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**HONG KONG IS PREPARING TO REOPEN GOVERNMENT OFFICES AND SOME PUBLIC FACILITIES, AS LEADER CARRIE LAM URGES CAUTION**

**ONLINE SCAMS RELATED TO FACEMASKS, INVESTMENTS, GAMBLING AND ROMANCE**

**THE PRESUMED SUSPENSION OF THE GOVERNMENT'S FACEMASK SUPPLY HAS CAUSED PUBLIC, LAWMAKERS TO WORRY ABOUT PRICE HIKES**



**China** Wuhan again reported no new coronavirus cases or deaths yesterday and its hospitals remained empty of virus patients for a second straight day. China's six new cases were three imported from overseas and three in Heilongjiang province bordering Russia. No new deaths were reported nationwide and just 648 current confirmed cases remained registered.

**India** The Chinese embassy in India says it was "unfair and irresponsible" to "label" Chinese testing kits procured by India as "faulty." India canceled orders to procure rapid antibody testing kits from two Chinese companies after quality issues and controversies over its price. Chinese Embassy spokesperson Ji Rong said, "The quality of medical products exported from China is prioritized."



**Australia** Sydney's iconic Bondi Beach reopened to swimmers and surfers despite the local area having Australia's highest concentration of COVID-19 cases. People can only enter during daylight hours, cannot linger on the sand and are counted to ensure social distancing. Hundreds braved cool autumn weather to return to the water soon after the gates opened.

**Japan** said it will approve remdesivir, a closely watched antiviral drug made by Gilead Sciences Inc., for the treatment of COVID-19 patients in the country. The drug is expected to be the first approved COVID-19 drug in Japan. Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga that Japan has been part of multinational testing of remdesivir and that it was moving ahead overseas.

More on backpage

# VIRUS SCREENING TO EXTEND TO WIDER COMMUNITY



**GOV'T GRANTS MELCO UNTIL 2022 TO FULLY DEVELOP STUDIO CITY LAND PLOT**

**COVID-19 PROVIDES CHANCE TO REFLECT ON DIVERSIFICATION FAILURES**

P2

P2-3



# AMID RECESSION, COVID-19 PROVIDES CHANCE TO

DANIEL BEITLER, RENATO MARQUES

**F**OR a long time, Macau's dependence on the gaming industry has been a concern shared by economists, politicians and the general public.

Even before the gaming liberalization and the transfer of sovereignty, talk of "diversifying the economy" was common and widespread. At the time, diversification meant "industrial diversification" for a territory that was reliant on the now-defunct textile industry.

But in these past two decades, the dependence of the local economy on Macau's casinos has grown to the point where not only is the activity responsible for the major share of gross domestic product, but it also makes possible a range of other tourism products and services, including hotels, restaurants and retailers.

Less than half a year since the virus first emerged in the central Chinese city of Wuhan, the International Monetary Fund is predicting that the world economy will suffer a recession of about 3% this year. That comes as companies across the globe have seen their supply chains disrupted and their business evaporate in recent months.

At the same time, the economy of Macau could shrink by 30%.

That rate of economic decline is on par with the 2014 depression, which also prompted widespread discussion at the time over the urgent need for diversification.

Yet, diversification efforts since 2015 have been largely unsuccessful.

Without the large number of tourists drawn by the casinos, the city's other tourism entities are struggling to survive. For many observers, this city cannot escape its current, coronavirus-induced economic downturn unless the gaming sector recovers first.

For local economist Albano Martins, the idea of diversifying the economy has long focused on the building of new sectors, particularly the cultural and creati-



ve industries, as well as the MICE sector (meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions). But these two sectors have proved ineffective at establishing themselves at alternatives to gaming.

According to the government's latest report on diversification from 2018, cultural and creative industries represented only 1.6% of gross domestic products, while the MICE sector represented less than 1%. Moreover, "on top of these results, we still need to bear in mind that around half [of the economic contribution] was made possible due to government subsidies."

For Bruno Simões, President of MISE (Macau Meetings, Incentives, and Special Events Association), who has had a hand in developing the MICE sector for many years in Macau and Hong Kong, it is "obvious" that the measures to reduce the dependency on gaming have been unsuccessful.

