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China The province at the center of China's virus outbreak began allowing factories and some other businesses to reopen yesterday in a show of confidence that Beijing is gaining control over the disease that devastated its economy. Chinese leaders are trying to revive business after the most sweeping anti-disease controls ever imposed took effect in late January, sending shock waves through the global economy. More on p6

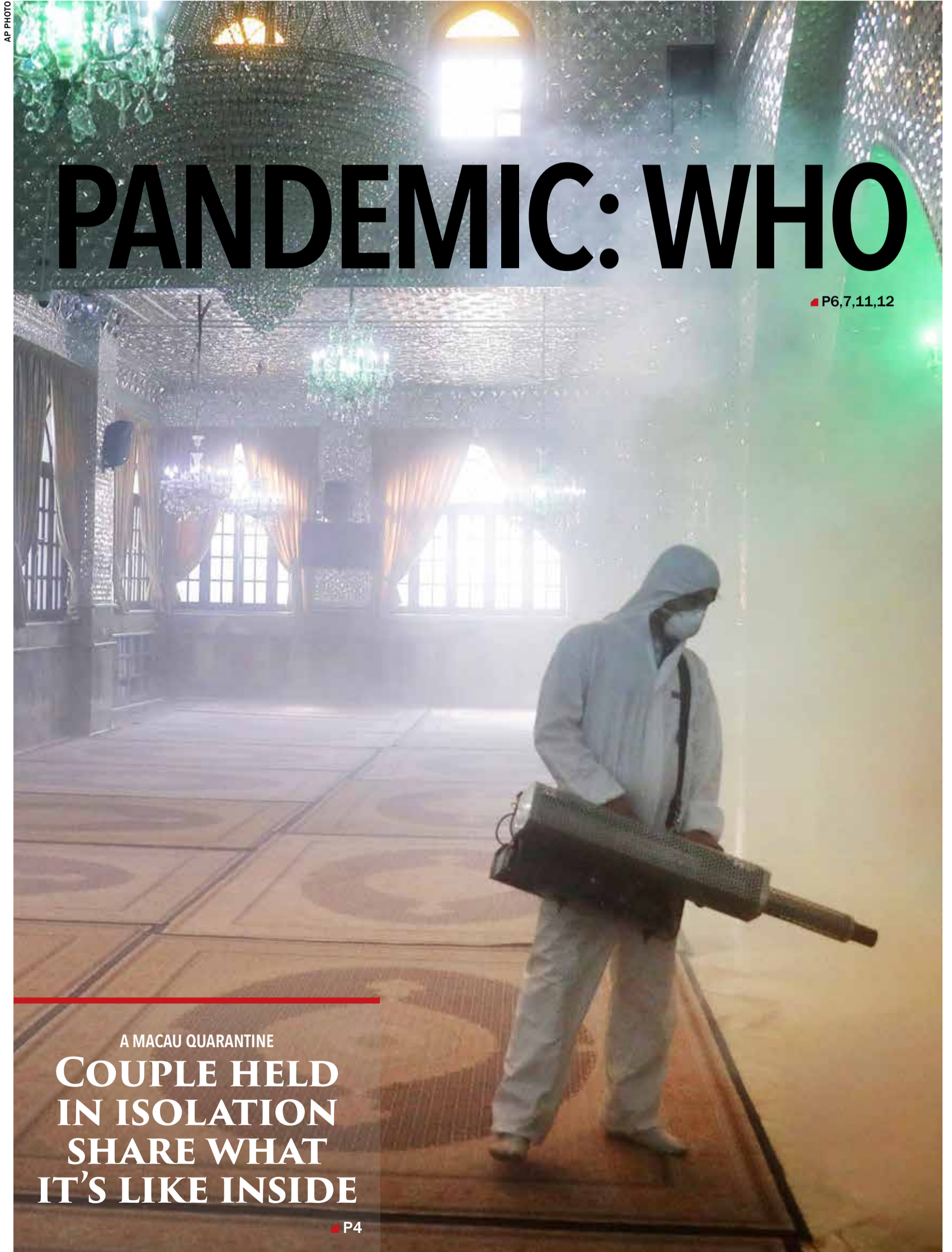


German Chancellor Angela Merkel is citing expert estimates that up to 60% to 70% of the population could be infected by the new coronavirus as she insists on the necessity of measures to slow its spread. She said the reason is because people do not yet have immunity to the virus and there are so far neither vaccines nor therapies to fight it.



The Vatican representative to East Timor said a visit by Pope Francis has been cancelled due to the coronavirus outbreak. Monsignor Marco Sprizzi of the Apostolic Nunciature told reporters in Dili that Francis had previously indicated his willingness to visit East Timor later this year. But Sprizzi cited concerns about large crowds, saying "because he did not want his people affected by the coronavirus, he canceled his visit."

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EDUCATION REGULATOR HAS PLAN TO TACKLE PARENTS' SCHOOL RESUMPTION CONCERNS

ANTHONY LAM

PARENTS have the liberty of not sending their children back to school during the early stage of school resumption if they are worried about the potential risk of coronavirus spread. Such absences are to be handled "with flexibility," the Education and Youth Affairs Bureau (DSEJ) recommends.

On Tuesday, the Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture, Elsie Ao Ieong U, and the Deputy Director of the DSEJ, Kong Chi Meng, announced separately at the Legislative Assembly and in the daily press conference at the Health Bureau (SSM) that non-tertiary education will be resumed no later than April 20.

However, some parents have expressed their concern that a hasty resumption of school might pose a risk to their children.

The DSEJ was questioned on the topic during yesterday's daily press conference. Wong Kin Mou, head of the Department for Educational Research and Resources, pointed out that the bureau has suggested that educators handle these cases with flexibility.

"If parents feel it is unsafe to send their children to school, as long as they offer reasonable explanation, they can notify the school of their reasoning. We have spoken with schools to encouraged them to allow flexibility," the department head said.

Before that, he spent nearly five minutes explaining the bureau's stance.

"When we researched a plan for school resumption, we considered many perspectives," the department head said.

"The outbreak started in January, and gradually improved in late February. Now we finally see 30-something days without a new case. Furthermore, our neighboring cities in the mainland have seen no new infections for more than 20 days already," he continued.

"Therefore, we are working in [consideration of] the developments in the situation and have prepared contingencies to determine the date for school resumption. [That's why] we announced yesterday that we aim to resume school no later than April 20."

The school resumption date



is preliminary and is subject to change should the situation deteriorate. It was announced so that parents can feel secure and less anxious, giving all parties involved sufficient time to plan ahead.

Wong also hinted that the bureau will make further announcements in the coming weeks. "We hope we can offer details on specific arrangements by the end of March, provided that the situation doesn't deteriorate," Wong noted. "There is still more than 40 days until our proposed school resumption date, but still we want to allow parents, teachers and schools the time to prepare early."

He was questioned twice on how students whose parents insist on keeping out of schools will not fall behind their peers attending classes.

The official admitted that during the discussions with schools, the bureau had touched on the topic. Certain "auxiliary measures," according to the department head, will be in place to help these students. However, he did not explain what these measures will be.

"Apart from schools handling these absences with flexibility, there will also be other auxiliary measures in the hope of supporting students whose parents will not allow them to return to school," Wong stated.

Previously, a parent had called in to a live radio station show, complaining that the school sus-

pension had run too long. The parent accused the DSEJ of violating the rights to education of local students by overweighting the in-

The school resumption date is preliminary, according to the education regulator, and is subject to change should the situation deteriorate

terests of those residing across the border.

Wong disclosed yesterday that there are 3,000 students, in ad-

dition to 300 teachers and staff, currently not in Macau. He hinted that these students should not be the main problem.

"Most of our border-crossing students reside in neighboring Zhuhai and Zhongshan. These two cities have seen more than 20 days clear of new infections already," the department head said. "Considering this factor, we believe that these students should be clean and safe to return to schools in Macau."

But then he elaborated that the bureau's guidelines do not recommend they travel to other places beside their homes and Macau.

"We have recommended that students currently not in Macau return to the city immediately,"

Wong reiterated. "If they live in Zhuhai or Zhongshan, they should return to their homes too. As a result, they can have sufficient time to conduct home quarantine before returning to school campuses."

On specific arrangements to avoid close contact on campus, the department head explained, "In response to the epidemic, we have updated our guidelines. For example, students should not be seated face to face during lunch, because that is considered risky."

