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AIR TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS MAY SOON EASE, ACCORDING TO MACAU'S TOURISM BOARD, WITH FLIGHTS TO KOREA AND JAPAN TO RETURN FIRST P2

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THE EDUCATION AND YOUTH AFFAIRS BUREAU WILL SCREEN ALL TEACHERS, SCHOOL STAFF AND CROSS-BORDER STUDENTS AHEAD OF CLASS RESUMPTION P5

India Lightning killed at least 10 villagers during thunderstorms and heavy rain in eastern India yesterday, said Pratay Amrit, a Bihar state disaster management official. Nine villagers died as they were plucking vegetables in farms and one later died in a hospital.



Saudi Arabia's King Salman has ordered an end to the death penalty for crimes committed by minors, according to a statement yesterday by a top official. The decision comes on the heels of another ordering judges to end the practice of flogging, replacing it with jail time, fines or community service.



Nepal Rescuers yesterday recovered the bodies of two South Korean trekkers who had been missing since an avalanche in January buried them in Nepal's mountains, an official said. An army helicopter flew the bodies — one male and one female — from the Annapurna Trekking Circuit to the city of Pokhara.



Lebanon Unknown assailants lobbed an explosive device at a private bank branch in southern Lebanon on Saturday, damaging its facade and roof, the country's state news agency reported. The assault on a branch of Fransabank in the southern city of Sidon came at a time of rising public anger against banks in the small country facing its worst economic and financial crisis in decades.

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CHINA DIPLOMATS SHOW TEETH

ON ALMOST EVERY CONTINENT, CHINESE ENVOYS HAVE SET OFF DIPLOMATIC FIRESTORMS WITH A COMBATIVE DEFENSE WHENEVER THEIR COUNTRY IS ACCUSED OF MISHANDLING THE CORONAVIRUS



FORMER GRAFT BUSTER WARNS TOO MUCH OVERSIGHT RISKS 'NO ACTION, NO MISTAKE' MENTALITY

P3 POLICY ADDRESS



TWO SUSPECTED OF LUXURY WATCH FRAUD INVOLVING 80 MILLION PATACAS

The Judiciary Police (PJ) has apprehended two local residents – one man and one woman – who are suspected of being responsible for a luxury watch fraud worth 80 million patacas, the police authority reported on Friday. The man, aged 36, started selling branded watches with a 25% discount to three victims in September 2018. In the beginning, he provided the products. However, after one year, the suspect could no longer provide all the requested watches, but continued to keep the payments. The man said that he purchased the watches from the female suspect, aged 40, who did not deliver them. He then accused her of fraud. When questioned by the police authority, the woman denied the fraud accusation, saying only that due to Hong Kong's massive protests last year, and the disruption caused by them, she could not obtain the items promised to the buyers. However, believing that it was a fraud case, the PJ has referred the two to the prosecution authority.

CENTRAL REGISTRATION SYSTEM RECORDS 46 DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CASES IN 2019

The city recorded a total of 46 suspected domestic violence cases in 2019, according to the statistics of the central registration system for domestic violence cases. Twenty-six cases involved violence against spouses, 14 involved violence against children, four involved violence against seniors and two involved violence between other family members. In the classification of domestic violence, physical violence accounted for the majority, with 27 cases (58.7%). Four cases were related to mental abuse (8.7%), nine cases involved multiple instances of violence or aggression (19.6%). There were also three sexual crimes (6.5%) and three cases of inappropriate care (6.5%). The city's domestic violence law came into effect in September 2016, establishing domestic violence as a public crime instead of a semi-public crime.

TWO MAINLAND RESIDENTS SMUGGLED INTO MACAU FOR GAMBLING

The Judiciary Police (PJ) has apprehended two mainland residents who were smuggled into Macau. They claimed that they were simply avoiding both the mainland's and Macau's quarantine measures. Each of them paid 23,000 yuan to a 20-year-old mainland man to transport them via sea. They admitted having planned to gamble in Macau despite not wanting to go through the mainland's and Macau's quarantine measures. On the other side of Macau, the Zhuhai police authority arrested seven mainland residents, aged between 30 and 44 years old, who were responsible for trafficking people between Zhuhai and Macau, including this specific smuggling case. The trafficking group has been operating for more than one month, charging every clandestine tourist 23,000 yuan.

FLIGHTS TO KOREA, JAPAN TO RESUME WITH RESTRICTIONS

RENATO MARQUES

THE government has decided to partially ease travel restrictions, allowing some flights to resume, according to the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO).

The government has affirmed that the resumption does not pose much risk, as they will continue to restrict access to the aircraft to people in possession of negative test results for Covid-19.

Questioned by the media on the topic, MGTO representative Inês Chan said, "at this moment, we can forecast that preventive measures will need to remain in force for a long period."

"Acknowledging this fact, we also need to evaluate the [economic] impacts and to ease some measures to allow economic activities to resume as well," said Chan.

"We will be ensuring that people continue to be tested as a requirement to board any plane with [Macau as a destination]," stressed the tourism board official yesterday.

According to media reports, Macau's flagship airline, Air Macau, is one of the companies



COURTESY MACAU PHOTO AGENCY

preparing to resume flights to destinations such as Japan and South Korea, but the MGTO official said there is not yet concrete information on when this should happen.

Chan said the lack of information was partly due to the fact that "each country takes individual measures and decisions." Although some companies are already taking bookings for some destinations, according to Chan, it is not yet clear whether they will be able to actually make these flights on such dates or whether they will need to be postponed.

Questioned also regarding difficulties experienced by several foreign nationals in leaving Macau and by some residents attempting to return, Chan said, "both entering and exiting Macau is very inconvenient at the moment. We know about several cases, including residents of Hong Kong, who want to return [to the neighboring region] and are finding it a challenge."

"We have also received requests from a group of Portuguese nationals" about this same matter, the official added.

Chan explained that in all these cases, the negotiations between authorities follow the same procedure and are usually done by way of official consular representations, adding that MGTO only lends its support to these official representations.

Meanwhile, asked to comment on a reported case involving around 150 Vietnamese non-resident workers that were said to be stranded in Macau after being fired in the past few weeks, Chan said no request for help regarding the case had yet been received.

Taipa Ferry Terminal to accommodate four airlines after airport extension

THE auxiliary airport passenger terminal planned for the Taipa Ferry Terminal is set to accommodate at least four airlines with daily operations in the early stage of implementation.

Secretary for Transport and Public Works Raimundo do Rosário previously announced that there were plans to use the Taipa Ferry Terminal in Cotai as an extension of the Macau International Airport. The local airport received 9.6 million tourist arrivals last year, despite being designed to receive only 7.8 million annual passengers.

The government considered the Taipa Ferry Terminal as a

site with "advantageous geographical accessibility that is already in operations with spatial development possibility," according to a statement released by the Civil Aviation Authority (AACM).

"In the long term, the air traffic is expected to continue its growth, but the capacity of the passenger terminal has been saturated and the unavailability of space in the passenger terminals needs to be addressed," said the AACM.

The AACM announced that it plans to operate 12 to 16 check-in counters, four boarding gates, and waiting lounges with a floor area equivalent to a

quarter of that of the Taipa Ferry Terminal. The expansion will raise the airport's annual passenger capacity by between 1.5 and 2 million passengers.

The departure and arrival flow of airport passengers would be similar to that of ferry passengers.

Modification works addressing passenger and baggage handling as well as ground operations will be conducted, and will utilize four waiting lounges and their adjacent commercial shops on the east wing of the first floor with approximately 5,100 square meters used as a security checkpoint and departure waiting lounge.

The AACM also plans to utilize the existing east departure hall on the first floor as a check-in area, and the arrival hall and the arrival immigration area on the east wing of the ground floor as a baggage handling area.

The bureau further noted that the auxiliary passenger terminal also enhances the sea-air intermodal transportation services between the ports. Air-to-sea passengers and sea-to-air passengers are not required to go through the immigration and customs procedures, and can travel outbound by plane or to the Greater Bay Area by ferry. LV

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POLICY ADDRESS

Greater accountability for gov't officials risks 'no action, no mistake' mentality

JULIE ZHU

THE SAR government is reviewing a specific law to provide a solution for holding high ranking officials accountable, according to Secretary for Administration and Justice André Cheong Weng Chon, who made the announcement during Friday's Legislative Assembly plenary meeting.

