

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

MacauDaily 澳門每日時報® Times

FOUNDER & PUBLISHER Kowie Geldenhuys

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF Paulo Coutinho

www.macaudailytimes.com.mo

Greater Bay Plan CTM

\$158 / 6GB

Data Increase Again

CTM supports you to make the final decision in

N.º 3502

FRIDAY

27 Mar 2020

T. 22° / 26°



Air Quality Good



“THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN’”

MOP 8.00
HKD 10.00



PEOPLE ENTERING MAINLAND CHINA THROUGH A BORDER CHECKPOINT IN GUANGDONG FACE QUARANTINE FROM TODAY, INCLUDING SARs, TAIWAN P5

SECRETARY LEI SAYS ‘THERE ARE SIGNS’ ECONOMY WILL RECOVER IN THE SECOND HALF P3

OUT OF LINE! LAWMAKER SK MAK SLAMS FOREIGN CAPITAL ENTERPRISES FOR ‘FAILING SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY DUTIES’ P3

BLOOMBERG



WHO A petition to oust the World Health Organization Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus has now surpassed 500,000 signatures, the media reported. On Jan. 31, a netizen named Osuka Yip started a petition titled, “Call for the resignation of Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General,” on Change.org, citing the official’s refusal on Jan. 23 to designate the novel coronavirus a global health emergency. [More on p8](#)

China A Chinese citizen who was working as a professor in Japan has been detained in China for alleged espionage and has confessed to spying and other unspecified wrongdoing, Beijing’s foreign ministry said yesterday. Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said the case against Yuan Keqin was backed up by “clear fact and conclusive evidence” and has been transferred to prosecutors.

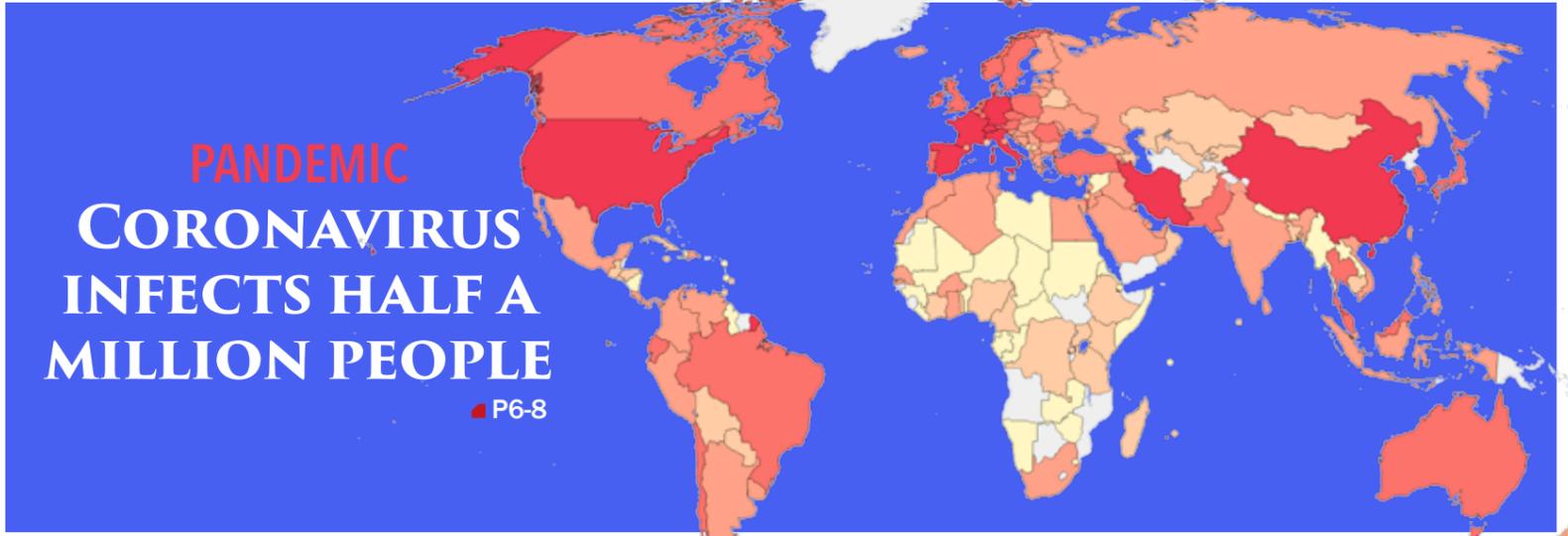
Hong Kong An opposition politician has been arrested over an online post criticizing a policeman who blinded a journalist in one eye during anti-government protests last year, local media said. Cheng Lai-king was released yesterday afternoon after being formally charged with sedition earlier in the day, public broadcaster RTHK said.

AP PHOTO



G20 Leaders of the world’s most powerful economies are convening virtually today [Macao time] in an effort to coordinate a response to the fast-spreading coronavirus, which has shuttered businesses and forced well over a quarter of the world’s population into home isolation.

More on backpage



EVA BUCHO



QUARANTINE HOTEL

MONEY NOT A PROBLEM IN TALKS WITH GAMING CONCESSIONAIRES, GOVERNMENT SAYS

 P2



MONEY NOT THE ISSUE IN QUARANTINE HOTEL NEGOTIATION

ANTHONY LAM

DURING the government's negotiation with hotel operators on offering their premises to host quarantined returnees, money has not been a main topic, Inês Chan, head of the Department for Licensing and Inspection of the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) disclosed.

Currently the government is offering 5,600 patacas per 14 days of room use to hotels being designated as quarantine facilities. The MGTO official said two days ago that the subsidy is for all hotels, regardless of their star rating.

When questioned whether this factor has set hurdles to the government's search for designated ho-

tels, the official expressed that it was unlikely. In negotiations with hotel operators, Chan said that both parties seldom touched on the topic of pricing.

"The [subsidy] is a publicized reference point," the official said at yesterday's daily press conference. She added that there was not much of a tug of war on the negotiation table on this issue.

Two days ago at the press conference, Chan said that many hotel operators have contacted them with regard to offering their premises as quarantine facilities. The official said they were of various sizes and scales.

The tourism and health authorities tend not to choose hotels that are too small as it could get

filled up easily. On the other hand, hotels that are too big – usually connected with non-accommodation facilities – may not be a good choice either, as it may cause security and management difficulties.

In order to transform a large resort into a quarantine facility, the authorities need to ensure that they can be accessed directly from neighboring streets. "When entering the hotel, the quarantined individual should not pass through any [shopping or casino] areas," the tourism official said.

"Access to the hotel and other areas must be 'physically separate,'" the official added. "It means that the quarantined and other guests should not cross paths."

She hinted that each hotel has "doors that the public can see and that the public cannot".

With that said, the government has confirmed that if an integrated resort is being used for quarantine purposes, other public areas, such as shopping malls and casino, will likely remain in operation. In order to facilitate that, "only small adjustments" – the official assures – will need to be made.

FLU CASES DROP

Leong Iek Hou, coordinator at the Macau Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), has revealed that the toll of flu infection in the past two months or so has dropped to zero.

The health authority attributed

this to rise of public consciousness in maintaining hygiene. It all started when Covid-19 emerged in Macau. From late January, after Lunar New Year holidays, schools and public services were suspended. Events and gatherings were called off or discouraged by the government. Wearing face masks in public became a must.

"When all these happened, the number of flu infection dropped dramatically to zero," Leong told yesterday's press conference. "Moreover, the condition has maintained for a long time."