Schools may also consider breaking up meal sessions to avoid students crowding in the canteen, Wong added.

The SSM also announced that it would update its list of highly infected areas. Further announcements will be made in due course.

FACEMASKS NEEDED UNTIL RISK ELIMINATED

THE general public will still need to wear facemasks for the foreseeable future, unless the global Covid-19 outbreak eases and it no longer poses a significant risk to Macau, Leong Iek Hou, coordinator at the Health Bureau's (SSM) Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), has said.

Although Macau has recorded zero new infections for more than a month – prompting one Singaporean official to dub Macau's response as "platinum standard" – the local health authority still considers it too early to relax preventative measures such as the requirement to wear masks.

Leong pointed out that she is unsure how long the current pandemic period will last. Therefore, she thinks it is crucial to keep masks on, "because this is one of the easiest ways to protect oneself."

Meanwhile, Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture, Elsie Ao Ieong U, has assured the public that the government will do its best to source facemasks for the younger population, as schools are set to resume by late April.

"First, some organizations have donated facemasks to education institutions," the secretary pointed out. "So that schools can have extra ones in case students accidentally damage their masks."

Ao Ieong said that the government should have sufficient children's facemasks to cover at least two more rounds of the mask sales scheme. "My colleagues have made a calculation and the number of masks should be enough for the next two to three rounds [of mask distribution]," the secretary disclosed. **AL**

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Times

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Four residents admitted to quarantine after travel abroad

ANTHONY LAM, LYNZY VALLES

TWO local residents were admitted to the Coloane Alto quarantine facility on Tuesday, Macau health authorities reported during yesterday's daily press conference. The residents are husband and wife and because the wife recently returned to Macau from Spain, the couple were admitted to quarantine as a precautionary measure (inside story on p4).

Meanwhile, two other Macau residents, a 64-year-old man and a 60-year-old female, were reported to have traveled in Egypt between February 27 to March 7, and have also been put into quarantine at the Coloane Alto facility.

A group of Hong Kong residents recently tested positive for the infection after their trip in the Middle Eastern country. The Macau locals flew on the same outbound and inbound flights as the tour group from Hong Kong. On the inbound flight, the Macau locals were seated three rows behind the



Hong Kong tourists.

The Macau Health Bureau has categorized them as close contact cases and placed them into quarantine at Coloane Alto.

The Macau residents have both developed mild fever and respiratory symptoms. The man has been tested twice with negative results from both tests. He tested positive, however, for other respiratory viruses. The woman has

been tested once and also obtained a negative result.

The four residents were placed under quarantine as part of precautionary measures adopted by the Macau government, as it works to safeguard its recent success in eradicating the Covid-19 coronavirus from Macau. Yesterday was the sixth day without any cases of the virus confirmed in Macau.

Other countries and territories have not been as successful at managing the Covid-19 outbreak. In many places, the number of cases continues to rise on a daily basis.

In response to this situation, the Tourism Crisis Management Office (GGCT) has issued a Level 2 Travel Alert for Germany, France, Spain and Japan, countries where the incidence of the novel coronavirus infection is worsening.

As of yesterday, Germany's total cases had risen to 1,565, meanwhile France has recorded 1,784 cases, nearly double its figures from earlier this week. Spain and Japan recorded 1,695 and 587 cases respectively.

The GGCT alerts Macau residents - both those who intend to travel to these countries and those who are already there - to reconsider their travel plans. Avoidance of non-essential travel to those destinations is recommended. In a statement, the GGCT said that it would keep monitoring the latest developments of the situation.

Since Tuesday, the Macau SAR government has required individuals who have travelled to Germany, France, Spain or Japan in the 14 days prior to their arrival in the city to undergo a 14-day quarantine before entry.

Macau residents will be quarantined at a domestic venue deemed appropriate by the health authorities, whereas non-Macau residents will be placed at a designated hotel at their own expense.

This is the third time that the GGCT has issued a Level 2 Travel Alert, having issued similar alerts to South Korea and Italy two weeks ago. The latest data shows that South Korea has seen a total of 7,755 Covid-19 cases and 61 deaths, while Italy has recorded 10,419 cases and 631 deaths.

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MAK SOI KUN WANTS AWARDS FOR THOSE ON CORONAVIRUS FRONTLINE

Lawmaker Mak Soi Kun wants the government to award workers who participated in Macau's work to contain the Covid-19 epidemic outbreak. In his interpellation to the local government, Mak made special mention of healthcare professionals, police officers, and civil servants who, among other frontline efforts to combat the virus, volunteered to travel to Hubei on a chartered flight to fetch Macau residents at the start of the month. In Mak's opinion, these individuals' work ethic and spirit deserve recognition. He proposes the local government set up a program to award these people in order to encourage others and to set a good example for the public.

PORTUGUESE PROSECUTOR TO RETIRE

A prosecutor of Portuguese ethnicity, António José de Sousa Ferreira Vidigal, will leave his post after serving at the Public Prosecution Office (MP) for 15 years. In a dispatch published in the Official Gazette, the government praised the work of the prosecutor and his contribution to the MP in the past decade and a half. Sousa Ferreira Vidigal's retirement comes at the completion of his work contract. After stepping down from his position, he will return to Portugal. Prosecutor General of the MP Ip Son Sang commended Sousa Ferreira Vidigal's service as a judicial officer of the MP for over one decade and praised him for having contributed to the prosecution authority with his rich experience and professional legal knowledge.

HALF OF PERSONAL DATA IRREGULARITIES INVOLVE COSMETICS VENDORS

Half of all personal data irregularities in 2019 were related to cosmetics promotions, according to the Office for Personal Data Protection. In 2019, the office opened investigation files for 155 cases, 78 of which were related to beauty sales. Throughout the year, the office issued 24 penalty tickets, six of which were related to cosmetic sales. Four people involved in these six cases were fined a total of 715,000 patacas. The total number of investigations filed increased 42% compared with 2018, mainly involving the improper processing of personal data and protection of data rights of the concerned parties. Fines totaled 929,000 patacas, almost 2.5 times that of 2018.



QUARANTINE

COUPLE HELD IN ISOLATION SHARE WHAT IT'S LIKE INSIDE

RENATO MARQUES

A couple that is currently in isolation at Coloane Alto's Centro Clínico de Saúde Pública and whose case was reported during yesterday's daily press conference of the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Center told the Times their experience and how the Macau residents had ended up in isolation during a visit to the hospital.

Under the agreement of anonymity, the man under quarantine told the Times about their circumstances.

"My wife is Spanish, and the kids are in Spain already for some

time. They left for Spain at the time that the first cases of Covid-19 started to surface in Macau," he said, about one and a half months ago.

"She was there for a week to visit them and after returning on Wednesday [March 4] she started feeling her throat was a bit sore, but she was not even sick," he explained. Later, on Sunday (March 8), he also began to feel unwell and developed a fever in the evening and throughout Monday as well as throat and body pain. "On Tuesday I was feeling better already but I thought it was a good idea to do the test [of the Covid-19] just to ensure it was nothing related to that."

Upon arrival at the hospital, the man was told that he and his wife were considered of "high-risk" because they had recently traveled in Spain and now had a fever. They were immediately isolated and tested for the coronavirus.

After that, they were taken into a room and told that they had to wait for the results of the test and, even if it was negative, they must have a second test 48 hours after the first one.

After the acknowledgment of the test results, which turned out to be negative, the couple was informed that they would be taken to the Coloane facility (Centro Clínico de Saúde Pública), but at

around 2 a.m. "they returned and informed that it was not possible to do so as the driver was already off duty."

After spending the night at Centro Hospital Conde de São Januário, yesterday morning they were finally taken to the Coloane facility where the couple says the living conditions are "great."

Besides that, they told the Times that they are basically living in prison. "They come and give us the food through a drawer like in a prison," the man explained, drawing the analogy.

According to the information provided by the Health Bureau, they will stay in the facility until the second test that they expect to be complete by around 5 p.m. this afternoon. "After that, we were told we need to wait another six to eight hours for the results of the second test, this means that we will stay here probably until the early hours of tomorrow until we can return home," he said.

The man also said he was never seen by a physician about his light fever and throat pain, nor was he given medication for it.

The couple also told the Times that some of the information disclosed about their case during yesterday's daily press conference by local health authorities was, in fact, inaccurate. Having accessed the press conference via the internet, the man disputed the government's report that they had a cough and other symptoms.

