

The Macao SAR Government urges:

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

Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Centre

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Pandemic Bells tolled in Madrid's deserted central square and flags were lowered in a day of mourning yesterday as Spain raced to build field hospitals to treat an onslaught of coronavirus patients. In the U.S., the government's top infectious-disease expert warned that smaller cities are about to see cases "take off" the way they have in New York City. *More on p8*



Japan Popular Japanese comedian Ken Shimura (pictured), who drew inspiration from the American comedic icon Jerry Lewis, has died from the coronavirus, becoming Japan's first known celebrity victim of the disease. He was 70. Shimura, who attracted fans of all generations with his slapstick comedy and funny faces, had been treated at a Tokyo hospital and died on Sunday.



India is adding more resources to tackle its increase in coronavirus cases by announcing that private hospitals may be requisitioned to help treat virus patients, and turning railway cars and a motor racing circuit into makeshift quarantine facilities. The steps were taken after a nationwide lockdown announced last week by Prime Minister Narendra Modi led to a mass exodus of migrant workers from cities to their villages.

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ELDERLY AMONG MOST VULNERABLE, REMINDS HEALTH AUTHORITY AFTER FIRST SERIOUS CASE

P2



ELDERLY AMONG MOST VULNERABLE, REMINDS HEALTH AUTHORITY AFTER FIRST SERIOUS CASE

FOLLOWING news reports of the emergence of Macau's first serious case of Covid-19, health authorities yesterday fielded questions from journalists seeking to better identify the most vulnerable parts of the population.

Although everybody is at risk of becoming infected by the novel coronavirus, the elderly and those with chronic health conditions are most vulnerable, said Lo Iek Long, medical director of the Conde São Januário Hospital (CHCSJ).

The doctor was asked which groups of people should be more vigilant where Covid-19 is concerned. Citing data from the previous months of the outbreak, Lo explained that there are several factors that influence the severity of infection.

"Generally speaking, age is one factor," the doctor said. "People above the age of 60 are more prone to severe symptoms."

Lo said the risks of severe infection and mortality are greater in this age group. People with chronic illnesses should also be more rigorous in terms of health management.

"For instance, patients with diabetes, organ failure or cancer are at higher risk of severe symptoms [from Covid-19]," the doctor explained. "Early treatment, on the other hand, may be a factor in stopping [people] from deteriorating."

Besides the government hospital, the local Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) also reminds peo-



ple living in Macau to remain vigilant. As the director of the Health Bureau (SSM) previously said, "The next wave [of infections] could be more impactful than the last one."

The SSM recently transferred 26 people from the Public Health Clinical Center to the Island Medical Complex's Nursing College Building. The 11th to 15th floors of the building are being used as Provisional Quarantine Center. There are 192

beds in 96 rooms.

The location will be used to host close contacts, persons considered to be of high risk and patients undergoing recovery quarantine. Lo stressed that these actions do not indicate an expected boom in new cases, but the relevant authorities wish to make early preparations in order to avoid any disorganization in the instance of a rapid increase in infection numbers.

ANOTHER BREACH OF HOUSE QUARANTINE

The Public Security Police Force (PSP) reported yesterday that it received intelligence about a breach of home quarantine on March 27. The investigation revealed that quarantined residents had left their residence more than once while they were still supposed to stay within their homes.

The PSP managed to speak with the two people living in the residential apartment. The duo admitted that on three instances they left the apartment and proceeded to the main entrance of the building to fetch resources delivered to them by their family members. However, they said that they had remained in the apartment the rest of the time. Although they had a reason, they were still suspected of violating the Contagious Disease Prevention and Control Law and have then been transferred to a designated hotel for another quarantine period.

As of yesterday, the PSP had recorded a total of seven cases of such violations.

The PSP disclosed that due to

the new measures in neighboring Guangdong province, 21 Macau residents are currently undergoing mandatory quarantine in Zhuhai.

OVERSEAS RESIDENTS NEED TO CONSIDER RISK OF RETURN

The Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) has recommended that Macau residents currently abroad carefully evaluate the necessity of returning to Macau.

The special consensus made between the Special Administrative Regions regarding the transfer of Macau residents from Hong Kong International Airport to the MSAR will end today. Under the consensus, Macau residents stopping over in Hong Kong on their way back have been sent to Macau via coaches chartered by the local government.

MGTO representative Inês Chan said, "they should evaluate whether coming back or staying [overseas] is less risky."

The SSM director added that the flight can be a risky part of the return journey.

Once they have decided to come back, residents should search for routes that fly directly to the Macau International Airport, removing the need to transfer in Hong Kong.

HONG KONG ROAMED MACAU FOR DAYS

One of the cases confirmed recently in Hong Kong had been in Macau for several days right before her diagnosis. During her stay in Macau, she was in the central business district and Cotai, with visits to Jollibee, Haagen-Dazs and the Roadhouse at Broadway Macau. Although all the outlets have been instructed to sanitize the premises, the SSM reminds members of the public to remain vigilant.

THE HEALTH BUREAU REMINDS THE PUBLIC

- Keep at least 1 meter apart,
- Refrain from gathering,
- Wash hands frequently,
- Wear a facemask,
- Remain in Macau.

ENGLISH-LANGUAGE MEDIA CRUCIAL TO OUTBREAK CONTROL

LEONG Iek Hou, coordinator at the local Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), said during yesterday's daily press conference that English-language media plays an important role in helping the authorities spread crucial information.

Members of the public have been concerned about the effectiveness of the government's public safety announcements within the non-Chinese speaking communities, particularly non-resident workers. The authority said it has tried to spread the message through various channels.

"We hope the press – especially English newspapers – can help us dispense the information to

the non-resident worker community," said Leong. "Reminders have revolved around maintaining personal hygiene and refraining from forming crowds."

The government, according to Leong, has also done its part. "Our website is published in three languages: Chinese, English and Portuguese," the CDC coordinator said. "Meanwhile, word-of-mouth is also an essential channel."

The medical doctor said that employers, colleagues and Chinese-speaking friends of these non-resident workers should also help spread the message.

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AL PLENARY

Mi Jian says Basic Law does not allow for housing market controls

JULIE ZHU

THE constitutional law of the People's Republic of China and the Basic Law of Macau do not allow the concept of "Macau people, Macau land," said Mi Jian, director of the Policy Research and Regional Development Bureau, during yesterday's Legislative Assembly (AL). The government official was referring to a policy proposal that would give priority over residential units to local residents.

Yesterday, lawmaker Ng Kuok Cheong asked the government for the ninth time to implement a "Macau people, Macau land" policy. His enquiry concerns the land plot in the New Urban Zone in particular, and the policy would ensure that this land was sold only to Macau residents.

Yesterday, Mi Jian turned down Ng's proposal. According to Mi, the proposal cannot be implemented in Macau because the local community has not formed a consensus over the policy and whether it is in conflict with the Basic Law, which calls for Macau to maintain a free capitalist system.

He also pointed to the results of a study conducted by the University of Macau, which indicated that there is no need for a "Macau people, Macau land" policy as it conflicts with public housing policies and may negatively impact the market.



Policy Research and Regional Development Bureau Director Mi Jian

Mi also suggested that Ng not use Hong Kong as a reference for Macau's policies.

Lawmakers, including Sulu Sou and Angela Leong, asked the local government to develop apartments for the youth.

Mi said that the local government attaches unnecessary importance to youth apartments. He stressed, "Not to mention that youths can't afford the mortgage of an apartment. People like me can't afford one either."

On another land topic, lawmakers raised concerns over the Macau Urban Renewal Limited investment in Hengqin.

Representatives of the company were unable to give clear answers to lawmakers' questions.

During yesterday's AL plenary, company representative Lam Kam Seng revealed the details of the Hengqin projects to the

lawmakers.

