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MACAU HAS AGAIN SEEN A RISE IN ITS POPULATION DENSITY EVEN AS THE TERRITORY MANAGED BY THE SAR CONTINUED TO GROW IN 2019 P2

MAGNITUDE 2.2 EARTHQUAKE FELT YESTERDAY IN SECOND TREMOR THIS YEAR P5

THE PUBLIC WILL STILL BE ASKED TO WEAR FACE MASKS WHEN GOING OUT EVEN IF THE GUARANTEED SUPPLY SCHEME ENDS SOON P4

AP PHOTO



North Korea is saying nothing so far about outside media reports that leader Kim Jong Un may be unwell and there's renewed worry about who's next in line to run a nuclear-armed country that's been ruled by the same family for seven decades. Questions about Kim's health flared after he skipped an April 15 commemoration of the 108th birthday of his grandfather, North Korea founder Kim Il Sung.

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AP PHOTO



Iran's Revolutionary Guard said it put the Islamic Republic's first military satellite into orbit, dramatically unveiling what experts described as a secret space program with a surprise launch yesterday that came amid wider tensions with the United States. There was no immediate independent confirmation of the launch of the satellite, which the Guard called "Noor," or light.

Indian government forces killed four rebels in a gunbattle in disputed Kashmir during a stringent lockdown to combat the coronavirus, the Indian army said yesterday. The fighting broke out in a village in southern Shopian district as counterinsurgency police and soldiers raided a house on a tip that militants were hiding there.

India said yesterday that it plans to manufacture thousands of wristbands that will monitor the locations and temperatures of coronavirus patients and help perform contact tracing. The wristband project aims to track quarantined patients and aid health workers and those delivering essential services.

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HO IAT SENG RETHINKING THE UNIVERSITY MODEL

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AP PHOTO



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LIFE RETURNS TO THE YANGTZE AS WUHAN NORMALIZES

P7 CHINA



YOUNG COUPLE FACES CRIMINAL CHARGES DUE TO FRAUD CASE

A young Macau couple is facing criminal charges for an alleged scam concerning the delivery of department store vouchers. The main suspect in this case is the husband, aged 34, who is suspected of having deceived at least seven victims into "investing" in department store cash vouchers. According to the first victim, the suspect sold him cash vouchers for a department store in Macau. Initially, the deals were all honest. However, the suspect subsequently persuaded the first victim to invest six million patacas to buy the vouchers for an even lower price and with a 3% interest rate. The money was later all spent on the suspect's investment in Cambodia. The Judiciary Police later identified evidence that suggested the suspect's wife was also involved.

GROUP TAKES ADVANTAGE OF HEALTHCARE VOUCHER GREY AREA

A group of 12 Macau local residents is suspected of fraud involving the collection of thousands of identification cards to dishonestly cash out healthcare vouchers. The group has three masterminds, including a doctor, an owner of a Chinese medicine pharmacy, and an owner of a food products shop. Last year, the group cooperated to collect local residents' identification cards in exchange for sums equivalent to 30% to 40% of government's healthcare voucher. At one point, the doctor's clinic used 27 healthcare vouchers within one hour, amounting to an appointment time of less than three minutes per appointment. This situation triggered the Health Bureau's suspicion. Since last May, the shop has collected over 11,000 identification cards, cashing out nine million patacas in total.

MAN NEARLY FALLS TO SEX SCAM SECOND TIME

A young local man has almost fallen victim, for the second time, to the same type of sexual service scam. The man, unemployed and aged in his 30s, came in contact with an unknown woman online. The two started talking online on April 5. On April 17, at 8 p.m., the man engaged in a video chat with the woman. During the talk, she claimed she could provide him paid sexual services for 800 patacas. The two reached an agreement for a deal to take place at noon on April 18. On the scheduled day, the man arrived at Estrada do Repouso as agreed, to meet up with the woman. He had given her his personal phone number. However, the woman contacted him via phone, asking him to buy 3,000 game points (equivalent to 800 patacas) from a convenience store nearby. Still haunted by his previous experience with a similar crime involving sexual services and game points, the man called off the deal. In response, the woman threatened to have him crippled and killed. Horrified by the threats, the man reported the case to the police authority. Previously, in July 2016, the man fell victim to a similar case, losing 12,650 patacas.

MACAU SEES RISE IN POPULATION DENSITY IN 2019

THE population density of Macau, one of the most densely populated places in the world, has risen to 20,400 people per square kilometer of land, according to the government's Statistics and Census Service (DSEC). That marks an increase of 400 more than in 2018, the data released yesterday shows.

Macau's population rose to 679,600 people last year, equating to an increase of 12,200 from 2018.

Meanwhile, Macau's total land area was 32.9 square kilometers in 2019. The growth of the city's land area did not catch up with that of the population, even as city's three principal areas – Macau, Taipa and Coloane – all recorded increases, although at varying rates.

According to 2019 data compiled by the United Nations, the Macau SAR is the world's second-most densely populated jurisdiction after Monaco. Singapore is the third-most densely populated place, while Hong Kong is fourth.

A report by the World Economic Forum noted that densely populated areas "present problems for governments and policymakers, as they look to provide adequate infras-



DANIEL BEITLER

structure, including sanitation, transportation and housing."

However, it also noted several advantages to crowded cities. The report cited studies which show that residents of highly populated cities tend to be healthier and happier.

Also disclosed in the DSEC data release yesterday, the average residential area per person in Macau remained stable throughout 2019, at 221 square feet or about 20.5 square meters per person.

With regards to other population metrics for the year of 2019, the tendency for females to outnumber males in the city

persisted, having not changed for many years. However, in contrast to the gender distribution of the overall population, among all newborns, there were 106.5 male babies to every 100 female babies born.

Slightly more than one-tenth of the city's population was aged 65 or above. A similar portion of the population was aged 14 or under. The middle-range age group amounted to three quarters of the total population.

In 2019, 8.9 babies were born out of every 1,000 people, virtually unchanged from 2018. Meanwhile, 3.4 deaths

were recorded out of every 1,000 people, marking an increase of about 0.03 percentage points.

The life expectancy for the period covering the past three years was 83.8 years overall. Women in Macau tended to live longer than men, as life expectancy for males was 80.8 years and 86.7 for females.

Tumors were the most common cause of death in Macau, with circulatory system diseases – closely connected to cardiovascular diseases – following. The two causes of death are responsible for nearly 63% of local deaths. **AL**

Lawmaker concerned about employees of offshore organizations

LAWMAKER Lei Chan U has asked the local government for an update on the operation of offshore organizations in Macau, more specifically on the future of the employees working for these organizations.

Law no. 15/2018 "Repeal of the legal regime of the offshore services" was published in the Official Gazette on December 27, 2018. The law terminates the application of offshore licences and introduces a number of facilitations, which mainly include the continued entitlement of

existing offshore institutions to the income tax exemption until December 31, 2020, with the exception of any profits arising from intellectual property, which are governed by specific regulations.

The law also encourages offshore institutions to continue their development in Macau by expanding or amending their businesses or changing their company names after their offshore licences expire.

The law concerns a total of 355 offshore service organizations in Macau and affects

1,700 workers.

As of May 10, 2019, 43 of these organizations had elected to stay in Macau with amended businesses, 20 decided to end their businesses in Macau, and the rest had not made a decision.

Lei pointed out that the operation amendment related to these organizations raises concerns for the affected employees amid the Covid-19 outbreak. He wants the local government to explain these organizations' current operations, and then asked if a large-scale layoff

will happen within these entities.

The Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute and the Labour Affairs Bureau are allegedly conducting quarterly surveys of these offshore organizations.

The local government amended the city's offshore service law in response to the appeal of international organizations seeking to eliminate cross-border tax evasion and profit shifting, while proactively improving transparency in taxation across jurisdictions. **JZ**

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HIGHER EDUCATION

Ho Iat Seng aims to turn universities into businesses

RENATO MARQUES

THE Macau government aims to turn higher education into a new industry that can contribute to the local economy. The information was revealed in a reply from Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng at the Legislative Assembly on Tuesday during a question and answer session with the legislators about the Policy Address.

Ho said that contrary to the trend in previous years, higher education has to be seen as a self-sustaining business and cannot continue to exist at the expense of the government.

