

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

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N.º 3507

FRIDAY
03 Apr 2020

T. 18°/22°

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“THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN’”

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DSEJ ROLLS OUT SERIES OF SERVICES TO PROVIDE SUPPORT TO PARENTS OF SEN STUDENTS AMID SCHOOL CLOSURES

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China yesterday recorded another 35 confirmed and 20 suspected coronavirus cases, all from overseas. Another 55 asymptomatic cases were also recorded, 17 of them imported, bringing to 1,075 the number of who have tested positive but show no symptoms and are now being isolated and monitored. China also reported another six deaths, all in the hardest-hit province of Hubei, bringing the national death toll to 3,318 with 81,589 total cases.



South Korea Seoul is building a huge coronavirus testing station in a sports complex built for the 1988 Summer Olympics as it seeks to test hundreds of people returning to the city each day amid broadening outbreaks in Europe and the United States. Mayor Park Won-soon said the city will test all South Korean and long-term foreign residents returning from overseas starting today.

Australia's government will offer parents free child care from next week in a bid to keep 13,000 child care centers open during the coronavirus pandemic and to prevent workers staying home to look after children. Prime Minister Scott Morrison said yesterday one million families would benefit from the subsidies expected to cost 1.6 billion Australian dollars (\$973 million) over three months.

New Zealand's government says it has a plan to repatriate tens of thousands of tourists who have been stuck in the country since a strict lockdown began a week ago. The tourists are from Britain, Germany, the U.S. and many other countries. Many had been unable to catch restricted internal flights to the main city of Auckland to get a seat on one of the few international flights that are still operating.

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BLOOMBERG

EDUCATION REGULATOR PLEDGES HELP FOR SEN STUDENTS DURING PANDEMIC

ANTHONY LAM

THE Education and Youth Affairs Bureau (DSEJ) has announced that the department is stepping up its measures in providing support to students with Special Education Needs (SEN) amid the closures of education institutions.

Since late February, nine rehabilitation service providers have been commissioned by the DSEJ to offer assistance to students with SEN, a bureau official announced yesterday at the Health Bureau (SSM) daily press briefing.

From March, the education regulator took one step further to instruct schools with SEN service teams to provide similar assistance to their SEN students, as explained by Leong I On, head of Division for Secondary and Vocational Education of the DSEJ.

The education official, however, stressed that all such assistance was only provided under the circumstances in which the schools concerned were well-prepared and approvals were obtained from parents as well as the SSM.

Furthermore, the official disclosed that digital means were available to provide support to parents of SEN students. "Our therapists have made videos to demonstrate supportive measures to parents, so that parents can use them on their children," Leong said. "The DSEJ significantly cares about the welfare of SEN students."

Depicting essential skills for daily life, these videos were made as another tool for parents to help their students during the school suspension period.

On the other hand, in terms of emotional support for students, Leong disclosed that the bureau has set up a website for that particular purpose. The website consists of hotline numbers for the nine rehabilitation service providers who work on emotional support, as well as the hotline number for the DSEJ.

"We have so far received quite a number of calls from students, parents and even teachers," revealed Leong. He also said that not all calls received were related to emotional support. Some called to make in-

quiries or provide comments and suggestions.

Furthermore, following a previous call – made by a local parent to complain that her kids were not behaving well at home – received by the local public radio, the DSEJ official also made reference to the bureau's service supporting parents.

"We have made some videos addressing that in the series 'DSEJ 2 Minutes', in the hopes of helping parents and students," the DSEJ official said. Meanwhile, the bureau has long described the current pandemic as a lesson for students. Therefore, videos were also made on this aspect to educate students and parents.

A concern was raised at the press conference regarding graduating secondary school students who may have changed their minds and decided to stay in Macau for their tertiary education but might have missed the deadline for university admission. When questioned whether the DSEJ will take any action to help these students, Leong refrained from making a promise, but stressed that the bureau has been helping graduating students.

"Regarding university admission, it is recommended that students ask their respective universities for information," Leong said.

The SSM has also noted that the 50-year-old female patient who was earlier identified as having a severe case was, as of yesterday, in a stable condition, although she was on a ventilator. The Conde S. Januário Hospital (CHCSJ) pledged to employ all possible means to treat the patient and help her recover.

Tourism regulator admits shortcomings among some quarantine hotels

ANTHONY LAM

SOME of the designated hotels currently used by the government for quarantine purposes may have served unhygienic food to guests, Inês Chan, official from the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO), admitted during the press conference at the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Center.

The Times has recently received information from

readers that food provided by a quarantine hotel was dirty and inedible. There were even insects in the food served, a reader claimed.

In response to the comment, Chan stressed that most of these designated hotels were set up in haste, while stressing that efforts have been made to improve conditions.

So far, nearly 3,000 people who have returned from other countries, many of whom had been

in Europe and North America, are staying at the designated hotels. The sudden influx of returnees over a brief period of two weeks has imposed an extra burden on the hotel operators, the official explained.

However, Chan assured the public that the management of these hotels is rigorous in handling these guests. Some managers attended to their guests' requests, inquiries or complaints even at late

hours. In many cases, they also had meetings with the tourism regulator to find ways to improve their services.

"Of course, we did witness areas in which improvements were needed," the official admitted, before disclosing problems with catering at some hotels.

She explained that many hotels had had to outsource catering services and that many of the hotels were not designed to hold a full house of

guests who had to stay inside at all times for 14 days straight.

"As a large number of guests are staying in at one time, their kitchen just couldn't handle the catering needs," Chan disclosed. "Once they discovered problems with their catering service providers, they stopped using their services."

Chan further said that the designated hotels have been working to cater to every guest's need. "For instance, some hotels [have] asked their caterers to reduce their use of oil, after receiving complaints that food was too oily," the MGTO official disclosed. Children's meals were also

provided as some guests had requested meals for their young children.

The Times also received a complaint from a reader, who said that breakfast was served late – at about 9:30 a.m. – by a designated hotel.

The tourism official pointed out that the designated hotels have tried to serve meals at the same time every day, but noted that some delays were unavoidable.

"Sometimes health checks coincided with meal service, so we need to make ways for health checks to finish," Chan explained. "Otherwise, there is a fixed schedule according to which meals are served."

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Times

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Economy secretary says 10B pataca relief fund is not for gaming companies

JULIE ZHU

GAMING companies will receive nothing from the government's 10 billion pataca Covid-19 relief fund, Secretary for Economy and Finance Lei Wai Nong said yesterday.

For the time being, no details have been disclosed about how the fund will operate and who will be eligible for this new support measure, with the government leaving such information for a future announcement to be made shortly after the fund's establishment.

The government created the community relief fund worth 10 billion patacas late last month.

The community relief fund, which will be managed and distributed via the Macao Foundation, will provide financial support to both Macau residents and local businesses affected by the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic.

On the sidelines of yesterday's meeting of the Standing Committee for the Coordination of the Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture, Lei commented on the



Secretary for Economy and Finance Lei Wai Nong

community relief fund, as he understands that the public is very concerned about the fund.

The SAR government is still determining how the fund will be used and a plan will be announced as soon as possible.

The secretary confirmed that none of the money will go to ga-

ming companies.

"Temporarily, I can't see that gaming companies should benefit of the relief," said Lei.

The gross gaming revenue in March reached a low of 5.26 billion patacas, representing a year-on-year decline of 79.7%.

