

The Macao SAR Government urges:

- Let's all persist;
- Wash hands frequently;
- Wear a mask properly;
- Avoid crowd gathering;
- Keep a social distance;
- Declare health conditions;
- Reduce leaving Macao.

Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Centre

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A COVID-19 PATIENT WHO WAS DISCHARGED FROM HOSPITAL ISOLATION HAS TESTED POSITIVE AGAIN, BUT HE IS IN GOOD HEALTH

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TRIAL OF FORMER IPIM CHIEF ACCUSED OF CORRUPTION POSTPONED

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1990s GANGSTER RETURNED TO MACAU WHERE HE WILL STAND TRIAL FOR THEFTS AMOUNTING TO 43 MILLION PATACAS

P6

AP PHOTO



China's ambassador reportedly warned Australia that its pursuit of a coronavirus inquiry could set off a boycott by Chinese consumers. China also cited faults with the U.S. response to the outbreak and called for Washington itself to admit error. "Indeed, lately in the U.S. many people are questioning whether the U.S. government responded in a timely and effective manner and there are concerns," Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said yesterday.

AP PHOTO



North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's prolonged public absence has led to rumors of ill health and worries about how it could influence the future of what one analyst calls Northeast Asia's "Achilles' heel," a reference to the North's belligerence and unpredictable nature. But there's a basic, unanswered question, debated by the media and government intelligence services alike: Are the rumors even true? More on p8

AP PHOTO



Thailand yesterday reported the country's lowest number of new cases of the coronavirus in more than six weeks, as the government considers easing some restrictions imposed to control the spread of the virus. Nine new confirmed cases were reported, the smallest single-day increase since March 14. Thailand has confirmed 2,931 cases, including 52 deaths. A proposal will be submitted to the Cabinet today for easing restrictions according to suggestions from the state planning agency.

More on backpage

LAWMAKERS WANT ANSWERS ON CASINO DEAL DETAILS

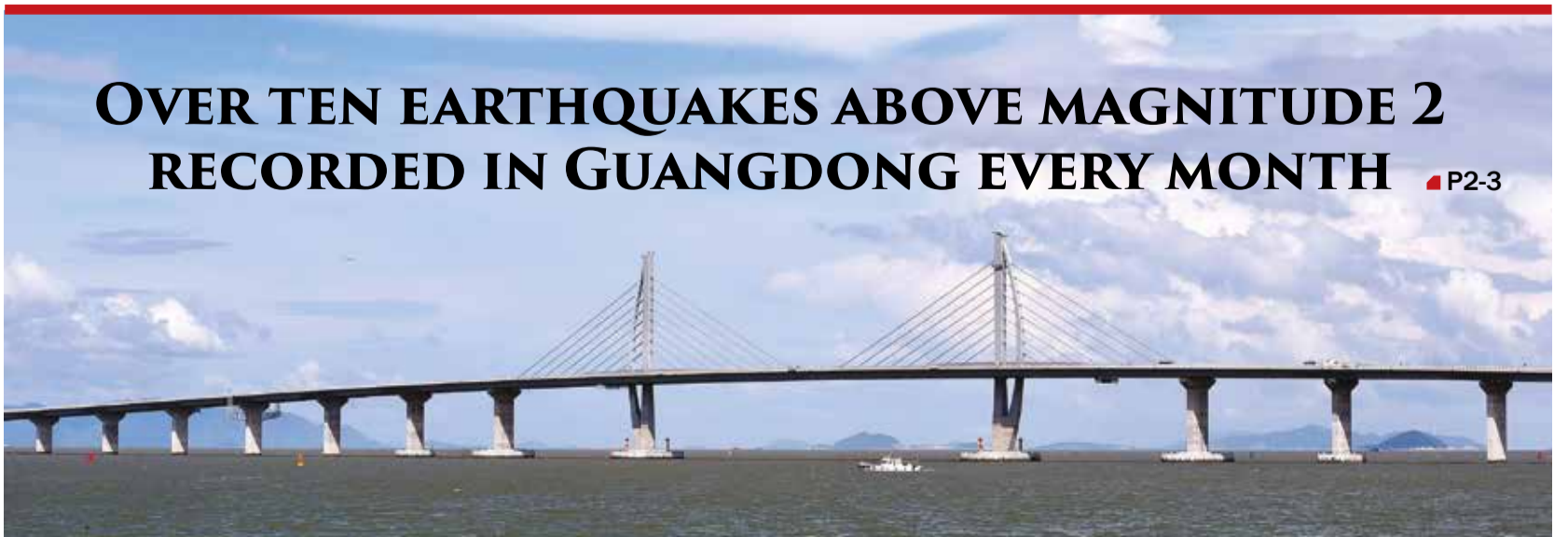
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BLOOMBERG



OVER TEN EARTHQUAKES ABOVE MAGNITUDE 2 RECORDED IN GUANGDONG EVERY MONTH

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XINHUA

City's urban planning unfit to

LYNZY VALLES

MACAU'S urban infrastructure could not cope with even an earthquake of medium intensity, researchers have indicated to the Times, citing the apparent lack of earthquake-resistant structures across the city.

Asia's gambling hub is missing earthquake mitigation in its urban planning as the city's high-rise buildings, complex infrastructures, and urban and touristic facilities may not be able to withstand earthquakes.

Earth science experts contacted by the Times warned that there is a need to raise awareness about the earthquake tremors that have been felt recently in the city, adding that even though they are only tremors, the risks should not be underestimated.

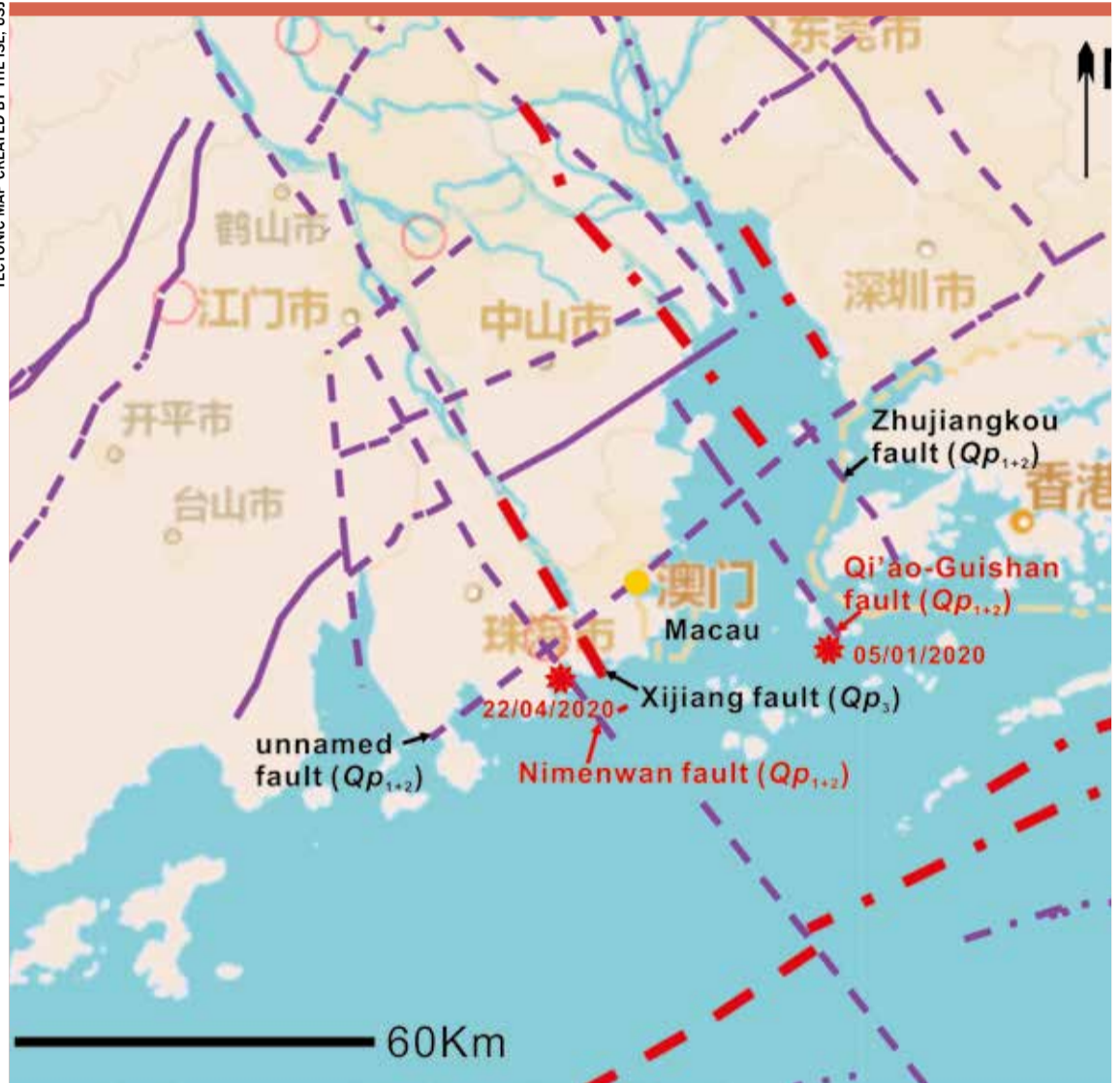
Recent low-magnitude earthquakes in neighboring regions such as Guangdong Province have been barely registered in Macau.

