

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

Greater Bay Plan CTM

\$158 / 6GB

Data ↑ Increase Again

CTM is the only operator to make the final decision in

COMMUNITY INPUT IS MOVING ONLINE, WITH MOST OF THE PUBLIC RELAYING OPINIONS TO THE GOV'T BY NON-TRADITIONAL MEANS P6

MONETARY AUTHORITY SLASHES INTEREST RATES FOR SECOND TIME THIS MONTH P6

A NEW GOV'T CENTER HAS BEEN SET UP TO MONITOR ONLINE PUBLIC OPINION RELATING TO THE COVID-19 OUTBREAK P6



Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte placed the northern third of the country under an “enhanced community quarantine” that requires millions of people to stay mostly at home in an attempt to contain the coronavirus, which has killed a dozen people in the Southeast Asian nation. Under the monthlong containment, most office work and mass public transportation on Luzon Island, which includes the capital, Manila, will be suspended.



Malaysia's leader announced yesterday a drastic two-week lockdown in the country following a sharp spike in the number of virus cases. Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin said religious institutions, schools, businesses and government offices will be shut until March 31. He said travel in and out of the country will be banned. Only essential services including supermarkets, banks, gas stations and pharmacies will be allowed to stay open.

Greenland The government in Greenland has reported the first confirmed coronavirus case on the world's largest island. The government said yesterday that the infected individual was in isolation at home in Nuuk, Greenland's capital. Prime Minister Kim Kielsen said during a news conference: “Now, we need to assess how to react.” He urged residents of the Arctic island to limit their travel.

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LOCKDOWNS ERUPT AS WORLD INFECTIONS SURPASS CHINA

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CASINO WORKERS COMPLAIN ABOUT UNPAID LEAVE

A group of casino workers have complained to the Labour Affairs Bureau about unpaid leave. Yesterday, local association Macau People Power brought over ten casino cleaning workers to the bureau in order to complain about the situation. According to association representative Si Tou Fai, because these employees worked during the government's mandatory casino suspension period in February, they hope to receive compensation for these days of work. In addition, the association received requests for assistance from approximately 30 casino dealers. The workers said that their employer forced them to take half a month of leave without pay during February. These workers accepted the company's proposal because they became worried that if they did not, they would be fired.

POLICE DISCOVER TWO SHAM MARRIAGE CASES

The Public Security Police Force (PSP) has discovered two sham marriage cases involving four people. In the first case, a local woman married a mainland man and then pretended that the man was the father of her son. One month after she had divorced her husband, her fake marriage was registered. In the second case, a local man accepted 10,000 patacas to help a woman obtain a Macau ID through a sham marriage. The man's sister made the sham marriage proposal. The PSP has transferred the three in the second case and the woman in the first case to the prosecution authority.

RESIDENTS FORM QUEUES FOR GOVERNMENT'S PAID TRAINING COURSES

A group of 50 people have queued up at the Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL) to sign up to take part in the government's paid training courses. Yesterday marked the opening of the first stage of the government's program. Courses in this stage will officially start by the end of March. Courses on welding, carpentry, construction supervision, truck crane operations, electrician, paint and wall mounting will provide a total of 300 places. A worker taking the course can receive a maximum of 6,656 patacas after completing the course. The entire program provides 2,000 training places involving 20 types of jobs. Workers who attend 80% of the courses, participate in the relevant exams, and accept the DSAL's employment assistance offers can also receive a subsidy.

MACAU PASS TO WAIVE CHARGES ON RETAILERS FOR TWO YEARS

ANTHONY LAM

CONTACTLESS smartcard provider Macau Pass will waive annual fees, deposits and payment terminal rental fees for all retailers using its services in 2020 and 2021, the company announced yesterday.

The announcement was made at the government press conference held to explain details and arrangements for the upcoming e-voucher program, which is an economic relief measure enacted by the government.

"We don't have the intention to charge retailers," Man Wong, Deputy General Manager of the e-payment company said, when asked to clarify whether the company will charge retailers any money. "[But] a handling charge [from each transaction] is a global common practice, so we'll keep it."

Macau Pass is accepted at about 13,000 points-of-sale (POS) across the city. Wong later added that these POS machines are the ones that detect and deduct money from cards.

Since the government's announcement, the e-payment company has received more than 1,000 inquiries from retailers that are interested in installing a console.

Wong was questioned as to whether the company has the capacity to handle all the inquiries and complete the installation of the consoles, in case all of the inquirers decide on the installation.

She pledged that the company is confident in completing the installation work before the start



of the program, which will be on May 1. "We have tripled our team to handle these applications," the deputy general manager disclosed. "We have also simplified the application procedure, such as requesting a narrower range of documents."

Some street hawkers and wet market retailers are not set up appropriately, with safe power sockets for example, to operate a Macau Pass console. Wong said that the company has technical support for these retailers, but did not give a specific explanation.

User registration for the program will start this Wednesday, March 18, and close on April 8. It will be conducted via the website of the Monetary Authority of Macao. Residents can approach the authority, as well as the Municipal Affairs Bureau's service centers at Areia Preta, Taipa and China Plaza, for assistance with online registration.

Cards will be ready for collec-

tion between April 14 and 30 by appointment. The government subsidy will be effective from May to July. The daily spending cap is 300 patacas.

The Economic Bureau pointed out that the fund cannot be used for public utilities, gambling-related purchases, cross-border travel, financial services and medical services. Tai Kin Ip, head of the Bureau, clarified that it can be used to buy herbal medicines or Chinese soup packs at Chinese herbal pharmacies.

Newborn babies who do not have an ID card can be registered for the program by their parents or lawful guardians at the Identification Bureau.

Parents or lawful guardians of minors can register for their children. Upon registration, they will be required to print out a declaration form to state that they are registering for children.

Tai said the Economic Bureau will rely on the application of the law to guarantee the truthfulness

of such declarations, similar to the practice at the Health Bureau. In other words, if a declaration is found at a later date to be dishonest, the declarants will face a criminal penalty.

Upon collection, the registrant's ID card will be scanned by a console provided by Macau Pass. The government has assured the public that the company will not be able to access personal data collected for the program.

Each registered Macau resident will be given 3,000 patacas to spend at small and medium-sized enterprises in the city. The money will be loaded onto a Macau Pass card especially made for the program, although it will remain functional after the end of the program.

The program is expected to cost the government a total of 2.2 billion patacas. The equipment provider has pledged that it will not receive any funds from either the government or the retailers using its services.

Golden snub-nosed monkey ready to receive visitors

A golden snub-nosed monkey born in Macau last month is now ready to receive visitors at its home in Seac Pai Van, the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) has announced.

Born on Valentine's Day (February 14), the

baby monkey is the first of its kind to be conceived in Macau. The IAM revealed in a statement that the monkey is in good health and is curiously and constantly inspecting its surroundings.

"The little monkey is

active and has showed curiosity," the IAM noted. "The mother monkey, meanwhile, has been taking close and good care of her baby."

The golden snub-nosed monkey is native to a small area in temperate,

mountainous forests of central and Southwest China. They inhabit the mountainous forests of Southwestern China at elevations of 1,500-3,400 meters above sea level.

This type of monkey is born with grey hair over

its body which gradually changes to golden-yellow as it grows. They live on a seasonal diet of plants ranging across lichens, fruits, buds and flowers. Due to continuous habitat shrinking, the golden snub-nosed monkey is endangered.