According to Lei, the amount is

within the SAR government's expectations. He also expressed his confidence that Macau's business environment will return to normal once the pandemic situation slows down.

Currently, mainland China is restricting outbound travel of mainland residents, which has led to Macau suffering tremendously in economic terms.

At the current stage, provided both Macau and mainland China

perform well in controlling Covid-19, Lei believes that the mainland's restriction measures will soon be lifted.

"The most important thing for us is to have confidence," said Lei.

It is unlikely that the SAR government will announce a detailed plan this week.

Meanwhile, Lei hopes that employees and employers can work together to get through the hardship of Covid-19.

DSAL RECORDS RISE IN UNEMPLOYMENT

SECRETARY for Economy and Finance Lei Wai Nong indicated that there are some 1,100 applications for unemployment certificates that were registered with the Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL), an increase compared to previous years. So far, the official said that the trend of the dismissals are still not evident on whether it was due to the pandemic outbreak, but added that the government will be paying close attention to the situation. With regards to companies requiring workers to take leave without pay, the official reminded that there is a need for ne-

gotiation and agreement between the employer and the employee before a leave without pay will be implemented. Lei also said that the authorities have not received any case about employers forcing employees to accept unpaid leave. Regarding the salary reduction, both parties must be in agreement and that such decisions must be communicated to DSAL within ten days, in order to be considered valid. DSAL data shows that up to April 1, a total of 27 wage reduction applications were received, involving 417 employees from 19 companies.

Administrative Court rules against Polytex compensation claim

RENATO MARQUES

THE Administrative Court has ruled against Polytex Import and Export Company Limited, which filed a compensation claim of 25.4 billion patacas against the government over losses related to the reclaiming of land plot concessions whose contracts had expired, the Office of the President of the Final Appeal Court has informed.

The case relates to the land plots of the former development site known as Pearl Horizon, which the government reclaimed pleading the concession's expiration. In November 2018, the company filed a compensation claim for around 25.4 billion patacas which included damages in lost profits, emerging damages and losses related to potential business opportunities, in addition to a claim for non-pecuniary losses in the symbolic amount of 1 pataca.

In its claim, Polytex said



that the government's actions had prevented the company from completing the construction of the building according to the concession within the given time and that the government should either pay the damages claimed or grant the company a new concession for the same land plot so it could complete the work.

On the government's side, authorities questioned

the legality of the process and argued that it was unable to provide a new concession or extend the expiring one. The government also noted that the period for claiming damages had expired and that the company had waived its right to claim damages, adding that the reasons that Polytex is invoking are incompatible with the case filed.

The court accepted the government's submissions

and considered that the waiver declaration previously made by Polytex was valid and precluded it from filing a subsequent claim for damages. The court refused to make the orders sought by Polytex.

The court also noted that such a waiver, although suggested by the government, was made consciously and unilaterally by the company. The ruling also adds that the waiver was not

made out of fear or self-inflicted damage, but as part of a deliberate business strategy designed to obtain special benefits from the other party.

Lastly, in relation to the claim for moral damages as compensation for non-pecuniary loss, the judge noted that the party in this case is not a person but a commercial company, and that the company also failed to demonstrate how its reputation was

tarnished by the administrative action from the government and the damage it sustained as a result. The court also noted that even the amount claimed of just 1 pataca shows that the request is merely symbolic and there is no serious matter to be invoked that is worthy of legal protection.

It is not clear for the time being whether Polytex intends to file an appeal from the decision of the Administrative Court.

GOV'T RETRIEVES TWO LAND PLOTS AT NAM VAN

THE government has reclaimed two land plots located in the Nam Van area in between the Lakes Nam Vai and Sai Van, whose concessions were declared expired, the Land, Public Works and Transport Bureau (DSSOPT) informed. The two contiguous land plots have a total area of 6,702 square meters and are classified as plots C10 and C11 of the Nam Van area. According to the DSSOPT, the former concessionaires had been previously notified to vacate the plots voluntarily within a given time. Since the plots were not vacated at the deadline, the DSSOPT proceeded earlier this week with the eviction to recover possession of the plots, clearing materials and equipment and fencing to prevent future unauthorized occupation. RM

MAN ARRESTED FOR KIDNAPPING SEX WORKER

The Judiciary Police (PJ) arrested a man after he kidnapped a woman who illegally entered Macau in January to work as a sex worker. On March 30, she provided sexual services to the suspect, a 37-year-old mainland man. On March 31, the suspect gained the victim's trust and took her to the hill in the area of A-Ma Cultural Village. When the woman tried to escape after she sensed danger, the suspect attacked her and robbed her of 20,000 yuan in cash. On April 1, the PJ found the man in his apartment in Lai Chi Yun. He denied having committed the crime. The man began working in Macau in December last year, based in Coloane. The victim has been banned from entering Macau for three years, and will be charged by the PJ with illegal immigration.



SULU SOU URGES SUBSIDY REGULATION REFORM AGAIN

Lawmaker Sulu Sou is again urging the local government to reform regulations on subsidies granted to local associations, clubs and societies. The lawmaker wrote an interpellation to the SAR government asking for the establishment of a law that provides one singular unified standard for autonomous funds to approve subsidies. The government should also implement policies made under the city's legislation regulating associations' activity to increase transparency and allow the public to learn about the subsidies, Sou says. The pro-democrat lawmaker wants the Chief Executive to announce a fixed amount for the total value of subsidies, and says that whenever the government approves subsidies in excess of the fixed amount, the local government should publicize details of the fund's records.

300 TOUR GUIDES STUDIED GBA TOURISM ONLINE

A total of 300 tour guides from the cities of the Greater Bay Area have participated in online training courses on tourism. Provided by the Greater Bay Area Tourism Education Training Base, the courses included talks from tourism academics on the improvement of tourism service quality. Last year, the cultural and tourism ministry of China set up the base in Macau at the Macao Tourism Institute (IFT). Amid Covid-19, IFT has been developing free online training courses targeting tourism and hospitality professionals.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS WILLING TO ACCEPT STUDENTS FROM CLOSED PRIVATE SCHOOLS

JULIE ZHU

THE Education and Youth Affairs Bureau (DSEJ) can assist with the teaching of students affected by the closure of non-tertiary private schools, according to the Second Standing Committee of the Legislative Assembly.

Yesterday, the committee had another meeting to discuss the non-tertiary education private school law which passed the first reading. Government representatives from the DSEJ atten-

ded the meeting to reply to the lawmakers' questions.

Lawmakers were mostly concerned about school close-downs, school assets, and school board members' salaries.

Chairman of the AL committee Chan Chak Mo reported to the media the DSEJ's responses to the above-mentioned topics.

As of today, no private schools have closed in Macau. In the event that a private school is closed, the DSEJ will be able to help students affected by the closure.

Macau currently has 17,000

students forming over 2,500 classes at the non-tertiary education level. On average, each class has 28 students, and the law in Macau stipulates a maximum of 35.

The DSEJ will be able to place any students affected by the closure of a private school into a public school.

Regarding school assets, the law currently uses the term "assets" across different articles, creating confusion. Thus, the government accepted lawmakers' opinions and pro-

mised that it would amend the law to clarify that a school asset includes physical facilities, cash and documents. Currently, the bill is written in such a way as to indicate that teaching facilities will not be included in the list of school assets, whereas cash and bank balance will be included, especially in the list of assets after the school stops operation.