Questioned on whether they would still go to the hospital the next time such symptoms were detected, the couple laughed and said, "Probably not. We probably will stay home and wait for [the symptoms] to go away."

CRIME

Casino cage worker arrested after five years on the run

JULIE ZHU

A former casino cashier worker at a local property has been caught trying to enter Macau after five years on the run accused of stealing from her workplace.

The suspect is a 54-year-old woman from Macau. The case dates back to 2014. The suspect, surnamed Lai, was working inside a casino VIP room located in Cotai. At the time, Lai was working at the cashier desk, known as the cage.

Two of her colleagues suddenly asked for sick leave while they were still on duty. Taking advantage



of her colleagues' sudden absence, Lai took over HKD600,000 from the cage and immediately left her workplace.

Later, VIP room staff realized money was mis-

sing and reported the case to the police authority.

An investigation spearheaded by the Judiciary Police (PJ) found that Lai had left Macau on the same day she stole the

money.

Earlier this week, after five years away from Macau, Lai returned to the city. Upon her arrival at the border gate, police officers arrested her.

According to the PJ, Lai had been living in Guangdong for the past five years, during which time she spent all the money she stole from her employer.

Lai stole the money because she had been in debt due to her gambling in Macau. After spending all the money, Lai thought that after five years away the case would have already been forgotten and closed.

The PJ has charged Lai and handed her over to the prosecution authority.

Last year, a 30-year-old Macau man who was working for a casino cage stole 5.1 million patacas in cash from his workplace.

In 2016, a 31-year-old Macau man stole 13 million patacas in casino chips from the casino VIP room cage he was working for. He said he lost all the money gambling.

MACAU PHOTO AGENCY VIA UNSPLASH



Top court clears Health Bureau of medical malpractice

RENATO MARQUES

THE Court of Final Appeal (TUI) has cleared the Health Bureau (SSM) of an accusation of medical malpractice involving the case of a young child that died after a series of medical interventions performed at the Conde de São Januário Hospital Center (CHCSJ).

The top court cleared the Health Bureau, noting that it was not proven that the health services made any errors in procedure or operation that led to the death of

the child.

According to the court ruling number 120/2019, the case goes back to early January 2016 when the child, who was not yet 2 years old, was hospitalized to undergo surgery at the public hospital to repair a cleft palate.

After the surgery, several complications led to cardiac arrest. The patient was successfully resuscitated multiple times but ended up in a coma that lasted almost two months, until she died in early March 2016.

The parents, claiming that the

death had occurred due to medical malpractice, decided to sue the SSM, calling for compensation in the amount of MOP1.5 million.

In October 2018, after an initial analysis of the case, the Administrative Court issued a decision, rejecting the claims of the parents and cleared the SSM from responsibility in the case, after which the parents appealed to the Court of Second Instance (TSI).

In the second analysis, the TSI decided that it had been proven that the medical team at CHCSJ failed to comply with the duties of

care and diligence, noting particularly the errors made during the intubation of the patient (the respiratory tube had been incorrectly placed at the esophagus and not at the trachea), ruled that there was, in fact, improper conduct, and attributed responsibility to the medical team's actions which resulted in the death.

The Court of Second Instance then requested the cancellation of the initial decision of the Administrative Court, sentencing the SSM to pay compensation of the amount of MOP1 million to the parents.

The SSM appealed this decision at the TUI, which after analyzing the case concluded that the accusation presented insufficient facts, not explaining clearly which actions were being considered as malpractice, presenting only the fact that the surgery had registered several complications which resulted in the coma and eventual death.

On the other hand, the court noted that it was the SSM, the defendant, which had come forward to offer clarification during this case, especially regarding which medical procedures had been performed the flaws or problems that were registered.

The court remarked that although there are clear indications that there were medical procedures that were performed in a deficient manner, namely concerning the intubation error, such indications were presented by the defendant, and the complainant had not presented any evidence or facts to prove that such medical procedures were done in a negligent or unlawful manner, or that the death of the patient resulted from such malpractice.

Furthermore, the TUI explained that, even if the medical procedures were proven to have been the cause of the death, no facts have been presented as to how those flaws or deficiencies can be attributable to structural failures in the operation of a particular service of the CHCSJ, or to the operations of the public hospital as a whole.

In light of such facts, the top court dismissed the claims, ruling that it is not possible to attribute guilt to the SSM, thereby upholding the original decision of the Administrative Court.

MINIMUM WAGE LAW

Gov't turns down lawmakers' call to include handicapped workers

JULIE ZHU

THE local government has decided that a minimum wage law currently under discussion will not cover handicapped workers, contrary to lawmakers' request that it do so.

Yesterday, the Second Standing Committee of the Legislative Assembly (AL) met with government representatives to discuss two laws concerning the Hengqin port and a minimum wage.

Regarding the minimum wage law, the title of the bill has been changed from the "employee minimum wage law" to the "minimum wage law." Indeed, most changes

the government has agreed to relate to the wording of the articles; no changes were made to their definition or meaning.

Legal advisors at the AL said that the government did not agree with the lawmakers' opinions nor with legal advisors on the minimum wage law. Yesterday the lawmakers, called on the government to explain why it disagrees with their collective opinion.

For example, lawmakers had proposed to include handicapped workers in the bill, but the government did not agree to do so. Lawmakers are seeking an explanation for the non-inclusion.

The government claimed to have listened to the opinions of the lawmakers but has not yet changed the provisions in the law. The government said that it will establish a point-based working-ability evaluation for handicapped workers, but didn't say when it will set up the evaluation system.

Speaking on behalf of lawmakers, Chan Chak Mo, Chairman of the Second Committee of AL, said that the legislators had been left surprised that no explanation had been provided. Lawmakers still hope that the government will continue answering lawmakers' questions, responding to their proposals and atten-

ding the meetings.

The minimum wage bill amendment to the city's labor laws was generally passed at the AL last July amid lawmakers' concerns for employees with disabilities and for domestic helpers, who are both excluded from the provision.

Once the law takes effect, the minimum wage will be increased to MOP32 per hour, MOP256 per day, MOP1,536 per week, or MOP6,656 per month. It will be reviewed every two years, though there is no minimum interval date set for updating the amounts.

Regarding the Hengqin port bill, the Second Committee signed an opinion

RENATO MARQUES



report and submitted it to the government. According to Chan, the law is in urgent need of approval.

Chan said that the government only changed two expressions inside the law. It did not make substantial changes to the content or the articles.

In this bill, it was previously suggested that Macau would use the law to regulate the Chinese State Council's decisions on dif-

ferent stages of the development of the Hengqin port. Rephrasing the sentence prevents Macau from overruling the State Council. Both the government representatives and lawmakers agreed to the changes.

The government hopes that this bill can be passed within this month, while lawmakers are keen to visit the port and requested that such a visit be arranged for them.

QUANZHOU MAN RESCUED AFTER 69 HOURS IN RUBBLE OF FALLEN HOTEL



A man was pulled out alive after being trapped for 69 hours under the rubble of a collapsed virus quarantine hotel in southeastern China in which at least 27 other people died and two remain missing, Xinhua reported yesterday.

The official news agency said the man was sent to hospital immediately after being rescued late on Tuesday afternoon.

A 10-year-old boy and his mother had been rescued around midnight Monday after being trapped for 52 hours. The condition of all three survivors remains unknown.

The updated death toll from the national rescue service was current as of about 9 a.m. yesterday.

The hotel in the city of Quanzhou had been a quarantine site for people exposed to the new coronavirus, which has infected more than 80,000 people in China though about three-fourths of them have recovered. The virus causes mild symptoms such as fever and cough for most people but can cause serious illness such as pneumonia for others, especially older adults and people with existing health problems.

Most parts of China are quarantining people for 14 days if they are from high-risk areas or even traveled abroad or simply outside their home regions.

Rescuers at the scene of the collapse had protective gear and disinfectant to minimize exposure to the virus.

The building had reportedly been modified illegally before the collapse. **MDT/AGENCIES**



HUBEI

PROVINCE AT CENTER OF VIRUS LETS SOME COMPANIES REOPEN

JOE McDONALD, BEIJING

The province at the center of China's virus outbreak is allowing factories and some other businesses to reopen in a show of confidence that Beijing is gaining control over the disease that devastated its economy.

The country's communist leaders are moving to revive business after the most sweeping anti-disease controls ever imposed shut down manufacturing, travel and other industries in late January, sending shock waves through the global economy.