According to the Chief Executive, "each student [at local institutions] costs around 250,000 patacas per year and we need to

support over 100,000 of those."

The situation is aggravated by the fact that many of these students are not local residents and their academic qualifications and training will never be put to the service of Macau society.

"We cannot continue to spend so many resources on students [mostly] from the mainland who afterward will not even stay in Macau and work in Macau," the Chief Executive said, adding, that due to the hefty support from the government, local institutions are currently charging the students tuition fees "that are lower than some kindergartens in China."

For Ho, it is time for the institutions to change their mentality and become a high-quality education system desired by those

"We cannot continue to spend so many resources on students from the mainland who afterward will not even stay in Macau."

HO IAT SENG

aiming to receive a high-quality education and who are able to pay for it.

"There are many people interested in coming to Macau to study. We need to balance this matter. We need to develop this into an industry," he said, giving the example of the U.K., which has several highly reputable universities such as Cambridge and

Oxford despite not being a very large country, according to Ho.

The Chief Executive said that the government would carefully consider the studies and experiences offered by the U.K. to develop new policies regarding higher education.

One of the measures from the new government for this year is the merging of the Education

and Youth Affairs Bureau and the Higher Education Bureau; the latter created just one year ago to replace the former Tertiary Education Services Office.

Questioned on that topic by lawmakers, the Chief Executive noted that Macau currently has only ten higher education institutions with a relatively small number of students, which is even lower than the number of local students who are studying abroad. The Chief Executive stated that he considered that having a standalone entity to manage this small matter was a "waste of resources."

At the same time, he expressed his belief that with the merging of the two education bureaus into one, there will be a greater interconnection of ideas, measures, and policies that span throughout all education sectors, hinting that this might also contribute to creating conditions for more local students to choose local institutions over those abroad.

"We need to take into account that even if the number of students is low, the number of teachers [and other staff] is high. We need to find a balance and to take local education to a higher level," said Ho.

On the sidelines of the event, lawmaker José Pereira Coutinho told the media that in his opinion, the reason many choose to study abroad is the lack of quality of local universities and also the lack of options in terms of career paths offered by their tuition.

"If you want to have a more technical career you need to study abroad as local universities are all oriented to the same types of courses," he said.

Coutinho suggested the government prioritize these technical subjects at local institutions to first give Macau students the option of studying locally, instead of working to attract wealthy students from the mainland.

POLICY ADDRESS

CE PREFERS TO STUDY UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE AT A BETTER TIME

RENATO MARQUES

ONE of the topics that lawmaker Sulu Sou considers missing from Ho Iat Seng's Policy Address for 2020 is political reform.

Questioning the Chief Executive (CE) at the Legislative Assembly question and answer session on Tuesday, Sou heard that Ho Iat Seng is supportive of the idea of implementing a system that includes universal suffrage for the CE position but stated that this is not the best time to address such a matter.

"I did not introduce this matter in the Policy Address Report for 2020 because [we] just started this mandate and we do not yet have enough of a foundation to start this discussion," answered Ho.

"I was never against the idea of universal suffrage and I agree that people have the right to vote but I do not think this matter is a priority for the Policy Address for this year."

Furthermore, the CE explained that although he thinks that the democratiza-

tion of the electoral system is the right path to follow, it is not a priority at the moment as Macau is facing several important challenges due to the current economic conditions resulting from the Covid-19 outbreak.

"I agree that this is the direction we are heading towards but we need to have the right timing. For the time being, the economic recovery is more important," Ho said. "I am not saying that you are not right, but we need to do something very different first."

POLICY ADDRESS

NO PLAN YET FOR 85 SQUARE KILOMETERS OF NEW WATERS

MACAU Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng has said that his administration still does not have a plan to define the next steps in the use of 85 square kilometers of maritime jurisdiction placed under the SAR's management by China's State Council in December 2015.

According to a statement issued yesterday by the government, Ho said that Macau will continue to study how to best utilize the maritime area.

This will be the principal role of the Coordinating Commission for the Management and Development of Maritime Jurisdiction Areas, according to the government.

In March 2017, the government of Chui Sai On announced the creation of the aforementioned commission to study the possible economic uses of the maritime area and to issue guidelines for its future use.

Initial proposals to use some of the maritime

area for further land reclamation were rejected by Macau government officials, who found little of the 85 square kilometers suitable for this purpose.

Ho hinted during his Policy Address this week that Macau has reached the limits of what can be achieved with land reclamation. Describing the reclamation as "too slow," the Chief Executive believes a better land solution can be arranged with nearby Hengqin. **DB**



PUBLIC STILL ASKED TO WEAR MASKS, EVEN IF SUPPLY SCHEME ENDS

ANTHONY LAM

AFTER hinting that the centralized mask supply scheme might come to an end in the future, Lo Iek Long, medical director of the Conde São Januário Hospital, clarified that the scheme's termination does not imply that wearing masks will no longer be necessary.

The doctor made the clarification at the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Center's

daily press conference yesterday, where he was questioned about the end of the scheme.

He stressed that residents should not misinterpret the government's future termination of the scheme, if it occurs, and think that mask wearing is no longer necessary from then on.

He said the necessity of wearing masks was "not about the mask scheme," but "about the condition of the pandemic."

He added that it is the right

time to consider the discontinuation of the scheme. The scheme, he said, was a successful project that has been favored by residents. However, following the resumption of work in many cities on the mainland, the doctor thinks masks have now become more accessible.

Indeed, he has checked prices himself and found many places were selling boxes of 50 masks at 150 patacas. He thinks that price point is considered

affordable in Macau.

"Even if price speculation happens, I believe local people, including the government, will not hesitate to report it," the doctor stated with confidence.

Furthermore, Lo disclosed that the government is working with mainland authorities on measures that can facilitate cross-border travels. The mechanism will likely be the "Health Code Scheme," already in effect on the other side of the border.

Leong Iek Hou, coordinator at the local Center for Disease Control and Prevention, added that the Macau version of the Health Code Scheme will very likely be founded on the existing electronic health declaration.

Both officials said a formal announcement will be made once the information is ready.

Separately - and also announced during yesterday's press conference - recovered patients outside of Macau have shown the presence of antibodies following an infection with Covid-19. Whether this antibody is effective in blocking further infection is, however, unknown, Lo said. The local health authority has not monitored local recovered Covid-19 patients with regards to the existence of antibodies.

As of yesterday, the city has been free of new Covid-19 cases for a total of two weeks. Excluding cases infected by an imported case, known in the mainland as "related imported cases", the city has been clear of new infections for 25 days.

Meanwhile, two more patients have recovered from the disease and have been discharged from the hospital. They were both transferred to the Public Health Clinical Center for recovery quarantine.

They are a 37-year-old Filipina non-resident worker and a 44-year-old male local. The former has stayed in the hospital for 28 days. Her hospitalization and treatment amounted to a 15,000-pataca bill.

The latter, on the other hand, has been hospitalized for 25 days. The cost of his therapy will be borne by the government, according to legal stipulations on the treatment of contagious diseases.

Propaganda piece features Macau woman and her good mainland life

STAFF REPORTER

THE People's Daily has published a feature story about a young woman born in Macau who has been fighting the coronavirus at its source in Wuhan. The story seeks to present the ideal that Macau residents are delighted to be contributing to healthcare work in the motherland.

Sou is a Macau resident who graduated from Hou Kong School in 2006. In that same year, she pursued a degree in medicine at Wuhan University, beginning her life in mainland China. After completing her studies, she commenced her employment at the

Renmin Hospital of Wuhan University in the Department of Anesthesiology.

The People's Daily report presented the story surrounding Sou's engagement on the frontline of Wuhan's Covid-19 battle, emphasising the sentiments of "Loving the Country and Loving Macau" from a Macau resident.

According to the report, Sou and her mainland husband, surnamed Lei, who is her co-worker, left Wuhan on January 22 in order to spend the Lunar New Year in Macau.

However, the next day, Wuhan announced the lockdown. In light of the situation, Sou's husband

returned to Wuhan by himself. On March 16, Sou joined her husband with her two young children. The first day after her return from Macau, Sou went back to work.

The feature story then detailed how Sou prepared herself for a Covid-19 patient at 2 a.m. in the morning.

Sou "didn't show a hint of hesitation," immediately assisting the patient with a ventilator, according to the propaganda report. "Soon, the patient's vital signs basically returned to stable levels," the report says.