When a school violates the law, the school will be penalized. When the sponsoring body of a school violates the law, the sponsoring body will also receive a penalty. The two bodies will be responsible for their own violations.

The sponsoring body of the school is also responsible for paying the salaries of members of the school board.

The government will rewrite the articles related to school board members' salaries. **JZ**

UM to collaborate with research institution on cancer therapy

AN agreement on the establishment of a joint cancer research center has recently been signed between the University of Macau (UM) and the national-level Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS), the university announced in a statement.

The Institute of Oncology and Basic Medicine (IOBM), an entity within the CAS, will act on behalf of the academy to

enact the agreement with the local higher education institution.

The IOBM is the first research institution operated by the CAS to focus on cancer prevention and treatment. It is also the first national research institute of life and health sciences in Zhejiang province.

As set forth in the statement, the agreement aims to fully utilize the advantages of the col-

laboration in terms of scientists and technologists, medical resources and innovative research, as well as to improve the health and wellbeing of people in China, particularly in Macau and the Greater Bay Area.

Under the agreement, the joint cancer research center will carry out cutting-edge, clinically oriented cancer research to tackle key scientific and technical issues in

cancer prevention and treatment, as well as cancer drug research and development.

As announced by the local university, innovative pure and clinical research will be carried out to develop the center into an internationally renowned oncology research and training base.

The two entities will use a variety of omics techniques and tumor organoid culture methods

to systematically conduct drug sensitivity tests and heavy ion treatment and research.

With the enactment of the agreement, UM will be in the privileged position to make full use of IOBM's innovation platform and the advantages of the affiliated cancer hospital of the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

UM will also benefit from increased opportunities as the Zhejiang government seeks changes to develop the province into an innovation powerhouse in life and health sciences and medical science in the Yangtze River Delta. **AL**

First batch of DSAL subsidized training classes commence

RENATO MARQUES

THE first batch of people who enrolled in the Labour Affairs Bureau's (DSAL) program for subsidized training have started training sessions this week.

This initial group of 340 people will be the first to undergo the special vocational training program organized by the DSAL in response to the large number of workers who have been laid off or made to take unpaid leave for an undefined period of time.

The DSAL previously advised that the restrictions imposed to contain the Covid-19 outbreak stopped the usual influx of tourists. As many local workers may have to seek alternative employment, this program provides the opportunity to assist with such a career change.

For the time being, the courses being held are focused on hygiene and safety and quality control, but the DSAL already announced that this month, other courses will open with a greater capacity of up to 1,000 vacancies.

In a statement, the Bureau also noted that through these courses, "the government hopes that it will be able to help affected workers to increase their professional skills in a short period and



quickly integrate them into jobs of a technical nature to alleviate economic pressure caused by the epidemic."

The trainees undergoing the first phase of the subsidized courses are mainly those who became unemployed due to the epidemic, such as former tourist guides, taxi drivers and tour bus drivers, as well as other workers in the transport and convention and exhibition sectors. Trainees will receive a training allowance of up to 6,656 patacas after com-

pleting the program.

According to the DSAL, the first sessions ran smoothly and in accordance with a series of guidelines designed to avoid the transmission of Covid-19. The registered attendance rate was 92%.

After the courses, the DSAL will also provide the trainees with job-matching sessions and career-routing, which will direct the workers to jobs where there is a current need for manpower.

The DSAL has received re-

quests from large entertainment companies to fill around 2,600 roles. The companies are seeking cleaners, waiters, receptionists, security staff, cooks, and maintenance and repairing staff, among others.

The DSAL also noted that the construction sector has a growing capacity to employ a large number of people, including those whose employment has been affected by Covid-19, due to the government's reinforcement of investment in public works.

PROFESSIONAL TAX REFUND DELAYED

Tax refund from fiscal year 2018 will be delayed as the amendment to the public budget is still being discussed by the Legislative Assembly due to the Covid-19 outbreak, the Financial Services Bureau announced yesterday. Also due to the outbreak, the administrative branch has decided to raise the tax refund level as part of its economic relief efforts. The percentage is proposed to increase from 60% to 70%, while the ceiling will be raised from 14,000 patacas to 20,000 patacas. Since the change to the tax refund arrangement requires amendments be made to the government's budget, they must be legally discussed and passed by the legislature in order to be enacted.

LAW FIRM LAUNCHES COVID-19 RESPONSE CENTER

Law firm MdME Lawyers has launched an online response center aimed at providing real-time updates on new regulations, restrictions and relief measures impacting people and businesses in Macau amid the pandemic outbreak.

According to the law firm, the "Covid-19 Response Center" will also provide the firm's insights on the economic and human costs of this crisis and practical guidance on how to address these costs. The firm has put together a team of legal experts dedicated to this project. Within the response center, the firm will also launch a series of open-access webinars addressing the most relevant legal matters arising from the challenges posed by the pandemic.

Lawmaker wants local museums to fully reflect city's history

JULIE ZHU

DURING a Legislative Assembly (AL) session this week lawmaker Au Kam San was critical of the fact that despite Macau constantly talking about "Love the Country and Love Macau," the city does not have a museum to fully reflect the region's history.

In Au's opinion, Macau has dozens of themed museums but none of them fully reflects Macau's history and culture. Au, in particular, addressed the Macao Museum.

This museum currently has three permanent exhibitions divided into ten periods, which include Prehistoric Age Macao; International Commercial Activities; Administrative, Management and Defen-

sive Measures; and Urban Development and Macao Handover.

Au commented that only the Prehistoric Age Macao and the International Commercial Activities exhibitions actually involve history in spite of the big temporal gap between the two periods.

"Macao's opening, which is urban history, indeed started because of Portuguese occupation. How was it started? How did the Portuguese arrive in Macau? The first sentence of the preface of the Basic Law says that Macau, including the Macau peninsula, Taipa and Coloane, has been part of the territory of China since ancient times and it was occupied gradually by Portugal from the middle of the 16th century. What exactly

is gradual occupation? Should Macao Museum's exhibition also reflect this aspect?"

"I can say that tourists or local residents alike will have no clear understanding of Macau's history and culture even if they walk through all Macau's museums," Au commented.

Replying to the lawmaker, the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) president Mok Ian Ian argued that Macao Museum is effective at "reflecting Macau's history."

Meanwhile, Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture Ao Ieong U said that the museum is considering adding more content related to Coloane and Taipa.

The local government is also studying ways to enhance the public's know-

ledge about Macau's history after 1840.

"Between the First Opium War and the Joint Declaration of the Government of Portugal and the Government of the People's Republic of China on the question of Macau, there is a long period," lawmaker Sulu Sou commented. He then asked how the local government is helping local pupils learn about Macau's history.

Lawmaker Agnes Lam also believes that Macao Museum's exhibition needs an upgrade.

Secretary Ao Ieong confirmed that the Macau SAR government aims to create a system of cultural and museum interaction to create a base for education on Loving the Country and Loving Macau. JZ

MACAU SUPERMARKET CREATES TEMPORARY CHECK-OUT PRIORITY LANE

RENATO MARQUES

THE supermarket chain San Miu announced the creation of priority lanes in 24 of their supermarkets, as of April 1, aiming to facilitate the lives of customers aged 65 and above, pregnant women and those with disabilities.