On Tuesday, President Xi Jinping visited Wuhan, the city where the coronavirus emerged in December, signaling China's crisis might be passing even as the United States and European governments tighten anti-disease controls.

Manufacturers, food processors and other businesses in Wuhan that are essential to the national economy or providing daily necessities can resume operation, the provincial government announced yesterday.

The changes are meant to "accelerate establishment of economic and social operation order, compatible with the epidemic

prevention," said a government statement. It said companies that reopen are required to make "epidemic control" plans, inspect employees for signs of disease and keep workplaces disinfected.

Controls have been eased in other areas of China that are considered at low disease risk, but travel and other curbs still are in place. Automakers and other industries aren't expected to return to normal production until at least mid-April due to disruption to supplies of components.

A foreign ministry spokesman expressed confidence the impact on China's economy is "temporary and limited" and rejected suggestions companies should move operations out of the country or find foreign suppliers of components and raw materials.

The long-term sound fundamentals and "factors and conditions that support the high-quality development of the Chinese economy have not changed," said the spokesman, Geng Shuang.

His comments suggest official unease over suggestions that industries may want to further diversify their manufacturing to minimize risks.

"With the recent progress China has made in domestic epi-

dem prevention and control, key industries including foreign-funded enterprises and leading enterprises have resumed work," Geng said. "It is neither realistic nor wise to artificially cut off the global supply chain, nor even tout 'transfer' and 'decoupling' of the supply chain."

Most access to Wuhan, a city of 11 million people that is the manufacturing hub of central China, was suspended on Jan. 23 in a dramatic effort to contain the outbreak. Residents were ordered to stay in their homes.

Restrictions spread to cities with a total of 60 million people. The Lunar New Year holiday was extended to keep factories and offices closed. Other cities followed suit, as the government canceled group tours and closed shopping malls, restaurants and cinemas.

That jolted global auto, smartphone and other brands that look to China as a manufacturing center and a major market.

In high-risk areas of Hubei province outside Wuhan, businesses that supply food and daily necessities, freight handling and some other services will be allowed to resume, the statement said. It did not say when restrictions on other industries might end.

Even in low-risk areas, businesses such as cinemas, hair salons and karaoke bars "will not resume until the epidemic situation is resolved," the statement said.

Wuhan and nearby areas of Hubei are home to factories for global automakers and suppliers of components for electronics, smartphones and other industries. The province accounts for about 6% of China's auto production.

Groupe Renault, one of a number of global auto brands that operate factories in Wuhan with Chinese partners, said it tentatively plans to restart production on March 20 but was awaiting a final government decision.

In mainland China, where the virus first exploded, more than 80,000 people have been diagnosed and nearly 60,000 have recovered.

For most people, the virus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia. Most people recover in about two weeks, though those with more severe illness may take up to six weeks to recover. **AP**



WHO declares that virus crisis is now a pandemic

NICOLE WINFIELD, COLLEEN BARRY & JOHN LEICESTER, ROME

EXPRESSING increasing alarm about mounting infections, the World Health Organization declared that the global coronavirus crisis is now a pandemic.

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, who heads the U.N. agency, said the WHO is “deeply concerned by the alarming levels of spread and severity” of the outbreak. He also expressed concern about “the alarming levels of inaction.”

“We have, therefore, made the assessment that COVID-19 can be characterized as a pandemic,” he said at a briefing in Geneva.

“All countries can still change the course of this pandemic. If countries detect, test, treat, isolate, trace and mobilize their people in the response,” Tedros said.

Italy weighed imposing even tighter restrictions on daily life and announced billions in financial relief yesterday to cushion economic shocks from the coronavirus, its latest efforts to adjust to the fast-evolving health crisis that silenced the usually bustling heart of the Catholic faith, St. Peter's Square.

In Iran, by far the hardest-hit country in the Middle East, the senior vice president and two other Cabinet ministers were reported to have been diagnosed with COVID-19, the illness caused by the virus. Iran reported another jump in deaths, by 62 to 354 — behind only China and Italy.

In Italy, Premier Giuseppe Conte said he would consider requests from Lombardy, Italy's hardest-hit region, to toughen the already extraordinary anti-virus lockdown

that was extended nationwide Tuesday. Lombardy wants to shut down nonessential businesses and reduce public transportation.

These additional measures would be on top of travel and social restrictions that imposed an eerie hush on cities and towns across the country from Tuesday. Police enforced rules that customers stay 1 meter (3 feet) apart and ensured that businesses closed by 6 p.m.

Milan shopkeeper Claudia Sabbatini said she favored stricter measures. Rather than run the risk of customers possibly infecting each other in her children's clothing store, she decided to close it.

“I cannot have people standing at a distance. Children must try on the clothes. We have to know if they will fit,” she said.

Conte said fighting Italy's more than 10,000 infections — the biggest outbreak outside of China — must not come at the expense of civil liberties. His caution suggested that Italy is unlikely to adopt the draconian quarantine measures that helped China push down new infections from thousands per day to a trickle now and allowed its manufacturers to restart production lines.

China's new worry is that the coronavirus could re-enter from abroad. Beijing's city government announced that all overseas visitors will be quarantined for 14 days. Of 24 new cases that China reported yesterday, five arrived from Italy and one from the United States. China has had over 81,000 virus infections and over

3,000 deaths.

For most, the coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. But for a few, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illnesses, including pneumonia. More than 121,000 people have been infected worldwide and over 4,300 have died.

But the vast majority of people recover. According to the World Health Organization, people with mild illness recover in about two weeks, while those with more severe illness may take three to six weeks to recover.

“Countries can still change the course of this pandemic. If they detect, test, treat, isolate, trace and mobilize their people in the response.”

TEDROS A. GHEBREYESUS
WHO

In the Mideast, the vast majority of the nearly 10,000 cases are in Iran or involve people who traveled there. Iran announced another increase in cases yesterday to 9,000. Iran's semiofficial Fars news agency said they include Vice President Eshaq Jahangiri, who had not been seen in photos of recent top-level meetings. Fars said Iran's ministers for cultural heritage, handcrafts and tourism, and for industry, mines and business were also infected.

Cases in Qatar jumped from 24 to 262. Kuwait announced a two-week shutdown of the country.

For the global economy, virus repercussions were profound, with increasing concerns of wealth- and job-wrecking recessions. U.S. stocks sank again in early trading yesterday, wiping out most of a huge rally from a day earlier as Wall Street continues to reel from worries about the coronavirus.

The Wall Street plunge followed a steep decline by markets across Asia, where governments there and elsewhere have announced billions of dollars in stimulus funds, including packages revealed in Japan on Tuesday and Australia yesterday.

Italy's government announced it was earmarking 25 billion euros (nearly \$28 billion) to boost anti-virus efforts and soften economic blows, including delaying tax and mortgage payments by families and businesses.

Britain's government announced a 30 billion-pound (\$39 billion) economic stimulus package and the Bank of England slashed its key interest rate by half a percentage point to 0.25%.

Normal life was increasingly being upended.

With police barring access to St. Peter's Square, emptying it of tens of thousands of people who usually come on Wednesdays for the weekly papal address, Pope Francis instead live-streamed prayers from the privacy of his Vatican library.

In France, the government's weekly Cabinet meeting was moved to a bigger room so President Emmanuel Macron and his ministers could sit at least 1 meter (more than 3 feet) apart.

Athletes who usually thrive on crowds grew increasingly wary of them. Spanish soccer club Getafe said it wouldn't travel to Italy to play Inter Milan, preferring to forfeit their Europa League match

rather than risk infections.

Olympic champion skier Mikaela Shiffrin said she would be limiting contact with fans and fellow competitors, tweeting that “this means no selfies, autographs, hugs, high fives, handshakes or kiss greetings.”

In the U.S., the caseload passed 1,000, and outbreaks on both sides of the country stirred alarm.

Former U.S. Vice President Joe Biden and Sen. Bernie Sanders, who are vying to take on President Donald Trump in the presidential election, abruptly canceled rallies Tuesday and left open the possibility that future campaign events could be impacted, too. Trump's campaign insisted it would proceed as normal, although Vice President Mike Pence conceded future rallies would be evaluated “on a day to day basis.”

In Europe, deaths soared among Italy's aging population. Authorities said Italy has suffered 631 deaths, with an increase of 168 fatalities recorded Tuesday. In Spain, the number of cases surged past the 2,000-mark yesterday. Belgium, Bulgaria, Sweden and Albania announced their first virus-related deaths.