Overall, the Macau government will use seven land plots (totaling 19,000 square meters) in Hengqin to build a neighborhood designated for Macau residents. There will be 4,000 apartments, including

Mi Jian said Macau attaches too much importance to youth apartments, stressing that young people 'can't afford the mortgage of an apartment' and neither can he

200 for individuals working in the education sector. The company plans to build a primary school with 17 classes and kindergarten facilities with 12 available classes. In addition, there will be transportation, commercial projects, and health centers.

The SAR government, which is fully responsible for developing the project, will build the entire neighborhood project based on "Macau standards."

Company representatives repeatedly claimed that the Macau public fund invested project only serves to help Macau local residents, but have not revealed any details about capital investments related to the project.

Lawmaker Sulu Sou raised questions about the government-owned company. His particular concern is that the company, which was established for the purpose of renewing Macau's old districts and buildings, is now primarily focused on advancing a project outside of Macau territory. "How can the public supervise the company, the investment? Where can the company invest? How much can the company invest? Who will the company cooperate with?" Sou asked. He further questioned how many of the company's workers will be available for Macau's local urban renewal projects.

Lawmaker Mak Soi Kun then asked "if Macau can make money" from the project.

Lam did not give clear replies to the specific questions of the two lawmakers, stating only that the project would be of good quality and the investment will be supervised.

He said that houses from the Hengqin project would be sold to Macau residents at cost price.

Macao Foundation encouraging beneficiaries to 'write better reports' after call for greater transparency

JULIE ZHU

THE Macao Foundation has been working to improve its subsidy approval process by requesting that sponsored organizations submit forms with improved designs, according to Ng Chi Leong, Chairman of the Administrative Committee of the Macao Foundation.

During yesterday's Legislative Assembly, lawmaker Sulu Sou asked the Macao Foundation to improve the transparency of subsidy approvals.

The request comes after the New Macau Association, of which Sou is a member, called on the

public body to increase its transparency when distributing financial grants.

Earlier, the Audit Commission released a report uncovering subsidy errors by the Macao Foundation. The report pointed out that there is no legal requirement for the Macao Foundation to review the profit and loss reports submitted by subsidized entities, considering the large number of entities it subsidizes per year.

The report revealed that many associations subsidized by Macao Foundation delayed submitting reports disclosing the details of the subsidies.

Although most of the

reports did not lead to discoveries that any of the subsidy policies had been violated, some dishonest organizations were still given more subsidies after the failure to report on previous subsidies.

Yesterday, Sou requested that the foundation publish more detailed subsidy reports. The lawmaker also wants the report to include accounting records to show how the associations have used the subsidies.

Sou proposed that when an entity receives an excessive number of subsidies from public organizations, that entity should publicize the subsidized projects' details.

The Macao Foundation should be one of the key organizations under the government's watch when it comes to subsidies, he said. The public asset monitoring and planning authority, under the leadership of former Secretary for Administration and Justice Sonia Chan, is particularly called upon to carry out the relevant work.

A new law specifically related to public fund monitoring is the solution for the problem, according to Sou.

In response, Ng said that the foundation has been working to improve, including by "encouraging the associations to write bet-

ter reports, [...] in the correct format, and to submit them on time." However, these measures have only been encouraged rather than enforced.

The foundation has not enforced any penalties for organizations submitting reports after the deadline, and frequently extends the deadlines.

Sou believes that his questions were not answered and was disappointed by the fact that government officials were not present at the AL to reply to his questions.

Citing a former insider at the Macao Foundation, Sou said that an application would be given a hi-

gher subsidy if the foundation simply mentioned the phrase "Greater Bay Area," a recent policy initiative to promote closer political and economic ties between Hong Kong, Macau and nine mainland cities in the Pearl River Delta area.

Between 2001 and 2019, the Macao Foundation distributed 6.7% of its funds to non-local entities. The most controversial case involved a 100-million yuan donation to Jinan University announced in 2016, to be used in part for the construction of two dormitories for students from the special administrative regions, according to the Macao Foundation.

LIAISON OFFICE ANNOUNCES APPOINTMENT OF NEW VICE-DIRECTOR

The Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Macau Special Administrative Region announced the appointment of Yan Zhichan as one of its four vice-directors. According to a statement by the office, Yan was born in the city of Yangchun, Guangdong province in May 1964. A graduate of Sun Yat-sen University's School of Government, she holds a postgraduate degree and a master's degree in management. Yan has held a raft of senior government and Communist Party of China positions in various cities and provinces, such as in Zhanjiang, Jieyang, Anhui and the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. Before this Macau post, Yan was a vice-chairwoman of Guangxi. The Liaison Office is the representative office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China in Macau. Its director, Fu Ziying, is the highest-ranking central government official posted to Macau.

FOUR TO SIX TROPICAL CYCLONES PREDICTED FOR 2020

The Macao Meteorological and Geophysical Bureau (SMG) has said that four to six tropical cyclones will come within 800 kilometers of Macau this year. Strong and severe typhoons are a possibility this year, which the bureau expects will occur during the peak typhoon period from mid-June to late September. During the rainy season, which lasts from April until September, rainfall will be within the normal range and temperatures will be normal to high. The SMG analyzed current ocean and atmospheric circulation and concluded that the sea surface temperature in the central to eastern equatorial Pacific is within normal range, meaning that the El Niño, or Southern Oscillation, is in a neutral state and that this weather phenomenon will remain until summer.

SURVEY SHOWS ALMOST TWO-THIRDS WANT TIGHTER ENTRY POLICIES

A survey conducted by the Women's General Association of Macau showed that 63% of respondents want stricter entry policies. From over 1,000 respondents, 85% approved of the SAR government's work on Covid-19 prevention. Ninety-five percent endorsed the government's facemask distribution policy, while 73% said they hope that the local government can continue implementing the supply plan. Regarding the government's subsidy programs and tax reduction measures, 85% supported water and electricity bill subsidies as well as the advanced cash handout. Some 60% of respondents are in favor of the 3,000 patacas e-voucher, 72% agreed with tax reductions, 65% endorse SME subsidies, and 61% agree with work training programs. Moreover, about 60% of respondents were worried about layoffs.



IMPORTS FALL TO LOWEST LEVEL SINCE MARCH 2011

RENATO MARQUES

TOTAL merchandise import fell by more than 30% in year-on-year terms in February, falling to its lowest single-month figure since March 2011, the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC) has informed in a statement. That came as imports of one particular products, facemasks, surged more than 850% in response to the consumer demand brought

about by Covid-19.

Imports of gold jewelry, mobile phones and watches plunged by 73.9%, 68.3%, and 57.9% respectively, and saw the most significant drops among the various import categories monitored.

However, imports of products such as facemasks registered a hike of 854.6%, followed by imports of pharmaceutical products which increased by 57.6%.

Nevertheless, February was a

very weak month for trade. The significant decrease in demand for imported goods directly related to the recent decline in economic activity and the drastic reduction in visitors to Macau.

The month closed with the total value of imports falling to MOP3.87 billion.

At the same time, total merchandise export amounted to MOP911 million, down by 1.4% year-on-year. The value of re-exports went down by 0.8% to

MOP841 million, with diamonds and diamond jewelry shrinking 48%.

The value of domestic exports (MOP70 million) fell by 8%, with products such as tobacco leading the fall, dropping by 41.9%. The merchandise trade deficit in February this year was MOP2.96 billion in total.

The February results follow the weak figures registered for January exports. Together, the first two months of this year registered a drop of 16% year-on-year to MOP2.06 billion. The value of re-exports (MOP1.84 billion) dropped even further, falling by 17.8%. Only domestic exports (MOP223 million) registered growth of 3.7%.

Analyzing the results by place of origin, merchandise import from the mainland (MOP4.05 billion) and the European Union (MOP3.71 billion) decreased by 17.2% and 8.9% year-on-year in the first two months of 2020 respectively.

On the other hand, imports from the Belt and Road Countries (MOP2.59 billion) rose by 95.1%.