"It is obvious that the results of the policies of diversification are poor. This is obvious for everyone and I am talking about the efforts on reducing the dependency from the gaming sector only, because to [build] another sector that is not

related to the hospitality industry would be completely impossible," Simões said.

Martins agrees. For the economist, it is almost impossible to achieve diversification without the gaming industry. "It is gaming that finds a way to generate other activities that are complementary to casinos and [... as a consequence] reduce our dependency on gaming."

In his opinion, the development of a different sector that can reach the level of "importance" in the local economy is not likely to happen anytime soon. "Even if we have enough creativity to create new

## GOV'T GRANTS MELCO UNTIL 2022 TO FULLY DEVELOP STUDIO CITY LAND

**T**HE Macau SAR government has granted Melco International Development Ltd until May 31, 2022 to completely develop the land plot on which Studio City is situated.

However, the gaming operator noted in a statement that it could not guarantee that they could complete the development of the remaining project in time, and would request an additional extension if needed.

"Prior to the Covid-19 outbreak, we estimated a construction period of approximately 32 months for the remaining project. With the disruptions from the Covid-19 outbreak, the construction period may be delayed and extend beyond the estimated approximately 32 months," Melco said in its annual report.

"In the event that additional time is required to com-

plete the development of the remaining land of Studio City, we will have to apply for an extension of the relevant development period which shall be subject to Macau government review and approval at its discretion," it added.

In the same report, the gaming operator announced that works for phase two of Studio City have already started.

Previously, Melco Resor-

ts & Entertainment said that it was expecting a slowdown for phase two of Studio City's construction due to Covid-19, citing the low number of construction workers arriving from mainland China.

Due to the delay in construction and completing the expansion, delays are also expected in the approval process for operating licenses.

The second phase of the

expansion – which is budgeted at around \$1.35 billion to \$1.4 billion (about 11 billion patacas) – will increase Studio City's hotel room capacity by approximately 60%. In addition to the gaming space expansion, phase two will also offer non-gaming attractions, including a cineplex, a water park, fine dining restaurants and meetings and exhibition spaces. LV

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**Times**

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# REFLECT ON MACAU'S DIVERSIFICATION FAILURES

products in emerging sectors, we do not possess any productive capacity to grow them into large industries," he said.

"It is politically correct to say that we want to diversify but that will not happen in the next 20 years - and I even doubt that will ever happen," added the economist.

Questioned on which other sectors could be potentially developed by the government, Simões elected two. "The health sector could be an interesting bet although it requires a lot of time and resources. [...] Also education, especially at the university level. We have some experience in receiving students from abroad and they like to live and study here. It could be interesting to have an education and research hub in Macau, although in terms of space we would probably have to use Hengqin as a location for that."

Simões made these suggestions to the Times prior to Ho Iat Seng's Policy Address last week, in which Macau's top official elected to turn universities into profit-making centers and promote policies that encourage foreign students to stay and continue contributing to the local economy once they graduate.

"But then we would have to change our mindset in what concerns to the attribution of permits, blue cards, and residency, as people only stay if they feel welcomed to stay," Simões had said earlier.

"What I think failed in this diversification process was the contracts with the gaming concessionaires," continued Simões.

"Twenty years ago these concessionaires promised diversity and they claimed not to be exclusively gaming-oriented companies and the government accepted those claims without assuring that that was, in fact, true."

Simões said that the casino operators built their infrastructure to serve gaming alone. Anything additional was merely complementary and only if the space allowed.

"To create some meeting rooms is not enough," he told the Times. "The majority of the hotels do not have an interest in having a bar or any other kind of entertainment or leisure besides the gaming. They did not create those alternatives or complements, and the government did not force them to do so either."

"In the MICE sector, we have a big problem. Even if we want to have a large-scale conference it is very difficult to find a hotel that can provide enough rooms that are not for gaming activities. They have many hotel rooms, but they will not provide them for group reservations for conferences and other events as they are reserving them for the gamblers."

