

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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THE SIXTH ROUND OF FACE MASK DISTRIBUTION BEGINS TODAY WITH THE GOV'T URGING THE PUBLIC NOT TO RUSH TO PHARMACIES

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GOV'T E-VOUCHERS TO LAST THREE MONTHS, EXPIRING IN AUGUST

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THE MACAU GOV'T HAS REFUTED THE CLAIMS OF DIMINISHING FREEDOMS ALLEGED IN A US STATE DEPARTMENT REPORT

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AP PHOTO



China Authorities have taken several people into custody as part of their investigation into the collapse of a coronavirus quarantine facility that killed 29 people. Officials told reporters that preliminary investigations had shown “serious problems exist in the construction, renovation and examination and approval” of the Xinjia Hotel, the official Xinhua News Agency reported. The Ministry of Emergency Management announced that the State Council has formed a special investigative team to look into the collapse.

AP PHOTO



China Four Chinese medical experts and one Italian-language lecturer from Sichuan arrived in Italy yesterday, in a bid to assist the country to fight against the novel coronavirus outbreak. They were joined by a voluntary expert team organized by the Red Cross Society of China. In Italy, “we’ll get down to learning about the situation there and exchange anti-epidemic experience and cooperate with the Italian medics,” said Liang Zongan, director of the department of pulmonary and critical care medicine of the West China Hospital of Sichuan University.

AP PHOTO



USA President Donald Trump’s decision to impose a 30-day ban on most Europeans entering the United States is the latest calamity for airlines already reeling from falling bookings and cancelled reservations as people try to avoid contracting the coronavirus. The ban, to begin at midnight today, won’t apply to Americans trying to return home or to citizens of the United Kingdom. *More on p12*

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PANDEMIC

HEALTH BUREAU TURNS ATTENTION WORLDWIDE

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JOSE DRUMMOND



A SHANGHAI QUARANTINE

LOCAL ARTIST DRUMMOND SAYS ISOLATION IS ‘PSYCHOLOGICALLY DEMANDING’ BUT WORTH IT

P4

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE HOLDS STABLE UP UNTIL JANUARY

THE unemployment rate in Macau remained stable for the three months between November 2019 and January 2020, the government's Statistics and Census Service announced.

Overall unemployment rate during the period was 1.7%, which equates to 6,800 people. As far as the resident workforce is concerned, the unemployment rate stood at 2.3%. The rates did not fluctuate when compared with those covering the period from October to December 2019.

The total workforce in Macau during the concerned period was approximately 390,000 people, nearly 285,000 of which were Macau residents. People looking for their first job made up about 14% of the unem-

ployed population.

Analysts warn that the employment situation for the first quarter of 2020 will likely deteriorate because of the Covid-19 outbreak.

A report by local Chinese media Exmoo cited representatives from local chambers of commerce and trade unions discussing their difficulties during this period. Lawmaker Ella Lei, who is also deputy director-general of the Federation of Trade Unions, has said that some small and medium sized enterprises have started laying off employees.

Representatives from the business sector have said that despite the pressure, many employers are trying to avoid layoffs. **AL**



MACAU PHOTO AGENCY VIA UNSPLASH

GOV'T E-VOUCHERS TO LAST THREE MONTHS, EXPIRING IN AUGUST

JULIE ZHU

THE government-issued e-voucher worth 3,000 patacas will be made redeemable during the three-month period from May 1 to July 31, while any outstanding funds by August will be returned to the public coffers, the government's top advisory body, the Executive Council (ExCo), disclosed yesterday.

The ExCo has completed the discussion of two administrative regulations, one related to the consumption subsidy plan and the other related to the financial assistance program for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

According to the consumption subsidy plan, every Macau resident is entitled to receive 3,000 patacas in total, to be distributed via the e-voucher system managed by smartcard operator Macau Pass.

Every eligible recipient must register in order to receive the money. The registration period is from March 18 until April 8 and recipients can collect the money from April 14 until April 30.

Local residents, both permanent and non-permanent, can only spend the money between May 1 and July 31. After July 31, unused money will return to the government.

The local government has decided not to distribute cash or printed coupons to the beneficiaries. Instead, as indicated by Secretary for Administration and Justice André Cheong Weng Chon, the money will come in

the form of a new Macau Pass card, which the government has dubbed the "e-method."

The money can be used for goods and services, although some services are excluded from the plan. For instance, the money cannot be used to pay for water, electricity, gas, and fuel bills, nor telecommunication and television broadcast services. The money also cannot be used for cross-border transportation services, outbound tourism services and medical services. Additionally, the coupons cannot be used at gambling places, pawnbrokers, banks, insurance companies and other financial organizations, regardless of whether it is for buying goods or services from these places. The money also cannot be cashed out.

Any party who "illegally" uses the coupon must return the money to the government and will be held accountable for both civil and criminal responsibilities.

The SAR government's total budget for this consumption coupon plan amounts to 2.19 billion Macau patacas.

Macau Pass company will not charge the government or the residents for the new card. After July 31, the special card itself will not expire, meaning that residents will own the card and may continue using the Macau Pass card.

The detailed procedure for registration, collection and use of the future Macau Pass card remains unexplained. During yesterday's press conference, the Secretary said that the Secreta-

riat for Economy and Finance will hold a special briefing to explain the relevant details.

Cheong also suggested that shops which have not yet installed a Macau Pass reader should contact Macau Pass company to install these machines.

Eligible recipients can allow other people to collect the money on their behalf and anybody can use the money once it is claimed. As Cheong explained, the government's main consideration in issuing the 3,000 patacas is to help boost the city's consumption levels.

Regarding the other administrative regulation, the local government has proposed benefits for SME bank loans.

According to the proposal, qualified SMEs can request a loan from the bank and then apply for a subsidy from the Industrial and Commercial Development Fund. The maximum value of eligible bank loans is two million Macau patacas, and the maximum subsidy period is three years.

If an SME violates the agreement of the subsidy, for example by using the loan for purposes other than business operation or keeping the loan unused for three months, the Fund will cancel the subsidy and the benefited SME must return the subsidy within three months of being notified.

This regulation will be published in the government's Official Gazette on March 16, and SMEs will be given six months from this date to apply for the subsidy.

FUTURE BRIGHT RECORDS LOSSES OF HKD376 MILLION LAST YEAR

FUTURE Bright Holdings Limited is on alert for a considerable continued loss of revenue in the first quarter of 2020 due to the outbreak of the Covid-19 infection, after it recorded HKD376.8 million in unaudited losses last year.

In a filing to the Hong Kong Stock Exchange, the food and beverage group owned by lawmaker Chan Chak Mo said that the trade and technology disputes between China and the U.S. and the civil unrest in Hong Kong had "made the operating environment of the group tough and competitive."

The majority of the losses was derived from the disposal of its development property project, namely the "Hengqin Land" in

Hengqin Island.

Meanwhile, the group's business during the Chinese New Year holiday in January 2020 was adversely affected due to the coronavirus outbreak.

"The group has had to temporarily close down most of its restaurants and shops in Macau, Hong Kong and mainland China for about two weeks in February 2020 which would substantially reduce its revenue contribution in the first quarter of this year," the group said.

The management expects that the considerable loss of revenue from the above-mentioned temporary shutdown will lead to a considerable loss in the first quarter of 2020. **LV**

APPROVED COMMERCIAL PROPERTY LOANS DROP 35%

THE monthly average value of new commercial real estate loans approved between November 2019 and January 2020 amounted to 2.4 billion patacas, down by 35.6% in comparison with the previous period between October and December 2019.

Such loans slightly increased in January by 0.2% month-to-month to 2.45 billion patacas, according to data released by the Monetary Authority of Macao.

Within this total, new commercial real estate loans granted to residents, which made up 98.4% of the total, decreased by 1.2% to 2.41 billion patacas, whereas those to non-residents increased to 39.4 million patacas.

As at end-January 2020, the outstanding value of commercial real estate loans decreased by 0.1% month-to-month or 9% from a year earlier to 178.4 billion patacas. **LV**

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AP PHOTO



Pedestrians wearing protective masks cross a street in Kuala Lumpur, capital of Malaysia, where coronavirus infections had swelled to nearly 150 as of Thursday night

After success at home, health authority shifts attention worldwide

RENATO MARQUES

LOCAL health authorities are redirecting their attention regarding the outbreak of Covid-19 away from the mainland and toward other countries and regions, the director of the Health Bureau (SSM) Lei Chin Ion said yesterday during the daily press conference of the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Center.