Exports to the U.S. (MOP59 million) and the EU (MOP29 million) increased by 68% and 29.3% respectively. However, exports to Hong Kong (MOP1.43 billion) fell by 18.8% year-on-year.

External merchandise trade in the first two months of 2020 totalled MOP14.38 billion, down by 14.4% compared to MOP16.81 billion a year earlier.

MUST to confer honorary doctorates on six distinguished personages

ON the occasion of its 20th anniversary, the Macau University of Science and Technology (MUST) has planned to confer doctoris honoris causa on five distinguished academics and one local community leader. The conferment ceremony has been postponed to September in order to abide by the government's call for pandemic containment effort.

Three of the six recipients are from the People's Republic of China, one from Japan, one from the U.K. and one from Macau Special Administrative Region.

The local personage is Ho Sut Heng, president of the Federation of Trade Unions of Macau. She is also a Macau Representative in the National Peo-



ple's Congress for its 12th and 13th term.

Having worked in the patriotic worker association for more than 40 years, Ho is admired by many from the working class, according to a statement from the university.

Meanwhile, educator

and expert in electronic technology, Zhou Lixuan, is another doctorate recipient. The founding recipient of MUST, Zhou has researched extensively in signal handling, mode determination and medical application of computer science. His research efforts have received glo-

bal recognition, as introduced by MUST.

Among the six conferees, two are academicians of the Chinese Academy of Engineering. Li Lanjuan is an expert epidemiologist who has contributed significantly in fields of liver failure and viral hepatitis. She has

contributed extensively to theories of microbial ecology, taking the lead in several aspects and topics within the field.

Meanwhile, Ding Jian is an expert in cancer-related medication and holds more than 120 patents.

Tasuku Honjo is a Japanese epidemiologist and was conferred with the Nobel Prize for Physiology or Medicine in 2018 with a fellow researcher.

Teaching Physiology at the University of Oxford, Frances Ashcroft is an expert in the research related to diabetes. She has global accreditations in the areas of insulin secretion and diabetes proteomics, among other areas of study.

The university held a closed-door ceremony to celebrate the occasion. The ceremony was presided over by the top management of the university, and was attended by department heads of MUST. **AL**

ANALYSIS | GAMING

Border entry restrictions thought to smother first signs of recovery

DANIEL BEITLER

NEW border entry restrictions implemented last week across the greater China region threaten to smother the first signs of recovery in yet another stress test for Macau's battered casino economy.

A mandatory 14-day quarantine for almost any traveler crossing the border between the three regions of Macau, Hong Kong and Guangdong Province has quashed the possibility of a tourism-led recovery in the second quarter. That's bad news for many local businesses struggling to stay afloat even as the local government led by Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng readies another round of economic relief measures.

Macau is highly dependent on its gambling industry, which directly accounts for about half of gross domestic product and indirectly influences most of the remainder of the economy.

Under the new policy implemented Friday, mainland residents that visit Macau or Hong Kong must undergo a 14-day quarantine upon their return to Guangdong Province. With few people expected to endure a two-week quarantine back in Zhuhai, the number of tourists is projected



DANIEL BEITLER

to drop again to near-zero levels.

The Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau is expected to release gross gaming revenue data for the territory tomorrow, giving some insight into how the local economy has responded a partial shutdown of economic activity across the globe in March.

Gross gaming revenue in February plummeted 87.8% to just 3.1 billion patacas on the back of a collapse in visitor arrivals caused by the Covid-19 coronavirus

and an unprecedented decision to mandatorily suspend all casino activity for a period of 15 days.

Earlier in March, gaming analysts had converged on a projected decline in gross gaming revenue of between 75% and 80% for the month. With gross gaming revenue a year earlier amounting to 25.8 billion patacas, a year-on-year decline of 75% would leave the month tally at just under 6.5 billion patacas.

The volatile VIP segment might be partially behind an antici-

pated bounce, but visitor arrivals more commonly associated with the mass segment are also on the rise. An Inside Asian Gaming report showed that visitor arrivals in the 30-day period following the resumption of casino activity on February 20 had climbed to 250,000 in a marked improvement over the 156,000 arrivals seen in the calendar month of February.

Having been introduced in the final third of the month, the new border restrictions adopted by Macau, Hong Kong and Guangdong Province may have a minimal effect on March revenue. Some mainland gamblers were still spotted inside three peninsula-based casino properties visited by the Times days after the

Guangdong quarantine measure took effect.

However, the restrictions threaten to push back a resumption of mainland China's Individual Visit Scheme that analysts had pegged for as early as late April. The scheme allows mainland Chinese to apply for a single-use travel permit to visit Macau or Hong Kong without the need to join a tour group.

With group tours suspended and the Individual Visit Scheme cancelled since January, mainland residents can visit Macau only if they have unexpired travel permits issued prior to the cancellation or by using other visas, such as those for business purposes.

Tourists from the greater China region made up the bulk of Macau visitation last year, accounting for over 92% of the 39.4 million visitors. Mainland visitors alone typically account for about two-thirds of monthly arrivals, with about half of those hailing from southern Guangdong Province and about 40% from the nine mainland cities of the Greater Bay Area.

JUNKETS CALL FOR VISA RESUMPTION

GAMING promoter Kwok Chi Chung hopes that mainland China will return to issuing travel permits for mainland residents so that they may come to Macau. Kwok, who is the president of the Macau Association of Gaming and Entertainment Promoters, hopes that the mainland government will resume issuing visa permits to Macau for mainland residents from non-high-prevalence regions that are less affected

by Covid-19. Earlier in January, mainland China suspended the granting of permits to visit the SARs. Recently, Guangdong province also issued new entry policies that restrict people from moving freely between mainland and Macau. Kwok said that Macau's casino VIP rooms are receiving nearly no income due to Covid-19 and that the uncertainty regarding the situation may lead to the closure of VIP rooms.

Hotel occupancy rate plunges to just 10%

RENATO MARQUES

HOTEL occupancy in Macau hit new lows last month with five-star establishments affected most. According to statistics published yesterday by Statistics and Census Service (DSEC) the occupancy rate in five-star hotels during February 2020 plunged by 84% to just 10%.

The occupancy rate of two-star hotels and guesthouses dropped as well but less significantly, registering decreases of 33.8% and 22.3%, respectively.

Guesthouses managed to keep relatively high occupancy throughout the month, registering a 43.3% occupancy rate. The DSEC attributed the good performance of guesthouses and two-star hotels to the fact that the majority of the rooms

had been booked to be provide accommodation to non-resident workers (from the mainland) due to the enforcement border crossing restrictions.

The government noted that this accommodation had been provided by employers.

Still, even when taking that into account, the number of guests that checked into the 115 hotels and guesthouses that were operating in February was only 157,000, representing a slump of 85.4% year-on-year.

In line with expectations, the guests that registered the most significant falls were those arriving from the mainland (106,000) and Hong Kong (21,000) which recorded decreases of 86.3% and 81%, respectively.

The average length of stay of guests grew by 0.3 nights year-

-on-year from 1.5 to 1.8 nights.

In the first two months of 2020, the average occupancy rate of guest rooms was only 50.3%, representing a drop of 42.1% when compared with the same period last year. Guests numbers at hotels and guesthouses shrank by 46.4% to 1,236,000, while their average length of stay increased by 0.1 nights to 1.6 nights.

Owing to the cancellation of most inbound and outbound tours in February, the number of visitors on package tours, including inbound package tours and local tours, plunged by 98.1%, with only 200 tours being organized. The same trend occurred with the number of outbound residents using the services of travel agencies.

In the first two months of 2020, a total of 253,000 package tour visitors were recorded, a fall of 83% year-on-year. The number of outbound residents using the services of travel agencies decreased by 72.9% to 84,000.