On Friday, lawmakers questioned Cheong regarding the policy address in his field. Lawmakers mostly raised questions about the government's administrative efficiency, transparency and integrity.

Legislator Sulu Sou pointed out that both Macau's low-ranking civil servants and high-ranking officials have been found to be involved in corruption, and that society wants both "the mosquitoes and the tigers" – referring to low-ranking and high-ranking officials respectively - to be held accountable for corruption. Sou also hopes that Macau will develop laws to protect all kinds of whistleblowers.

"It's been 20 years since the hand-over. How many high-ranking officials have apologized for mistakes, let alone been held accountable for their responsibilities?" asked Sou, who also hopes a democratic process can be applied to the 45 government advisory committees so that members of the public can run for membership of the committees in an election.

"There should be a corresponding law to follow up on high-ranking officials' power and responsibilities. We are currently working on it. We hope that this year we can present a solution for



the public to discuss," said Secretary Cheong.

In 2019, the SAR government conducted a survey assessing the relationship between high-ranking officials' retirement and accountability amid the aftermath of typhoon Hato.

In Cheong's opinion, policies to hold high-ranking officials to account should not be excessively strict because high-ranking officials will "be afraid of executing" with the mentality of "no action, therefore no mistake."

The Secretary, who formerly headed the city's anti-graft authority, thinks that policies should encourage high-ranking officials to shoulder responsibilities, but not scare them into paralysis.

"Our regime must encourage

leaders to take responsibility and not lead them to be afraid," he said.

Cheong's opinion was later opposed by Sou, who commented that high-ranking officials already have the mentality of "no action, therefore no mistake," hinting at laziness and a lack of integrity among high-ranking officials.

Regarding the 45 advisory committees, Cheong insisted that only these advisory committees can represent members of the public and can "make [timely] proposals" to the government. However, he acknowledged that reforming advisory bodies is an important part of the city's public administration reform agenda.

The secretary also said Friday that he hopes to include constitutional law in civil servant recruit-

ment exams.

Lawmaker Lam Lon Wai had proposed to Cheong that civil servants should not only be tested about their knowledge of the Basic Law but also about the law of the constitution. Lam, who is vice rector of the Workers' Children High School, said that students should also learn more about constitutional law. Responding to Lam, Cheong said that the SAR government shares the same view.

Previously, the Commission of Audit condemned failures and malpractice in the recruitment system of the Public Administration and Civil Service Bureau (SAFP).

At Friday's meeting, Cheong acknowledged the problems of the civil servants' recruitment system despite the fact that its efficiency

has improved over the past years. However, the administrative procedure is still "complex" and "time consuming."

According to Cheong, the SAR government plans to simplify the recruitment procedure. Plans currently being considered include cutting down the number of interviewees. As of today, many candidates unlikely to succeed are interviewed, wasting unnecessary time during the recruitment procedure.

When specific positions are more common and are required by multiple departments, the SAFP will work with the other concerned departments to hold the exams. The SAFP will then rank the applicants' test results and will be the bureau responsible for assigning successful workers to their relevant departments.

According to Cheong, before the end of this year, the local government will review the civil servants' protocol and other relevant regulations and laws. The government is currently studying the amendment and will listen to the civil servants' opinions.

The other matters addressed by Cheong include his priorities for the rest of the year. Cheong said he will lead his sector to prioritize legislation concerning fire service safety, urban construction, urban renewal, and Chinese medicine registration and management.

Meanwhile, on September 27, the city's e-governance law will come into effect. Cheong's departments are currently drafting an auxiliary regulation for the e-governance law, which is expected to be approved by the legislature by June of this year.

Secretary Cheong calls for guidelines to govern department mergers

STAFF REPORTER

SECRETARY for Administration and Justice André Cheong Weng Chon has called for the establishment of principles and guidelines for the merging of government departments, as announced last week by Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng.

This year, the SAR government will carry out a public consultation process in relation to administration reform.

At a Legislative Assembly plenary session on Friday, Secretary Cheong urged Macau to clearly establish "guidelines and regulations" for deciding how and when to merge two bureaus together.

"This time we have to establish some principles and guidelines for the merging of the departments. We have to be realistic and analyze the functions of each of them," said Cheong.

"We also have to set con-

ditions under which bureaus can set up a division or a department. We have to have guidelines and regulations for these," added the senior official.

According to the policy address delivered by Ho, the administration reform will include the merging of several key departments, among them, the Education and Youth Affairs Bureau and the Higher Education Bureau.

The Chief Executive sta-

ted 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 levels. He also said that this might contribute to creating conditions for more local students to choose local institutions over those abroad.

Another major restructuring on the agenda is the transfer of the Macao Government Tourism Office

from under the purview of the Secretariat for Social Affairs and Culture to that of the Secretariat for Economy and Finance. The responsibilities of the tourism regulator are expected to remain the same, with a hand in both attracting tourists from overseas markets as well as overseeing large-scale cultural events in the SAR, such as the Macao International Fireworks Display Contest and the International Film Festival and Awards – Macau.

Public administration reform was one of Ho's major manifesto pledges during his candidacy for Chief Executive.

In addition to the afore-

mentioned changes, several other public entities will be merged or see part of their responsibilities shift, according to the Policy Address. For example, the Office for the Development of the Energy Sector will join the Environmental Protection Bureau, while the Office of Government will merge with the Government Information Bureau.

The Science and Technology Development Fund, the Economic Bureau and the Transferência Electrónica de Dados - Macau Edifício Van, S.A. will be merged together into a department named the Economy, Science and Technology Development Bureau.

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE CLIMBS ABOVE 2% FOR FIRST TIME SINCE 2012

The general unemployment rate for the three-month period between January and March 2020 increased 0.2 percentage points to 2.1% from the previous three-month period (December 2019 to February 2020), according to data newly released by the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC). The posting is the first time the unemployment rate has climbed above 2.0% since the second quarter of 2012, noted DSEC in a statement to explain the data yesterday. Meanwhile, in the first quarter of this year, the unemployment rate for local residents edged up 0.3 percentage points to 2.9%. On a quarterly comparison basis, the general unemployment rate (2.1%) and the unemployment rate of local residents (2.9%) grew by 0.4 and 0.6 percentage points respectively from the previous quarter. Median monthly employment earnings of the employed in the first quarter dropped by 1,000 patacas quarter-to-quarter to 16,000 patacas. The median earnings of employed residents remained unchanged from the previous quarter at 20,000 patacas.

UM RECORDS OVER 8,000 POSTGRADUATE APPLICANTS, REACHING RECORD-HIGH

The University of Macau (UM) has reported a 50% surge in the number of postgraduate applicants for the 2020/2021 academic year. UM said in a statement Friday that it has so far received over 8,000 applicants for postgraduate programs, including nearly 1,700 for doctoral programs and over 6,500 for master's programs. The sudden growth in applicants represents a record-high for the UM, according to the tertiary education institution. Following the principle of merit-based admission, the university expects to admit approximately 1,500 postgraduate students this year to ensure quality student intake. In the statement, UM said it plans to launch more postgraduate programs designed to nurture local talent to meet the needs of the local community. Meanwhile, UM also offers dedicated scholarship for international students in order to attract outstanding students from around the world. Awarded master's students will be exempted from tuition and accommodation fees.

MACAO MUSEUM LAUNCHES APP FOR VIRTUAL MUSEUM VISITS

The Macao Museum has launched a mobile app to help its users to enjoy the permanent exhibits along the tour route as if they were actually inside the museum. The app utilizes technologies such as augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) to offer a 720-degree panoramic view of the first, second and third floors of the Macao Museum and the Mount Fortress Garden. In addition, visitors can also scan the QR code next to the exhibits to get more information and enjoy a self-service guided tour. The public can download and use the app free of charge by simply entering "Macao Museum VR/AR" in the App Store and Google Play or scanning the relevant QR code.