Last week, a magnitude 2.2 earthquake was detected with the epicenter located approximately 21 kilometers southwest of Macau. Some netizens said on social media that they had felt the tremor. In general, the population can only notice seismic activity when magnitudes are above 2 to 3.

Ágata Alveirinho Dias, an associate professor from the Institute of Science and Environment at the University of Saint Joseph expressed her belief that while the region must expect low-magnitude earthquakes, there is an outside chance that more disastrous earthquakes could actually occur.

Dias, who is a geology expert, said that despite moderate levels of seismic activity in the city, the population must be prepared for the occurrence of low to moderate earthquakes with some frequency.

"Macau lies within an active seismic area (the Lianhuashan seismic zone) and



Location of the epicentre of two recent earthquakes and spatially related active faults (dashed lines) in the Zhuhai-Macau and surrounding areas

is directly affected by the other ones. The seismic activity is, contrarily to what is believed, frequent but usually of low magnitude," said Dias.

The probability of strong earthquakes (magnitude 8 or above) occurring is extremely low. Even magnitude 6 earthquakes are very rare for Macau, according to Dias.

"If a seismic activity of magnitudes 2 to 3 is almost undetectable for most people, and the damage is none or residual, the same is not true for magnitudes 4 to 6 earthquakes. They can cause significant impacts, particularly if the population and structures such as buildings and bridges are not

prepared," said Dias. "There are some earthquake-proof buildings in Macau [such as] the Macau Tower and the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge, but

Since the city has changed dramatically in line with rapid economic growth, the large concentration of high-rise buildings, complex infrastructures, urban and touristic facilities, and a significant proportion of reclaimed land face potential seismic risks.

To answer whether the city is prepared to face a moderate earthquake, Dias believes that the recent small earthquake plays a significant part in educating the population on how to act during

these events and encouraging the integration of earthquake mitigation in the city's urban planning.

"If these small tremors



HKD BACK AT STRONG END, WITH MORE INTERVENTION LIKELY

THE Hong Kong dollar returned to the strong end of its trading band yesterday, increasing the likelihood of the city's de facto central bank stepping in to defend the peg.

The Hong Kong dollar traded at 7.7500 per greenback yesterday afternoon, according to data compiled by Bloomberg. It has strengthened 0.5% this year, making it the second-best performer among 31 major currencies, after the yen.

Funds have flowed into Hong Kong to take advantage of higher interest rates relative to the greenback. In response, the Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) has sold HKD7.71 billion (\$995 million) of local dollars since first intervening on April 21.

The Hong Kong dollar is pegged to the U.S. dollar in a band that ranges between HKD7.75 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, although local banks are not obliged to follow with lower retail costs.

The selling of Hong Kong dollars by the HKMA will add to liquidity in the city, which is suffering from the effects of the coronavirus pandemic. DB/BLOOMBERG

Geologist Ágata Dias said that despite moderate levels of seismic activity in the city, the population must be prepared for the occurrence of low to moderate earthquakes with some frequency

the majority of buildings, particularly ones in older residential areas, are likely to be unfit to resist even moderate earthquakes," she added.

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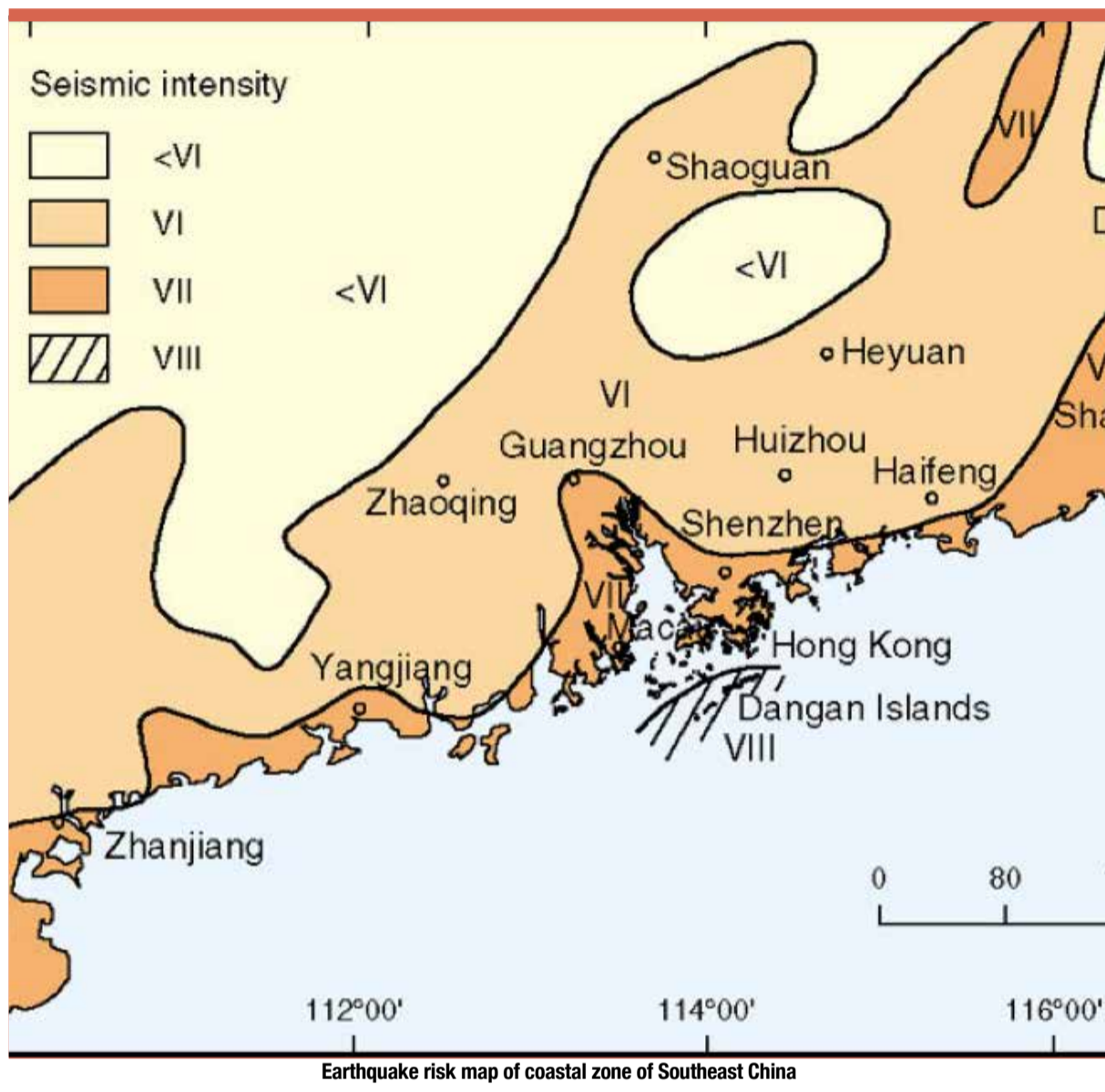
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resist even moderate earthquakes



such events," he added.

For example, study of the natural disaster should be incorporated into students' textbooks in the two SARs, he suggested. That would help students to be better prepared to deal with earthquake hazards, should they occur.

"Students should learn more about natural hazards," said Nakagawa. "Aside from flooding and extreme weather, students must also be briefed on seismic and volcanic activities and their risks. This is a good practice for their preparedness."

The recent 2.2 magnitude earthquake was the second minor earthquake that was felt in the city this year.

The first was on January 5 with a 3.5 magnitude, which occurred in the seas under the administration of the Xiangzhou District in Zhuhai.

Larger-scale earthquakes were recorded several decades ago and were felt in Macau, including the 7.3 magnitude earthquake recorded on February 13, 1918 in Nan'ao, Guangdong.

The recent two earthquakes were generated by faults from the Lianhuashan seismic zone, however they were located in different faults. The latest one was due to the movement of the Nimenwan fault, whereas the previous earthquake had its epicentre in waters southeast of Macau and is spatially related to the Qi'ao-Guishan fault.

According to Nakagawa, the geologic map of Hong Kong, Macau, and Guangdong Province shows several faults but many of their activities are inactive.

However, they could be reactivated if the geologic setting changes due to the dynamics configuration of the Earth. According to the current geological feature, Hong Kong and Macau seem to be located in the stable plate.

On average, more than 10 earthquakes above magnitude 2 are recorded in Guangdong Province every month. During just one year, dozens of tremors can be recorded in the estuary of the Pearl River alone.