SANDS CHINA RENEGOTIATES \$2 BILLION LOAN FACILITY AMID COVID-19

RENATO MARQUES

CASINO operator Sands China Ltd, has renegotiated the conditions of a \$2 billion (MOP16 billion) loan facility that the company has held since November 2018. A filing made by its mother company, Las Vegas Sands (LVS), to the Securities and Exchange Commission of Nasdaq Stock Exchange acknowledged this.

In the filing dated March 27, LVS informed that Macau subsidiary Sands China had entered a waiver and amendment request letter with regard to certain provisions of the Facility Agreement made with several bank lenders and with Bank of China Limited, Macau Branch as the agent.

This renegotiation is said to be related to the difficulties the company was experiencing in Macau and its ability to respect the ter-

ms of the 2018 agreement due to the ongoing impacts of Covid-19. These include several border control measures and travel restrictions that are keeping casino players away from Macau.

In the filing to the Nasdaq, the company acknowledges that after the new agreement, the Bank of China and the lenders it represents have agreed to waive the requirements for Sands China to comply with a leverage ratio that at the last day of any fiscal quarter should not exceed 4 to 1, among other contract clauses.

Additionally, the parties have also agreed to waive the penalties that would arise from non-compliance with the clause during the next 18 months. In exchange, Sands China has agreed to pay a fee of an undisclosed amount to the lenders who consented to the new deal.

EXCEPTIONAL TIMES

Facebook gives \$100m to journalism, easyJet grounds planes

THE outbreak of the coronavirus has dealt a shock to the global economy with unprecedented speed. Following are developments yesterday related to the global economy, the work place and the spread of the virus.



AIR CARE

Britain's health service is asking airline cabin crew who have been laid off to go to work in temporary new hospitals being built to treat COVID-19 patients. The National Health Service says easyJet and Virgin Atlantic are writing to thousands of staff - especially those with first aid training - asking them to work at hospitals being built inside convention centers in London, Birmingham and Manchester. Those who sign up will perform support roles under the supervision of doctors and nurses.

European budget airline easyJet is grounding all of its 344 aircraft amid a collapse in demand. It said there was "no certainty of the date for restarting commercial flights." The carrier had already canceled most of its flights and reached an agreement with unions on furlough arrangements for its cabin crew.

The European Council says EU member states have suspended airport slot requirements until Oct. 24 to help ease the impact of the coronavirus outbreak on the aviation industry. Under EU regulations, airlines are subject to a "use it or lose it rule" and are required to operate 80% of their allocated slots, the right of an aircraft to take off or land at a congested airport at a certain time of the day. If they don't abide by this rule, they face losing their right to the slot.

CENTRAL BANKS AND GOVERNMENT

South Korea will provide as much as 1 million won (\$817) in gift certificates or electronic coupons to all but the richest 30% of households. The country will spend around 9.1 trillion won (\$7.4 billion) on the one-time giveaways, which will reach 14 million households.

South Korea has used various financial tools to support its economy during the global health crisis, including cutting its baseline interest rate to an all-time low, expanding short-term loans for financial institutions and introducing a rescue package for companies totaling 100 trillion won (\$81.7 billion).



EXTRA

Facebook is investing an additional \$100 million in local journalism to support reporting on the pandemic. Emergency grant funding of \$25 million will go to local news through the Facebook Journalism Project and another \$75 million will be devoted to media marketing. Facebook, which has a rocky relationship with the media industry, has already committed \$300 million to journalism organizations. AP

WUHAN

City at center of China's

NG HAN GUAN, WUHAN
JOE McDONALD, BEIJING

SHOPKEEPERS in the city at the center of China's virus outbreak were reopening yesterday but customers were scarce after authorities lifted more of the anti-virus controls that kept tens of millions of people at home for two months.

"I'm so excited, I want to cry," said a woman on one of Wuhan's major shopping streets, the Chuhe Hanjie pedestrian mall, who would give only the English name Kat.

Kat said she was a teacher in the eastern city of Nanjing and was visiting her family when most access to Wuhan, a city of 11 million people and the manufacturing hub of central China, was suspended Jan. 23 to stem the spread of the coronavirus.

"After two months trapped at home, I want to jump," said Kat, jumping up and down excitedly. "I want to revenge shop."

While other governments tighten travel and other controls, the ruling Communist Party has rolled back curbs on Wuhan and other areas as it tries to revive the world's second-largest economy after declaring victory over the outbreak.

Wuhan in Hubei province is the last city still under travel controls. Residents are allowed to go to other parts of Hubei but cannot leave the province. Restrictions on other Hubei residents were lifted March 23. The final curbs on Wuhan end April 8.

Wuhan became the center of the most intensive anti-disease controls ever imposed after the virus emerged in December. Some researchers suggest it may have jumped to humans from a bat at one of the city's wildlife markets.

The ruling party suppressed information about the outbreak and reprimanded doctors in Wuhan who tried to warn the public. As late as Jan. 19, city leaders went ahead with a dinner for 40,000 households to celebrate the Lunar New Year.

Local leaders held one more event, a Jan. 22 holiday gala at which musicians and actors were sniffing and sneezing, before the government acknowledged the severity of the problem. The next morning, residents awoke to news that their sprawling city that straddles the Yangtze River was cut off from the outside world.

Police set up roadblocks at expressway entrances. Only truckers leaving the city to collect food and a handful of other drivers with official passes were allowed through. Bus and subway service inside Wuhan shut down.

Restaurants, shops, cinemas and other businesses were ordered to close, leaving streets empty and silent in a foreshadowing of controls

AP PHOTO



A store employee in a protective su

that would spread to other countries. Families were ordered to stay home.

Restrictions spread to cities around Wuhan and eventually expanded to cover some 800 million people, or more than half of China's population. Restaurants, shopping malls, factories and other businesses were closed nationwide and families were told to stay home.

Wuhan became the center of a massive effort to treat the sick, understand the virus and stop its spread. Two temporary hospitals with more than 1,000 beds each were built and a third one was set up in an exhibition center. Hundreds of military doctors and nurses were dispatched to the city, along with tons of medical supplies.

President Xi Jinping visited Wuhan for the first time March 10 in a show of official confidence that

the virus was under control. The next day, the government began to ease controls on Hubei, allowing some factories and other businesses deemed essential to the economy or to producing daily necessities to reopen.

Yesterday, 70% to 80% of shops on the Chuhe Hanjie mall in the city center were open but many imposed limits on how many people could enter.

Shopkeepers set up dispensers for hand sanitizer and checked customers for signs of fever.

Buses and subways started to run again Saturday and the train station reopened, bringing thousands of people to the city.

At the same time, the ruling party has rolled out a massive propaganda effort to portray its leaders as the heroes of the outbreak and deflect accusations they allowed the virus to spread due to politically motiva-

Some parents were on the streets with children, but traffic was light on streets that normally are jammed with cars

virus outbreak gradually revives



it waits for customers outside a re-opened retail street in Wuhan yesterday



ted foot-dragging.

Government spokespeople have suggested the coronavirus's origin is unknown, contradicting earlier official statements that it came from Wuhan. A foreign ministry spokesman said the virus might have been brought to Wuhan by visiting American military officials, a claim that prompted an angry response from Washington.

Wuhan suffered 2,547 coronavirus deaths, accounting for about 80% of China's total fatality toll of 3,186 as of midnight Sunday, according to the National Health Commission. The country had a total of 81,470 confirmed cases.

Officials are under orders to revive manufacturing, retailing and other industries while also preventing a spike in infections as people return to work.

This week, visitors to Wuhan were required to report how they arrived and their reason for coming. Hotel guests were checked twice a day for fever. They were required to show a code on a smartphone app that tracks the user's health status and travel.

Authorities set aside five ho-

tels to quarantine visitors including foreigners who lack Chinese identity cards. Hotel staff and volunteers in protective coveralls sprayed guests and their luggage with disinfectant.

Passengers who wanted to board a public bus had to show a smartphone health code to volunteers in red vests.

Some of Wuhan's major shopping malls reopened yesterday. Others planned to reopen later in the week.