It has been 37 days since Macau reported a new infection of the coronavirus, reminded Lei. The situation across the border

to the mainland has also improved significantly. Given this change, it is time to focus attention on other countries and regions of the world where the spread of the disease is growing, noting particularly the cases of jurisdictions relatively close to Macau, such as Malaysia, Singapore, and Hong Kong.

"It's been 37 days that we have not had any case confirmed and [...] there is a slowdown in mainland China," Lei said. "In our works on containment [of the virus] the MSAR is paying attention to the developments of the disease world-

dwide and particularly to the cases in the neighboring countries [...] where the situation has been worsening and from where we do not rule out of the possibility of having some imported cases in Macau."

Lei remarked that both the mainland and Hong Kong have already reported several imported cases from people returning from European countries.

The SSM director also advised citizens to avoid all unnecessary trips, especially to the countries where the outbreak is now very active, but also to other countries where the lack

SECOND WUHAN FLIGHT BEING EVALUATED

THE representative of the Macao Government Tourism Office at the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Center, Inês Chan, said that a second flight to evacuate the remaining Macau residents currently in Hubei province is being evaluated. Questioned on the topic, the official noted that although there have not been any reported cases of infections among the first group of residents that traveled

from the Hubei capital to Macau last week, the 14-day quarantine has not yet finished. Moreover, there are many preparatory works required to ensure the success of a possible second flight, and these need to be studied first. While reaffirming the intentions of the government to organize a second mission, Chan said that for the time being, there is no date set for such an operation.

of resources to test suspicious cases of the disease might be concealing a lot of cases that have not been reported.

Lei added that Macau has applied restrictions to people arriving from Norway, who must now pass through a medical examination before entering Macau. This adds Norway to a list of countries with restrictions on entry to Macau that already includes South Korea, Italy, Iran, Germany, France, Spain, and Japan.

When asked by the media what criteria had led to the inclusion of these places, and not other countries or territories such as Hong Kong, Singapore or even the U.S., on the list of those against whom restrictions are enforced, Lei explained that three criteria primarily determine the outcome when considering a country or region as of high incidence. These are "the number of

infection cases, the rate of the infections and the measures that are undertaken to prevent and control [the disease]. If the measures are poor or unsafe in a certain place, even if their number of infected is low, we still do not rule out the possibility of considering it as an area of high incidence," Lei said. The Health Bureau chief refuted the idea that other factors such as foreign policy or economy-related factors could influence the decision.

Lei assured the public that the epidemic situation is being evaluated on a daily basis and that the measures being applied are also being reviewed daily, noting that at this moment the health authorities are paying special attention to the evolution of the Covid-19 outbreak in Denmark as a potential place to be classified under the label of an area of high incidence.

SIXTH ROUND OF MASK DISTRIBUTION STARTS TODAY

THE sixth round of the sale of masks organized by the government begins today and will be conducted in exactly the same manner as the previous sale, according to the information disclosed yesterday by the Coordinator of the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordinator Center, Leong Iek Hou.

The face masks will be available at the 84 accredited pharmacies that have participated in the previous rounds.

Batches of 10 adult size masks or five adult size masks and five children-size masks will be available to all residents and non-resident workers.

As on previous occasions, Leong remarked on the non-necessity of rushing to acquire the products, requesting the collaboration of all citizens for a smooth and ordered process.

Asked about the existing stock of children-sized masks, the director of the Health Bureau (SSM) Lei Chin Ion revealed that the government had acquired

a total of 1 million masks, roughly 100,000 of which were sold in the previous distribution round.

Lei suggested that parents should "reduce as much as possible [...] outings from the house now, so they can stock up masks [for children] for when the classes resume." Yet the official also added that the government will ensure that "all children will have a mask per day when the schools restart."

The director also revealed that the original intention of the Center was only to authorize the reopening of the schools after the epidemic was considered finished, "but since it is at the moment impossible to predict when will that happen, we had to decide [on a date] for the classes to restart at a moment in time that we consider it safe to do so."

Lei added that although the government has identified April 20 as the date for school resumption, it has not yet ruled out the possibility of such a date changing if the epidemic situation requires it. **RM**



LOCAL RESIDENT: SHANGHAI'S LOCKDOWN PSYCHOLOGICALLY DEMANDING BUT WORTH IT

LYNZY VALLES

A number of Chinese cities have strictly enforced measures to combat the spread of the novel coronavirus, with many cities experiencing whole or partial shutdowns as ordered by their municipalities. Governments have urged the public to avoid gathering and to quarantine themselves at home, encouraging citizens to limit outdoor activities.

Similar to Macau, Shanghai has also strengthened its measures to contain the novel coronavirus.

Macau resident José Drummond, who is currently affected by the lockdown in Shanghai, remarked that the measure has been effective in reducing the spread of the virus.

The use of masks in public areas in Shanghai has been compulsory for weeks.

"I've actually been quarantined for more than 46 days. I'm only leaving home to go for a little walk with my dogs inside my compound. Yesterday, I left [only] for the second time since the lockdown," Drummond, who is currently based in Shanghai, told the Times.

The Macau resident explained that residential lockdowns are of varying strictness — from checkpoints at building entrances to hard limits on going outdoors.

Drummond further expressed that they can only leave the compound every three days to pick up necessary supplies they have ordered online or wait for the voluntary commission to bring them.

"We still need to arrive before midnight and can't leave until 6 a.m. There are still disinfection trucks spraying the streets around 5 a.m. Temperature checks are made everywhere," Drummond added.

Similar to the SAR, Shanghai authorities oblige residents to declare their health status prior to entering governmental departments and office buildings, as well as residential estates.

"The isolation and quarantine... is a hardship. We've been enduring but the results seem, for now, to be satisfactory. Socially and psychologically demanding — no doubt about it — but at the same time I believe everyone feels safer this way," he said.

Meanwhile, amid China's drastic efforts to contain the vi-

rus, racism and misinformation circulating around the internet has been growing as global anxiety continues to increase.

Chinese people were reported to have been randomly attacked on public streets in the West, with some aggressors calling on these people to go back to their hometown. However, it does not stop there, as photos featuring people of Chinese ethnicity with jokes about the coronavirus have been circulating since the outbreak began in late December.

Drummond — who has experienced first-hand how it feels to be in lockdown — has expressed his disappointment about how photos are used to make fun and mock the panic felt by others.

"In my perspective, this is one sign of prejudice — a growing western tendency of generalized

racism towards Asian people. There's nothing funny in these pictures. There's only drama and trauma," Drummond further commented.

"There's too much misinformation and conspiracy theories on the internet. [...] To downplay the situation and think that for some reason we're invincible is dangerous," he added.

Furthermore, with the global outbreak in the West continuing to rise, Drummond believes that there is a slow response from western countries to adopt measures akin to those already in place in China.

For him, people in the West seem to forget that the virus spreads quickly and that health systems in other countries may not be prepared to handle the scale of the situation to come.

Visitors from Norway to face medical exams upon SAR entry

THE Macau SAR is requiring individuals who have travelled to Norway within the 14 days prior to their entry into Macau to submit to medical examination.

In view of the serious outbreak of Covid-19 in Norway, visitors from the country are to be subjected to the examination upon arrival beginning yesterday at 12 p.m.

Currently, Norway has registered a total of 629 Covid-19 cases, of which only one person has totally recovered.

The Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Centre reiterates that individuals contravening the above requirements may be subject to mandatory isolation in addition to corresponding criminal liabilities

under the law.

Earlier this week, the government also introduced requirements for individuals who have traveled to Germany, France, Spain or Japan in the 14 days prior to their arrival in the city to submit to medical examination.

Later, the government increased this to an obligation for individuals from these

four countries to undergo a 14-day quarantine period before entry.

The new quarantine measures are due to the rising number of Covid-19 cases in the four countries. Since late February, individuals attempting to enter Macau who have visited South Korea, Italy or Iran in the preceding two weeks have been required to un-

dergo 14 days of medical observation at a designated venue at the discretion of local health authorities.

These are the regions that the government considers high-risk contagion areas for Covid-19.

Visitors and residents who have traveled to the aforementioned countries must undergo medical observation at a designated

venue for 14 days, without ruling out other epidemic prevention measures deemed necessary by the government.

So far, the SAR government has issued a Level 2 Travel Alert to countries such as South Korea, Italy, Germany, France, Spain and Japan where the pandemic outbreak continues to spread. LV

DANIEL BEITLER

THE government of the Macau Special Administrative Region is interfering with press freedoms and the right to peaceful assembly, according to the latest human rights report by the U.S. Department of State.