The article also notes several other idiosyncrasies of the Macau-born doctor, in-

cluding that she has a habit of taking several pieces of chocolate to work.

She also has no fear the moment she puts her doctor's coat on, and does everything out of instinct that she developed during her medical studies.

When mainland news outlets interview people from the two SARs, the reports generally reach the conclusion that Macau and Hong Kong residents live well in the mainland China and that they also find mainland China better than the two SARs.

"Why don't you return to Macau to be a doctor? Macau's income should be at least several times hi-

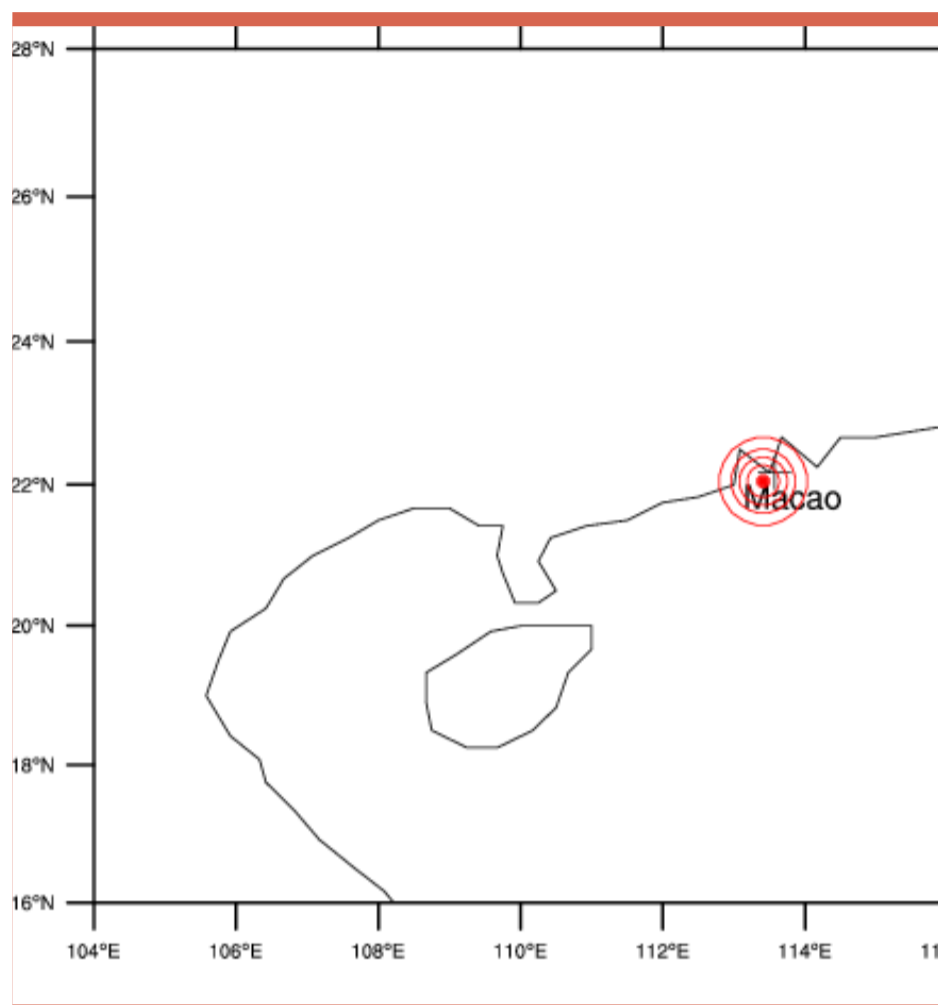


gher than that of Wuhan? It's a question Sou has been asked many times," reads the report.

"If I only think of money, I will not be a doctor. I stayed in Wuhan mainly for advancing my medicine knowledge. I think, as a doctor, that it is fairly important to get contact with medical cases. Macau has a small population and a small number of medical cases, which is not helpful

for doctors who wish to improve," Sou replies, according to the report.

Sou said that her family did not enthusiastically endorse her choice to study at Wuhan University out of fear that she would stay in mainland China once she had her own family and career over there. "Now, I want to tell them. There is nothing to worry about. I am very well in mainland China and in Wuhan," says Sou.



Minor earthquake felt in Macau yesterday morning

A magnitude 2.2 earthquake was detected yesterday at 11:35 a.m., according to information released by the Meteorological and Geophysical Bureau (SMG).

The epicenter was located approximately 21 kilometers southwest of Macau.

Some social media users confirmed that they had felt the tremor, though most had attributed the noise or movement to something other than seismic activity.

"I thought I just felt dizzy while waiting for the bus but apparently it was the earthquake," said one netizen.

"Was that an earthquake?" wrote another. "I felt it earlier, [but] I thought this building was the only thing that moved."

A third said they thought it was a thunderstorm.

"I think this is the second or third time that I've felt an earthquake here in Macau. Seems like it's occurring more often," said a social me-

dia user.

As of 2 p.m. yesterday, the SMG had received more than 15 enquiries from citizens.

Meanwhile, the Hong Kong Observatory received reports of people in the neighboring SAR feeling the earth tremor, even though it only lasted a few seconds. The observatory said it recorded reports from 1,200 people detailing their personal accounts of the quake.

This is the second earthquake with magnitude 2.0 or above recorded within 100 kilometers of Macau this year.

The last one occurred at 6:55 a.m. on January 5 of this year, with magnitude 3.5, in the seas under the administration of the Xiangzhou District in Zhuhai. The authorities in Guangdong Province recorded two aftershocks, with the most severe reaching magnitude 2.1.

Although severe earthquakes are rarely seen in Guangdong Province, minor ones are quite common.

Following previous minor earthquakes,

mainland experts assured the reliability of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge, which has reportedly been designed to withstand earthquakes of up to an intensity of magnitude 8.0.

In October last year, an earthquake of magnitude 5.2 in Yulin, Guangxi at 10:55pm was felt in the Macau SAR, five minutes after it occurred. The epicenter was registered as being 315 kilometers northwest of Macau.

Many areas of Macau and Taipa were affected, but the tremor lasted only around six seconds. There were no reports of any injuries or damage.

Meanwhile, a 6.4-magnitude earthquake struck off the east coast of Japan yesterday.

The epicenter of the earthquake was 41.7 kilometers beneath the Pacific seabed, less than 50 kilometers off the coast of Miyagi prefecture, the U.S. Geological Survey noted on its website, rating the risk of casualties and damage as low.

No tsunami warning was issued. LV

Hong Kong dollar reaches lower limit for first time since 2016

HONG Kong's currency strengthened to the limit of its trading band for the first time since 2016, increasing the likelihood of intervention by the city's de facto central bank.

To defend the peg, which allows the city's currency to move in a narrow range of 7.75 to 7.85 against the greenback, the Hong Kong Monetary Authority has sold the equivalent of \$760 million of its currency so far this week. That's the first case of intervention on the strong side of the band since 2015.

The Hong Kong dollar is pegged to the U.S. dollar in a band that ranges between 7.75 and 7.85 to the U.S. dollar. In turn, the Macau pataca is fixed to the Hong Kong dollar at an exchange rate of 1.03. As the Hong Kong dollar is pegged to the greenback, both special administrative regions essentially import U.S. monetary policy, even if local rates don't always track those across the Pacific.

Appreciation in the city's currency is a reflection of a



widening gap between local borrowing costs and those in the U.S., rather than investor confidence in Hong Kong's outlook. The interest rate spread makes the local currency more appealing to hold versus the greenback, and is the reverse of the situation that prevailed in recent years.

"We may see the currency pair frequently touching 7.75 in the coming sessions to trigger intervention," said Carie Li, an economist at OCBC Wing Hang Bank Ltd. Local interest rates will fall, she added, predicting the one-month tenor will likely slide toward 1% after the end of April from the current 1.59%.

The currency will likely stay close to 7.75 throughout the second quarter, said Stephen Chiu, a foreign-exchange and rates strategist at Bloomberg Intelligence.