The medical doctor unveiled that in the past month or so, the Conde São Januário Hospital has not recorded a single case of flu, although it conducted flu test on patients every day.

On the other hand, Leong reassured members of the public that they do not need to worry about living next to a home-quarantined.

"In epidemiology, there are three factors making a contagion: source, channel and immunity," the doctor stated. There must be a source of infection, a channel to allow an infection, as well as a person's immunity to an infection.

"When droplets cannot pass to another person, the channel is cut off. The infection will not be completed," the doctor explained.

She also considers it possible that Human Immunodeficiency Virus infection will drop this period, "as people have been advised to conduct social distancing," the doctor estimated.

While there has been a period when people stayed at home extensively, Leong was asked whether the pregnancy rate would be affected. "It may rise or fall, depending on how close people are," Leong said.

Gov't auditor uncovers subsidy error

AN error made by the organizer of the Macau Food Festival has shifted the event from making a profit to making a loss, the Audit Commission pointed out in its audit report. The error benefited the organizers however, as the festival would have had to reimburse its subsidi-

dizer, the Macao Foundation, with the profits.

The report pointed out that there is no legal stipulation requiring the Macao Foundation to review the Profit and Loss reports submitted by subsidized entities, considering the large amount of entities it subsidizes per year.

During the review, the government auditor realized that some of the subsidies for a particular entity had not been included in the report. The entity, which has received about MOP8.5 million annually from the foundation for several years, later turned out to be the Macau Food

Festival.

The festival was also found to be receiving funds from the Macao Government Tourism Office and the Environmental Protection Bureau, as well as the relatively small amount of MOP140,000 from the Sports Fund, which was never reported

to the foundation. The details were uncovered after reports from 2015 to 2018 were cross-referenced.

The commission discovered the organizer reported a profit of MOP700,000 in 2015, and losses for the next three consecutive years, ranging from MOP50,000 in 2016 to MOP460,000 in 2018.

If the funds from the Sports Fund had been added to the accounts,

the 2016 event would have turned a profit. This would have eventually led to the festival reimbursing the Macao Foundation. The commission noted the issue was not followed up.

However, the foundation said the subsidized entity had submitted certified financial statements signed by an accredited accountant or auditor, which the foundation found reliable. **AL**

www.macaudailytimes.com.mo

REACHING OUT!

+17,500

Like us on facebook.com/mdtimes



MacauDaily 澳門每日時報
Times

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF (DIRECTOR) Paulo Coutinho paulocoutinho@macaudailytimes.com
MANAGING EDITOR Daniel Beitler daniel@macaudailytimes.com
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS Leanda Lee, Severo Portela, Sheyla Zandonai

NEWSROOM AND CONTRIBUTORS Albano Martins, Annabel Jackson, Anthony Lam, Emilie Tran, Irene Sam, Ivo Carneiro de Sousa, Jacky I.F. Cheong, Jenny Lao-Phillips, João Palla Martins, Joseph Cheung, Julie Zhu, Juliet Risdon, Linda Kennedy, Lynzy Valles, Paulo Cordeiro de Sousa, Renato Marques, Richard Whitfield, Viviana Segui
DESIGNERS Eva Bucho, Miguel Bandeira | ASSOCIATE CONTRIBUTORS JML Property, MdME Lawyers, PokerStars, Ruan Du Toit Bester | NEWS AGENCIES Associated Press, Bloomberg, MacauHub, MacauNews, Xinhua
SECRETARY Yang Dongxiao amy@macaudailytimes.com

SEND NEWSWORTHY INFORMATION AND PRESS RELEASES TO: NEWSROOM@MACAUDAILYTIMES.COM WEBSITE: WWW.MACAUDAILYTIMES.COM.MO

A MACAU TIMES PUBLICATIONS LTD PUBLICATION

ADMINISTRATOR AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Kowie Geldenhuys kowie@macaudailytimes.com

OFFICE MANAGER Juliana Cheang juliana@macaudailytimes.com

ADDRESS Av. da Praia Grande, 599, Edif. Comercial Rodrigues, 12 Floor C, MACAU SAR Telephone: +853 287 160 81/2 Fax: +853 287 160 84

Advertisement advertising@macaudailytimes.com

For subscription and general issues:

general@macaudailytimes.com | Printed at Welfare Printing Ltd

Hopes for SAR's unprecedented uncertainty to stabilize in second half of 2020

JULIE ZHU

SECRETARY for Finance and Economy Lei Wai Nong said during yesterday's Legislative Assembly plenary meeting (AL) that there are signs the economy will recover in the second half of 2020.

Yesterday, after Lei presented the government's revised 2020 budget proposal to the AL, legislators approved in a first reading of the amendments. The government had cut its 2020 forecast for gross gaming revenue to 130 billion patacas (USD16 billion), half the initial projection of 260 billion patacas.

The secretary depicted the novel coronavirus, as the most "unprecedented uncertainty" the Macau SAR has ever encountered. The pandemic has caused numerous issues in the city, ranging from a higher rate of unemployment, to health risks and economic recession.

However, while acknowledging that the city is suffering due to Covid-19, Lei is still hopeful. He believes that this uncertainty might make way for economic changes in the last half of 2020.

As indicated by Lei, service and exports, which account for approximately 75% of Macau's economy, may rebound as mainland China recovers from the pandemic. Service and exports are closely linked



BLOOMBERG

to tourism.

Currently, the Macau domestic market contributes 25% to the city's economy with its local power of consumption.

"We need time and more measures," said Lei. "At the moment, we need domestic consumption [that is] aimed at helping local small and medium enterprises (SMEs) get through the tough winter."

The revised bill proposed multiple financial support measures for local people and local companies.

"We need to protect SMEs because they represent 90% of Macau's local companies, providing 40% of jobs," said Lei, suggesting that protecting SMEs would keep

Macau society stable.

According to Lei, the local government's hope for stable employment and a stable society lies in mainland China, as the region contributes 70% of Macau's tourist arrivals.

As of 6 p.m. yesterday, mainland China reported a total of 547 imported Covid-19 infections out of a total of 4,541 infections.

Lei believes that the situation in mainland China is "getting stable." Once the situation is finally stable, the local government will launch tourism plans to attract mainland visitors to travel to Macau.

"We want them to stay here more than one night," said Lei, as he explained the government's plan.

Last month, the city's tourism arrivals dropped 95.6% year-on-year, with only 156,300 visitors recorded.

Those arriving from China registered a year-on-year drop of 97.2% with a total of just 72,300.

Echoing Lei's sentiments, lawmaker Zheng Anting is also looking forward to seeing the economy recover. Zheng wants tourists, especially mainland tourists, to see Macau as the first region to "excellently" carry out Covid-19 prevention procedures.

In Zheng's words, "mainland China and the world envy Macau for its excellent work" handling the outbreak of the virus.

"With Macau being safer than anywhere else, [affluent] visitors

from mainland China will come to Macau instead of go to other places," said Zheng.

Zheng's opinion aligns with the secretary's. Lei endorsed Zheng and further elaborated on his opinions regarding Macau's economic recovery.

According to the secretary, the local government's strict Covid-19 policy aims to remind the tourists how safe Macau is, especially mainland and Hong Kong tourists.

The local government expects to present its policy address in April, at the AL. The relevant government secretaries will reveal the tourism recovery plan during the policy address.

Lawmaker Agnes Lam asked for confirmation of whether the mainland had scheduled visitation permits to Macau to resume in July.

The secretary did not answer, only saying that even if the economy makes a recovery in the second half of the year, the city should not expect the economy to be as it was in 2018 or 2019.