For Simões, Sands China and Melco Resorts and Entertainment are the possible exceptions because they have managed to promote some degree of entertainment outside the casino floor. "Sands still promoted some festivals, regular concerts, sports events [boxing and mixed martial arts], and Melco created the 'House of Dancing Water' show which was very successful and popular but it is difficult to find other examples among the remaining concessionaires," he said.

"Nobody created any attractions as they did in Singapore, in Shanghai or even Hong Kong with theme parks and other activities. In Macau, all the facilities have the casinos as a centerpiece, and anything else is built around them."

For Marco Duarte Rizzolio, a lecturer of International Finance, Risk Management, and Corporate Finance at the City University of Macau and Founder and Director of Follow me Macau, a company that provides an e-commerce platform for travelers in Macau, the impact of an event like the Covid-19 outbreak should be taken by decision-makers as a lesson. It should serve as an opportunity to "re-think" the economic diversification strategy, he said.

"The outbreak is an opportunity to re-think and implement strategies for the public and private sectors. Many enti-

ties are simply not prepared and need to develop, for example, digital capabilities to avoid business disruptions. New business models need to progress, especially in sectors such as online office, education, health, logistics, automation, entertainment, and retail."

The gaming operators should also adopt this mindset. Rizzolio said they need to be "more innovative and less conservative," considering new trends such as e-sports and sports betting arenas."

Rizzolio said that the government target to have just 9% of concessionaire revenue derived from non-gaming sources is insufficient. That target, due to be achieved by 2020, has already been achieved but, as the Times previously reported, only under a calculation method recently revised by the government.

"Setting a 9% non-gaming revenue goal is not enough. The Macau government has the responsibility to establish smarter goals for the operators rather than a number to be achieved," said Rizzolio. "These goals need to be specific, relevant and bring advantages to both the community and visitors."

For MICE sector expert Simões, government enforcement remains the only way to overcome the failure to diversify. "Forcing them to do it," said Simões. "Without it being mandatory, they will not do it."

Another way the government can partially help to solve the problem is by allowing the creation of budget hotels without casino facilities, which will help to attract other types of visitors come to Macau and enjoy other forms of tourism, said Simões.

However, a government initiative to shift Macau's gambler demographic may have also hurt the local economy during the coronavirus pandemic. Though revenue from the mass market and VIP segment fell by proportionate amounts during the first quarter of this year, some analysts believe that high rollers will prove more resilient in the coming months.

"The diversification of the gaming through the mass market is good for the casinos because, in this way, they avoid paying high commissions to junkets [gaming promoters] to attract the VIP gamblers," said Martins.

"It might also be good for some retail, hotel and food and beverage operators. But for the general population, it is not the best solution because it causes huge crowds [during the good times], yet if there is a crisis all the sectors suffer drastically."

Rizzolio said that the measure to diversify the tourism source market has a lot of potential, but requires a big investment in marketing Macau to jurisdictions outside of the greater China region.

"China has become in less than a decade the fourth most visited country in the world, after France, the United States, and Spain. Macau manages to attract an average of 25% of all Asian travelers visiting China. In other words, a quarter of Asians who spent their holidays in China went to Macau," said the analyst. "But when comparing to Western countries, Macau manages to capture less than a tenth of travelers coming to China. Most Westerners end up visiting Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen, Guangzhou, and Hong Kong, without passing through Macau."

## MELCO SHUFFLES MANAGEMENT DUTIES INVOLVING KEY EXECUTIVES

SEVERAL senior executives at Melco Resorts and Entertainment are due to depart from the company and have their responsibilities fulfilled by other management staff.

According to an internal company document reviewed by the Times, the staff changes include the departure of Maggie Ma, SVP Chief Government Affairs Officer, Andy Choy, EVP Chief Operations Officer, International and Judy Zhao, SVP Chief Human Resources Officer.

Ma's area will be handled by Clarence Chung, a member of the Board of Directors for Melco Resorts and Entertainment. Chung will also oversee the government re-

lations for the international jurisdictions, while Ma "will be around to advise and do a proper handover."