Customers at the upscale Wuhan International Mall were greeted by employees who wore masks and carried signs that said, "Please wear masks all the way. Please don't gather. Please keep a safe distance."

Cinemas, teahouses and some restaurants still were closed.

Automakers and other manufacturers in Wuhan have reopened but say they need to restore the flow of components from suppliers before production returns to normal levels.

Some are waiting for employees who went to their hometowns for the Lunar New Year holiday and were stranded when plane, train and bus services in

areas deemed at high risk of the disease were suspended.

Some parents were on the streets with children, but traffic was light on streets that normally are jammed with cars.

The owner of a candy shop on the Chuhe Hanjie mall said two of her four employees are back at work but she wasn't sure whether the others were willing to come back.

"We've only prepared a little stock," said the owner, Li Zhen. "Most people are still afraid of the virus."

A poster at the entrance to the pedestrian mall asked customers to wear masks, cooperate with fever checks and show a smartphone health code.

A banner nearby said, "Wuhan We Are Coming Back. Thank You."

Two women who wore protective clothing that identified them as medical workers were surrounded by pedestrians who waved Chinese flags at them in a gesture of gratitude. Li gave them bags of candy.

"We may have to wait for a while to see when things can return to normal," said Li. AP

ARITZ PARRA,
VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV,
DAVID RISING

Spain passes China in infections; Trump extends US lockdown

IN an abrupt turnaround, President Donald Trump extended lockdown measures across the United States as deaths in New York from the new coronavirus passed 1,000. Spain yesterday became the third country to surpass China in infections after the United States and Italy.

With a population of only 47 million to China's 1.4 billion, Spain's tally of infections reached 85,195, an 8% rise from the previous day. Spain also reported 812 new deaths, raising its overall virus death toll to 7,300.

The health systems in Italy and Spain have been crumbling under the weight of caring for so many desperately ill patients at once. The two nations have more than half the world's 34,600 deaths from the virus that has upended the lives of billions of people and devastated world economies.

At least six of Spain's 17 regions were at their limit of ICU beds and three more were close to it, authorities said, while crews of workers are frantically building more field hospitals. In hard-hit Madrid, flags were hoisted at half staff for an official mourning period.

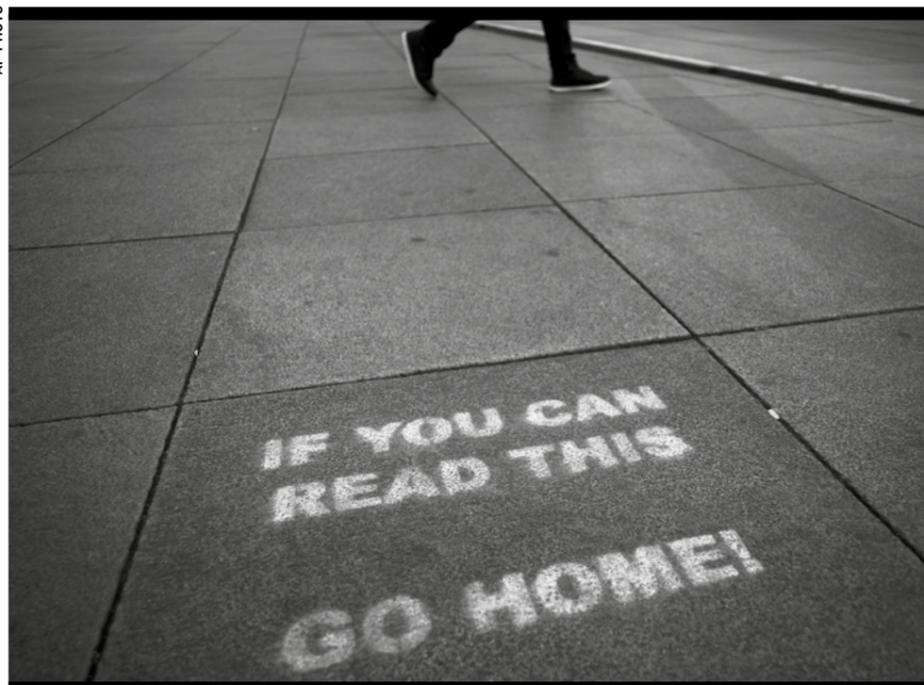
Even as the rate of new infections slows in Spain, Dr. Maria José Sierra said there's no end to the restrictions in sight yet.

"Reducing the pressure on the ICUs will be important for considering de-escalation measures," said Sierra, who took over as the health emergency center's spokesperson after its director, Fernando Simón, tested positive.

In a situation unimaginable only a month ago, Italian officials were cheered when they reported only 756 deaths in one day.

"We are saving lives by staying at home, by maintaining social distance, by traveling less and by closing schools," Dr. Luca Richeldi, a lung specialist, told reporters.

In a stark reversal of his previous stance, Trump extended federal guidelines recommending that Americans stay home for another 30 days until the end of April to slow the spread of the virus. The turnabout came after Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, said up



to 200,000 Americans could die and millions become infected if lockdowns and social distancing did not continue.

"We want to make sure that we don't prematurely think we're doing so great," Fauci said.

The U.S. now has more than 143,000 infections and 2,500 deaths, according to Johns Hopkins University, while around the world 732,000 people are infected. The true number of cases is thought to be considerably higher because of testing shortages and mild illnesses that have gone unreported.

Moscow went on its own lockdown yesterday as all of Russia braced for sweeping nationwide restrictions. The Russian capital of 13 million accounts for more than 1,000 of the country's 1,836 coronavirus cases.

"The extremely negative turn of events we are seeing in the largest European and U.S. cities causes extreme concern about the life and health of our citizens," Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyenin said.

An electronic monitoring system will be used to control residents' compliance with the lockdown, he said.

In Italy, which has by far the most deaths from the virus worldwide, officials expressed cautious optimism that the drastic measures they have taken

to keep people apart are having an impact.

Italy has reported 97,689 infections and 10,779 deaths, but said the number of positive cases in the last day increased just 5.4%, and the number of deaths have dropped about 10% a day since Friday.

Experts say the critical situations seen in hospitals in Italy and Spain will be soon heading toward the United States.

Coronavirus patient Andrea Napoli, 33, told The Associated Press he didn't remotely expect that he would be hospitalized, struggling for his life, since he was young and fit. But what he saw at a Rome hospital shocked him.

While he was being treated, three patients died in his ward. He saw doctors stressed and exhausted from the long hours, out of breath from pushing equipment around, dressed in protective masks, suits and gloves.

"What I saw was a lot, a lot of pain. It was very hard," Napoli said. "I heard screams from the other rooms, constant coughing from the other rooms."

China's National Health Commission yesterday reported 31 new COVID-19 cases, among them just one domestic infection. At the peak of China's restrictions, some 700 million people were ordered to stay home, but those rules are easing.

New York state remained the epicenter of the U.S. outbreak, with the vast majority of the deaths in New York City. But infections were spiking not only in cities but in Midwestern towns and Rocky Mountain ski havens. West Virginia reported its first death, leaving only two states — Hawaii and Wyoming — with none linked to COVID-19.

The virus is moving fast through nursing homes, assisted living facilities and other places for vulnerable people, spreading "like fire through dry grass," New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo said.

Britain's National Health Service said EasyJet and Virgin Atlantic were writing to cabin crew who have been laid off — especially those with first aid training — to ask if they would work in makeshift hospitals under the supervision of doctors and nurses.

Britain's political elite have been hit hard by the coronavirus pandemic, with the country's prime minister, health minister, chief English medical director and Brexit negotiator all testing positive and in isolation, as well as the heir to the throne, Prince Charles.

Cases across Africa rose close to 5,000 in 46 countries. Zimbabwe began a three-week lockdown and more cities across the continent were shut down. **AP**

this day in history



1966 HAROLD WILSON WINS SWEEPING VICTORY

The Labour party is on course to win the general election with a majority of about 100 seats in the House of Commons.