Despite suggesting several times that the economy would commence recovery in the second half of 2020, Lei said that the local government wants the public to be well prepared. He also believes they may bring another budget bill to the AL later this year in case the Covid-19 situation persists or worsens.

Mak Soi Kun: Foreign-capital corporations 'out of line'

LAWMAKER Mak Soi Kun has accused Macau's "foreign-capital enterprises" of being "out of line" because they are not helping the local government by renting out integrated resort property for quarantine purposes.

Earlier this week, Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng expressed his disappointment at the city's gaming concessions because they were unreachable when the government was looking for more hotels for quarantine purposes.

"When I heard the Chief Executive, I felt, as a petty bourgeois, that these foreign-capital enterprises [were] out of line. In regard to this incident, they only know how to make money from Macau, but make no contribution," said Mak.

Mak also remarked that



RENATO MARQUES

all of Macau's sectors had donated resources to Macau. Many small and medium-sized enterprises

(SMEs) insisted on operating, and Mak said that these SMEs had been supporting the local government

in maintaining the city's economy.

Macau's casinos are taxed at a rate of 35% of gross

gaming revenue (GGR). However, in Mak's opinion, these large-size gaming operators still only make money in the city instead of contributing.

"The gaming industry, as [the] leading industry in Macau, makes so much money every year," said Mak, pointing out that the Chief Executive even had to publicly urge these corporations to fulfil their social responsibilities.

Compared with gaming enterprises, local SMEs are outstanding for their "passion and gratitude" for the country and the Macau SAR, according to the lawmaker.

Mak, as a lawmaker, has consistently been a voice for Macau residents in his AL speeches and has urged the government to put further sanctions in place

for uncooperative gaming operators.

"In the future, the SAR government's economic policies should not tilt [in favor of] foreign capital enterprises. They should care more about Macau local SMEs," said Mak, claiming that the proposal comes from other residents.

Meanwhile, lawmaker Angela Leong, who is also co-chair with another executive director at SJM Holdings, defended the gaming operators, noting that concessionaires have exerted its efforts to deter the spread of the outbreak. "Some colleagues may not know that gaming operators have done a lot and spent lots of efforts during this pandemic. You can visit gaming companies directly to learn about it," said Leong. **JZ**

MILD PATIENTS TRANSFERRED TO COLOANE

Three Covid-19 patients with mild symptoms have been transferred to the Public Health Clinical Center on Coloane Hilltop for treatment, Lo Iek Long, medical director of the Conde São Januário Hospital disclosed. The doctor stressed that there is nothing to worry about, as this is part of a pre-existing contingency plan. There are 120 beds in total on the top three floors of the center. The Health Bureau is now only using the top floor of the center. Arrangements for patients will be adjusted according to the situation. Currently, only 8.6% of negative pressure isolation ward beds are being used. Lo is confident that the local hospital has adequate capacity.

INSURANCE AGENTS ASK FOR LICENSE FEE WAIVER

An association representing local insurance agents has made a request to the government to waive this year's license fee. In addition, they requested that the government waive or postpone the compulsory training sessions for this year. The other three requests the association has made to the government were about extending relief measures to the industry, expanding the use of medical vouchers to medical insurance charges, as well as investigating medical insurance for all. The Monetary Authority of Macao replied to the association that the government has already announced several types of tax returns and a waiver on the license fee is likely included.

MANY HOTELS SHOW INTEREST IN BECOMING DESIGNATED HOTELS

After Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng expressed disappointment several days ago about the difficulty the government faced sourcing hotels to host quarantined arrivals, Inês Chan from the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) disclosed that many hotels – some of them small hostels – have contacted the office to express their willingness to become a designated hotel, or to inquire about the scheme. However, the tourism official declined to name any hotels as “there is a lot of work going on” and she did not want to cause public confusion. Before being confirmed as a designated hotel, inspectors from the Health Bureau, MGTO and the police will inspect the premises.

MACAU PHOTO AGENCY VIA UNSPLASH



PORTUGUESE COMMUNITY LAUNCHES FUNDRAISING FOR PORTUGAL'S COVID-19 BATTLE

THE Portuguese community in Macau launched a fundraising campaign this week, aiming to help healthcare professionals in Portugal obtain personal protective equipment and other medical equipment urgently needed to fight the Covid-19 outbreak in the European country.

The initiative has brought together almost 20 institutions and people in support of Portugal's efforts to combat the outbreak in less than two weeks.

The group, headed by sev-

eral important figures from the local Portuguese community, has already created an account at the Banco Nacional Ultramarino (BNU) with the number 9016556516, where all the funds will be collected.

At a press conference organized by the group, the president of Casa de Portugal in Macau, Amélia António, explained that the priorities for the acquisition of equipment and other items were established based on a list from the Portuguese Ministry of Health, which sta-

ted the materials needed most. She also noted that the main goal is “to help to prevent deaths as much as possible, as well as to prevent a larger number people being infected,” as quoted by Lusa.

Another important figure in the community, António José de Freitas, who is president of the local Holy House of Mercy, was also quoted saying that this is an urgent contribution to Portugal's ‘war efforts’ against the virus. He stressed that there is not much time left, as the

items are needed urgently, so the account will only be open for donations until April 5.

Up until yesterday, Portugal had registered a total of 2,362 cases of infection which has already resulted in 33 deaths.

The exponential growth in the number of cases led the president of the Portuguese Republic, Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, to declare a state of emergency for the whole country a week ago. The decree is valid for two weeks (until the end April 2). **RM**

POUSADA DE COLOANE TEMPORARILY CLOSES

POUSADA de Coloane Boutique Hotel has voluntarily halted operations until April 10, following the government's announcement that the 30th novel coronavirus case is a 52-year-old tourist who stayed at the hotel.

The general manager of the hotel, Luis Heredia, said, “We don't know how long [we will be closed]. It was not under the directive of the government but they said we had to be monitoring ourselves.”

Heredia said that the hotel employees had minimal contact with the guest.

In the meantime, the hotel is disinfecting the premises.

According to a staff member the Times spoke with, the hotel may be operating again

April 10. Following the local government's announcement of the Covid-19 case, the hotel immediately stopped selling rooms online and closed its restaurant.

On Wednesday, the government announced that the Australian national claimed that he and his wife had mostly stayed within hotel grounds or nearby areas between March 16 and March 20.

The couple visited The Venetian Macao on March 19 via the number 26A public bus. He attempted to enter the casino but was refused entry because he was not carrying his passport. After being denied entry, they returned to Coloane. **LV**

GOV'T LISTS ROYAL DRAGON HOTEL AS 10TH QUARANTINE VENUE

ROYAL Dragon Hotel is the 10th hotel to be designated as a medical observation and quarantine facility starting from today, increasing the total number of quarantine rooms to 2,416.

Royal Dragon Hotel is situated in ZAPE on the Macau peninsula, and has 144 rooms available.

This is the fifth hotel on the Macau peninsula that is being used by the government as a medical facility after The Grand Harbour Hotel, Metropole Hotel, San Tung Fong Com-

mercial Inn South Wing and Grand Lapa Hotel.

So far, the SAR government has temporarily enlisted a total of 10 hotels as venues for medical observation, including Pousada Marina Infante Hotel, Golden Crown China Hotel, Regency Art Hotel, and Grand Coloane Resort.

As part of the process for choosing designated hotels for medical observation, the SAR government must take a diverse range of factors and conditions into careful consideration. They must also

gain the consent of the hotels.

