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A MAN, 67, IS SUSPECTED TO HAVE KILLED HIS 66-YEAR-OLD WIFE OVER A FINANCIAL DISAGREEMENT, THE PJ DISCLOSED YESTERDAY

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LONG LIST OF 'REVITALIZATION' WORKS WILL ADVANCE THIS YEAR, PLEDGES HO IAT SENG

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THE GOV'T SUBMITTED THE LATEST AMENDMENT TO THE AFFORDABLE HOUSING BILL, WHICH WILL GIVE MORE WEIGHT TO PERMANENT RESIDENTS

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Taiwan The founder of a bookshop specializing in texts critical of China's Communist Party leaders was attacked with red paint in Taiwan yesterday, but suffered no serious physical injuries. Lam Wing-kee (pictured) was assaulted by a man wearing a mask and dark clothes while he was sitting alone at a coffee shop. The assailant remains unknown, but surveillance footage provided by the police shows a person fleeing the scene on foot as Lam chased him.



North Korea Officials in Seoul reported no unusual activity in North Korea yesterday following unconfirmed media reports that leader Kim Jong Un was in fragile health after surgery. But the possibility of high-level instability raised troubling questions about the future of a nuclear-armed state that has been steadily building an arsenal meant to threaten the U.S. mainland amid stalled talks between Kim and U.S. President Donald Trump.

South Korea reported nine new coronavirus infections and one more death, bringing its totals to 10,683 cases and 237 deaths. The country's caseload has slowed from early March, when it was reporting about 500 new cases a day. Infections continue to wane in the hardest-hit city of Daegu, which reported two new cases. While calling for vigilance to maintain hard-won gains against the virus, officials have relaxed social distancing guidelines.

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THE BORDERS OF RECOVERY

DESPITE A NEGATIVE OUTLOOK BY RATING AGENCIES, LOCAL ECONOMISTS SAY MACAU WILL BOUNCE BACK AS BORDERS REOPEN

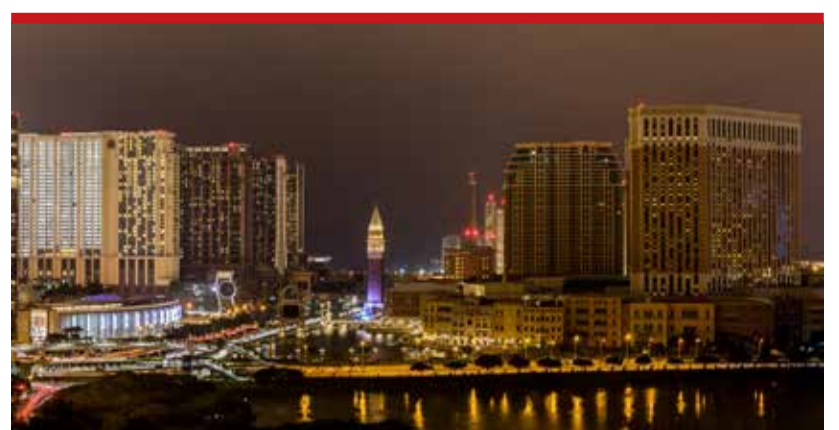
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FEARING BIG ELECTION LOSS, CHINA GOES ON OFFENSIVE IN HONG KONG



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GAMING LAW REVISION MAY BE COMPLETED ONLY IN 2022: ANALYSTS

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DSEJ PREPARES MASKS FOR KINDERGARTEN INTERVIEWS

As children undertaking kindergarten interviews are required to wear facemasks throughout the admission process, a centralized mask supply has been arranged for them, the Education and Youth Affairs Bureau (DESJ) recently announced. Parents should log on to the bureau's website and register using their children's identification cards and central enrolment registration numbers. They can then select a convenient time and date to collect the masks. Parents will receive a mobile text message within 24 hours of successful registration. Collection points include five service centers of the General Women's Association. Mask allocation will be administered upon presentation of the child's identification and the collection code issued by the bureau. Six masks will be allotted to each registered child.

UM, BANK OF CHINA CO-HOST ONLINE SME WORKSHOP

The University of Macau and the Bank of China, Macau Branch have co-hosted, for the first time, an online workshop to help small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) develop their operational knowledge. The workshop forms part of the university's Faculty of Business Management Development Plan. The workshop focused on the situation currently facing local SMEs. It aimed to foster inter-enterprise exchange and communications. At the workshop, the university's academics presented their analytical findings on of the current global business situation and public policies. Meanwhile, the bank's representatives introduced opportunities for financial assistance schemes. Participants believe that the workshop will better prepare them for future fluctuations in the business environment.

PENG CHENG LABORATORY SIGNS STRATEGIC AGREEMENT WITH UM

The University of Macau (UM) and Peng Cheng Laboratory in Guangdong Province recently signed a strategic collaboration agreement via video conferencing, marking the beginning of a long-term collaborative relationship. According to the agreement, both parties will conduct collaborative research in artificial intelligence (AI), network and communication, cyberspace security, and robotics. The partnership also reflects the determination of both parties to carry out cross-regional cooperation in scientific research during the epidemic. Peng Cheng Laboratory is a laboratory approved by the government of Guangdong province and established by the government of Shenzhen city. Dedicated to serving the needs and strategic layout of the country and Guangdong Province, the lab conducts regional and multi-disciplinary, interdisciplinary, and large-scale collaborative basic research and applied basic research projects. It mainly focuses on three research fields, namely AI, network and communication, and cyberspace security.

CRIME

HUSBAND SUSPECTED OF KILLING WIFE AFTER ARGUMENT

A 67-year-old man is suspected to have killed his 66-year-old wife over a financial disagreement, the Judiciary Police (PJ) disclosed yesterday.

The couple had been married for about 40 years. They have a son and two daughters.

Early Monday morning, the PJ was notified by the Fire Services Bureau of the discovery of a body in an apartment on the eighth floor of an Areia Preta building.

After preliminary investigations, the PJ recategorized the case to murder. The suspect was arrested on site.

The police found a fracture in the head of the victim upon inspecting her body at the scene. A post-mortem examination discovered that there were more than 10 wounds on the woman's body, believed to have been caused by blunt objects. Wounds on both hands of the deceased suggested an attempt to defend herself.

During the investigation at the police station, the suspect confessed to the police that he had killed his wife over a money dispute.

The man claimed that he killed



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led his wife accidentally on the evening of April 19, when they were having dinner. It was the night before he called for emergency services.

Over dinner, they had an argument about money. The husband asked his wife for his bank passbook.

According to the police, the wife refused to retrieve it, knowing that her husband had

a gambling addiction. The wife also hit her husband's hands and head with her chopsticks.

The man reportedly lost his temper and picked up the small chair on which he was sitting. He banged the chair against his wife several times until the woman lost consciousness.

Afterwards, the man hastily cleared the crime scene. He cleaned the blood from the

apartment and changed his wife's outfit.

He moved his wife's body to the kitchen. He then transferred MOP2,000 from his late wife's handbag to a secret drawer in the wardrobe, to suggest a murder in the context of a burglary.

Before going to work that night, he disposed of his wife's bloody outfit at a public rubbish collection point. **AL**

CRIME

Dangerous motorbike riders twice ignore police directives

THREE local men claimed not to have seen police officers and not to have heard their instructions after they were investigated for dangerous driving, the Public Security Police Force (PSP) reported during yesterday's joint police press conference.

On April 18, at 1 a.m., the Public Security Police Force (PSP) received a complaint about incessant

noise from motorbikes. The complainant suspected the noise originated from an illegal motorbike race.

The PSP dispatched one traffic PSP officer to investigate the situation on Avenida Wai Long and Estrada da Ponta da Cabrita.

The PSP officer stopped his motorbike on Estr. da Ponta da Cabrita, blocking the road. The police officer then turned

on the warning signal of his vehicle. Soon afterwards, three heavy-duty motorbikes approached the road, with the PSP officer indicating an official stop gesture in front of the three riders. The riders failed to comply with the stop order for police inspection and turned around and left the scene.

The PSP then assigned another officer to intercept the three bikes on another avenue.

The second PSP officer spotted the vehicles and, using both vehicle lights and hand gestures, signalled for them to stop. The three riders once again ignored the order. In addition, they rode past the second police officer at high speed, and ended up driving against the direction of traffic.