Choy will continue to oversee Cyprus operations until travel restrictions are lifted and fellow executive Grant Johnson, SVP Casino Sales and Marketing, arrives in the Mediterranean island. Meanwhile, strategy and analytics will be under Evan Winkler, according to the company document, and "Manila and Cyprus" will also report directly to Winkler. Geoff Andres, EVP Property President for Studio City, will be moving back to oversee Manila's City of Dreams, from where he was originally transferred. He will

report directly to Winkler.

Kevin Benning, currently SVP Chief Operating Officer of City of Dreams Manila, will be moving to Studio City as SVP Studio City Operations, its property head, and will report directly to David Sisk. The internal document noted that, "due to the lock down in the Philippines, both will stay in their current roles until travel restrictions are lifted."

Zhao's responsibility for human resources and the operator's Learning Academy will be overseen, for the time being, by Akiko Takahashi, EVP Chief of Staff, who was previously the Chief Human Resources Officer of the company. DB

AD

**DISEASE CONTROL GUIDE**

### PERSONAL PRECAUTIONS

- Wear a face mask and avoid social gathering
- Keep a safe social distance
- Personal Hygiene
- Wash hands frequently and avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue paper or your elbow when sneezing
- After using the toilet, flush it with the lid down
- Clean and disinfect your home and workplace regularly
- Avoid contact with people who have fever or symptoms of respiratory illnesses
- Avoid going to the hospital to visit friends or relatives
- Avoid travelling outside of Macao

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CRIME

## ONLINE SCAMS RELATED TO FACEMASKS, INVESTMENTS, GAMBLING AND ROMANCE

JULIE ZHU

**T**HE Judiciary Police (PJ) reported seven online scams during yesterday's joint police press conference, covering matters from facemasks to online romance.

The police authority said yesterday that it has not found any of the scammers responsible for the online swindles as of the press conference.

In total, the PJ received three reports of scams related to facemasks. In two of these cases,

the victims, who are both local Macau residents, got in contact with an online "seller" purporting to supply Japanese-made facemasks at 400 patacas per 100 pieces. The first victim bargained the price down to 300 patacas per 100 pieces, while the second victim paid the full requested amount.

Both victims transferred the money to a bank account supplied by the suspect, who confirmed receipt of the payment. However, the "seller" never delivered the products to the victims

and could not be contacted. The "seller" also faked a pharmacy for the victims to collect the facemasks. Both cases took place on April 24.

The third facemask-related incident, believed by the PJ to originate online, is related to the unauthorized use of personal identification information. On April 25, a Macau local woman visited a government designated pharmacy in Taipa. There, she was told that her ID had already been used to buy facemasks from another designated pharmacy.

This marked the third time that such a situation had occurred to the same woman, prompting her to make a report to the PJ.

The fourth online scam concerns a Macau local woman in her 30s who works in the financial sector. She became online friends with another person who said he was an engineer from Europe.

The man tried to charm the victim and pursue her, but the woman said she was not deceived. However, later, the same internet friend told the victim that he had mailed her a gift.

She received a message stating that she needed to pay a fee to collect the package. The victim believed the message and transferred a total of HKD74,903 to several different bank accounts. Afterwards, she continued receiving requests to send more money. The victim then realized she had fallen victim to a scam and reported the case to the police authority.

In the fifth online scam, the victim claimed she had become friends with another account user online. The internet friend told her to invest in a wine business by buying shares in the stock market via a specific website. The woman invested 136,500 yuan in total. However, when she eventually planned to sell her stocks, which had already turned a profit, she could not collect the yield or her original investment.

In the sixth case, the victim also became friends with the scammer online. The scammer told the victim that he could win money by betting on a local casino's website, of which the online friend was an administrator.

In total, the victim bet nearly 400,000 yuan on the website, with all the money being transferred to a mainland bank account. The victim only suspected it to be a scam when he was told to pay 150,000 yuan in order to claim back all his betting money and winnings.

The seventh case is also related to online gambling and is similar to the sixth case. The concerned victim was also told to pay 150,000 yuan to claim the winnings. In this case, the victim lost a total of 55,000 yuan.