“These designated hotels are committed to social responsibility, providing support and coordination with the SAR government for implementation of the measure of medical observation,” the Macao Government Tourism Office reiterated in a statement issued yesterday.

Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng has called on the six gaming concessionaires to fulfill their corporate social responsibility obligations. **LV**



TSI rejects appeal on contract of fourth Macau-Taipa bridge

RENATO MARQUES

THE Court of Second Instance (TSI) has rejected a request to suspend the contract for the design and construction of the fourth Macau-Taipa sea bridge, the Office of the President of the Final Appeal Court informed.

Collectively, the judges decided to reject the preventive injunction request, however that does not mean that the case has been ruled in favor of the appellant. A decision previously made by the government in an order of the Chief Executive (CE) on October 15, 2019 had awarded

the contract for the design and construction of the fourth link to a consortium.

The consortium is composed of the China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation, China Railway Construction Bridge Engineering Group Co., Ltd and Omas Construction and Engineering Company Limited.

In fact, at this point, the TSI only rejected a request to suspend the contract, which would have forced the start of work to be postponed while further action takes place in court.

On the decision to reject the request, the Collective Court said that the decision was not made

on the basis of the analysis of any proof or evidence for the claims of the appellant, but due to a technical mistake the appellant made.

This fact led to the TSI's decision. The appellant, Coneer Engenharia e Administração, Limitada, participated in the tender for the contract for the design and construction of the fourth Macau-Taipa maritime bridge in a consortium that included China Road and Bridge Corporation. Coneer should have presented the appeal together with the other company that was part of the consortium, as Coneer alone has no legitimate claim to request the suspension of the effective-

ness of the award of the contract. The decision was accepted by the appellant.

The tender received a total of seven different bids at the time. When the winner of the tender was announced, Coneer Engenharia e Administração, Limitada, who was one of the bidders, contested the government's decision. They claimed that the public tender had "serious defects that tainted its validity," the appeal document noted.

The appellant made several claims. They argued there should have been an audience with all the tender participants, and a report explaining the factors that

led to the decision to attribute the contract to the tender winner as well as the criteria used to decide the winning bid before the decision was made public by CE order.

Although the current decision by TSI is not final, they anticipate that Coneer's case is likely to fail for the very same reasons.

The contract for the design and construction of the fourth link between the peninsula and Taipa Island was awarded to the consortium of three companies for 5.3 billion patacas and with an execution time of 1,098 working days.

The bridge will be about 3.1 kilometers long, 2.9 kilometers of which will be a section above the sea. The main section of the bridge is to consist of four lanes of traffic in each direction, with the center lanes on each side reserved for motorcycle traffic. The bridge will connect Zone E1 of new reclaimed land in Pac On to Zone A.

Gov't spots defect in Hengqin crossing facility

THE Macau SAR government has discovered defects in the Macau immigration facility of the future Hengqin port, according to Secretary for Security Wong Sio Chak.

Yesterday, Wong revealed to local media that he had noticed the problems during his previous visits to the new Hengqin port immigration building in Macau.

He added that various government departments are still in the process of making improvements. The

local security authority will work with the public works secretariat to repair the defect.

The construction of the new Hengqin port building was supervised by the Zhuhai Government. Commenting on the quality of the building, Wong defended the Zhuhai government, saying that they had built the Macau immigration facility in accordance with the SAR's requirements.

In August 2018, the Macau government reached a consensus with the Guang-

dong government to build a new Hengqin port. The newly completed Macau immigration facility, which was handed over to Macau on March 18, already needs to be "fixed."

The secretary indicated the new facility might be operational within the year, although it depends on the "small-scale repair[s]" that need to be done.

The port includes an immigration checkpoint building, an entry-exit platform, and the main body of the lotus flower bridge. The

SAR will acquire more facilities during and second and third phases of the transfer.

Meanwhile, besides reporting on the border facility, Wong also commented on special rewards for the security authority's frontline workers in the battle against Covid-19.

Wong will follow the Chief Executive's order to expand the reward scheme to include frontline security force workers.

At the end of this year, security force workers' performance during the Covid-19 period will become one of the criteria for the special merit reward for police officers. The reward will be either cash or holidays.

Wong himself will make the final decision as to the number to be awarded. **JZ**

GUANGDONG IMPLEMENTS NEW RESTRICTIONS FOR ALL NATIONALS

ALL people entering the People's Republic of China through a border checkpoint in Guangdong face new restrictions from 6 a.m. today, the mainland authorities announced last night.

Upon arrival, all nationals, including Macau residents, will be tested for novel coronavirus infection. In addition to that, they will be put in monitored quarantine for 14 days at their own expense. The measures cover people of all nationalities and transit passengers.

People critical to maintaining daily routine of Guangdong, Macau and Hong Kong will be exempted from the quarantine but a nucleic acid test will be conducted.

The statement released by mainland authority hinted that the new measures are results of regional communications. **AL**

DAVID RISING, ARITZ PARRA & COLLEEN LONG, MADRID

NOVEL CORONAVIRUS

Infections near 500,000 as

489,434

Confirmed cases worldwide

22,076

Deaths worldwide

Jurisdictions with cases confirmed as of March 26, 2020, 11:15 PM GMT+8

1-9 10-99 100-999 1,000-9,999 10,000 or more



THE number of coronavirus infections were set to top a half-million worldwide yesterday as both Italy and the United States appeared poised to surpass China, where the pandemic began, and Spain's death toll climbed to more than 4,000. Health care systems in Europe and New York buckled under the strain.

Faced with the spread of the pandemic, the U.S. Senate passed a \$2.2 trillion economic rescue package steering aid to businesses, workers and health care facilities. Millions of Americans hoped the measure, which is expected to be voted on in the House on Friday, would give them a lifeline as they lost jobs, income and child care due to lockdowns, travel restrictions and business closures.

At least 2.8 billion people are under severe travel restrictions. But the head of the World Health Organization, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, scolded world leaders for wasting precious time in the fight against the virus that has already killed more than 22,000 people and infected over 480,000, thrown millions out of work and ravaged the world economy.

"The time to act was actually more than a month ago or two months ago," he said. "We squandered the first window of opportunity. ... This is a second opportunity, which we should not squander and do everything to suppress and control this virus."

In the United States, where virus deaths passed 1,050 and 70,000 people were infected, a political battle raged between those demanding urgent action for a long siege against the pandemic, like New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo, and President Donald Trump.

Trump has expressed hope churches could return to normal by Easter on April 12, and grumbled that "our country wasn't built to be shut down" — apparently concerned that the outbreak's devastating effects on financial markets and employment will harm his re-election chances. Democrats say Trump is prioritizing the economy over the health and safety of Americans.

"I'd like to say, let's get back to work next Friday," said Joe Biden, the front-runner for the Democratic presidential nomination. "That'd be wonderful. But it can't be arbitrary."

In Brazil, the country's governors are defying President Jair Bolsonaro over his call to reopen schools and businesses, dismissing his argument that the "cure" of widespread shutdowns to contain the spread of the coronavirus is worse than the disease.

Brazil's Supreme Court upheld virus mitigation plans that had been challenged by Bolsonaro. As of yesterday, the country had more than 2,550 cases and 59 deaths.

New York has emerged as a glo-

bal virus hotspot and Cuomo says infections are doubling nearly every few days. The city's convention center is being turned into a temporary hospital and the state has hit 280 deaths, according to a count by Johns Hopkins University.