“If you want to be blunt, Europe is the new China,” said Robert Redfield, the head of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Also sounding the alarm at a Congressional hearing in Washington was Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases.

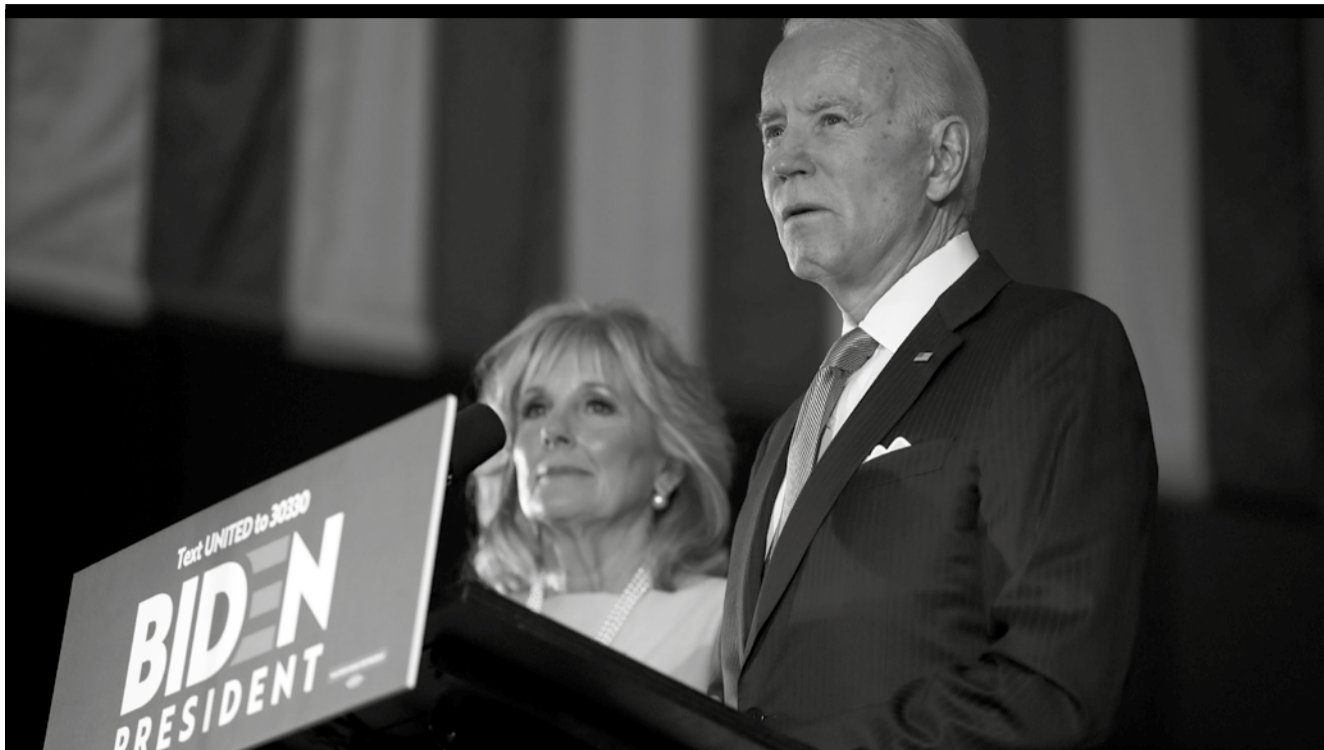
“Bottom line, it's going to get worse,” he said.

In Germany, Chancellor Angela Merkel said that if the virus is not halted by vaccines and cures, up to 70% of the country's 83 million people could ultimately become infected, citing estimates that epidemiologists have been putting forward for several weeks. Germany has some 1,300 confirmed infections. Merkel's comments fit a pattern of government officials using sobering warnings to try to get people to protect themselves, most notably by washing their hands and not gathering in large numbers.

Dozens of cases have been tied to a conference in Boston, and leaders in multiple states were announcing curbs on large events. Colleges emptied their classrooms as they moved to online instruction and uncertainty surrounded the upcoming opening of the major league baseball season and college basketball's championships. Even the famed buffets of Las Vegas were affected, with some of the Strip's biggest being closed as a precaution.

“It's terrifying,” said Silvana Gomez, a student at Harvard University, where undergraduates were told to leave campus by Sunday. “I'm definitely very scared right now about what the next couple days, the next couple weeks look like.” AP

AP PHOTO



Democratic presidential candidate former Vice President Joe Biden, accompanied by his wife Jill

WILL WEISSERT & LAURIE
KELLMAN, WASHINGTON

USA

JOE Biden decisively won Michigan's Democratic presidential primary, seizing a key battleground state that helped propel Bernie Sanders' insurgent candidacy four years ago. The former vice president's victory there, as well as in Missouri, Mississippi and Idaho, dealt a serious blow to Sanders and substantially widened Biden's path to the nomination.

Biden again showed strength Tuesday (yesterday, Macau time) with working-class voters and African Americans, who are vital to winning the Democratic nomination. Sanders' narrow hopes for good news rested on North Dakota and Washington state. Washington's primary was too early to call, and because all votes there are cast by mail or by dropping them off in a ballot box, many ballots were marked for candidates who have since dropped out of the race.

The six-state contest Tuesday marked the first time voters weighed in on the primary since it effectively narrowed to a two-person race between Sanders and Biden. And the first four states on Tuesday went to Biden, a dramatic reversal for a campaign that appeared on the brink of collapse just two weeks ago. Now it is Sanders, whose candidacy was ascendant so recently, who must contemplate a path forward.

Addressing supporters in Philadelphia, Biden noted that many had "declared that this candidacy was dead" only days ago, but "now we're very much alive." He also asked Sanders supporters to back him going forward.

Joe Biden has another big primary night, wins four more states

"We need you, we want you, and there's a place in our campaign for each of you. I want to thank Bernie Sanders and his supporters for their tireless energy and their passion," Biden said. "We share a common goal, and together we'll beat Donald Trump."

It marked a high point for the former vice president's staff. They sipped beer and broke into an impromptu dance party after his speech, which was held close to his Philadelphia headquarters.

Even as the contours of the race came into shape, however, new uncertainty was sparked by fears of the spreading coronavirus. Both candidates abruptly canceled rallies in Ohio that were scheduled for Tuesday night. That set the stage for Biden's remarks in Philadelphia, while Sanders flew home to Vermont and didn't plan to address the public.

Sanders' campaign also said all future events would be decided on a case-by-case basis given public health concerns, while Biden called off a scheduled upcoming Florida stop. Still, the former vice president said Tuesday night that he'd be announcing plans to combat the coronavirus later this week.

The Democratic National Committee also said that

Sunday's debate between Sanders and Biden would be conducted without an audience.

Among former White House hopefuls and leaders of powerful liberal groups, however, Biden's momentum is now undeniable.

Bradley Beychok, president and co-founder of American Bridge 21st Century, a liberal super PAC, said his group "will be ALL IN to elect @JoeBiden as our next president." The organization is spending millions of dollars trying to win over people who backed President Donald Trump in key states in 2016.

Guy Cecil, chairman of the flagship Democratic outside political organization Priorities USA, tweeted: "The math is now clear. Joe Biden is going to be the Democratic nominee for President and @prioritiesUSA is going to do everything we can to help him defeat Donald Trump in November."

There were other major warning signs for Sanders on Tuesday. He again struggled to win support from black voters. About 70% of Mississippi's Democratic primary voters were African American, and 86% of them supported Biden, according to an AP VoteCast survey of the electorate.

After Sanders upset Hillary Clinton in Michigan four years ago, his loss there Tuesday was particularly sobering. It undermined his argument that he could appeal to working-class voters and that he could expand the electorate with new young voters.

One of the few bright notes for Sanders was his strength among young voters, but even that has a downside because they didn't turn out enough to keep him competitive. Sanders won 72% of those under 30 in Missouri and 65% in Michigan, according to AP VoteCast. The senator was also about even with Biden among voters ages 30 to 44.

"There's no sugarcoating it. Tonight's a tough night," New York Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, one of Sanders' highest-profile supporters, said on Instagram. "Tonight's a tough night for the movement overall. Tonight's a tough night electorally."