Members of the public can now visit the monkeys at Seac Pai Van Park from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. every day except Mondays. **AL**

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Macau imposes entry restrictions on all but greater China

RENATO MARQUES

FROM midnight today, Macau is enforcing entry restrictions on arrivals from all countries and regions in the world, with the exception of those coming from the greater China region comprising the mainland, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, according to Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture Elsie Ao Ieong U.

The restrictions include a mandatory 14-day quarantine for all those traveling outside the greater China region. Prior to today, similar restrictions were already in force for any travelers who had been to most European countries as well as the U.S., Canada, Egypt, Australia and Brazil in the past 14 days.

In the announcement, Secretary Ao Ieong informed that the measure comes after Macau recorded its first confirmed case after 40 days free of new infections.

Explaining the measure in more detail, Ao Ieong said that anyone entering the city will have to complete a health declaration reporting on their travel history and health condition, as well as undergo a medical evaluation by the health authorities, who will decide the level of risk that the person represents. Accordingly, the visitors will be directed either to a self-quarantine period in their home, or to the Pousada Marina Infante or the Public Health Clinical Centre in Coloane.

At the press conference, Ao Ieong reaffirmed that such measures represent a shift in the government mindset from “the prevention of the local cases to a prevention from imported cases.”

The Secretary also recalled that anyone providing false information or concealing information on their health condition or travel history will be subjected to compulsory hospitalization and criminal charges that could result in up

to six months of imprisonment or a 60-day fine.

Ao Ieong also noted that in view of the anticipated return of Macau residents from overseas in the next few weeks, the government would not rule out the possibility of enforcing other preventive measures that might influence, for instance, the resumption of school activities.

“We will continue to evaluate the impact of the people that are returning to Macau and we will see if there is any need to readjust the date for the school resumption,” she said, while appealing to all those residing or traveling abroad to properly evaluate the risks to decide whether the travel is worthwhile.

“Please do evaluate well these risks, especially the youngsters that are studying abroad that are very young and that need to bear in mind the consequences [of infection with Covid-19] on their health,” said Ao Ieong.

Meanwhile, the director of the Health Bureau said he does not consider the 11th confirmed case in Macau as a sign that the territory is losing the battle against the coronavirus.

“This does not mean we have lost the battle,” insisted Health Bureau Director Lei Chin Ion. “If we look back we can see that much was [accomplished] to safeguard the lives of citizens. This battle was important for all and with the help of all citizens we have achieved some success and proven that the measures [adopted] were the right ones.”

Echoing the comments of Ao Ieong, Lei said the government’s focus will be directed to those Macau residents returning home from other parts of the world where now the outbreak is only now reaching its peak.

“We are not immune to this worldwide pandemic outbreak and we need to keep our preventive measures and be alert,” Lei

affirmed, noting that it is almost inevitable that a few of these cases will be detected in Macau.

Lei also noted that the 11th case was not especially concerning as the patient, a Korean non-resident woman who is a flight attendant with Air Macau, was proving not to be very contagious.

The woman had traveled back to Portugal with her boyfriend days earlier and has not had much contact with people in Macau since she arrived in the territory.

The fact that her boyfriend tested negative for the virus supports the idea that “this is a person with a low level of contagion,” according to Lei. The boyfriend is also being monitored by the health authorities in the hospital.

According to the coordinator of the Center, Leong Iek Hou, there are currently seven other people being tested and under medical surveillance for having close contact with the 11th case.

For the time being, only one person from this group has reported noteworthy symptoms; a university student that returned to Macau on the same aircraft from Dubai to Hong Kong, two rows in front of the patient. It is not yet confirmed whether the student has been infected with Covid-19.

Level 2 travel alert issued to US, most European countries

THE government has issued a Level 2 travel alert for many European countries and the United States.

This is the fourth time that the Tourism Crisis Management Office has issued the alert given the recent situation of the novel coronavirus infection (Covid-19).

The Level 2 travel alert

was newly imposed on the European countries of Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Latvia, the Principality of Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland

and the United Kingdom.

The Tourism Crisis Management Office (GGCT) alerts Macau residents who intend to travel to or are already in those countries to reconsider their current travel plans. “It is suggested to avoid non-essential travel to the aforementioned destinations,” the bureau said. In addition, the Level 2 tra-

vel alert for Egypt, Turkey, Korea, Italy, Japan, Spain, France and Germany remains in force. It is suggested that non-essential travel to those destinations during this period be avoided.

The GGCT pledged that it would keep monitoring the latest developments.

So far, the GGCT has not imposed a Level 3 travel

alert – the highest alert – to countries with a high number of cases including Italy, which as of yesterday had recorded 24,747 cases and Iran, which had 13,938 Covid-19 cases yesterday.

Several European countries are on lockdown to deter the spread of the novel coronavirus.

A new round of restric-

tions and border closures was announced in Europe on Sunday as some countries closed their borders to foreign nationals.

The virus has infected more than 156,000 people worldwide and killed over 5,800. Macau has recorded a total of 11 cases to date, with 10 former patients now fully recovered. **LV**

Sands China implements series of donations in light of virus outbreak



SANDS CHINA LTD. has initiated to donate an array of necessary necessities to the Macau SAR and non-governmental organizations as part of its pledge to support the city's efforts to combat the pandemic outbreak.

The gaming operator has donated a total of 500,000 medical facemasks to the local government and some 35,000 bottles of alcohol-based hand sanitizer gel to local community organizations as part of the company's pledge to donate MOP5 million towards the city's relief efforts.

In total, Sands China Ltd. has pledged to donate MOP25 million to help contain the spread of the virus and to assist with relief efforts in mainland China and Macau. The donation includes MOP20 million to assist the mainland in its efforts to combat the virus, and another MOP5 million to support the local community in implementing preventive measures.



MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER



Sands China Care Ambassadors continues to extend warmth and care in times of epidemic outbreak

SANDS China Ltd. considers its support to the valuable groups of the community in the Macau SAR central to its commitment toward social causes and community involvement.

The gaming operator's Sands Cares Ambassadors (SCAs) did not fall short of extending their helping hand to extend its warmth and care to the vulnerable and less-advantaged groups in the Macao community amid the outbreak of the Covid-19 novel coronavirus.

The SCAs actively volunteered during these hard times of pandemic crisis that the city is experiencing, visiting a series of elderly centers and delivering necessities to different organizations.

Through these voluntary works, these ambassadors are given an outlet for serving the local community by organizing community activities and initiatives that work toward creating a better Macau.

Amid the virus outbreak, a group of SCAs went to the Peng On Tung service center to make follow-up calls to the 150 elderly residents they had visited just before the Chinese New Year to check on them during the challenging time.

The volunteers noted down the

live-alone elderly's health conditions and checked if they needed any special assistance for the centre to follow up.

While there, they also took the opportunity to learn more about the daily operations and volunteering needs of the service, and to provide manpower support to the centre during the epidemic.

The SCAs' courageous visit did not stop there as the volunteers continued to extend its moral support to local communities as they helped drop off 10,000 pairs of medical gloves and 1,000 shower caps at the Ka Ho Elderly Care Centre.

The visit was to address the material shortage of supplies the nurses require for taking daily care of the elderly.