Dias explained that the theory of plate tectonics suggests the occurrence of most earthquakes, since they result from repeated accumulation and release of tension at the contacts between differentially moving plates.

The most damaging earthquakes occur along plate boundaries, which explains why stronger earthquakes are usually noted in regions on or adjacent to subduction zones such as Japan, Indonesia, Taiwan and the Philippines.

More than 90% of earthquakes have their origin at plate boundaries, however intraplate seismic events that take place far away from the plate boundaries, also occur.

"Although Macau is relatively close to major plate boundaries, such as the contacts between the Eurasian-Philippines plates and the Eurasian-Australian plates, it is located intraplate, that is, far from a direct influence of the boundaries movement between those plates," explained Dias.

"This fact explains why seismic activity is weaker and less frequent than, for example, in Taiwan or Japan," Dias added.

could serve to promote population awareness and a rethinking of strategies that can help to mitigate the effect of a possible stronger earthquake, then, these small quakes are welcome," said the expert.

Takashi Nakagawa, an associate professor at The University of Hong Kong's Department of

Earth Sciences said that the effects of earthquakes, even those that occur in nearby regions, should not be downplayed.

Nakagawa said that although the probability of moderate seismic activity occurring in Macau is low, the risk and the extent of damage is relatively high.

"Many Hong Kong and Macau people believe that the risk of an earthquake is low, which is a dangerous thought," the academic told the Times.

"I would recommend people living here to learn the mechanism of the earthquake and its risks as soon as possible. Then they can prepare for the future impact from

COVID-19

Patient who tested positive again remains in good health

JULIE ZHU

A Covid-19 patient who was discharged from hospital isolation has tested positive again during his convalescence period, as announced during yesterday's daily press conference of the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Center.

The patient is the 15th confirmed case in the city. He left the Conde S. Januário Hospital (CHCSJ) on April 12 and entered a convalescence period at the Public Health Clinical Centre in Coloane.

On April 25 and 26, which were his 13th and 14th days at the Coloane center, he tested positive for Covid-19.

According to Lo Iek Long, medical director at CHCSJ, from the first day of testing positive for Covid-19, the patient did not experience any discomfort. During his entire treatment at the hospital, he did not manifest any Covid-19 symptoms and remained "strong." He was also asymptomatic during the convalescence at the Coloane health center.

Lo said that the situation in which a patient tests positive again is normal and well-understood by medical professionals globally.

Globally, there have been cases in which patients have tested positive again after fully recovering or after testing negative from the virus. According to Lo, between 1% and 4% of patients worldwide have tested positive again after recovery. From a medicinal science perspective, it is a normal phenomenon.

The SAR government

will not relocate the patient back to hospital isolation but will keep him at the Coloane health center until another two negative test results are recorded.

Lo also affirmed that the health authority has been implementing the same medical measures and standards at both the hospital and the Coloane center. Medical professionals working at the Coloane center and CHCSJ are from the same medical team, according to Lo.

In saying this, Lo reminded the public not to

worry whether this patient has already transmitted the virus to others, because he was still under a high-standard medical monitoring during his convalescence.

Yesterday, the 32nd patient was discharged from hospital and is now in isolation at the Coloane health center. In total, Macau still has 13 patients with Covid-19. Eight are receiving medical treatment at the public hospital and five are in the Coloane health center. A further twenty people are in

convalescence.

Yesterday also marks the 19th day no new cases of Covid-19 were registered.

From yesterday, the Education and Youth Affairs Bureau (DSEJ) has been performing nucleic and screening tests for Covid-19 on all teachers, school staff and cross-border students ahead of class resumption. As of 5 p.m. yesterday, 758 teaching staff had been tested. According to Lo, currently, the public hospital can perform 2,000 tests per day.

RENATO MARQUES

POLICY ADDRESS

Lawmakers hone in on economic relief

THE implementation of relief measures to help companies and individuals to face the economic crisis generated by the Covid-19 outbreak, as well as questions on the renewal of the gaming licenses due to expire in 2022, together drew the most interest from lawmakers during yesterday's discussion of the sectorial policies for the economy at the Legislative Assembly (AL).

The lawmakers wanted to know from Secretary for Economy and Finance Lei Wai Nong how some of the measures previously announced to support the revitalization of the economy would be implemented. They also asked if the government intends to extend some of them to help local society adjust to a forecasted long period in which the aftermath of the coronavirus will still be felt by both families and enterprises.

In addition, several lawmakers aired concerns over the expiration of gaming concessions due to occur in June 2022.

The lawmakers took the opportunity of the presence of Secretary Lei at the AL to ask for more details and a schedule on how the process for the tendering of the new concessions will take place.



'CLEAR PICTURE' ON NEW CASINO DEALS THIS YEAR

To the many questions of legislators on the topic of the

new gaming concessions and the laws that will rule them, Secretary Lei announced that when the government laun-

ches the public consultation document on the topic - which he assured will happen within this year - all the lawmakers'

questions, as well as doubts from stakeholders, will be cleared.

"When we publish the [pu-

AD

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measures and plan for casino concessions



blic] consultation document, I think everyone will have a clear idea about the direction we want to go and what we want to do [regarding the new gaming concessions]," Lei finally said in reply to a suggestion of lawmaker Angela Leong calling for the introduction of a rule to guarantee that a percentage of profits from casino operators would have to be mandatorily invested in projects in Macau.

On the topic, Lei also advanced that the public consultation will aim to collect opinions from across society for the legal production of new regulations that will support the tender. They will include "elements related to non-gaming activities, corporate social responsibility of the concessionaires as well as the support paid by the gaming concessionaires to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and micro-enterprises.

Several other lawmakers, including gaming scholar Davis Fong, questioned the secretary on the topic, noting that time is running short for a proper evaluation and legal production of the tender regulations.

To such concerns, Lei replied that he and his staff have been working on the matter since he took office. He said that the government is now in a position to make better assessments than during the last round of concessions in 2001.

"We will prepare the consultation well," said Lei. "We will not just look at the bigger picture but we will also pay attention to the details."

Lawmakers Ella Lei and Wang Sai Man suggested that both non-gaming contribu-

tions and the support and integration of SMEs in the businesses of the concessionaires should be included in the new concessions. These lawmakers said such measures would help to drive the city's economic diversification forward and that it would safeguard the many jobs among the resident population that are closely tied to, or dependent on, the casino sector.

RELIEF MEASURES DESIGNED TO BOOST CONSUMPTION

Secretary Lei explained yesterday that the main objectives behind the economy relief measures adopted by the administration in recent months is to stimulate internal consumption and develop infrastructure works.

Questioned on the measures that the government has already launched, Lei explained that they seek to boost internal consumption over the remainder of the year.

For Lei, this allows the government to address the problems in a more "proactive manner," and "revitalize the economy with effective measures that can be immediately absorbed by the market."

"When the epidemic stabilizes in China and Hong Kong, we can have more people circulating and coming to Macau," said Lei, when pressed on what the government has in store next.

"This does not mean that consumption will be reestablished immediately, but step-by-step we will achieve that," he added. "We hope to offer accommodation fares at lower

prices and to do other kinds of promotions related to restaurants and similar establishments to stimulate the consumption [from visitors]. This will influence many business sectors, including tour guides."

LABOR ISSUES REQUIRE A CHANGE OF MINDSET

Another of the topics that raised many concerns from lawmakers was related to labor conflicts, a rise in the unemployment rate of residents, and measures taken by the companies that terminated contracts and left a large number of workers either on unpaid leave or made redundant.

In reply to these lawmakers, who included Sulu Sou, Au Kam San, Agnes Lam, José Pereira Coutinho, Ella Lei, and others, the Secretary for Economy and Finance said that the mindset of local workers needed to change.

"There are many job positions that historically have a low occupancy rate by resident workers, but at these times when there is a change in the economy, maybe locals need to rethink and consider accepting some of these jobs. The current economic situation calls for special measures."

Lawmaker Ella Lei was calling yesterday for non-local workers to be replaced by Macau residents. But the Secretary replied that Macau "cannot depend only on local workers."

He said that the policy of the government of having non-resident workers patch critical labor shortages has not changed. "We cannot depend only on local workers. We know we need

non-resident workers for many positions such as hotel staff, cleaning, security, and restaurant-related jobs."

In reply to Sou, Lei also advanced that the latest data showed nearly 1,600 workers have already been made redundant. For these cases, the secretary said that the Labour Affairs Bureau has already found alternative positions for around 700 of them which involved in the majority of the cases a change from jobs in civil construction sector to other industries.

As for the others, "they will start receiving an unemployment subsidy that will grant them 150 patacas per day while we are trying [to find them other employment]."

Several lawmakers also expressed their concern regarding university and high school students who are about to graduate. They asked what the government will do to help newly-graduated students entering the workforce for the first time this year.