Although priority check-out lanes are common around the globe, this is the first time they have been implemented in Macau. San Miu said that the priority lanes were introduced due to the significant increase in demand for food and daily necessities and the need to ensure that tho-

se most in need are able to do their shopping safely, the company said in a statement.

The company also noted that the priority given to special groups will only be enforced up to 9 a.m., after which time the supermarkets would continue to operate as normal.

San Miu also said that their staff will provide special assistance to priority customers, such as "retrieving products from the higher shelves or carrying any heavier products to the check-out counters."

The program will be running on trial until the end of April, with the possibility of being extended if necessary.

Chinese smartphone health code rules post-virus life

SINCE the coronavirus outbreak, life in China is ruled by a green symbol on a smartphone screen.

Green is the "health code" that says a user is symptom-free and it's required to board a subway, check into a hotel or just enter Wuhan, the central city of 11 million people where the pandemic began in December.

The system is made possible by the Chinese public's almost universal adoption of smartphones and the ruling Communist Party's embrace of "Big Data" to extend its surveillance and control over society.

Walking into a Wuhan subway station this week, Wu Shenghong, a manager for a clothing manufacturer, used her smartphone to scan a barcode on a poster that triggered her health code app. A green code and part of her identity card number appeared on the screen. A guard wearing a mask and goggles waved her through.

If the code had been red, that would tell the guard that Wu was confirmed to be infected or had a fever or other symptoms and was awaiting a diagnosis. A yellow code would mean she had contact with an infected person but hadn't finished a two-week quarantine, meaning she should be in a hospital or quarantined at home.

Wu, who was on her way to see retailers after returning to work this week, said the system has helped reassure her after a two-month shutdown left the streets of Wuhan empty.

People with red or yellow codes "are definitely not running around outside," said Wu, 51. "I feel safe."

Intensive use of the health code is part of the efforts by authorities to revive China's economy while preventing a spike in infections as workers stream back into factories, offices and shops.

Most access to Wuhan, the manufacturing hub of central China, was suspended Jan. 23 to fight the coronavirus. The lockdown spread to surrounding cities in Hubei province and then people nationwide were ordered stay home in the most intensive anti-disease controls ever imposed. The final travel controls on Wuhan are due to be lifted April 8.

Other governments should consider adopting Chinese-style "digital contact tracing," Oxford University researchers recommended in a report published Tuesday in the journal *Science*. The virus is spreading too rapidly for traditional methods to track infections "but could be controlled if



A passenger holds up a green pass on their phone on a subway train in Wuhan

this process was faster, more efficient and happened at scale," the researchers wrote.

Once aboard the subway, Wu and other commuters used their smartphones to scan a code that recorded the number of the car they rode in case authorities need to find them later.

An attendant carried a banner reading "Please wear a mask throughout your trip. Do not get close to others. Scan the code before you get off the train." Seats were marked with dots denoting where passengers were to sit to stay far enough away from each other.

Visitors to shopping malls, offices buildings and other public places in Wuhan undergo a similar routine. They show their health codes and guards in masks and gloves check them for fever before they are allowed in.

The health codes add to a steadily growing matrix of high-tech monitoring that tracks what citizens do in public, online and at work

The health codes add to a steadily growing matrix of high-tech monitoring that tracks what China's citizens do in public, online and at work: Millions of video cameras blanket streets from major cities to small towns. Censors monitor activity on the internet and social media. State-owned telecom carriers can trace where mobile phone customers go.

A vast, computerized system popularly known as social credit

is intended to enforce obedience to official rules. People with too many demerits for violations ranging from committing felonies to littering can be blocked from buying plane tickets, getting loans, obtaining government jobs or leaving the country.

A statement by the city government of Tianjin, a port city of 16 million people adjacent to Beijing, said the health codes were temporary but offered no indication when use might end.

The codes are issued through the popular WeChat messaging service of internet giant Tencent Ltd. and the Alipay electronic payments service of Alibaba Group, the world's biggest e-commerce company.

Some 900 million people use the system on WeChat, according to the newspaper *Beijing Youth Daily* and other outlets. No total for Alipay has been reported.

Obtaining a health code is simple: Users fill out an electronic form with their identity details, address and whether they have a cough or fever. The system includes no steps to confirm whether a user is healthy.

Authorities have threatened that violators will be "dealt with severely," though detailed penalties have yet to be announced.

Regulations say people who try to travel with a red health code will be marked down in the social credit system.

"Fraud, concealment and other behaviors" carry penalties that "will have a huge impact on their future life and work," a statement by the government of Heilongjiang province in the northeast said. AP

VIRUS MASKS, APPS

The race is on to av

LORI HINNANT
& ROBERT BUMSTED, PARIS

THE worldwide race to protect people against unwitting coronavirus carriers intensified yesterday, pitting governments against each other as they buy protective gear and prompting new questions about who should wear masks, get temperature checks or even be permitted to go outside.

In the Chinese city of Wuhan, where the pandemic began in December, a green symbol on residents' smartphones dictates their movements. Green is the "health code" that says a user is symptom-free and it's required to board a subway, check into a hotel or enter the central city of 11 million. Serious travel restrictions still exist for those who have yellow or red symbols.

In northern Italy, the country with the most virus deaths in the world at over 13,000, guards with thermometer guns decide who can enter supermarkets. In Los Angeles, the mayor has recommended that the city's 4 million people wear masks. Same goes for grocery store customers in Austria.

And a top health official in France's hard-hit eastern region said American officials swooped in at a Chinese airport to spirit away a plenitude of masks that France had ordered.

"On the tarmac, the Americans arrive, take out cash and pay three or four times more for our orders, so we really have to fight," Dr. Jean Rottner, an emergency room doctor in Mulhouse, told RTL radio.

A study by researchers in Singapore on Wednesday estimated that around 10% of new infections may be sparked by people who carry the virus but have not yet suffered symptoms.

In response, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention changed how it defined the risks of infection, saying essentially that anyone may be a carrier, whether they have symptoms or not. But neither it nor the World Health Organization changed their recommendations that everyone did not have to wear masks.

Nine leading European university hospitals warned yesterday they will run out of essential medicines for COVID-19 patients in intensive care in less than two weeks. The European University Hospital Alliance said countries should cooperate, not compete, to ensure a steady supply of these drugs for critically ill virus patients.

Spain reported a record number of daily virus-related deaths, 950 in 24 hours, bringing its total deaths to 10,003 even as its infection rate appeared to be slowing.



Supporters of the minor opposition People's Party

In the United States, from New York to Los Angeles, officials warned that the worst is still ahead.

"How does it end? And people want answers," New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo said. "I want answers. The answer is nobody knows for sure."

Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti said even a "tucked-in bandanna" could slow the spread of the virus and remind people to keep their distance from each other.

"I know it will look surreal," he said, donning a mask. "We're going to have to get used to seeing each other like this."

In Japan, where masks are a household staple, the government planned to mail two gauze masks each to the country's 50 million households.

In Greece, authorities placed an entire refugee camp of 2,400 people under quarantine yesterday after discovering that a third of the 63 contacts of just one infected woman tested positive — and none had showed symptoms.

Altogether, more than 952,000 people around the world have contracted the virus, according to Johns Hopkins University. More than 48,000 have died from the virus and another 202,000 have recovered.

The real figures are believed to be much higher because of testing shortages, differences in counting the dead and mild cases that have gone unreported. Critics also say some governments have been deliberately under-reporting cases in order to avoid criticism.