Prime Minister Harold Wilson has hailed the result "a great victory". It is only the second time a Labour government has been voted back into power.

Across the country, the swing from Conservative to Labour was between 3% and 4%.

Labour needed 316 seats to be assured of victory and although they have not actually yet reached that figure, the trend shows the party to be well on the way to it.

Shortly after midnight, Conservative leader Edward Heath admitted his party had lost.

Speaking in his Bexley constituency in Kent, he insisted the Tories had fought the election on the right policies.

He said: "The Labour Party has been fighting on the past. We have fought on the present and the future."

Mr Wilson went into the election battle with a manifesto entitled, Time for a Decision, making his sole purpose clear - he wanted a mandate to govern.

Labour had won the 1964 election with a majority of five seats, later reduced through by-election losses to just one seat.

The Liberals have had a night of mixed successes.

No sooner had party leader Jo Grimond hailed Michael Winstanley's victory over the Tories to gain Cheadle than he heard that Roderic Bowen had lost Cardigan - and Richard Wainwright had at long last won Colne Valley from Labour.

Now Mr Wilson has a majority in the Commons some of the pressure of government will be eased.

He is expected to bring some new faces into the Cabinet. There is already a vacancy for a Lord Privy Seal after the retirement from the Commons of Sir Frank Soskice.

The country is also facing a debt of £900m, much of which has been inherited from the Tory government and which must be paid off within four years.

Inflation is continuing to rise but Mr Wilson insists Labour's prices and incomes policy is beginning to bring it into check.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

The final result confirmed Harold Wilson had a majority of 96 seats.

But Labour lost popularity when it devalued the pound in November 1967, plans for trade union reform had to be shelved and France vetoed Britain's second application for membership of the European Economic Community.

Although Labour enjoyed something of a revival in 1969, Mr Wilson went on to lose the 1970 election to Edward Heath's Conservatives.

He was elected for a third term in government in March 1974 when the party scraped a working majority.

In March 1976 he surprised everyone by announcing he was resigning, just after turning 60.

He was made a peer in 1983 and died in May 1995.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

Opening yourself up to a new romantic opportunity also means that you're opening yourself up to emotional intensity and upheaval, so be careful. Don't do anything for a new heartthrob.



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

There's a nice, warm place in your heart where you keep special memories and nostalgic ideas, but it's not an infinite space, and right now you need to make some room.



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

You are living proof that a person doesn't have to be an Olympic gymnast to be extremely skilled at balance! Rest easy knowing that there's nothing in this day you can't handle with grace.



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

When you come across a person from your past today, rely on your good memory to help you come up with a great conversation starter. In just a few moments, you'll know exactly what subject to bring up.



LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

Buying things to make yourself feel better may provide temporary relief, but in a couple days whatever has been bothering you will still be bothering you.



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

After months or even years of going back and forth in a relationship, you could reach a major turning point today, thanks to a revelation. Sometimes things come to an abrupt ending.



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

Men are going to be the primary actors in today's dramas, or the people around you will be displaying stereotypically masculine traits like aggressiveness and competitiveness.



SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

There's a lot to be said for being direct, but today the more rewarding type of communication for you to explore will be much more subtle: eavesdropping.



SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

Put your feet up and relax for a while. It won't be as boring as you think, and you will learn how to prevent more stress and pressure in your life. Your mind is still very active, so don't worry.



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

Beautiful words will turn anyone's head today, so if you've been working up the courage to make your move on a certain someone, today is the day to do it! Get creative.



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

Today, the devil will be not only in the details but also in the fine print. Keep that in mind when you're looking over any sort of contract. This includes credit card receipts and application forms.



PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Itchy fabrics, spicy foods, and atonal music. Any (or all) of these off-kilter experiences will be just the ticket for you today. What you need most is stimulation!

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	7	21	drizzle
Harbin	2	11	sleet
Tianjin	11	20	overcast
Urumqi	-2	12	clear
Xi'an	6	19	cloudy
Lhasa	3	18	cloudy
Chengdu	10	21	clear
Chongqing	12	22	cloudy
Kunming	13	28	clear
Nanjing	9	13	drizzle
Shanghai	10	14	drizzle
Wuhan	8	15	overcast
Hangzhou	9	13	drizzle
Taipei	19	22	overcast
Guangzhou	14	18	moderate rain
Hong Kong	21	25	cloudy
WORLD			
Moscow	-8	2	drizzle
Frankfurt	-1	6	drizzle
Paris	2	7	cloudy
London	2	8	clear
New York	4	16	drizzle

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS: 1-Paste; 6- Lustful deity; 11- The Racer's Edge; 14- Prefix with red; 15- More unfavorable; 16- ___ polloi; 17- Tale; 18- Total; 19- Exist; 20- Used to be; 22- Dazzling display; 24- Reclusive; 28- Robust; 30- Put in; 31- ___ and desist; 32- Twinned crystal; 33- Crossroads; 37- Alias letters; 38- Biblical brother; 39- Copy; 40- Funky; 43- Gives a 9.8, say; 45- Software buyers; 46- Take offense at; 47- Dilapidated; 50- Entrails; 51- Shakespearean sprite; 52- Designer Schiaparelli; 53- May ___ excused?; 54- Maker of Pong; 57- New Brunswick neighbor; 62- Pouch; 63- Actress Shire; 64- Host; 65- Chemical ending; 66- Broke off; 67- Erupts;

DOWN: 1- Bad-mouth; 2- Toronto's prov.; 3- Craft in the tabloids; 4- Boxer's warning; 5- Out of control; 6- Eddy; 7- Tops; 8- La-la lead-in; 9- Fashion designer's monogram; 10- Free from confinement; 11- Biblical verb; 12- Law of Moses; 13- Devoutness; 21- Devour; 23- Staff leader?; 24- Draw a bead on; 25- Plumber's tool; 26- Academy award; 27- Animation unit; 28- Biblical king; 29- Bring home the bacon; 31- Gives a hoot; 33- Monument; 34- Western; 35- Turn over; 36- Reposes; 38- Not many; 41- Uncouth; 42- Set apart; 43- Christens anew; 44- Simile center; 46- Hosp. staffers; 47- Elevate; 48- Living in a city; 49- Family tree member; 50- Greek epic poem; 52- Fort ___, captured by U.S. forces in 1814; 55- Catch some rays; 56- City official; Abbr.; 58- Roadie's burden; 59- Bump off; 60- Modern; 61- Some M.I.T. grads;

Yesterday's solution

A	P	E	S	T	O	O	L		R	T	E	N					
B	U	T	T		U	R	B	A	N		L	O	D	E			
I	S	T	O		R	A	I	S	E		E	R	I	N			
T	H	A	I		S	T	E		I	G	N	I	T	E			
		G	R	E		A	T	A	D								
		S	L	A	I	N		A	T	H	L	E	T	I	C		
		R	E	A	L	M		E	T	T	E		M	O	N	A	
		O	R	B		S	T	A	I	R		R	U	T			
		A	G	E		T	A	L	C		O	T	E	R			
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				L	R	A	D	S		S	D	A	K				
		A	L	U	M	N	I		E	W	E		E	A	C	H	
		S	A	R	A			U	N	D	E	R		O	G	L	E
		S	I	G	N			M	E	D	A	L		U	R	I	S
		T	R	E	T			B	Y	T	E		T	A	P	S	

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Emergency calls 999	Taxi 28 939 939 / 2828 3283
Fire department 28 572 222	Water Supply - Report 2822 0088
PJ (Open line) 993	Telephone - Report 1000
PJ (Picket) 28 557 775	Electricity - Report 28 339 922
PSP 28 573 333	Macau Daily Times 28 716 081
Customs 28 559 944	
S. J. Hospital 28 313 731	
Kiang Wu Hospital 28 371 333	
Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) 28326 300	
IAM 28 387 333	
Tourism 28 333 000	
Airport 59 888 88	