Later, on the same day, at 8 p.m., the three riders visited the PSP police sta-

tion, according to the police. They claimed that they had not seen the police officer, although the officer had been in the middle of the road with his vehicle parked blocking the road and with lights on as a signal.

The PSP insisted that both officers were within visual range and that the three riders would have been able to clearly spot the officers.

The PSP charged the three riders with disobedience and dangerous driving. The police referred them to the prosecution authority.

The three riders are all Macau residents in their thirties. **JZ**

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Long list of 'revitalization' works will advance this year, pledges CE

RENATO MARQUES

CHIEF Executive Ho Iat Seng guaranteed yesterday that the long list of public works presented during the Policy Address, which constitute a significant part of the government's plans to revitalize the post-pandemic economy, will all start this year.

Ho's promise was made at the Legislative Assembly (AL) where he returned for a question and answer session with the legislators

on the Policy Address report.

Topping the concerns of lawmakers were matters such as public housing, land use, urban renewal and the links to existing and planned public transportation projects.

The Chief Executive informed the lawmakers that he has the intention to advance on all the topics presented.

"While most people have been home sheltering from the epidemic, the government has not stopped. We have been working all

this time and meeting almost daily with all the [policy] secretaries to find a solution and move forward with some preparatory works."

The Chief Executive was questioned on how the government plans to solve the housing problem of the middle-class population, who cannot afford to buy a house on the private market but also do not meet the requirements to apply for public housing.

"Of course, we have prioritized the lower [income] class [in the past]," said Ho, but added that,

according to the plan from the previous government, which he will continue, "we will build 28,000 housing units on Zone A of the new landfills and the foundation works will start from next year." This will go some way to solving this issue, he said.

The Chief Executive also revealed yesterday that the current administration does not want to rush to start building on Zone A of the new landfills without the final form of the master plan for the area.

"We need to have the master plan for Zone A concluded and approved first," he said. "What we have at the moment are detailed plans for specific projects, [...] but I can guarantee that we will not reduce the number of the 28,000 housing units."

As he further explained, the plan sets the direction and orientation for the use of the entire area. Besides stipulating the land's residential purposes, the master plan will also include roads, green areas, leisure areas, and social facilities.

"Only after the start of the foundation works will we move into this second phase. In Seac Pai Van we did not do this and we realized that we needed it. We need this master plan. We do not want another Seac Pai Van. The construction is easy; what is difficult is the conception."

Ho said that while he does not have yet a schedule for all the phases of the project, he assured that the government will see it completed during his mandate.

The Chief Executive also acknowledged that another of the issues influencing the preparatory works on public housing projects is Macau's ageing population.

According to Ho, the government expectation is that the ageing population phenomenon will reverse in the mid-term.

"The problem we have at the moment is mostly regarding people we received from abroad between the 1970s and 1980s," said Ho, referring to a wave of adult immigrants from the mainland at that time.

"The number of the elderly population is [inflated] at present," he explained. "In 10 years, we expect that the current problem that we have [of a lack of resources] will reduce."

POLICY ADDRESS

LRT TO GO UNDERGROUND TO SAVE LAND RESOURCES

RENATO MARQUES

CHIEF Executive Ho Iat Seng has said he hopes new Light Rapid Transit (LRT) lines can be built underground in future so as to better allocate above-surface land resources.

Questioned by lawmaker Ho Ion Sang on the development of the Light Rapid Transit (LRT) project, which began operating briefly at the end of last year, the Chief Executive said that the underground alternative will also be less disruptive to traffic flows during the construction period.

"We will try to make an

underground line to save our land resources," said Ho during yesterday's meeting with lawmakers. "We hope we can do it all underground and in this way also relieve the traffic pressure on that area."

"We will prioritize the link to Seac Pai Van and also to Hengqin which will be done via an underwater tunnel. This link will be a fully underground line and that not only allows us to connect to the Hengqin border post but also to connect to the China railway system," said Ho.

He also announced that he hopes that the future connection between Zone

A and Zone E of the new landfills, as well as the continuation of the East Line that connects to the Border Gate, will also be made entirely underground.

Although the underground construction option comes with a higher price tag, it also offers a set of benefits to the public, according to the Chief Executive. The government intends to launch a public consultation to study the matter later this year.

He also pledged that his administration would advance soon on a solution for the payment of both the LRT and bus fares on a single electronic card.

POLICY ADDRESS

GOV'T HAS NO PLAN TO AMEND GAMING TAXES

RENATO MARQUES

MACAU'S top official said yesterday that the government has no intention of changing the current taxation structure for casinos and other gaming activities.

The information came in the form of a reply to a question posed by lawmaker Mak Soi Kun, who had called on the government to reduce gaming taxes as an incentive for the inclusion of non-gaming components, seen by many as critical to the diversification efforts of the city.

"I think the gaming concessionaires are capable and have enough money to

continue to run their businesses," Ho replied to the lawmaker.

The Chief Executive said that although the government expects gaming concessionaires to find ways to diversify their activities, the government will not rely on these operators alone for a solution to the economy's overreliance on gaming.

"I hope they can be the 'engine' [of alternative economic development], but I am not sure if we need to impose on them so many requirements," said Ho, adding that "society also has this responsibility, not just the concessionaires."

In another reply, this time

to lawmaker Ma Chi Seng, the Chief Executive said that he also does not think gaming concessionaires must always support or finance all activities and events in the SAR.

"Must it be the concessionaires [always] doing this? Maybe not. We know the economy is currently low and the concessionaires might not want to invest in this," answered Ho.

"But the government also has this interest and we will not reduce any investment in these matters. On the contrary, we will reinforce the investment in events and promote these activities."



EXPERTS SAY ECONOMY WILL BOUNCE BACK ONCE BORDERS REOPEN

LYNZY VALLES

THE Macau SAR is expected to undergo a “much deeper economic contraction” this year, with the city’s economy predicted to plunge by 24%, according to Fitch Ratings Inc.

This drop will be the city’s second straight year of economic decline.

Although the international rating agency has affirmed Macau’s credit rating (long-term foreign and local currency issuer default ratings) at “AA,” it maintains a negative outlook on the city’s economy.

In the Policy Address of the Chief Executive on Monday, Ho Iat Seng mentioned that the pandemic outbreak had exposed the vulnerability and huge risk inherent in the economy’s overreliance on gaming tourism.

The agency argued the same sentiment, noting that “Macau’s concentration on gaming tourism

exposes its economy to substantial disruptions from lockdown measures imposed to contain the coronavirus pandemic.”

“This is despite a limited number of locally confirmed cases and a significant counter-cyclical policy response,” the group added.

Fitch then points out that moderate economic diversification and a shift toward a more stable growth model could benefit Macau’s economy over time.

However, local economists expressed their views that diversification is not possible in the region.

“Everybody wants a diversified economy but no one can [achieve this], because there are just some factors that do not exist,” said economist Albano Martins. “In Macau, we have very few people [...] and some are not even the best ones for some of the industries. We need to get trained and have a lot of experience so we can have other successful industries.”

For Martins, in the meantime Macau needs to embrace itself as a region that is heavily reliant on gaming tourism and on the mainland market.

On Monday, the Chief Executive said that the local government will, in due course, request that the Central Government resume issuing tourist visas for residents of mainland China to travel to Macau, as well as an extended roll-out of the Individual Visit Scheme to more mainland cities.

For economist José Luís de Sales Marques, the expansion in tourism arrivals once the borders reopen will be a significant factor to alleviate the city’s economic hardship. He said that it will be this external force that will drive the economic recovery.

“The government investment [to help boost the economy] will be important, but at the end of the day, the important measure will be those administrative or non-economic measures that will have

to do with the reopening of the borders,” Marques told the Times.

Martins echoed the sentiment, noting that if borders remain closed for the upcoming months, the recession may be as significant as 30%.

“This is big trouble. We don’t have any other industry [to make money from],” he said.

The International Monetary Fund previously noted that the gross domestic product of Macau is expected to record a contrac-

tion of 29.6% this year.

However, it added that in 2021 the economy will grow at rate of 32%, a figure which it expects will balance this year’s predicted contraction.