Spain has become the country in Europe where the outbreak is spreading the fastest. The Health Ministry reported reported 8,578 new infections and 655 deaths, bringing the total cases to 56,188 and more than 4,000 fatalities — second only to Italy's death toll of 7,503.

"We are collapsing," said Lidia Perera, a nurse at Madrid's Hospital de la Paz. "We need more workers."

"The time to act was actually more than a month ago or two months ago."

TEDROS A. GHEBREYESUS WHO

Watching patients die alone is "killing all of us inside," she said.

"Physically this is extremely complicated, but psychologically it is appalling," said colleague Patricia Núñez, a nurse who is recovering from being infected herself.

In Italy, doctors and nurses have been begging the government daily to provide more masks, gloves and goggles and urged the public to understand how important one-orous social distancing measures really are. Scientists say stopping just one person from getting the virus means scores of others will not become infected down the road.

"Please don't leave us alone. Help us help you," Dr. Francesca De Gennaro, who heads a small medical clinic in Italy's hard-hit Bergamo region, wrote in an open letter.

European Union leaders were holding their third summit in three weeks on the virus to manage the havoc it is wreaking on their 27 economies. As the number of deaths in Europe soared past 12,000, Spain prolonged a state of emergency that will allow it to impose broader lockdowns while French President Emmanuel Macron launched "Operation Resilience," a military-

BLOOMBERG

AP PHOTOS

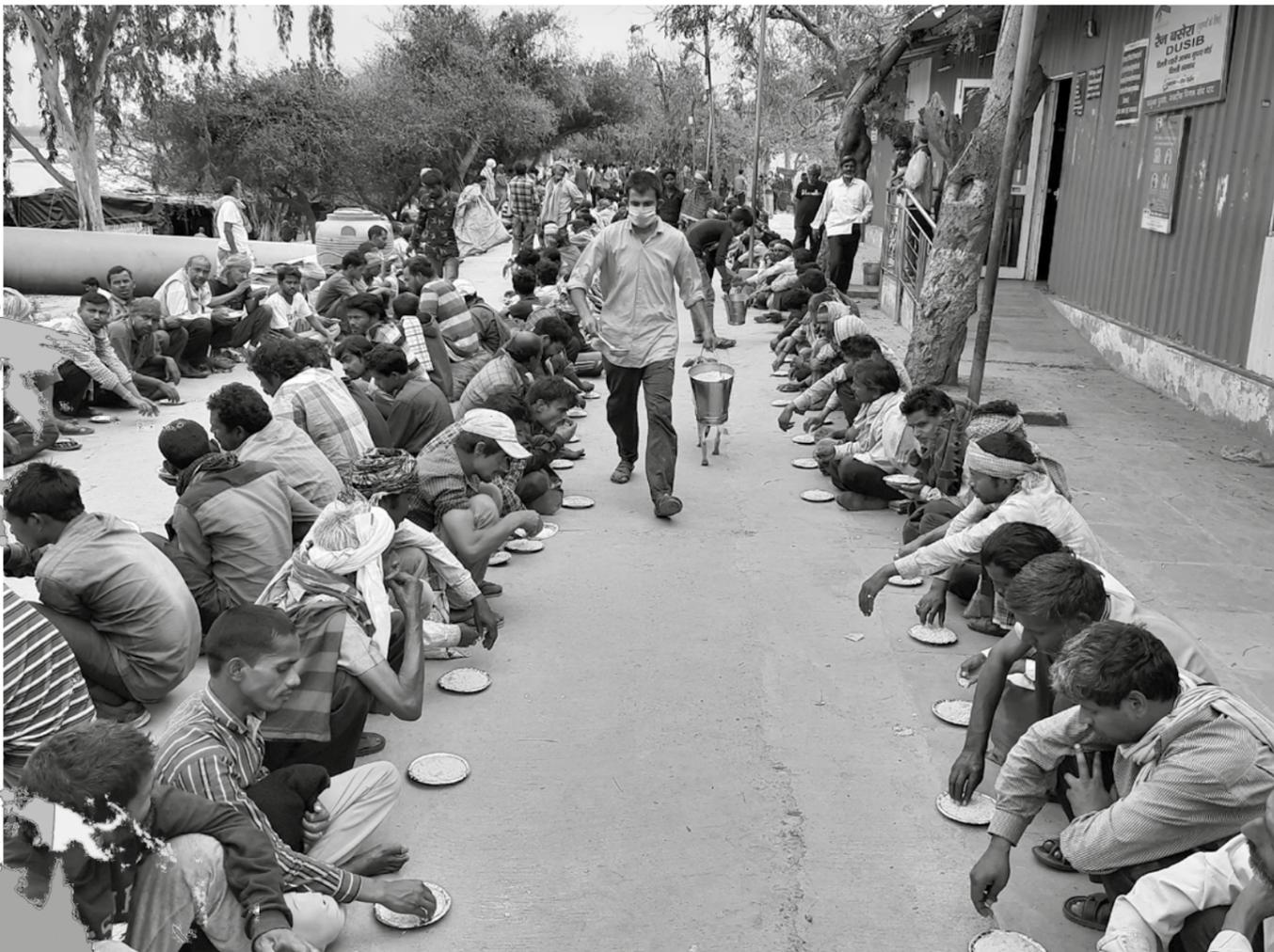


Workers spray disinfectant at the Gelora Bung Karno Main Stadium in Jakarta, Indonesia



A shopper looks at empty

health systems buckle



Homeless and impoverished Indians receive food at a government shelter in New Delhi, India



A vendor at an empty market in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia



Military trucks leave the Monument cemetery of Bergamo, Italy



A Thai Buddhist prays after offering food to Thai Buddhist monks



shelf at a grocery store in Tokyo



Firefighters conduct disinfection on the Yichang East Railway Station in Yichang China



A woman takes photos of cherry blossoms at the Yuyuantan Park in Beijing

-backed response to combat the pandemic.

France began evacuating infected citizens from the northeastern hotspot of Alsace using a special high-speed train that its health minister called a "first in Europe." About 20 patients were being taken from Strasbourg to hospitals in the Pays-de-la-Loire and other regions.

Britain ordered 10,000 ventilators to grapple with the COVID-19 crisis, working with engineers from Dyson. The government wants to increase its supply of the breathing machines from 8,000 to 30,000.

So far, more than 115,000 people

have recovered from the virus, and health care experts say the key to fighting it is to "flatten the curve" — slow the spread of the outbreak so that hospitals aren't overwhelmed with seriously ill patients all at once. Slowing the rate of infections will also cut the eventual death rate.

China's cases have slowed, with only 67 new cases reported, all recent arrivals.

The leaders of the Group of 20 largest economies were holding a special video conference to better coordinate a response to the pandemic, amid criticism that the world's wealthiest countries have not taken

cohesive action. The conference was being chaired by Saudi Arabia's King Salman.

As the virus spreads into new territory, many countries took drastic measures.

India on Thursday began enforcing the world's largest coronavirus lockdown, trying to keep its 1.3 billion people indoors. In neighboring Pakistan, a caseload of nearly 1,100 infections propelled government efforts to persuade the country's more than 200 million people to stay home.

As cases start to rise in Russia, President Vladimir Putin ordered the

military in to help. The government announced it would halt all international flights starting Friday and will have troops build 16 medical centers to treat virus victims by mid-May. Russia says it has 658 cases, but experts say those figures underreport the crisis there and may be due to the lack of testing.

Dr. Deborah Birx, coordinator of the White House's coronavirus task force, urged people to understand just how important each one of them is to stopping the pandemic.