## End of facemask distribution scheme stirs concerns over future pricing

**T**HE assumed suspension of the government's facemask supply has caused some members of the public and lawmakers to worry about price hikes for facemasks. Yesterday, lawmaker Ella Lei wrote an interpellation to the SAR government, urging it to extend its facemask supply scheme.

The scheme, which has been in effect since late January, is currently in its 10th round of distribution. Medical officials in the SAR have indicated that the scheme will not continue indefinitely.

However, some

members of the Macau public are worried that once the government stops the scheme, people will have to seek facemasks from the market themselves, which could lead to an increase in the price of facemasks in response to the sudden growth in demand.

Lei is also concerned that not only will the price of facemasks rise, but the surge in demand may also compromise the quality of the facemasks.

"With the government's facemasks supply scheme, prices remain reasonable in the private market.

However, prices are double or threefold the ones practiced by the government. Facemasks are temporarily essential to the public," Lei said.

In the lawmaker's opinion, the "heavy financial burden" for some individuals will encourage these people to not wear facemasks or to repeatedly use the same one, and the suspension of the government's facemask supply will also lead to the "impression that wearing a facemask is no longer necessary."

With schools scheduled to reopen in early May, Lei suggested

that the local government should evaluate the suspension of facemask supply once schools have resumed and when entry restrictions are no longer implemented.

Supposing the SAR government will continue the facemask supply scheme for a longer period, Lei proposed that the government adjust the location and the sales time.

Lei suggested that there should be fewer designated pharmacies, and that the workers at these pharmacies should not need to work overtime or work on holidays to sell the facemasks. JZ

## FISHERMEN TO FULFILL MANDATORY 14-DAY QUARANTINE UPON ENTRY

RENATO MARQUES

**F**ISHERMEN returning to Macau will have to undergo a quarantine period of at least 14-days when arriving in Macau by sea, the health authorities informed during yesterday's press conference of the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Center.

"Fishermen who return to Macau on fishing boats are subjected to the same rules as everyone else," said center coordinator, Leong Iek Hou. "The only difference is that according to DSAMA (Marine and Water Bureau) regulations, they cannot leave the vessel or leave it unattended. At least one member needs to stay on board at all time."

For this reason and since conditions on the boats are

considered acceptable for fishermen to undergo quarantine, "fishermen can opt to undergo the quarantine on board or come on land and do it in a designated hotel," Doctor Lo Iek Long of the Conde de São Januário Hospital further explained.

Leong added that it is difficult to ascertain at this moment how many people will be affected by this measure, as every year the number of fishermen onboard fishing vessels changes. However, it is known that the measure will apply to a total of 170 fishing boats.

According to Lo, the fishermen will be also be a part of groups that will be subjected to nucleic acid screening for Covid-19 during their quarantine period.



# Other school, summer activities may follow class resumption

RENATO MARQUES

A representative of the Education and Youth Affairs Bureau (DSEJ) informed that following the reopening of secondary school classes, extra-curricular school activities such as interschool competitions might also resume.

The chief of the DSEJ's Department of Youth, Cheong Man Fai, informed the public about this possibility during yesterday's press conference of the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Center. Cheong further added that the Summer Vacation Activities program organized by the DSEJ in collaboration with the Sports Bureau (ID) is also likely to go ahead, albeit with several adjustments.

"This year and due to the epidemic, we have been communicating with ID to adjust these activities. In general, we expect that there will be fewer activities and a reduced quota for participants from these activities," Cheong said, adding that the registration and application will continue to use the online platform as in previous years.

Regarding school contests and competitions, Cheong noted that these are usually concluded before May, which, due to the suspension of all school activities, was not possible to do this year. Cheong said that the initial plan was to cancel all these competitions for this year but, with classes resuming early next month, the DSEJ will consider



going ahead with some of them.

"From May 4 we will observe the conditions and consider if there is any way we can host any of those competitions. I do not see a high possibility of hosting most of them but maybe we can still host sports-related ones behind closed doors," Cheong concluded.