For both Marques and Martins, a strong bounce in 2021 is likely, however the growth will not be sustained throughout the year. “We are at a very low base. The sharpness of recovery has to do with the fact that we are very low. That will increase sharply but it will stabilize somewhat,” said Marques.

However, Martins warned that if a second wave of the pandemic outbreak occurs outside Macau, then there will be no way to escape a protracted recession.

SOVEREIGN RATINGS NO EFFECT ON BANKS

THE downgrade of Hong Kong’s sovereign rating to ‘AA-’/Stable from ‘AA’/Negative and the Negative Outlook on Macau’s ‘AA’ sovereign rating this week have no direct rating impact on its rated banks, Fitch Ratings says. Hong Kong and Macau banks’ issuer default ratings are not driven by sovereign

support, but are underpinned by institutional support from parent banks or their intrinsic standalone credit profiles, the group said in a statement. The agency noted that banks’ financial profiles are resilient, but their viability ratings will face pressure from economic contractions in Hong Kong and Macau.

JP Morgan: Gaming law revision may be completed only in 2022

BROKERAGE JP Morgan Securities has predicted that the revision of the city’s gaming laws may only be finalized a matter of months before the concessionaire contracts expire.

During the Policy Address on Monday, Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng announced that the public

consultation process for the existing gaming law review will be launched in the second half of this year. The current casino agreements with Macau’s six concessionaires are due to expire in June 2022.

The SAR’s top official noted that the period of public consultation, which will be organized as part of

the legislation, will entail a long process and will not be concluded this year.

Ho believes that, given the importance of the legal framework supervising casino operations, the general public needs to have a stake.

JP Morgan noted that the revised law would likely pass through the Le-

gislative Assembly in 2021, and yet it still anticipates a possible delay in the tendering process until 2022, as “still possible in our view.”

“We wouldn’t be surprised to see the renewal [bidding] process postponed by a year or so versus the current expiry of June 2022,” wrote analysts DS

Kim, Derek Choi and Jeremy An, according to a note cited by GGRAsia.

Aside from a suspected requirement that the new concessions will come with diversification written into the contracts, very little information has yet been advised by the government.

The present gaming permits of the six casino operators are able to be extended for a maximum period of five years, according to the city’s existing gaming laws. The government can decide the number of years by which the

permits may be extended.

Ho Iat Seng said during this week’s Policy Address that none of the current concessions or sub-concessions would have their contracts automatically renewed in 2022.

Last year, appointed lawmaker Davis Fong stated that the new law should also more clearly address operators’ obligations to undertake corporate social responsibility, which “is the most urgent need from the public and [about which] in the old law there is no such detail.” LV

JULIE ZHU

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Length of residence now a factor in applications

THE Macau SAR government has submitted the latest amendment to the affordable housing bill, having proposed to give more weight to permanent residents as well as to their length of residence in Macau.

The bill includes a set of criteria for evaluating each application, such as applicant's family structure and applicant's age.

However, previously, the law did not take into account the number of permanent residents within each application, with some lawmakers, including Sulu Sou, urging the local government to amend the relevant provisions.

Yesterday, Secretary for Transport and Public Works Raimundo Arrais do Rosário presented to the First Standing Committee of the Legislative Assembly (AL) the most recent version of the bill, which shows that the SAR government has accepted the lawmakers' opinions and has afforded more importance to permanent residents.

According to the new bill, there are five major criteria, including three existing criteria and two new criteria for the local government to assess each economic housing application. The three existing criteria are the



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Lawmaker Ho Ion Sang, chairman of the First Standing Committee of the AL

applicant's family structure; the number of family members; and the number of seniors, disabled family members and children. The two new criteria are the length of time the applicant and the involved family members have lived in Macau and the number of Macau permanent residents in each application.

The Secretary did not provide explicit details about these two

new provisions. The Chairman of the First Standing Committee, Ho Ion Sang, said that the precise criteria will be detailed and revealed later by way of a Chief Executive order.

The newest amendment also proposes solutions for when applications receive the same score. Affordable housing applications are to be evaluated and awarded points and ranked

based on stated criteria. Applications with higher scores will be ranked higher, meaning that those applicants will have a greater chance of receiving an economic housing unit.

When two or more applications receive the same score, an additional evaluation will become mandatory. According to the new amendment, applicants with a lower monthly income will be given priority. If the applications remain tied after the monthly income assessment, then older applican-

ts will be given priority. If these two additional evaluations fail to yield distinct results in terms of ranking, the government will then carry out a computer-generated random draw.

Government officials made it clear that the SAR government, in view of the short supply of economic housing, will not consider dividing the applications into different categories and then ranking the applications within each category.

Regarding the permanent waiting list, which has been of wide public concern, the local government stated that it will not completely rule out the possibility of a permanent waiting list. According to Ho, in the future, when the SAR government has expanded its affordable housing supply, it will not rule out a permanent waiting list. However, in the short term, there will be no such list.

SENIORS' APARTMENT COMPLEX CONSIDERED FOR LAND PLOT P

SECRETARY for Transport and Public Works Raimundo Arrais do Rosário informed the First Standing Committee yesterday that the SAR government is considering an apartment complex for senior citizens on land plot P in Area Preta. The Urban Planning

Committee will first publish the land plan for the plot and only then will the project enter the discussion phase. A public consultation process regarding the project is also on the agenda, according to lawmaker Ho Ion Sang, who heads the Committee.

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GOV'T MULLING BEST TIME TO END GUARANTEED MASK SUPPLY SCHEME

ANTHONY LAM

ON the verge of the commencement of the 10th round of the centralized mask supply scheme, Lo Iek Long, medical director of the Conde São Januário Hospital, hinted yesterday that the scheme may have an end date.

With 10 days in each round of centralized mask sales, the scheme has been in effect for nearly three months. A total of 52.5 million masks have been sold to local residents and non-resident workers.

However, the doctor stressed that the decision will not be made suddenly and that the scheme will likely run through rounds 11 and 12. The Health Bureau will take several factors into account, according to the doctor.

"I think it's time we considered whether this scheme should run forever," the doctor explained. He added that the authority would keep an eye on the development of the outbreak to decide an end date for the scheme.

"As far as we know, masks are not scarce in the market," the doctor explained. "That's why I think residents should start thinking about whether this will be a permanent measure." He suggested that it might not become a permanent fixture.

The measure was introduced, the doctor said, in an attempt to ensure local people's accessibility to a critical resource. At the start of the local outbreak, which coincided with the Lunar New Year holiday period in the Greater China Region, very few mask manufacturers were producing the item in sufficient quantity to



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meet local demand.

In addition, local pharmacies had been unprepared to respond to just how quickly the circumstances changed. Many of them, as the Times has previously reported, ran out of supply while demand across the city continued to grow.

As the situation unfolded, production was resumed in the Greater China Region, stabilizing the supply of masks. Many local pharmacies that are not part of the centralized scheme now also report having sufficient stock of masks.

"When market supply becomes sufficient, we need to reconsider the necessity of the scheme," the doctor stated. "But there shouldn't be any problem with round 11."

When asked how many masks have been sold so far, the medical doctor revealed that in the current round, 6 million masks have been sold. The 10th round of centralized mask supply commences today and will see no change – in terms of selling points, pricing and quantity – from the previous rounds.

Over the previous two days,

four Covid-19 patients have recovered and were transferred to the Public Health Clinical Center for post-recovery quarantine.

NURSERIES TO REMAIN SUSPENDED IN MAY

The supervisory body of subsidized nursery schools, the Social Welfare Bureau, announced at yesterday's daily press conference held by the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Center that such nurseries will not resume in May alongside high schools.

The bureau will coordinate

with nursery operators and strive to achieve a tuition fee waiver for the month. Since these nurseries are not directly operated by the bureau, it will have to negotiate with the nursery school operators.

The bureau was told by these operators that parents are generally not convinced about the prudence of resuming the service for the time being. Their main concerns are about health and safety. Parents have expressed their disagreement with a premature resumption of service.

There are 40 subsidized nurseries across the city, with 6,800 infants and 1,300 staff.

In the future, when the situation returns to normal, guidelines will be issued to these nurseries with regards to service resumption, which will be conducted in a safe and orderly manner, according to the bureau.