ANALYSIS | GAMING

EVEN CONSERVATIVE CASINO PREDICTION PUTS 80% REVENUE RECOVERY IN SIGHTS

DANIEL BEITLER

MACAU'S gaming concessionaires may see a "sequential recovery" in gross gaming revenue throughout 2021, according to Union Gaming, a boutique investment bank and advisory firm focused on the global gaming industry.

Union Gaming, which has taken a more conservative view than some other analysts, suggests that such a recovery would manifest in the city returning to about 80% of the gross gaming revenue level of 2019 by next year.

That would mark a considerable turnaround for an economy widely expected to shrink as much as one-third over the next few months.

Nevertheless, the group remains "cautious" about the 80% recovery given that, at present, borders are still closed and strict travel restrictions are still in place.

"We forecast a sequential recovery throughout 2021 with operators largely getting back to approximately 80 percent of 2019 GGR

[gross gaming revenue] benchmarks by year-end," analysts John DeCree and Sam Ghafir said, according to a note seen by GGRAsia. "Our overall market estimate may seem overly conservative, but at this point there is just no visibility and we find it prudent to be more cautious."

The cautious view articulated by Union Gaming is similar to that of brokerage Nomura, which said earlier this month that it could be 2022 before gross gaming revenue returns to 2019 levels.

Meanwhile, JP Morgan Securities (Asia Pacific) - and other analysts - see it "reasonable to expect 2021 earnings before interest, taxation, depreciation and amortisation to be similar to that of 2019."

Where analysts agree, however, is that 2020 is likely in store for further declines.

Following a first quarter decline of 60% in gross gaming revenue, Union Gaming predicts that Macau gaming revenue will decline "approximately 75 percent in second-quarter 2020

across the board, by about 45 percent in third-quarter 2020 and 25 percent in fourth-quarter 2020."

The group added that April's gross gaming revenue, due to be released in a matter of days, may be "more pronounced" than the 80% year-on-year decline seen in March.

The SAR continues to endure near-zero levels in tourist arrivals as visitors from its number one source market are mostly prevented from traveling to the region due to the Central Government's suspension of the individual visit scheme and Guangdong's requirement that all arrivals, even its own residents, undergo a 14-day quarantine period.

According to data provided by the Public Security Police Force, which oversees immigration matters in the SAR, the number of tourist arrivals in March climbed above 200,000. That marked an improvement over the 156,000 visitor arrivals seen a month earlier, but remains far subdued from the more than 3 million tourists per

month averaged last year.

Last week, credit ratings agency Fitch Ratings predicted that Macau's gambling-driven economy would contract by 24% this year, based on a "roughly 40 percent" fall in gross gaming revenue. Fitch added that a recovery in 2021 would amount to just 12.6% growth.

This view was considerably more pessimistic than a prediction made a week earlier in the International Monetary Fund's World Economic Outlook report, which put full-year gross domestic product growth at -30% for 2020 and +32% for 2021. This suggests that the IMF believes the economic fundamentals of Macau remain strong and that the city will quickly recover once the coronavirus outbreak is fully contained.

Macau entered technical recession last year after recording two consecutive quarters of negative growth. The local economy contracted by 4.7% in real terms in 2019, according to the assessment made in the World Economic Outlook report.

GAMING

American-owned casino operators report first quarter losses

DANIEL BEITLER

MACAU casino operators owned by U.S. parents are reporting first quarter losses caused by the onset of the coronavirus pandemic.

Macau gaming operator Sands China reported a net loss of \$166 million for the first three months of 2020 after its revenue dropped 65.1% in year-on-year terms. According to a filing last week by its parent company, the U.S.-based Las Vegas Sands, net revenue contracted by two-thirds from

\$2.33 billion in the first quarter of 2019 to just \$814 million in the first three months of this year.

Meanwhile, Las Vegas Sands reported a 51.1% decline in group-wide revenue during the first quarter to \$1.78 billion. The company's operations in all three jurisdictions in which it operates - Macau, Singapore and the U.S. - were temporarily suspended during the quarter for varying periods of time.

Rival MGM Macau, which operates two properties in the SAR,

reported that it expected an approximate \$22 million in quarterly losses, compared to a profit of \$192.8 million in the same quarter a year earlier.

In its preliminary financial results released late last week, its U.S.-based parent MGM Resorts International said that first quarter revenues had fallen 63% to \$734.2 million.

Wynn Resorts, the third American casino operator with a Macau presence, is yet to release financial results for the first quarter.

However, in a com-

pany filing made earlier this month, Wynn Resorts said it expected total operating revenues to be between \$912 million and \$969 million for the first quarter, down from \$1.64 billion a year earlier.

Wynn Resorts stressed that this is preliminary financial information that "could differ materially" from the actual results.

Then, in its 2019 annual report filed last week, the casino operator said the coronavirus was having an "adverse effect" on the group's business and

that it was not certain that demand for gambling in Macau would recover quickly even after certain business conditions improve.

All three casino operators cited the impact of the coronavirus behind their diminished revenues during the first quarter.

Earlier this month, analysts at JP Morgan Securities (Asia Pacific) said that Macau casino operators have enough financial liquidity behind them to survive with "near-zero revenue" for years. According to the analysts, Sands China and Wynn Macau have enough in reserves to survive for about two years, while MGM can survive for "over a year" under the present circumstances.

Education authority to screen school staff and cross-border students to prevent outbreak

RENATO MARQUES

THE Education and Youth Affairs Bureau (DSEJ) is performing nucleic acid screening tests for Covid-19 on all teachers, school staff, and cross-border students ahead of class resumption, deputy director of the DSEJ, Kong Chi Meng announced during the daily press conference of the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Center.

The measures come in preparation for the resumption of classes for senior secondary and junior secondary education students, due to restart on May 4 and 11, respectively. They aim to guarantee that all staff and cross-border students are in good health, preventing a possible new outbreak, Kong added.

As the official noted, the DSEJ has been advising all teachers, school staff, and cross-border students that are not in Macau at the moment, to return to the region in time to fulfill a 14-day mandatory isolation period and to be screen-tested according to the scheduling previously announced.

Kong also noted that Covid-19 testing for teaching staff starts today and will continue until April 30, remarking that on the first day, five teachers have already registered to be tested according to the guidelines, enabling them to get a health certificate that will allow them to work from May 4.

In response to several questions from the media during yesterday's press conference, Kong also noted that cross-border students from Zhuhai will be allowed to return home every day after school, but that the Covid-19 nasopharyngeal swab test will have to be repeated every seven days.

In reply to the media, Kong also added, "We anticipate that around 5,200 people will need to perform the test [in the first phase]."

According to estimates previously made by the Conde de São de Januário Hospital Center, 1,000 tests can be conducted per day.



In this December 2019 file photo, students have physical education class at the Pui Ching Middle School in Macau

TEACHER MOBILITY JUSTIFIES TESTING

Questioned as to why the DSEJ decided to test all the teachers and staff but not local students, Kong said that the decision is based on the risk posed by mobility and multiple contacts.

"We are testing local teachers and not students because of their mobility and the fact that they need to have contact with several groups of students from different classes and sometimes even from different schools," the deputy director said.

"As for students, we issued guidelines in which we will not allow any activities that demand contact between different classes. These students will only have contact with their classmates and will also not be involved in any other extracurricular activities. But this does not apply to teachers and that is why we need to adopt different treatment."

Regarding the students that will have to lodge in Macau, Kong said that the requirement only applies to those from the city of Zhongshan but not from Zhuhai.

"We have around 30 students in that situation [with a need to lodge in Macau] and half of

them have already found lodging. If any of them cannot find a place to stay we can provide such lodging in the youth centers, which are managed by private institutions. We do not know yet if we are going to need to use them or not, but if so we will rent such a space and assume the expenses of the lodging of those students."

'CARETAKER' TEACHERS TO JOIN TESTING COHORT

One of the facts that created doubt in the scheduling of tests by the DSEJ was the information that primary and kindergarten teachers would be also included in the Covid-19 screening to be performed in May.