The next day, 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, to express care for those vulnerable segments of society and support their needs amid the fight against the epidemic.

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

Furthermore, just recently, 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 non-governmental organizations.

These NGOs include Macau Special Olympics, the Sheng Kung Hui Social Service Coordination Office, the Macau Gaming Industry Employees Home, and Christian New Life Fellowship.

The deliveries of supplies have benefited over 5,000 of the organisations' members.

Some of the supplies will go directly to the organisations' 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, with staff needing access to the hygiene supplies in order to safely perform their work.

"Sands China considers it our company's responsibility to assist the Macao community in times of need," said Dr. Wilfred Wong, president of Sands China Ltd.

"During this time of vigilance against the spread of the coronavirus, we are pleased to take this opportunity to extend our goodwill to the community and support Macao's coronavirus relief efforts," the executive further noted.

The executive hopes that the donation of medical supplies can

help support the needs of community groups in enhancing hygiene at their centres and at their members' homes.

"Our gratitude goes out to the Sands Cares Ambassadors for their eager participation in this important community initiative," Dr. Wong added.

Meanwhile, aside from the series of donations that the gaming operator had conducted, heeding to the government's call of supporting associations and private firms in times of crisis, the large-scale international company continues its donation of MOP 300,000 for Macau Holy House of Mercy's Welfare Shop.

This is to support the distribution of over 360 food hampers to disadvantaged families. It is the company's eighth straight year supporting the shop's food hamper distribution.

The hampers contain staple items like rice, noodles, biscuits, canned food, cooking oil, toothpaste, shower gel and others.

Sands China has been a major sponsor of the programme since 2013, and has donated MOP 2.3 million to date, including this year's donation of MOP 300,000.

The Welfare Shop making special arrangements to distribute the food hampers accordingly in compliance with the Macao's go-

vernment's appeal to avoid gathering in large groups.

"Each year, Sands China considers it our privilege and responsibility to show goodwill to the community, including by supporting low-income families through this annual volunteer activity with Macau Holy House of Mercy's Welfare Shop," said Dr Wong.

"And even though the current coronavirus situation meant that we couldn't be as hands-on as we always like to be, we are glad to have still been able to express our commitment to helping families in financial need through our support of the Welfare Shop."

Sands China Ltd. has pledged to continually support these associations to a bid to raise the profile of local charitable organisations and their events, which in turn could increase the number of residents to have the opportunity to offer a helping hand." Sands China's community work is part of Sands Cares, the global corporate citizenship programme of parent company Las Vegas Sands Corp.

Sands Cares integrates the company's philanthropic work worldwide in four key areas: financial giving, community problem solving and collaboration, in-kind donations, and team member volunteerism.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

IN MAJOR SHIFT ONLINE, ONLY 20% OF PUBLIC OPINIONS VOICED VIA TRADITIONAL MEANS

JULIE ZHU

OF the total number of public opinions that the local government has received from the local community, traditional means of input now only represent approximately 20%, representing a major shift online.

During yesterday's Legislative Assembly (AL) plenary session, Secretary for Administration and Justice André Cheong Weng Chon explained, in the context of the latest e-governance bill, that these opinions include most petitions submitted by local associations to different government departments. Most of the city's associations chose to submit opinions printed on paper to the government.

By contrast, the majority of the members of the public have been voicing their opinions to the local government through emails and phone call inquiries.

Cheong's comment, which came during the lawmakers' discussion on the e-governance bill, was in reply to lawmaker Sulu Sou's enquiry that suggested Macau's e-governance was "lagging behind" the rest of the world. Sou also pointed out that on the website of the Chief Executive's office and the city's



five secretaries, no email addresses are published for the public to send opinions.

Sou further proposed that the local government should not simply use e-methods to carry out 'one-way propaganda' but should also seek public opinion.

The Secretary said that Macau's public departments have already developed many online-services and that, with this new bill, the already existing e-services will see improvements. Moreover, according to the Secretary, once this bill comes into effect, it will facilitate the local government in collecting public

opinion through electronic methods.

In addition, the Secretary is certain that "this bill can solve the problem" of the wasted effort of many members of the public who submit documents and complete public services procedures online to only eventually be requested to submit paper documents through traditional channels to government departments.

"The government will certainly make it easier," said Cheong.

Currently, members of the public can find specific public services on different government websites depending on the nature of each service. Services

within a specific government department can only be found on that department's website.

The local government hopes to create a centralized website system which integrates all basic public services into one single platform.

Cheong explained that the Public Administration and Civil Service Bureau (SAFP) will serve as the coordinator of all basic public services, meaning that this bureau will be responsible for integrating all the basic public services into the one online platform. Cheong hopes that this centralized platform will be easier and save time for members of the public.

Monetary Authority cuts benchmark rate for second time this month

THE Monetary Authority of Macao lowered the benchmark interest rate yesterday by 64 basis points to 0.86%. The move marks the second reduction this month, and follows similar decisions in the United States and neighboring Hong Kong.

The rate cut announced by the U.S. Federal Reserve is designed to stimulate the U.S. economy in response to the damage anticipated by the Covid-19 coronavirus outbreak.

The Hong Kong dollar is pegged to the U.S. dollar in a band that ranges between HKD7.75 and 7.85 to the U.S. dollar. In turn, the Macau pataca is fixed to the Hong Kong dollar at an exchange rate of 1.03. As the Hong Kong dollar is pegged to the greenback, both special administrative regions essentially import U.S. monetary policy, although local banks are not obliged to follow with lower retail costs.

In a statement issued yesterday, the AMCM noted that the policy rates in Hong Kong and Macau "should be basically con-

sistent in order to maintain the effective operation of the linked exchange rate system."

Hong Kong followed the Fed as usual and reduced its benchmark rate by 44 basis points to 0.86% hours after the Fed. It also reduced capital buffers.

Meanwhile, countries across Asia are following the decision in the U.S.

The Bank of Korea slashed its benchmark interest rate to a record low of 0.75% in an emergency move following actions by the U.S. Federal Reserve.

New Zealand issued an early-Monday emergency rate cut of 75 basis points to 0.25%, and promised to keep the new rate for at least a year.

India's central bank took a number of liquidity measures yesterday and didn't rule out an interest rate cut at its April meeting.

In the Philippines, central bank Governor Benjamin Diokno, who is due to announce a rate decision on Thursday, signaled he could cut by more than 25 basis points. **DB/BLOOMBERG**

STUDY

COVID-19 SYMPTOMS LESS SEVERE AMONG CHILDREN

MAJOR findings from a study conducted by a scientific research team of the Faculty of Medicine at the Macau University of Science and Technology have just been published in international biomedical journal Nature Medicine, the university announced in a press statement.

Led by Professor Zhang Kang, the study was titled "Characteristics of pediatric SARS-CoV-2 infection and potential evidence for persistent fecal viral shedding."

As cited in a press release, dean of the faculty, Manson Fok said the team found that overall symptoms in children infected with Covid-19 are less severe than those in adults.

"They do not have the high fever that is common in adults. The clinical manifestations such as cough and fatigue, and obvious pneumonia, are largely absent in children. The lung X-rays and laboratory study also have less abnormal values," said Fok. "SARS-CoV-2 nucleic acid can be detected in [the] gas-

trointestinal tract (fecal), and its positive duration is longer and amount higher than that in the respiratory track; hence the possibility of fecal-oral transmission is high," he added.