Another top Sanders backer, Minnesota Rep. Ilhan Omar, tweeted: "Yes we are a family, united in restoring our democracy and committed to defeating Trump, but that doesn't mean we should stop fighting for the candidate that best represents our policy priorities in this Primary." AP

this day in history



1964 HOFFA FACES EIGHT YEARS BEHIND BARS

The president of the powerful American Teamsters union has been sentenced to eight years in jail on bribery charges.

James Hoffa has also been fined \$10,000 (£3,570) for trying to bribe a Federal Court jury which was hearing a conspiracy charge against him in 1962.

He was accused of attempting to secure an acquittal on a charge of "shaking down" a local haulage company owner for a million-dollar contribution to the union funds in return for 18 months of workforce co-operation.

This was Hoffa's first conviction - although he has now stood trial on four previous occasions. Past charges include trying to bribe a lawyer to spy on a Senate Committee and tapping the telephones of his subordinates in the Detroit office of his union.

Hoffa will remain free on bail pending an appeal.

If the sentence is upheld, it could mean the loss of his job as head of the 1.7 million-strong American Teamsters union - the nation's largest.

US District Judge Frank Wilson told Hoffa: "You stand here convicted of corrupting the administration of justice, of having struck at the foundation of this nation. Without fair, lawful administration of justice, there would be no civilisation in this country."

Hoffa replied: "I am not guilty. I believe this will be substantiated when the evidence is ultimately considered coolly and calmly."

Hoffa and three others were found guilty on 4 March of trying to fix a jury which could not agree on a verdict in his 1962 trial on a conspiracy charge.

The other three have been sentenced to three years each. They have not received fines. They include Ewing King, former president of the Nashville Teamsters local; Larry Campbell, a Detroit Teamsters official and Thomas Ewing Parks, a handyman from Nashville.

Grounds for appeal include allegations that US marshals plied the jury with alcohol. Staff of the hotel where several jurors were confined during the trial have supported these claims.

As head of the Teamsters union, Hoffa commands a salary of \$75,000, has an unlimited expense account and presides over an empire with pension and welfare funds worth \$1bn.

Hoffa and Attorney General Robert Kennedy have had a running feud for years.

Mr Kennedy later issued a statement congratulating the prosecutors who won the conviction.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

In July 1964, Hoffa was found guilty of misusing the union's pension funds. He appealed against this conviction as well.

Hoffa was re-elected president of the lorry drivers' union in July 1966 - despite two prison sentences totalling 13 years hanging over him.

He was also voted a big salary increase taking him to \$100,000 and making him the highest-paid trade unionist in the country.

He commanded immense loyalty from Teamsters members for whom he had won significant overtime and fringe benefits.

The convictions against Hoffa were upheld and he served four years in prison, during which time he lost his job as Teamsters president.

On his release, he began working to regain the leadership but vanished in mysterious circumstances in 1975. He has not been seen since.

Investigators believe he may have been the victim of a feud within the world of organised crime.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

It's a great day for romance, so if you've got a partner, things are going to be sweet! The two of you will have that special unspoken bond, when holding hands is all you need to say.



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

It's a great day for romance, so if you've got a partner, things are going to be sweet! The two of you will have that special unspoken bond, when holding hands is all you need to say.



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

If you want to put one of your innovative ideas into action right now, you have to be open to the possibility of asking for help from someone in a higher position than you.



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

Dig deep until they come up with the real reason. They have assumptions about you that need to be corrected, and you're the only person who can do it.



LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

This morning, dress in clothes that can let you go from an uptight business meeting to a wild party, because this will be an expansive day full of opportunity.



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

Feel free to refuse invitations from the people who you know are going to want to do things their way. By saying no, you'll be helping them due in to the fact that they should start being more open-minded.



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

Don't be too surprised if others in your work or school life start looking to you for answers today. You have a reputation for knowing what you're doing, and word of your competence is spreading like wildfire.



SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

If you feel like your boss or another authority figure has been trying too hard to control you lately, you're probably right, but that's what they're in your life for right now.



SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

The people you've left behind were distracting you more than you initially realized. All that is over now, and you can look forward to a greater feeling of self-worth and self-confidence.



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

Why be shy today when being loud and proud is so much more fun? The people you meet today aren't interested in good manners. They're interested in engaging ideas, and you have a lot of them!



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

Despite the fact that it can be fun to be part of the crowd, today you need to hold onto your independence! Veer off the road everyone else is on and carve your own trail through the weeds.



PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

You could be forced to rethink your health when a typical activity leaves you a bit more winded than expected. Frustration will lead you to make declarations of dramatic change.

The Born Loser by Chip Sanson



SUDOKU

EASY

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

EASY+

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

MEDIUM

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

HARD

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

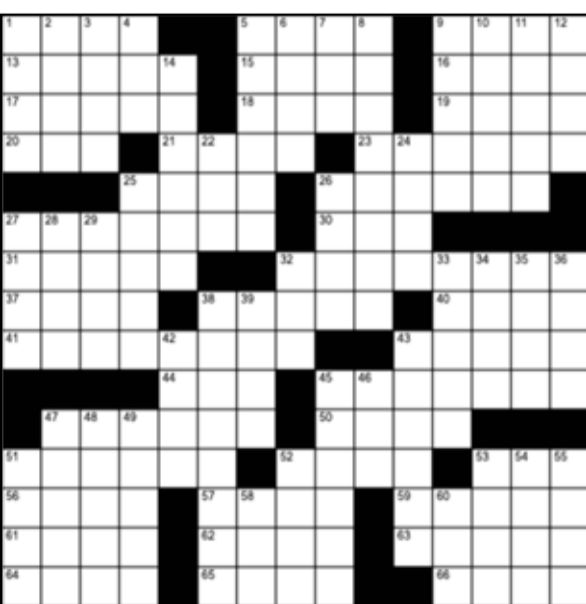
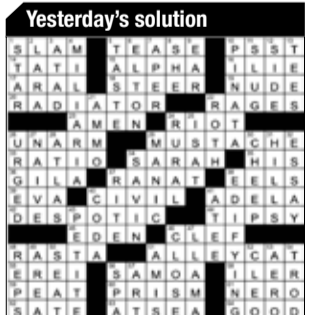
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	1	14	cloudy
Harbin	-7	-2	cloudy
Tianjin	5	12	cloudy
Urumqi	-5	4	clear
Xi'an	7	20	cloudy
Lhasa	1	16	cloudy
Chengdu	10	19	cloudy
Chongqing	12	18	cloudy
Kunming	9	23	clear
Nanjing	9	15	drizzle
Shanghai	10	14	drizzle
Wuhan	9	18	shower
Hangzhou	9	15	drizzle
Taipei	17	20	drizzle
Guangzhou	17	23	overcast
Hong Kong	19	23	cloudy
WORLD			
Moscow	3	7	drizzle
Frankfurt	4	12	drizzle
Paris	5	13	drizzle
London	4	13	drizzle
New York	1	9	drizzle

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS: 1- Smart; 5- Catalog; 9- Pack of cards; 13- ___ Ark; 15- Aware of; 16- Neural transmitter; 17- Breakfast food; 18- Grape plant; 19- Speed contest; 20- ___-Magnon man; 21- Skeptic's scoff; 23- Head rest; 25- Bluey-green color; 26- Party animal?; 27- Rumor; 30- ___ Lingus; 31- Not abridged; 32- Lineage; 37- Con; 38- Pithy; 40- Black-and-white cookie; 41- Sudden muffled thud; 43- Garish; 44- "Mentalist" Geller; 45- Underwater missile; 47- Leave high and dry; 50- Outback hoppers; 51- Relax; 52- Andy of the comics; 53- Capp and Capone; 56- Turkish titles; 57- Shi'ite leader; 59- Body of values; 61- Sharp to the taste; 62- Retain; 63- Stage play; 64- Flat sound; 65- Sea eagles; 66- Girder type;

DOWN: 1- "Power Lunch" network; 2- Rime; 3- Emilia's husband; 4- Friend of Fidel; 5- Beautiful; 6- Monogram ltr.; 7- RR stop; 8- Footwear; 9- "Our Gang" girl; 10- Glorify; 11- Winter drink; 12- Understood; 14- Most cunning; 22- Bleat of a sheep; 24- Memo opener; 25- Outdo; 26- Gives a bad review; 27- Corn covering; 28- Suffix with exist; 29- Rent-___; 32- Biblical beast boat; 33- Lathers; 34- Factual; 35- Comic Foxx; 36- It's used to walk the dog; 38- Highway; 39- Geraint's beloved; 42- Hawaiian outdoor feast; 43- Felt one's way in the dark; 45- Vagrants; 46- Alley-___; 47- Long stories; 48- Former Russian rulers; 49- Reposes; 51- Diner sign; 52- Normandy city; 53- Gregory Peck role of 1956; 54- Bean town?; 55- Surgery reminder; 58- Debussy's "La ___"; 60- Prefix with angle;