On this topic, Kong clarified that this is not related to the resumption of primary and kindergarten school levels but, instead, due to a program from the government that will provide special help to families that cannot find caretakers for their children in those school levels.

"We are requesting that other teachers are also tested because we have a 'courtesy measure' that aims to help these families," clarified Kong.

"This is caretaking, not formal classes, and it only applies to families that

have no domestic helpers or any other family member that can take care of the children." He added

that "these are very special cases and do not apply to full classes or a large number of students."

He further explained that the program is scheduled to start from May 11.

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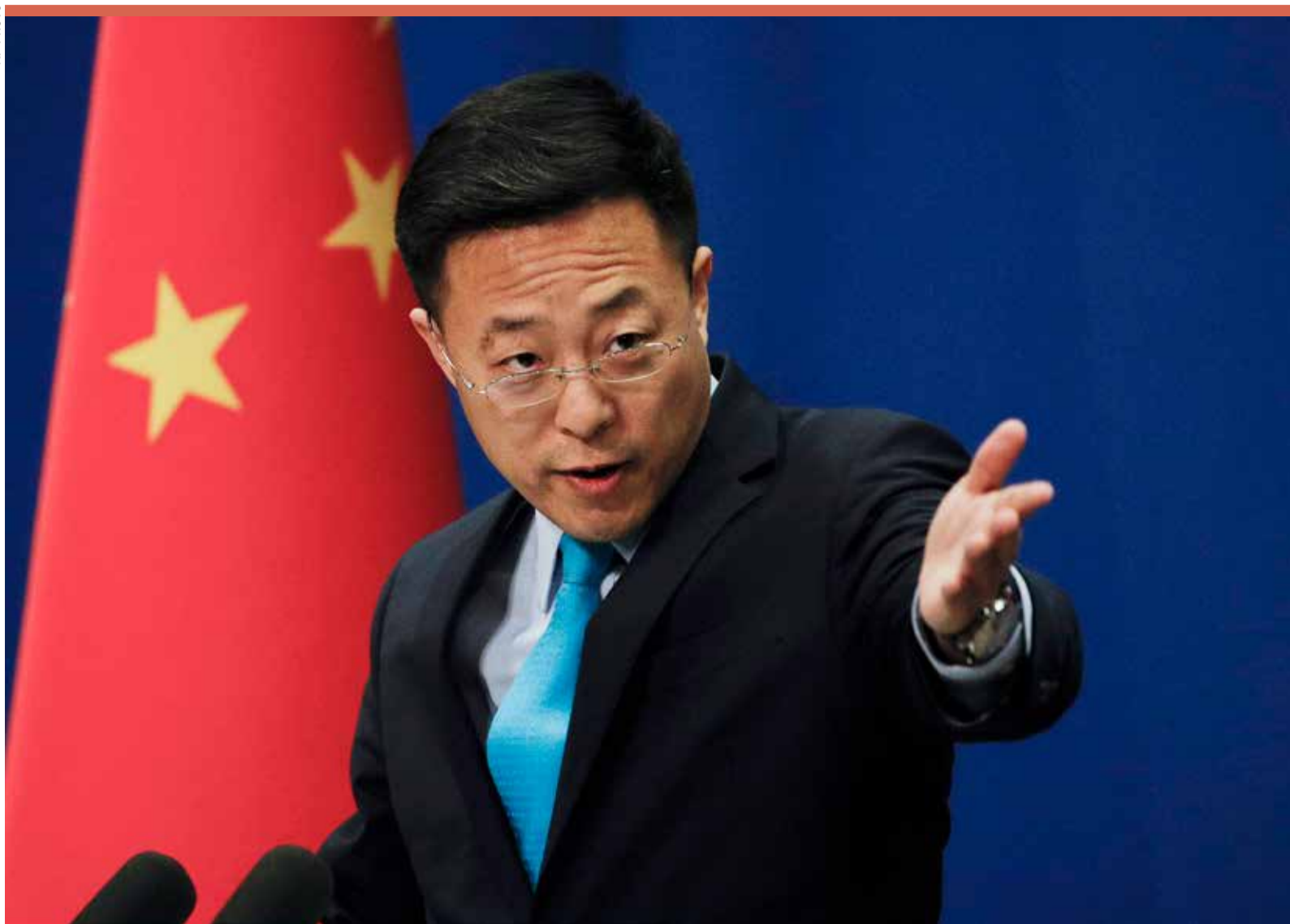
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AP PHOTO



Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian, a newly-promoted firebrand whose controversial tweets while stationed in Pakistan attracted a huge following

China's diplomats show teeth in defending virus response

DAKE KANG, BEIJING

FROM Asia to Africa, London to Berlin, Chinese envoys have set off diplomatic firestorms with a combative defense whenever their country is accused of not acting quickly enough to stem the spread of the coronavirus pandemic.

They belong to a new generation of "Wolf Warrior" diplomats, named after patriotic blockbuster films starring a muscle-bound Chinese commando killing American bad guys in Africa and Southeast Asia with his bare hands.

The tougher approach has been building for several years under President Xi Jinping, who has effectively jettisoned former leader Deng Xiaoping's approach of hiding China's ambitions and biding its time. His government has urged its diplomats to pursue "major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics" — a call for China to reassert its historic status as a global power.

"The days when China can be put in a submissive position are long gone," said an editorial in the *Global Times*, a state-run newspaper known for its outspoken views. The Chinese people, it said, "are no longer satisfied with a flaccid diplomatic tone."

Ambassador Gui Congyou has belittled journalists in Sweden, comparing them to a lightweight boxer seeking to go toe-to-toe with a heavyweight China. A commentary on the embassy website last month assailed a Swedish reporter for an article on the impact of China's one-party political system on its virus response.

"Using this epidemic for political purposes, waging ideological attacks and spreading lies in the name of 'freedom of speech' will only lead to self-sabotage. It's like lifting a rock and dropping it on your own toes," it said.

Experts say Beijing sees critics as assailing not just its actions, but also its leadership and right to rule.

"If anyone tries to attack China on this issue, China will resolutely fight back," said Shi Yinhong, professor of International Studies at Renmin University. "Chinese leaders may think if China doesn't fight back, it will hurt China even more."

Chinese diplomats are increasingly taking to Twitter and

Facebook — platforms that are blocked in their own country. They're following in the footsteps of Zhao Lijian, a pioneering firebrand whose tweets while stationed in Pakistan attracted a huge following and also led America's former U.N. Ambassador Susan Rice to call him a "racist disgrace" who should be dismissed.

" [These new diplomats are] are using bombastic language overseas as a tool to garner attention from nationalistic audiences at home — both among the party elite and among society at large.

CARL MINZNER
PROFESSOR OF CHINESE LAW AND POLITICS

Instead, China promoted him — to foreign ministry spokesman.

Xi has clearly indicated a preference for 'wolf-warrior' diplomats, said Carl Minzner, an expert on Chinese politics at Fordham Law School in New York City.

These new-style diplomats are "reading the tea leaves, and are using bombastic language overseas as a tool to garner attention from nationalistic audiences at home — both among the party elite and among society at large — regardless of the impact on China's image abroad," Minzner said.

Overseas, the newly strident tone has been less appreciated. The French foreign minister summoned the Chinese ambassador after an embassy statement, in apparent response to Western criticism, accused French nursing home workers of deserting and "letting their residents die from starvation and disease."

The U.S. protested after Zhao tweeted unsubstantiated speculation that the American military may have brought the virus to China.

China's envoys in Nigeria, Ghana and Uganda have been berated over reports of virus-related harassment of Africans in the city of Guangzhou, a rare public rebuke of Beijing by African nations. The Chinese Embassy in Zimbabwe

waved away the anger, tweeting dismissively about "so-called racial discrimination."

Chinese officials fume at what they see as Western hypocrisy. They say President Donald Trump and other leaders ignored the brewing pandemic, then began scapegoating China once the virus arrived on their shores.

French President Emmanuel Macron has questioned China's virus response, telling the *Financial Times* that "there are clearly things that have happened that we don't know about." Britain's top diplomat said it couldn't go back to "business as usual" with China.