NO STUDENTS ASKING ABOUT RETURN TO PORTUGAL

The Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) said yesterday it has received no enquiries from local students who returned from Portugal to Macau in recent months, but now wish to go back to the European country to resume their studies.

Portugal has recently announced that universities will resume on May 4. Earlier, many local students based in Portugal returned to Macau as the pandemic epicenter shifted to Europe.

Yesterday, the MGTO was asked whether it has been asked to help with transportation arrangements for these students to return to Portugal.

At the press conference, the office stated that so far there have been no relevant inquiries. Based on that, the MGTO believes that the returnees have decided not to go back to Portugal, at least for the time being, to resume their studies.

HONG KONG EXTENDS SOCIAL DISTANCING MEASURES FOR ANOTHER TWO WEEKS

HONG Kong is extending social distancing restrictions for another 14 days as a precautionary measure, even as the financial hub sees a drop off in daily new Covid-19 infections.

"This is not the time to let down our guard, or our efforts would go to waste," Chief Executive Carrie Lam said as she announced the move yesterday before a meeting of the city's Executive Council. The measures were previously due to expire tomorrow.

Hong Kong reported

four new cases Tuesday, all of which had a travel history to the U.S. or the U.K, health department official Chuang Shuk-kwan said at a briefing. Hong Kong's total number of infections now stands at 1,029, and it hasn't seen a death from the virus since mid-March.

Lam said the government was trying to strike a balance between ensuring the success of the city's existing public health measures and making sure its economy didn't suffer too much dama-

ge. She said Hong Kong's stimulus package, which was announced earlier this month and is worth about HKD137.5 billion (\$17.7 billion), gave her the confidence to extend the social distancing restrictions.

Yesterday was the 13th consecutive day that Macau reported no new coronavirus cases in the city. Still, health officials have urged the public not to become complacent and to refrain from gathering in large numbers for the time being. **DB/AGENCIES**

CONSULATE LAUNCHES SURVEY TO ASSESS IF SECOND CHARTERED FLIGHT WANTED

THE Philippine Consulate General in the Macau SAR is calling on Philippine nationals who want a second chartered flight back to the Philippines to sign an online survey before April 24.

According to a statement, the consulate has received requests for repatriation from Filipinos stranded in the region due to Covid-19.

There are still no flight routes available from Macau to Manila, capital of the Philippines.

In February, a group of

134 Filipinos sent the government a petition via the Philippine Consulate General in the Macau SAR requesting a chartered flight back to Manila. Among them were elderly people, pregnant women, and people with young children.

However, negotiations with the airline arranging the flight broke down after the company expressed concerns over the quarantine measures that would be applied to crew members.

Last month, the Philippine government repa-

triated 163 Filipinos from Macau, including 137 undocumented and irregular Filipino workers.

The individuals boarded a chartered Air Macau flight and underwent medical examinations that were carried out by the Philippine Bureau of Quarantine upon their arrival.

Late last month, the consulate told the Times that they still had no instructions to negotiate with any airline to help the remaining Filipinos stranded in the city to return the Philippines. **LV**

AP PHOTO



Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam listens to reporters questions during a press conference held in Hong Kong yesterday

Fearing big election loss, China goes on offensive in Hong Kong

IAIN MARLOW

ON the surface, Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam appears to have had a few pretty good months: Her government has managed to contain the coronavirus outbreak, during which street protests have mostly disappeared.

Yet her bosses in Beijing don't appear convinced that will help their allies during Legislative Council elections set for September. A spate of arrests and stern official edicts over the past few weeks amount to an offensive that looks designed to ensure China gets its way no matter what happens at the ballot box.

Over the weekend, Hong Kong police arrested more than a dozen prominent pro-democracy figures in the former British colony, including a current lawmaker, former politicians and a media tycoon whose outlets are sympathetic to protesters who paralyzed the city for much of the last year. That came after Beijing agencies that oversee the city blasted the opposition for filibustering in the parliament, known as LegCo.

"The authorities would like to prepare Hong Kong people for the possibility that the LegCo majority falls into the hands of the pro-democracy camp," said Joseph Cheng, a veteran democracy activist and retired political science professor. "The preservation of the regime is of paramount importance all of the time - and the authorities are willing to pay the price, in terms of conflict, damage to the stability of Hong Kong, its international image, its progress."

Yesterday, Lam blasted the opposition's "malicious filibustering" and suggested that the city's recent stimulus relief package wouldn't have been possible if the pro-democracy forces had a majority in the Legislative Council - and that Hong Kongers and businesses alike would suffer.

"Imagine if the Legislative Council is led by those who voted against the HK\$130b in funding? What would Hong Kong become?" Lam asked in a regular news conference ahead of a meeting of the city's Executive Council. "How can the suffering of companies and the people be alleviated?"

The harder-line approach comes just as Hong Kong appears to be ready to open up again after months of social-distancing restrictions kept people indoors: The city reported no new cases Monday for the first time since March 5. It risks spawning another summer of discontent, with protesters expected to mark several anniversaries from June up until the Leg-Co election.

On Monday, Fitch Ratings downgraded Hong Kong as an issuer of long-term, foreign currency debt in part because the city's "deep-rooted socio-political cleavages remain unresolved," despite the virus dampening protests.

"This injects lingering uncertainty into the business environment, and entrenches the risk of renewed bouts of public discontent, which could further tarnish international perceptions of the territory's governance, institutions, and political stability," Fitch said.

XI'S HARDLINERS

A majority for the pro-democracy camp in the lawmaking body would be unprecedented: The high-water mark came in 2004, when it won 42% of seats. But the sometimes-violent protests last year, in which demonstrators called for meaningful elections, propelled the pro-democracy camp to win about 85% of seats in a vote for local district councils in November.

President Xi Jinping's response to that result was the appointment of two hardliners to oversee Hong Kong. In January, Luo Hui-ning, a cadre known for executing Xi's anti-corruption campaign, was made head of China's Liaison Office in Hong Kong, while in February Xi appointed Xia Bao-long, who oversaw a crackdown on Christian churches several years ago when he was the Communist Party chief of China's Zhejiang province, as director of the overarching Hong Kong & Macau Affairs Office.

China Official Who Tore Down Church Crosses to Oversee Hong Kong

In recent weeks, Beijing's agencies overseeing the city have accused the opposition politicians of potentially violating their oaths with delay tactics - a potential precursor to disqualification. They also reiterated their support for national security legislation that has ignited previous rounds of protest in the city.

Lam and other pro-establishment politicians in Hong Kong have criticized the filibustering and have supported the right of

the Liaison Office chief to comment on gridlock at the city's legislature. As Hong Kong successfully contained the virus, Lam's popularity rating has rebounded from record lows and "significantly increased" in a poll conducted in late March and early April, which did not attribute the increase to any particular policy.

"The central government has constitutional responsibility for the governance of Hong Kong, and of course has the right to express its views on the performance of the Legislative Council," said Zhi Zhenfeng, a law professor at the state-run China Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing. He added, though, that "policy tweaks are possible" and the recent statements do not constitute any sort of new policy direction.

However, the Hong Kong government's defense of the two central government agencies to comment on Hong Kong politics has set off alarm bells, particularly since Article 22 of the city's mini-constitution bars any Beijing-controlled entity from interfering in the former colony.

The Hong Kong Bar Association pointed out Monday that the city's government was contradicting previous statements on the role of Beijing's agencies in Hong Kong, and that the "current uncertainty contributes to undermining confidence" in both governments' commitment to the "one country, two systems" principle. In its statement, Fitch Ratings said the central government is "taking a more vocal role in Hong Kong affairs than at any time since the 1997 handover."

DANGER OF EXTREMISM

For both China and Hong Kong, the economic stakes are high. The U.S. has increased scrutiny of the city's autonomy from the mainland, which is essential to maintaining special trading privileges that help underpin the economy.

President Donald Trump's administration roundly condemned China's latest arrests, which included 81-year-old Martin Lee, a former lawmaker nicknamed the "Father of Democracy" since he was a founder of the city's flagship opposition Democratic Party. China rejected the international criticism on Monday, calling it "gross interference in Hong Kong's internal affairs."

China's assertive tone - and the arrests of many moderate, older opposition figures - could alienate the city's more radical protesters and encourage them to renew violent attacks in the city, said opposition lawmaker Fernando Cheung. This may allow authorities in Beijing to then justify canceling the election or ramming through controversial national security legislation known as Article 23, he said.