<p>FOR SALE</p> <p>Nova City Apartment, Taipa HK\$12,880,000 1,494 ft² 3 1/2 2 1/2</p>	<p>FOR RENT</p> <p>Vai Fung Triplex, Macau \$15,800/mth 1,065 ft² 2 1/2 2 1/2</p>	<p>FOR SALE</p> <p>[Taipa] <i>Va Fat Apartment</i> 2 1/2 1 1/2 725 ft² \$4,380,000 (ref: 18115566)</p> <p>[Taipa] <i>Taipa Village Apartment</i> 1 1/2 1 1/2 785 ft² \$4,780,000 (ref: 20016009)</p> <p>[Coloane] <i>Man Fai Apartment</i> 3 1/2 2 1/2 1,390 ft² \$7,380,000 (ref: 190650105T)</p> <p>[Taipa] <i>Taipa Village Apartment</i> 4 1/2 2 1/2 1,404 ft² \$8,380,000 (ref: 19096006)</p>	<p>FOR RENT</p> <p>[Taipa] <i>Loft Style Unit</i> 1 1/2 1 1/2 890 ft² \$12,000/mth (ref: n/a)</p> <p>[Coloane] <i>Hellene Garden</i> 1 1/2 3 1/2 2 1/2 1,663 ft² \$14,000/mth (ref: 20021003)</p> <p>[Taipa] <i>Manhattan</i> 3 1/2 2 1/2 1,626 ft² \$20,800/mth (ref: n/a)</p> <p>[Taipa] <i>Manhattan</i> 4 1/2 2 1/2 2,305 ft² \$22,000/mth (ref: 19091003)</p>	<p>jml 卓雅物業 property SINCE 1994</p> <p>(853) 2835 2699 hello@jmlproperty.com www.jmlproperty.com</p> <p>f jmlmacau @ jmlproperty</p>
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SINGAPORE'S LEE SAYS VIRUS BATTLE INTENSIFYING AS INDUSTRIES DIE

Singapore's battle to fight the coronavirus outbreak is intensifying, while industries such as tourism and aviation are virtually dead, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said. Global supply chains are also affected, hurting the ability for the city-state to get its supplies, and in turn hurting its exports, Lee said in an interview with CNN. "That's an impact that's not going away in a hurry," Lee said. The island republic reported its third death on Sunday, but has been seen as an example as a country that has seemed largely successful in containing the outbreak. "I don't see this problem going away in a couple of months," Lee said. It will be "several years" before the virus runs its course, he said.

MALAYSIA RAMPS UP SUPPORT FOR VIRUS-HIT ECONOMY TO \$58 BILLION

Malaysia announced billions of dollars in fresh support for an economy punished by the coronavirus pandemic. Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin said Friday the government was unveiling 250 billion ringgit (\$58 billion) in support for the economy. That figure includes a 20-billion ringgit package announced last month by the previous government, as well as other measures presented since then, Muhyiddin said. "We are a nation at war with invisible forces. The situation we are now facing is unprecedented in history," Muhyiddin said. "This government may not be the government that you voted for. But I want all of you to know that this government cares for you." Malaysia joins governments around the world who have pledged trillions of dollars to support their economies as activity grinds to a halt to stop the pathogen.

THAILAND'S BIGGEST ISLAND ON LOCKDOWN TO CONTAIN CORONAVIRUS

SIRAPHOB THANTHONG-KNIGHT

PHUKET in Thailand is on lockdown, with most transportation to the island banned from yesterday, in the latest effort to contain the spread of the novel coronavirus in the usually popular tourist destination.

The order will last for at least one month, according to Phuket Governor Pakkamong Taweepat. Boats, cars and trucks providing essential goods and services are exempted.

Restricting access to the island is a toughening of state-of-emergency rules imposed by the government last week under which non-essential businesses are shut and inter-provincial travel is discouraged.

Phuket's economy is reeling from the outbreak: about 56% of total employment was in tourism-related industries, the Bank of Thailand said



in a note. Thailand's foreign tourism receipts plunged in February to the lowest since 2015 and the nation's economy is course for its worst contraction this year since the Asian financial crisis in the 1990s.

Local media, citing Phuket authorities, reported that the island's airspace will close

from April 10 onward. But finding flights to Phuket and other destinations is in any case getting more and more difficult as the airline industry shuts down. Phuket International Airport is operated by Airports of Thailand Pcl.

The nation's largest low-cost carrier, Thai AirAsia Co. Ltd., is temporarily sus-

pending all domestic and international flights. Bangkok Airways Pcl and Thai Airways International Pcl are also grounding planes as airlines slash costs to cope with the fallout of the new coronavirus.

Phuket, Pattaya and Bangkok - all popular with tourists before the disease hit - have some of Thailand's biggest Covid-19 clusters. According to the Health Ministry, 49 cases have been reported in Phuket, making it the province with the highest number of cases outside of the Bangkok metropolitan area.

Overall confirmed cases rose by 136 on Monday to 1,524, with two additional deaths reported, bringing the count to nine fatalities. Officials are taking a range of steps as infections surge. For instance, the Thai Navy has prepared 1,200 extra beds at its facilities for patients. **BLOOMBERG**

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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*
羅善齡 Zelina Rodrigues*
白秀蘭 Susana Bataiha
馬潔冰 Maria João Marques
陶義德 António Isóo de Azeredo
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巴慧雅 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
康靜雅 Viviana Hong
梁淑嵐 Ana Leon
黃瀚賢 Frederico Vong
張偉鴻 Cheong Wai Hong
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*私人公證員 Notary Public * 中國委託公證人 China Appointed Attesting Officer * 顧問 Of Counsel

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Macau SAR, China Mon-Thu: 9:30-13:00, 14:30-18:30
地址:澳門南灣大馬路759號3-5樓 Fri: 9:30-13:00, 14:30-18:00
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MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

AP PHOTO

FOOTBALL

Messi says Barcelona players taking 70% pay cut



TALES AZZONI, MADRID

IN a letter critical of Barcelona club officials, Lionel Messi said yesterday he and his teammates are taking a 70% cut in salaries because of the shutdown caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

Messi wrote in a social media post that the players will also make donations so other club employees are not affected by the upheaval.

"A lot has been said about Barcelona's first team and the players' salaries during the country's state of alarm," Messi wrote in the letter. "Before anything, we would like to make it clear that we have always wanted to reduce our salaries as we perfectly understand that this is an exceptional situation and we ALWAYS were the first ones to help the club when it asked. Actually, we have done that on our own in moments when we felt it was necessary or important.

"Therefore, it surprises us that within the club there were those who wanted to put us under scrutiny and tried to put us under pressure to do something that we always knew we would be doing."

Messi said it took a few days to announce the deal because "we were looking for a formula to help the club and also its workers in this very difficult moment."

The donations the players will make are expected to help cover 100% of the salaries of

club employees.

Earlier this year, Messi publicly complained about club officials after some criticized the players' efforts amid a controversial coaching change and a run of poor results.

Barcelona said all members of its professional sports teams and most of the basketball team have agreed to a pay cut. It added the club would also be contributing to the salaries of other workers.

"In the case of the football first

team, the reduction will be over 70% of that originally agreed with the club," Barcelona said. "This additional contribution by the team, together with the contribution that the club itself shall make, will guarantee 100% of the salaries of all non-sporting staff at the club."

The club said it wished to "express its gratitude to all of the professional athletes for their implication in such an exceptional situation that has been caused by this health crisis."

Barcelona was among the Spanish clubs that announced last week it would reduce players' and coaches' salaries during the stoppage.

Spain has been one of the hardest-hit nations by the pandemic. The country overtook China yesterday with more than 85,000 confirmed infections. It also reported 812 new deaths, raising its overall confirmed death toll to 7,340.

Barcelona said Saturday it delivered 30,000 masks to the Catalonia government to help fight the pandemic. The club said it was working through its foundation "to do as much as possible to help with this crisis, both locally and internationally."