The report, released annually by the U.S government department, said that while most basic freedoms were respected in Macau last year, at least one major incident had infringed on the right to peaceful assembly.

It was referring to a small demonstration planned for August that police authorities banned after deeming the political motifs used by organizers to be illegal.

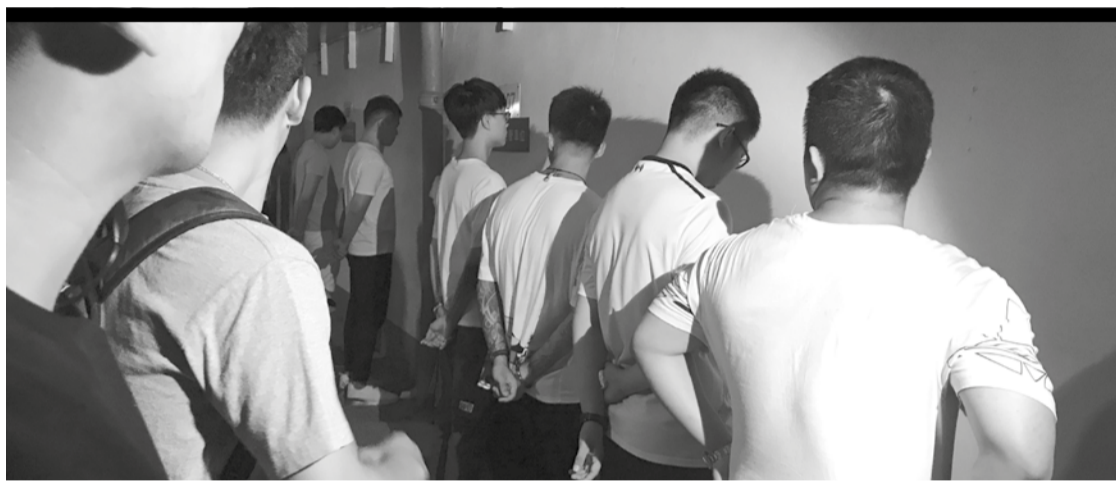
Macau's top court later ruled in favor of the police ban, in a controversial decision based on the fact that neither it, nor the police authorities, could find evidence of police brutality in the neighboring region. Many were alarmed by the judicial decision, with one high-profile activist saying that Macau's Court of Final Appeal had set a precedent by "making official proclamations a prerequisite for the people's exercise of freedom of assembly."

Macau's law requires prior notification, but not approval, of demonstrations.

The U.S. State Department report stressed that although "police may redirect demonstration marching routes, [...] organizers have the right to challenge such decisions in court."

"Critics alleged that authorities were making a concerted effort to use both intimidation and criminal proceedings against participants in peaceful

State Dept criticizes meddling with right to peaceful assembly



A scene from a planned protest in August banned by the police

demonstrations to discourage their involvement," the report added.

The State Department noted that Macau law prohibits the arbitrary arrest and detention of individuals and provides the right for any person to challenge the lawfulness of his or her arrest or detention in court. It said that the local government generally observed these requirements in 2019.

With regards to freedom of expression and press freedoms, the State Department said the Macau government had "occasionally sought to restrict this right" in 2019.

For example, it said that the government had taken steps to "restrict unfavorable news cove-

rage" of legislation approved in January that criminalized some actions that disrespect the Chinese national anthem. It also said that some media outlets practiced self-censorship, "in part because the government subsidized [them]."

Self-censorship was also to be found in the field of academia. Citing local media reports, it highlighted the instructions of the Education and Youth Affairs Bureau that teachers should not discuss their own political viewpoint regarding protests in Hong Kong inside the classroom. The Bureau's director, Lou Pak Sang, later told mainland media that the education authority required that educators guide students to making

a rational analysis of the Hong Kong situation, instead of using emotions to make judgments or decisions.

In a brief statement yesterday, the Macau government responded to the assessment by expressing its strong opposition to "claims that are baseless, a product of political bias and arrogant in tone."

It said that the rights and freedoms of Macau people are protected under both the Chinese constitution and the Basic Law of the Macau Special Administrative Region. Accordingly, "foreign countries have no right to interfere in China's domestic affairs and should not interfere in any form in the internal affairs of Macau."

TOP COURT AGREES TO BAR HIGHEST OFFICIALS AS WITNESSES

The Court of Final Appeal has supported the government's decision to exempt high-ranking government officials from being witnesses at court trials. In 2015, during a lawsuit case, a plaintiff listed former Chief Executive Edmund Ho and a former Secretary for Economy and Finance as witnesses. However, the then-Chief Executive instructed the court to forbid these two people from acting as witnesses in court on the grounds that the relevant case was confidential and should not be made available to the public. The plaintiff did not agree with the Chief Executive's decision and appealed to the TUI. However, Macau's top court said that the Chief Executive's decision was meant to protect public interests and that it was a political rather than administrative decision, on account of which the plaintiff could not appeal.

IMPRISONED POLICE OFFICERS DISMISSED FROM JOB

The Secretary for Security has dismissed two police officers who were convicted of crimes. The two are former officers of the Public Security Police Force (PSP). Back in 2017, the Judiciary Police (PJ) arrested the two former PSP officers, one Macau local resident and four non-local suspects. Later, the two officers were found guilty of abusing power and assisting illegal immigration. In August 2018, the PSP suspended both officers from their positions. In 2018, they were first sentenced to 21 and 19 years in prison. Subsequently, these sentences were revised to 19 and 15 years in prison.

HENGQIN TO BUILD MACAU RESEARCH ACADEMY

The Guangdong government has officially given Zhuhai approval to build an international research academy for Macau. Guangdong's provincial natural resources department agreed to allow Zhuhai to build the academy on a piece of land on Hengqin island, which will carry out research on topics related to the Greater Bay Area. Of particular focus will be the relationship between industry, academia and the research sector. The project will occupy a plot of construction land spanning 31.2 hectares.

IPIM COMPLETES FIRST AMENDMENT OF IMMIGRATION CRITERIA

The local government has completed its update of criteria for immigration applications. The Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM) responded to lawmaker Ella Lei's interpellation by saying that IPIM had already completed a preliminary draft of new criteria for immigration requests on the grounds of investment or skilled professions. IPIM has asked for the opinions of the Economic Development Committee and the Talents Development Committee, among other organizations. The bureau is currently working on details regarding operational steps for immigration application review procedures. It will announce relevant updates soon.

GAMING

Wynn to draw down part of \$850 million line amid virus pain

GILLIAN TAN

WYNN Resorts Ltd. is planning to draw down a portion of its \$850 million revolving credit line as the casino operator grapples with the coronavirus pandemic's impact on its revenues, according to people with knowledge of the matter.

The company is seeking to shore up its balance sheet as broader market uncertainty grows, said the people, who asked not to

be identified because the matter is private. A Wynn spokesman declined to comment. Affiliates of Deutsche Bank AG and Goldman Sachs Group Inc. are among Wynn's revolving credit facility lenders.

The company, founded by casino mogul Steve Wynn, has operations in Macau, where gross gaming revenue plunged as the world's biggest gambling hub closed for 15 days to try to contain the spread of the coronavirus. Las



Vegas-based Wynn's shares have tumbled around 38% in the past month, exceeding the S&P 500 Index's rou-

ghly 18% decline.

Wynn Resorts isn't alone, with other businesses hurt by the virus also bolstering their

liquidity. Hilton Worldwide Holdings Inc. is planning to draw a portion of a \$1.75 billion loan, and Boeing Co. is aiming to draw down the full amount of a \$13.8 billion loan as early as Friday, said people with knowledge of each company's plans.

Businesses whose core operations are affected by the virus are taking quick steps to improved their cash positions as market volatility raises concerns about a potential liquidity crunch. The coronavirus outbreak is now a pandemic, the World Health Organization declared on Wednesday, with worldwide cases topping 120,000 and deaths exceeding 4,300. **BLOOMBERG**

ANALYSIS

The new mask: Wave of global revolt replac

ZEINA KARAM

AS 2019 gave way to 2020 in a cloud of tear gas, and in some cases a hail of bullets, from Hong Kong to Baghdad, from Beirut to Barcelona and Santiago, it seemed civil disobedience and government crackdowns on protests would dominate the international landscape.