China's Embassy in Berlin posted an open letter to *Bild* that accused the mass-circulation tabloid of "bad taste" for blaming the pandemic on China and calculating how much it owes Germany in damages for failing to contain it. The embassy in Spain tweeted "Freedom of expression has limits," in response to a far-right politician who posted a video about "Spanish antibodies fighting the damned Chinese viruses."

Under Xi, Beijing has launched coordinated efforts to shape China's image abroad. Lifting a page from Russia's playbook, it has mobilized thousands of bots to tweet the Communist Party line, according to Twitter. China has pumped funds into state media outlets broadcasting in Swahili, Arabic, Spanish, and dozens of other languages.

"In the past, China's diplomacy was far away from the people," said Chu Yin, a professor at China's University of International Relations. Now, Chinese diplomats feel "it's safe for them to show they are tough. Being tough won't be wrong, at least."

In Thailand, the embassy on Facebook called critics "disrespectful" and accused them of "betraying history" in a social media battle over the origin of the virus and the status of Hong Kong and Taiwan. In Sri Lanka, the mission erupted in fury this month after Twitter suspended its account, demanding "free speech" and accusing the tech giant of "double standards." Twitter reversed the suspension the next day.

Beijing's diplomats see the virus as a chance to assert leadership among countries critical of the West. Many leaders have praised China for sending medical equipment and teams, with one flight greeted by the president of Serbia kissing the Chinese flag.

In the 1990s, some in China dismissed their diplomats as the "Ministry of Traitors," annoyed at perceived deference to Western powers. No more.

"We've approached the center of the world stage like never before, but we still don't have full grasp of the microphone in our hands," said Hua Chunying, the foreign ministry's chief spokeswoman. "We must assert our right to speak." AP

ADVERTORIAL

SANDS CHINA NEWS

Sands Cares Ambassadors Pack Anti-Pandemic Supply Kits for Guests

Part of Sands China's MOP 5 million COVID-19 relief fund

Sands Cares Ambassadors recently helped put together anti-pandemic supply kits as farewell gifts for guests checking out of the special isolated area of the Sheraton Grand Macao.

The Ambassadors packed the kits at The Parisian Macao, with each kit containing two bottles of alcohol-based hand sanitizer, 10 face masks, soap prepared by Clean the World, and a card with an encouraging message from the Ambassadors. All the volunteers involved in preparing the kits had washed their hands before packing, and stayed a metre apart from each other to ensure production safety and hygiene.

Dr. Wilfred Wong, president of Sands China Ltd., also met with the Sands Cares Ambassadors on the same day, and thanked them for assisting the Macao community in times of need, and encouraged them to keep up the good work of giving back to the community.

The activity is part of Sands China's pledge to donate MOP 5 million toward Macao's COVID-19 relief effort, and is part of Sands Cares, the global corporate citizenship program of parent company Las Vegas Sands Corp.



China's virus cases could have been four times official tally

CORONAVIRUS cases in China may have been four times higher than officially reported numbers, according to a study published in the Lancet medical journal.

Infections would have been 232,000 in China as of Feb. 20 if the calculation of cases confirmed by "clinical diagnosis" had been applied throughout the outbreak, the Lancet reported. That compares to the 55,508 cases announced at the time by the country's National Health Commission, according to the report.

Measurement of infections can change significantly as a virus spreads, more information becomes available and testing evolves and increases. The study's authors said seven versions of the coronavirus case definition were used by the NHC in China from Jan. 15 to March 3 and changes should be considered when estimating growth rates.

A change of methodology that included cases diagnosed with CT imaging scans, alongside the previous method of nucleic acid testing kits, led to the addition of nearly 15,000 virus cases in a single day. Previously, patients with pneumonia-like symptoms found only via CT scans weren't confirmed as positive cases without the other test, which was short of supply back then.

"The case definition was initially narrow and was gradually broadened to allow detection of more cases as knowledge increased, particularly milder cases and those without epidemiological links to Wuhan, China," according to the study published April 21 and led by Tim K Tsang from the Hong Kong University School of Public Health.

While the study doesn't project the current total of cases using the different methodology, it casts further doubt on the true scale of the outbreak in China, where data and death tolls have been repeatedly revised in the past three months. There have been

83,884 infections and 4,636 deaths in China, according to Johns Hopkins University data.

With the virus infecting more than 2.7 million people globally, and killing 190,000, countries are having issues working out accurate numbers of cases, especially when it comes to asymptomatic infections.

In China, serological surveys have been started to detect how many people overall have been infected, while the government urged mass testing of both the virus and its antibodies nationwide.

Amid accusations it's under-reported numbers and concealed the true extent of its outbreak, China added confirmed infections and an extra 1,290 fatalities to its tally last week. The revision was aimed at including cases where people died without being treated or tested and from overwhelmed health institutions that failed to report them in time.

The Lancet article says among the 232,000 estimated infections nationwide by Feb. 20, 127,000 cases would have been from the city of Wuhan where the pathogen was first identified in December. This includes some 11,000 infections that met the fifth version of case definition with illness onset by the start of the year.

"Estimates of key epidemiological parameters using epidemic curves could be biased if they do not account for such changes in case definitions," Tsang and other scientists wrote.

They added that when the case definition changed, there could be a backfill of cases that met the new definition around the change time.

Still, the findings suggest the lockdown measures in Hubei province turned out to be very effective in curbing growth as Wuhan implemented unprecedented control measures on Jan. 23. Before the lockdown, 92% of cases were undetected, the study said. **BLOOMBERG**

AP PHOTO



BRITAIN

Boris Johnson returns to face growing virus divisions

JILL LAWLESS, LONDON

B RITISH Prime Minister Boris Johnson is returning to work after recovering from a coronavirus infection that put him in intensive care, with his government facing growing criticism over the deaths and disruption the virus has caused.

Johnson's office said he would be back at his desk in 10 Downing St. on Monday, two weeks after he was released from a London hospital. Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab, who has been standing in for the prime minister, said Sunday that Johnson was "raring to go."

Britain has recorded more than 20,000 deaths among people hospitalized with COVID-19, the fifth country in the world to reach that total. Thousands more are thought to have died in nursing homes.

Johnson, 55, spent a week at St. Thomas' Hospital, including three nights in intensive care, where he was given oxygen and watched around the clock by medical workers. After he was released on April 12, he recorded a video message thanking staff at the hospital for saving his life.

Johnson has not been seen in public since, as he recovered at Chequers, the prime minister's country

retreat outside London.

Opposition politicians say Britain's coronavirus death toll could have been lower if Johnson's Conservative government had imposed a nationwide lockdown sooner. They are also demanding to know when and how the government will ease the restrictions that were imposed March 23 and run to at least May 7.

"Decisions need to be taken quicker and communication with the public needs to be clearer," opposition Labour Party leader Keir Starmer said in a letter to Johnson.

"The British public have made great sacrifices to make the lockdown work," he wrote. "They deserve to be part of an adult conversation about what comes next."

Despite the toll, which saw another 813 virus-related deaths announced Saturday, some in Britain

are growing impatient with the restrictions, which have brought much of the economy and daily life to a halt. Road traffic has begun to creep up after plummeting when the lockdown first was imposed, and some businesses have begun to reopen after implementing social-distancing measures.

Scientists say the U.K. has reached the peak of the pandemic but is not yet out of danger. The number of people hospitalized with COVID-19 is declining and the number of daily deaths peaked on April 8.

But with hundreds of new deaths announced each day, some health experts say Britain could eventually have the highest virus death toll in Europe.

As fears recede that the health system will be overwhelmed, opponents are criticizing Johnson's government over shortages of protective equipment for

medical workers and a lack of testing for the virus. More than 100 infected medical workers have died so far.

The government has promised to conduct 100,000 coronavirus tests a day by the end of the month, but has yet to reach even 30,000 a day. Increasing testing, so that all people with the virus can be identified and their contacts traced and isolated, is key to loosening the lockdown.

The British government says all health care staff and other essential workers can be tested if they show symptoms. It is rolling out almost 100 mobile testing sites, staffed by soldiers, to conduct tests at nursing homes, police stations, prisons and other sites.