According to lawmaker Chan Hong, there will be around 4,500 new graduates trying to find a job this year.

Secretary Lei admitted that new graduates might struggle to find work once they conclude their studies. He said he is in talks with large companies in the SAR to promote internships with a duration of three months, so that the new workforce entrants can gain experience. Meanwhile, these companies can decide who they might want to hire once the economic climate improves.

Lei added that he hopes that not only gaming and hospitali-

ty companies can participate in this program, but also firms in the finance and insurance sectors.

MANY MORE UNANSWERED PROPOSALS

Some of the questions and suggestions made by lawmakers yesterday went unanswered.

Among them was a proposal from lawmaker Mak Soi Kun to grant to all local residents a second handout this year.

The handout is the colloquial term for the cash disbursement policy officially known as the Wealth Partaking Scheme. Under the scheme, this year permanent residents are entitled to receive 10,000 patacas and non-permanent residents 6,000 patacas.

The lawmaker's proposal was based on the idea that, according to Mak, the existing measures advanced by the government are insufficient to cushion the local population from the economic fallout of Covid-19.

Meanwhile, lawmakers Chan Hong and Leong Sun Iok want the government to find a solution to control the prices of fuel products. While Chan proposed the indexation of prices to those in international markets, Leong suggested the creation of a public concession that could allow the government to exercise control over price.

Chan also wanted the government to find an exception arrangement so that all residents unable to apply for the electronic consumption vouchers due to being in the process of renewing their ID cards, will be able to do so in the second phase of the program.

COURTS

TRIAL OF FORMER IPIM CHIEF ACCUSED OF CORRUPTION POSTPONED

THE trial of Jackson Chang, former President of the Macau Trade and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM), due to commence yesterday, was postponed at the last minute.

The first hearing of the trial, in which Chang stands accused of corruption, was postponed by request of the public prosecutor after it learned that several defendants were absent without justification.

In October of 2018, Chang became the suspect of a criminal investigation for alleged irregularities at IPIM including the unlawful granting of residency status through investment and technical immigration applications.

The investigation followed a July report compiled by the Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) that exposed the irregularities, suggesting that IPIM had not done its due diligence in ensuring that investment and technical residency applications were processed according to the law.

The CCAC pointed out that IPIM lacked stringent vetting and approval mechanisms for major investment immigration applications. It also determined that the investment amounts of some major immigration investment



Jackson Chang, former President of the Macau Trade and Investment Promotion Institute

projects were too low, and a significant number of the amounts in some of the major investment immigration project applications related to immovable property investments.

When processing technical immigration applications, there were problems such as a lack of stringent vetting and approval criteria, leading to technical immigration applicants rarely

staying in Macau, and obtaining temporary residency through fictitious employment.

Chang's case has a total of 26 defendants. The prosecution has 90 witnesses, of which 10 are from the Commission Against Corruption and 16 are from IPIM.

Chang is the first defendant and faces 18 charges, including one count of criminal syndicate, four counts of bribery, one count

of breach of confidentiality, three counts of abuse of power, six counts of money laundering and three false declarations of property and interests.

Ian Iat Chun, a 48-year-old civil servant, is the second defendant. The third defendant is Glória Batalha Ung, a 57-year-old civil servant. These three defendants all previously served at IPIM. The fourth defendant is Ng Kuok Sao,

a businessman aged 48, while the fifth defendant is 51-year-old businesswoman, Annette Ng.

The other defendants include Chang's wife and daughter, as well as six individuals who allegedly obtained their Macau residency permits by bribery.

The indictment has divided the case into multiple parts, including organizing criminal groups, and bribery.

According to the indictment, Ng Kuok Sao and Annette Ng created the alleged criminal group in 2010. The pair own several companies in Macau. They are accused of forging fake employment records to make unqualified non-local people able to apply for residence in Macau, charging a high fee for the service.

After Jackson Chang was appointed as IPIM president in 2011, he came into frequent contact with Ng Kuok Sao. Since 2012, Ng Kuok Sao is said by the public prosecutor to have bribed Chang. The prosecution's indictment claimed that Ng Kuok Sao bribed Chang so that he could obtain the confidential information in IPIM's residence review procedure as well as the approval progress of an application at any time.

From 2014, Ng Kuok Sao is accused of bribing Ian Iat Chun by selling Ian properties in mainland China at a price far below the market level. Ian is accused of providing inside information for Ng Kuok Sao regarding IPIM's residence application procedure. **JZ**

AD

DISEASE CONTROL GUIDE

OVERVIEW OF NOVEL CORONAVIRUS PNEUMONIA (NCP)

- SOURCE OF INFECTION** Source of infection are mainly patients of NCP. Asymptomatic patients are also a likely source.
- MODE OF TRANSMISSION** Direct or indirect contact of respiratory droplets via the eyes, nose or mouth; the most common form of indirect contact is the touching of eyes, nose or mouth with dirty hands.
- INCUBATION PERIOD** 1-14 days (usually 3-7 days)
- CLINICAL FEATURES** Fever, tiredness, dry cough; some patients may also develop symptoms like nasal obstruction, runny nose, sore throat or diarrhoea.
- MANAGEMENT AND PROGNOSIS** Treatment is mainly supportive. Some cases are severe; fatal cases have been reported. Older patients and people with chronic diseases are at a higher risk of developing severe complications.

NCP IS TREATABLE IF DETECTED EARLY

Please scan this code to visit our special webpage on epidemics. Please stay tuned for the latest government information on the epidemic.

1990S GANGSTER RETURNED TO MACAU WHERE HE WILL STAND TRIAL

THE mainland police authority has returned a Macau resident to the Judiciary Police (PJ) who was allegedly involved in four armed-robbery cases in Macau back in the 1990s.

The man, aged 55, and his associates, were accused of committing armed robbery against a bank and multiple casinos, Casino Taipa and Lisboa Casino, between 1991 and 1994.

In total, he is believed to have been involved in four robbery cases linked to 43 million patacas in cash and casino chips.

During the robberies, the suspect was armed with a large number of weapons including pistols and rifles, and sometimes

even opened fire.

In 1994, the man and his associates were arrested in Zhuhai and given death sentences. The sentence was later changed, resulting in the man spending more than 20 years in a mainland prison. Yesterday, his jail sentence was completed and the mainland authority returned him to Macau.

The suspect's prison sentence on the mainland does not, however, pertain to crimes he stands accused of in Macau, according to the PJ.

Besides robbing banks and casinos, the man is also accused of robbing taxis, illegally accommodating criminals in Macau, and facilitating illegal immigration to Macau. The man's mainland jail

time did not account for his part in these crimes.

After the man was transferred to Macau, the PJ escorted him straight to the Coloane prison, where he will await his Macau trial.

The PJ, after discussion with mainland courts, considered it necessary for the man to also be tried in Macau.

The suspect is accused of masterminding four armed robbery cases. He was reportedly responsible for purchasing weapons as well as for planning the heists. He is also said to have enlisted other robbers from mainland China to take part in the crimes as well as provided them with accommodation and food in Macau. **JZ**

Nations, US states each chart their own path on reopening

ELENA BECATOROS,
JILL LAWLESS & NICK PERRY

NATIONS and U.S. states have begun easing coronavirus lockdowns, each pursuing their own approach but all with a common goal: restarting their economies without triggering another surge of infections.

Restrictions are being lifted piecemeal with no clear signs of coordination among countries. Some have restarted construction work, while others never shut it down in the first place. Hair salons and restaurants were reopening in some U.S. states, while elsewhere such steps are weeks away.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson was back at work yesterday after a bout with the virus that by his own account nearly cost the 55-year-old his life.

Johnson said Britain was starting to "turn the tide" on the outbreak but added "it is also the moment of maximum risk" because easing the lockdown that now lasts until May 7 could produce a spike in infections.

"I refuse to throw away all the effort and the sacrifice of the British people and to risk a second major outbreak and huge loss of life and the overwhelming of the NHS (National Health Service)," he said. "I ask you to contain your impatience."

Technology is likely to play an important role in helping countries ease their restrictions. Many governments are working on mobile virus-tracking apps and other technology, keen for automated solutions to the time-consuming task of tracing an infected person's contacts.

The apps use either geo-location data or Bluetooth technology to detect when a user comes near an infected person. But activists and researchers worry that temporary measures to increase surveillance may become permanent.

"We can't allow our response to this pandemic to be used as a justification for compromising people's digital safety and security," said Michael Kleinman, director of Amnesty International's Silicon Valley Initiative.

In Australia, which has had few COVID-19 deaths, Chief Health Officer Damian Murphy said yesterday he was "really excited" by the early popularity of an app designed to accelerate contact tracing.

Within 12 hours of the Australian-developed COVIDsafe app becoming available, 1.13 million of Australia's 26 million people had downloaded it onto their smar-

AP PHOTO



An employee walks past vehicles in production with a face mask in the VW plant in Wolfsburg, Germany, yesterday

phones, despite some privacy concerns.