"Democrats don't want to see extremism grow," Cheung said. "We want to keep peace and prosperity, but by way of the government's handling of this - and more so the Communists handling of the situation - there's a danger that extremism will grow."

SUMMER IS COMING

This idea was echoed in a blog post over the weekend by Jerome Cohen, a renowned American scholar of Chinese law and a professor at New York University, who wrote the arrests could be a "trap" that could justify "repressive" national security measures or lead to a cancellation of the upcoming election.

Hong Kong officials repeatedly warned of the risk of terrorism last year, and those fears have continued to grow. The city's police chief on Monday received an improvised explosive device at his office on Monday although no one was injured, the South China Morning Post reported, citing multiple unidentified insiders.

Either way, analysts are expecting political turmoil to return to the streets once the pandemic fears subside.

"They're trying to use a tough political line ahead of summer, which is the traditional peak of social movements in Hong Kong," said Ivan Choy, a senior lecturer at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. "They want to use this time to try and threaten these people from coming out, to make people think that if they come out again there will be legal consequences. This is their thinking. Whether this happens is another issue. Protesters could be provoked. **BLOOMBERG**"

AP PHOTO



UK Parliament to hold virtual debates amid virus lockdown

JILL LAWLESS, LONDON

Britain's Parliament is going back to work, and the political authorities have a message for lawmakers: Stay away.

U.K. legislators and most parliamentary staff were sent home in late March as part of a nationwide lockdown to slow the spread of the new coronavirus. With more than 16,500 virus-deaths in Britain and criticism growing of the government's response to the pandemic, legislators are returning — at least virtually — to grapple with the crisis.

House of Commons Speaker Lindsay Hoyle plans to preside over an almost-empty chamber, with space being made for a maximum of 50 of the 650 members of Parliament. Other lawmakers will be able to ask questions from home using videoconferencing program Zoom, beamed onto screens erected around the wood-paneled Commons chamber.

Hoyle acknowledged "there are bound to be bumps along the way" as the tradition-steeped 700-year-old institution takes a leap into the unknown. But he urged lawmakers not to travel to Parliament.

"I do not want members and House staff putting themselves at risk," Hoyle said.

A small number of legislators will meet in person today [Macau time] to approve the new digital arrangements. Taped spaces will keep

them 2 meters apart.

The virtual Parliament will have its first big test later today during the weekly Prime Minister's Questions session. Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab will stand in for Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who is still recovering from a bout of COVID-19.

Dozens of British lawmakers, advisers, civil servants and journalists have had coronavirus symptoms, likely contracted in the cramped precincts of Parliament and other government buildings.

Johnson spent a week in the hospital, including three nights in intensive care, after contracting the virus. The 55-year-old leader is recuperating in the countryside, and there is no word on when he will be healthy enough to return.

Opposition politicians have been largely supportive of the national lockdown that was imposed on March 23 and runs until at least May 7. But political unity has frayed as Britain's coronavirus death toll mounts. Official statistics released yesterday show that at least 1,500 more people with the new coronavirus have died in Britain than the 16,500 whose deaths have been announced by the government.

Opponents are attacking Johnson's Conservative government over a lack of testing for the virus, shortages of protective equipment for medical workers and an elusive strategy for ending the lockdown.

The government says it is too soon to consider easing the restrictions. But it acknowledges that widespread testing — so that infected people can be identified and their contacts traced and isolated — will play a key part. The number of tests being performed has grown from 5,000 to near 20,000 a day — still a long way off the government's promise of hitting 100,000 a day by April 30.

Britain is not the only country grappling with how to conduct politics during the pandemic. Legislatures in France and Italy are working on a reduced schedule, while lawmakers continue to meet in Germany and Poland with social distancing measures. The U.S. Congress has postponed its return until May, while Canadian lawmakers have agreed to a mix of digital and in-person sittings starting next week.

It's unclear how fully British lawmakers will be able to scrutinize the government under the new digital arrangements. Approving legislation is on hold because there's no way yet for lawmakers to vote. In the House of Commons, that's done by the time-honored, time-consuming method of having legislators traipse out of the Commons and walk through "yes" or "no" lobbies.

Hoyle said authorities are "urgently" seeking a way that voting can be done remotely.

The pandemic has al-

ready upended everyday activity in the cramped, crumbling parliamentary complex, where several thousand people work, served by bars and restaurants, a post office and even a hairdresser. Even before parliamentarians were sent home March 25, Hoyle had suspended alcohol sales on the premises, to encourage staff not to linger.

The virtual arrangements are likely to curb Parliament's spontaneity and subdue its often raucous atmosphere. Jacob Rees-Mogg, the Conservative lawmaker who serves as leader of the House of Commons, accepted that "the new digital Parliament will not be perfect." But he said "we must not let the perfect be the enemy of the good."

And, he added, things have been worse.

"In 1349, the Black Death forced Parliament not to sit," Rees-Mogg wrote. "Today, we can do better thanks to technology, Mr. Speaker and a determination to keep our democracy going."

Meg Russell, director of the Constitution Unit at University College London, said the new arrangements were "unique and unprecedented." But she said politics would be more difficult without "face-to-face and informal contact."

"Politics is a lot more consultative than people think," she said. "Informal conversations and things which go on out of the public eye are really crucial to the way that Parliament runs." AP

this day in history



2000 SWAT TEAM GRABS TUG-OF-LOVE CUBAN BOY

US federal agents have seized six-year-old Cuban shipwreck survivor Elian Gonzalez in an early morning raid on the home of his relatives in Miami.

About 25 officers broke down the door of the house and re-emerged minutes later with Elian wrapped in a blanket.

They bundled the screaming boy into a vehicle and drove him away, as the crowd outside the house shouted protests.

Chaotic scenes followed as the officers retreated and pepper spray was used to keep back the crowd.

Elian was put on a plane and flown to Andrews Air force base outside Washington where he was reunited with his father for the first time in five months.

Elian has been at the centre of a bitter custody battle between his Miami relatives and his father in Cuba since being shipwrecked off the Florida coast last November.

His mother, and 10 other people attempting to enter the US as illegal immigrants, drowned.

One of the fishermen who rescued Elian, Donato Dalrymple, was in the house when he was taken.

Mr Dalrymple said agents pointed guns at the family and shouted: "Give me the boy or I'll shoot you!"

But Attorney-General Janet Reno, who ordered the raid after the failure of negotiations with Elian's relatives about surrendering him, defended the use of armed officers.

She said they had had information that there could have been guns in the house and among the crowd outside.

Ms Reno confirmed Elian would remain in the US in accordance with the appeal court injunction against the boy being taken to Cuba.

In a brief statement, President Bill Clinton said that he supported Janet Reno's decision.

"The law was upheld and that was the right thing to do," he said.

The affair has greatly strained US/Cuban relations with accusations from Cuba that the delay in returning Elian is politically motivated.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

After a series of court hearings Elian was allowed to return home to Cuba with his father in June 2000.

They received a rapturous welcome and Cuban leader, Fidel Castro, attended Elian's seventh birthday party. In an interview broadcast on US television a year after Elian's return his father said their life had gone back to normal and Elian was enjoying school in the small town of Cardenas, in central Cuba.

In spite of the fate of Elian's mother, thousands of other Cuban would-be illegal immigrants still attempt the dangerous crossing to the United States each year.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
Mar. 21-Apr. 19
What vision do you have for your future? If you haven't given any thought to where you want your life to be in the next few years or few decades, today is a good day to put your mind to the task.

TAURUS
Apr. 20-May. 20
It's important to have a healthy respect for teamwork today. While it might not be the most efficient way to get things done, it will definitely ensure the best solution to the group's problems.

GEMINI
May. 21-Jun. 21
Your ability to see a common thread weaving through many diverse opinions will be extremely valuable today. If there are warring parties, it's up to you to play diplomat.

CANCER
Jun. 22-Jul. 22
Being safe instead of sorry is always a better choice, especially where your wallet is concerned. If need be, you can distract yourself by doing simple chores around the house.

LEO
Jul. 23-Aug. 22
But as a friend, you need to listen to and support them just like they've done for you in the past. Stay patient and positive. You can help them through this period just by being yourself.