"The club has put itself at the service of the health authorities to help to fulfill and enforce all its instructions, recommendations and orders to combat contagion of the virus and alleviate its effects as much as possible," it said. AP

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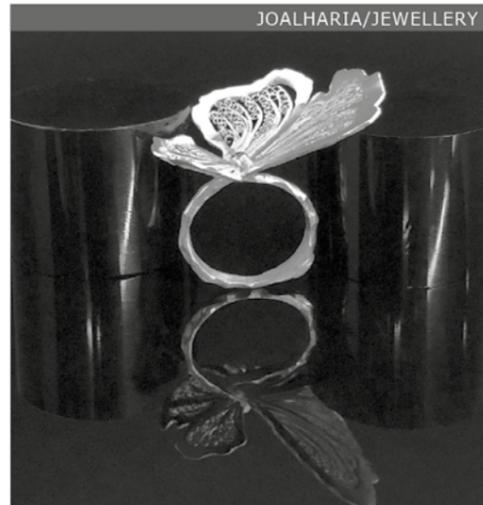
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OPINION

Our Desk

Anthony Lam



(ONE OF THE) MOST CREATIVE TIMES IN MACAU

While the Covid-19 outbreak has been officially categorized as a pandemic, with the tally rising drastically every day around the world, Macau is trying its best to contain the spread of the virus.

As advised, if not repeatedly reminded, by the government, people have tried their best to stay indoors and avoid forming groups or joining gatherings. The effort has lasted for about two months, having begun about the time of the Lunar New Year.

Following my previous article applauding some of the best creativity shone during this special time in the history of the city, I am taking one extra step to talk about other creative matters that I have seen in the past months.

Let us not forget that we are a Creative City of Gastronomy. Although the tourism regulator – and not the culture regulator – has recently been busied with epidemic containment and could not free itself to highlight that accolade, we still are.

It has been – and still is – a difficult time for the people living here, from here, or desiring to visit here.

The people living here experienced the most unusual and even frightening fortnight. It So many establishments were closed during that period: casinos, hotels, karaokes, bars and pubs, restaurants, and even supermarkets. The city literally stopped running.

However, like I said, we are a Creative City of Gastronomy – it's an accreditation from the UNESCO! To cope with the difficult time, restaurants started turning their focus to takeaway services.

Afterwards, the food delivery industry boomed. Food items previously less popular as delivery, such as fresh oysters and sashimi, were also sent to households too.

On the other hand, some eateries that had resisted the use of delivery apps changed their minds in their period and joined all platforms!

Even now, many eateries and restaurants still submit their dine-in services to takeaway, but they have survived so far after all.

The continuing education field has faced a tough time too, with all centers closed for more than a month. When no class was running, no income could be earned. But the electricity, water, and rental bills came in as usual.

As far as I understand, many continuing education centers followed the education regulator's policy for formal schools, which is to adopt online teaching as an alternative to on-site classes. Accordingly, some education centers maintained classes but taught them over the internet.

At the same time, some sports centers managed to maintain their exposure by teaching Internet users basic workout movements that are practical at home.

Oh yes! Even our dear lawmaker Mak Soi Kun has recently said that he had mastered the skill of making Char-siu – Cantonese barbecued pork – at home during the special period. It is unclear how he has learnt the skill, but he has admitted that he has built a belly after all this time. What a lesson!

Car owners have until today to pay the vehicle circulation tax on their cars this year, the government has reminded in a statement. Failure to do so may lead to a fine.

Although the government announced that this year's tax has been waived for owners of vehicles operated for profit, the tax must still be paid and owners will be refunded later.

Channels for payment include local bank branches, certain post offices and government service centers. Payment can also be made online by credit or debit card on the Transport Affairs Bureau's website.

Unlike in previous years, the Transport Affairs Bureau has not yet released the number of entities that have paid their tax so far.

BLISSFUL IGNORANCE? SUBMARINERS LIKELY UNAWARE OF PANDEMIC

AP PHOTO



OF a world in coronavirus turmoil, they may know little or nothing.

Submariners stealthily cruising the ocean deeps, purposefully shielded from worldly worries to encourage undivided focus on their top-secret missions of nuclear deterrence, may be among the last pockets of people anywhere who are still blissfully unaware of how the pandemic is turning life upside down.

Mariners aboard ballistic submarines are habitually spared bad news while underwater to avoid undermining their morale, say current and former officers who served aboard France's nuclear-armed subs. So any crews that left port before the virus spread around the globe are likely being kept in the dark about the extent of the rapidly unfurling crisis by their commanders until their return, they say.

"They won't know," said retired Adm. Dominique Salles, who commanded the French ballistic submarine squadron from 2003-2006. "The boys need to be completely available for their mission."

Speaking exclusively to The Associated Press, Salles said he believes submariners will likely only be told of the pandemic as they head back to port, in the final two days of their mission.

"Those who are at sea don't need this information," said Salles, who also commanded the nuclear-

armed French submarine "L'Inflexible."

"The commander, I think, is doubtless informed about what is happening. I don't think he'll have all the details," he said.

The French navy won't divulge what has or hasn't been said to submarine crews. Nor will it say whether any of the four French ballistic submarines, laden with 16 missiles that each can carry six nuclear warheads, left harbor before France instituted a nationwide lockdown on March 17.

Adm. Dominique Salles said he believes submariners will likely only be told of the pandemic as they head back to port

"Because the deterrent is wrapped in a bubble of protection and confidentiality, it is impossible to know whether the crews are informed or not of this situation," French navy spokesman Lt. Cmdr. Olivier Ribard said.

French submarine missions last 60 to 70 days, with about 110 crew members aboard. So a crew that left at the end of February wouldn't be expected back before the end of April. In that case, they will return to a world changed by the pandemic. On March 1, France had just 130 confirmed COVID-19

cases and two deaths. In under a month, those numbers have surged past 2,600 dead and over 40,000 sickened.

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

For submariners, the return to land could be a shock.

"They won't have experienced the crisis as we did, with a bit of fear, the lockdown. So for them it will be quite a surprise. They will learn the history, but it will be a history that is related to them," said a serving officer who was the doctor on the ballistic submarine "Le Triomphant" for four years. He spoke to the AP on condition that he be identified only by his first name and rank, in accordance with the rules of his branch of the French military.

"All events that could affect or change the morale of the crew members are kept from them," said the officer, Chief Doctor Gabriel. "Since there is no internet, no radio and no television on board, the only news you get comes from messages received by the commander, and the commander filters the messages to not give all of the information to everyone." AP

AP PHOTO



Australia More than 800 cruise ship passengers and crew were heading home to Germany on chartered flights yesterday while 41 others infected with the coronavirus were admitted to an Australian hospital after an argument over where they should be treated among local medical personnel.

AP PHOTO



North Korea said that "reckless remarks" by U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo made it clear that Washington has no intention of resuming nuclear talks, and warned that it is now compelled to pay back "the pains the U.S. has imposed on our people." After a teleconference of foreign ministers of the Group of Seven leading industrial nations last week, Pompeo told reporters the international community must remain united in urging North Korea to return to nuclear talks.

AP PHOTO



UK The Prince of Wales is now out of self-isolation, following his diagnosis of coronavirus. Prince Charles, 71, spent seven days self-isolating in Scotland after testing positive and displaying mild symptoms. The Duchess of Cornwall, 72, was tested and did not have the virus, but will self-isolate until the end of the week. A Palace official said the prince was in good health and was following the government's restrictions.

Netherlands A painting by Dutch master Vincent van Gogh was stolen in an overnight smash-and-grab raid on a museum that was closed to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. The Singer Laren museum east of Amsterdam said that "The Parsonage Garden at Nuenen in Spring 1884" by the Dutch master was taken in the early hours. All that could be seen from the outside of the museum was a large white panel covering a door in the building's glass facade.