Frank Ulrich Montgomery,

void hidden carriers



Party wear face masks to help protect against the spread of the new coronavirus during a campaign for the 2020 South Korean National Assembly election in Seoul

chairman of the World Medical Association, yesterday called China's recent low figures on coronavirus infections "nonsense," but added that many countries are working with uncertain data.

In Italy, a new study found a hidden toll from coronavirus in the province of Bergamo, more than doubling the official number of 2,060 dead to a new estimate of 4,500.

As hot spots flared in New Orleans and Southern California, the nation's biggest city, New York, was the hardest hit of them all. Bodies were being loaded onto refrigerated morgue trucks by forklifts outside overwhelmed hospitals.

"It's like a battlefield behind your home," said 33-year-old Emma Sorza, who could hear the sirens from Elmhurst Hospital in Queens.

Cuomo said projections suggest the crisis in New York will peak at the end of April, with a high death rate continuing through July.

For most people, the corona-

The [chairman] of the World Medical Association called China's recent low figures on coronavirus infections 'nonsense,' but added that the numbers aren't credible in many other countries, either

virus causes mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. But for others, especially older

adults and people with health problems, it can cause severe symptoms like pneumonia and lead to death.

More than 95% of those who have died of coronavirus in Europe have been older than 60 but young people should not be complacent, WHO said Thursday.

"Young people are not invincible," Dr. Hans Kluge told reporters. The U.N. health agency says 10% to 15% of people under 50 with the disease have moderate or severe cases.

Major global stock markets and U.S. futures rose yesterday following a rocky start to the day.

Many countries are now modeling their response to the virus after

China, which in January closed off an entire province of over 70 million people. AP

Trump's contradictory views on China shift as crisis grows

PRESIDENT Donald Trump has held an unequivocal position about China and the coronavirus — several of them.

Trump initially praised China, then excoriated Beijing after it made unsubstantiated claims that the virus originated in the United States. Now, Trump is back to offering niceties.

The diverging messages have generated finger-pointing by both Beijing and Washington that is further destabilizing a critical relationship between countries with the two largest economies and militaries.

There might not be radical shifts in U.S.-China policy during the next several months, but China's cover-up and disinformation campaign will color the relationship going forward, Dan Blumenthal, director of Asian studies at the American Enterprise Institute, said yesterday [Macau time].

"It's very hard to see progress on trade talks after this," he said. He added that he expects Congress will push to address American dependence on China for medical and other manufacturing supplies.

There are calls in Congress to hold China accountable for initially covering up the outbreak. Anticipating a backlash, China's official Xinhua News Agency last month suggested that Beijing could retaliate against the U.S. by banning the export of medical products that would leave the U.S. stuck in the "ocean of viruses."

Early in the outbreak, Trump lauded China for its response to COVID-19, tweeting on Jan. 24 that the U.S. appreciated Beijing's efforts and "transparency," even though local Chinese officials initially covered up mounting cases in Wuhan, the city where the virus was first reported. In February, as the virus began to spread in Europe, Trump still refrained from blaming China.

Then Trump started going after Beijing, repeatedly calling COVID-19 the "Chinese virus." He said he was upset that some Chinese officials had suggested

without evidence that the U.S. military transported the virus to Wuhan or that the virus was released from a U.S. lab.

A Chinese foreign ministry spokesman, Zhao Lijian, tweeted March 12: "It might be US army who brought the epidemic to Wuhan. Be transparent! Make public your data! US owe us an explanation!"

Other U.S. officials chimed in. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo called COVID-19 the "Wuhan virus" six times in one State Department briefing. He chastised the Chinese Communist Party for not allowing U.S. medical experts into the country, kicking Western journalists out and cracking down on the flow of information.

The National Security Council at the White House also has accused the Communist Party of launching disinformation campaigns around the world and retaliating against Chinese citizens who wanted to tell the public about the coronavirus.

The president has said China was trying to blame the United States to distract the world from the shortcomings of Beijing's own response.

"It could have been stopped in its tracks," Trump said March 19 at a coronavirus task force briefing at the White House. "Unfortunately, they (Chinese officials) didn't decide to make it public. But the whole world is suffering because of it."

Trump abruptly stopped calling it the "Chinese virus" shortly after China's ambassador to the U.S., Cui Tiankai, appeared to split with Zhao, calling the theory "crazy" and saying that it was not for diplomats to speculate.

Now the president is praising Chinese President Xi Jinping again.

"We have a great trade deal and we would like to keep it. They would like to keep it and the relationship is good," Trump said yesterday. He noted that some of China's numbers on COVID-19 cases seem a bit "low," but he insisted his relationship with Xi remained "really good." AP

WORKING THE NUMBERS

THE chairman of the World Medical Association said yesterday China's figures on the new coronavirus infections aren't credible.

But German doctor Frank Ulrich Montgomery added the numbers aren't credible in many other countries, either.

Montgomery said the recent low Chinese numbers were "nonsense" and suggested Beijing was intentionally providing false figures. The radiologist and former head of the German Medical Association said other countries are also working with uncertain figu-

res because better data often isn't available.

Montgomery cited the lack of proper testing as one reason why many developing countries are reporting low infection rates.

He called for the World Health Organization to do more to impress on governments in poorer nations the need to take measures to restrict the spread of the pandemic.

Montgomery warned that if the virus takes hold in megacities such as Cairo, "then it's going to get really dangerous."



AP PHOTO

AP PHOTO



New York virus toll doubles in 72 hours as hot spots spread

NEW York rushed to bring in an army of medical volunteers as the statewide death toll from the coronavirus doubled in 72 hours to more than 1,900, while the global number of people diagnosed with the illness edged closer to 1 million on Thursday.

As hot spots flared around the U.S. in places like New Orleans and Southern California, the nation's biggest city was the hardest hit of them all, with bodies loaded onto refrigerated morgue trucks by gurney and forklift outside overwhelmed hospitals.

The wail of ambulances in the otherwise eerily quiet streets of the city became the heartbreaking soundtrack of the crisis.

"It's like a battlefield behind your home," said 33-year-old Emma Sorza, who could hear the sirens from severely swamped Elmhurst Hospital in Queens.

And the worst is yet to come.

"How does it end? And people want answers," New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo said. "I want answers. The answer is nobody knows for sure."

President Donald Trump acknowledged that the federal stockpile is nearly depleted of personal protective equipment used by doctors and nurses and warned of trying times to come.

"Difficult days are ahead

for our nation," he said. "We're going to have a couple of weeks, starting pretty much now, but especially a few days from now that are going to be horrific."

Altogether, close to 940,000 people around the world have contracted the virus, according to a tally being kept by Johns Hopkins University. More than 47,000 people have died from the virus, which was first found in China late last year.

The real figures are believed to be much higher because of testing shortages, differences in counting the dead and large numbers of mild cases that have gone unreported.

Asian stocks were meandering Thursday after a White House warning that as many as 240,000 Americans might die in the pandemic sent Wall Street tumbling. The Dow Jones Industrial Average lost more than 970 points, or over 4%.

Meanwhile, European nations facing extraordinary demand for intensive-care beds were putting up makeshift hospitals, unsure whether they will find enough healthy medical staff to run them. London was days away from unveiling a 4,000-bed temporary hospital built in a huge convention center.

Spain reported a record 864 deaths in one day Wednesday, for a total of more than 9,000, while France re-

gistered 509 deaths for more than 4,000 deaths in all.