Thus, the study suggested that rectal swab-testing may be more useful than oropharyngeal-swabs in diagnosis. Professor Zhang Kang's team is working on several studies on COVID-19 in several interdisciplinary fields, with more advances to be released shortly, the university said. **LV**

SECURITY

GOV'T TO MONITOR PUBLIC OPINION ON COVID-19 WITH NEW CENTER

A new government center, led by the Secretariat for Security, has been set up to monitor online public opinion related to the Covid-19 outbreak, local public broadcaster Radio Macau reported yesterday.

The newly-founded public opinion monitoring center will proactively identify "untrue" comments and information online. It will also handle inquiries, under the name of the Civil Protection Center, forwarded from the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination

Center's hotline outside the hotline's operating hours.

According to the public broadcaster's report, the Civil Protection Center will focus on explaining the development of the pandemic to callers.

The government explained that the authority handling the epidemic operation is not the Civil Protection Center. The draft of the Civil Protection Law is still under discussion at the Legislative Assembly.

One provision within the bill relating to a "rumor crime" has generated much

debate within society. The article will empower the government to prosecute people spreading "rumors" as deemed necessary by the government.

Commentators and lawmakers have expressed their concerns over the provision, which may eventually lead to a silencing of public discourse.

The Secretariat for Security has also been in charge of the intercity communication task force with neighboring Zhuhai, since the outbreak started in Macau in late January. **AL**



Pamplona, Spain

COVID-19

Lockdowns erupt as world infections surpass those in China

ARITZ PARRA
& FRANK JORDAN, MADRID

YESTERDAY marked another milestone in the global battle to outwit the new coronavirus, as reported infections in the rest of the world overtook those in China. Millions of people in Europe and the United States began holing up at home amid rapid-fire border closures announced by one nation after the other.

Spain officially became the fourth-most infected country in the world, surpassing South Korea as its arc of contagion curved higher.

Only China, Italy and Iran have more confirmed cases of COVID-19 than Spain, where the number of infections increased overnight by roughly 20% to 9,191 and the number of fatalities rose to 309, according to the Spanish Health Ministry. The actual figure was presumed to be even higher, because Spain switched to a new system of reporting.

Spain's interior minister said European Union nations yesterday would discuss possibly closing the country's borders.

"It is a real possibility to fight against the expansion of the virus and to guarantee the health of European citizens," said minister Fernando Grande Marlaska.

Portugal and Spain have already halted tourism across their 1,200-kilometer shared border. Goods and workers will still be allowed to cross.

Spain has also already deployed the army to the streets, ordered its 46 million people to stay home and taken control of private hospitals. Marlaska said a total lockdown could be the next step. Nearly 500 people are under intensive care in Spanish hospitals for the virus, 70% of them in Madrid, the capital.

The measures echoed those already in place in Italy and now being rolled out in other parts of Europe and the United States. Serbia called out the army to help enforce the virus restrictions.

Among the most drastic measures, the Swiss city-state of Geneva banned gatherings of more than five people, though exceptions were made for business meetings that followed public health rules.

"What we don't want is people having picnics" with friends or relatives, said Geneva official Henri Della Casa.

Germany, which saw its infections increase by over 1,000 in 24 hours, restricted border crossings with France, Austria, Switzerland, Denmark and Luxembourg, while insisting that the flow of goods wouldn't be affected. The move was a sharp turnabout from the government's insistence last week that border controls weren't an effective way to curb the outbreak.

"We have a window of time at the moment to slow the spread of the virus," German government spokeswoman Ulrike Demmer told reporters.

Still, some countries resisted such strong measures. Unlike most of its European neighbors, Britain has not closed bars and restaurants, banned large events or shut schools to slow the spread of the virus. Prime Minister Boris Johnson's spokesman, James Slack, said closing schools hadn't been ruled out, but "the scientific and medical advice is that that's not a step which we should be taking at this point in time."

While traffic has begun returning to Beijing, office buildings were enforcing strict screenings for fever

In Asia, where the virus has been a brutal fact of life for months, authorities urged vigilance to keep hard-won gains against the microscopic foe that has shut down travel, severely rattled financial markets, upended daily life and was threatening the livelihoods of millions.

"If we loosen our grip on the quarantine, it could be just a matter of time for the embers of small-scale cluster infections to be revived," the South Korean Dong-a Ilbo newspaper said in an editorial yesterday.

New rules governing daily life cascaded around the globe, restricting bars, restaurants, school

and work. Resorts closed on the Las Vegas strip. Many restaurants offered only takeout, if they were open at all. Schools, concerts, sporting events — even small-scale St. Patrick's Day parties — were canceled.

In the United States, health officials recommended a limit to groups of 50 or more people and a government expert said a 14-day national shutdown may be needed. Americans returning from abroad encountered chaotic airport health screenings that clearly broke all virus-fighting rules against having packed crowds close together.

For most people, the coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. But severe illness can occur, especially in the elderly and people with existing health problems. Worldwide, over 169,000 people have been infected, 6,500 have died and over 77,000 have recovered, most of them in China.

Governors in California, Illinois and Ohio told all bars and restaurants to close or reduce their number of customers. New York City will shutter the nation's largest public school system as early as Tuesday, sending over 1.1 million children home.

With fears increasing that the pandemic will depress U.S. economic growth, the Federal Reserve took emergency action by slashing its benchmark interest rate to near zero and deciding to buy \$700

billion in Treasury and mortgage bonds.

China, where the virus was first detected in December, now accounts for less than half of the world's cases, according to Johns Hopkins University. Yesterday, China relaxed travel restrictions in the hardest-hit virus province of Hubei, sending thousands of workers back to jobs at factories desperate to get production going again.

The official Xinhua News Agency reported that cities just outside the epicenter of Wuhan were chartering buses to send back to work residents who had returned home for the Lunar New Year in late January.

The move came as Chinese officials said the outbreak had mostly run its course domestically but they remained vigilant against imported cases. Starting Monday, travelers arriving in Beijing from overseas will be quarantined for 14 days in designated facilities at their own expense.

While traffic has begun returning to Beijing, office buildings were enforcing strict screenings for fever and many restaurants still only offer takeout. Children who would usually be snowed under with classes remained glued to screens, shopping, chatting and watching video clips.

South Korea yesterday reported only 74 more cases but there were still worries that infections might surge again from those returning from Europe or from local people attending church services. Some urged authorities to further postpone the new school year.

South Korean Prime Minister Chung Se-kyun called the country's decline in cases a "hopeful sign" but said South Korea should "never loosen its guard."

Ireland ordered all pubs and bars to close for two weeks — including on Tuesday, St. Patrick's Day — and urged people not to hold house parties. A German medical adviser echoed that thought, telling people not to hold "corona parties" at home amid a shutdown of bars and clubs.

Turkey's highest religious authorities suspended Friday prayers in tens of thousands of mosques across the country.

Italy on Sunday reported its biggest day-to-day increase in infections — 3,590 more cases — for a total of 24,747. With 1,809 virus-related deaths, Italy has more than a quarter of the global death toll.

In Spain, a cut in the frequency of commuter trains created in considerable crowds yesterday morning in Atocha, one of Madrid's main train stations.

