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70 MILLION PATACAS SPENT ON RESIDENTS WHO HAD UNDERGONE QUARANTINE, NAMELY FOR TRANSPORTATION AND LODGING

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ARCHITECT MARIA JOSE DE FREITAS WON AWARDS IN THE LATEST INTERNATIONAL PROPERTY AWARDS FOR TWO PROJECTS IN MACAU

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Japan The Tokyo Olympic flame has been taken off public display in Japan. And it's not clear when it will reappear again or where — or under what conditions.



Afghanistan released 100 Taliban prisoners yesterday, claiming they were among 5,000 detainees to be freed under a deal between insurgents and the U.S. The Taliban said, however, they have yet to verify those released were on the list they handed over to Washington during negotiations.

Thailand Health authorities said forty-two of the 76 all-male Muslim pilgrims returning from a trip to a mass religious meeting in Indonesia who arrived on a charter flight on Monday were found to be carrying the virus when they were tested the following day.



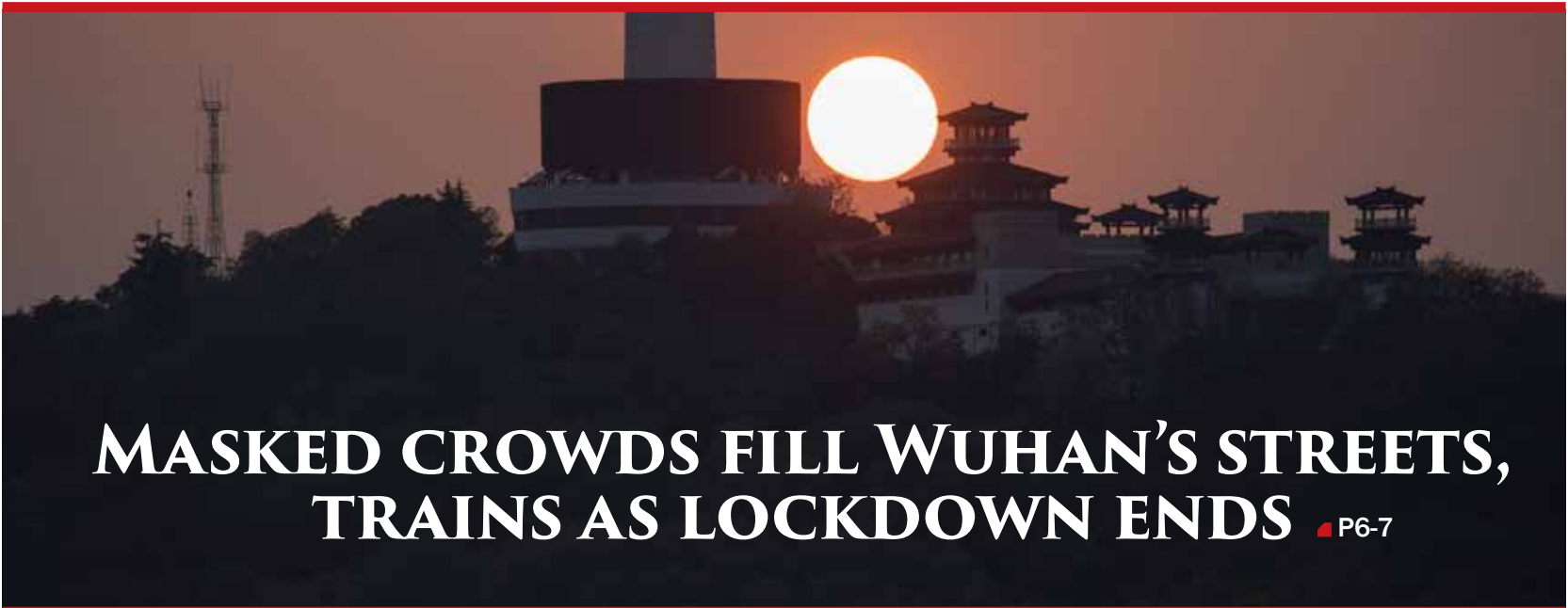
Italy A huge bridge section has collapsed in Tuscany, the latest case of Italy's infrastructure crumbling after years of neglect. Police and fire crews roped off the access road to the bridge over the Magra River in Albiano Magra in the province of Massa Carrara, according to Carabinieri footage of the scene yesterday.

The Vatican said yesterday that Pope Francis has created a new commission of experts to examine whether women can be deacons, an ordained role in the Catholic Church currently reserved for men.

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MOODY'S FORECASTS 20% PLUNGE IN CITY'S GDP

LYNZY VALLES

AMERICAN business and financial services company Moody's Corporation is predicting the city's gross domestic product (GDP) for this year will plummet 20%, contrary to the 3% rise that the firm had forecasted earlier.

The SAR's GDP was MOP434.7 billion last year and per capita GDP stood at MOP645,438.

The GDP last year shrank 4.7% in real terms and was the city's first negative GDP growth in three years.

According to Moody's report, based on the city's previous post-recession economic recovery in 2015-2016, the firm expects that GDP will sharply bounce-back 2% in 2021. Macau's economic output contracted 20.3% in 2015 due to a decline in casino revenue and a decrease in visitors amid China's anti-corruption campaign and slowing economy.

"However, prolonged coronavirus effects would present downside risks, particularly if they start to impact investment plans for major gaming operators," the firm said.

Meanwhile, Moody's still continues to classify the local profile as "Aa3 stable," a rating that the company says is the result of the "absence of government debt and large and growing fiscal and external buffers that provide the SAR significant capacity to counter future shocks."

As in previous reports from the ratings company, Moody's classified local GDP growth as "volatile" due to the region's size and the



concentration of economic factors in the gaming sector.

However, they noted that continuous efforts to diversify products were needed.

"Macau remains susceptible to potential economic and policy outcomes in China (A1 stable) that could negatively affect gaming and tourism," the firm said.

Previously, the ratings company had issued warnings about the need for "further progress on diversification toward non-ga-

ming activities," which, according to Moody's, will support more stable GDP growth.

"The stable outlook reflects our assessment that credit risks are balanced. On the downside, the shock from the ongoing coronavirus outbreak subjects the Macanese economy to a more marked contraction, beyond our baseline expectations, even as economic diversification away from the VIP gaming sector could prove less effective than we assume," Moody's said.

However, they added that diversification into mass-market gaming and non-gaming tourism may be more rapid, thus "lowering the SAR's exposure to shocks to the VIP gaming sector, and on Macau's fiscal and foreign exchange reserve buffers even more than we expect."

Meanwhile, in a separate statement, the group expects that the earnings and credit metrics of Wynn Resorts will weaken while operations in the U.S. and

Macau are negatively affected by facility closures and reduced travel and leisure spending. However, they expect that earnings and credit metrics will improve when economic conditions recover.

"The negative outlook reflects the uncertain duration and recovery from the coronavirus-related earnings and cash flow pressure, which will lead to higher debt even when property earnings recover," they added.

Minimum wage bill to be in effect on November 1

JULIE ZHU

THE minimum wage policy for all job types in Macau will come into effect November 1 if the government's plans proceed as expected.

Yesterday, the First Standing Committee of the Legislative Assembly signed the opinion report on the city's Employees' Minimum Wage Law.

The bill states that it will come into effect on November 1, 180 days after its pu-

blication.

This month, the AL plenary is set to vote on the final version of the bill. Once published, likely on May 1, the city will have six months to prepare until the law is officially implemented.

Every two years, the local government will review the law.

Some lawmakers asked if reviews could be more frequent, implying that the next increase in minimum wage would take more than two years once all neces-

sary administrative and legal procedures were carried out.

As previously reported, the law still excludes domestic helpers and workers with disabilities. However, the wages of the latter are protected because the local government already has a plan to ensure minimum wage for workers with disabilities.

The local government is currently preparing to draft administrative regulations to ensure that disabled

workers will receive minimum wage. The minimum wage for disabled workers will be the same as what was proposed in the Employees' Minimum Wage Law.

As soon as the bill is published, the local government will publish the administrative regulations, which are planned to come into effect on the same day as the minimum wage policies for all job types in Macau.

According to Chan Chak

Mo, chairman of the committee, the local government may subsidize disabled employees in order to secure minimum wage for these workers.