In Italy, with the most deaths of any country at more than 13,000, morgues overflowed with bodies and caskets piled up in churches, although experts drew hope that the spread was already slowing in the country.

Meanwhile, Israel's health minister, who has had frequent contact in recent weeks with Prime Minister Netanyahu and other top officials, was diagnosed with the illness, the Health Ministry announced Thursday.

Scientists offered more evidence that the coronavirus can be spread by seemingly healthy people who show no clear symptoms, leading the U.S. government to issue new guidance warning that anyone exposed to the disease can be considered a potential carrier.

Many countries are now modeling their response to the virus in part after China, which in January closed off an entire province home to tens of millions of people in what at the time was an unprecedented lockdown. The government says the measures have been a success, with nearly all new cases of the virus imported from abroad.

People in Wuhan, once the epicenter of the crisis, are starting to return to work. They are being tra-

cked by a smartphone app that shows if they are symptom free. The app is required to board a subway, check into a hotel or just enter the city.

More measures to control the spread of the virus rolled out Wednesday in the U.S. Under growing pressure, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis belatedly joined his counterparts in more than 30 states in issuing a statewide stay-home order. The governors of Pennsylvania, Nevada and Mississippi took similar steps.

The U.S. has recorded more than 216,000 infections and more than 5,100 deaths, with New York City accounting for about 1 out of 4 dead.

More than 80,000 people have volunteered as medical reinforcements in New York, including recent retirees and health care professionals taking a break from their regular jobs. A Navy hospital ship has docked in the harbor, a convention center has been turned into a hospital, and the tennis center that hosts the U.S. Open is being converted to one.

Those arriving to help have found a hospital system near the breaking point.

"It's hard when you lose patients. It's hard when you have to tell the family members: 'I'm sorry, but we did everything that we could,'" said nurse Katherine Ramos of Cape Coral, Florida, who has been working at New York Presbyterian Hospital. "It's even harder when we really don't have the time to mourn, the time to talk about this."

Cuomo said projections suggest the crisis in New York will peak at the end of April, with a high death rate continuing through July. AP

this day in history



2000 ASYLUM VOUCHER SCHEME ENFORCED

Asylum seekers in the UK will now receive vouchers to buy food and clothes, under controversial plans which have come into effect despite months of criticism.

The changes, being introduced under the Immigration and Asylum Act, also include full implementation of a plan to disperse asylum seekers around the country.

Asylum seekers will now get only £10 a week in cash and vouchers worth between £18.95 and £26.54 depending on their age.

Couples get vouchers worth £47.37 plus the cash.

Home Secretary Jack Straw has rejected suggestions that the changes will reinforce prejudice against refugees, after weeks of adverse publicity over begging involving asylum seekers.

The charity Oxfam has condemned the introduction of vouchers as "penny pinching" because refugees will not be given change if the value of the vouchers exceeds the cost of what they are buying.

The Chief Executive of the Refugee Council, Nick Hardwick, said the vouchers would "stigmatise and demean" asylum seekers.

The criticisms have been rejected by the Home Office. Immigration minister Barbara Roche said the moves would benefit genuine asylum seekers.

"The genuine refugee seeking asylum wants first of all safety and security, and that's what we are providing, and a level of support while their claim is being determined," Ms Roche said.

The current system had caused problems because 80% of asylum seekers were centred in London and the southeast, she added.

Between February and April the number of people applying for asylum averaged 6,230 a month - 32% more than the same period last year.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

The move was one of a number in recent years which critics said was designed to stem the flow of asylum seekers to the UK.

Vouchers were eventually scrapped in 2002.

However, new regulations for asylum seekers were introduced.

They included mandatory "smart cards" carrying fingerprints and photographs.

Plans to build special "accommodation centres" for asylum seekers in rural locations were also announced in 2002, sparking protest from residents in some of the areas concerned.

The announcement came just months after a similar institution - the £100m Yarl's Wood Centre in Bedfordshire - was severely damaged by fire after detainees rioted.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

The actions of other people could be very unpredictable today, so you need to be prepared for anything. And while this day may test your flexibility and patience, it will still be quite enjoyable.



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

You could be on a somewhat solid financial footing right now, although it wouldn't hurt to have a few more coins in your coffers. Put a little more effort into conserving more of your funds.



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

Enjoy a virtual happy hour or meal, sing some tunes, or engage in an impromptu workout and encourage one another. There are lots of ways to stay connected if you use that creative brain of yours!



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

No one sees things quite like you do, and more and more people are starting to enjoy your take on the world. Some of your ideas might leak out in an unconscious act on your part, and it might make you nervous.



LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

It's time to get social! You put lots of effort into your professional life, and now you need to start putting just as much effort into your personal life, too.



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

You'll be exposed to a lot of new things that will amuse you, shock you, and, most of all, educate you! So you'll want to take notes and lots of pictures.



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

You've been waiting for someone to show you a better way of being with people. Could this be that someone? It might take time to determine this, but you should look for the answer.



SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

Sometimes it's easy to confuse being busy with getting things accomplished, but you need to keep your focus on what needs to happen today, not on what you would like to have happen tomorrow.



SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

Fire up your laptop and start a spreadsheet, because you need to stay on top of all the details that will be flying at you today! You can't afford to let any numbers, names, or dates fall through the cracks.



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

You're a wonderful person, and even if there's no one in your life right now to remind you of that fact, you can remind yourself. It's a nice, powerful feeling to tell yourself how special you are.



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

Are you getting bored? The best cure for that is to take a few risks! Try to put yourself in a situation where you could be rejected, or at least come out with less than you put in.



PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Use beautiful words in a poetic sense to let them see into your heart. Whether you literally write a poem or not is up to you. Just make sure they know how you feel.

The Born Loser by Chip Sanson



SUDOKU

EASY

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

EASY+

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

MEDIUM

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

HARD

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

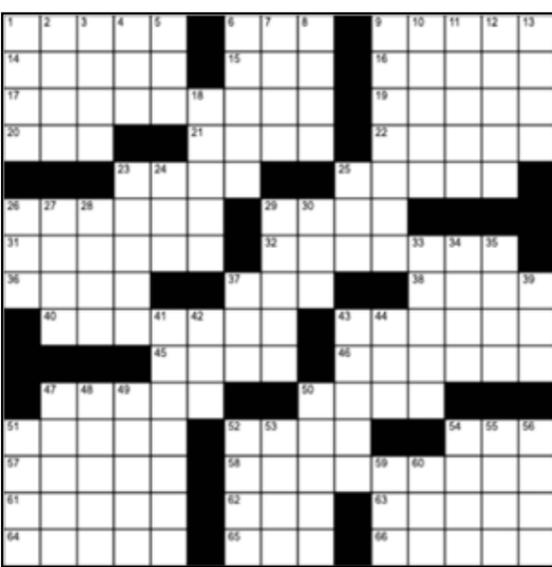
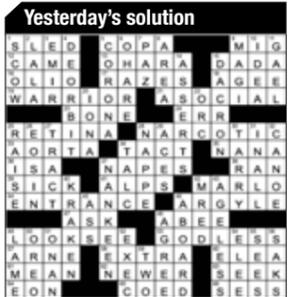
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	7	24	clear
Harbin	1	10	shower
Tianjin	9	23	clear
Urumqi	7	17	clear
Xi'an	6	14	drizzle
Lhasa	1	14	cloudy
Chengdu	10	13	drizzle
Chongqing	14	17	drizzle
Kunming	14	27	clear
Nanjing	7	18	cloudy
Shanghai	11	17	cloudy
Wuhan	10	16	overcast
Hangzhou	19	22	drizzle
Taipei	17	22	shower
Guangzhou	19	23	cloudy
Hong Kong			
WORLD			
Moscow	3	6	drizzle
Frankfurt	4	11	drizzle
Paris	5	10	drizzle
London	5	9	drizzle
New York	6	12	drizzle