Wearing blue latex gloves, cleaner Mari Carmen Ramirez said she, like many others, couldn't afford to risk her salary of 950 euros (\$1,042) per month.

"I fear the coronavirus, but I fear more not being able to pay the utility bills," said the 55-year-old. "When this is all over, how are we going to eat?" AP

ANALYSIS

On the front lines of developing a test for the coronavirus

DAVID PRIDE
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SAN DIEGO,
THE CONVERSATION

AP PHOTO



THAT escalated quickly!" is a common trope used in popular culture to describe when a situation gets out of hand before you've even had a chance to think about it. We don't often use this trope in medicine, but I can think of nothing better to describe what has been going on in the U.S. with the coronavirus outbreak.

I am a physician scientist who practices infectious disease medicine and runs a research laboratory that specializes in viruses. I spend much of my time directing a clinical microbiology laboratory for a large academic medical center. If you've ever had a doctor tell you that they are going to test you for a virus, it's teams like mine that develop and run that test.

When I first heard about the coronavirus outbreak in China, I had no idea I would soon be on the front lines of dealing with this outbreak.

WHY TESTING IS AT THE HEART OF THE PROBLEM

Let me start by describing exactly what this virus is. It's a novel virus from the coronavirus family and is spread by respiratory droplets (like when you sneeze) and contact with contaminated surfaces. The "common cold" is usually caused by rhinoviruses, but there are four coronaviruses that also cause colds.

The SARS outbreak of 2003 resulted in 774 deaths and the MERS outbreak of 2012 resulted in 858 deaths; both were caused by novel coronaviruses. The ease of spread of this new virus – called SARS-CoV-2 – has led to its rapid emergence across the globe, with more than 5,000 deaths and counting. Although there are drugs in development and testing phases, there are no drugs currently available that are proven effective against severe coronavirus illnesses.

For the most part, public health officials don't

know who in the U.S. has it because there isn't a method to test most of the population for it. If you don't know who has a disease, it's impossible to predict its spread, how many people will get it, or how many people may die from it. Testing in the U.S. must be expanded, which a number of companies are working on, to reveal the scope of the problem.

HOW THE US LAGGED BEHIND

Earlier this year, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention developed a rapid test for SARS-CoV-2. This test is designed to amplify and detect the genetic material in the virus – its RNA (ribonucleic acid) – from your body. It targets certain conserved RNA sequences in the virus that are different from those found in other coronaviruses. The problem is that for a population of 331 million, a single testing center wasn't nearly enough. The CDC enabled state public health labs to use their test, but this still hasn't been enough to meet population needs.

The testing deficiency leaves much of the U.S. population out in the cold. It's now up to companies, hospitals and academic centers to pick up the slack. Part of the delay was due to what happened during the Zika virus outbreak of 2015, when laboratories that developed their own tests were halted by the FDA because they did not have

approval.

Testing development really picked up Feb. 29 after the FDA relented and released guidance for developing tests in individual laboratories, and a free-for-all ensued. We laboratory directors were on the spot to develop tests, and most were unprepared to say the least. Test development typically takes months.

Labs use what is called a reverse-transcription polymerase chain reaction, or RT-PCR, to test a sample taken with a swab from the back of someone's throat and/or nose. The tests work by converting the virus' RNA to DNA and then replicating it millions of times in order to amplify its presence and then detect its genetic sequence. If it is detected, a patient is infected.

WHAT WENT WRONG?

If you compare our ability to ramp up testing to that observed in China and South Korea, the U.S. response was not up to par. Both countries allowed companies to develop and distribute tests from an early stage, permitting large portions of their populations to be tested.

Part of the problem in the U.S. is the lack of centralized facilities across the country that all have the same equipment to run complex tests. Just in the state of California alone where I live, there are hundreds of hospitals, most with significant differences in their equipment and

testing capabilities. When the CDC made their test available, my first thought was, "We don't even have the equipment to run this test." Most hospitals in my state and across the country faced this exact same dilemma: a lack of proper equipment and difficulty obtaining adequate testing materials.

Also, problems with CDC-manufactured testing kits arose immediately and caused testing failures when they first released them in February.

WHY IT'S NOT THE END OF THE WORLD

There's a lot of negatives to find in the response to the coronavirus outbreak, but the flaws in the response represent learning opportunities. Highly infectious viruses in a connected world won't stay contained for long. Our assumption should have been that it would make it to the U.S. from the onset.

The next time there's an outbreak, we laboratory directors won't be waiting for the government to give us the green light to develop diagnostic tests. We'll do it on our own and press the FDA to allow us to use it. The hard work to ramp up testing in the U.S. is the most significant effort in which I have ever taken part. If you could see the efforts of companies, academic centers, and hospitals right now in the U.S., you'd walk away with optimism that we're up to the task.

this day in history



1968 ANTI-VIETNAM DEMO TURNS VIOLENT

More than 200 people have been arrested after thousands of demonstrators clashed in an anti-Vietnam war protest outside the United States embassy in London.

The St John Ambulance Brigade said it treated 86 people for injuries. Fifty were taken to hospital including up to 25 police officers.

The trouble followed a big rally in Trafalgar square, when an estimated 10,000 demonstrated against American action in Vietnam and British support for the United States.

The mood at the rally was described as good humoured. The violence broke out when the protesters marched to the US embassy in Grosvenor Square.

The embassy was surrounded by hundreds of police. They stood shoulder to shoulder to cordon off the part of the square closest to the embassy.

Tensions rose as the crowd refused to back off and mounted officers rode at the demonstrators.

The protesters broke through the police ranks onto the lawn of the embassy, tearing up the plastic fence and uprooting parts of a hedge.

During a protracted battle, stones, earth, firecrackers and smoke bombs were thrown.

One officer was treated for a reported serious spinal injury, another for a neck injury.

One officer had his hat knocked off and was struck continuously on the back of the head with a stick from a banner as he clung, head down, to his horse's neck.

Earlier the actress Vanessa Redgrave was allowed to enter the embassy with three supporters to deliver a protest.

She had been one of the speakers at the rally in Trafalgar Square.

Labour MP Peter Jackson, has said he will be tabling a private question for answer by the Home Secretary about what he called "police violence".

He told The Times newspaper: "I was particularly outraged by the violent use of police horses, who charged into the crowd even after they had cleared the street in front of the embassy."

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

There was another big anti-Vietnam war demonstration on 27 October 1968. An estimated 25,000 took part in the march and once again trouble flared outside the US embassy in Grosvenor Square.

But security was very tight. There were 1,000 police outside the embassy and officers lined the streets of the march to prevent a repeat of the trouble in March.

The last American troops left Vietnam on 29 March 1973. The following year there were frequent violations of the peace treaty.

In 1975, fullscale warfare resumed between North and South Vietnam -without American intervention. In 1976 the first elections were held to a National Assembly, finally reuniting North and South.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES Mar. 21-Apr. 19
If you're feeling the urge to start something that offers you a challenge, today could bring you a great opportunity to do just that. It's a very good time to initiate a new work, school, or hobby project.

TAURUS Apr. 20-May. 20
Too much couch and television time can make a person start to feel a bit lazy, no? You might need to get up and get active, even if you have no idea what you'll do. Just get up and get out of the house.