Australian officials intend to outlaw using the collected data for purposes other than tracing potential COVID-19 cases. They have also promised to release the app's source code within two weeks so independent analysts can better understand how it works.

The government says at least 40% of Australia's population needs to use the technology based on Singapore's TraceTogether app for it to be effective. Authorities hope the app will help Australia, which has 83 recorded coronavirus deaths, safely reopen the economy by enabling health officials to quickly identify and contain new outbreaks.

Singapore was among the first to launch its contact-tracing app. Other countries, including France, Switzerland and Britain, are also developing their own.

South Korea will be issuing special electronic wristbands to alert officials if people under quarantine try to leave their homes. Hong Kong has also been issuing quarantine wristbands to arrivals to ensure they stay indoors during their mandatory two-week quarantine.

European countries, where privacy rights are generally strong, were taking a more cautious approach.

Italy's app, developed by the Milan-based tech company Bending Spoons, will be voluntary. As an incentive, officials are pitching it as a way for Italians to communicate remotely with their doctors, and warn it will only be effective if more than 60% of Italians use it.

Government officials have assured Italians their data will be kept in Italy, on a government platform that respects all national and European Union privacy norms.

Seven weeks into Italy's strict lockdown, Premier Giuseppe Conte laid out a long-awaited timetable for easing restrictions. Factories, construction sites and wholesale supply businesses can resume when they implement safety measures.

From May 4 parks and gardens will reopen, funerals will be allowed, athletes can resume training, and people can visit relatives in the same region. Stores and museums reopen May 18, and restaurants, cafes and salons on June 1.

Professional sports teams can resume training on May 18, meaning the Serie A soccer league could resume games in June.

Spain's Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez was to present details for the "de-escalation" of his country's lockdown today, but said it would be cautious. His French and Greek counterparts were also unveiling their reopening plans today.

Spain's easing of restrictions kicked off Sunday as children under 14 were allowed to leave their homes for the first time in six weeks. Health authorities urged parents to be responsible after some beach fronts and city promenades filled up with families.

"The impact in the epidemic can be a step backwards that can be much harder than what we have seen until now," warned Fernando Simón, head of Spain's health emergency coordination center.

The Czech Republic, another country with few COVID-19 deaths, was also easing restrictions, opening smaller stores, zoos, bo-

tanical parks, fitness centers and driving schools. Public gatherings of up to 10 people were allowed but social distancing and face masks remained mandatory.

In a boost for the economy, the three Czech plants of Skoda Auto belonging to Germany's carmaker Volkswagen renewed production yesterday. The company employs some 34,000 people.

The virus's official death toll neared 207,000 worldwide, with almost 3 million confirmed infections, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University. The pandemic's true toll is believed to be much higher, because of inadequate testing, differences in counting the dead and some governments concealing the extent of their outbreaks.

The U.S. death toll was nearly 55,000 — close to the 58,000 U.S. troops killed during the entire Vietnam War. Italy, Britain, Spain and France accounted for more than 20,000 deaths each.

There were some encouraging signs, as Italy recorded its lowest 24-hour number of deaths since mid-March, with 260. New York state registered its fewest since late last month, with 367.

In China, state-run media said hospitals in Wuhan, the pandemic's original epicenter, no longer have any COVID-19 patients. And Japan's central bank eased monetary policy, prompting a stock market surge.

Some worry that lifting lockdown measures too soon could spark a resurgence in infections. In the U.S., the split in approaches has often been along partisan lines.

Oklahoma Gov. Kevin Stitt, a Republican, said with hospitalizations dropping, he will reopen churches and restaurant dining Friday while keeping social-distancing guidelines.

But Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, a Democrat, told ABC her state is not ready and needs more robust testing, community tracing and a plan for isolating the sick.

"We've got to be nimble and we have to follow the science and be really smart about how we reengage," she said. AP

OFFICIALS: NO MORE HOSPITALIZED WUHAN PATIENTS

WUHAN, the city at the center of China's coronavirus outbreak, has no more hospitalized patients after the last 12 were discharged Sunday, the Hubei province health commission said.

Hubei's remaining patients were all in Wuhan, the provincial capital where the outbreak took the heaviest toll in China. The 3,869 people who died in the city account for more than 80% of the country's reported deaths.

"It is a historic day," said a report in a newspaper owned by the Wuhan government and posted on the city's website.

Hubei has no more suspected cases in its hos-

pitals, though 1,728 people who had close contact with an infected person remain under medical observation, the province's health commission reported yesterday.

Patients remain hospitalized elsewhere in China, including 67 in Shanghai and three in Beijing. Many cities have seen an influx of cases from overseas, prompting the government to curtail international flights and entry sharply.

With the easing of the crisis, a central government team that had overseen the response in Hubei since late January departed yesterday, China's official Xinhua News Agency said.

South Korea maintains Kim Jong Un health rumors are untrue

AP PHOTO



This satellite image shows an overview of Wonsan leadership complex in North Korea. A train probably belonging to Kim Jong Un has been spotted on the country's east coast since last week

HYUNG-JIN KIM, SEOUL

SOUTH Korea's government has dismissed rumors that North Korean leader Kim Jong Un is in fragile condition, as speculation about his health intensifies amid the North's silence on his whereabouts.

There are concerns, particularly in Seoul and Washington, about what would happen to North Korea and its nuclear program if anything had actually happened to Kim. For South Korea and the U.S., Kim's absence would mean the departure of a man they've dealt with over the past two years to try to achieve the North's denuclearization, though talks have stalled in recent months.

Unification Minister Kim Yeon-chul told a closed-door forum in Seoul that South Korea has "enough intelligence to confidently say that there are no unusual developments" in rival North Korea that would back up speculation about Kim's health, his ministry said yesterday.

The minister would not reveal at Sunday's forum

what specific intelligence led to that conclusion, but he stressed that it was reached after a thorough analysis.

The rumors about Kim's health began to swirl after he missed the April 15 commemoration of the 108th birthday of his grandfather, North Korea founder Kim Il Sung. Kim Jong Un is the third generation of his family to rule North Korea, and he hadn't missed the event, one of the most important in the North, since assuming power after his father, Kim Jong Il, died in late 2011.

North Korea's state media has since made no mention of Kim's health or his public activities, though they said he had received some messages of greeting from foreign countries. Yesterday, North Korea's state TV broadcast said Kim sent his thanks to workers and officials at a tourist resort construction site on the east coast.

The unification minister's comments are a reiteration of earlier South Korean statements that Kim Jong Un appeared to be handling state affairs normally and

that no unusual activities had been detected in North Korea. Those comments, however, failed to dispel the rumors about Kim.

As the absolute leader of a country with a nuclear weapons program, Kim's health is matter of intense interest both regionally and globally. If something were to happen to Kim, some experts say it could lead to instability in North Korea.

South Korea's presidential office earlier said it has information that Kim has been staying out of Pyongyang, North Korea's capital, and that there had been no emergency readiness order issued by the North's military or the ruling Workers' Party that likely would have been made if Kim were truly in serious condition.

Yesterday, South Korean President Moon Jae-in repeated an offer to conduct some inter-Korean cooperation projects such as a joint anti-coronavirus quarantine campaign. Moon also said he will strive for mutual prosperity "based on confidence between Chairman Kim and me and our firm resolve to [achieve] peace."

Yesterday was the se-

cond anniversary of Moon's first summit with Kim at the Korean border village of Panmunjom. Moon, a liberal who favors a negotiated settlement of the North Korean nuclear issue, facilitated U.S.-North Korea nuclear diplomacy, including the first summit between President Donald Trump and Kim in Singapore in June 2018.

A U.S. official, speaking on condition of anonymity because he wasn't authorized to talk to the media, said earlier this week that the latest rumors about Kim's health had not changed the U.S. assessment of the information as "speculation."

Satellite photos released Saturday by 38 North, a website specializing in North Korea studies, showed that a train likely belonging to Kim has been parked at his compound on the country's east coast since last week.

"The train's presence does not prove the whereabouts of the North Korean leader or indicate anything about his health, but it does lend weight to reports that Kim is staying at an elite area on the country's eastern coast," 38 North said. **AP**

this day in history



1986 SOVIETS ADMIT NUCLEAR ACCIDENT

The Soviet Union has acknowledged there has been an accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant in Ukraine.

The report, from the official news agency, Tass, said there had been casualties but gave no details of numbers. It said aid was being sent to the injured.

The report said that one of the reactors had been damaged in the accident, but gave no further details beyond saying that measures were being taken to "eliminate the consequences of the accident". It also claimed the accident was the first at a Soviet power station.

The report was the first confirmation of a major nuclear catastrophe since monitoring stations in Sweden, Finland and Norway began reporting sudden high discharges of radioactivity in the atmosphere two days ago.

The accident is believed to be the most serious in the history of nuclear power, worse even than that at the Three-Mile Island power station in the United States in 1979, when there was some release of radioactivity but nobody was injured.