Chan also commented that 42.5% of the world's domestic helpers are not entitled to minimum wages, citing statistics from the International Labour Organization.

The city's labor authority thinks that the majority of domestic workers' employers are households,

and that these households can't afford to pay the minimum wage for their helpers during this crisis.

The bill says the minimum wage for all workers should be raised from 30 patacas to 32 patacas per hour, except for domestic helpers and disabled workers.

Once the law comes into effect, the minimum wage will increase to 32 patacas per hour. This is 256 patacas per day, or 6,656 patacas per month.

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MOP10B RELIEF FUND

Gov't to launch financial support to SMEs, salary subsidies

ANTHONY LAM

THE Macau SAR government has unveiled its plans on the use of the 10 billion pataca economic relief fund, which includes a second round of e-vouchers and financial support to local Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs).

Presented yesterday at the Health Bureau's daily press conference, a total of 13.6 billion patacas of public funds will be used, of which 10 billion patacas will be spent through the Macao Foundation and 3.6 billion patacas from the government's account.

The second round of e-vouchers will be provided and paid for from the government's account.

The 5,000 pataca e-vouchers will be issued to all Macau residents, permanent or non-permanent, based on their registration. The issuing and use period will be between August and December this year.

Similar to the first round of economic relief actions, Lei Wai Nong, the Secretary for Economy and Finance, stressed that the extra e-voucher and other elements of the 10 billion pataca fund are being provided in the hopes of supporting the entire population

of local residents.

That said, subsidies will be available for workers of various professions, including taxi drivers, hawkers and freelancers.

Salary support will also be given to each eligible local employee. The amount of the salary support available is 15,000 patacas in total. Civil servants, as well as employees who will receive an income tax refund of 20,000 patacas for the financial year of 2018, will not be eligible.

The amount was calculated against the city's median income of 20,000 patacas. The government took a 25% portion (5,000 patacas) to start with. The initiative is intended to help employees with three months of income, and will be paid in a lump sum of 15,000 patacas.

Any local employee with an active income tax registration as of March 31 this year will be eligible for salary support, the official said. In addition, the means of payment will be similar to that of the Wealth Partaking Scheme – or the cash handout – every year. It means that if a resident has registered to receive the cash handout through bank transfer, they will receive the salary support in similar manner, provided they are eligible. The Financial Services

Bureau (DSF) will host a website for eligibility inquiries.

As for subsidies for SMEs, the government will give 15,000 patacas to 200,000 patacas, depending on the number of employees the company has. Calculations will be based on the registration with the DSF as of March 31. For taxable companies that run more than one outlet, a maximum of 1 million patacas can be received from the government.

The government has set a condition on this subsidy, however. Within six months of receiving the funds, the recipients must not unreasonably dismiss any employee. Furthermore, public service providers, formal education institutions, social welfare entities and casinos will be exempted from the subsidy.

Freelancers, or those registered as Group 2 Salaries Tax Payers, can apply for an interest subsidy on their bank loan amounting to a maximum of 100,000 patacas. A maximum of 4% of the interest or no more than 8,000 patacas, will be issued.

Existing employees will be eligible for a 5,000 patacas subsidy if they participate in and finish a training course offered by the government. Those who are unemployed can receive 6,656

patacas under the same circumstances. They will also be given job opportunities as they finish their training.

Meanwhile, expiry dates of taxi licenses, if any, will be extended for six months. Taxis bearing licenses that will not expire will have their mandatory vehicle examination date postponed for six months.

Taxi drivers, hawkers, tricycle riders and wet market stall tenants will each receive a 10,000 pataca subsidy.

However, the Legislative Assembly is still working on the first round of budget amendments submitted by the government. Questioned on when the second round of budget amendment would be dealt with, Lei disclosed

that government would submit the motion to the legislature in mid-April using an urgent procedure and hopes it will be passed in late April. Certain subsidies should be expected in May.

As most of the subsidies cover local residents only, the secretary was questioned on whether the government was overlooking non-resident workers. The secretary did not agree with the comment.

"It does not mean that the government is not aware of the contributions that non-resident workers have made to the city's development," the official emphasized. "Given other restrictions, the government needs to prioritize local residents."

The secretary also expressed his gratitude for the contributions these non-resident workers have made to the city.

When asked about his view of economic diversification, Lei hinted that Macau should embrace Hengqin for further development and diversification. "Physical space [for development] has been the main challenge," Lei said. "We can't expect much diversification with such a small area."

He told the press conference that aside from all Macau residents, Hengqin is an opportunity for Macau. The local government will continue to communicate with the neighboring city to achieve further integration.

LEI: FURTHER INFLATION UNLIKELY

With two rounds of e-voucher schemes, the official does not think that companies will raise their prices, given the current economic conditions. In other words, inflation caused by the e-voucher scheme is unlikely, according to the secretary.

"The number of visitors to Macau is literally at [a low]," the secretary said, hinting that the city was now dependent on Macau people to help Macau companies. "The second round of e-vouchers is the fruit of in-depth consideration."

The secretary disclosed that a review would be conducted around late June to early July to evaluate the effectiveness of the scheme and its pressure on the consumer price index, however. The result of the review may lead to a change in the criteria of the second round.

GOVERNMENT SUBSIDIES FOR SMEs

Beneficiary	Amount (MOP)
SME/individual businessperson without employees and with tax declaration conducted	15,000
SME with 1 to 3 employees	50,000
SME with 4 to 6 employees	75,000
SME with 7 to 10 employees	100,000
SME with 11 to 13 employees	125,000
SME with 14 to 16 employees	150,000
SME with 17 to 20 employees	175,000
SME with above 21 employees	200,000

FC LAW DONATES 5,000 MASKS TO GOV'T

Macau-based law firm FC Law - Lawyers and Notaries is donating 5,000 surgical masks to the government as part of its initiatives to assist the local community. "In so doing, we at FC Law wish to contribute to the government-led mission of assisting any person from our community," the group said in a statement. "We are thankful for the opportunity to contribute to the efforts levied against the Covid-19 pandemic." The surgical masks were purchased in China to be directly and indirectly distributed to the city's health services and community.

GOV'T'S HENGQIN INVESTMENTS QUESTIONED

Lawmaker Sulu Sou has questioned the local government's plan to invest in a community project integrating houses and community services in Hengqin. In Sou's opinion, the project, led by government-owned Macau Urban Renewal Ltd., has disappointed local residents as they expect the old area of Macau to be renewed instead. The young lawmaker remarked again that the Hengqin investment and the public money involved would escape the supervision of the Macau public. Sou also wants full disclosure of the urban renewal plan for the lao Han area.

WONG KIT CHENG PROPOSES SECOND CASH HANDOUT

The Women's General Association of Macau has asked the local government for cash to support vulnerable families, in addition to a second cash handout. Yesterday, lawmaker Wong Kit Cheng, who is also the vice president of the association, said that the money should specifically be given to caretakers of vulnerable families in order to help avert problems within these families. According to the lawmaker, cash should be given to help caretakers who are on unpaid leave because they need to take care of their own family. Wong also thinks that the local government should consider the society's current situation following the economic impact on livelihood due to the pandemic outbreak.

DISTRICT ADVISOR CALLS FOR A CREMATORIUM IN MACAU

A member of the Islands District advisory body, Liu Fengming, calls on the local government to build its own crematorium. According to Liu's statistics, Macau recorded 2,282 deaths in 2019. Approximately 75% of the bodies were cremated in Zhuhai. In Liu's opinion, changes in burial traditions mean it is now necessary for Macau to build a crematorium. He is also concerned about deaths due to infectious diseases. Mainland China does not allow bodies with infectious diseases to be transported to the mainland. If Macau records a large number of deaths involving infectious disease one day, the city will have no alternative but to bury the bodies. Liu worries that Macau will face increased risks during the current infectious disease outbreak.



An aspect of the Macau Young Entrepreneur Incubation Center

147 YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS FAIL TO PAY BACK SUBSIDIES

A group of young entrepreneurs still owe the Macau SAR a total of over 30 million patacas due to their unsettled repayments of government subsidies, the local government told the Second Standing Committee of the Legislative Assembly (AL) yesterday.