VIRGO
Aug. 23-Sep. 22
You could be asked to give your feedback today, which is nothing new. People value your perspective. But today, the person who wants to know what you think could have an extremely delicate ego.

LIBRA
Sep. 23-Oct. 22
You can create self-fulfilling prophecies. Annoyed with a bully? Imagine them gone. Eager to get to know someone better? Picture yourself sitting next to them, engrossed in deep conversation.

SCORPIO
Oct. 23-Nov. 21
Find a person who intimidates you a little bit, whose methods of thinking or working are odd to you. Then observe them for a while and see whether or not they have new things to teach you.

SAGITTARIUS
Nov. 22-Dec. 21
You know you're smart, and your confidence and intellectual strengths will be very useful today. They'll help you get noticed and connect with people who can offer you the opportunity you've been waiting for.

CAPRICORN
Dec. 22-Jan. 19
A new adventure could come to mind today, but you'll have to wait to go exploring. Travel is a wonderful idea, even if it's just a few hours' drive away. Go online and start planning.

AQUARIUS
Jan. 20-Feb. 18
Video chat with a new friend. Inserting yourself into someone else's life is easy right now, especially because so many folks are eager to welcome you in!

PISCES
Feb. 19-Mar. 20
You could find that there is no scarcity of scintillating conversation flying around today. If you've had a strong desire to get philosophical and deep with someone, this is the day to do it.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

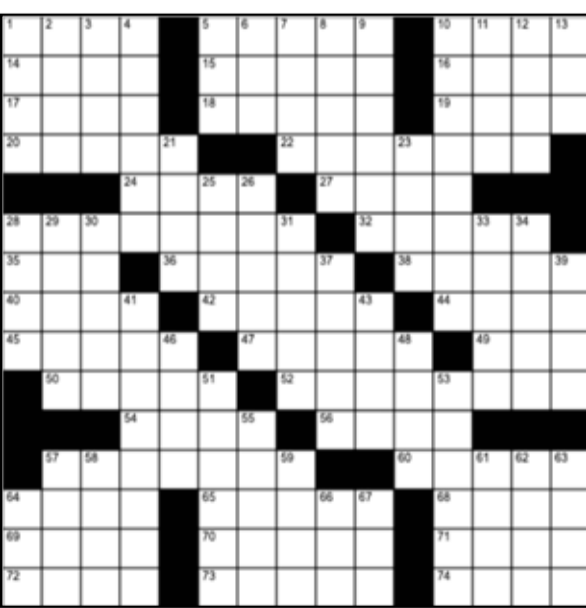
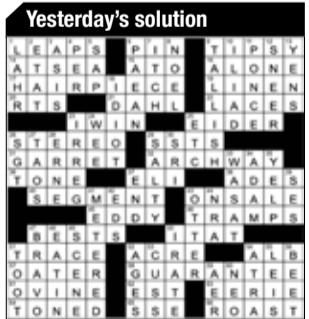
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	11	22	blowing dust
Harbin	3	16	cloudy
Tianjin	9	19	drizzle
Urumqi	9	17	drizzle
Xi'an	12	25	clear
Lhasa	3	15	overcast
Chengdu	16	28	overcast
Chongqing	19	29	cloudy
Kunming	10	28	clear
Nanjing	15	29	cloudy
Shanghai	16	27	overcast
Wuhan	15	29	cloudy
Hangzhou	12	29	cloudy
Taipei	16	24	cloudy
Guangzhou	16	27	cloudy
Hong Kong	20	27	cloudy
WORLD			
Moscow	1	8	drizzle
Frankfurt	0	8	cloudy
Paris	2	10	clear
London	5	13	cloudy
New York	3	10	cloudy

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS: 1- Graceful horse; 5- Stern with a bow; 10- Contented sighs; 14- Soft drink; 15- Gal's guy; 16- Final Four org.; 17- Lounge; 18- Lost a lap; 19- Director Premier; 20- Functional; 22- Express support; 24- "The Time Machine" race; 27- Leprechaun land; 28- Having tender feet; 32- Philly hoopster; 35- Electrically charged atom; 36- To the left, at sea; 38- Prone; 40- Churn; 42- Capture; 44- Helper; 45- 1961 Heston role; 47- Fend (off); 49- Dancer Charisse; 50- Man of morals; 52- Performs surgery; 54- Tease; 56- Faux pas; 57- Ailment; 60- Viscounts' superiors; 64- Winglike parts; 65- Less common; 68- Prepare food; 69- Drinks slowly; 70- Large wading bird; 71- Sharpen; 72- Enervates; 73- Short literary composition; 74- Advantage;

DOWN: 1- Rights org.; 2- Underground part of a plant; 3- ___ want for Christmas...; 4- Theatrical dance; 5- Stipulations; 6- What the sun does in the west; 7- Moisturizer ingredient; 8- Isolated; 9- Woolen braid; 10- Loss of appetite; 11- After John in the NT; 12- Detest; 13- ___ Paulo; 21- Designer Schiaparelli; 23- Not a dup.; 25- "My fault!"; 26- Golf clubs; 28- Send packing; 29- Alley Oop's girlfriend; 30- In readiness; 31- Muse of poetry in Greek mythology; 33- Kick out; 34- Color anew; 37- Snares; 39- Beatty and Rorem; 41- Languid; 43- Daredevil Knievel; 46- Feathers; 48- Iroquois foe; 51- Penetrate; 53- Geronimo, e.g.; 55- Former Russian rulers; 57- Hip bones; 58- Reindeer herder; 59- Ladies of Spain; Abbr.; 61- Crucifix; 62- Yearn; 63- ___ - Ball; 64- Pompous person; 66- Bambi's aunt; 67- Actor Fernando;



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



<p>FOR SALE</p> <p>Nova City 3 bedroom, Ready to move in! HK\$11,400,000 1,515 ft² 3 2</p>	<p>FOR RENT</p> <p>Manhattan Apartment, Taipa \$20,800/mth 1,626 ft² 3 2</p>	<p>FOR SALE</p> <p>[Taipa] <i>Wa Bao</i> 2 2 1,071 ft² \$7,995,000 (ref: 18115568)</p> <p>[Taipa] <i>Taipa Village- two connected 4</i> 2 1,404 ft² \$8,380,000 (ref: 19096006)</p> <p>[Macau] <i>Unique Loft</i> 2 2 2,200 ft² \$9,990,000 (ref: 15115464)</p> <p>[Coloane] <i>Large 3/4 bedroom 2</i> 3 2 2,530 ft² \$12,980,000 (ref: 19096000)</p>	<p>FOR RENT</p> <p>[Macau] <i>Vai Fung Triplex, Macau</i> 2 2 1,065 ft² \$15,800/mth (ref: 19121001)</p> <p>[Taipa] <i>Buckingham</i> 2 1 1,100 ft² \$15,900/mth (ref: 20031002)</p> <p>[Taipa] <i>Manhattan</i> 3 2 1,626 ft² \$20,800/mth (ref: n/a)</p> <p>[Coloane] <i>Ocean Garden</i> 4 4 3,700 ft² \$35,000/mth (ref: 18040674)</p>
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ANALYSIS

THE ERA OF AIRLINE BUCCANEERS MAY BE ENDING

DAVID FICKLING

AVIATION has always carried a whiff of the pirate ship about it. Richard Branson, founder of Virgin Atlantic Airways Ltd., likes to describe himself as an “adventurer and troublemaker,” and once claimed to have found buried treasure on his private Caribbean island as a prank.

Right now, the buccaneering executives who have driven the airline industry since the 1980s, when the era of state-owned flag carriers started to break down, are facing their appointment with the gallows.

Branson's Australian affiliate, Virgin Australia Holdings Ltd., was taken into administration Tuesday after years of losses. Virgin Atlantic will go the same way if it doesn't receive a government loan, Branson wrote in a letter to employees Monday.

Other carriers may be heading in the same direction. South African Airways is planning to lay off its entire workforce after years of losses, Bloomberg News reported last week; Norwegian Air Shuttle ASA's debt-for-equity workout is heading down to the wire; bonds issued by Colombia's Avianca Holdings SA due in 2023 are trading at 20 cents on the dollar, while PT Garuda Indonesia sukuk due in June are at 48 cents.