Hong Kong has suffered a double blow of economic disruptions from widespread anti-government protests last year and the coronavirus pandemic in 2020. Fitch Ratings on Monday downgraded Hong Kong's long-term, foreign currency debt to AA- from AA, with a stable outlook. The ratings agency said the city's real gross domestic product is expected to fall by 5% this year after a 1.2% decline in 2019. DB/BLOOMBERG

AD

DISEASE CONTROL GUIDE

POINTS TO NOTE when going to the doctor

The epidemic is still serious, Residents should stay vigilant and go to the doctor immediately if symptoms appear

Take precaution when going to the doctor

If acute respiratory symptoms such as fever or cough appear, please wear a face mask and call for an ambulance (or self-drive) to the Conde S. Januario Hospital or Kiang Wu Hospital for further check-up

Please don't go to private medical clinics or Health Centres for check-up if symptoms appear

Please avoid public transport

Please provide the doctor with the details of your recent movements, travel history and contact history

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HONG KONG

CARRIE LAM REPLACES FIVE MINISTERS IN CABINET RESHUFFLE

NATALIE LUNG

HONG Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam replaced five senior officials, including the minister overseeing ties with Beijing, in the biggest cabinet reshuffle since hundreds of thousands of demonstrators took to the streets demanding her resignation.

Lam named Immigration Director Erick Tsang to replace Patrick Nip as Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs and appointed Nip to lead the Civil Service Bureau - two agencies at the center of Beijing's demands for greater political loyalty from the former British colony. The heads of the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau, the Innovation and Technology Bureau and Home Affairs Bureau were also replaced.

Lam told a news conference to discuss the moves Wednesday that she hoped the changes would help lay the ground for the financial center's recovery from a year of protest and pandemic. She left unchanged more high-profile positions such as chief secretary and the finance and justice ministers.

"This reshuffle is aimed at taking us forward," Lam said. The appointments were announced earlier by China's official Xinhua News Agency, which said that the State Council had approved the nominations, as required for all top positions in Hong Kong.

The move comes as the city tackles a second wave of coronavirus cases while trying to soften the pandemic's blow to the economy. Hong Kong has also been battered into recession by the U.S.-China trade war and months of histori-

cally large and often violent protests that erupted in opposition to Lam's effort to allow the transfer of criminal suspects to the mainland.

While Lam has said her government deserves the blame for the "entire unrest," Chinese President Xi Jinping has continued to back her and she has refused calls to resign. Lam's approval has risen from historic lows in part due to her early success in managing the coronavirus outbreak, with 18% supporting her in a Hong Kong Public Opinion Research Institute survey released Tuesday, compared with 9.1% in February.

The reshuffle follows Xi's own shakeup of the agencies who oversee Hong Kong, which was guaranteed a "high degree of autonomy" after its return to Chinese rule in 1997. Luo Huining, a cadre known for executing Xi's

anti-corruption campaign, was made head of the Liaison Office in Hong Kong, while Xia Baolong was named director of the overarching Hong Kong & Macau Affairs Office.

The appointments will likely do little to assuage public opposition. Police over the weekend arrested more than a dozen prominent pro-democracy activists, while Beijing's agencies in Hong Kong are waging a war of words against the city's opposition

lawmakers over filibustering in the Legislative Council.

Nip, the incoming civil services chief, apologized earlier this week for causing "confusion" and "misunderstanding" with a series of contradictory news releases from the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau attempting to explain a claim by China's Liaison Office that it has the authority to supervise Hong Kong's local affairs. His replacement, Tsang, meanwhile, received fresh scrutiny for giving a recent interview with a portrait of Xi over his shoulder.

Under Tsang's watch, the immigration department in 2018 denied a visa renewal for Financial Times journalist Victor Mallet after he hosted an event at the Foreign Correspondents' Club featuring the founder of a banned pro-independence party. More recently, Hong Kong barred entry by Human Rights Watch Executive Director Kenneth Roth weeks after the Chinese Foreign Ministry threatened unspecified sanctions against the group.

The Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau is responsible for overseeing a legislative election in September that could give the pro-democracy opposition a stronger platform to block initiatives backed by Beijing. The Communist Party's Central Committee last year also signaled a greater focus on Hong Kong's civil service, urging more measures to teach "patriotism" to public officials.

Lam said Wednesday that the reshuffle was "completely and entirely unrelated" to recent events. She deflected a question about the Xi portrait, saying Tsang was chosen because of his capabilities. **BLOOMBERG**

HONG KONG'S TOP MINISTERS

Erick Tsang	Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Secretary
Patrick Nip	Civil Services Secretary
Christopher Hui	Financial Services Secretary
Alfred Sit	Innovation and Technology Secretary
Caspar Tsui	Home Affairs Secretary

China ponders late May date for NPC after virus forced delay

CHINA is considering holding its highest-profile annual political meeting in late May, according to people familiar with the matter, after it was postponed for the first time in decades amid the coronavirus pandemic.

The gathering of China's legislature, the National People's Congress, usually runs for about two weeks in Beijing and is attended by President Xi Jinping and other top leaders. At least one set of dates being considered is May 23-30, ac-

ording to the people, who asked not to be identified. That would be shorter than normal.

The Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, an advisory body whose annual meeting is held in conjunction with the NPC, will gather from May 21 to May 27, two Hong Kong broadcasters reported over the weekend, citing unnamed sources. The NPC Standing Committee, which is set to meet in Beijing April 26-29, will decide the final date to con-

vene the legislature, they added.

The spokesperson's office of the NPC Standing Committee didn't immediately respond to faxed questions.

China uses the meeting to unveil its annual economic targets, defense spending projections and other key policy decisions or changes. This year's economic target announcement will be closely watched after the pandemic pushed China's economy into its first contraction in dec-

ades in the first quarter, with GDP shrinking 6.8% from a year ago. The economy is expected to expand 3% in 2020, according to a Bloomberg survey of economists.

China's top leaders softened their tone on the importance of reaching specific growth targets this year during the latest Politburo meeting on April 17, saying the nation is facing "unprecedented" economic difficulty and signaling that more stimulus was in the works. A higher GDP target

would suggest more stimulus measures to come, while a lower target would suggest authorities are going to be conservative about stimulus.

The gathering holds greater symbolic importance this year in showing that China is getting back to normal following the outbreak, even as much of the U.S. and Europe remains on lockdown. The country has 82,788 confirmed coronavirus cases, as global infections top 2.5 million.

Some 3,000 members of the NPC had been expected to convene in early March for the meetings. They were delayed in February by the Standing Committee as the government fought to contain the virus, which emerged in Hubei province late last year.

This year, the NPC is also expected to deliberate on a draft Civil Code, consisting of sections on property, contracts, personality rights, marriage and family, inheritance and torts. **BLOOMBERG**

SAM McNEIL, WUHAN

BATHED in golden late-afternoon light, Chen Enting snapped a photo of his ticket to commemorate his first ferry ride across the Yangtze River after a 76-day quarantine ended in the Chinese city where the coronavirus pandemic began.

The reopening of ferry services on the Yangtze, the heart of life in Wuhan for two millennia, was an important symbolic step to get business and daily life in this city of 11 million people back to normal.

Wearing goggles, gloves, a homemade mask and a black trench coat, Chen was checked by security guards in protective suits and bought a 1.5-yuan (20-cent) ferry ticket. He boarded with a dozen other passengers, some pushing electric scooters, and found a bench at the front beside a red flag with a yellow sickle. He sprayed the seat with disinfectant before sitting.

"The ferry on the Yangtze River is a symbol of Wuhan's people," said Chen, a 34-year-old cost engineer and Chinese Communist Party member.

"The choppy river symbolizes the force of life," he said, as the sun set behind the Tortoise Mountain TV Tower. "Although Wuhan had such an ordeal, it will flow away just like the river and receive exuberant vitality."

Wuhan was one of China's most important centers under inward-looking dynasties that had little interest in foreign trade and carried out commerce and politics over the country's vast river networks.

The city was eclipsed by the explosive rise of Shanghai, Hong Kong and other coastal cities after the ruling Communist Party set off a trade boom by launching market-style economic reforms in 1979.

Today, Wuhan is regaining its status as an economic dynamo as Chinese leaders shift emphasis from exports to developing more sustainable growth based on domestic consumer spending. The city government says more than 300 of the world's 500 biggest companies, including Microsoft Corp. and Honda Motor Co., have operations in

AP PHOTO

Wuhan embraces Yangtze River as virus-hit city reopens



Wuhan to get access to central China's populous market.