In 2013, the local government launched the Young Entrepreneurs Aid Scheme, which aims to subsidize young local entrepreneurs who are starting their business activities. As of today, the local government has granted a total of 360 million patacas to

young entrepreneurs who have joined the program.

However, entrepreneurs from 147 applications have not paid the public fund back and owe over 30 million patacas. The SAR government is planning measures to collect the money.

Meanwhile, government representatives provided lawmakers yesterday with further details about the additional 1.4 billion pataca budget for the Industrial and Commercial Development Fund, as well as the 37 million pataca increase in the Tourism Fund budget.

Originally, this year the Industrial and Commercial Development Fund budget was 3.6 billion patacas. However, due to the impact of Covid-19, the SAR government is contributing another 1.4 billion patacas into the original budget to help local SMEs.

This year, the Industrial and Commercial Development Fund has already granted 250 million patacas in financial support to SMEs through the specific interest-free loan support program. They have already reached the limits of their budget.

Regarding the Tourism Fund, a total of 70 million patacas has been spent on residents who have undergone quarantine, including arranging cars to fetch local residents from Hong Kong airport and other transportation expenses related to the Hong Kong airport charter transport service.

50 million patacas were used to pay the 12 hotels used as quarantine zones.

Originally, the fund's budget for this year was approximately 1.2 billion. The tourism authority explained that because there will be a six-month tourism tax reduction this year, which in turn will produce a small amount of income for the Tourism Fund, the government proposed a budget increase of 37 million patacas. JZ

GOV'T PROPOSES THREE YEARS JAIL FOR OPERATORS OF FRAUDULENT MOBILE BASE STATIONS

THE local government has proposed a maximum jail term of three years to punish those involved in fraudulent mobile base stations.

Yesterday, the First Standing Committee of the Legislative Assembly (AL) signed an opinion report regarding the city's cyber security law.

According to chairman of the committee, Ho Ion Sang, the last version of the bill submitted by the SAR government suggested a maximum three-year imprisonment or equivalent cash penalty for setting up fraudulent mobile base stations.

Utilizing fraudulent mobile base stations to make a profit or for other crimes, such as spreading illegal advertisements or

issuing pornographic content, are classified as aggregated offences and are to be subject to imprisonment terms between one to five years.

The committee will submit the bill to the AL plenary for a vote soon. Once the bill is passed, it will come into effect on July 1 as suggested in the last version of the bill.

The amendment to the cyber security law aims to synthesize the city's cyber security laws in order to strengthen the protection of critical infrastructure operators and computer systems used by the Central Government's organizations in Macau specifically. JZ

SLIGHT DROP RECORDED IN LAST QUARTER'S RESIDENTIAL PRICES

THE city's residential prices have dropped slightly, 0.2% down compared to the last three-month period, the Statistics and Census Service announced yesterday.

The data covers the period from December 2019 to February 2020. The residential price index for that period was 264.7, equating to a 0.2% drop compared with the previous period.

The price index of residential properties on the Islands, meaning Taipa, Cotai and Coloane, fell further than those on the Peninsula. The Island's residential price index dropped 0.7%, compared with 0.1% for the Peninsula.

The government bureau discovered that the older the property was, the more severe the fall. Meanwhile, there was a rise in the price indices of properties less than five years old and pre-sale properties.

The price index for properties between 11 and 20 years old plunged 1.1%, while properties less than five years old recorded a slight rise of 0.1%, the same as pre-sale properties.

On the other hand, properties with a usable area smaller than 50 square meters recorded a 0.6% rise in their price index. Properties larger than 75 square meters recorded falls of 0.5% to 1%. Residential buildings of all heights recorded falls. AL

Two local architecture projects receive international accolades

RENATO MARQUES

A Macau residential building and a public information counter won awards in the latest International Property Awards. Both projects are from local firm AETEC-Mo Architecture and Engineering Ltd., led by architect Maria José de Freitas.

The Chon Kit Gardens residential building in the Peninsula and the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) – Tourist Information Counter, located at the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge Port, were completed in 2019. The projects won awards in the Asia Pacific Property Awards section in the categories of Residential High-Rise Architecture and Interior Design respectively.

De Freitas explained the concepts and ideas underlying the distinguished projects to the Times, while expressing her happiness about the awards.

"I was very happy with the fact that the value of local architecture was acknowledged [through the awards] that are related to two very different projects," de Freitas said. The idea behind Chon Kit Gardens was to make this residential building an example of a building that connects with the area it is located in, namely the "Red Market" (Mercado Almirante Lacerda). The market also served as inspiration for the modern building.

"The Red Market is a great representation of modernist architecture, a building with a great presence and relevance in the urban fabric of the city. It played a somewhat inspirational role in the architectural design that we used in the Chon Kit building. This can be seen in the use of the ochre colored panels that we then mixed with other colors, like cream and greyish tones that are more related to the colors in the area," the architect explained.

The building was also designed with environmental protection in mind. The architect described the use of double-glazed windows and natural ventilation through side-windows and thermal isolation. If these solutions were applied to a large number of buildings in Macau, they would reduce energy consumption by about 50%.

As de Freitas explained, the gardens on the fourth floor and the rooftop were also created with the environment in mind. The architect wanted to make this an example of a green building in Macau, noting that she



had the help of a promoter who "gave us the green light for us to try - as much as possible - to have a green building."

De Freitas also noted the need to update local governmental regulations so they incorporate new solutions that benefit both building users and the environment.

"We tried to go further but we also saw limitations from the local regulations. For instance, we wanted to use natural grass on the rooftop but that was not approved by the government because of fire safety concerns,

"Our wish is that these awards can serve as an example to the city, showing that it is worth investing in quality architecture and promoting quality at all levels."

MARIA JOSÉ DE FREITAS.
ARCHITECT

as they did not understand that grass can be stood on and does not limit the access of people to

fire-safe areas," she noted. "We need to debunk these concepts, and I think these awards can

help sand off the rough edges and promote sustainable architecture and quality architecture inside the city."

'FLUID LINES' AS INFORMATION WAVES

Explaining the MGTO information counter project at the HZMB Port in more detail, the architect highlighted several ideas that were already present in several similar projects for the MGTO located in the other border posts in Macau and at the Shun Tak Center in Hong Kong. "In the HZMB Port, we had a little more freedom to create, so we could intensify this idea of a 'wave of information.' The counter aims to receive tourists asking for information about the city and its events," de Freitas said, adding that this interior design has been used in other projects for MGTO and aims to connect with Macau's traditions, image, and multiculturalism.

"Our wish is that these awards can serve as an example to the city, showing that it is worth investing in quality architecture and promoting quality at all levels. These are values that are very well widespread in contemporary cities all over the world, and in Macau we do talk about it but we have little practice," she said. She noted that most promoters prefer to build cheaply with poor quality materials, leading to early aging and low quality living spaces.



MGTO counter at the HZMB Port

Japan's state of emergency is no lockdown. What's in it?

PRIME Minister Shinzo Abe has declared a state of emergency in Tokyo and six other hard-hit Japanese prefectures to fortify the fight against the coronavirus outbreak. But this is no European or Wuhan-style lockdown. A look at what Japan's state of emergency entails:

Q. WHY DID ABE DECLARE A STATE OF EMERGENCY?

A. Abe was facing heavy pressure to declare a state of emergency after the number of new cases in Tokyo began doubling every several days in late March. The city of 14 million had 1,339 cases as of Wednesday, up from about 600 a week earlier. Japan focused on dealing with clusters of infections and selective testing for the virus, a strategy that has failed to curb its spread. Experts found that one-third of Tokyo's recent cases were linked to hostess clubs and other night entertainment districts where cluster tracing is difficult. Meanwhile, compliance with calls for working remotely and other social distancing has been weak.

Q. IS ALL OF JAPAN AFFECTED?

A. The state of emergency announced Tuesday applies to only Tokyo, neighboring Chiba, Kanagawa and Saitama, Osaka, and Hyogo in the west and Fukuoka in the south. That is only seven of Japan's 47 prefectures. Residents are requested to avoid nonessential trips within and outside the designated areas, but there are no restrictions on travel. Some Tokyo residents drew criticism for rushing to escape from Tokyo to the countryside.