GEMINI May. 21-Jun. 21
Ready for action? You'd better be, because the stars are sending you something unexpected and very exciting your way. It could be a hot, new romance or an unexpected windfall.

CANCER Jun. 22-Jul. 22
If you stay open to different ideas today, you could gain a valuable insight that most other people would kill for. It makes sense: In order to fill your mind, you have to open it!

LEO Jul. 23-Aug. 22
You could have a very fun day today, full of silliness and laughter galore. Take the time to enjoy yourself, and put aside any serious work for a while if you can.

VIRGO Aug. 23-Sep. 22
Today, having a discussion with someone amusing could open up your mind to a whole new way of thinking, but it won't change your ideas about what is right and what is wrong.

LIBRA Sep. 23-Oct. 22
Every relationship involves a balance of power, but it's important that you not confuse balancing power with fighting for control. Not every compromise has to be about someone giving up what they want.

SCORPIO Oct. 23-Nov. 21
This is the kind of day that the introverted part of your personality loves! You could be experiencing the perfect combination of flexible schedule, positive energy, and an urge for self-indulgence.

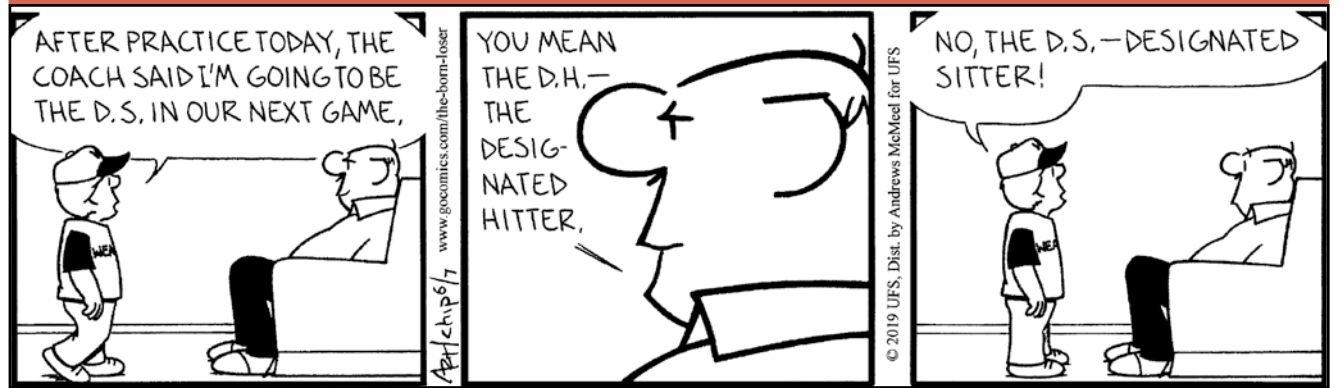
SAGITTARIUS Nov. 22-Dec. 21
Socially, your life may be about to get a lot busier! You're loved by all your friends, and they want to spend more time with you. One of them could have an exciting idea for a group vacation.

CAPRICORN Dec. 22-Jan. 19
It's time to stop thinking so long and hard about what you want to say! Sometimes being spontaneous is the only way you can initiate something new and exciting.

AQUARIUS Jan. 20-Feb. 18
You might not be able to get along with everyone as well as you'd like to right now, but there won't be any real fights. The social harmony will still be there, but there could be one or two people who rub you the wrong way.

PISCES Feb. 19-Mar. 20
If someone has owed you money (or something else) for too long, you need to speak up. Thinking about what others owe you without asking them for it will only increase the amount of stress you feel.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

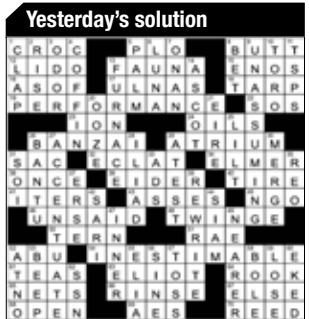
WEATHER

	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- Campaign tactic; 6- Lessen; 11- Sch. group; 14- Name; 15- Impressionist Edgar; 16- Branch; 17- Treaties; 18- Pub game; 19- Mens (criminal intent); 20- Inner surface of the hand; 22- Paradises; 24- Rote procedure; 28- Entrails; 30- Catalog; 31- Come into contact with; 32- Lake in the Sierra Nevada; 33- Weed plant; 37- Barely make, with "out"; 38- Sprite; 39- Acapulco aunt; 40- Cutting; 43- Three squares; 45- Ejects; 46- Small village; 47- In practice but not in law; 50- Mill; 51- Singer Bonnie; 52- Thrust; 53- Hot time in Paris; 54- Herbert Hoover, for one; 57- Son of Abraham; 62- Richards of Texas; 63- ___ a million; 64- Pluck; 65- Slender bar; 66- Wanting; 67- Art supporter;

DOWN: 1- Indy 500 sponsor; 2- Actress Farrow; 3- List-ending abbr.; 4- High-pitched; 5- Breathe; 6- Discombobulate; 7- Ray of light; 8- Cabinet dept.; 9- Tasteless items, junk; 10- Spirit; 11- Kitchen gadget; 12- Tendency; 13- Gather; 21- Aardvark morsel; 23- Writer Roald; 24- Gives a 9.8, say; 25- Honshu port; 26- Doorkeeper; 27- Also; 28- Greek column type; 29- Unclothed; 31- Hire cars; 33- Same here; 34- Author Calvino; 35- Fuel transport; 36- Beastly; 38- Hey, over here!; 41- Outer garment; 42- Public sale; 43- Apparatus; 44- CPR giver; 46- Possesses; 47- Gloomy, in poetry; 48- Jack Sprat could ___ fat; 49- Demon; 50- Amusing; 52- Discharged a debt; 55- Single unit; 56- Minute; 58- Neptune's realm; 59- ___ longa, vita brevis; 60- Hail, to Caesar; 61- Animation frame;



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- 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



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3,180 ft² \$18,000,000 (ref: 19126002)

[Macau] Seaview Garden 3 1/2 2 1/2
1,420 ft² \$11,800,000 (ref: 20016004)

[Macau] Waterfront Duet Studio 1 1/2
469 ft² \$5,100,000 (ref: 20016001)

[Taipa] Nam Long 1 1/2 1 1/2
785 ft² \$4,780,000 (ref: 20016009)

FOR RENT

[Coloane] Grand Coloane Resort 1 1/2 1 1/2
710 ft² \$10,000/mth (ref: n/a)

[Taipa] Nam Long 2 1/2 1 1/2
645 ft² \$11,800/mth (ref: 19111001)

[Macau] Vai Fung Triplex 2 1/2 2 1/2
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AVIATION

CATHAY LOSES HKD2 BILLION IN FEBRUARY DUE TO VIRUS

CATHAY Pacific Airways Ltd. said it made a "significant" unaudited loss of more than HKD2 billion (\$257 million) in February alone because of widespread disruption from the coronavirus, which has left the global aviation industry reeling.

The monthly loss is for Cathay and full-service unit Cathay Dragon, Chief Customer and Commercial Officer Ronald Lam said in a statement yesterday. Last week, Cathay reported a 28% drop in 2019 net income to HK\$1.69 billion as protests in Hong Kong hurt demand. Now the coronavirus is proving to be even more damaging to the Hong Kong carrier's business.