The metropolis was formed from three ancient cities — Wuchang, Hankou and Hanyang — at the meeting of the Yangtze and Han rivers that grew together.

"If you are in Wuchang, you can go anywhere under heaven," said Ji Li, a University of Hong Kong historian, quoting a traditional saying.

The emperor Kublai Khan visited in the 13th century when China was part of his Mongol empire and Shanghai was a fishing village of a few thousand people.

In the mid-19th century, Wuhan became, along with Shanghai, Tianjin and Qingdao, one of a series of "treaty ports" where China's Manchu rulers were forced to give Western powers trading privileges and exempt their people from local laws.

A rebellion began on Oct. 11, 1911, in Wuhan that spread across the country and led to the breakup of the Manchu empire and the founding of President Sun Yat-sen's Republic of China.

The Yangtze's water is "very sweet," communist leader Mao Zedong said after he swallowed a mouthful while swimming in

the 1950s, according to a report from the time by The Associated Press.

Meandering 6,300 kilometers from Tibet's Tanggula Mountains to the East China Sea, the Yangtze is the longest river in Asia and the world's third-longest.

It and the Yellow River in the north are the "mother rivers of the nation," much like America's Missouri and Mississippi or Eastern Europe's Danube. It is also the site of the Three Gorges Dam, the world's biggest hydroelectric project.

The Yangtze stars in countless poems, songs and history-making events, including the third century "Battle of Red Cliffs," which was fought by one of China's wiliest strategists, Zhuge Liang. The story, involving armored battleships, has been turned into a traditional opera and a 2008 blockbuster movie directed by John Woo.

Today, Wuhan produces agricultural chemicals, 6% of China's cars, and components for smartphones, industrial machinery and optical devices for markets in Europe and North America. Skyscrapers loom above parks and ancient temples.

Ships carry goods 700 kilometers (450 miles) downriver

to Shanghai by way of Nanjing, another ancient inland city.

Shipping, however, plunged after the coronavirus outbreak started in Wuhan late last year and led to a strict lockdown of the city. Traffic near Wuhan fell by as much as 70%, according to HawkEye 360, a company in Virginia that follows radio communications and ships' satellite-linked tracking beacons.

Traffic is back to less than half its pre-outbreak level, the company says.

Mao's face, etched in a giant gold coin, perches atop a stone obelisk in the Bund, the riverfront former center of Western business activity and now a tourist spot. On it is etched a poem by Mao calling for a bridge to be built across the river.

That bridge was finished in 1957, cementing Wuhan's renaissance as a transportation hub by connecting rail networks in northern and southern China.

That connection is one reason the coronavirus spread so fast.

Wuhan's Huanan Seafood Market, where scientists suspect the virus might have jumped from a bat to humans, is next door to the Hankou Train Station.

Authorities have since de-

contaminated the station, and on April 11, high-speed trains began leaving Wuhan for Beijing again. The ferry system had opened a few days before.

Chen Xianming, a 70-year-old veteran of 26 years in appliance sales, knew that would save him money. Paying for taxis across the bridge had cut into profits.

"We should be thrifty," Chen said as he secured boxes on a motorized tricycle he uses to make deliveries.

Most of Wuhan is thinking the same way and tightening its belt after factories, restaurants, shopping malls, cinemas and almost every other business except supermarkets were shut for 2 1/2 months. Jittery consumers aren't spending much. Manufacturing has yet to get back to normal levels.

But the public has returned to the banks of the Yangtze, known in Mandarin as Chang Jiang, or Great River.

Couples wearing masks walk hand-in-hand. Fishermen flick long rods out across the babbling waters. Joggers run past picnickers. People fly kites shaped like butterflies, birds, lanterns and fighter jets. A ship's horn blares.

"Wuhan reopens," Chen said. "This is a day of remembrance." AP

AP PHOTO



Trump says 'we don't know' how Kim Jong Un is doing

AP PHOTO



Kim Jong Un and Donald Trump inside the demilitarized zone in June 2019

MARIO PARKER
& JIHYE LEE

U.S. President Donald Trump said he doesn't know about Kim Jong Un's health after American and South Korean officials gave differing accounts on the North Korean leader's condition after he was conspicuously absent from a major celebration.

"I wish him well, we've had a good relationship," Trump said Tuesday in response to a question about Kim at a White House. The U.S. president said "we don't know" if the reports about Kim's health deteriorating are true, adding that he might reach out to check on him.

U.S. officials said Monday they were told Kim was in critical condition after undergoing cardiovascular surgery last week and they were unsure of his current health. Meanwhile, South Korean President Moon Jae-in's office said that Kim was conducting "normal activities" in a rural part of the country assisted by close aides and no special movements were detected.

Kim continued to be absent from North Korean state media yesterday. Nei-

ther the state broadcaster nor the official Korean Central News Agency mentioned new public appearances by the leader, although they continued to publicize his messages to dignitaries around the world.

"I just hope he is doing fine," Trump said. "I had a very good relationship with Kim Jong Un and that is to the benefit of the country. That is not a bad thing, that's a good thing, and I would like to see him be well. We will see how he does. Again, I don't know that the reports are true."

Trump and Kim have gone from trading insults in 2017, when North Korea was testing nuclear weapons and missiles that could deliver them to the U.S., to striking up what Pyongyang officials describe as "mysteriously wonderful chemistry" after meeting three times since a summit in June 2018. Despite the unprecedented talks and the bonhomie between the two, there have been no indications that Kim has slowed down his production of weapons of mass destruction.

The health of Kim, overweight and a heavy smoker, is one of North Korea's most closely guarded

secrets, known by a handful of people in the inner circle of leadership. While North Korea had scaled down major events as it battles the coronavirus pandemic, speculation about Kim had been growing since his unprecedented absence from April 15 celebrations for the birthday of his grandfather and state founder Kim Il Sung, one of the biggest days on the country's calendar.

Even the most well-informed North Korea experts find it hard to tell what's happening in the secretive state. The Daily NK, a Seoul-based website that gathers information from informants inside the isolated nation, separately reported that Kim underwent a "cardiovascular surgical procedure" and was now mostly recovered.

North Korea's state media reported on April 11 that Kim attended a Politburo meeting of the ruling Workers' Party. The next day it said he inspected a military unit, but didn't reveal the date of that visit. There have been no state media reports since then on him at any event.

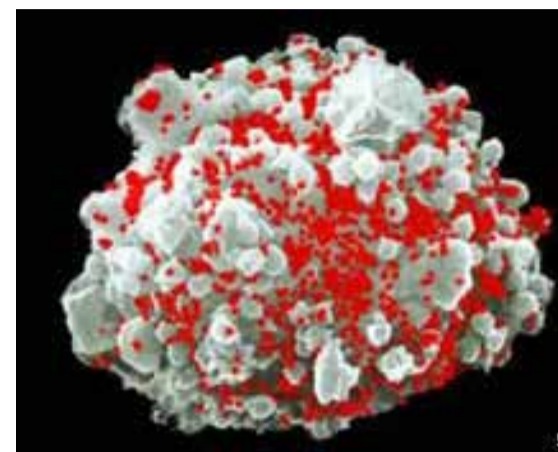
Any leadership crisis in North Korea could have ramifications for regio-

nal stability, as well as for talks with the U.S. over the country's nuclear arsenal. Kim, who took power in 2011 following his father's 17-year reign, developed the capability to deliver a nuclear warhead to any part of the U.S. before engaging in direct talks with Trump over his arsenal and sanctions imposed on the state.

While there's been little time for him to groom a successor, Kim raised the status of his younger sister Kim Yo Jong as a key player in the secretive state. She was thrust into the global spotlight when she served as envoy to the 2018 Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, South Korea, and became the first member of the immediate ruling family to visit Seoul.

"We can't completely rule out his sister yet, although it would be unprecedented for their system causing much confusion because she's a woman, but on the other hand, she's part of the Mt. Paektu lineage," said Duyeon Kim, a senior adviser for Northeast Asia and Nuclear Policy at the International Crisis Group, referring to the mountain seen as the symbol of Kim family rule. **BLOOMERG**

this day in history



1984 SCIENTIST FINDS AIDS VIRUS

The discovery of a virus which may cause Aids, the fatal disease sweeping through America, has been hailed as a "monumental breakthrough" in medical research.