The major American players aren't immune, either. Five-year credit default swaps protecting against non-payment of American Airlines Group Inc.'s debt have soared to 2,883 basis points, with United Airlines Holdings Inc. on 960 basis points and Delta Air Lines Inc. at 694 basis points. These are fear-and-loathing levels: Lehman Brothers Holdings Inc.'s



swaps peaked at 707 basis points on the eve of its 2008 collapse.

There are plenty of national champions among that group of walking wounded. Still, the differing experiences of Virgin Australia and its 20% shareholder Singapore Airlines Ltd. suggest that robust state ownership, for so long considered a millstone for ambitious airline companies, is turning into a life-raft.

Singapore's \$10.5 billion capital raising last month — backed by its largest shareholder, state-owned investment company Temasek Holdings Pte. — is the most striking instance of support offered to an airline in the current crisis. Less than a tenth of that sum would have been sufficient to provide the A\$1.4 billion (\$882 million) rescue loan that Virgin had sought from the Australian government. There's no legal barrier to Singapore

buying out the remaining 80% of the company. Consolidating control would have given it a stronger foothold in a domestic aviation market that it once coveted, at a time when only within-country

Since the dawn of commercial flying, aviation businesses have had a complicated relationship with nation states

flights are likely to be operating in significant numbers for some time. It's telling, then, that the company turned down this option.

Since the dawn of commercial

flying, aviation businesses have had a complicated relationship with nation states. After an initial flurry of private enterprise, most of the global industry was nationalized during World War II and remained that way until the deregulation of the 1980s.

In recent decades, former flag carriers such as British Airways have been privatized and at times amalgamated into cross-border giants, while budget airlines have swallowed up short-haul market share to become some of the most profitable businesses in the global industry. The only state-owned airlines that have prospered have been those, like Singapore Air and Emirates, that have been able to count on the traffic of busy hub airports and the unquestioning backing of their governments.

For all that, aviation is any-

thing but a free market. Most of the world's airline routes are oligopolies where only a handful of carriers compete. The number of seats available between countries is still decided in government-to-government treaty talks, which often limit the ability of commercial carriers to operate. Airlines remain a vital piece of national infrastructure, and can throw themselves on the mercy of governments if things get tight.

We may be on the brink of a realignment as dramatic as the 1980s privatizations. The Austrian, Swiss and Belgian governments are all in talks with Lufthansa AG about support for the former flag-carriers that it absorbed in recent decades. Air France-KLM's state shareholders in Paris and The Hague are looking to do the same. In most cases, it's doubtful whether these attempts will be sufficient to survive an extended crisis. It's hard for governments to argue that full-service airlines are a national interest as vital for European nations as they are for an island-state like Singapore, especially when rail travel causes so much less carbon pollution.

The result is likely to be a hollowing out of the middle ground. Budget airlines such as Southwest Airlines Co., Ryanair Holdings Plc and Interglobe Aviation Ltd. have always known that they had no hope of government support. As a result, their more conservative balance sheets, lower costs and smaller shares of long-haul traffic given them the best chances of survival. True state champions such as Singapore Air and Emirates can count on the indulgence of their shareholders, too.

The hybrid carriers that remain, however, will find the going tough. Neither lean enough to survive on their own, nor politically connected enough to count on unlimited support, they may find the implicit backing of their governments less forthcoming than they'd hoped. **BLOOMBERG**

Genting plans unprecedented pay cut as virus shuts casinos

MALAYSIA'S casino-to-hospitality conglomerate Genting Bhd. and its units are planning the first group-wide salary cut since its founding in 1965.

Genting, backed by Malaysian tycoon Lim Kok Thay, is proposing as much as 20% temporary reduction of basic salary for employees based on their ranks, while Genting Hong Kong Ltd. suggests up to 50% cut for those holding vice president role or higher, according to internal memo seen by Bloomberg News.

Genting Hong Kong confirmed in a statement that the salary cut will be in effect until year-end, while Genting Singapore Ltd. and Genting Malaysia Bhd. said they have proposed similar voluntary pay cuts with varying terms.

A representative for the group didn't immediately respond to requests for comment.

“The businesses of the Genting Group have been badly affected, resulting in significant reduction in revenue,” the group's Chief Operating Officer

Tan Kong Han said in the memo. “When business resumes, we would expect to face challenges to regain the level of business prior to the pandemic due to the adverse impact that Covid-19 will have inflicted on the domestic and global economies.”

Genting seeks to avoid job cuts as much as possible, even if salary remains one of its biggest cost components, he added.

Shares of the companies declined except for Genting Hong Kong, which

surged 11%. Genting fell 2.2%, while the Singapore unit lost 3.3% and the Malaysia arm slid 3.4% as of 3:40 p.m. local time.

The group that operates casinos and resorts in Las Vegas and Singapore had to scale back operations as countries impose lockdowns, while consumers shun cruises after a few ships became sites of coronavirus outbreaks. The conglomerate, founded in Malaysia in 1965, is also involved in property, plantation and energy sectors as well as life sciences. **BLOOMBERG**



MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

BOOK IT

'Rules for Being a Girl' leaves readers wanting more

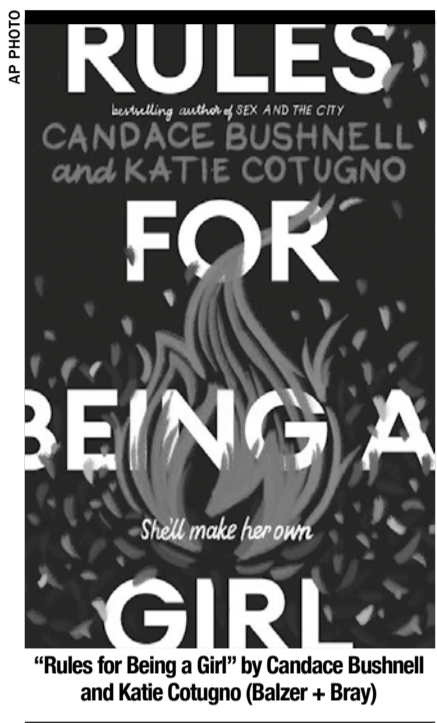
MOLLY SPRAYREGEN

IN "Rules for Being a Girl," by bestselling authors Candace Bushnell and Katie Cotugno, high school student Marin Lospato becomes the victim of a teacher's sexual advances — one who happens to be the school's most beloved.

Marin knows that what happened is beyond unacceptable, but she must nevertheless face off with school administrators, classmates, and even her best friend, who all seem convinced she either made the whole thing up or at least misread the situation.

Marin, however, refuses to back down until this teacher sees consequences. As she continues to stand up for herself, she begins to notice the many more ways in which girls at her school are victimized. So, she begins speaking out for them, too.

"Rules for Being a Girl" is an engrossing and engaging read, filled with dynamic characters that will keep readers wanting more. While



Marin's is a fight that should never be necessary, her experience is one that many women and girls will unfortunately relate to. It's a powerful story of a girl determined to make others look her in the eyes and listen. **AP**

tTUNES

NEW SHELBY LYNNE ALBUM CONNECTED TO UNRELEASED FILM

PABLO GORONDI

THERE'S hardly a song among the 11 on Shelby Lynne's first solo record since 2015 that fails to mention love, and even the exceptions stay on theme.

The self-titled album is in part the soundtrack to an unreleased film she stars in, "When We Kill the Creators," and some of the songs were recorded live on set.

Though many of the lyrics are from Cynthia Mort, the film's screenwriter and director, it is Lynne's name on the cover and it still sounds like one of her most personal collections.

Lynne, who often acts here as her own backing band, once again travels the fine line between happiness and heartbreak, making both feel necessary.

Love and relationships are presented in many phases and guises — celebratory ("I Got You"), nostalgic ("Weather"), yearning ("My Mind's Riot," which includes a Lynne sax



Shelby Lynne, "Shelby Lynne" (Thirty Tigers)

solo) and resilient ("Here I Am"), among others.

Though there are some notable guests like Benmont Tench on a few songs, most of the arrangements are translucently elementary and it's Lynne voice that carries the emotional weight.

Even with highlights throughout, there's a definite mid-album peak with "Revolving Broken Heart," "Off My Mind" and "Don't Even Believe in Love."