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS: 1- The Little Mermaid; 6- Tough wood; 9- Eight singers; 14- Artist Rousseau; 15- Sault ___ Marie; 16- Boite ___; 17- Moving stairway; 19- Kind of kitchen; 20- 1959 Kingston Trio hit; 21- State of midwestern USA; 22- Cruise stops; 23- Coarse file, angry tone of voice; 25- Elects; 26- Illegible handwriting; 29- Single entity; 31- Fit for cultivation; 32- East African nation; 36- Actress Gilpin; 37- Sympathetic attention; 38- Table scraps; 40- Marriage; 43- Strangled; 45- Nose out; 46- Setbacks; 47- Capital of Yemen; 50- Having a sound mind; 51- Bitterly pungent; 52- Wet septet; 54- Distress call; 57- High-toned; 58- Terrifying dream; 61- Truman veep Barkley; 62- Man-mouse connector; 63- Art supporter; 64- Facial hair; 65- Bentley of "American Beauty"; 66- Disinfectant brand;

DOWN: 1- Excuse me; 2- Breather; 3- Member of a great Peruvian people; 4- Period of history; 5- Like Abner; 6- Put ___ to (halt); 7- Pack away; 8- Jealous wife of myth; 9- The tiniest bit; 10- Seashore; 11- Name; 12- Great Lakes tribesmen; 13- Addition column; 18- Grocery lane; 23- Violently intense; 24- Hole-punching tool; 25- Vitality; 26- Dupe; 27- Ship's company; 28- Steak order; 29- Grammarian's concern; 30- Hide-hair link; 33- Unfettered; 34- Bothers; 35- To ___ (perfectly); 37- Chang's twin; 39- Radical '60s grp.; 41- Blind alley; 42- Highest mountain in Crete; 43- Don't match; 44- Darlin'; 47- Fish covering; 48- Island off Venezuela; 49- Fertilizer ingredient; 50- Long stories; 51- Gregory Peck role of 1956; 52- Chilly powder?; 53- Hibernia; 54- Disrespectful back talk; 55- Black-and-white cookie; 56- Offer; 59- ___ Aviv; 60- Spring month;



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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



AD

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生活藝術雜誌 LIVING & ARTS MAGAZINE

MACAUCLOSER

數百年來，澳門冷靜沉穩，不屈不撓，平安度過重重難關

歷難彌堅 A RESILIENT CITY

OVER THE CENTURIES MACAU HAS SURVIVED MANY TOUGH TIMES WITH PATIENCE, STRENGTH AND PERSEVERANCE

ON SALE

數百年來，澳門冷靜沉穩，不屈不撓，平安度過重重難關

OVER THE CENTURIES MACAU HAS SURVIVED MANY TOUGH TIMES WITH PATIENCE, STRENGTH AND PERSEVERANCE

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STEVE DOUGLAS

PANDEMIC

THE U.S. has filed for bankruptcy. The Australians are facing a black hole of more than \$70 million. English rugby leaders have drawn up worst-case scenarios of an even bigger financial hit.

The coronavirus pandemic has left rugby on its knees over the last two weeks, with the prospect of more pain to come because of the uncertainty over whether leagues, lucrative tours and international competitions can resume or go ahead.

The chief executive of England's Rugby Football Union, the world's richest union, said yesterday there has been an "unprecedented amount of dialogue" between the sport's leading countries during the outbreak that has shut down rugby.

"The relationship between the north and the south has probably never been better," Bill Sweeney said.

Sweeney acknowledged that Australia might be in the weakest position of all the major unions.

After returning a net loss of more than \$5.4 million for last year, the Australian Rugby Union could take a hit of more than 10 times that figure this year if Super Rugby does not

Rugby in crisis as unions engage in 'unprecedented dialogue'



AP PHOTO

start up again and there are no domestic test matches for the Wallabies, according to CEO Raelene Castle.

The ARU doesn't even have a TV deal at present after refusing to take up an offer with Foxtel, its existing broadcaster. Foxtel

had been bidding for rights with Optus, but negotiations have now been suspended.

"It's in no one's interest," Sweeney said, "for Australia to get into even more serious difficulties."

Sweeney suggested USA Ru-

gby's decision this week to file for bankruptcy was no surprise because the body was "struggling somewhat before the crisis," through sponsorship pull-back and losses from sevens competitions and test matches in the country in 2018.

World Rugby, the sport's governing body, is in conversations with the Americans to see how they can sustain the game in what it sees as a key future market.

Sweeney last week said the RFU was bracing for lost revenue of up to 50 million pounds (\$62 million) over the next 18 months.

There will be a further blow to global revenues in July if test matches set to be hosted by New Zealand, South Africa, Australia and Japan are called off because of the pandemic.

A decision is set to be taken on those tours by the northern hemisphere sides at the end of April, but there is little optimism around given most coun-

tries are under lockdown, and could be for months.

More realistic, at least among northern hemisphere countries, is ensuring the new season scheduled to start in September can proceed as planned.

Wales and Scotland have already voided their domestic campaigns, as has England below the top-tier Premiership.

"There is a final phase in our reaction to this crisis and it's a reboot phase," Sweeney said, "how we resurrect ourselves from this and emerge stronger."

A decision was made by the RFU yesterday that final standings in English leagues should be determined by a "best playing record formula," meaning that Newcastle Falcons will be promoted to the Premiership because they have a 100% record so far this season. The Falcons are set to replace Saracens, whose demotion because of breaches of salary cap regulations was confirmed in January. AP

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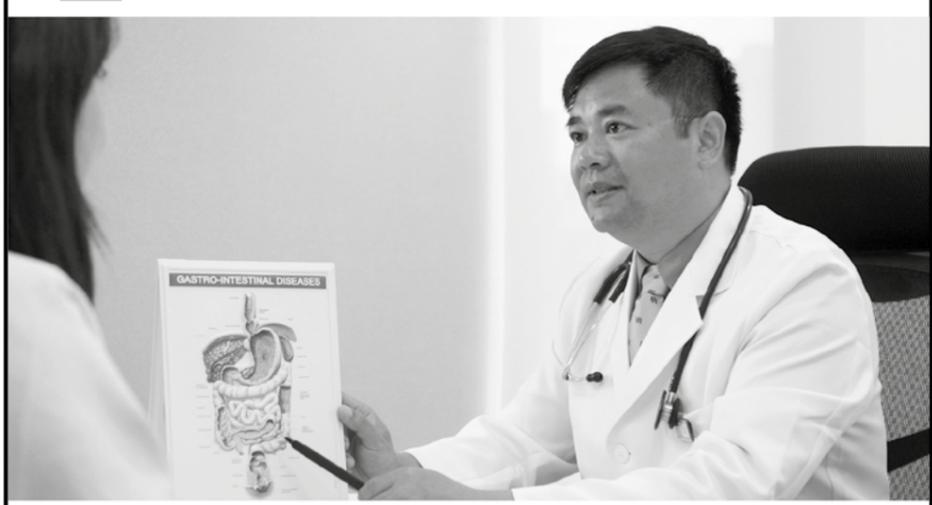



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OPINION

World Views

Tae Kim, Bloomberg

CASH AND CREDIT CARDS ARE DIRTY

Cash is dirty. Credit cards may be even dirtier. That's a problem in this new germophobic world created by the coronavirus. There will likely be new winners and losers as consumers shift to products and services that help them keep their social distance even after this outbreak subsides. Is it finally time to embrace the digital wallet?