In response to several questions to the health authorities, the representative of Social Welfare Bureau Choi Pui Ying noted that for the time being, Macau has not met the requisite conditions to permit nurseries to reopen to the public. As she further explained, unlike schools, nursery work is mostly based on playing together and involves significant contact and interaction between young children aged two years and below. Such conditions currently still pose a significant risk.

Ahead of the class resump-

tion scheduled for May 4 and 11, the health authorities continue to screen teachers, school staff members, and cross-border students for the infection.

According to Doctor Lo Iek Long of the Conde de São Januário Hospital, the authorities aim to test around 5,000 people within this category, noting that from the first day of screening on Monday, the Health Bureau had already tested 1,388 teaching staff.

## SCREENING TO EXTEND TO OTHER PROFESSIONALS

During the same press conference, Lo also noted that after the education sector, the health authorities aim to extend the screening for Covid-19 to other professionals that are considered of potential risk.

Lo noted that after teachers, school staff members, and cross-border students, the test would

also be applied to other groups including healthcare staff members, workers at aged care homes, and social workers and caretakers at private institutions.

The physician added that this is not a campaign aiming to test the population in general, but rather the means of ensuring the protection and safety of specific groups.

"This is not screening in the community. In Macau, the teachers as well staff at elderly care homes need to be tested due to the nature of their work. If they are affected, this can cause a lot of problems in the community. We need to prevent this possibility," Lo said, adding that what health authorities are doing is finding priority groups of people to be tested to ensure that general society will be safe.

"In the future, even other citizens might be called to do the test," he concluded.

## EIGHT PLACES OPEN FOR UNESCO INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

The Talent Development Commission and the Macao Foundation are calling for applications to fill eight vacancies at the UNESCO Internship Program. According to the statement, those interested can submit their application between May 4 and June 3. The list of candidates will be forwarded to UNESCO in July for selection. As the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak may last for some time yet, the commission and UNESCO agreed that this year's internship commencement date, scheduled for September, would be postponed if the country of internship is still considered as high risk for the virus. This year's internships will take place in Kazakhstan, Samoa, Nepal, Peru and Cameroon.

## SARS' RESIDENTS ALLOWED TO STUDY IN HENGQIN KINDERGARTENS

Hong Kong and Macau young children will be permitted to attend two public kindergartens in Hengqin. From May 1, two public kindergartens in Hengqin will commence enrollment applications. Hong Kong and Macau residents who are currently either living or working in Hengqin can apply to send their children to these two kindergartens. In total, the two kindergartens will provide 330 vacancies for 11 classes. Parents can register their children until May 7. Hong Kong and Macau residents must have worked or lived in Hengqin for more than one year or have property in Hengqin or paid for social security for more than one year.

## ALMOST 900 PEOPLE AFFECTED BY CEM POWER OUTAGE

A power outage in Macau's central district yesterday morning affected almost 900 customers, public electricity provider Companhia de Electricidade de Macau (CEM) said. The outage resulted from the failure of the medium-voltage customer substation in China Plaza building on Avenida da Praia Grande at 11:04 in the morning. According to CEM, 893 customers were affected in total. The company immediately dispatched an emergency team to the site to repair, and use the medium-voltage ring network for power restoration. The power supply for most of the customers was resumed at 11:38 a.m. and the remaining customers' power supply returned to normal at 1:12 p.m. CEM said it is still investigating the root cause of the incident.

# Hong Kong preparing to re-open public facilities, leader says

HONG Kong announced plans to reopen government offices and some public facilities, as Chief Executive Carrie Lam took cautious steps to get the city back to work amid the threat of further coronavirus outbreaks and fresh political protests.

Government employees will start returning to offices May 4 and the city is preparing to open facilities including museums and libraries that have been closed during the pandemic, Lam said

yesterday. Authorities have yet to decide whether to extend social distancing measures beyond May 7, she said, as the city continues to see success containing daily cases.

"When we relax these measures, if the need arises, we may need to tighten them again until there is a vaccine developed," she said at a briefing before a meeting of her advisory Executive Council.