Then came the coronavirus. Protests, by their very nature driven by large gatherings, have been doused. Streets crammed with tens of thousands of chanting protesters are largely deserted. Masks worn to protect against tear gas are now worn to protect against the virus. A very different kind of fear has set in around protest camps and around the world.

The global unrest spanned three continents last year, fueled by local grievances but reflecting worldwide frustration at growing inequality, corrupt elites and broken promises. In Hong Kong, Beirut and Barce-

lona, images of euphoric protesters captured people's imaginations around the world even as they were beaten back, and in some cases, shot dead by police.

In most of these places, the protests had waned even before the outbreak — a combination of fear and fatigue giving way to resignation or apathy. The spreading new coronavirus has in some cases given authorities a means to further suppress the protests.

But the movements are not over. Even with the panic and adjusted daily behavior engulfing the world, some continue to demonstrate, insisting they have sacrificed too much to give up. With the street revolts' underlying causes largely unaddressed, those surviving remnants could eventually swell once more.

SIGNATURE FACE MASKS

Hong Kong's protesters made face masks a signature of revolt, wearing them to protect against tear gas and conceal their iden-

AP PHOTO



tities from authorities.

These same masks are now ubiquitous around the world

- worn by people from China and Iran, to Italy and America, seeking to protect against the

coronavirus.

In Hong Kong, major anti-government protests that at

MATT SEDENSKY & JAMEY KEATEN, BANGKOK

COVID-19

World walls off as leaders warn viral pandemic wil

PEOPLE around the world became increasingly closed off from one another Thursday as sweeping travel bans accelerated, walling regions apart as a viral pandemic unfolds and financial markets plunge.

It was an outbreak moving, at once, both glacially and explosively, with a virus first detected three months ago in China creeping across borders and producing eruptive outbreaks that have crippled areas.

Even for a crisis that has brought no shortage of headlines, dizzying developments were flashing across screens: An official designation of "pandemic" from the World Health Organization, a dramatic halt to much travel between the United States and 26 European countries, and infections among beloved Hollywood stars, sports luminaries and political leaders. All of it came against a backdrop of plunging world economies that left not only Wall Street investors but people from all walks of life hurting.

"We will see more cases and things will get worse than they are right now," said Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the U.S. National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases.

President Donald Trump, who had downplayed the virus for days, suddenly struck

AP PHOTO



a different tone, delivering a somber Oval Office address announcing strict rules on travel from much of Europe to begin this weekend. The State Department followed with an extraordinary warning to Americans to "reconsider travel abroad" too. Local leaders warned things would only get worse.

"This will be a very difficult time," said Dr. Jeff Duchin a top public health official for the Seattle area, which has one of the biggest U.S. outbreaks. "It's similar to what you might think of as an infectious disease equivalent of a major earthquake that's going to shake us

for weeks and weeks."

Across the U.S., where cases now number more than 1,300, a sense of urgency was pervasive.

Nursing homes turned away visitors, schools emptied of students and workplace cubicles went vacant. A rite of spring, college basketball's March Madness, was set to proceed in empty arenas, while professional basketball won't play at all. Joyous, booze-filled, green-splashed celebrations of St. Patrick's Day were called off. TV shows taped without audiences, rush-hour crowds in New York subway cars disappeared, and families hunkered down

wondering what would come next.

"If we avoid each other and listen to the scientists, maybe in a few weeks it will be better," said Koloud 'Kay' Tarapolsi of Redmond, Washington, who has two children whose schools were being closed beginning today.

As the pandemic grips Europe and the U.S., it continues to ebb in China, where the first cases of COVID-19 emerged in December. It reported a record low of just 15 new cases Thursday and was cautiously monitoring new arrivals who were returning with the virus from elsewhere.

More than three-fourths of China's patients have recovered. Most people have only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough, though symptoms can be severe, including pneumonia, especially in older adults and people with existing health problems. Reco-

very for mild cases takes about two weeks, while more severe illness may take three to six weeks, WHO says.

More than 126,000 people in more than 110 countries have been infected. But WHO emphasized the vast majority are in just four countries: China and South Korea — where new cases are declining — and Iran and Italy, where they are not.

"We have called every day for countries to take urgent and aggressive action," said WHO's leader, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. "We have rung the alarm bell loud and clear."

High-profile announcements of infections made the alarms even louder. Double Oscar winner Tom Hanks said he and his wife Rita Wilson tested positive. Australian officials say the couple are in a Queensland hospital and their close contacts would have to self-quarantine.

In Italy, soccer club Juventus said defender Daniele Rugani

As the pandemic grips Europe and the US, it continues to ebb in China, where the first cases of Covid-19 emerged in December

ed by virus fear



times drew hundreds of thousands of marchers began to tail off late last year.

worsen

tested positive. In Iran, the senior vice president and two other Cabinet ministers were reported to have been diagnosed with COVID-19.

Italy, already under unprecedented restrictions, tightened rules even more. Italian Premier Giuseppe Conte announcing the closure of pubs, restaurants, hair salons, cafeterias and other businesses that can't ensure a meter (yard) of space between workers and customers.

"In this moment, all the world is looking at us," Conte said, as the rules brought an eerie hush to places around Italy.

Asian shares plunged Thursday, following a drop of 1,464 points of the Dow Jones Industrial Average, putting the index 20% below its record set last month and into fearsome territory Wall Street calls a "bear market."

"There's a real feeling that we don't know where this ends," said Brad McMillan, chief investment officer for Commonwealth Financial Network. AP

But smaller-scale gatherings continue to spring up, mostly to mark the anniversary of key incidents during last year's demonstrations, underlining the refusal of city leader Carrie Lam to give in to most of the movement's demands.

"The movement that began last June, while no longer regularly making the front pages, is still very much underway and Hong Kong remains on the brink," wrote Jeffrey Wasserstrom, a historian of modern China at the University of California, Irvine.

The government's handling of the virus outbreak may add to protesters' long list of grievances, he said.

Complaints include the selection of quarantine sites, Lam's refusal to close the border with China entirely and the stranding of Hong Kong residents in virus-hit parts of mainland China, although some returned home last week.

In Chile, protests that drew hundreds of thousands of people demanding social reforms late last year had dropped off dramatically during the southern hemisphere's summer months. Those who are never absent are the masked hard-liners who clash violently with police.

They call themselves the "first line" of defense for other protesters from police repression.

Despite the expanding coronavirus, Carlos Donoso, a 30-year-old tattoo artist, says he won't stop protesting.

"You could catch it in the disco, at the gym, in the supermarket. It's much more important what we're doing now," he said.

In India, fear of the virus has had almost no impact on an 85-day-long sit-in led by women in New Delhi's sprawling Muslim-majority neighborhood of Shaheen Bagh, now an epicenter of the protests over a disputed new citizenship law. Hundreds of women take turns maintaining the around-the-clock gathering.

The demonstrators demand the revocation of the citizenship law, which fast-tracks naturalization for religious minorities from several neighboring countries, but not Muslims. The law caused an explosion of communal violence and rioting in New Delhi, with dozens killed.

Organizers say more women and children were now participating in the sit-in after authorities closed all primary schools in the capital because of the coronavirus.

"We are also taking the ne-

cessary precautions by wearing masks," said Hena Ahmad, a protester.

In a twist, thousands of women across Mexico made their protests felt this week by staying home from work and school, to demonstrate against gender-based violence. And teenage climate activist Greta Thunberg called for digital protests for now, to slow the spread of the coronavirus.

'BETTER TO DIE PROTESTING'

The protest camps in central Beirut and Baghdad are subdued. The coronavirus was the last straw for two struggling protest movements that for a short while seemed like they might actually achieve at least some of the social change they so desperately aspired for.

Both countries, scarred by long conflicts and on the brink of economic collapse, erupted last October in unprecedented, spontaneous anti-government revolts, calling for revolutionary change. "Thieves!" they shouted to describe a hated and corrupt ruling class they blame for their current despair.

But security crackdowns, disputes among the protesters, economic exhaustion and a craving for normalcy greatly diminished the rallies in recent weeks.

Protesters in both countries now struggle to attract demonstrators with the added obstacle of outbreak worries. Both the Iraqi and Lebanese governments have called on citizens to avoid large gatherings, although they have not yet banned protests outright.

"What are you waiting for? Do not fear corona, you are dying anyway from the air you breathe!" shouted a woman in Beirut marching along with a small group of protesters, referring to Lebanon's chronic pollution and waste management troubles. "Better to die protesting."