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

- Emergency calls 999
- Fire department 28 572 222
- PJ (Open line) 993
- PJ (Picket) 28 557 775
- PSP 28 573 333
- 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
- Taxi 28 939 939 / 2828 3283
- Water Supply - Report 2822 0088
- Telephone - Report 1000
- Electricity - Report 28 339 922
- Macau Daily Times 28 716 081



AD

<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 2 1,404 ft² \$8,380,000 (ref: 19096006)</p> <p>[Macau] Lakeview Tower 3 2 2 1,344 ft² \$11,000,000 (ref: 19126001)</p> <p>[Taipa] Nova City 3 2 2 1,515 ft² \$11,750,000 (ref: 19106001)</p> <p>[Macau] One Central 2 2 2 1,349 ft² \$14,839,000 (ref: 19096004)</p>	<p>FOR RENT</p> <p>[Taipa] One room apartment 1 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 1 935 ft² \$17,800/mth (ref: 19091005)</p> <p>[Cotai] One Grantai 3 3 3 2,122 ft² \$23,000/mth (ref: 19030001RT)</p>	<p>jml 卓雅物業 property SINCE 1994</p> <p>(853) 2835 2699 hello@jmlproperty.com www.jmlproperty.com</p> <p>f jmlmacau @ jmlproperty</p>
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MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

HSBC appoints new China CEO

HSBC Holdings Plc, which operates the largest franchise among global banks in China, named Mark Yunfeng Wang as president and chief executive officer of its China business as the U.K. lender reaffirms the commitment to the world's biggest banking market.

Wang is currently head of global banking and markets China and replaces David Liao, who will take up another senior position in the group, the bank said in an email.

The move is the latest major management reshuffle for HSBC's China operations after former Greater

China head Helen Wong departed in July amid the abrupt ouster of group CEO John Flint. Instead of replacing Wong, the four regional chiefs that worked under her - Liao for mainland China, Diana Cesar for Hong Kong, P.H. Lau for Macau, and Adam Chen for Taiwan - continued to collaborate.

Europe's biggest lender, created 155 years ago as a merchant bank in Hong Kong, vowed to deploy resources into building the Asian wealth and retail businesses as well as to keep investing in China, betting that a slump in the world's

second-largest economy will be fleeting.

In China, HSBC has ramped up its investment across financial sectors including commercial banking, credit cards, investment banking and wealth management. The bank now employs more than 8,000 staff in about 170 outlets across China, according to its website.

Wang joined HSBC in 2005, and has overseen global banking and markets for HSBC in mainland China since June 2016. Liao in 2015 succeeded Wong as CEO of HSBC China. **MDT/BLOOMBERG**

SINGAPORE TOURISM MAY BE WORSE HIT THAN EXPECTED BY VIRUS

SINGAPORE is bracing for a harder hit to tourism than initially expected from the coronavirus as the outbreak spreads to more than 100 countries, impacting global travel plans, Minister for Communications and Information S Iswaran said.

"Now it's really the fact that there's a global spread of this virus and therefore we will have to reevaluate certainly the numbers," Iswaran said in an interview yesterday.

Just last month, Singapore's tou-

rism chief forecast that tourist arrivals and spending could drop by 25% to 30% this year because of the outbreak, making it worse than the 2003 SARS pandemic.

The city-state is losing about 18,000 to 20,000 tourists a day and that could plummet further if the situation persists, Keith Tan, chief executive officer of Singapore Tourism Board, said in mid-February.

With the economic fallout expected to grow, Singapore is already mulling another round of

aid for businesses. Unveiling its 2020 budget last month, the government pledged SGD6.4 billion (\$4.6 billion) in dedicated support, including a SGD4 billion stabilization package.

A second support package may be introduced if necessary, local media has reported, citing Deputy Prime Minister Heng Swee Keat. Singapore isn't ruling out tapping its past reserves for that purpose, the Business Times reported, citing Heng. **MDT/BLOOMBERG**

CORPORATE BITS

Sands Cares Ambassadors distribute donation of anti-virus products



Sands Cares Ambassadors recently helped to deliver 4,800 bottles of hand sanitizer, 30,000 pairs of medical gloves and 2,000 shower caps donated by Sands China to local community organizations, as part of the company's novel coronavirus relief efforts.

On March 2, the volunteers helped drop off 10,000 pairs of medical gloves and 1,000 shower caps at the Ka Ho Elderly Care Centre, to address the material shortage of supplies the nurses require for taking daily care of nearly 180 elderly people at the center. And on March 3, they took 1,000 bottles of hand sanitizer each to the Rehabilitation Centre for the Blind, the Macau Deaf Association, and the Macau Autism Association. More

than 1,200 members and their families will benefit from the supplies donated during the two-day activity.

Then on March 11, the Sands Cares Ambassadors helped deliver 1,800 bottles of hand sanitizer, 20,000 pairs of medical gloves, and 1,000 shower caps for distribution among four local NGOs. Some of the supplies will go directly to the organizations' service users, most of whom are low-income or have special needs. The rest will address the NGOs' operational needs, as they prepare to reopen and resume their services.

Sands China's donation is part of the company's pledge to donate MOP5 million toward Macau's Covid-19 relief effort.

AD

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生活藝術雜誌 LIVING & ARTS MAGAZINE

MACAUCLOSER

ANA MOURA

ON SALE
JAN/FEV issue

FOOTBALL

Spanish club Getafe refuses to play game in Italy amid virus

TALES AZZONI, MADRID

THE president of Spanish soccer club Getafe said his team will not travel to Italy to play Inter Milan in the Europa League on Thursday because of the coronavirus outbreak.

Ángel Torres said he does not want to risk his players' health by traveling to an area struggling to contain the spread of the virus. He also said he was concerned the team would not be able to return to Spain because of travel restrictions.

"If we are eliminated because of that, so be it," Torres told Spanish radio station Onda Cero late Tuesday. "I'm not going to be the one taking any risks. I'm not going to go to a place where I don't want to go."

The spreading virus has affected sports around the world, forcing many professional soccer games in Europe to be played in empty stadiums and canceling dozens of other events from tennis to gymnastics. It's also put into question whether Tokyo will be able to host the Olympics in July and August.

Torres' comments came after a joint statement by the Italian and Spanish players' associations asking UEFA to suspend matches featuring clubs from those countries. They said the games should be played only when safety conditions are more appropriate.

Spanish club Sevilla is hosting Roma in the Europa League on Thursday. Italian club Atalanta played in an empty stadium in Valencia in a Champions League match on Tuesday, winning 4-3 and advancing to the competition's quarterfinals.



AP PHOTO

FIFPRO, the international soccer players' union, requested that teams and organizers respect the wishes of players who want to stop playing because of the virus.

"We support the players and their associations who have requested a suspension or postponement of football activities in their countries or regions," the union said in a statement.

On Tuesday, Spain announced that all sports events with a significant number of people must be played without fans, while Italy on Monday suspended all sporting events until April 3. Italy is the country with most coronavirus

cases in Europe, and Spain this week reported a sharp increase in cases.

Spanish authorities closed schools and halted direct flights to and from Italy, though charter flights apparently could be used by teams.

The Italian soccer federation ordered Italy's women's team to return home before the end of the Algarve Cup tournament in Portugal fearing it would not be able to get a flight back. Yesterday, the Portuguese soccer federation canceled the final between Italy and Germany.

Torres said he spoke to Inter

officials and was told the Italian club recognized it didn't make sense for Getafe to play the match in Italy.

The statement by the players' associations said the situation in Europe required "tough" and "inevitable" measures.

"Playing a match in Italy, where Getafe and Sevilla would need to go, will jeopardize the health of many players," the statement said. "The risks of playing matches in Italy and Spain are more than evident."

For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever

and cough. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia. The vast majority of people recover from the virus.

Greek club Olympiakos is expected to play its Europa League match against Wolverhampton Wanderers on Thursday despite owner Evangelos Marinakis saying he has tested positive for the disease. Olympiakos said tests on players, coaches, medical and technical staff were negative.