Also yesterday, Hong Kong's secretary for food and health, Sophia Chan said the city would extend

mandatory quarantine rules for arrivals from mainland China and Macau until June 7. However, she said they were amending the regulations to enable the government to eventually exempt some students and business people who need to regularly cross the border, without providing a time line.

The outbreak of Covid-19 and the government's subsequent social-distancing restrictions have, over the past few months, largely suppressed pro-democracy pro-

tests that rocked the Asian financial hub last year. But as virus cases ease, activists have begun organizing new demonstrations, defying the measures.

A protest of some 100 people on Friday ended peacefully at a central shopping mall, while another two days later was dispersed by police after authorities warned demonstrators they would be in violation of rules barring groups of more than four people.

Last week, Hong Kong extended social distan-

cing measures for an additional 14 days, with Lam saying it was "not the time to let down our guard." Many protesters fear that her China-backed government may be keeping restrictions in place in a bid to suppress political unrest.

The city has contained the spread of the virus through a mix of early social distancing measures starting in late January, travel restrictions, contact tracing and mandatory quarantines.

It has seen zero daily new cases for five of the last nine days and hasn't reported a virus-related death since mid-March. Almost all of the newer infections were found in people with a recent travel history. **BLOOMBERG**





An AP journalist examines a gate system made by Guard ME that conducts temperature checks and fogs disinfectants on users, in Dubai

## As virus cases rise, UAE adjusts to a new normal in pandemic

JON GAMBRELL, DUBAI

**I**n a Dubai industrial park, workers weld, drill and build what one entrepreneur sees as key to the near future of this desert city-state amid the coronavirus pandemic: disinfection gates.

Husam Zammar's company builds such gates for government and commercial clients. He believes the new safety measures will find wide acceptance, just as metal detectors did after the 9/11 terror attacks. "If we consider two people, one has a knife and one has coronavirus, the second one is a hundred times dangerous than the first one," he said.

Fear of the virus is palpable in Dubai and elsewhere in the United Arab Emirates, a federation of seven sheikhdoms where foreigners make up 90% of the population. Yet even as confirmed coronavirus cases spike, the UAE is opening up its cavernous malls and restaurants in a gamble to stimulate its economy while still trying to fight off the pandemic.

That's led to a new normal here of temperature checks, social distancing monitors at supermarkets and marked-off empty seats on the city's driverless Metro. But crowds already

have come to the malls and others are leaving their homes after weeks of a lockdown, eager to party in a city known for its nightlife and increasing the risk of the virus spreading.

In lifting more stringent restrictions, the UAE cited the holy Muslim fasting month of Ramadan, which began late last week. Dubai also lifted a weeklong quarantine order on a neighborhood along the Dubai Creek that's home to many low-wage workers late Sunday, saying it had detected no new coronavirus cases there for two days.

But the detection rate for cases continues to spike due to mass testing. Authorities say more than 1 million tests have been administered — a number expected to rise. This week, Abu Dhabi's Department of Economic Development ordered companies outside of free zones to test all their employees.

Yesterday, UAE reported it had seen over 11,300 confirmed cases of the virus with 89 deaths. Recent days have seen numbers rise around 500 daily, in part as the testing reaches the UAE's population of low-paid laborers, who

remain particularly at risk as they can live with up to 10 people in a single room like in other Gulf Arab countries.

The UAE isn't yet like Wuhan, China, from which the first cases of the virus emerged. There, biosecurity checkpoints are everywhere that spray people with disinfectant or have them walk through a box of grey decontaminant gas like an airlock. Similar gates or tunnels have been constructed in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Turkey, Kenya and elsewhere, aimed at killing traces of the virus on people's clothes or their body.

### The UAE is opening up its cavernous malls and restaurants in a gamble to stimulate its economy while still trying to fight off the pandemic

Hoping to fill an anticipated demand in the UAE, Zammar's firm Guard ME constructs the gates out of metal frames, galvanized steel and temperature-checking equipment from

China. Someone trying to enter a business or office with such a gate first must undergo a temperature check, then walk through a fog of disinfectant created ultrasonically.

While that won't detect an asymptomatic carrier of the coronavirus, it still will offer people peace of mind, said Zammar, a Syrian entrepreneur based in Dubai.