Q. DOES A STATE OF EMERGENCY CAUSE A TOKYO LOCKDOWN?

A. No, Abe and officials say Japan cannot legally enforce hard lockdowns. Public transportation is operating as normal. Most state of emergency measures are requests and instructions. Violators cannot be punished unless they fail to comply with orders related to storage or shipment of emergency relief goods and medical supplies.



Q. WHY IS JAPAN NOT IMPOSING A HARD LOCKDOWN?

A. Japan's history of repression under fascist governments before and during World War II has left the public wary of government overreach. The country's postwar constitution lays out strict protections for civil liberties. Abe's government was reluctant to risk severe economic repercussions from more severe measures.

Q. WHAT MEASURES ARE TAKEN IN A STATE OF EMERGENCY?

A. The state of emergency allows prefectural leaders to ask residents to stay home. They can also request closures of schools, some child and senior care or community centers, and stores and businesses that are considered nonessential. They can advise organizers to cancel or postpone events. The governors can also request use of private property to build hospitals and other medical facilities.

Q. WHAT ARE ESSENTIAL ACTIVITIES?

A. Essential activities and facilities, including banks, grocery stores, postal services, pharmacies and utility companies, remain open. Some retail stores and entertainment venues such as movie theaters, concert halls and amusement parks can be asked to shut down. Public schools in Tokyo and some neighboring prefectures already are closed until at least early May.

Q. CAN PEOPLE STILL GO OUT?

A. Yes, residents can go out for purposes considered essential, including work, hospital visits and grocery shopping, according to a Cabinet Office statement. Residents in designated areas can still go out for a walk, a jog or other individual exercise.

Q. HOW EFFECTIVE IS THE MEASURE?

A. Abe on Wednesday repeated his request for the people to stay home and reduce interactions with others by up to 80%. But in Tokyo's downtown Shibuya district, business was almost normal. Rush hour trains were still crowded and commuters were heading to work, though fewer people were seen in other areas of the capital. Akihito Aminaka, an education industry worker, said heeding Abe's request was difficult because "to me, it sounds like they're saying, 'Please don't go out, but we won't help you.'"

Q. WHAT'S THE POTENTIAL ECONOMIC IMPACT?

A. Abe also announced an unprecedented 108 trillion yen (\$1 trillion) stimulus package, equivalent to about a fifth of Japan's annual GDP, to pay for coronavirus measures and protect businesses and jobs. It includes 300,000 yen (\$2,750) cash handouts for some hard-hit households. A monthlong state of emergency in the Tokyo area could cause consumer spending to fall nearly 2.5 trillion yen (\$23 billion), according to Nomura Research Institute. **AP**

AP PHOTO



WORLD OF TROUBLES

Wuhan ends lockdown workers buckle under s

DANICA KIRKA & ELENA BECATOROS, LONDON

AFTER 76 days in lockdown, the Chinese city at the heart of the global pandemic reopened yesterday, and tens of thousands immediately hopped on trains and planes to leave. Elsewhere, the economic, political and psychological toll of fighting the virus grew increasingly clear and more difficult to bear.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson spent a second night in intensive care with his country in the grips of its biggest crisis since World War II. The 55-year-old Johnson, the first major world leader confirmed to have COVID-19, was stable and responding to treatment, spokesman James Slack said.

Across the Atlantic, New York City endured one of its darkest days yet, with the death toll surging past 4,000, hundreds more than the number killed on 9/11. New York state recorded 731 new coronavirus deaths on Tuesday, its biggest one-day jump yet, for a statewide total of nearly 5,500.

"Behind every one of those numbers is an individual. There's a family, there's a mother, there's a father, there's a sister, there's a brother. So a lot of pain again today," Gov. Andrew Cuomo said.

Across the U.S., the death toll reached about 13,000, with approximately 400,000 confirmed infections. Some of the deadliest hot spots were Detroit, New Orleans and the New York metropolitan area.

More pain was seen on the economic front. Japan, the world's third-largest economy, could contract by a record 25% this quarter, the highest since gross domestic product began to be tracked in 1955. The dismal prediction by two economists said exports are expected to dive 60% in the April-June period.

The Bank of France said the French economy has entered recession, with an estimated 6% drop in the first quarter compared with the previous three months, while Germany, Europe's economic powerhouse, is also facing a deep recession. Expert said its economy will shrink 4.2% this year.

European governments have been scrambling to put together hundreds of billions of euros to save lives and prevent bankruptcies. The countries worst hit by the virus are among those that can least afford the costs, like Italy and Spain. But they disagree over how to tackle the challenge.

The finance ministers of countries using the euro failed yesterday to agree on how to help their nations through the crisis, after marathon all-night talks. They will resume on Thursday.

With European health workers toiling round the clock in a desperate bid to save lives, the psychological toll is becoming unbearable.

Weeks into Italy's outbreak, two nurses have killed themselves and more than 70 doctors and 20 nurses have died from the virus. Hospitals are making therapists available to help staff cope with the effects of seeing so much death. Italy is the hardest-hit country overall, with over 17,000 deaths.

In Spain, nurse Diego Alonso said he and colleagues have been using tran-



as health strain

quilizers to cope.

“The psychological stress from this time is going to be difficult to forget. It has just been too much,” he said.

Spain's Health Ministry on yesterday reported 757 new deaths, bringing the total to more than 14,500, and 6,180 new infections. Both figures were slightly higher than Tuesday's, when the first increase in five days was explained by a backlog of test results and unreported weekend fatalities.

Spanish authorities have acknowledged that laboratory bottlenecks and a shortage of testing kits are giving an incomplete picture of the disaster.

In Wuhan, the Chinese city of 11 million where the pandemic began, residents waved flags and the city staged a light show with skyscrapers and bridges radiating images of health workers helping patients.

Restrictions in the city where most of China's more than 82,000 virus cases and over 3,300 deaths were reported have been gradually eased in recent weeks as new cases declined.

“I haven't been outside

for more than 70 days,” said Tong Zhengkun. “Being indoors for so long drove me crazy.”

In Washington, President Donald Trump threatened to freeze U.S. funding to the World Health Organization, saying the U.N. agency had “missed the call” on the pandemic. He suggested that WHO had gone along with Beijing's efforts months ago to minimize the severity of the outbreak.

WHO has praised China for its transparency on the virus despite wide skepticism among experts about the country's actual number of infections and deaths.

Some African leaders bristled at Trump's attack on WHO, especially after its head, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus of Ethiopia, spoke up this week against “racist” comments by two French doctors who said a coronavirus vaccine could be tested in Africa. Tedros condemned the French remarks as showing a “colonial mentality.”

“Surprised to learn of a campaign by the U.S. govt against WHO's global leadership. The African Union fully

supports WHO and Dr. Tedros,” AU chief Moussa Faki Mahamat tweeted.

In Europe, Britain and France appeared to be at different stages of the crisis than Italy, where new infections and virus deaths were declining daily. Deaths in Britain reached nearly 6,200 after a one-day increase Tuesday of 786, its highest figure yet, while in France, the number of dead climbed to more than 10,300.

Worldwide, more than 1.4 million people have been confirmed infected and over 80,000 have died, according to Johns Hopkins University. The true numbers are almost certainly much higher, because of limited testing, different rules for counting the dead and deliberate underreporting by some governments.

For most, the virus causes mild to moderate symptoms such as fever and cough. But for some older adults and the infirm, it can cause pneumonia and death. Over 300,000 people have recovered.

In Japan, Albert Camus' novel “The Plague” has gone into seven extra printings since February and was so popular that one chain limited customers to one book each to curtail literary hoarding.

The novel, first published in French in 1947, portrays the dilemma of human existence as a North African city gets overtaken by the plague.**AP**

Philippines backs Vietnam after China sinks fishing boat

JIM GOMEZ, MANILA

The Philippines yesterday expressed solidarity with Vietnam after Hanoi protested what it said was the ramming and sinking of a Vietnamese fishing boat by a Chinese coast guard ship in the disputed South China Sea.

The Department of Foreign Affairs in Manila expressed deep concern over the reported April 3 sinking of the boat carrying eight fishermen off the Paracel Islands. The incident happened at a time when a common approach was crucial in confronting the coronavirus pandemic, it said.