To encourage protesters, Iraqis set up a sterilization booth on the edge of Baghdad's Tahrir Square for those entering the encampment at the center of their movement. Civil defense teams sterilized the square and the Turkish Restaurant, a Baghdad high-rise where protesters have been staging a sit-in, turning it into a potent symbol of the demonstrations.

On a recent day, protesters wearing face masks and protective suits marched in Tahrir Square.

"The demonstrations may make you ill, but they will not kill you," said Ali Salih, 30, who works as a volunteer paramedic for the protesters. "We gave at least 700 martyrs and more than 25,000 wounded. How can it end without fulfilling its demands?" AP

PHILIPPINES

President Duterte to be tested for virus, palace cleaned

PHILIPPINE President Rodrigo Duterte is being tested for the new coronavirus after meeting with Cabinet officials who were exposed to infected people and have now been self-quarantined, an official said yesterday.

Duterte has no symptoms of COVID-19 but wanted to make sure he is healthy and can continue to engage with the public, said Sen. Christopher Lawrence "Bong" Go, a former presidential aide who still accompanies Duterte to official functions.

"Considering that some Cabinet members we engage with regularly have been exposed to individuals who were tested positive for COVID-19 ... it is just prudent for us to take precautionary measures in compliance with the advice of our health officials," Go said.

Go, who was elected to the Senate last year, told reporters he and Duterte planned to be tested but did not elaborate.

At least six Cabinet members, including Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea and Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez, have said they were exposed separately to COVID-19 patients and decided to self-quarantine. Several mayors and senators have also gone on home quarantine after coming into contact with patients.

Presidential Communications Secretary Martin Andanar said some finance officials who had been with Dominguez later held a news conference at a presidential palace briefing room. The press area was later disinfected, along

with a media working area and presidential conference halls.

"Some members of the Malacañang press corps who covered the economic briefing also deemed it best to undergo self-quarantine," Andanar said, referring to journalists covering presidential palace events.

Duterte's elite presidential guards announced early this week that they will enforce a "no touch policy" for Duterte to protect him from the virus and screen politicians and dignitaries who get near him. But Duterte played down the restrictions and suggested that he was not intimidated by the disease.

"That protocol is foolish. I will shake hands," Duterte said. "If God calls me now, I'll go. I'm done. I'm the president now, the highest post anybody could reach."

Duterte was to lead an inter-agency task force on the outbreak yesterday and then announce possible new steps to fight the disease.

Health officials have confirmed 52 cases of the virus, and two people, a Chinese and a Filipino, have died.

The illness causes mild to moderate symptoms in most people but can be severe in the elderly and people with other health problems.

Duterte, 74, who took time off from work due to illness several times last year, postponed a trip to Boracay island yesterday due to concerns over the virus, presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo said. AP



AP PHOTO

AP PHOTO



Kalianthi Karipidu, 89, poses for a photo at the windows of her home in central Rome

PANDEMIC

Virus lockdown means Italy's old are isolated from relatives

FRANCES D'EMILIO,
ROME

NATALINA De Santis' three adult children come to her front door, bringing food to keep her healthy and books to relieve her boredom, but she doesn't let them in any more.

Widowed a few months ago and living alone, the 83-year-old resident of Rome is so afraid of catching the coronavirus that she foregoes all visits as the disease that is especially deadly for the elderly grips Italy. She insists they leave their care packages outside her door and then steps onto her balcony to wave to them.

"If I get sick, what would my children do?" she said in a telephone interview. "They'd have to come, they won't be able to leave me alone. So, to avoid all this, I stay in my home."

Still, De Santis takes comfort in the fact that she gets to see her children, even if they are on the street two floors below.

Elderly people all over the country are being separated from their loved ones as Italy has put in place drastic restrictions on everyday life to tame its dramatic surge in contagions. In a country with one of the world's oldest populations, the viral outbreak is taking its toll on family relationships, that bedrock of Italian life.

Two months ago, Caroline Santoro's 76-year-old father, his dementia worse-

ning, was moved from his home in Rome where he lived with his wife to an adult care facility. Her 70-year-old mother then drove every day to visit him.

"Putting him in the residence was already a dramatic passage for her. But seeing him once a day was the only act of consolation for such a brutal turn" of events, Santoro said.

Then, last week, her family received a devastating notice from the care facility: visits to residents were now "absolutely" forbidden.

"That was the ultimate, the supreme solitude" that compounded the family's anguish for a husband, father and grandfather, Santoro said. Now her mother goes to the residence every two days to bring her husband freshly washed and ironed clothes.

Some of the residents, whose dementia is less advanced, can keep in touch by telephone or video calls. But her father's illness is too advanced for verbal communication, she said, anguished.

"For us, it's hard. It is the physical contact, the physical nearness that is the essential channel of communication," she said.

Despite the sorrow, Santoro admitted that the safety measures are necessary. Still, the lack of human contact with her elderly parents has brought "great anxiety."

Compounding the anguish is her mother's decision, after the nationally-ordered lockdown, to iso-

late herself from the family, staying away from Santoro and her children - three sons, ages 11, 9 and 5.

In Italy, the epicenter of Europe's coronavirus outbreak, roughly 23% of the population is over 65. Along with neighboring France, Italy has the largest number of people over 100. In France, medical units are common in assisted living facilities for those over 60 who need daily nursing care.

As COVID-19 cases ratchet up in France, visits to nursing homes by those younger than 15 are being discouraged. Since last weekend, some French facilities have gone into complete lockdown, informing residents' families by email in grim, capital letters that: "UNTIL NEW ORDERS, NO MORE VISITS ARE POSSIBLE."

With distrust of institutions deeply rooted in many an Italian's psyche, nursing homes and assisted-living setups are a relatively new phenomenon. With many adult children still living at home well into their 30s, older parents often rely on family members for help. Italians aren't terribly mobile, meaning when they strike out on their own, they remain near their childhood homes.

In Rosalia Giardino's condominium building near Rome's Janiculum Hill, several families are living with their elderly parents or, if they themselves are elderly, have at least one adult child living a block or two away. She's an exception.

Her 94-year-old mother lives in Castellammare di Stabia, 240 kilometers south of Rome. The national lockdown, announced Monday night and forbidding people to leave the towns of their official residence except for work and proven necessity, threatens to upend how she has managed to keep her mother, who uses a walker, still living in her home.

"Just two minutes ago I was on the phone talking to my brother," said Giardino. "I asked him, what do you think, can you go by car?"

She was referring to the restrictions on travel between cities. She and her brother, who also lives in Rome, alternate weekend trips down to Castellammare di Stabia to check up on their mother, especially since her Russian aide's Italian is poor and they struggle to understand what she tells them by phone. Giardino doesn't drive, so she usually makes the trip by bus.

Not long ago, purely as a precaution, Giardino put her mother on a waiting list at an assisted-living residence run by Catholic nuns, a five-minute walk from her Rome apartment. About a week ago, she looked at her cell phone and realized she had missed a call from the residence days earlier. In a panic that perhaps she had lost a potential place for her mother, Giardino dialed the nuns.

"When I called, they said, 'Don't worry, signora. With this virus, we are not letting anyone in,'" including new residents, Giardino said. AP

this day in history



1979 GRENADA LEADER OUSTED BY COUP

A coup in the Caribbean island of Grenada has toppled the country's controversial Prime Minister, Sir Eric Gairy. Sir Eric was at the United Nations in New York when he was overthrown.

After initially denying anything was amiss, Sir Eric, 56, said the coup leaders had shot dead a soldier and a policeman and taken four hostages, including one of his ministers.

He has appealed to the US and British for help in capturing what he described as a "small group of Communists".

The coup is believed to have been staged by members of the New Jewel party, a left-wing opposition group in Grenada's parliament.

Their leader, Maurice Bishop, has been broadcasting regularly on Radio Grenada - renamed Radio Free Grenada - since the takeover early this morning.

Mr Bishop has been appealing to Grenadians to remain calm and has pledged that all "democratic freedoms" will be fully restored.

Describing himself as the new prime minister, Mr Bishop said the national barracks had been taken by force before by "people's revolutionary forces".

The police force had surrendered and leading cabinet ministers had been arrested, Mr Bishop added.

Grenada, the most-southerly of the Windward Islands, has a population of 100,000.

It became independent of Britain in 1974 but is still a member of the Commonwealth.

'Mongoose squad'

Sir Eric Gairy was appointed premier in 1967 and then prime minister after independence.

