailand and Malaysia to companies belonging to the CP Group, Thailand's biggest conglomerate. CP is controlled by the Chearavanont family, which Forbes magazine lists as Thailand's richest outside of the country's royal family.



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan will visit Brussels for talks with European Union officials amid a standoff between Ankara and Brussels over sharing of responsibility for refugees and migrants. Thousands of migrants have massed at Turkey's land border with EU-member Greece after Erdogan's government made good on a long-standing threat and announced that Turkey would no longer prevent migrants and refugees from crossing into EU countries.