“COVID-19 is a very real threat that demands unity and mutual trust,” the department said. “In the face of it, neither fish nor fictional historical claims are worth the fuse that's lit by such incidents.”

China claims virtually the entire South China Sea and has built several islands equipped with military installations in the area, one of world's busiest shipping lanes. Vietnam has been the most vocal opponent of Beijing's territorial assertiveness.

The Philippines' Department of Foreign Affairs recalled that 22 Filipino fishermen were left floating in the high seas after a Chinese vessel sank

their boat at Reed Bank on June 9 last year. They were rescued by a Vietnamese fishing vessel.

“Our own similar experience revealed how much trust in a friendship is lost by it and how much trust was created by Vietnam's humanitarian act of directly saving the lives of our Filipino fishermen,” the department said.

The United States has also expressed serious concern over the reported sinking of the Vietnamese vessel and called on China to remain focused on supporting efforts to combat the pandemic and “stop exploiting the distraction or vulnerability of other states to expand its unlawful claims in the South China Sea.”

Amid the pandemic, China “has announced new ‘research stations’ on military bases it built on Fiery Cross Reef and Subi Reef and landed special military aircraft on Fiery Cross Reef,” U.S. State Department spokeswoman Morgan Ortagus said in a statement, referring to two of seven islands China built on disputed shoals in the South China Sea.

China has also “continued to deploy maritime militia around the Spratly Islands,” she said, referring to a hotly contested group of islands and citing a 2016 decision by an international tribunal

that invalidated China's sprawling claims in the South China Sea.

China has said it has the right to build in waters where it exercises sovereignty and has ignored and continued to defy the arbitration ruling.

The Philippines warned that incidents like the sinking of the Vietnamese boat undermine the potential for a trusting relationship between the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations and China. It cited “positive momentum” in talks between ASEAN and China on a proposed “code of conduct” — a pact to prevent major clashes in the South China Sea, which many fear could be Asia's next flashpoint.

China responded to Vietnam's diplomatic protest and demands for an investigation with its own statement accusing the Vietnamese boat of illegally entering Chinese waters. It said it collided with the Chinese ship Haijing 4301 after conducting “dangerous actions.”

All eight Vietnamese sailors were rescued by the Chinese and admitted to wrongdoing, China Maritime Police spokesman Zhang Jun was quoted as saying in a statement.

China seized the islands from Vietnam in 1974 and frequent confrontations have occurred there. **AP**

AP PHOTO



Passover in isolation dampens holiday mood in Israel

ILAN BEN ZION,
JERUSALEM

EACH year, Patricia Sheerit and her family gather with in-laws for the first night of Passover, bringing together some 20 people for the holiday's main event, the festive meal known as the Seder.

But like most Israelis, Sheerit and her husband will be stuck at home this year — holding a bare-bones Seder for two.

"Everyone is sad and alone, and everyone is worried about one another," Sheerit said.

As a modern pandemic afflicts the globe, Israeli Jews are being forced to scale back or cancel beloved traditions and rituals marking Passover, the holiday celebrating Israelites' freedom from Egyptian bondage and referencing biblical plagues.

Communal preparations have been canceled. Police are enforcing stay-at-home orders and a general lockdown through Friday morning. Families are turning to videoconferencing in hopes of capturing a small slice of the holiday spirit.

"There's a lot of families, a lot of seniors, a lot of singles who will be having Seder alone, and that's very challenging because this is really the family holiday," said Rabbi Kenneth Brander, president of Ohr Torah Stone, a network of 27 modern Orthodox institutions.

The week-long festival starts Wednesday night (today in Macau) with the Seder, a large meal that retells the Exodus story. A highlight of the joyous dinner is the chanting of the 10 plagues — the biblical afflictions that pushed the Pharaoh to free the Israeli slaves.

Ordinarily, most Israeli Jews — religious and secular alike — spend the Seder with extended family in an experience akin to Thanksgiving. It also is customary to invite strangers such as lone travelers or students.

But this year, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has ordered a



general lockdown on Wednesday night, telling Israeli Jews that "every family will sit down for Seder night on its own." Police plan to set up checkpoints in neighborhoods and on major highways to enforce travel restrictions.

Israel has over 9,400 confirmed cases of COVID-19, the illness caused by the new coronavirus, and at least 71 deaths.

Jews make up about 80% of Israel's population. The pandemic is also disrupting other faiths' celebrations this month, including the Christian holiday of Easter and the start of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

Despite growing anxiety over spiking unemployment, and political paralysis after three inconclusive elections in the past year, Israeli Jews are still trying to salvage some holiday spirit.

Jewish tradition prohibits the consumption of leavened goods and instead requires eating matzo, a crisp, unleavened flatbread. The week leading up to Passover is marked by frenetic cleaning and preparations.

In the run-up to the holiday, many religious neighborhoods around the country set up gigantic cauldrons of boiling water for dunking kitchenware to make them suitable for use on Passover. On the morning before the holiday commences, it's traditional to burn leftover bread outdoors.

This year, the Health Ministry has banned both communal activities as a precaution, though a

small group of people in one neighborhood was seen illicitly cleansing plates on Tuesday. Yesterday, residents in an ultra-Orthodox neighborhood in Jerusalem defied the orders and burned their leavened bread in a dumpster.

City Hall set up containers for residents to dump their remaining baked products. The containers were collected, and the city was holding a massive bonfire to destroy them.

Synagogues also have been closed and holiday prayers are to be held individually at home due to a ban on public gatherings.

"All the different things that happened both before and on Pesach, this year suddenly are not happening, or happening in very different ways than they always did," said Rabbi Issamar Ginzberg, a Jerusalem-based ultra-Orthodox rabbi, referring to Passover by its Hebrew name.

Israel's ultra-Orthodox population, which initially resisted safety precautions, has been hit especially hard by the outbreak, with an estimated 50% of the country's cases. One ultra-Orthodox city, Bnei Brak, has been placed under a closure.

Ginzberg said he and most other ultra-Orthodox families are strictly observing social distancing rules. "This year everyone's essentially staying home, nuclear family only, and no guests, which is also something unique," he said.

The effect on Israel's collective psyche after weeks of a climbing death toll and stringent so-

cial distancing will come to a fore at the time of the Seder, said Yoram Yovell, a Hebrew University psychiatrist.

Even in the most difficult times in Jewish history, Jews managed to celebrate with their extended families, Yovell said. The disruption of a key family event like Passover will be "very demoralizing and very anxiety provoking," he said, adding that Muslim communities may experience a similar trauma when Ramadan arrives.

To raise spirits, several Israeli towns are calling on residents to sing songs from the Hagaddah, the text read at the Seder, from apartment balconies. Yovell suggested leaving the front door open so that people "can hear their neighbors and the neighbors can hear them."

"That is a way of — while still complying with the social distancing regulations — getting a sense of togetherness," Yovell said.

For many, Zoom videoconferencing will be the centerpiece of their Seder table this year. A group of Sephardic, or Middle Eastern, rabbis even issued a ruling permitting the elderly, sick and quarantined to use video chat during the holiday meal, despite an Orthodox prohibition on using electronics on holidays.

Sheerit, who has three grown children and a young granddaughter, said her extended family intends to hold a digital Seder over Zoom — "to feel somewhat together during this loneliness." AP

this day in history



2003 SADDAM STATUE TOPPLES WITH REGIME

There have been scenes of jubilation in Baghdad as US tanks rolled into the very heart of the Iraqi capital, confirming that the government of Saddam Hussein has been ousted from power.

In the main square in Baghdad, a group of Iraqi men attempted to pull down a massive statue of Saddam Hussein in an unprecedented show of contempt for the Iraqi leader.

The metal plaque at the base of the statue was torn off and the statue's marble plinth attacked with a sledgehammer.

The men scaled the statue to secure a noose around its neck but were unable to pull it down.

Then US troops joined in, and used an armoured vehicle to gradually pull down the statue.

The extraordinary scenes were watched by millions across the world live on television.

The square is opposite the Palestine Hotel, used as a base by the world's media during the war in Iraq.

A little before the statue came down, a US soldier climbed up and draped the face with a US flag.

The crowd did not welcome the move, seeing it as a step too far towards American triumphalism, and the flag was quickly removed.