In the first two days of expanded testing, however, the online system handling daily demand for the tests had exceeded the supply by early morning. AP



AP PHOTO

this day in history



1992 BETTY BOOTHROYD IS NEW SPEAKER

The House of Commons has elected a woman to the post of Speaker for the first time in its 700-year history.

Betty Boothroyd, the 62-year-old Labour MP for West Bromwich West, won her historic victory by a decisive 134-vote majority. It is the first time since World War II that a member of the opposition party has held the job.

Her appointment was contested, for the first time since 1951. Five Conservatives are known to have said they were interested, but despite a frantic last-minute campaign, only two, the former Northern Ireland Secretary, Peter Brooke, and former minister Sir Giles Shaw, had enough support to be potential candidates.

Sir Edward Heath, who as the new Father of the House presided over the election, called on Mr Brooke's supporters first to put their case. They were followed by the former Conservative cabinet minister, John Biffen, who proposed the amendment to substitute Miss Boothroyd's name.

More than 70 Conservative MPs filed in to the lobby to vote for her, and her election was carried without asking for more candidates.

MPs broke with Commons protocol by standing and applauding her to her chair.

Clearly moved, she said, "I wish to thank the House for the very great honour it has bestowed on me. I pray that I shall justify its confidence and I pledge that I shall do all in my power to preserve the Speakership and its traditions."

The Prime Minister, John Major, congratulated her and said, "You have become our Speaker-elect because this House trusts you. It believes you enjoy in abundance the qualities necessary to protect and sustain the House and to safeguard its rights. The fact that it was a contested election adds, I believe, to your success."

Miss Boothroyd, 62, is from Yorkshire, and worked for Britain's most famous chorus line dancers, the Tiller girls, before she became an MP in 1974. During the last five years, as deputy Speaker, she became popular with MPs across the political divide. She is known for her briskness and good humour. Famously, when MPs asked what to call her when she took up the post of deputy Speaker, she replied, "Call me Madam."

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Betty Boothroyd was re-elected Speaker unopposed in 1997, serving a total of eight years before her retirement in October 2000.

She was immensely popular, both at home and abroad, for her warmth and humour while in the second-highest office in British government.

She became renowned for her forthright, distinctive style when bringing MPs to order. She astonished the Commons on the first time she presided over Prime Minister's Question Time, when she closed the session by saying, "Right - time's up!" It became one of her catchphrases.

She was succeeded by another Labour MP, Michael Martin, who faced opposition from a record 12 alternative candidates.

Betty Boothroyd was granted a life peerage, and took her seat in the House of Lords as Baroness Boothroyd of Sandwell in January 2001.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
 Mar. 21-Apr. 19
 Someone close to you may need help. You may have difficulties with someone who lives with you. Your ability to visualize will help you convince others of the possibilities.

TAURUS
 Apr. 20-May. 20
 Check your personal papers and make sure everything is in order. Get involved in sports groups or hobbies that attract you. You will have to be careful not to let others find out about your intentions.

GEMINI
 May. 21-Jun. 21
 Opportunities to meet new lovers will evolve through your interaction with groups or fundraising functions. Don't get involved in other people's problems. Don't let others bait you into arguments.

CANCER
 Jun. 22-Jul. 22
 Don't take your frustrations out on the ones you love. You may find that children are not as accepting as you have been. If you want to make your mark, try to get involved in projects that will bring you some glory.

LEO
 Jul. 23-Aug. 22
 Money may slip through your fingers. You will be looking for creative ways to make a little extra cash. Don't allow your personal problems to interfere with your professionalism.

VIRGO
 Aug. 23-Sep. 22
 Difficulties with your mate may lead to isolation. Don't expect others to live up to their promises and you won't be disappointed or find yourself stuck with delays. It's time to get yourself back on track.

LIBRA
 Sep. 23-Oct. 22
 You need activity. You will accomplish the most in the work environment today. Do not get upset about situations you cannot change. Power through them.

SCORPIO
 Oct. 23-Nov. 21
 Try not to hurt your partner's feelings. Today is a good day for romance. You may find some difficulties but persevere and you will discover new things about your partner.

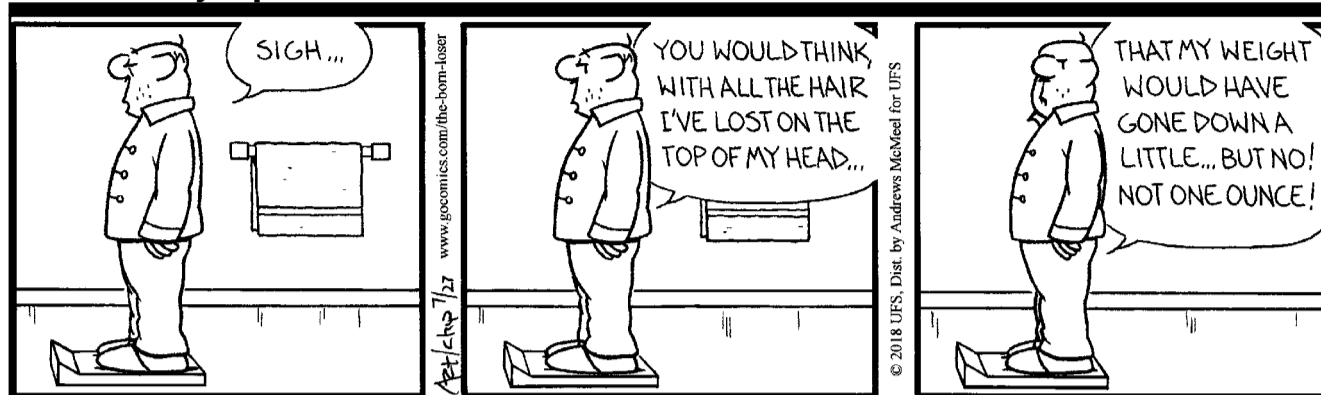
SAGITTARIUS
 Nov. 22-Dec. 21
 Travel will be enjoyable but could be expensive. Your interest in religion and philosophy may lead you to specific destinations. Take a close look at any contracts you've signed.

CAPRICORN
 Dec. 22-Jan. 19
 You may want to take a look at courses offered at a local institute. You can have quite the romantic adventure if you take time to get to know your mate all over again.

AQUARIUS
 Jan. 20-Feb. 18
 Your bankbook will suffer and your restrictions will put a damper on your relationship. This day was meant for love. Make creative changes to your residence. Trips will be exciting.

PISCES
 Feb. 19-Mar. 20
 You should make special plans for you and your lover. Use your own ideas to further your interests. Be aware that joint financial ventures could fall apart.

The Born Loser by Chip Sanson



SUDOKU

EASY

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

EASY+

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

MEDIUM

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

HARD

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					2
				8	
5			2		
		8		6	
1					
	3				5
		6	8		
		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

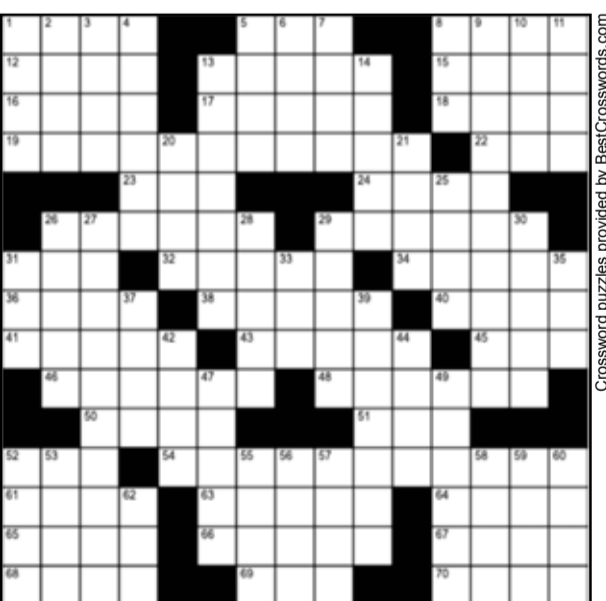
CROSSWORDS

ACROSS: 1- Balance; 5- Whimper; 8- Treaty; 12- lams alternative; 13- Men; 15- Memo opener; 16- Arrest; 17- Like a roc; 18- Old Pontiacs; 19- Between teeth; 22- bin ein Berliner; 23- Cub Scout group; 24- Gym counts; 26- Observes Yom Kippur; 29- Many; 31- Skater Midori; 32- Willow; 34- Mother-of-pearl; 36- Oklahoma Native; 38- Roofing stone; 40- Former name of Thailand; 41- Part of TNT; 43- Shrimplike crustaceans; 45- Latin I verb; 46- Hard to please; 48- Fit to be eaten; 50- Bishop of Rome; 51- Chemical ending; 52- Paleozoic, for one; 54- The study of ghosts; 61- Minus; 63- Thin as ___; 64- Desperate; 65- Permits; 66- Hard candy; 67- Bhutan's continent; 68- Summer coolers; 69- Date; 70- Department store department;