The Chernobyl nuclear power plant, just north of Kiev, consists of four nuclear reactors, known as light-water cooled, graphite-moderated reactors - a type hardly used outside the Soviet Union.

Nuclear experts say the levels of radioactivity recorded indicate that the nuclear core of the damaged reactor may have melted down.

The number of casualties, both immediately and in the future, from radiation sickness, is expected to be high, although the exact number may never be known. It is not believed, however, that there is any risk to the health of anyone outside the Soviet Union.

The discharge of radioactivity was so great that by the time the fallout reached Sweden, 1,000 miles away, it was still powerful enough to register twice the natural level of radioactivity in the atmosphere.

The sudden jump in radioactivity levels was enough to prompt a full-scale alert in Sweden, which initially believed the accident had happened at its own nuclear power station, on the Baltic coast. The evacuation of 600 workers had been ordered before experts realised that the source of the radioactivity must have been within the Soviet Union.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Chernobyl remains the world's worst civil nuclear disaster. It emerged that design flaws had led to a power surge, causing massive explosions which blew the top off the reactor. Estimates of the numbers affected vary tremendously. A report in 2005 by the Chernobyl Forum, set up by a number of bodies including the World Health Organisation, the UN and governments of Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine, concluded that fewer than 50 people, most of them workers at the plant, died as a result of exposure to radiation. Most of them died immediately after the disaster, but some survived until as late as 2004.

The forum estimates up to 9,000 people could eventually die from radiation exposure - although Greenpeace claims the figure could be much higher, up to 93,000.

The contamination spread across neighbouring Belarus, and into Europe. In north Wales, sheep on some 350 farms still have to be tested for radiation before their meat can be eaten.

A concrete sarcophagus was hastily built to cover the damaged reactor, but it is weakening over time. It is due to be replaced in 2007.

Chernobyl continued to produce electricity for another 14 years, until international pressure forced its closure in 2000. An official exclusion zone around the plant remains in place, extending for 18 miles. It is one of the most radioactive spots on Earth.



MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
Mar. 21-Apr. 19
 You can ask for favors or run your ideas by those who will be able to support your objectives. Try not to overreact to the loss. Your ideas will be well received.

TAURUS
Apr. 20-May. 20
 You need to keep everyone on your domestic scene too busy to complain. Trips should be your choice. You can discuss your findings behind closed doors with your boss.

GEMINI
May. 21-Jun. 21
 Read some books on self awareness. Don't blow situations out of proportion. You can help sort out problems that friends are facing. Or problems that you are facing.

CANCER
Jun. 22-Jul. 22
 Alienation may be the result of a misunderstanding. Don't get talked into get rich quick schemes. You will have no trouble getting things to fall into place.

LEO
Jul. 23-Aug. 22
 You must try to include your mate in your activities today. You may have a problem at work with a female coworker. You will be attracted to unusual forms of entertainment and foreign cultures.

VIRGO
Aug. 23-Sep. 22
 Put your efforts into making changes to your domestic scene. Try to be there for someone if they need assistance. You can make major gains professionally by completing projects on time.

LIBRA
Sep. 23-Oct. 22
 Don't offer to pay for others. Someone close to you will get upset easily if you are insensitive to their needs. Do not reveal personal information to those you feel may be untrustworthy.

SCORPIO
Oct. 23-Nov. 21
 New projects may lead you into a dead end. Get involved in sports groups or hobbies that attract you. Don't blame others for your own stubbornness.

SAGITTARIUS
Nov. 22-Dec. 21
 Your boss may not be in the best of moods today. You will be uncertain of your feelings. Coworkers may not be on your side. It might be time to look for opportunities elsewhere.

CAPRICORN
Dec. 22-Jan. 19
 Put your energy into your work or moneymaking ventures rather than into your emotional life today. Social events will be plentiful. You must strive to get the most important projects completed.

AQUARIUS
Jan. 20-Feb. 18
 It might be best to spend time fixing up your premises and making changes that will be appreciated. You will expand your circle of friends if you join groups. Debates will stifle passion.

PISCES
Feb. 19-Mar. 20
 Don't be taken advantage of by any fast talking salesperson trying to part you from your cash. Direct your energy wisely. You must consider yourself for a change.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

EASY

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

EASY+

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

MEDIUM

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

HARD

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

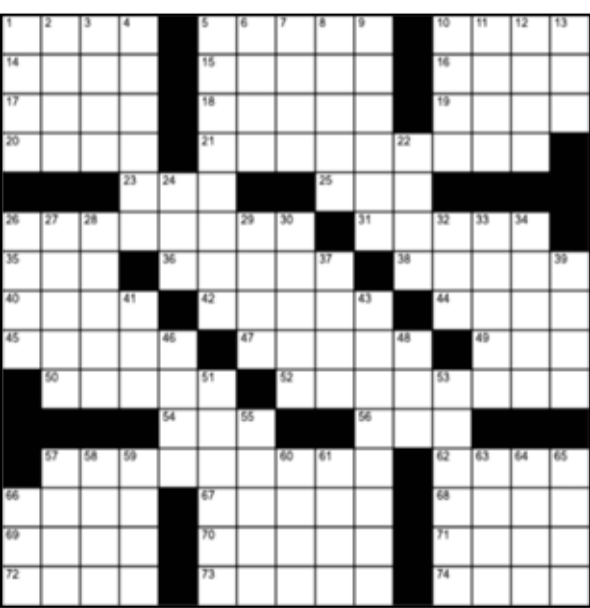
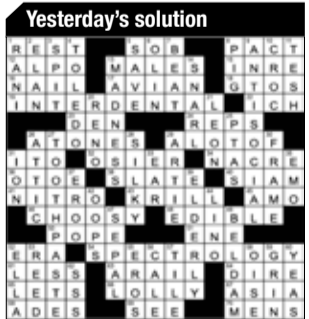
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	11	30	clear
Harbin	7	18	clear
Tianjin	12	30	clear
Urumqi	19	31	clear
Xi'an	14	30	clear
Lhasa	4	16	overcast
Chengdu	16	30	cloudy
Chongqing	17	31	clear
Kunming	10	20	shower
Nanjing	8	24	clear
Shanghai	12	22	clear
Wuhan	11	26	clear
Hangzhou	10	24	cloudy
Taipei	19	24	cloudy
Guangzhou	18	30	clear
Hong Kong	22	28	cloudy
WORLD			
Moscow	5	10	clear
Frankfurt	11	23	drizzle
Paris	11	22	drizzle
London	9	18	moderate rain
New York	6	9	cloudy

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS: 1- Driving aids; 5- Primary strategy; 10- Game played on horseback; 14- Famous last words; 15- Western; 16- Den of wild animals and dragons; 17- Rebuff; 18- Nautical pole; 19- Capital of Norway; 20- Mai ____; 21- Pasta; 23- Yalie; 25- Humble dwelling; 26- Segment of the spinal column; 31- Lion sounds; 35- Despot Amin; 36- Martini garnish; 38- Water nymph; 40- Type of phone; 42- French school; 44- Poker stake; 45- Chou ____; 47- Small mountains; 49- Capitol Hill abbr.; 50- Passover meal; 52- Well statistic; 54- TKO caller; 56- Low island; 57- Succulent S African shrub; 62- Rules; 66- Relocate; 67- Fuel transport; 68- It's blown among the reeds; 69- Supplements, with "out"; 70- ____ evil...; 71- Dangerous weapon; 72- Polo of "Meet the Parents"; 73- Ruhr city; 74- Anna of "Nana";

DOWN: 1- Dry run; 2- Sicilian volcano; 3- Sewing case; 4- Group that is part of a larger group; 5- Thinkable; 6- Reindeer herder; 7- Gillette brand; 8- Sound of a horse; 9- Legendary king of Britain; 10- Scheme; 11- Oven used to dry hops; 12- Taylor of "Mystic Pizza"; 13- Guadalupe gold; 22- Collar type; 24- Composer Delibes; 26- Immoral habit; 27- Parades; 28- Lunar valley; 29- Having wealth; 30- Evade; 32- Battery size; 33- Wash cycle; 34- Satisfies; 37- Vogue rival; 39- Studies; 41- Young fellow; 43- Elementary particle; 46- Able was ____; 48- Hot tub; 51- Tranquility; 53- Hose; 55- May, dragon, and fire, e.g.; 57- Jest; 58- Declare; 59- Ricky's portrayer; 60- Pub offerings; 61- Panamanian baby; 63- Border on; 64- Roused; 65- Observed; 66- Fulfilled;



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



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MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

EUROPE SEEKS SAFE REVIVAL OF TOURISM BEFORE SUMMER SEASON

JASMINA KUZMANOVIC & ALEXANDER WEBER

EUROPEAN Union nations seek to agree on a way to revive the crucial tourism industry this summer without causing new coronavirus infections to spike.