Lam said Cathay will only operate a "bare skeleton passenger flight schedule" for April, representing a capacity reduction of up to 90%. That could continue into May if there's no relaxation of travel and immigration restrictions that have been imposed by nations worldwide.

Cathay and Cathay Dragon carried 1.01 million passengers in February and passenger load factor fell by 28.6 percentage points to 53.1%, according to the statement. Capacity in available seat kilometers

slid 29.3%. Regional routes to mainland China, Taiwan, Korea and the Philippines saw the most significant drops in passenger volume. Cargo carried by the two airlines fell 9.6% from a year earlier to 118,711 tonnes.

Cathay also owns the carrier Hong Kong Express, which it acquired last year. Lam said overall passenger numbers fell 64% in February from the same month last year. "On a typical day following the Chinese New Year peak we would normally carry around 90,000 passengers; towards the end of February, that figure dropped to below 20,000."

Hong Kong's tourism board yesterday reported a 96% plunge in visitor arrivals in February based on preliminary data, and said declines are expected to persist in March. Lam also said the situation has deteriorated since February.

"We have already announced around 65% passenger flight capacity reduction for March," he said. "Governments around the world have since introduced more travel restrictions, with the most recent ones starting to affect our major long-haul markets including Euro-

pe, the United States and Southwest Pacific."

In a separate statement yesterday evening, Cathay said it had entered an aircraft sale and leaseback agreement in which it will sell six Boeing Co. 777-300ER jets to BOC Aviation Ltd. for \$703.8 million and lease them back. The move will free up cash that can be used for general working capital requirements, Cathay said.

Cathay last week predicted a substantial loss for the first half of this year as the virus presents another challenge on top of anti-government protests in Hong Kong. The airline, which has asked staff to take unpaid leave, is reinstating a few flights from U.S. cities and London this week, citing demand from people wanting to return home to Hong Kong in time for the Easter break.

"The scale of the challenge we are currently facing is unprecedented and no one can predict when conditions will improve," Lam said in the statement. "Our advance passenger bookings show no clear signs of recovery at this stage, and the gap in bookings compared to 2019 continues to widen." **BLOOMBERG**

CORPORATE BITS

MGM partners with local firm to launch virtual classroom



MGM has partnered with the Yorkshire Online Academy to introduce a virtual classroom that offers a series of practical new courses, the gaming operator announced in a statement.

During the business-matching session under the "MYEIC ProQ Alliance" program co-organized by MGM and Macao Young Entrepreneur Incubation Center in late 2019, MGM met with young local entrepreneur Yorkshire Online Academy, which resulted in a partnership to launch a training program in Putonghua for commercial purposes.

As of today, over 1,000 team members have already registered on this platform, said MGM. Thirty

more new virtual classroom courses will be launched with Yorkshire Online Academy, covering areas such as hotel operations, customer services and food safety.

Meanwhile, the MGM eAcademy introduced a Special Selection series in February. The series consists of six topics, including those developed by local SMEs and other learning partners of MGM such as Harvard Business Review and the University of Macau.

According to the gaming operator, over 4,000 team members have signed up for the series, enabling them to learn freely through their mobile devices, even when they are off-property.

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TOKYO 2020

IOC official says no deadline for decision on Olympics

THE leader of the IOC's coordination commission for the Tokyo Olympics said there is no May deadline to cancel the games and he remains confident the event will go ahead despite sports coming to a virtual standstill globally amid the coronavirus outbreak.

John Coates, who will have to go into government-mandated self-isolation when he returns to Australia this week from Olympic business in Europe, told the Sydney Morning Herald newspaper: "It's all proceeding to start on the 24th of July."

Dick Pound, a former IOC vice president, said in an interview with The Associated Press last month that the end of May loomed as a possible deadline for the IOC to make a call on the Tokyo Olympics.

But Coates, an IOC vice president and head of the Australian Olympic Committee, told the paper in a telephone interview from Switzerland that the IOC didn't recognize the deadline and he thought Pound had backed away from it, too.



John Coates, the leader of the IOC's coordination commission for the Tokyo Olympics

"It's never been the IOC's position. It was Dick's idea. There is four months to go," Coates told the newspaper yesterday.

More than 169,000 people have been infected and 6,500 killed in the coronavirus pandemic. The COVID-19 illness causes mild or moderate symptoms for most,

but severe symptoms are more likely in the elderly or people with existing health problems. More than 77,000 people have recovered from it so far, mostly in China where the outbreak started late last year. Though China still has the most infections, a dozen other countries have more than 1,000

cases, mostly in Europe.

Coates was in Europe when the Australian government announced the mandatory two-week self isolation on all people arriving in the country after the weekend.

The latest restrictions, including bans on gatherings of more than 500 people, came in the wake

of the cancellation of the Australian Grand Prix in Melbourne over the weekend, and the suspension of sporting events and large-scale gatherings in parts of the world affected by the virus outbreak.

That has caused postponements and uncertainty for qualifying in some Olympic sports, although the IOC and Tokyo organizers have consistently said the games will go ahead as scheduled.

"The difficulty for those who have qualified or will qualify is they won't get any more international competition," Coates said, adding that some countries may have to base selections on time trials or previous performances.

As for athletes traveling to Japan from affected countries, Coates said some national Olympic committees were already preparing.

"The Chinese are probably the best organized," he told the SMH. "The Chinese are in various parts of Europe and the last I heard is they're bringing them all together in a university in Paris where they'll be fully contained, 600 of them, and they will go straight from confinement there, straight into Japan. They won't put anyone on a plane who has got coronavirus."

"They're all basically in serious lockdown."

The Olympics open on July 24, followed by the Paralympics on Aug. 25. **AP**

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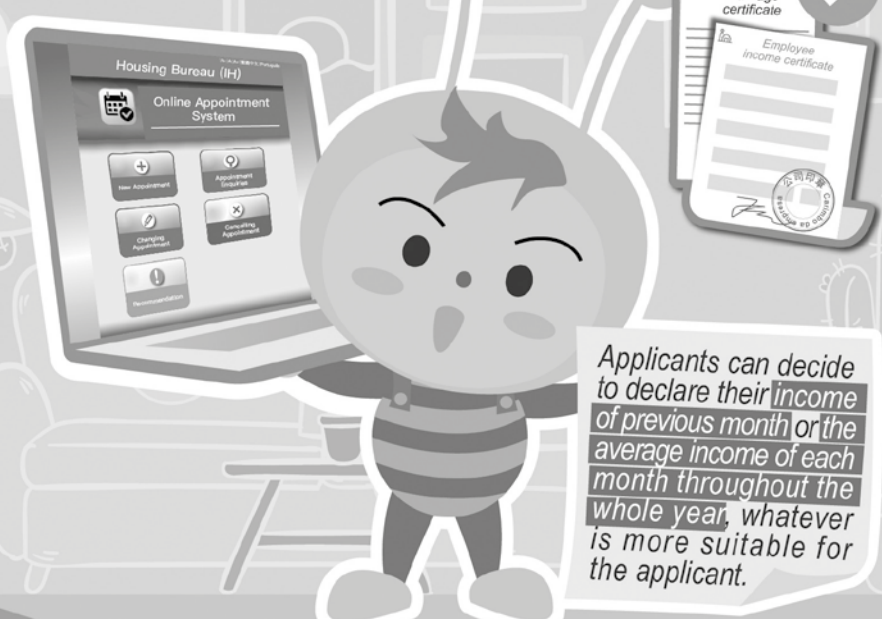

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Economic Housing application website
www.ihm.gov.mo/zh/heapplication

Online Appointment
<https://booking.ihm.gov.mo>

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28594875

OPINION

Our Desk

Anthony Lam



WRITING AMID THE 11TH CASE

Early morning yesterday, the latest Covid-19 infection was confirmed for Macau after the city recorded zero infections for 40 days.