DOWN: 1- Wife of a rajah; 2- Brio; 3- Roasting rod; 4- Holy city?; 5- Rescue; 6- Actress Lena; 7- Defeat; 8- Hog; 9- Antagonistic; 10- Gator's cousin; 11- New Ager John; 13- Insanity; 14- Growl angrily; 20- City in Western Nevada; 21- Boxer Spinks; 25- School orgs.; 26- Top story; 27- Dentifrice; 28- Like corn tassels; 29- Bandleader Shaw; 30- Picture border; 31- It's not free of charge; 33- Musical aptitude; 35- Comedian Philips; 37- Switch back?; 39- On in years; 42- "My fault!"; 44- Start to type?; 47- Flower-part; 49- Old woman; 52- Raines of film; 53- Oboe, e.g.; 55- Love deity; 56- Racer Yarborough; 57- One with a glazed look, perhaps; 58- River to the Seine; 59- Sheepish look; 60- Votes for; 62- Conscriptio.org;

Friday's solution

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



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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

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DIARY OF SAMUEL PEPYS SHOWS HOW LIFE UNDER THE BUBONIC PLAGUE MIRRORED TODAY

UTE LOTZ-HEUMANN,
UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

IN early April, writer Jen Miller urged New York Times readers to start a coronavirus diary.

"Who knows," she wrote, "maybe one day your diary will provide a valuable window into this period."

During a different pandemic, one 17th-century British naval administrator named Samuel Pepys did just that. He fastidiously kept a diary from 1660 to 1669 – a period of time that included a severe outbreak of the bubonic plague in London. Epidemics have always haunted humans, but rarely do we get such a detailed glimpse into one person's life during a crisis from so long ago.

There were no Zoom meetings, drive-through testing or ventilators in 17th-century London. But Pepys' diary reveals that there were some striking resemblances in how people responded to the pandemic.

A CREEPING SENSE OF CRISIS

For Pepys and the inhabitants of London, there was no way of knowing whether an outbreak of the plague that occurred in the parish of St. Giles, a poor area outside the city walls, in late 1664 and early 1665 would become an epidemic.

The plague first entered Pepys' consciousness enough to warrant a diary entry on April 30, 1665: "Great fears of the Sickenesse here in the City," he wrote, "it being said that two or three houses are already shut up. God preserve us all."

Pepys continued to live his life normally until the beginning of June, when, for the first time, he saw houses "shut up" – the term his contemporaries used for quarantine – with his own eyes, "marked with a red cross upon the doors, and 'Lord have mercy upon us' writ there." After this, Pepys became increasingly troubled by the outbreak.

He soon observed corpses being taken to their burial in the streets, and a number of his acquaintances died, including his own physician.

By mid-August, he had drawn up his will, writing, "that I shall be in much better state of soul, I hope, if it should please the Lord to call me away this sickly time." Later that month, he wrote of deserted streets; the pedestrians he encountered were "walking like people that had taken leave of the world."

TRACKING MORTALITY COUNTS

In London, the Company of Parish Clerks printed "bills of mortality," the weekly tallies of



A cart for transporting the dead in London during the Great Plague, by George Cruikshank, nineteenth century

burials. Because these lists noted London's burials – not deaths – they undoubtedly undercounted the dead. Just as we follow these numbers closely today, Pepys documented the growing number of plague victims in his diary.

At the end of August, he cited the bill of mortality as having recorded 6,102 victims of the plague, but feared "that the true number of the dead this week is near 10,000," mostly because the victims among the urban poor weren't counted. A week later, he noted the official number of 6,978 in one week, "a most dreadful Number."

By mid-September, all attempts to control the plague were failing. Quarantines were not being enforced, and people gathered in places like the Royal Exchange. Social distancing, in short, was not happening.

He was equally alarmed by people attending funerals in spite of official orders. Although plague victims were supposed to be interred at night, this system broke down as well, and Pepys griped

that burials were taking place "in broad daylight."

DESPERATE FOR REMEDIES

There are few known effective treatment options for Covid-19. Medical and scientific research need time, but people hit hard by the virus are willing to try anything. Fraudulent treatments, from teas and colloidal silver, to cognac and cow urine, have been floated.

Although Pepys lived during the Scientific Revolution, nobody in the 17th century knew that the *Yersinia pestis* bacterium carried by fleas caused the plague. Instead, the era's scientists theorized that the plague was spreading through miasma, or "bad air" created by rotting organic matter and identifiable by its foul smell. Some of the most popular measures to combat the plague involved purifying the air by smoking tobacco or by holding herbs and spices in front of one's nose.

Tobacco was the first remedy that Pepys sought during the plague outbreak. In early June, seeing shut-up houses "put me

into an ill conception of myself and my smell, so that I was forced to buy some roll-tobacco to smell ... and chaw." Later, in July, a noble patroness gave him "a bottle of plague-water" – a medicine made from various herbs. But he wasn't sure whether any of this was effective. Having participated in a coffeehouse discussion about "the plague growing upon us in this town and remedies against it," he could only conclude that "some saying one thing, some another."

During the outbreak, Pepys was also very concerned with his frame of mind; he constantly mentioned that he was trying to be in good spirits. This was not only an attempt to "not let it get to him" – as we might say today – but also informed by the medical theory of the era, which claimed that an imbalance of the so-called humors in the body – blood, black bile, yellow bile and phlegm – led to disease.

Melancholy – which, according to doctors, resulted from an excess of black bile – could be dan-

gerous to one's health, so Pepys sought to suppress negative emotions; on Sept. 14, for example, he wrote that hearing about dead friends and acquaintances "doth put me into great apprehensions of melancholy. [...] But I put off the thoughts of sadness as much as I can."

BALANCING PARANOIA AND RISK

Humans are social animals and thrive on interaction, so it's no surprise that so many have found social distancing during the coronavirus pandemic challenging. It can require constant risk assessment: How close is too close? How can we avoid infection and keep our loved ones safe, while also staying sane? What should we do when someone in our house develops a cough?

During the plague, this sort of paranoia also abounded. Pepys found that when he left London and entered other towns, the townspeople became visibly nervous about visitors.

"They are afeared of us that come to them," he wrote in mid-July, "insomuch that I am troubled at it."

Pepys succumbed to paranoia himself: In late July, his servant Will suddenly developed a headache. Fearing that his entire house would be shut up if a servant came down with the plague, Pepys mobilized all his other servants to get Will out of the house as quickly as possible. It turned out that Will didn't have the plague, and he returned the next day.

In early September, Pepys refrained from wearing a wig he bought in an area of London that was a hotspot of the disease, and he wondered whether other people would also fear wearing wigs because they could potentially be made of the hair of plague victims.

And yet he was willing to risk his health to meet certain needs; by early October, he visited his mistress without any regard for the danger: "round about and next door on every side is the plague, but I did not value it but there did what I could con ella."

Just as people around the world eagerly wait for a falling death toll as a sign of the pandemic letting up, so did Pepys derive hope – and perhaps the impetus to see his mistress – from the first decline in deaths in mid-September. A week later, he noted a substantial decline of more than 1,800.

Let's hope that, like Pepys, we'll soon see some light at the end of the tunnel.