"We all agreed that we should have a unanimous approach when it comes to opening the borders, as we are all one family," Croatia's Tourism Minister Gari Cappelli told reporters in Zagreb after a video conference with his peers in the bloc. "People still want to travel outside their borders, and we should allow that as much as we possibly can."

Tourism contributes about 10% to the EU's economic output and provides jobs for almost 12% of workers, according to the Croat government, which currently holds the bloc's rotating presidency. Mediterranean nations are particularly vulnerable to the impact of the pandemic, as tourism makes for large parts of tax revenues and jobs.

Spain's central bank last week said the economy could shrink between 6.8% and 12.4% this



year, a range based on how long confinement measures last as well as survival rate of businesses. Greek hotels expect to lose more than half of their predicted revenue in 2020, contributing to the country's economic contraction of between 5% and 10%, according to the government's forecast.

Croatia depends on revenue from the sector for about 20% of its economic output. It stands to lose about 75% of its income from tourism this year, which may result in an economic drop of 9%, according to the Interna-

tional Monetary Fund. While countries including Spain, Germany and Croatia have recently started easing restrictions on citizens movements, as their rates of new infections stabilized, no government in the bloc has fully reopened its border to foreigners.

"Should there be no EU-wide agreement on a safety protocol, Croatia will seek bilateral deals on opening air and road corridors with interested countries," Cappelli said. Epidemiologists will be included consulted in the process of reopening any bor-

ders, he said.

Not every country is equally enthusiastic about allowing international travel in the coming months, however. German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas on Sunday warned against a "European race to see who will allow tourist travel first," recalling the incident of an Austrian ski resort that became a cluster for new infections.

The EU's tourism ministers also said in a joint statement yesterday that the industry should be among the main priorities of the EU's recovery plan. **BLOOMBERG**

ANBANG UNIT SUES MIRAE TO COMPLETE \$5.8 BILLION HOTEL DEAL

AN Anbang Insurance Group Co. unit sued to force South Korea's Mirae Asset Global Investments Co. to complete its \$5.8 billion purchase of a U.S. luxury hotel portfolio as the coronavirus pandemic roils financial markets.

The suit was filed under seal in Delaware Chancery Court Monday. In a public summary, officials of the Anbang unit said the suit "seeks an order compelling defendants to specifically perform their obligations under a sale and purchase agreement and certain equity commitment letters."

Mirae officials had asked the Beijing-based insurer for more time to close the deal because the required debt financing isn't immediately available, Bloomberg News reported earlier this month.

The portfolio of 15 luxury hotels, which Anbang acquired via its acquisition of Strategic Hotels & Resorts Inc., includes the Westin St. Francis in San Francisco, Loews Santa Monica Beach Hotel, JW Marriott Essex House in New York and the Four Seasons in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. **BLOOMBERG**

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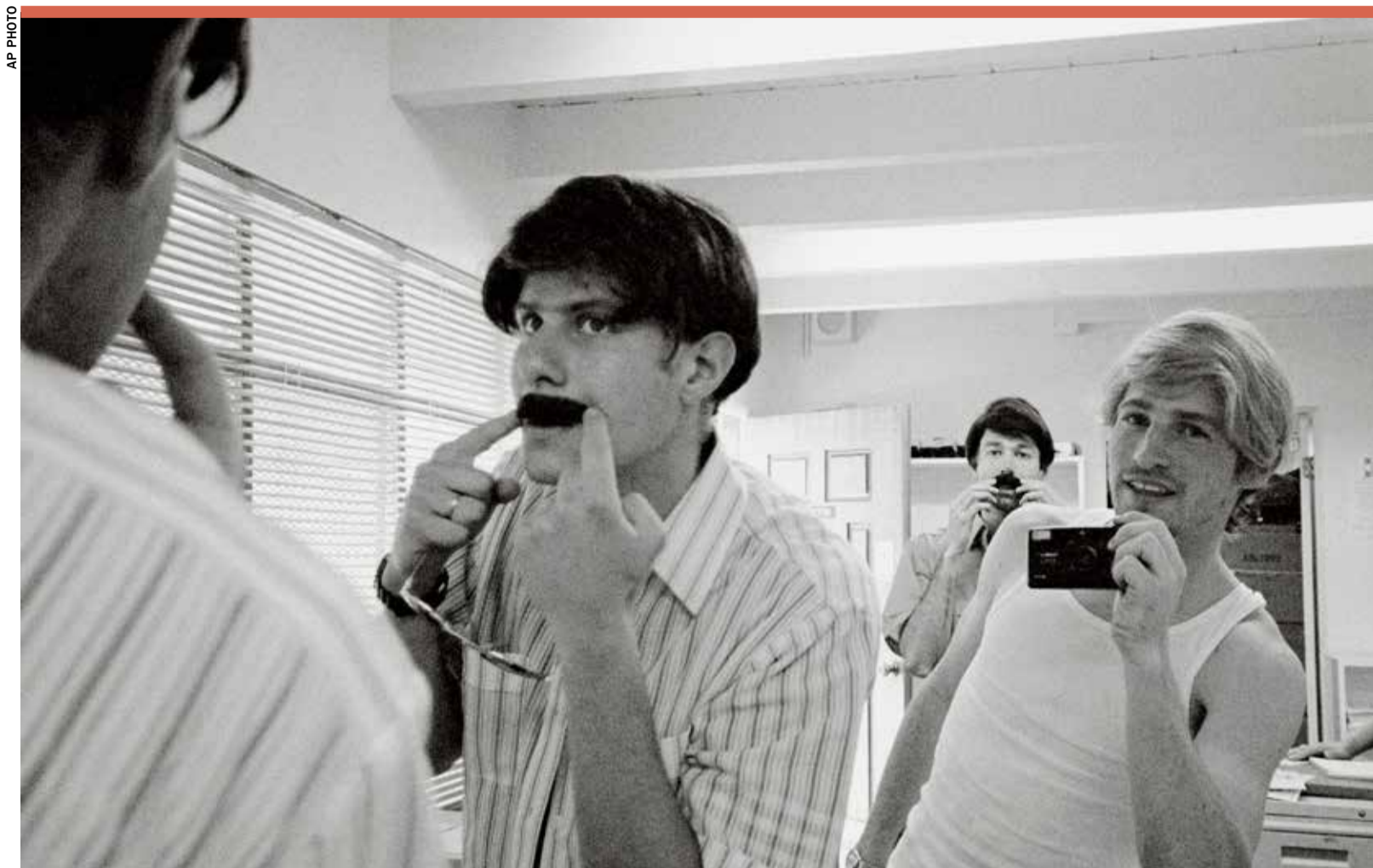
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A scene from the documentary "Beastie Boys Story," about the iconic New York City group, which debuted last week on Apple TV Plus

JAKE COYLE, AP FILM WRITER

DRIVE IN

LITTLE was predictable about the Beastie Boys in their three-plus decades of making music. They were spontaneous, always evolving, off-the-cuff pranksters who turned pro without ever losing the punchline.

Even seeing ahead to the end of a rhyme was impossible. Their lyrics took circuitous, hysterical routes. "I'll stir fry you in my wok/Your knees'll start shakin' and your fingers pop/Like a pinch on the neck of Mr. Spock."

So why is "Beastie Boys Story," a documentary of Mike Diamond and Adam Horowitz's staged show, so predictable? "Beastie Boys Story," which arrives Friday on Apple TV-Plus, is billed as a "live documentary experience." And with Spike Jonze, who so memorably directed the Beastie Boys' "Sabotage" music

'Beastie Boys Story' isn't a sure shot, but it'll do

video presiding over both the theater show and the film, one could reasonably expect — whatever "live documentary" means — something alive. Maybe even something "off the hook like Lattrell Sprewell" or popping "like a pinch on the neck of Mr. Spock."

And yet, "Beastie Boys Story," while often rollicking and moving, frequently has the stale air of a Ted Talk, as Horowitz and Diamond calmly walk the stage, read teleprompters from stools, pause for frequent video inserts and chronologically tell the story

of their unlikely rise from downtown New York to hip-hop elite.

"Beastie Boys Story" was a touring stage show that Horowitz (Ad-Rock) and Diamond (Mike D) performed following the 2018 publication of their massive memoir-scrapbook "Beastie Boys Book." Over their three-night stand last year at Brooklyn's Kings Theater, Jonze documented it. Occasionally, he's heard (but not seen) interjecting from the booth.

Those few moments, along with a handful of other sly riffs (a

montage of their hard-working "Check Your Head" club tour is scored to Dolly Parton's "9 to 5") supply some of the deconstruction you'd expect from the Beasties and Jonze. But, really, much of this isn't so different than "Springsteen on Broadway," only with more interjections of "No joke!" and "That's crazy!"