"To every American out there, where you are protecting yourself, you are protecting others," Birx said. AP

THE WAYS OF THE CORONAVIRUS

FOR most people, the coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough that clear up in two to three weeks. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia and death.

A petition to oust the World Health Organization (WHO) Director-General Tedros Adhanom has now surpassed 500,000 signatures, Taiwan News reported.

On Jan. 31, a netizen named Osuka Yip started a petition titled, "Call for the resignation of Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General," on Change.org, citing Adhanom's refusal on Jan. 23 to designate the novel coronavirus disease a global health emergency. The author said this was partially to blame for the number of infected cases increasing more than tenfold from 800 to more than 10,000 over the next five days.

"We strongly think Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus is not fit for his role as WHO Director General. We call for the Immediate Resignation of Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus," the petition reads.

It goes on to lament that despite the WHO's supposed commitment to neutrality, Adhanom has taken the number of infected provided by China at face value. The vast majority of coronavirus infections have occurred in the communist country, which at the time of writing has counted 81,226.

Petition to fire Tedros: 500,000 signatures



Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) this week confirmed that it had warned the WHO about human-to-human transmission of Covid-19 on Dec. 31 last year.

On Jan. 22, Tedros praised China's management of the epidemic saying he was "very impressed by the detail and depth of China's presentation." Nearly a month after Taiwan's warning, a WHO delegation traveling to Wuhan finally concluded that "human-

to-human transmission is taking place in Wuhan."

It was not until Jan. 30 that Tedros finally declared the outbreak to be a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC). Tedros waited until the virus had infected 118,000 people and killed 4,291 patients in 114 countries to finally declare a global pandemic.

Since the petition was first posted, the number of infections worldwide has skyrocketed to over 480,000

and deaths have catapulted to more than 20 thousand. As global outrage rises over the WHO's inept response to the pandemic, the petition had reached 513,177 signatures, by press time.

According to Taiwan News, the petition also pointed out that Taiwan continues to be denied access to the WHO.

Taiwan has 235 cases and two deaths, with most cases now coming from abroad, said the news outlet. **MDT/TAIWAN NEWS**

UN chief urges \$2 billion for vulnerable nations with virus

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres launched a \$2 billion appeal yesterday [Macau time] to help vulnerable and conflict-torn countries in the Middle East, Asia, Africa and South America tackle the coronavirus pandemic and prevent COVID-19 from again circling the globe.

The U.N. chief called the amount a "drop in the ocean," noting that the U.S. Senate is seeking \$2 trillion — "1,000 times more" — for the U.S. economy.

U.N. humanitarian chief Mark Lowcock announced a \$60 million contribution from the U.N.'s emergency relief fund to kick-start the appeal.

Guterres said the \$2 billion is essential to keep economies in the developing world going so their health systems remain afloat to deal with the CO-



Trump, Putin, Erdogan and United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres (second left) in last year G20 summit in Osaka

VID-19 pandemic. He said the money will also help countries already in the midst of a humanitarian crisis caused by conflicts, natural disasters and climate change.

These people have been forced to flee their homes, have no space to socially distance or isolate, and lack clean water and soap to wash their hands to pro-

tect against the virus, he said.

If they become critically ill, Guterres said, there is no health care that can provide a hospital bed and a ventilator.

"We must come to the aid of the ultra-vulnerable — millions upon millions of people who are least able to protect themselves," the secretary-general stressed.

"This is a matter of basic human solidarity. It is also crucial for combating the virus."

"The worst thing that could happen," he said, "is to suppress the disease in developed countries and let it spread like fire in the developing world where then millions of transmissions will take place, millions of people will die, and the risk of mutations would be there, which means that the virus could come back in ways that even vaccines that, I hope, will be soon developed wouldn't be able to stop it again."

World Health Organization Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told the launch that while COVID-19 is a threat to people everywhere, what's most worrying is the danger the virus poses to those affected by crisis, who must be given urgent priority.

"History will judge us on how we responded to the poorest communities in their darkest hour," he said. **MDT/AP**

this day in history



1989 MILLIONS OF RUSSIANS GO TO THE POLLS

Millions of Russian voters have gone to the polls, with early results suggesting that a number of Communist candidates have been rejected by the electorate.

The Soviet parliamentary election was the first opportunity citizens ever had of casting their ballots for any but the official Communist Party candidates.

Election data available so far shows a net gain to unofficial candidates in the voting for 1,500 seats in the new Congress of People's Deputies.

Some Communist Party officials have failed to gain election and despite the absence as yet of many provincial results, there appears to be a swing against the party establishment.

These included five members of the central committee and one Politburo member.

President Mikhail Gorbachev has urged Russian newspaper and broadcasting editors "not to dramatise" the results, according to the official Tass news agency.

Soviet foreign ministry spokesman Gennady Gerasimov described the results as a "victory for glasnost and perestroika".

Government newspaper Izvestia welcomed early results and referred to a new era of "the dictatorship of democracy".

In a predicted landslide, Boris Yeltsin has been elected as a representative to the CPD, which was established by Mr Gorbachev.

Mr Yeltsin won in the all-Moscow constituency against the official party candidate with 89% of the vote.

The biggest majority of all in the polls was won by Telman Gdyan, a senior prosecutor who exposed a notorious corruption case in Uzbekistan in 1988, with 86.4% of the vote.

The next biggest majority in the polls went to Valentin Dikul, once a famous trapeze artist, with 72%.

Among other elected representatives are retired ice hockey champion Anatoly Firsov, who was seeking to improve health and sports facilities.

Tass described the defeat of one regional Communist party chief in Uzbekistan in Central Asia as a "vote of no confidence".

In the Ukraine, five regional party chiefs were rejected by the voters. Among others who failed to secure their seats were the party chief in Minsk, capital of the western republic of Byelorussia.

It is reported that a Central Committee inquest is under way into the election results.

Mr Gorbachev was reported as saying that economic problems, including the budget deficit and shortages of food and consumer goods, were reasons why the authorities were criticised during the election.

One Muscovite said: "There's been nothing like this for 72 years ... and for all that time it's been nothing but blood, blood, blood."

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

The 1989 election saw many senior Communist Party officials defeated.

This was seen as revolutionary at the time because internal critics of the Soviet regime were able to receive a hearing and to get themselves elected.

According to the Soviet government newspaper Izvestia, turnout in most regions stood at between 80% and 85%, which was not as high as official figures for previous elections.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

律師事務所



C&C
LAWYERS
& NOTARIES
SINCE 1996



合夥人 PARTNERS:

- 官樂怡 Rui José da Cunha °
- 山度士 Álvaro Rodrigues °
- 馬天龍 Nuno Sardinha da Mata °
- 趙魯 Zhao Lu **
- 馬傑安 João Nogueira Marques °

大律師 ASSOCIATES:

- 高文軒 Adelino Correia °
- 羅首齡 Zelina Rodrigues *
- 白秀蘭 Susana Batalha
- 馬潔冰 Maria João Marques
- 陶義德 António Isáco de Azevedo
- 白穎怡 Iolía Berenguel
- 冼玲鳳 Mariana Afonso Esteves
- 薛明恩 Maria Antónia Giestas
- 飛嘉華 Carlos dos Santos Ferreira *
- 杜力信 Nelson de Azevedo
- 宋哲言 João Gonçalves Assunção
- 巴慕雅 Vera Bastos
- 莫永誠 Rui Velez de Moura
- 安東尼 António Manuel dos Santos
- 歐文傑 Miguel Evaristo
- 陳芷喬 Joana Chan
- 顏曉蓉 Teresa Xiaorong Yan
- 諾瑪莉 Maria Noras

實習律師 TRAINEE LAWYERS:

- 羅成軒 José J. Rodrigues
- 廖靜雅 Viviana Hong
- 梁淑嵐 Ana Leon
- 黃瀚賢 Frederico Vong
- 張偉鴻 Cheong Wai Hong
- 李莉 Lei Lei

* 私人公證員 Notary Public * 中國委託公證人 China Appointed Attesting Officer * 顧問 Of Counsel

To protect the health and safety of our Clients and Staff, we continue implementing prevention measures at the office entrance, as recommended by the local Authorities.