In Germany, officials in Frankfurt gave the go-ahead to have fans at Eintracht Frankfurt's Europa League game against Basel on Thursday, but not for the Bundesliga game on Sunday against Borussia Mönchengladbach.

Basel previously said it won't be able to host the return game against Eintracht amid concerns over the virus.

The French League Cup final between Paris Saint-Germain and Lyon, scheduled for April 4, was postponed yesterday. A new date has yet to be announced. On Tuesday, the French soccer league announced that all soccer matches in its top two divisions will be played without fans until April 15.

Elsewhere, the International Gymnastics Federation said it was postponing next week's World Cup event in Doha until June. The competition was part of the Olympic qualifying series for the apparatus events. The federation said it was also postponing a rhythmic gymnastics World Cup event and a trampoline World Cup event. Both were due to be held in Italy next month.

Turkish Youth and Sports Minister Muharrem Kasapoglu said the country is postponing sports competitions that were scheduled for March and April but soccer league games "will continue as planned" with fans in attendance.

Turkey is due to host the Champions League final in Istanbul on May 30.

In golf, the Indian Open that was scheduled to start on March 19 in Gurugram, New Delhi, was postponed. **AP**

AD

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OPINION

World Views

Mohamed A. El-Erian, Bloomberg

BANK OF ENGLAND AND UK SHOW HOW TO DEAL WITH VIRUS

Despite losing an empire and the sterling as the world's reserve currency, the U.K. managed for years to punch well above its weight on international economic and financial issues, often critically informing and influencing key decisions and policy pivots.

The policy announcements by the Bank of England and the U.K. Treasury yesterday suggest that this is still possible despite concerns about the unintended negative consequences of Brexit. In the process, they have set an important example for other central banks.

Let's start with the Bank of England.

In an emergency meeting responding to the cascading supply and demand destruction caused by the coronavirus — not to mention the fear, unusual uncertainty, economic paralysis and balance sheet pressures — the bank's Monetary Policy Committee followed counterparts in Canada and the U.S. by cutting its key rate by 50 basis points, to 0.25% from 0.75%, and joining in a "whatever it takes" narrative. But unlike other central banks, it didn't stop there. In addition to relaxing the countercyclical buffer requirement imposed by banks, it did two notable things that I argued earlier the European Central Bank should do.

First, the BOE deployed measures targeting small and midsize businesses to specifically relieve pressures that would undermine growth and expose to harm some of the vulnerable segments of the population. Second, it signaled it was coordinating its actions with the U.K. Treasury, or what I refer to as a "whole of government" response.

Later on, Chancellor of the Exchequer Rishi Sunak announced 30 billion pounds (\$34 billion) of fiscal stimulus. He also pledged to spend 600 billion pounds by 2025 on a huge infrastructure program.

Such actions are an important step both in designing a policy response to the particularly tricky challenges posed by the economic sudden stops caused by the coronavirus and in starting to pave a better path for enhanced productivity and growth over time. They are part of the necessary comprehensive response, and not just because of the speed with which economic interactions are coming to a halt. Policy problems are compounded by the lack of good data — the current set of data releases are immediately outdated — policy tools ill-suited for the task at hand, ballooning demands for bailouts, lagging global policy coordination and political complications in some countries.

The best way of getting to a desired destination is to take the first few steps. The Bank of England showed yesterday how this can be done.



Federal regulators waived a rule yesterday that was causing airlines to fly nearly empty planes just to avoid losing takeoff and landing rights at major airports.

The Federal Aviation Administration said it would suspend the rule through May 31 to help airlines that are canceling flights because of the new virus outbreak. The FAA assigns takeoff and landing rights, or "slots," at a few big, congested airports. Airlines

must use 80% of their highly coveted slots or risk forfeiting them.

That FAA requirement — and especially a similar rule in Europe — led airlines to operate flights using those slots even if there were very few passengers.

The FAA's decision affects flights at John F. Kennedy and LaGuardia airports in New York and Reagan Washington National Airport outside Washington, D.C.

MIDEAST

IRAN VP, TWO CABINET MEMBERS HAVE NEW VIRUS



A laboratory in Tehran

NASSER KARIMI, TEHRAN

IRAN'S senior vice president and two other Cabinet members have contracted the new coronavirus, a semiofficial news agency reported yesterday as the death toll in the Islamic Republic from the outbreak rose by 62 to 354.

The report by the Fars news agency, believed to be close to Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard, comes as President Hassan Rouhani took control of the country's much-criticized response to the virus and the COVID-19 illness it causes. Authorities announced that there were some 9,000 confirmed cases of the virus across Iran.

The Fars story also comes amid days of speculation about the health of Vice President Eshaq Jahangiri. Jahangiri has not been seen in pictures of recent top-level meetings, raising concerns about him.

Fars said the others sick are Ali Asghar Mounesan, minister of cultural heritage, handicrafts and tourism, and Reza Rahmani, minister of industry, mines and business.

Across the Mideast, the vast majority of the 9,700 people who have contracted the coronavirus and the COVID-19 illness it causes are in hard-hit Iran or had recently returned from there. The Islamic Republic has one of the world's worst death tolls outsi-

de of China, the epicenter of the outbreak. Outside of Iran, only Iraq, Egypt and Lebanon have recorded deaths from the virus in the Middle East.

Kuwait announced yesterday the oil-rich nation would close down all work and business for two weeks beginning Thursday. Flights would halt to the nation from Friday, the country said. It has over 70 confirmed cases of the new virus. Restaurants, cafes and health clubs also will be closed, the state-run KUNA news agency reported.

In the Gulf Arab island nation of Bahrain, authorities say their number of confirmed cases yesterday spiked by nearly 70% to 189 confirmed cases. The 77 new cases were all on a returning flight of Bahraini evacuees from Iran.

There are concerns that the number of infections across Iran is much higher than the confirmed cases reported by the government, which is struggling to contain or manage its spread. The rising casualty figures each day in Iran suggest the fight against the new coronavirus is far from over.

Among the dead are five of the Guard members and an unspecified number of the Guard's volunteer Basij force.

Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia has barred travel to and from 14 countries affected by the new virus. Early on,

as the virus spread in Asia, the kingdom stopped pilgrimages to Islam's holiest sites in Mecca and Medina, and cut travel links with China and later, Iran. It has also barred entry and exit for residents of Qatif, an eastern Saudi province where most of the country's 21 cases of the virus are confirmed after travel back to Iran.

Lebanon reported its second death saying a 53-year-old man died of the virus. The Health Ministry said 37% of the cases reported in Lebanon originated from four countries: Egypt, Iran, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. Also, the country's restaurant association said all restaurants around the country will be closed until further notice, though delivery services will continue.

In Israel, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced a \$2.8 billion rescue package to stabilize the economy as it grapples with the virus. The money will double a previously announced fund to help businesses hit by the crisis to \$2.4 billion. It also includes roughly \$280 million for the health sector.

Israel has diagnosed a total of 77 cases of the virus. It has imposed a number of restrictions, including two weeks of home quarantine for anyone arriving from overseas.

There are 26 confirmed cases in the Palestinian Territories. AP



Indonesia Achmad Yuriyanto, the government spokesman on efforts to contain the coronavirus, said yesterday a 53-year-old woman had diabetes and lung disease and had contracted the virus abroad. Yuriyanto did not reveal the patient's nationality and said her husband will be repatriated soon. The spokesman said two of Indonesia's 27 cases have recovered.



UK Health minister and Conservative MP Nadine Dorries (pictured) has been diagnosed with coronavirus. Dorries said she has been self-isolating at home. Labour MP Rachael Maskell said she has since been told to do the same as she had met Dorries. The Department of Health said Ms Dorries first showed symptoms last Thursday - the same day she attended an event hosted by the prime minister.



Malaysia's new Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin (pictured, left) said yesterday that all of his Cabinet members will have to declare their assets as part of his pledge to have a government with integrity. The move comes amid concerns over the inclusion in his administration of the scandal-plagued party of disgraced former Prime Minister Najib Razak, who is on trial for corruption charges.

Russia The parliament approved a sweeping constitutional reform in the third and final reading in a move that will allow President Vladimir Putin to stay in power for another 12 years after his current term ends in 2024. The Kremlin-controlled lower house, the State Duma, endorsed a set of amendments to the constitution and a provision resetting the term count for Putin after the revised constitution goes into force. It passed by a 383-0 vote with 43 abstentions.