The development was announced in Washington by US Health Secretary Margaret Heckler.

She said the virus was a variant of a known human cancer virus called HTLV-3. A blood test has also been developed, which, she said, would be available within six months, preventing the tragedy of transfusion patients contracting the disease through tainted blood products.

She also suggested that a vaccine to prevent Aids might be ready for testing in two years' time.

"Today's discovery represents the triumph of science over a dreaded disease," she said.

Aids, or Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, weakens the immune system, leaving its victims open to a series of wasting diseases. Those people who appear to be more at risk of contracting Aids include homosexuals, haemophiliacs, drug users and those who have received blood transfusions.

It has been causing widespread panic in the United States, where 4,000 people have been infected since the discovery of the disease in 1981. Almost half have died.

The findings in the United States are similar to the discovery in France last week of a virus called LAV, although French researchers stopped short of saying it was definitely the one which causes Aids.

Reaction to the news among victims was philosophical. Bob Scheckey has lived with the disease for two years - far longer than his doctors predicted. He welcomed the news from Washington, but said a possible vaccine was too far off to offer comfort.

"I am working with people with Aids on a daily basis," he said. "To hear that there is a possible vaccine that could come out in two or three years is no good news for these people. Most of the people we're working with now will be dead by that time."

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

The HTLV-3 virus was discovered to be the same as the LAV virus discovered in France. To avoid confusion, it was re-named HIV in 1987.

An estimated 24 million people, both homosexual and heterosexual, have died of Aids since the disease emerged in the United States. It has now reached pandemic proportions in some parts of southern Africa, where two million died in 2001 alone.

No successful vaccine has yet been developed, although billions of dollars have been spent trying. Only eight potential vaccines are currently being tested on humans, and just one, developed by US firm VaxGen, has reached end-stage trials.

The trials were held in North America, Europe and Thailand and involved thousands of volunteers at high risk from Aids.

But preliminary results announced in November 2003 from the AIDS-VAX trial in Thailand showed it does not work.

Nevertheless since the start of the HIV epidemic, a series of drugs have been developed which significantly prolong the lives of people who are HIV positive.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

Your curiosity might be getting the better of you right now. Your quest to know all the answers all the time has led you down a path that just might be a dead-end street. So, why ask why?



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

Someone is back on the scene, and they might have a hard time adjusting to the fact that you have much more influence than you did when they first worked with you.



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

Start exploring the places, people, and things that are foreign to you, from food to music to politics. What other countries have to offer will suddenly be fascinating to you.



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

It will make a bigger impact on their life than yours, and it will make you feel good to brighten someone's life that way. Random acts of kindness always feel good.



LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

If someone already knows what you're going to ask before you ask it, you should move on to a different person who isn't always your first stop when you're in need.



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

Your regular way of doing things might not change today, but it might feel different. Something has changed in you, and it's giving you a fresh perspective on your daily life.



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

They've been through this all before, and their experience has taught them lessons that they think you should learn - and they're right! Make sure you're all ears when this friend starts to get serious.



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

The way you interact with strangers could impact your day in a very big way. If you choose to ignore everyone you don't know, your day will be uneventful and typical.



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

The next time the urge to do something negative pops up as you go about your usual routine, take a detour. Changing your plans today will go a long way toward helping you resist any bad behavior tomorrow.



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

You truly value the people you have in your life right now, so set aside some time to get to know them better. Video chat with a new friend. Inserting yourself into someone else's life is easy right now...



PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Trying to gain insight from your dreams right now will only be a waste of your time. Instead, if you want to figure things out, look at your life realistically.

The Born Loser by Chip Sanson



SUDOKU

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

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

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

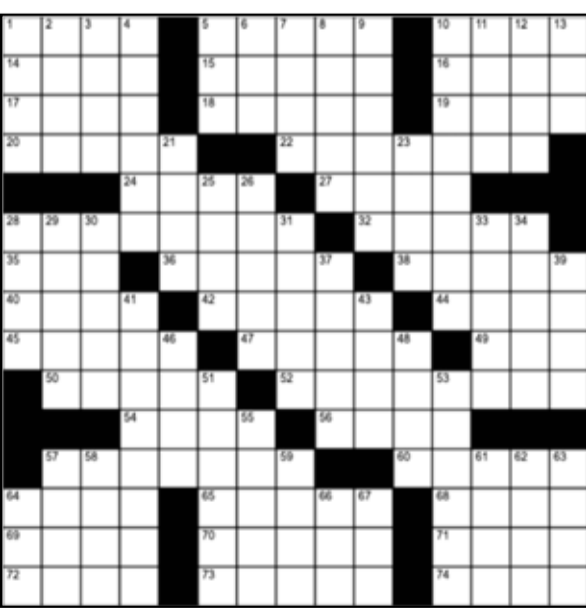
CROSSWORDS

ACROSS: 1- It's over your head; 5- To talk, usually in a pompous manner; 10- Convince; 14- "Puppy Love" singer; 15- More healthy; 16- Cravings; 17- Belgrade native; 18- Aquatic mammal; 19- Arrest; 20- Warning; 22- Hot; 24- Othello villain; 27- Quick cut; 28- Frozen dessert; 32- Delicious; 35- Boy; 36- Result; 38- Turkish money; 40- Mid-month time; 42- Bridal path; 44- Tender; 45- Knight wear; 47- Locations; 49- Switch positions; 50- Chair designer Charles; 52- Cave in; 54- Chow; 56- Russian no; 57- Remove obstruction from; 60- Apparel; 64- Ersatz butter; 65- Blathered; 68- Langston Hughes poem; 69- Like a noted Norwegian Blue parrot?; 70- Muse of poetry in Greek mythology; 71- Toronto paper; 72- Ethereal; 73- Profundity; 74- Held on to;

DOWN: 1- Tabula ___; 2- Like Nash's lama; 3- Gumbo thickener; 4- Cloth; 5- What have we here?; 6- Deserter; 7- Female choir voice; 8- Mall frequenters; 9- Wide of the mark; 10- Brief summary; 11- Well-being; 12- Indigo; 13- Fashion monogram; 21- Female horse; 23- Unit of currency in Iran and Yemen; 25- Actress Rowlands; 26- Watering hole; 28- Hip bones; 29- Training group; 30- Plant problem; 31- Melody; 33- Band; 34- Tall tales; 37- John of England; 39- Zaire's Mobutu ___ Seko; 41- Big shot; 43- Hard to hold; 46- Sincere; 48- Go downhill fast?; 51- Hoarded; 53- On the line; 55- Frighten; 57- Peter Fonda title role; 58- In the neighborhood; 59- Sack starter; 61- Kitchen addition; 62- Work up lather; 63- Kind; 64- Room within a harem; 66- Polo Grounds legend; 67- Yokohama drama;

Yesterday's solution

ARAB	ISAAC	AAHS
COLA	FELLA	NCAA
COLL	STOOD	OTTO
UTILE	ENDORSE	
ELLOT	EIRE	
FOOTSO	SIXER	
ION	SPORT	GIVEN
ROIL	SNARE	AIDE
ELCID	STAVE	CYD
AESOP	OPERATES	
TWIT	SLIP	
ILLNESS	EARLS	
ALAE	KARER	COOK
SIPS	CRANE	HONE
SAPS	ESSAY	EDGE



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



FOR SALE

Nova City 3 bedroom, Ready to move in!
HK\$11,400,000 1,515 ft² 3 2

FOR RENT

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

FOR SALE

- [Taipa] *Wa Bao* 2 2
1,071 ft² \$7,995,000 (ref: 18115568)
- [Taipa] *Taipa Village- two connected* 4 2
1,404 ft² \$8,380,000 (ref: 19096006)
- [Macau] *Unique Loft* 2 2
2,200 ft² \$9,990,000 (ref: 15115464)
- [Coloane] *Large 3/4 bedroom* 2 3
2,530 ft² \$12,980,000 (ref: 19096000)

FOR RENT

- [Macau] *Vai Fung Triplex, Macau* 2 2
1,065 ft² \$15,800/mth (ref: 19121001)
- [Taipa] *Buckingham* 2 1
1,100 ft² \$15,900/mth (ref: 20031002)
- [Taipa] *Manhattan* 3 2
1,626 ft² \$20,800/mth (ref: n/a)
- [Coloane] *Ocean Garden* 4 4
3,700 ft² \$35,000/mth (ref: 18040674)

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The Art of Giving

Lurdes de Sousa *



MODERN PHILANTHROPY AND GLOBALIZATION

A virus that vanishes with some droplets of soap has put the world into lockdown, caused national health systems to collapse, created one of the greatest depressions in modern times and even brought the price of crude oil to such negative rates that crude oil sellers in the US have actually started paying buyers to take the black gold off their hands...