OPINION

World Views

Aaron Brown, Bloomberg

SENATORS' STOCK TRADES WOULD MAKE A POKER CHEAT BLUSH

One dispiriting story of the Covid-19 pandemic is that four U.S. senators sold hundreds of thousands of dollars of stock in the days after getting a classified briefing on the expanding coronavirus in January. The trades paid off as the virus spread and stocks crashed. This development is more interesting in a positive way than suggested by the news coverage, in that it shows efforts to clamp down on potential insider trading by members of Congress have largely worked. Even so, more needs to be done.

I'm a poker player. Cheating in poker is harder than most people think. It's relatively easy to deal yourself or a partner good cards. You don't need much practice for that, but it has minimal value. You can accomplish the same thing by merely throwing away your bad hands and only playing the good ones. To make money against good players, you need to deal other people very good cards, and yourself better cards, in statistically unusual ways. Since good players are relying on statistics, by subverting the odds, you can make money. But this becomes obvious pretty quickly. No one hand proves anything, but the build up of unusual events needed to make significant profits stands out clearly.

This is what members of Congress have been doing at least since 1978, when the Ethics in Government Act required disclosure of stock transactions. Researchers who have studied the transactions that were subsequently disclosed found clear statistical evidence of misuse of confidential information.

Any single trade could be luck or even skillful use of public information, and any one member of Congress could be lucky or skillful. But the overall record was inconsistent with honesty. Profits were considerably better than Warren Buffett managed. It defies credulity that the average member of Congress is that much better at stock picking than Warren Buffett.

I was skeptical when Congress passed the Stock Act of 2012, which bars insider trading by lawmakers, because I don't trust reforms passed by the people who need reforming. The act did not say much beyond the old ethics rules, and didn't have sharp teeth. On top of that, even most of the dull teeth were quietly pulled a year later without a recorded vote.

A new study published on April 22 by the National Bureau of Economic Research titled "Relief Rally: Senators As Feckless As the Rest of Us at Stock Picking" shows the Stock Act worked. Congressional stock trading dropped 77%, and abnormal profits disappeared. Incidentally, this is one more nail in the coffin for the claim that pre-2012 trading was innocent. After all, why would stronger reporting requirements discourage legitimate trading and destroy trading skill?

But bad behavior doesn't disappear when outlawed, it just changes. Getting back to poker, a different suspicious circumstance is when a new player sits at the table and gets a royal flush on the first hand. This is different from the regular player who might be cheating. Here there is specific evidence from one hand, not accumulation over many hands. The Relief Rally paper documents that the stock trading after the coronavirus briefing was entirely unlike any other in the eight years since the Stock Act became law.

Normally, Congressional buying and selling balance out, and almost all trades are under \$15,000. After the briefing, there were the normal number of small buys and sells, and these trades did not do abnormally well. But there was a flood of 60 large sells, without matching buys, that did very well—not just because the market as a whole went down, but because the specific stocks sold did worse than the market. The paper further documents that the happy results cannot be plausibly explained by known market factors unrelated to the virus.

This result meets standard tests of statistical significance in that it's unlikely to be random chance. But that's for all 60 trades combined. Any one senator could have been lucky or skillful. But when four people sit at the poker table and all get exceptional cards on the only hand they are dealt in eight years, it's wise to find another game. [Abridged]

Hong Kong police rejected an application by a pro-democracy labor group to hold a march on May 1, citing concerns about public health and security risks, the government said in a statement on Friday.

The Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions had proposed to hold the march in groups of four spaced at least 1.5 meters apart. It expressed concern in a Facebook post that the police were using laws against gathering to suppress freedom of expression and called for a detailed explanation.

"We will appeal and are in talks with lawyers," Carol Ng, chairperson of the confederation said in a video posted on the group's Facebook page.

"We understand the need to balance public health and to continue with the anti-gathering measures."

Police regarded public meetings and processions as "high-risk activities with crowd gatherings," according to the government statement. They cited the increased risk of spreading coronavirus among participants as well as concerns about public safety.

Pro-democracy protesters staged a demonstration at a luxury downtown mall at lunchtime on Friday in defiance of the ban on gatherings of more than four people. About 100 people rallied at the International Finance Centre in Central in one of the largest protests since the coronavirus outbreak began earlier this year.

HK BOOKSTORE UNDER ATTACK IN CHINA REOPENS IN TAIWAN



THE part-owner of a Hong Kong bookstore specializing in texts critical of China's leaders reopened his shop in Taiwan on Saturday after fleeing Hong Kong due to legal troubles, saying he was grateful for the chance to make China's Communist rulers "less than happy."

The opening and accompanying news conference came days after Lam Wing-kee was splattered with red paint by a masked man while sitting alone at a coffee shop in Taiwan. Lam suffered no serious physical injuries and showed little sign of the attack other than a red tint to his hair.

China's leaders don't want to allow a bookstore selling tomes that would "make them uncomfortable or impact on their political power," Lam, who moved to Taiwan a year ago, told journalists.

He thanked supporters in both Taiwan and Hong Kong, a semi-autonomous Chinese territory, for the opportunity to start over. "This makes [China's leaders] less than happy," said Lam, who raised nearly \$200,000 through online fundraising to finance his new venture.

Commenting on last Tuesday's assault, Lam said the Communist Party appeared to think it could stifle the shop's business in both Hong Kong

and Taiwan by using "underhanded methods of all sorts."

However, on a slightly pessimistic note, he added that China's policies had left little room for idealistic young Hong Kongers other than "into the big sea."

Lam was one of five shareholders and staff at the Causeway Bay Book shop in Hong Kong, which sold books and magazines purporting to reveal secrets about the inside lives of Chinese leaders and the scandals surrounding them.

Along with others, he was taken across the border and put into Chinese custody in 2015, but was released on bail and allowed to return to Hong Kong in June 2016 in order to recover information about his customers stored on a computer.

After refusing to return to China, he went public with accusations that he had been kidnapped and brought to the mainland, where he says he was interrogated under duress about his business. Following the detentions, the shop was forced to close while edgy political texts have largely disappeared from mainstream book retailers under pressure from Beijing.

Lam moved to Taiwan last year amid fears over proposed legislation that

would have allowed suspects to be extradited to China, likely face torture and unfair trials. Concerns over the legislation, which was later withdrawn, sparked months of sometimes violent protests in Hong Kong, a former British colony that has retained its own legal, political and economic system after being handed over to the mainland in 1997.

Hong Kong police last week arrested 15 prominent lawyers and opposition figures over their alleged involvement in the protests, prompting further concerns that the city's civil liberties are being eroded by China's increasingly stringent political controls.

Although claimed by Beijing as its own territory, self-governing Taiwan, with its flourishing democracy and robust defense of civil rights, has become a safe haven for critics of the Chinese government.

Two high school students who turned out for Saturday's event at the minuscule shop on the 10th floor of a business building in Taipei's Zhongshan District said they saw its reopening as a sign of both hope and defiance. "I think that this bookstore coming to Taiwan makes us Taiwanese extremely proud. We can give Hong Kong a helping hand," said one of the students. MDT/AP



Israel's embattled health minister yesterday said he would step down following a public uproar over his handling of the coronavirus crisis and his own COVID-19 infection. Health Minister Yaakov Litzman informed Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that he would step aside as the country forms a new government.

Germany's labor minister wants to enshrine into law the right to work from home if it is feasible to do so, even after the coronavirus pandemic subsides. Labor Minister Hubertus Heil told yesterday's edition of the Bild am Sonntag newspaper that he aims to put forward such legislation this fall.



Netherlands A group of 25 Dutch high school students with very little sailing experience ended a trans-Atlantic voyage yesterday that was forced on them by coronavirus restrictions. The children, ages 14 to 17, watched over by 12 experienced crew members and three teachers, were on an educational cruise of the Caribbean when the pandemic forced them to radically change their plans.



Somalia A police officer in Somalia's capital has been arrested in the fatal shooting of at least one civilian while enforcing coronavirus restrictions, fellow officer Ahmed Muse said Saturday. The shooting Friday evening sparked protests in Mogadishu that continued Saturday with crowds of angry young men burning tires and demanding justice.