He was a favourite of US President Richard Nixon but his standing has fallen in recent years after constant allegations of human rights abuses and corruption.

Many of the human rights complaints have been laid at the door of Sir Eric's personal protection unit, known as the "Mongoose squad".

Its members were blamed for the death of coup leader Maurice Bishop's father during violence on the day the island got its independence.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Maurice Bishop ruled Grenada for the next four years. His regime forged closer links to Cuba and Russia causing American suspicion.

In October 1983 Maurice Bishop was killed by supporters of his deputy, Bernard Coard, who resented attempts to mend bridges with the US.

Later that month 6,000 US troops invaded Grenada. Mr Coard and his wife Phyllis were among 19 government and army officials put on trial for the murder of Mr Bishop and ten other people.

The Coards and 12 others were found guilty and sentenced to death, later commuted to life imprisonment.

An election held in 1984 was won by the centre-left New National party (NNP) led by Herbert Blaize.

The NNP has remained in power ever since - it is currently led by Keith Mitchell.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

Attending a family gathering could give you a fresh perspective on where you want to take your life. It seems that stories from the past are great places to find inspiration for your future.



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

In any and all confrontations you have today, be sure to take the high road. Let aggressive drivers zoom right by you, and simply smile if someone tries to blame you for something they did.



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

Bringing your lunch from home is an easy first step. You can even make it fun by concocting a new dish to try each day. You'll save money and expand your culinary experience!



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

Try to add more exercise to your daily routine. Your physical self is something you can control a lot more than your emotional self right now, so you might as well make the best of 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. You never know where a conversation will take you...



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

From the very start of your day, you could be picking up on all the energy of people around you. Sadness, happiness, anger, terror, all of these diverse emotions will be coming at you today.



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

By living a generous life, you become an inspiration to the people around you. Someone in your social circle who's known for being inflexible is suddenly realizing that they aren't the only person on earth.



SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

Your mood may swing back and forth like a pendulum today, and your emotional reactions might not always be in line with what's going on around you.



SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

Own your success. Being in touch with your importance is relevant to your entire day. You have key roles in the lives of many people who love you. A mentor would like to hear from you, so drop them a line soon.



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

There are a lot of things going on that you may not be aware of, and these extreme changes of behavior are the start of a trend that may rub off on you. Ride your emotions like a roller coaster.



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

Why not just speak from the heart? You might be surprised by how warmly you're received. Have you been selling your family short? Expect the best and you could get it!

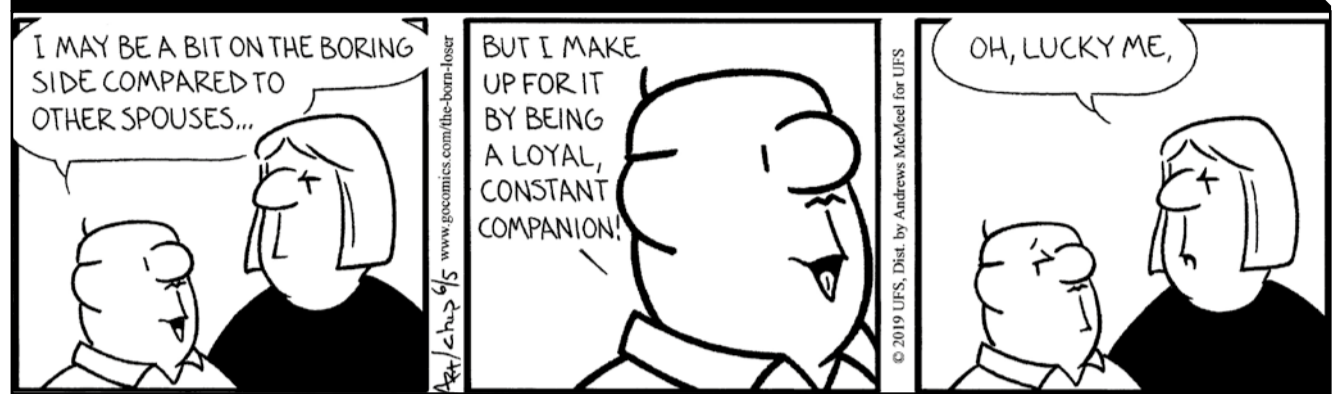


PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

As a calm comes over your emotional life, look for other areas of your life to grow more peaceful as well. For any social outings today, try to choose an intimate spot that's conducive to private conversations.

The Born Loser by Chip Sanson



SUDOKU

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

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

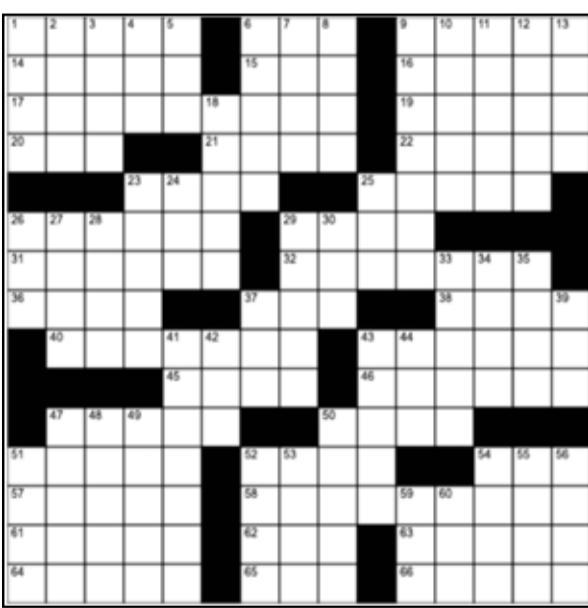
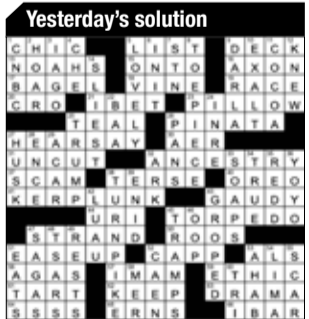
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	-2	11	clear
Harbin	-16	0	clear
Tianjin	0	12	cloudy
Urumqi	-2	7	clear
Xi'an	2	16	cloudy
Lhasa	-2	11	cloudy
Chengdu	10	15	overcast
Chongqing	11	16	overcast
Kunming	8	20	cloudy
Nanjing	2	12	clear
Shanghai	5	10	clear
Wuhan	5	16	clear
Hangzhou	4	12	cloudy
Taipei	15	16	drizzle
Guangzhou	13	18	overcast
Hong Kong	16	19	cloudy
WORLD			
Moscow	2	6	cloudy
Frankfurt	2	10	moderate rain
Paris	6	9	moderate rain
London	2	10	drizzle
New York	0	9	drizzle

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS: 1- Unties; 6- Sine ___ non; 9- Melts; 14- Dripping; 15- Samovar; 16- Dike, Eunomia and Irene; 17- Remotest; 19- ___ Gay; 20- Some MIT grads; 21- JFK postings; 22- Adjust to zero; 23- Church recess; 25- Duck with soft down; 26- Places of contest; 29- Region; 31- Hard to please; 32- Gallery in a theater; 36- Watch over; 37- Route; 38- Enlist again; 40- Sterile; 43- Mountain range; 45- Trademark; 46- Introduction; 47- Forbidden; 50- River crossing; 51- Refute by evidence; 52- Confess; 54- Posed; 57- Inactive; 58- Fax; 61- Post; 62- Simile center; 63- Income source; 64- Banana oil, for one; 65- Fam. member; 66- Healing plants;

DOWN: 1- Duct for smoke; 2- Network of nerves; 3- Diner sign; 4- Just manage, with "out"; 5- Neighbor of Leb.; 6- Cite; 7- Bear up there; 8- Formicary residents; 9- Treacle; 10- Perfected; 11- "___" by any other name...; 12- Strong Australian horse; 13- Show to a table; 18- Unordered; 23- Battery terminal; 24- Ballet step; 25- Sushi choice; 26- Do something; 27- Earthbound bird; 28- Seemingly forever; 29- Bahamian island; 30- Narrow beam of light; 33- Echo, for one; 34- Square; 35- Cosmonaut Gagarin; 37- Hairpiece; 39- Bad review; 41- Cabal member; 42- Also; 43- Reduces speed; 44- Occupational suffix; 47- Camp sights; 48- Skip ___; 49- Calamity Jane's surname; 50- ___ point; where it all becomes clear; 51- Greet the day; 52- Whence one may worship; 53- Still life subject; 54- Farm structure; 55- Sheltered, nautically; 56- Actress Harper; 59- This ___ stickup!; 60- ___ de mer;