A few minutes later, it was replaced by the old Iraqi flag, to roars of approval.

As the statue fell to the ground at last, the crowd surged forward and jumped on it.

Chanting and jeering, they danced on the fallen effigy, kicking it and hitting it with their shoes in a symbolic gesture of contempt as it was torn to pieces.

They then severed the head, tied chains around it, and dragged it through the streets.

As news of the events in the square spread, more and more Iraqis gathered to watch, with women and children joining the crowds of men.

There were similar scenes across the capital, as the many hundreds of statues and pictures of Saddam Hussein that came to symbolise his regime were attacked and torn down.

The military campaign will continue, although the US Army has delivered its most upbeat assessment yet of the gains it is making in Iraq.

"Much of Iraq is free from years of repression," said Brigadier-General Vincent Brooks, the US Central Command spokesman in Qatar.

"With every day that passes, we are breaking the grip of the regime."

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

The toppling of Saddam Hussein's statue became one of the enduring images of the war in Iraq. Although there has since been some speculation that it was staged by US forces. One BBC correspondent, who was in Paradise Square and watched the statue being pulled down, said his impression was of "a newly free people" expressing their "overwhelming joy". US troops continued to advance north for another week, taking key towns such as Saddam Hussein's home town of Tikrit, before President Bush declared victory on 1 May. The honeymoon period for US troops was short. In the power vacuum which followed the collapse of Saddam Hussein's regime, law and order broke down and US troops became targets for many Iraqis resentful of the continuing occupation. In the six months after the war ended, more US soldiers died in guerrilla attacks and suicide bombings than during the whole of the war. Saddam Hussein himself was captured in December 2003. He was tried by an Iraqi court, sentenced to death and was hanged on 30 December 2006.

YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

You might not be feeling all that great at the start of the day, but other people sure think you're looking great! This confirmation of your attractiveness will do wonders for your physical and mental health.



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

All of the unresolved romantic issues in your life aren't as confusing to you as they once were, probably because you're getting a handle on what you want and don't want.



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

It would be good for you to set a few goals today, but try to keep them as simple and attainable as possible. Right now, you need to remind yourself how capable and smart you are!



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

Make time for old friends as well as new friends. Send a thank-you note to that teacher or mentor who inspired you. Realize that your life is not just about the future.



LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

Give them space for a few days and then make another effort to connect. This is definitely not the right time to make anyone feel under any type of pressure.



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

Today, even a slight change in your daily routine could put a major crimp in some future social plans. Your schedule might be flexible, but your friends' schedules may not be.



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

Move these emotions up into your head and turn them into logical thoughts that you can see in a more analytical way. Getting your emotions organized will help.



SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

Keep an eye out for someone who seems to be putting on an act. Being in such a strong intuitive space will enable you to reach out with the right words to cheer them up.



SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

If you think you're completely in charge of your day today, you're in for a big surprise! It won't be another person, an unpleasant occurrence, or even inclement weather that mucks up the works;



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

Today, keep that open mind, especially when someone says something that rubs you the wrong way. There is something there that's worth investigating.



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

It might not be easy to open up and let someone new into your life, but things worth doing are often difficult. You sense that you should let down your guard a little, and you should trust yourself this time.



PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

There are lots of opportunities coming your way right now, and you'll definitely want to get involved in many of them, even though they might require a bit of hard work.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

EASY

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

EASY+

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

MEDIUM

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

HARD

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	-5	8	clear
Harbin	-21	-9	clear
Tianjin	-5	6	clear
Urumqi	-8	-1	clear
Xi'an	-4	10	clear
Lhasa	-3	14	clear
Chengdu	3	13	cloudy
Chongqing	4	14	cloudy
Kunming	3	11	drizzle
Nanjing	-3	8	clear
Shanghai	0	8	clear
Wuhan	-3	12	cloudy
Hangzhou	-2	9	clear
Taipei	9	12	cloudy
Guangzhou	6	15	cloudy
Hong Kong	10	16	cloudy

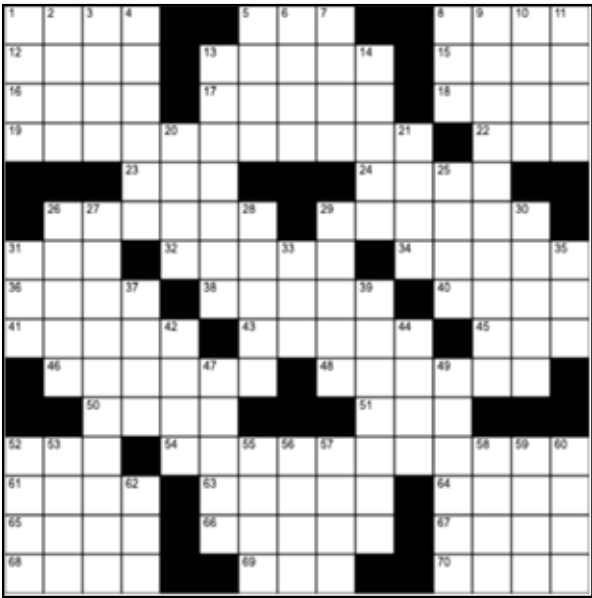
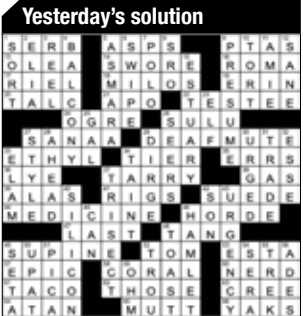
WORLD

Moscow	2	4	drizzle
Frankfurt	6	16	moderate rain
Paris	5	14	drizzle
London	5	13	drizzle
New York	0	4	cloudy

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS: 1- Toll rds.; 5- Excavate; 8- Chieftain, usually in Africa; 12- Churn; 13- Inhibit; 15- Metal filament; 16- Outstanding; 17- Varnish resin; 18- Periods of history; 19- Presides over a meeting; 22- Powdery residue; 23- Moo ___ gai pan; 24- Bath powder; 26- Shocked; 29- Dense metallic element; 31- Song syllable; 32- Arrive at; 34- Conger catcher; 36- River to the Seine; 38- At the bottom of the barrel; 40- Indifferent; 41- Outer coat of a seed; 43- Like tubers; 45- Employ, utilise; 46- Tempestuous; 48- Stylish; 50- Not pro; 51- Fleming who created Bond; 52- TV part; 54- Dispossess; 61- Reformer Jacob; 63- Military camp; 64- Competed; 65- Environmental sci.; 66- Called one's bluff; 67- Elysium of Genesis; 68- Start of a counting rhyme; 69- D.C. VIP; 70- Actress Olin;

DOWN: 1- ___ Il (razor brand); 2- Milne creation; 3- Basic currency of Papua New Guinea; 4- Sled; 5- Remove from text; 6- Anatomical passage; 7- Precious stones; 8- Farm female; 9- Inexplicable; 10- Some nest eggs; 11- 20th letter of the Hebrew alphabet; 13- Deprived of office; 14- Mob scenes; 20- Laugh heartily; 21- Specify; 25- Falsehoods; 26- Spring sign; 27- Car fill up location?; 28- Dawdle; 29- 1977 George Burns film; 30- Unordered; 31- Little one; 33- Boardroom bigwig; 35- Caviar; 37- School founded in 1440; 39- Like barber poles; 42- Commedia dell'___; 44- Age unit; 47- Assorted; 49- Whine; 52- Canadian tribe; 53- Starchy staple; 55- School orgs.; 56- Hard to find; 57- Amenable; 58- Adjutant; 59- High schooler; 60- Actress Best; 62- Willy;



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

FOR SALE

Ocean Gardens FrAGRANT Court, Taipa
HK\$24,000,000 3,500 ft² 4 3 1

FOR RENT

Manhattan Apartment, Taipa
\$20,800/mth 1,626 ft² 3 2 2

FOR SALE

[Macau] Apartment w/ balcony 2 1 1
840 ft² **\$4,580,000** (ref: 20016003)

[Macau] Waterfront Duet Studio Apartment 1 1
469 ft² **\$4,980,000** (ref: 20016001)

[Coloane] Hoi Wan Garden Apartment 2 1 1
900 ft² **\$4,900,000** (ref: 19106003)

[Macau] Nova City Apartment 3 2 2
1,515 ft² **\$11,500,000** (ref: 19106001)

FOR RENT

[Macau] Vai Fung Triplex, Macau 2 2 2
1,065 ft² **\$15,800/mth** (ref: 19121001)

[Coloane] Ocean Garden 4 4 4
3,700 ft² **\$35,000/mth** (ref: 18040674)

[Taipa] Manhattan 3 2 2
1,626 ft² **\$20,800/mth** (ref: n/a)

[Taipa] Buckingham 2 1 1
1,100 ft² **\$15,900/mth** (ref: 20031002)

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Coronavirus scams: guard against fraud cures and other cons

CON artists are finding lots of marks amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Watchdog groups and authorities report a surge of complaints about scams targeting people who fear catching the virus or need money due to lost income.