The first is one of those

hushed cries of despondency Lynne excels at. It's followed by a slice of southern soul in the Aretha Franklin mold, with Lynne playing all the instruments. Finally, comes a sleek tale of inevitability, one of the few tracks with a full band behind her.

Lynne, who with sister Allison Moorer released an album of covers stretching from Merle Haggard to Nirvana in 2017, makes this album one of the purest in her canon and makes one curious about the film. **AP**

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OPINION

World Views

Ferdinando Giugliano, Bloomberg

A WEALTH TAX ISN'T THE RIGHT WAY TO PAY FOR THE PANDEMIC

An epidemic is often referred to as a “great leveler” since viruses infect people indiscriminately regardless of their net worth. However, the economic consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic will be very asymmetric, as the draconian lockdowns to slow the outbreak hit various sectors of the economy differently.

For now, politicians have rightly avoided any discussions about how to spread the cost of the crisis, instead prioritizing higher spending to mitigate the shock. But, when the health emergency is finally over, one can expect calls for making sure the exceptional expenses are fairly redistributed to grow louder. And while it's natural to turn to the tax system to allocate losses more evenly, it's essential that governments think carefully about what exactly has driven inequalities during the lockdowns so that they don't inadvertently make matters worse.

The inequalities are being brought on by individual governments' decisions to shut down significant chunks of the economy. Businesses that have closed shop have suffered dearly while giving the rest of their community an indirect benefit, by not exposing people to the virus. Economists call this asymmetry between those who bear the costs of an action and those who gain from it an “externality” — and see it as a classic case for some degree of government intervention to balance things out.

Recognizing that's what we are dealing with here should change how we think about redistribution. For example, a group of economists including Emmanuel Saez at the University of California at Berkeley, have called for a European wealth tax to help governments reduce their debt levels, which will inevitably increase during and after the pandemic.

However, there are many practical and conceptual problems with a wealth tax, including the risk of large-scale tax avoidance and that it would be a form of double taxation.

A better alternative would be to tax individuals and companies differently depending on how well they fared during the lockdown. The standard income and corporate tax system already does this to some extent: If I lose business during the pandemic, I will earn less income, which will lower my tax bill. But simply raising taxes on high earners could run into similar problems as a wealth tax. It could still hit those who saw a steep reduction in their income because they had to close up shop, so long as their earnings are high enough. Is it right to tax them more?

One way to adjust taxes more fairly would be to identify which sectors have been able to stay open through the crisis and ask them to contribute more. Another plan, designed by Michele Boldrin, an economist at Washington University in St. Louis, would be to place higher taxes on those whose earnings have increased or stayed the same in 2020, compared to a year earlier. There will need to be exceptions: For example, medical doctors and nurses have worked incredibly hard and put their lives at risk during the pandemic. They deserve a bonus, not a tax hike. But a surcharge hitting those who can keep their income while easily working from home would be justified.

These proposals face practical problems. Identifying who exactly should pay for the “lockdown externality” won't be easy. Governments shouldn't discuss any new taxes, let alone introduce them, while the world economy goes through a deep recession. Even the talk of higher taxes would prompt citizens to save more, deepening the crisis.

But if in the future governments want to use taxation to help the losers from the pandemic and to contribute more to footing the colossal public bill, they must be very careful in first identifying who the real winners are. Politicians must not to come across as the “incompetent levelers,” inflicting additional pain on top of what the virus will have wrought.

[Abridged]

GOD SHUSH! THE QUEEN: ELIZABETH II MARKS 94TH BIRTHDAY WITHOUT FANFARE

THE BUZZ



Britain is marking Queen Elizabeth II's 94th birthday with silence yesterday, as the nation in lockdown amid the COVID-19 pandemic forgoes the usual gun salutes and ringing of bells.

With thousands dead amid the outbreak, the monarch decided that the celebratory display of military firepower would not be appropriate. Nor will there be a celebratory peal of bells at Westminster Abbey, as the church where the

queen was married and crowned is currently closed.

The royal family took to social media to share images of Elizabeth as she marks the occasion — but in keeping with social distancing rules, there will be no visits.

The queen will mark the day with her husband, the Duke of Edinburgh, 98, at Windsor Castle in Berkshire.

TRUMP SAYS HE WILL SUSPEND IMMIGRATION TO US OVER VIRUS CONCERNS

JOSH WINGROVE

PRESIDENT Donald Trump said he'll sign an executive order temporarily suspending immigration into the U.S. as the country tries to contain the spread of the coronavirus.

Trump made the announcement by tweet yesterday [Macau time], and did not offer specifics, such as the time frame or the scope of who would be affected. The White House did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

He tweeted that he made the decision, “in light of the attack from the Invisible Enemy, as well as the need to protect the jobs of our GREAT American Citizens.”

National Security Advisor Robert O'Brien, speaking to reporters at the White House on Tuesday morning, called the suspension “a temporary issue” and said he didn't know how long it would last.

“We'll have to wait and see. Look, we don't know what the time horizon is going to be for the fight against this virus,” O'Brien said. “No one likes it. The president didn't want to put travel restrictions in place, he didn't want to put immigration restrictions in place, but we have to because of this terrible virus that's been unleashed from foreign shores.”

It's the latest measure taken by Trump and his administration to restrict the U.S. border amid the pandemic. Trump has imposed broad travel restrictions on China, Europe, Canada and Mexico to curb the virus's spread, and the State Department last month temporarily suspended routine visa services at embassies and consulates.

The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services has also already suspended routine in-person services,



but is still offering some emergency services.

At the same time, the White House has ordered federal agencies to begin preparing to return workers to offices and begin to reopen parts of the country, despite a widespread shortage of testing and warnings of a second wave.

It's the latest measure taken by Trump and his administration to restrict the US border amid the pandemic

The president has often said the pandemic has strengthened his desire to further restrict access to the U.S., and even to manufacture certain products on home soil.

Cracking down on illegal immigration and a promise to erect a wall at the Mexican border formed the centerpiece of Trump's election campaign in 2016.

His Gallup approval rating slipped six points last week as scrutiny of his handling of the outbreak

has intensified, and the U.S. leads the world in total reported cases.

Congressman Joaquin Castro, a Texas Democrat and chairman of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, wrote on Twitter that the suspension was “not only an attempt to divert attention away from Trump's failure to stop the spread of the coronavirus and save lives, but an authoritarian-like move to take advantage of a crisis and advance his anti-immigrant agenda.”

Since becoming president, Trump has sought to curb immigration and migration widely — restricting travel from certain majority-Muslim nations, pushing to erect the wall, striking deals to almost immediately deport asylum seekers from certain countries and moving to slash the number of refugees that the U.S. accepts. He's also repeatedly criticized leaders of so-called sanctuary cities and mused about trying to end automatic citizenship for people born in the U.S.

His previous travel restrictions have been swiftly met with legal challenges.

BLOOMBERG



Japan Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said people haven't practiced social distancing as much as they should under the state of emergency he declared two weeks ago to fight the coronavirus. Abe has asked people reduce social interactions by as much as 80% to slow infections to manageable levels, but surveys show people are moving around too much, especially at train stations and in downtown areas where restaurants and grocery stores are still operating.

WHO has warned that the lifting of lockdowns and other measures needs to be done gradually or there will likely be a resurgence of virus cases. The WHO regional director for the Western Pacific, Takeshi Kasai, said “we need to ready ourselves for a new way of living for the foreseeable future.” He said governments must remain vigilant, and the lifting of lockdowns and other social distancing measures must strike the right balance between keeping people healthy and allowing economies to function.



Australia's prime minister has backed his foreign minister's call for an independent inquiry into the origins of the coronavirus. China's foreign ministry has already rejected the call for an independent review into the origins of the virus including China's handling of the initial outbreak. But Prime Minister Scott Morrison (pictured) said yesterday that his minister's proposal had his “very, very strong support.”

Australia Virgin Australia, the nation's second-largest airline, announced it had entered voluntary administration, seeking bankruptcy protection after a debt crisis worsened by the coronavirus shutdown pushed it into insolvency. Virgin said it had appointed a team of Deloitte administrators to “recapitalize the business and help ensure it emerges in a stronger financial position on the other side of the COVID-19 crisis.”