Take Apple Inc.'s Apple Pay, a service that stores your credit-card information and lets you pay for purchases via your iPhone. The tech giant launched the product six years ago, but it didn't bring about the revolution it hoped it would, where mobile payments lead the move toward a cashless society as it had in China. In the U.S., there just wasn't a compelling enough reason for many consumers to change their entrenched routines.

My own habits are noticeably changing on this front. Though I had my card information inside Apple Pay for years, I rarely ever used it. Old habits die hard, and I simply didn't mind pulling out my credit card and paying for things the usual way. Nowadays? Not so much. Due to virus fears, I would rather not tap on a payment terminal's numeric key pads or use my finger to sign for purchases when there is a much cleaner alternative. As a result, Apple Pay has now become the main way I pay for things whenever I venture outside.

Apple Pay, Google Pay and Samsung Pay work similarly on their respective smartphones. This type of proximity-based mobile payment enables consumers to pay for items without touching or handing over anything.

Traditional paper bills and physical card payment alternatives are filthy in comparison. An academic study cited by Mastercard found the average cash note has 26,000 bacterial colonies. And according to LendEDU, a personal finance products comparison website, credit cards contain even more germs than cash or New York City subway poles. It makes sense as cards are often put on tables, inside restaurant bill folders and are rarely cleaned, while cash is constantly circulated by hand.

Yes, the credit-card companies are rolling out their own version of contactless or "tap-to-pay" payments. Visa and Mastercard both said in their most recent reported quarters that about one-third of global transactions are now contactless. But the usage rate of the new cards is much lower in the U.S. as many Americans have yet to receive them. Further, it still requires touching the physical card and tapping the terminal (or at least getting the card within a couple of inches). This year, Apple Pay will command 47% of the U.S. proximity-based mobile payment market, with Google capturing 19% and Samsung Pay 17%, according to an eMarketer forecast.

If Apple Pay and its brethren do take off, there will be deeper ramifications across the industry. Credit-card companies will do fine because their card networks are still being utilized by the smartphone maker's service. But it could be a negative for PayPal Holdings Inc., the payments company that dominates the adjacent market of digital checkout buttons for online retailers.

PayPal's e-commerce checkout button enables its users to pay for online orders on retailer websites without having to re-type address or payment information, reducing friction to complete orders. It is a critical cash cow for the company and accounts for nearly 90% of its earnings, according to MoffettNathanson.

But Apple Pay also offers a competing digital checkout feature. And if Apple Pay became increasingly used inside physical stores, it seems likely customers will be inclined to use the service for e-commerce transactions as well, eating into PayPal's business.

With new consumer habits being formed in a coronavirus world, Apple's gain may be PayPal's pain.

[Abridged]

China says a chartered flight is currently bound for London to pick up a group of Chinese international students who have struggled to return home as Covid-19 spreads around the world.

At a press briefing yesterday, Chinese officials said similar flights were organized in March to evacuate 1,457 Chinese citizens, including students, from countries such as Iran and Italy. But the officials also said they hoped students could limit their travels.

"Based on the recommendations of the WHO and epidemic

prevention experts, we hope that students abroad will do their best to reduce movement and avoid cross-infection," Deputy Education Minister Tian Xuejun said at the briefing.

The Chinese government says it has given out "health packages" with more than 11 million masks and 500,000 disinfecting products to Chinese students in hard-hit countries.

As its domestic Covid-19 cases have dwindled, China has sought to curb imported infections, which now make up the bulk of its reported new cases.

**UN-BAAAAA-LIEVABLE:
 GOATS INVADE LOCKED
 DOWN WELSH TOWN**

UN-BAAAAA-LIEVABLE: This wild bunch is completely ignoring rules on social distancing.

With humans sheltering indoors to escape the new coronavirus, mountain goats are taking advantage of the peace and space to roam in frisky clumps through the streets of Llandudno, a town in North Wales.

Andrew Stuart, a video producer for the Manchester Evening News, has been posting videos of the furry adventurers on his Twitter feed and they are racking up hundreds of thousands of views.

He said the goats normally keep largely to themselves, in a country park that butts up against Llandudno. But now emboldened by the lack of people and cars, the long-horned animals are venturing deeper into the seaside town. The U.K. has been in lockdown for the past week to combat the spread of the coronavirus.

"There's no one around at the moment, because of the lockdown, so they take their chances and go as far as they can. And they are going further and further into the town," Stuart told The Associa-



A herd of goats walk the quiet streets in Llandudno, north Wales

ted Press in an interview yesterday [Macau time] from his parents' pub in Llandudno, where he is waiting out the pandemic.

His videos show the goats munching on people's neatly trimmed hedges and trees in front yards and loitering casually on empty streets as if they own the place.

"One of the videos on my Twitter shows that they were on a narrow side street and I was on the other side and they were scared of me. They were edging away from me. So they are still scared of people," Stuart said. "But when there's

hardly anyone around on the big streets, they are taking their chances, they are absolutely going for it. And I think because it's so quiet, and there's hardly anyone around to scare them or anything, that they just don't really care and are eating whatever they can."

For most people, the new 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. AP

THE DECISIVE MOMENT

AP Photo/Mahesh Kumar A



Virus Police. An Indian policeman wearing a virus themed helmet rides on a horse during an awareness rally aimed at preventing the spread of new coronavirus in Hyderabad, India.



Spain Nearly 900,000 workers lost their jobs in Spain since authorities ordered people to stay home to slow down the expansion of the new coronavirus, authorities said yesterday. The short-term job loss was higher than in January 2009, when 350,000 workers lost their jobs as the global financial crisis hit the country. The number of workers who were making payments to the social security fund dropped by 898,822 by the end of March.

Russian officials registered 771 new cases yesterday — 43% more than the day before, bringing the country's total to 3,548 cases, with 30 deaths and 230 recoveries. The vast majority of Russian regions are currently on lockdown, ordering residents to self-isolate at home and not go out, unless it's to buy groceries, medications, walk their dogs or take out trash.



Greece Authorities have placed a refugee camp north of Athens under quarantine after 20 of its residents tested positive for the new coronavirus. The Migration and Asylum Ministry said the Ritsona camp would be quarantined from yesterday for 14 days, during which nobody would be allowed into or out of the facility. The camp is normally open, with residents allowed to enter and leave at will.



Africa The first country in sub-Saharan Africa to impose a coronavirus lockdown has now extended it by two weeks. Rwanda's announcement is a likely sign of what's to come as more African nations tell almost all citizens to stay home or lock down major cities. Cases in Africa are now above 6,000. The lockdowns in places like South Africa, Uganda and now Eritrea have led to concerns that millions of people could go hungry or lose access to emergency healthcare.