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



FOR SALE

Kinglight Carpark, Taipa
HK\$1,450,000 1 🚗

FOR RENT

Spacious Apartment, Ocean Gardens
\$35,000/mth 3,700 ft² 4 🛏 4 🚿

FOR SALE

- [Taipa] Two Units connected 4 🛏 2 🚿
1,404 ft² \$8,380,000 (ref: 19096006)
- [Macau] Lakeview Tower 3 🛏 2 🚿
1,344 ft² \$11,000,000 (ref: 19126001)
- [Taipa] Nova City 3 🛏 2 🚿
1,515 ft² \$11,750,000 (ref: 19106001)
- [Macau] One Central 2 🛏 2 🚿
1,349 ft² \$14,839,000 (ref: 19096004)

FOR RENT

- [Taipa] One room apartment 1 🛏 1 🚿
740 ft² \$10,900/mth (ref: 19101006)
- [Coloane] Hellene Garden 1 🛏 3 🚿 3 🚿
1,663 ft² \$14,000/mth (ref: n/a)
- [Taipa] Nova Grand 2 🛏 1 🚿
935 ft² \$17,800/mth (ref: 19091005)
- [Cotai] One Grantai 3 🛏 3 🚿
2,122 ft² \$23,000/mth (ref: 19030001RT)

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MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

CHINA AUTO SALES PLUNGE IN FEBRUARY AMID VIRUS SHUTDOWN

CHINA'S auto sales plunged 81.7% in February from a year ago after much of the economy was shut down to fight a virus outbreak, an industry group reported yesterday, adding to problems for automakers already struggling with shrinking demand.

Sales of SUVs, sedans and minivans fell to 224,000, according to the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers. Total vehicle sales, including trucks and buses, fell 79.1% to 310,000.

Auto dealerships, cinemas and other consumer businesses were ordered to stay closed after the Lunar New Year holiday to help contain the virus that emerged in central China in December.

Sales "fell sharply due to the severe impact of the new coronavirus epidemic," a CAAM statement said.

The government is easing controls in many areas to revive economic activity. Auto factories are reopening, but tens of millions of city dwellers still are under travel and other curbs that weigh on consumer spending.

Sales in the first two months of 2020 were down 43.6% from a

year earlier at 1.8 million units. Total vehicle sales were off 42% at 2.2 million.

Demand already was weak due to consumer jitters about a tariff war with Washington, slower economic growth and possible job losses. Sales fell 9.6% last year, their second straight annual decline.

The downturn is a blow to global automakers looking to China to drive revenue growth amid weak demand in the United States and Europe.

Forecasters say it will be weeks, maybe months before the industry returns to normal production levels. Automakers say the pace depends on how fast suppliers can resume delivering components.

Reviving the industry "could take longer than previously expected due to labor and materials supply shortages," said Fitch Solutions in a report this week.

Both foreign and Chinese brands also are investing billions of dollars to develop electric vehicles under pressure to meet government sales targets.

Sales of electric and gasoline-electric hybrid SUVs and sedans

fell 75.2% in February from a year ago to 12,908 vehicles, according to CAAM. Sales for the first two months were down 59.5% at 59,705.

China is the biggest market for electrics, accounting for about half of global sales last year.

Demand sank in mid-2019 when Beijing ended multibillion-dollar subsidies to producers and buyers and shifted the burden to the industry by requiring automakers to make a portion of their sales electric.

The extended closure of factories also is hurting the industry by disrupting the global flow of components. China's accounts for about 8% of global exports of auto parts, according to UBS.

Producers abroad that need Chinese components "will see little relief as the industry recovers," said Fitch.

The economic impact of the most sweeping anti-disease measures ever imposed is expected to be so big that private sector forecasters have cut their growth outlooks for this year.

February sales usually get a boost as shops reopen after the Lunar New Year holiday, which fell this year in January.

Forecasters expect automakers to make up a big share of their losses this year once consumers start making delayed purchases. AP

CORPORATE BITS

MGM continues charity donations as part of relief measures



Dedicated to supporting local charity work in the midst of the Covid-19 epidemic, MGM has donated 45 temperature guns, along with hand sanitizers and other anti-epidemic supplies, to Macau Tung Sin Tong Charitable Society.

According to a statement issued by the gaming operator, the donation was in addition to supporting their annual fundraising, which has accumulated a total of MOP5.4 million in donations in the past 12 consecutive years.

This donation of supplies is intended to strengthen the anti-epidemic measures for daycare centers, primary and secondary schools as well as the society's elderly activity centers when their services resume.

José Chui, president of the Board of Directors of Tung Sin Tong, said, "We are really thankful for MGM's prompt support. This series of anti-epidemic supplies offers us more comprehensive protection and allows us to provide services to our citizens as usual."

Earlier, MGM donated hand sanitizers to the disabled community and drug rehabilitation organizations to aid in enhancing their anti-epidemic preparedness for reopening. Beneficiaries included Concordia School for Special Education, Macau Association for the Mentally Handicapped, Macau Association of Support for the Disabled, and Association of Rehabilitation of Drug Abusers of Macao.

AD

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花心公子俱樂部

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Come and buy a Standard drink Mop45 only
You can see a European Striptease Show

Attention
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Address: Basement, Hotel Guia, Macau Tel: 28532081 www.macauplaymatesclub.com

MACAUCLOSER
生活藝術雜誌 LIVING & ARTS MAGAZINE

MACAUCLOSER

ANA MOURA

ON SALE
JAN/FEV issue

FOOTBALL

Juventus player Rugani tests positive for coronavirus pandemic

ITALIAN soccer club Juventus announced yesterday [Macau time] that one of its players, defender Daniele Rugani, has tested positive for COVID-19.

Rugani, who also plays for the Italian national team, is the first player in the country's top soccer division to test positive for the disease, which is caused by the new coronavirus.

Juventus, which has won the last eight Serie A titles, announced the result on its website and social media channels.

The club said Rugani and "those who have had contact with him" are being isolated. It also said Rugani is not showing any symptoms of the disease.

Juventus trained earlier on Wednesday, although it was unclear whether Rugani was present. The club had said earlier that forward Cristiano Ronaldo was still in Portugal "pending developments related to the current health emergency" after visiting his mother — who had a stroke last week.

The outbreak of the virus has led to a nationwide lockdown in Italy, where soccer and all other sports have been suspended until April 3. However, Juventus is scheduled to play French club Lyon at home in the Champions League on Tuesday.

Rugani was an unused substitute in the team's last game, at

home against Inter Milan last Sunday. That match was played in an empty stadium in line with a government decree before measures became even more strict in Italy.

Shortly after Juventus' announcement, Inter released a statement saying the club had decided to suspend "all competitive activities" until further notice.

It added: "The club is currently taking steps to put all the necessary procedures into place."

That is likely to include self-isolation for all players and staff.

Inter's Europa League game on Thursday against Getafe had already been postponed after the Spanish club said it wouldn't travel to Italy.

Rugani was also on the substi-

tutes' bench for the first leg of the round-of-16 Champions League game against Lyon on Feb. 26. He last started a match against Spal on Feb. 22.

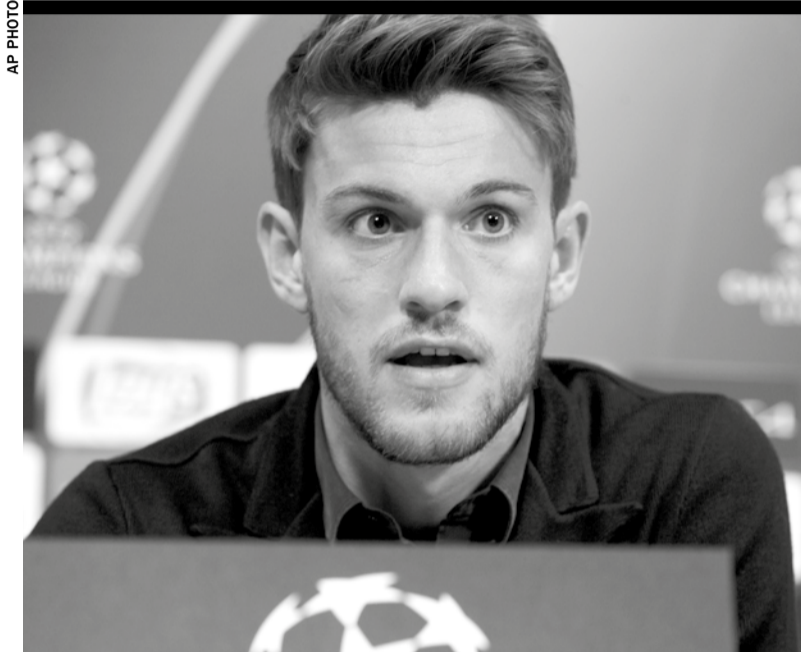
Italy's number of virus cases soared again yesterday, to 12,462 infections and 827 deaths — numbers second only to China.