But one of the richest threads of the Beasties' story is how they were so often propelled by improvisation and goofing off. Their sophomore album, "Paul's Boutique," was a mash-up mas-

terpiece of endless sampling and style mixing. When they rented a Hollywood house owned by Marilyn Grasshoff, her '70s wardrobe became their treasure-trove of props. "Sabotage," they filmed without permits or much planning. At their best, they just went out and made stuff, pulling from a wide spectrum of sources and whatever was around them.

"Beastie Boys Story," though, is polished legacy burnishing that doesn't quite suit the rappers of "So What'cha Want" let alone "(You Gotta) Fight for Your Right (To Party)." At times, it feels perilously close to the rough draft of a jukebox musical to come.

But if the framework is less inspired, the story remains grand. Their arc is a spectacular one, starting as a wannabe punk band ("We were Monty Python as much as we were Black Flag," one recalls); being molded by Russell Simmons into a cheap MTV act; picking up instruments and taking control of their musical destiny; turning from party anthems to socially conscious activism.

It's a journey not so unlike The Beatles or The Who, starting as a novelty act and turning artistically adventurous. "It's not so much that we grew up. We wised up," says Horowitz.

But where the Beastie Boys differed most from the standard music-stardom cliché is in how tight they remained, brothers to the last -- a perpetual three-man weave with the comic timing of Moe, Larry and Curly. And it's in the heartfelt remembrances of Adam Yauch, the band's musical and spiritual leader, that "Beastie Boys Story" breaks into sometime more authentic and memorable. Even the deficiencies of the movie become a kind of tribute. Early on Mike D says it simply: "The two of us will do the best we can because one of us isn't here."

"Beastie Boys Story," an Apple TV Plus release, is unrated by the Motion Picture Association of America. Running time: 119 minutes. Two and a half stars out of four. ★★☆☆

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OPINION

Our Desk

Renato Marques



'SCAMSIDY'

Subsidies, who would reject them? I am guessing no one, and in times of extra difficulties, a government subsidy seems always to be the perfect solution to patch a rising issue and bring back the praising smiles.

For those used to living in Macau, it is no surprise that the local government often finds the "magic effect" of subsidies as though they are an ace up the government's sleeve that will tackle every problem.

It was like that for a long time, when after the handover, people soon realized that with the exponential economic growth of Macau came a drastic reduction in quality of life. The Wealth Partaking Scheme, among other subsidies, came to be a reality that would never again be prescinded in the universe of local residents.

But, as often happens with money-related issues, money attracts greed and while no one rejects it, some are not just happy with the share they get and want a share of what others get.

From the Continuing Education Development Plan to the Healthcare Subsidy Scheme, there are many examples, some very fresh in the memory, of scams and malpractices performed by people and institutions to unlawfully get money from the government.

Just last week, we heard about another of these scams involving health vouchers amounting to over 9 million patacas.

According to the report, a group of twelve people behind the unlawful scheme acquired the amount in only a few months through the unlawful use of over 11,000 Macau ID cards.

And if it is possible to perform scams on such a scale with vouchers that are worth only 600 patacas per person, imagine what has been done with the continuing education policy that grants up to 6,000 patacas for activities that are supposed to be for education, training, and the increase of personal and professional skills.

But while these unfortunate events have been happening and the government tries to tackle them by closing the loopholes, other opportunities arise.

The newly created Electronic Consumption Voucher, aiming to revitalize the economic activities of local companies through internal consumption, seems to contain another of these loopholes that allows fraudulent activities.

Although it has not yet been put into operation, as soon as its details were known by the public, and especially after the vouchers had started to be collected, underground movements kicked-off, making use of contact lists and social media networks to bypass a system that aimed to provide support to local residents and companies.

From people that are and have been abroad for years finding ways to get the vouchers collected by family members and friends, to people willing to purchase other people's e-vouchers in exchange for a smaller amount of cash, a little of everything started to be seen around Macau.

Again, the e-voucher seems to be another plan that, like the others, started with good intentions but would potentially be transformed into the most recent "scamsidy" opportunity for the upcoming months. This is as the first 3,000 patacas are loaded on each card, and another 5,000 will follow in a couple of months.

According to official data released by the Economic Bureau and the Monetary Authority of Macao, in the first phase of registration there were about 650,000 people that filled out an application to collect the e-vouchers. The government noted that it believed this number would increase in the second registration period.

Considering this figure, I get confused. After all, how many residents of Macau are there?

The head of the World Food Program says he has been on the phone with leaders of some of the world's richest nations with a critical message: the coronavirus pandemic is not only affecting your economy but is impacting the economies of vulnerable and conflict-torn countries where millions of people will face starvation if you cut the U.N. agency's funding for food.

David Beasley said in an interview with The Associated Press he has also been telling leaders that maintaining supply chains is critical and there are many potential obstacles — export res-

trictions, closed borders and ports, farms not producing and roads closed.

Beasley warned the U.N. Security Council last week that as the world deals with the COVID-19 pandemic it is "on the brink of a hunger pandemic" that could lead to "multiple famines of biblical proportions" within a few months if immediate action isn't taken.

He said 821 million people go to bed hungry every night all over the world now.

ONE GOOD THING

STOOP SHOW: BROOKLYN ACCORDIONIST ENTERTAINS NEIGHBORS



Choir director and neighbor Pam McAllister (left) encourages musician Paul Stein to invent timely words to his songs

KATHY WILLENS, NEW YORK

PAUL Stein felt useless - stuck in his Brooklyn brownstone apartment, watching his neighbors suffer deprivations as COVID-19 swept the city.

Then, on television, the retired public-sector lawyer and political activist saw people around the world rallying: "I saw people in France and Italy banging pots and pans out their windows, clapping and singing from balconies. I wanted to do this in my neighborhood."

He knew what he had to do.

He took out his accordion. And he played.

His stage is the steps leading up to his building, his stoop. "For as long as people have been hanging out on their stoops and socializing with their neighbors, they've been doing it from their stoops," he said. "The natural acoustics of the narrow street bring the music to my neighbors."

He regularly sings and plays during the nightly 7 p.m. rounds of applause for health care and front-line workers. Over the past few weeks, he has played four, 45-minute concerts.

Stein had played on his block before: scary music for the children on Halloween while his partner Elena handed out candy. This time, he alerted the neighbors with a telephone call. At 71, he's in a high-risk group. So, he didn't want to encourage a get-together at close distance.

"The natural acoustics of the narrow street bring the music to my neighbors."

PAUL STEIN

"I'm very conscientious, he said. "I don't want to do anything to promote social gathering."

Stein calls his impromptu concerts the "Emergency Accordion Stoop Extravaganza," or "EASE." He decorated a construction helmet with the words "Accordion Extravaganza" on the front and "Keep Back Six Feet" on the back.

"Elena doesn't like it," he says, "but I do."

The accordion is not an instrument beloved by all; it has been the butt of many jokes (What's the difference between an

accordion and a concertina? I takes longer to burn an accordion.) But Stein loves it, and has been playing since he was 8. He has a vast repertoire of songs, and he sometimes adds the melodica, a free-reed type of large harmonica.

"I'm doing mostly instrumentals. ... a polka, a tango, the 'Hokey Pokey,' and other fun things," he said. "Sometimes 'This Land is Your Land,' 'La Cucaracha,' the Mexican hat dance; Bill Withers' 'Lean on Me.' People like up-tempo things."

His neighbors seem to appreciate his efforts.

Madeline Chang, who just retired after 20 years teaching in New York City's schools, and partner Tim Sozen danced on a tiny concrete patch in their front yard.

"We were inspired because the music is so wonderful ... so powerful," Chang said. "It's its own language."

Said Stein: "I try to come up with songs of hope. We need to keep our spirits up."

And regardless, "What's more Brooklyn than hanging out with your neighbors on the stoop?" AP

New Zealand reported five new coronavirus cases as the nation gets ready to ease its strict lockdown at midnight. Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said there hasn't been widespread community transmission of the virus and the country has so far managed to avoid the worst scenarios for an outbreak. She said it would continue to hunt down the last few cases. Starting at midnight, certain businesses like construction can reopen, but with social distancing.



Japan is adding 14 more countries, including Russia, Peru and Saudi Arabia, to its entry ban as it steps up border controls while its coronavirus outbreak grows. Japan already banned entry from more than 70 other countries, banning foreigners with records of visiting those countries in the past two weeks, while invalidating visas for the rest of the world. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said the expansion will take effect tomorrow.

South Korea reported 10 new cases of the coronavirus as officials mull reopening schools. The figures released by the Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention brought the national totals to 10,738 cases and 243 deaths. Using an active test-and-quarantine program, South Korea has managed to slow its outbreak without lockdowns or business bans. But schools remain shut while providing children remote learning.



Singapore reported 799 new infections yesterday to take its total to 14,423, including 12 deaths. The health ministry said the vast majority of the new cases were again foreign workers living in cramped dormitories. Singapore has the third highest number of infections in Asia, after China and India. Despite the sharp rise in infections among foreign workers — who now account for over 80% of the cases — the city-state has said the situation is contained.