為了保護客戶和員工的健康和安全，我們將繼續按照本地政府的建議在辦公室入口處實施預防措施。

A: Av. da Praia Grande 759, 3-5 Floors Macau SAR, China
 Office hours: Mon-Thu: 9:30-13:00, 14:30-18:30
 Fri: 9:30-13:00, 14:30-18:00
 Sat: 9:00-13:00

WWW.CCADVOG.COM



WELCOME TO Playmate's Club
 花心公子俱樂部

WILD NIGHT OUT

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

Business Hours: 8:00pm-4:00am
 Attention: No admission under 18

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

MACAUCLOSER
 生活藝術雜誌 LIVING & ARTS MAGAZINE

ON SALE JAN/FEV issue

ANA MOURA

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

STEPHEN WADE, TOKYO

TOKYO GAMES

THE Tokyo Olympics need new dates for the opening and closing ceremonies in 2021.

Nothing much can get done until those dates are worked out by the International Olympic Committee, the Japanese government and Tokyo organizers.

"We must decide this soon, otherwise it will be hard to decide on other things to follow," Toshiro Muto, the CEO of the organizing committee, told his 30 senior directors — all men but one — seated in a large meeting room yesterday.

Two days after the unprecedented postponement was announced, the group gathered for the first meeting of what is being called the "Tokyo 2020 New Launch Task Force." They must put the Olympics back together after they were torn apart by the coronavirus pandemic.

Muto and the president of the organizing committee, Yoshiro Mori, each gave pep speeches. Mori, an 82-year-old former Japanese prime minister, drew on war memories from his youth to summon the resolve to redo in a few months what was seven years in the planning.

He talked of his father going "to the war in the Pacific" and leaving a rugby ball and a baseball glove behind for his young son.

"I'm sorry, I'm an old person and

Looking for a new date for opening, closing



Tokyo 2020 Organizing Committee President Yoshiro Mori arrives for the first meeting of the "Tokyo 2020 New Launch Task Force" in Tokyo yesterday

I talk about the old days," Mori said. "I'm comparing this to the old days and I might be criticized by the media. However, this is the emotion I have inside me and this is the emotion I have as we face the predicament in front of us."

Muto ran off a condensed string of issues to be resolved: ticketing,

security, venues, merchandise, accommodation, the Athletes Village, transportation and lining up unpaid volunteers. He added he was looking at "thousands of contracts" and the interests of broadcasters, sponsors, the IOC, world sports federations and national Olympic committees.

"I didn't imagine at all we'd be tested to this degree," he acknowledged.

He also voiced another reality. "Additional expenses are going to be quite massive we assume," Muto said.

The Japanese financial newspaper Nikkei has estimated ad-

ded costs due to the delay of \$2.7 billion. This would go on top of an official budget of \$12.6 billion. A Japanese national audit agency, however, says the actual amount of spending is about twice that size.

IOC President Thomas Bach said Wednesday that "all options are on the table" for new dates. He said next year's Olympics don't have to be restricted to summer in the Northern Hemisphere and might occur sooner.

Two of the marquee Olympic events — track and swimming — have already scheduled their own world championships for July and August of 2021.

If the Olympics are moved into spring, when it's cooler in Tokyo, they clash with the end of the European soccer season. In North America, they would bump into Major League Baseball, NBA basketball, NHL hockey and possibly even college basketball. That's assuming normal sports schedules resume by then.

"The postponed Olympic Games will need sacrifices," Bach said.

Hidemasa Nakamura, the games delivery officer, was pressed again on dates.

"That's something we haven't decided on yet," he said. "We have no idea when we will be able to finalize the dates. We don't have a fixed plan how to proceed from here." AP

MAKE-UP
FOR ALL OCCASIONS

- BRIDAL / WEDDINGS • PHOTO SHOTS • PARTY •
- GRADUATION • SPECIAL EVENTS •

MAKE YOUR APPOINTMENT TODAY!

TEL / WHATSAPP: (853) 6685 3323 | WECHAT: MISSJ_23
WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/JULIANAC.MAKEUPARTIST



新 陽 光 清 潔 服 務 有 限 公 司
NEW SUNSHINE CLEANING SERVICES LTD.

Septic Tank Pump Outs

- Sewer Transfer
- Grease Trap Pump Outs



Call: 2883 3008

Member of General Association of Macao Cleaning Service Industry

仁 德 醫 療 中 心
CENTRO MEDICO PEDDER



We bring high quality of medical service to Macau

General Surgery : Dr. Fok Manson, Dr. Lai Cheuck Seen Edward, Dr. Lau Wing Kee Peter, Dr. Kwong Man, Dr. Nie Fu Zhong, Dr. U Chong San, Dr. Lei Chin Chong

Breast Surgery : Dr. Leong Iat Lun

Urology : Dr. Lo Kwong Yin Richard, Dr. Zhao Yun Qiao

Paediatric Surgery : Dr. Yeung Chung Kwong

Paediatrics : Dr. Zhang Zhiqin

Obstetrics & Gynaecology : Dr. Fong Kuan Io

Plastic & Aesthetic Surgery : Dr. Lam U Lin

Orthopaedic Surgery & Sports Medicine : Dr. Lam Kun Kuan

ENT : Dr. Cheng Zheng Ang

Cardiology : Dr. Wong Kwok Yiu Chris, Dr. Jin Chun, Dr. Leong Man Kin

Gastroentero-Hepatology : Dr. Zhan De Juan

General Medicine : Dr. Ng Kam Hong, Dr. Lam Weng Chio

Dietitian : Chan Lai U Joey

Avenida da Praia Grande No 599, Edifício Comercial Rodrigues 14 e 15 Andar, em Macau
T. 2832 2298 / 2832 2229 Website: www.peddermacau.com
Opening Hours: Mon - Fri 10:00 - 19:00 Sat 10:00 - 14:00 Sun & PH closed

OPINION

World Views

Andrea Felsted, Bloomberg

**NIKE’S WORKOUT APP
 BEATS THE CORONAVIRUS
 BLUES: ANDREA FELSTED**

As consumer groups grapple with how to cope with the unprecedented impact of Covid-19, Nike Inc., one of the world’s most successful brands, has given a useful road map.

The retailer weathered the China store closures far better than expected — with sales in China down 4% excluding currency movements in the third quarter — and its strategy in the face of the coronavirus offers some interesting lessons for other retail brands in how to cope with an extended shutdown.

While stores were closed, Nike fired up online operations effectively. It also activated other digital ways of connecting with customers, such as home fitness apps offered for free. It worked. Weekly active users rose 80% in China over the course of the third quarter, as people were confined to their homes. That in turn drove them to purchase new workout gear, boosting digital sales by more than 30%.

It also helps that fitness equipment is still in demand when people are stuck at home. The same can’t be said for many products, such as glam dresses.