Scams include "investments" in phony COVID-19 cures and charging people in advance for nonexistent home tests, fake protective gear or even overpriced toilet paper that never arrives. Other fraudsters offer "help" finding a new job or quickly getting federal stimulus checks, if people provide bank account and Social Security numbers or pay upfront fees.

The Federal Trade Commission reported that through March 31, Americans filed complaints about losses to coronavirus-related fraud totaling nearly \$6 million.

Kathy Stokes, head of AARP's fraud prevention program, notes "a significant uptick in reports" to its fraud watch network.

And the Better Business Bureau, which offers anti-scam tips, is getting so many virus-related fraud reports that it's started a COVID-19 category on its scam tracker.

About one-third of people contacting the agency lost money, some hundreds of dollars. The rest wanted to warn others.

To avoid being duped, be super-skeptical. Don't jump on offers that sound too good to be true. Stop and investigate or seek advice from trusted sources.

Some more tips:

—Don't answer your phone unless you know the caller.

"Use your answering machine," Stokes said, and don't call back unfamiliar numbers. If you answer a robocall and are directed to press a number for details on an offer, don't. It's likely a scam.

—Beware "spoof" calls. These falsely ID callers as agencies like the IRS, Social Security Administration or Small Business Administra-

tion and tell you to call a number for help getting money. Instead, look up that agency's phone number to check.

"Most of those are phishing scams trying to get your personal or financial information," or get you to pay a fee, said Paul Rodriguez, acting director of the New Jersey Division of Consumer Affairs.

—Consider the source. Government agencies contact people by mail, NOT by phone, text, social media or email.

—Don't fall for pitches offering drugs or nutritional supplements to cure or prevent infection by the coronavirus, or at-home virus test kits. They don't exist, and the first time you hear about one won't be from a stranger; it'll be on the news.

Dozens of drugmakers are researching treatments and vaccines, but none will be available for many months.

—Question email and text requests that seem to be from

friends or relatives, asking you to buy store gift cards from a third party promising to forward the cards to them.

Diann Gray, a Denver widow, was called last week by her grandson, daughter-in-law and a church friend, each of whom had been contacted by scammers. They'd apparently hacked Gray's former Facebook page and found contact info for friends and family to target. One church friend said an email claimed Gray needed a supermarket gift card to buy food.

"I have plenty of food," said Gray, 64.

—Don't send money to someone you haven't met, particularly via money orders, prepaid debit cards or gift cards, which aren't secure or traceable, advises Hutt. Don't give info to people who contact you, or click unfamiliar email links, which could put malware on your computer to find passwords and financial information. AP

CORPORATE BITS

Sands China co-organizes family activity



Sands China Ltd. and the Sheng Kung Hui Social Service Coordination Office have organized a parent-child colouring contest, aimed at enhancing parent-child interactions while schools are closed during this time.

Around three hundred families received picture book gift kits donated by Sands China Ltd. and Sheng Kung Hui in March as part of a coronavirus prevention themed contest, the gaming operator said in a statement.

The Parent-Child Picture Book Gift Kit Program distributed storybooks, educational games, and infection prevention items to local families.

Local families who use the services at the Sheng Kung Hui's Social Service Coordination Office were selected to participate in the program. Single parents, children with special learning needs, and families with special parenting needs were prioritized.

"We hope this contest helps give children a meaningful activity to engage in during their time at home during the epidemic prevention period, while reminding us all to remain united in the fight against the coronavirus," said Dr. Wilfred Wong, president of Sands China Ltd.

AD

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

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English soccer warned of \$1B pandemic losses, clubs closing

ROB HARRIS

ENGLISH soccer faced warnings this week that losses caused by the coronavirus pandemic could exceed \$1 billion and clubs could go out of business.

The financial alarm was sounded by the heads of the English Football Association and Premier League as well-paid players in the top flight resist calls to cut their salaries because they believe the move would only benefit wealthy owners.

FA chairman Greg Clarke urged the country to unite to "keep the game alive."

In the lower leagues, third-tier promotion hopeful Sunderland and fourth-tier leader Crewe announced they would place staff, including players, on the government's job retention scheme.

Premier League chief executive Richard Masters wrote to the head of the parliamentary sports committee Julian Knight to defend the decision by some clubs in the world's richest soc-



cer competition to have the government pay the salaries of furloughed non-playing staff.

"The furlough scheme announced by government is meant for the whole economy, including many enterprises which might be regarded as providing entertainment or otherwise dependent on eli-

te talent," Masters wrote. "Not only is our industry facing losses now, but to be realistic, we must also base our plans on full recovery being some distance away."

"Ultimately, the very heavy losses that we face will have to be dealt with or else clubs or other enterprises who depend

on football for income will go out of business."

The league was paused more than three weeks ago with Liverpool leading by 25 points with nine game games remaining and is indefinitely suspended.

Masters said the Premier League faces losses of at least 1 billion pounds (\$1.2 billion) if the season cannot be completed. But Knight, a member of the House of Commons in the ruling Conservative Party, said Masters was "defending the indefensible" in justifying Premier League clubs "resorting to taking money from the government scheme."

The Football Association said furloughing any of its staff is only a contingency plan, having already reduced salaries, including England manager Gareth Southgate taking a 30% cut.

"Football faces economic challenges beyond the wildest imagination of those who run it," Clarke told the FA Council. "The pandemic will be followed by its economic consequences

and all business sectors will suffer. We face the danger of losing clubs and leagues as finances collapse.

"Many communities could lose the clubs at their heart with little chance of resurrection. In the face of this unprecedented adversity, all the stakeholders within the game from players, fans, clubs, owners and administrators need to step up and share the pain to keep the game alive."

Under the scheme implemented to help businesses survive the national lockdown, staff can be put on furlough and receive 80% of their salaries from the government, up to a maximum of 2,500 pounds (\$3,000) a month.

Liverpool on Monday reversed a decision to apply its furloughed non-playing staff for the scheme and apologized to fans after facing public backlash.

Manchester United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer defended players who have been criticized by the government for not reducing their pay as clubs deal with the lack of revenue with sport on hold.

"It's unfair to call on any individual or footballers as a group because I already know players do a great amount of work in the community, and players are doing a lot to help in this situation," Solskjaer said. **AP**

**CASA DE PORTUGAL**
EM MACAU 澳門葡人之家協會

curso - course

CROCHÉ - Vamos fazer uma colcha!

crochet - Let's make a coverlet!

monitora/monitor: Ana Cristina Silva ≥ 18 anos/years old

horário/schedule:	início/starts:	total:	propina/fee:
Segundas	13/04/2020	14 horas	MOP 560 *
Mondays	fim/finishes:	07 sessões	
19h00 - 21h00	25/05/2020	sessions	

língua/language:
Português, Cantonês e Inglês/Portuguese, Cantonese and English


patrocínio/sponsor: Fundação Macau

local/venue: na sede da CPM/CPM main office: Rua Pedro Nolasco da Silva, nº 28, Macau

número máximo de participantes/maximum number of participants:
8 (Será respeitada a ordem de inscrição sendo esta efetiva mediante o pagamento de propina).
8 (The registration order will be respected and registration will be confirmed upon receipt of payment in full).

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OPINION

Editorial

Paulo Coutinho



SMALL TO MICRO SUPPORT

Secretary Lei Wai Nong announced yesterday the details of the new Covid-19 relief fund which amounts to 13.6 billion patacas overall, on top of the previously announced 30 billion support measures.