Juventus' under-23 squad recently had to self-quarantine after a member from an opposing team tested positive for the virus. That quarantine ended March 9,

with none of the players showing symptoms.

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 cau-

The club had said earlier that forward Cristiano Ronaldo was still in Portugal



Juventus' Daniele Rugani: infected

se more severe illness, including pneumonia.

The vast majority of people recover from the new virus. According to the WHO, people with mild illness recover in about two

weeks. Those with more severe illness may take three to six weeks to recover.

Juventus currently leads Serie A by one point over Lazio as it bids for a ninth straight title **AP**

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OPINION

Editorial

Paulo Coutinho



EIGHT WEEKS

It's eight weeks since the first contagion of the new virus was detected in Macau.

In this period the community has given a tremendous example to the world on how to behave in the face of this insidious natural enemy.

What we did as a community was to understand, profoundly, that the "enemy" has a tremendous advantage over us. He cannot be seen. Even if he touches one of us, he may not acknowledge the "encounter," and we may not feel it while unknowingly infecting others in our social circle.

This is what many countries in the world fail to understand. We use masks to protect ourselves even as we know the protection is fallible. Who we protect, mostly, is the person next to us: on a bus, in the workplace, in the market, in a shop, in a queue at the bank or for a public service.

We wear masks to protect ourselves, but they mostly protect others. The effect of "everybody" wearing masks is that "everybody" is protected. Does it work? Apparently it does.

The Macau government went the extra mile last week in safeguarding its citizens abroad, announcing a program to acquire medical masks locally and have them sent to Macau students abroad.

The system is beautifully simple. The student fills a form in the place of his/her current residence, and indicates the ID card of the person who will be entitled and responsible to buy the masks (only ten per every ten days for 8 patacas). In seconds the student receives an SMS on the cell phone of his/her country of current residence, takes a screen shot and send it to the designated person, usually a parent living and working in Macau.

When arriving at the collection location, at a chosen day and hour, the designated person has just to show the screenshot and go through the usual procedure to enter a government building (or a casino): completing a 24-hour valid health declaration, presenting a Macau ID and offering their forehead for a body temperature reading.

Once inside, after getting your sealed 10-masks pack, you also have the option to immediately dispatch it at the next counter installed by the postal services (CTT).

There is only one shortcoming: the cheapest option to ship the masks will take two full weeks to reach the recipients if they study in Europe or America. So by the time a parent sends out a second pack by snail mail the recipient is already without stock. A change to 20 masks per request would solve the problem.

Apart from that, what struck me was the clever high-tech operation of the order's platform and its simplicity. That requires a mind used to dealing with ones and zeros as well as managing resources. A coder who, by default, hates to write unnecessary code.

I think, in all this process we are starting to see the "magical" hand and mind of Macau's master programmer: Secretary Ao Ieong U, herself a programmer and former head of the Identification Bureau who brought it into the 21st century.

But we have to be cautious about the (healthy) evolution of the situation in Macau, which has been praised and noticed the world over. Yet, next door in Zhongshan, two new cases were reported yesterday, while Zhuhai hasn't had a case for over 20 days.

A final note on the late response of the World Health Organization - because the state of pandemic should have been declared weeks ago by all standards. Saying that they didn't do it before to "avoid panic" is disastrous. Guess who's panicking now? The world.

Expedition operators on Mount Everest said yesterday that Chinese mountaineering officials will not allow spring climbs from their side of the mountain due to fears of the coronavirus.

On the other side of the mountain in Nepal, operators say cancellations for the popular spring climbing season have been pouring in despite the mountain being open for business.

Dawa Shepra of Kathmandu-based Climbalya Treks and Expeditions said the officials told them though the virus was getting under control in China, they could not risk bringing in foreign climbers.

He said the conversation with the China Tibet Mountaineering Association officials was over the phone and no official emails, faxes or messages were sent.

Jiban Ghimire of Shangrila Nepal Trek also said he spoke on the phone with Chinese officials who said there would be no climbing on Everest during this year's popular spring climbing season.

Climbers using the northern route in China generally uses operators based in Nepal to equip and manage the expeditions.

PANDEMIC

LOCKED OUT: EUROPEANS GRAPPLE WITH NEW US TRAVEL BAN

JOHN LEICESTER, PARIS

THEY had spent months planning their route, a 3,500-kilometer trans-America road trip, a voyage of a lifetime.

Just when it was within touching distance, with a flight into New Orleans booked for March 24, Jean-Michel and Christiane Deaux's dream trip evaporated, falling victim to the new anti-virus travel ban announced yesterday [Macau time] by U.S. President Donald Trump.

The French retirees were among legions of Europeans scrambling Thursday to adjust to the idea that the United States is now suddenly off-limits to them.

"We've been preparing this trip for years," Jean-Michel Deaux said. "It was going to be a pilgrimage."

Their March-May voyage would have taken them through multiple states, on a giant south-north loop. They planned to follow in the footsteps of the Marquis de Lafayette, the French aristocrat who fought with American colonists against the British. They wanted to see Amish communities in Pennsylvania, take in music in Memphis and ride a boat on the Mississippi. They even bought extra suitcases to carry



ry gifts and souvenirs back to France.

"I've been studying the maps every night," Deaux said. "I had already pictured myself on the boat."

More than three-fourths of China's patients have recovered. Most people have only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough, though symptoms can be severe, including pneumonia, especially in older adults and people with existing health problems. Recovery for mild cases takes about two weeks, while more severe illness may take three to six weeks, the World Health Organization says.

Trump, in a rare Oval Office address to the nation yesterday, said the monthlong restriction on travel from Europe would begin late Friday, at midnight.

While Trump said all European travel would be cut off, Homeland Security of-

ficials later clarified that the new travel restrictions would apply only to most foreign nationals who have been in the "Schengen Area" at any point for 14 days prior to their scheduled arrival to the United States. The area includes France, Italy, Germany, Greece, Austria, Belgium and others, and the White House said the zone has the highest number of confirmed COVID-19 cases outside of mainland China.

On the receiving end of the restrictions, Europeans struggled to make sense of it. And there were immediate howls of concern from the travel industry.

Deaux said he'd try to reschedule their voyage for later in the year, in hopes the virus passes.

"When I heard this morning, I was very disappointed but not surprised," he said. "All the preparations, ruined." AP



Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte is being tested for the new coronavirus after meeting with Cabinet officials who were exposed to infected people and have now been self-quarantined. Duterte has no symptoms of COVID-19 but wanted to make sure he is healthy and can continue to engage with the public. More on p7



Markets Asian shares plunged yesterday after the World Health Organization declared a coronavirus pandemic and indexes sank on Wall Street. Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 dived 4.9% to 18,468.99. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 dropped 6.6% to 5,348.60. South Korea's Kospi dipped 4.7% to 1,815.98. Hang Seng lost 3.8% to 24,269.06, while the Shanghai Composite index shed 1.3% to 2,928.80. Thailand's benchmark plunged 8%.



Afghanistan After a series of delays, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani issued a decree promising to release 1,500 Taliban prisoners as a goodwill gesture to get intra-Afghan negotiations started. A recent peace deal signed between the United States and the Taliban called for the release of up to 5,000 prisoners ahead of the much sought-after negotiations.

Myanmar The U.S. military yesterday repatriated what may be the remains of service personnel who were lost in action in Myanmar during World War II. The remains from Myanmar's central Sagaing region were repatriated at a ceremony at Mandalay International Airport after being recovered in a mission carried out by the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency of the U.S. Department of Defense, the U.S. Embassy said.

THE DECISIVE MOMENT

AP Photo/Mary Altaffer (File 2019)



Oh, and the saints... The New York City St. Patrick's Day Parade has been postponed for the first time in its 258-year history because of coronavirus concerns, Gov. Andrew Cuomo announced yesterday. Other major cities canceled the parade.