Covid-19 has killed globalization as we know it, some argue, or at least brought it to a standstill as the disruption may continue until a vaccine is administered globally.

Globalization is not a new phenomenon; it has existed for centuries since traders travelled vast distances in ancient times to buy commodities that were rare in their homelands. To put it in simple terms, it is a term used to describe the increasing connectedness of world cultures and economies.

Praised for decades, especially as we entered the fourth wave of globalization, the advantages of globalization, we were told, translated into raising output in countries, raising productivity, creating more jobs, raising wages, and lowering prices of products in the world economy.

Covid-19 travelled around the globalized world and as a direct consequence, raised a debate over whether globalization is a beneficial force in reducing inequalities. "Coronavirus: they tell us it's a great leveler... it's not (...). It's much harder if you're poor" a BBC pivot tells us in a touching, yet revealing report.

What we previously saw in globalization as powering economic growth and allowing the spread of ideas to improve people's lives turned into a cruel reality, as global issues such as pandemics erode communities and widen the gap between the elite and the rest of the world. So, we may ask: has a little virus that vanishes with droplets of soap killed globalization? Quite probably not, but once this is over, there will surely be much debate about whether globalization has reduced or increased inequalities, and it will certainly be a most interesting debate to follow. It's time to recall and learn from Confucian philosophy, "When wealth is centralized, the people are dispersed, when wealth is distributed, the people are brought together".

Despite the tragic consequences and sad moments humankind is facing, one thing this episode has shown us is that globalization has never been more meaningful. We are living a unique moment of history when we can say that we are together as one, that we have never been closer to each other, in pain, solidarity, compassion. All around the world, mother nature has come back to life and philanthropy, charity and kindness initiatives have been spreading spontaneously... even a 99-year-old war veteran was able to raise £27 million for Britain's National Health Service... That's the most beautiful expression of philanthropy as the love of humankind.

It is too early to draw conclusions about faith in globalization but what we can already see is that the little virus has definitely reshaped globalization towards new trends and, paradoxically or not, this global disease has brought forth the best of humankind.

***President, Associação Internacional de Filantropia (Macau)**
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Macau Daily Times is the official media partner of the Associação Internacional de Filantropia (Macau).



SNAPCHAT SAYS APP USAGE ACCELERATING WITH PEOPLE IN LOCKDOWN

SARAH FRIER

SNAPCHAT'S parent company reported a jump in daily users and said it expects to keep growing as people turn to messaging apps to stay connected during the coronavirus pandemic. Shares surged as much as 22% in late trading.

Snap Inc. said the app's popularity is accelerating, with Snapchat reaching an average of 229 million daily users in the first quarter, compared with the 224 million analysts projected, according to Bloomberg consensus estimates. With many users sheltering in place and spending more time on their smartphones, activity is also on the rise, Snap said Tuesday in prepared remarks.

The Santa Monica, California-based company said it's too soon to know whether the surge in usage will boost revenue, because advertisers are expected to trim budgets during the global Covid-19 outbreak. First-quarter sales jumped 44% to \$462.5 million, also topping analysts' predictions, and Snap said revenue growth in the current period has slowed but not stopped. In the first few weeks of April, revenue was up 15% from a year earlier, Snap said. Still, the company said it's not providing forecasts for the current period.

Chief Executive Officer Evan Spiegel said his company has enough cash to continue hiring and investing in research and development despite the economic slowdown caused by the virus. After a 2017 IPO, Snap's rocky performance and lackluster growth forced Spiegel to cut staff, change the focus of the advertising business and raise more money by selling convertible bonds. "The many difficult transitions and changes we made as a business over the past few years have positioned us well for the challenges ahead," he said in the company's remarks.

Now, Snapchat has become a vital tool for people stuck at home with no way to see friends in real life or venture out for entertainment. The app, mainly used for friends to chat through photos that disappear, has also become more popular for other, more solitary features, like games and short TV series on the company's Discover page. With TV studios losing the ability to film traditional shows, the short-form content might see greater adoption.

Snapchat has also seen broader use of its augmented-reality face filters, which let people chat while appearing as talking rolls of toilet paper, or with virtual cats on their heads. The company said an average of 75% of users

engaged with an augmented-reality feature every day during the first quarter. Spiegel said the company has been seeing more interest from brands using AR in their ad campaigns - for example, makeup companies that might need to let users try on a product virtually before they buy it.

The company's shares climbed as high as \$15.12 in extended trading following the report. Snap stock closed at \$12.44 in New York, marking a 24% decline for 2020. The company's upbeat announcement also lifted shares of social-media rivals Twitter Inc. and Facebook Inc., which have yet to report earnings.

Snap may be more insulated from the downturn than Facebook and Twitter because it doesn't have as many small advertisers, said Jim Cridlin, global head of innovation and partnerships at WPP Plc's Mindshare media agency. "Those larger advertiser budgets are more stable than small business advertisers, and their businesses are more likely to remain open," Cridlin said in a note following Snap's report.

The company's first-quarter net loss narrowed to \$305.9 million, or 21 cents a share, from \$310.4 million, or 23 cents, a year earlier. Excluding certain items, the loss was 8 cents a share.

BLOOMBERG

PANDEMIC AND CHILL

Netflix adds a cool 16 million subscribers

NETFLIX picked up nearly 16 million global subscribers during the first three months of the year, helping cement its status as one of the world's most essential services in times of isolation or crisis.

The quarter spanned the beginning of stay-at-home orders in the U.S. and around the world, a response to the coronavirus pandemic that apparently led millions to latch onto Netflix for entertainment and comfort when most had nowhere to be but home.

Netflix more than doubled the quarterly growth it predicted in January, well before the COVID-19 outbreak began to shut down many major economies. It was the biggest three-month gain in the 13-year history of Netflix's streaming service.

The numbers — released Tuesday as part of Netflix's first-quarter earnings report — support a growing belief that video streaming is likely to thrive even as the overall U.S. economy sinks into its first recession in more than a decade.

"Our small contribution to these difficult times is to make home



AP PHOTO

confinement a little more bearable," Netflix CEO Reed Hastings said while speaking to investors during a video call from a bedroom.

Investor optimism about Netflix's prospects propelled the company's stock to new highs recently, a sharp contrast with the decline in the broader market.

Netflix's shares initially surged in after-hours trading after the first-quarter report came out, although

they soon fell back. One reason: The strengthening U.S. dollar will likely depress the company's revenue from outside the U.S., which could dampen gains from some of its fastest growing markets.

Currency effects also limited Netflix revenue growth to 17%, for a total of \$5.8 billion, even though the company ended March with nearly 183 million worldwide subscribers, a 23% increase from

the same time last year. Netflix earned \$709 million in the first quarter, nearly tripling its profit from last year.

Even though it faces plenty of competition, Netflix appears better positioned to take advantage of the surging demand for TV shows and movies largely because of its head start in video streaming.

Since beginning its foray into original programming seven years

ago, Netflix has built up a deep catalog that can feed viewer appetites even though the pandemic response has shut down production on many new shows.

That stoppage could hurt Netflix as well, although analysts at Canaccord Genuity believe its video library will serve as a "content moat" that can keep most competitors at bay.

One notable exception is Walt Disney Co., whose recently launched streaming service is also stocked with perennial classics, especially for children who have even more free time than usual.

That's one of the big reasons Disney's service has amassed 50 million subscribers and why Netflix is basking in another resurgence in popularity. Netflix predicted it will add 7.5 million subscribers from April through June. That's nearly three times more than its average springtime gain of 2.7 million subscribers during the past seven years.

Hastings praised Disney's fast start in streaming as "stunning" in his video call with investors. "My hat's off to them," he said. "We are both going to do great work." MDT/AP

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OPINION

World Views

Daniel Moss, Bloomberg

SINGAPORE PROVES
THERE'S NO TEXTBOOK
VIRUS RESPONSE

Once lauded as a beacon in the fight against Covid-19, Singapore reached an unenviable milestone this week: the most cases in Southeast Asia.