The main solution was, again, to give away money in the form of e-vouchers to the amount of MOP5,000 to each resident card holder to stimulate internal consumption, which follows a similar measure in the previous bailout of MOP3,000 per Macau resident.

In principle, this may help revitalize the economy and, surely, has universal appeal: even those who were not affected financially by the health crisis, like public servants, will benefit from it.

Yet, non-resident workers were again excluded from this and other relief measures.

Yet again, the problems of the so-called SME, which according to the government comprise 90% of incorporated Macau, are not properly addressed.

The Lei Plan envisages a lumpsum of between 15,000 and 200,000 patacas for companies in eight staged levels depending on the number of tax-paying workers – from 1 to 21 or more.

This will merely delay the agony of hundreds if not thousands of companies which are struggling to pay their staff salaries. Just imagine a 21-staff enterprise in the service industry which requires highly qualified personnel, without a stream of revenue since January. Would 200,000 be of any substance in this dwarfed economy for the months to come?

Even if a company has a sinking fund enough to make ends meet for a year – a rarity in the MSAR – it will probably go bust all the same with this level of support.

Now, if the idea behind this plan is to safeguard current jobs – for local residents or migrants – then, it is insufficient.

In a place as rich as Macau, in terms of foreign reserves and GDP per capita, this low level of support is not acceptable for 90% of its entrepreneurship in these times of the coronavirus that has sent away the tourists who support the casino-economy.

Look at what other countries, even most liberal economies, are doing.

In the UK, facing more hardship than us, the government has announced a £350 billion package of financial support,” BBC reported mid-March.

According to the source, London set out plans to pay employees 80% of their salaries, capped at £2,500 per month (MOP25,000), in an attempt to protect jobs.

A scaled-down Australian Federal Parliament was yesterday to vote in a bill to approve a Job Keeper Scheme that gives businesses a flat rate wage subsidy worth AUD1,500 (MOP7,500) a fortnight for each worker they employ. Federal Treasurer, Josh Frydenberg, said the purpose of the payments was “to maintain that formal connection between the employer and the employee” which should support 6 million Australians. Over 730,000 businesses have already registered their interest with the tax office.

Our own local economists and lawmakers have already come out defending similar solutions that would really keep companies and employment in place – beyond casinos and government offices.

Having said that, we have to admit that when it comes to the top priority in combatting this global health crisis – people’s health and life – Ho Iat Seng’s policies are, as recognized by experts, in line with the best in the world: South Korea, Japan, Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Australia and Germany.

China too would be in that group if you are to rewrite history and skip Beijing’s initial response arresting and shutting down the warning voices which if had been heeded right away, some say, may have prevented the pandemic.

**LUFTHANSA RETIRES BIG JETS,
SAYS REBOUND COULD TAKE YEARS**

German airline group Lufthansa said it was permanently removing some of its large aircraft from service and reducing capacity for the long term, saying it will take years for demand for air travel to return to levels seen before the coronavirus pandemic.

The company said in a statement this week that it was retiring six Airbus A-380s, five Boeing 747-400s and seven Airbus A340-600 aircraft, a step that anticipates less traffic long term at its Frankfurt and Munich hubs in Germany. The company was unable to say what eventually would happen to the planes given lack

of demand for aircraft at the moment but it was clear they would not fly for Lufthansa again.

The company said it was ceasing operations for its Germanwings brand, speeding up a move already decided before the crisis. Its Eurowings low-cost division would retire 10 Airbus A320s, while its SWISS, Austrian Airlines and Brussels Airlines group members would also reduce their fleets, in the case of SWISS by foregoing delivery of already ordered aircraft.

Currently 700 of the group’s 760 planes are parked as air traffic has dwindled.

**EUROPE STRUGGLES TO
AGREE ON ECONOMIC
RESPONSE TO VIRUS**



German Finance Minister Olaf Scholz

**LORNE COOK & DAVID
MCHUGH, BRUSSELS**

EUROPEAN government elements remained at loggerheads yesterday over measures to help the economy weather the coronavirus outbreak, breaking off a meeting of finance officials who clashed over aid conditions and proposals to borrow together to pay for the health crisis.

Finance ministers from the 19 countries that use the euro haggled into the night for 16 hours by videoconference starting Tuesday. The meeting, described by France’s finance minister as “long and difficult,” ended without a deal. It is to resume Thursday.

European governments have individually ramped up spending to support the economy but leaders are still searching for a collective response at European Union level that could marshal the collective financial strength of its 27 members to combat what is expected to be a deep recession. France’s central bank said the country has entered recession with a 6% drop in the first quarter and German economists predict the economy will shrink 4.2% this year.

On the table is a three-part package amounting to around a half-trillion euros (\$550 billion). It consists of up to 240 billion euros in emergency loans from the eurozone’s standing bailout fund, credit guarantees from the European Investment Bank to keep com-

panies afloat, and support for short-work schemes that help companies avoid layoffs during what is hoped are temporary business interruptions.

Italy has rejected using the bailout fund, the European Stability Mechanism. One reason is that the money is supposed to come with conditions to carry out economic reforms, based on the fund’s original purpose as a bailout refuge for financially troubled countries. Italy argues that makes the fund the wrong tool since the virus is no country’s fault. Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte has dismissed the bailout fund as “totally inadequate.” Germany has proposed waiving most conditions on the money, but the Netherlands has pushed for requiring reform promises.

The issue of conditions raises the spectre of the harsh austerity imposed on Greece after its three bailouts during the eurozone’s 2012-2015 debt crisis, with deep cuts in spending and salaries, official visits by an enforcement committee and the perception of a loss of national sovereignty.

German Finance Minister Olaf Scholz said he and his peers were close to a deal on the bailout loans, company support and short-work schemes. “We are mostly in agreement but not quite all the way,” he said, citing the need for unanimity over conditions for the ESM loans and that he expected agreement before the end of the week.

He said the position of Germany and other countries was that loans should come with minimal conditions and “should not mean that, as happened 10 years ago, commissars or a troika travel to the countries and develop a program for the long-term.”

Italy, backed by France, Spain and six other countries, had pushed to go even farther than using the ESM and rely on a one-time shared bond issue backed by all countries to raise money at low interest rates and favorable conditions such as long repayment.

Funding from such a move could help already indebted countries such as Italy avoid future questions about their ability to handle added government debt caused by the virus outbreak. Germany and the Netherlands have resisted the idea of common borrowing. Scholz said there had been discussions about a longer-term recovery program that could be discussed separately from the three support measures under discussion, but did not provide details.

French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire stressed the importance of getting a deal: “I strongly believe that our shared responsibility now is to reach an agreement within the next 24 hours. A failure is inconceivable.”

He added that he and Scholz “will put our weight to reach an agreement. An agreement is within reach, we should spare no effort to reach it.” **AP**



USA Sen. Bernie Sanders, who saw his once strong lead in the Democratic primary evaporate as the party’s establishment lined swiftly up behind rival Joe Biden, ended his presidential bid yesterday. The Vermont senator’s announcement makes Biden the presumptive Democratic nominee to challenge President Donald Trump in November. reserved for men.



French aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle headed back to port yesterday due to a possible virus on-board outbreak of the new coronavirus, France’s Defense Ministry said. The Defense Ministry said in a statement that around 40 sailors showed symptoms compatible with COVID-19, the disease the virus causes.

French counter-terrorism prosecutors have opened a judicial investigation after a knife attack south of Lyon left two people dead on Saturday. In a statement, prosecutors said charges will be pressed against the assailant, who was arrested by police minutes after the attack as he was kneeling on the sidewalk praying in Arabic.

European Union The head of the top science organization has quit at the height of the coronavirus crisis, a move he attributed to disappointment with the EU’s response to the pandemic and an EU spokesman said came after other scientists requested their colleague’s resignation. Mauro Ferrari resigned yesterday [Macau time] as president of the European Research Council, a position he held only since Jan. 1.

HOLIDAY TIMES

Macau Daily Times will not be published during the holiday. The Times will be back on the stands on Tuesday April 14. However the MDT website will be updated with breaking news during the recess period. We wish our readers, advertisers and friends the best of times.