It was not much of a surprise to me. I mean, who are you to think that Macau can stay immune when the disease is spreading to some of the most remote corners on Earth?

Indeed, compared with that Macau 17 years ago, when Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) struck the region, Macau was only a tranquil city with much lesser fame and fewer visitor arrivals. The population was also incomparable back then.

With that huge change, new cases coming in is not a matter of possibility, but of time. Not to mention the authority has said that a lot of students studying abroad are fighting to return.

But I am not going to boast how well the city has done or how we should brace for a new wave of cases. That has been happening for months. I believe it has already caused stress to many.

If you desire to find information on epidemic control, flip to the first seven pages, not this last one. You are on the wrong page.

The outbreak has invigorated creativity and innovation, if not fun, in the city. Many people have been striving hard to achieve that, but it seems that the most effective remedy is to sit down and think.

On social media, a collection of graphics that resemble those commonly shared among the older generations has previously gone viral. The collection has even made it to Hong Kong media outlets, which commended the creativity needed to urge senior citizens to keep their feet in Macau.

Believe it or not, the graphics were prepared by the Judiciary Police (PJ). The effectiveness is still unknown, because the PJ have not yet released any data. If I were to vote on the best work of the government this year, this would probably be my choice.

On the other hand, many parents were forced to work from home. It unexpectedly gave them more time to spend with their children. They have the chance to extensively witness the daily life of their children. More importantly, they can cuddle, care about, and converse with their children.

Much more common is that many people have eventually found the chance to test their cooking skills. At an earlier stage, many food outlets were closed, and people were made to stay home and realized that they had no excuse to avoid cooking.

A friend of mine whom I have known for more than a decade has taken the chance to exhibit his cooking – and food arrangement – skills. After knowing him for so long, I finally realized that he could cook!

Not only did he surprise his clan of social media (and real-life) friends with his cooking skills, he also arranged and presented his dishes nicely. He even staged a social media live broadcast where he cooked dinner for his family one night.

Once again, I'm not celebrating a disaster. I know many people hate doing so; so do I. I only want to keep a record of what happened in these past couple of months for future review.

US GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL: CORONAVIRUS VACCINE TRIAL STARTS TODAY

THE BUZZ

The first participant in a clinical trial for a vaccine to protect against the new coronavirus will receive an experimental dose today [Macau time], according to a government official.

The National Institutes of Health is funding the trial, which is taking place at the Kaiser Permanente Washington Health Research Institute in Seattle. The official who disclosed plans for the first participant spoke on condition of anonymity because the move has not been publicly announced.

Public health officials say it will take a year to 18 months to fully

validate any potential vaccine.

Testing will begin with 45 young, healthy volunteers with different doses of shots co-developed by NIH and Moderna Inc. There's no chance participants could get infected from the shots, because they don't contain the virus itself. The goal is purely to check that the vaccines show no worrisome side effects, setting the stage for larger tests.

Dozens of research groups around the world are racing to create a vaccine as COVID-19 cases continue to grow.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

TRADE UNION LAW DEFEATED AGAIN

JULIE ZHU



JULIE ZHU

THE Legislative Assembly (AL) has once again rejected a trade union bill, with just nine lawmakers in favor and 16 opposed.

This is the 11th time a trade union law proposal has been considered by the AL. Lawmakers including Ella Lei and Au Kam San supported the bill whereas Pang Chuan and Cheung Lup Kwan, among many others, opposed it.

Cheung Lup Kwan, one of the lawmakers who rarely speaks during AL plenary meetings, voiced his opposition to the proposal yesterday.

In Cheung's opinion, a trade union should include a large number of workers, not just a small group. "If a group of 15 people means a trade union, I can make hundreds of trade unions," said Cheung, adding that Macau has a "very good" system of resolution between employers and employees, claiming that in 90% of employment disputes the employers lose.

"In the old times, the trade union law was needed because capitalis-

ts exploited [workers]," Cheung argued, adding that that was no longer the case.

The supporters of the bill argued that the trade union law is a requirement of the Basic Law and international conventions also suggest Macau should have trade unions.

"The Basic Law lists many things, many of which have not been realized. Are we finishing the trade union law first?"

CHEUNG LUP KWAN
LAWMAKER

Cheung disagreed by saying that "the Basic Law lists many things, many of which have not been realized. Are we finishing the trade union law first?"

Cheung, who is an indirectly-elected lawmaker, related that, at this time, when Macau is still undergoing the Covid-19 prevention battle, "many businesses remain closed." He questioned whether employers could also set up a representative committee to ask the government for money whenever there is a business shutdown. "I don't feel it's very fair [to employers at this

time]," said Cheung.

Au Kam San responded to Cheung arguing that the AL had barred the bill in the past due to the claim that "it is not the right time" to advance with such legislation. Au also defended workers by noting that they are in a weaker position when signing contracts with their

employers, as employees have no way to complain when signing a contract which broadly favors the employer.

The latest proposal, brought to the AL by legislators Lam Lon Wai and Lei Chan U, was the 11th time the Special Administrative Region's parliament heard

the matter.

As the Times has previously reported, no other proposal generates as much fervent interest from Macau's rubber-stamp parliament than the trade union bill. It typically pits the workers representatives and the pro-democratic wing against the business interests of the AL.

Previously, the government has expressed its intent to present its own trade union bill in the future. Secretary for Economy and Finance Lei Wai Nong reaffirmed last week that it remains on the government's agenda.



South Africa The coronavirus has now been confirmed in at least 30 of Africa's 54 countries, officials said, and regional power South Africa warned of a new crisis once the virus begins to spread at home and into crowded low-income communities. The most alarming confirmation of a first case came from Somalia, the Horn of Africa nation with one of the continent's weakest health systems after nearly three decades of conflict. Tanzania, Liberia and Benin also announced their first cases.



Iran reported another 129 fatalities from the new coronavirus yesterday, the largest one-day rise in deaths since it began battling the Middle East's worst outbreak, which has claimed more than 850 lives and infected a number of senior officials in the country. Businesses in Tehran remained open, however, even as other countries in the region moved toward full lockdowns.

Europe Major airlines are scaling back flights dramatically in response to the coronavirus crisis that has seen Europe and the wider world go into lockdown. Budget airline EasyJet said it is making big cancellations that will continue on a rolling basis. It said that could result in the grounding of the majority of its fleet.



Las Vegas The owners of iconic Las Vegas casinos such as Bellagio and Wynn Las Vegas are shutting down as the coronavirus pandemic prompts authorities to lock down public gathering places. MGM Resorts' operations in Las Vegas include the MGM Grand and Mandalay Bay. The company said it will suspend operations at casinos and hotels indefinitely by today. It will not be taking reservations for arrivals prior to May 1.