As the number of Covid-19 cases spreads in other markets, it’s of course not a given that every company can soldier on as seemingly seamlessly as Nike, which has been doing well for a long time. The company generated a better-than-expected \$10.1 billion of revenue in the third quarter, even with the impact from China. Nike has a strong balance sheet and is highly cash generative. Even so, inventories rose 7% in the third quarter to \$5.8 billion, partially reflecting the drop-off in demand from China. Retailers across the board will be scrambling with how to deal with a surfeit of stock.

Nike’s success has enabled it to invest heavily in its digital offering. Its fitness apps, which have come into their own in this crisis, are a case in point. Not all groups have been — or have the resources to be — so proactive. So it’s fair to expect that the companies with strong balance sheets, well-known brands and developed digital offerings should be able to navigate the crisis. Spain’s Inditex SA, owner of the Zara chain, fits the bill here.

By contrast, those companies that were already struggling, or burdened with large borrowings, will be particularly challenged by the first phase of containment.

As I have noted, the U.S. department stores look particularly susceptible to shuttered stores and shell-shocked shoppers. On Monday, Bloomberg News reported that Neiman Marcus Group Inc., the luxury retailer that has been struggling to ease its \$4.3 billion debt load, was mulling options that could include a bankruptcy filing. And another Bloomberg report said J. Crew Group Inc. is suspending the initial public offering of Madewell, its most popular brand, a move necessary to cut its borrowings.

Elsewhere, taking into account store leases, as well as other forms of financial obligations and upcoming debt maturities, analysts at Morgan Stanley have identified companies including L Brands Inc., Macy’s Inc., The Gap Inc. and Michael Kors owner Capri Holdings Ltd. as having particularly high levels of leverage, making them potentially less resilient in the current downturn.

So while Nike can just do it, some laggards may truly struggle to get through this crisis.

[Abridged]

The novel coronavirus has an unlikely victim - one of the world’s most popular beers.

Corona has become the subject of memes and videos shared on social media as the toll from the virus climbs worldwide. Reports of an increase in online searches for “corona beer virus” and “beer coronavirus” show the Mexican beer hasn’t been able to escape the association. The so-called purchase intent among adults in the U.S. has plunged to the lowest in two years, according to data from YouGov Plc.

The damage has become more severe in recent days as infec-

tions spread. Shares of Corona-maker Constellation Brands Inc. dived 8% this week in New York. Corona’s buzz score - which tracks whether American adults aware of the brand have heard positive or negative things about it - has tumbled to 51 from a high of 75 at the beginning of the year, YouGov said.

Corona, which derives its name from the Sun’s corona and has nothing to do with the virus, is the third-most popular beer in the U.S., according to YouGov rankings. Guinness is first and Heineken is second.

**DAILY BREAD? IN FRANCE,
 FIGHTING VIRUS ONE
 BAGUETTE AT A TIME**

In France, the fight against COVID-19 is being waged one baguette at a time.

No longer just a mere staple, the iconic loaf and the French daily ritual of buying it have become loaded with moral, civic and public health considerations that could never have been imagined before the new coronavirus turned life upside down.

In a nation in lockdown, popping out for a fresh baguette is proving a handy excuse for people to get out of the house. There is one notable exception: a town on the Mediterranean coast where the mayor has banned people from doing just that, to keep them indoors.

But eschewing the crusty comfort of a fresh-baked baguette has become significant, too — a small sacrifice in this new era where sacrifices are being asked of many. For some, not buying bread daily and instead staying indoors to try to stay healthy has become an act in itself, a gesture of solidarity with the doctors and nurses fighting to save lives in stressed emergency wards.

Trying to steer a path between their love of bread and beating the virus, some in France are now buying baguettes by the armful and freezing them. That would have been a gastronomic no-no in normal times. But defrosting and reheating is now a pragmatic, civic-minded and health-conscious compromise, certainly better than no baguette at all.

The French have baked long loaves for centuries and coined “baguette” — or stick — around 120 years ago in Paris. Millions of French consume billions of baguettes each year.

“It’s indispensable. You need bread to push your food stuffs, to give them taste, for nourishment. It is good for everything,”



masked shopper Yves Lagrellette said this week as he made what has now become his weekly baguette run in Le Vesinet, west of Paris. He bought five in one go, for freezing. He used to buy one daily.

When the government locked down France earlier this month, shutting down schools and stores deemed non-essential and forcing families indoors, it also gave bakers special dispensation to work every day of the week if they wish.

Baker Margot Hazard says she and her husband, Cyril, feel that with their breads and cakes, they are providing a slice of normalcy to customers who line up, standing apart, outside their door, respecting each other’s space and handwritten signs on the window that read: “Three people maximum in the bakery.”

“The work really is tough at the moment,” Hazard said. “Some clients are very worried about us touching their bread and touching their change. They are all a bit on edge. And we are on edge, too.”

But “it is super important for everyone’s morale,” she added. “It’s important that people eat what they want to eat, to keep their spirits up.”

“A life without bread, cheese and wine is not

French,” she said.

Customers Marie and Jean-Claude Lemeux, now work-from-home bankers, agreed. No sooner had he bought their baguette that he ripped one end off and nibbled it, right there in the street. That crusty nub of pleasure even has its own name — “le quignon.”

“It’s better fresh. It’s hot, crusty,” he said. And baguette-buying “allows us to get out.”

“The sharing of bread is an anchor at the dinner table, at family meals,” she said. “We feel a need to focus on family, on food, for life to go on. It’s symbolic.”

But in the Mediterranean town of Sanary-sur-Mer, buying only one baguette risks a police fine of 135 euros (\$146). Mayor Ferdinand Bernhard says people shouldn’t be using the buying of bread as an excuse to go out every day.

“Anyone caught coming out of a bakery with just one loaf will be fined,” he said in a telephone interview. “If you go once a week, you cut the risk by a factor of seven — for you, the baker, his entourage and yours.”

“This is no time for people’s moods. The priority is to not get sick,” he said. “You can freeze bread. You can even live without it.”

“It’s not a sacrifice. It’s an adaptation.” AP



Iraq’s military yesterday said at least two rockets hit inside Baghdad’s heavily fortified Green Zone, the seat of Iraq’s government and home to the American Embassy, in the first attack following a brief lull in violence from earlier this month. The attack came as the U.S.-led coalition pulled out of a second base elsewhere in Iraq, in line with a planned drawdown.



India’s legions of poor and others suddenly thrown out of work by a nationwide stay-at-home order began receiving aid yesterday, as both public and private groups worked to blunt the impact of efforts to curb the coronavirus pandemic. India’s finance ministry announced a 1.7 trillion (\$22 billion) economic stimulus package that will include delivering grains and lentil rations for three months to 800 million people.

Greek authorities arrested a Syrian man after finding 12 Egyptian teenagers hidden in his van following a car chase through the northern Greek city of Thessaloniki early Thursday, police said. Police said they arrested the 22-year-old who had allegedly picked up the teenagers, all boys aged between 15 and 17, from the Greek-Albanian border.

Egypt A trailer-truck smashed into multiple cars stopped on a freeway, killing 15 people and injuring a dozen in Egypt’s capital late Wednesday, authorities and state media reported. The deadly collision occurred a few hours after Egypt’s nighttime curfew took effect to curb the spread of the coronavirus.

France is pulling out its military forces from Iraq as French forces are increasingly called upon to help fight the coronavirus at home. The chief of staff of the French armed forces said in a statement Wednesday night that France is suspending its anti-terrorism training operations in Iraq.