Soaring infections suggest rapidly tightening restrictions on social and economic activity are unlikely to cease anytime soon; the prime minister said Tuesday that schools and most workplaces will remain closed until June 1. The struggle to contain this pandemic even in a well-run, rich nation casts doubt on whether any country can become a global standard-bearer.

Singapore has 9,125 coronavirus cases as of Tuesday, a tenfold increase in just three weeks, though has reported just 11 fatalities. That's a blip compared with Indonesia's 616 deaths, the Philippines's 437 and Thailand's 48. The bulk of new infections are from the migrant-worker community, which resides in tightly packed dormitories. These laborers hold many of the lower-paid jobs vital to Singapore's first-world economy.

While the surge likely reflects more comprehensive testing than neighbors, this is an uncomfortable position for a place that usually runs like a Swiss watch. In return for its strong executive powers, the elected government has long provided policy stability, predictable decision-making and maintenance of health and wealth. Per capita income is among the highest on the globe and Singapore's health system is in the top 10 worldwide, according to a 2019 Bloomberg analysis.

Singapore's attention to procedure can chafe, but its methodical approach is often preferable to the haphazard administration that can characterize much of Southeast Asia. That's part of what's made the past few weeks so jarring.

Having navigated through Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome in 2003, the government warned its citizens early of the risks from Covid-19. Singapore was among the first to restrict arrivals from China; temperature screenings at offices and restaurants became commonplace by February. For months, the government urged citizens only to use masks if unwell. But as the case count rose, the government changed its tune, and stopped discouraging healthy people from wearing them. That later evolved into an order: Wear a mask, or risk fines and prosecution. (Children under two and exercisers have been exempt.)

It wasn't until the government's early April "circuit breaker" — the term lockdown is frowned upon — that schools were shut. By that point, more than 160 nations had taken this step. The new restrictions also closed most businesses, aside from essential services. Fines are administered for people perceived to be breaching distancing rules; social gatherings with people outside your household have been outlawed, even inside private homes. Restaurants can sell food for takeout or delivery, but loitering is prohibited.

After months of gradual limits on activity, officials hit the fast-forward button. New curbs were unveiled Tuesday, at the halfway point of the initial month-long circuit breaker that was scheduled to end early May. Access to wet markets and supermarkets will be restricted. Residents are advised to go out alone, rather than with family members, and stick close to home.

For its part, Singapore has never laid claim to being a model in the battle against the virus, though Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong did note that the World Health Organization lauded its response in a March 12 address. In an interview with CNN later that month, host Fareed Zakaria invited Lee to explain the country's success. The premier balked at any talk of victory and predicted a long struggle. "I know this has not been an easy time for everyone," Lee said Tuesday. "We are making progress, but we have not yet succeeded."

Perhaps the best lesson from Singapore is that there is no single playbook to combat an adversary that disregards boundaries. Even the most efficient and risk-averse countries have been sideswiped. The pandemic responses of the future may wind up splicing together the most effective steps taken around the world — unfortunately, that's a template we may not see for years to come. [Abridged]

China yesterday slammed a lawsuit brought against it by the U.S. state of Missouri over the coronavirus pandemic as "very absurd." Foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said the legal action has "no factual and legal basis at all" and repeated China's defense of its response to the outbreak, which has largely subsided in the country where it was first detected.

The lawsuit alleges that Chinese officials are to blame for the pandemic that has sickened around 2.5 million worldwide, thrown tens of millions out of work and devastated local economies, including in China.

Missouri's action is likely to be largely symbolic, since lawsuits

against other countries typically don't go anywhere because U.S. law generally prohibits them.

The Chinese government has strenuously denied accusations that officials delayed reporting on the extent of the outbreak in the central Chinese city of Wuhan late last year, despite reports that worries over political stability were placed above public health concerns.

"This so-called lawsuit is very absurd and has no factual and legal basis at all," Geng said at a daily briefing. Since the outbreak began, China has proceeded in an "open, transparent, and responsible manner" and the U.S. government should "dismiss such vexatious litigation," he said.

AS PEOPLE STAY HOME,
EARTH TURNS WILDER
AND CLEANER



An unplanned grand experiment is changing Earth.

As people across the globe stay home to stop the spread of the new coronavirus, the air has cleaned up, albeit temporarily. Smog stopped choking New Delhi, one of the most polluted cities in the world, and India's getting views of sights not visible in decades. Nitrogen dioxide pollution in the northeastern United States is down 30%. Rome air pollution levels from mid-March to mid-April were down 49% from a year ago. Stars seem more visible at night.

People are also noticing animals in places and at times they don't usually. Coyotes have meandered along downtown Chicago's Michigan Avenue and near San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge. A puma roamed the streets of Santiago, Chile. Goats took over a town in Wales. In India, already daring wildlife has become bolder with hungry monkeys entering homes and opening refrigerators to look for food.

When people stay home, Earth becomes cleaner and wilder.

"It is giving us this quite extraordinary insight into just how much of a mess we humans are making of our beautiful planet,"

says conservation scientist Stuart Pimm of Duke University. "This is giving us an opportunity to magically see how much better it can be."

Chris Field, director of the Stanford Woods Institute for the Environment, assembled scientists to assess the ecological changes happening with so much of humanity housebound. Scientists, stuck at home like the rest of us, say they are eager to explore unexpected changes in weeds, insects, weather patterns, noise and light pollution. Italy's government is working on an ocean expedition to explore sea changes from the lack of people.

"In many ways we kind of whacked the Earth system with a sledgehammer and now we see what Earth's response is," Field says.

Researchers are tracking dramatic drops in traditional air pollutants, such as nitrogen dioxide, smog and tiny particles. These types of pollution kill up to 7 million people a year worldwide, according to Health Effects Institute president Dan Greenbaum.

The air from Boston to Washington is its cleanest since a NASA satellite started measuring nitrogen dioxide, in 2005, says NASA atmospheric scientist Barry Lefer. Largely caused by

burning of fossil fuels, this pollution is short-lived, so the air gets cleaner quickly.

Compared to the previous five years, March air pollution is down 46% in Paris, 35% in Bengaluru, India, 38% in Sydney, 29% in Los Angeles, 26% in Rio de Janeiro and 9% in Durban, South Africa, NASA measurements show.

Cleaner air has been most noticeable in India and China. On April 3, residents of Jalandhar, a city in north India's Punjab, woke up to a view not seen for decades: snow-capped Himalayan peaks more than 100 miles away.

Stanford's Field says he's most intrigued by increased urban sightings of coyotes, pumas and other wildlife that are becoming video social media staples. Boar-like javelinas congregated outside of an Arizona shopping center. Even New York City birds seem hungrier and bolder.

In Adelaide, Australia, police shared a video of a kangaroo hopping around a mostly empty downtown, and a pack of jackals occupied an urban park in Tel Aviv, Israel.

We're not being invaded. The wildlife has always been there, but many animals are shy, Duke's Pimm says. They come out when humans stay home. MDT/AP



Lebanon A Palestinian woman from Syria has become the first refugee living in a camp in Lebanon to test positive for the coronavirus, the U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees said yesterday. It triggered a spate of testing to determine whether other residents have been infected.

Cameroon's President Paul Biya has acknowledged that the military massacred innocent people, including women and children, in a northwestern village in February after the government first denied it. A statement from Biya's office said the president has asked for legal action. Three soldiers have already been arrested.



European Union leaders are preparing for a new virtual summit to take stock of the damage the coronavirus has inflicted on the lives and livelihoods of the bloc's citizens and to thrash out a more robust plan to revive their ravaged economies.



UK Britain's Parliament went back to work Tuesday, and the political authorities had a message for lawmakers: Stay away. A few dozen legislators sat, well-spaced, in the Commons, and agreed on arrangements for lawmakers to ask questions from home using videoconferencing program Zoom, beamed onto screens erected around the wood-paneled chamber.

New Zealand While most countries are working on ways to contain the coronavirus, New Zealand has set itself a much more ambitious goal: eliminating it altogether. And experts believe the country could pull it off. The virus "doesn't have superpowers," said Helen Petousis-Harris, a vaccine expert at the University of Auckland. "Once transmission is stopped, it's gone."