"In the next two or three months, we will (feel) that if they didn't check your temperature, there is some problem in this building," he said.

In all of China, each person also has a "health code" that uses geolocation and other mobile phone data to assign an infection risk by color, with red resulting in a 14-day, closely monitored quarantine. In the UAE, such mobile phone apps remain voluntary.

However, images from Zammar's gate or a helmet-based temperature checker now used by Dubai police could be fed into a facial-recognition database. The UAE already has such a database from its national ID card system, which residents use for fast immigration clearance at Dubai International Airport. That fuels worries about privacy and surveillance in the UAE, which has been internationally criticized for targeting journalists and human rights activists and was linked to a suspected spying app.

Still, the country is slowly opening up as people in masks and gloves now go to the mall. Barber shops have also reopened, with scissors and hair clipper attachments individually sterilized and wrapped like surgical tools.

What this all means for Dubai's nightlife and bar scene, a crucial economic driver, remains in question.

A famed Irish bar chain in the city-state called McGettigan's quietly opened its main location in Dubai's Jumeirah Lakes Towers neighborhood on Friday, but soon saw a line of people queuing up to enter. The bar closed early, before a 10 p.m. nightly curfew.

And like other bars in Dubai, it hasn't been serving alcohol since the 24-hour, police-enforced lockdown lifted. Signs out front tell customers that masks "must be appropriately worn at all times."

The company told The Associated Press in a statement that it's complying with the guidance from local authorities.

"The health and safety of our customers is the priority — from temperature checks to social distancing of tables, sanitization of the venue and all other regulations," it said. **AP**

## New Zealand

ANGELA CHARLTON, ELENA BECATOROS & NICK PERRY

**F**RANCE and Spain, two of the worst-hit countries in the coronavirus pandemic, were laying out separate roadmaps yesterday for lifting their lockdowns, while signs emerged the virus has been all but vanquished in New Zealand and Australia.

But on the other side of the globe, Brazil is emerging as a new hotspot for infections. And new doubts were raised over whether Japan would be able to host the already postponed Summer Olympics next year without the development of a vaccine.

In Europe and elsewhere, the key question of when to reopen schools loomed as nations seek to ease lockdowns and restart their battered economies.

Although the coronavirus seems to affect children far less seriously than adults, many officials, teachers and parents are concerned about the health risks that school openings pose. Some point to the difficulties of ensuring that children stick to social distancing and frequent hand washing, and teachers themselves fear risks to their own health.

But many parents would struggle to return to work without schools being open, hampering efforts to restart the economy.

In France, President Emmanuel Macron wants schools to start reopening May 11, but teachers, parents and even some mayors are raising alarms. The government says it will be up to parents to decide whether to send children back to class, with details expected to be released by the prime minister today [Macau time]

Joel Wilmotte is among a growing number of French mayors refusing to re-open their schools, at least for now.

"I am not against the reopening of schools," he said in a video on the Facebook page of his northern town of Hautmont. But he listed seven reasons why he's not ready to do so.

Among them: Teachers don't know how to make sure every child respects protective gestures and a poll suggests most French parents oppose school reopenings. Cleaning staff are afraid and under-equipped to do constant disinfections.

So Wilmotte said he's keeping the six schools in his town closed "until further notice."

Greece, which so far has managed to keep its coronavirus death toll low, at 136 people, was also releasing more lockdown easing details yesterday but the issue of schools remained tricky.

Schools will be reopened "gradually, with conditions" and subject to constant review, said the Health Ministry's virus spokesman, infectious diseases specialist Sotiris Tsiordas. The team of experts he is on has not recommended a date.



# And tames virus; France, Spain reveal lockdown exits



Surfers prepare to enter the water at Sumner Beach as level four COVID-19 restrictions are eased in Christchurch, New Zealand

Scientists agree that children are less at risk from the virus and appear to transmit it less than adults, said Tsiodras, a father of seven. "This is not an experiment where we want something bad to happen to our children. It is a scientific proposal. We propose, the state will decide."

In the United States, which has the world's highest death toll at more than 56,000, President Donald Trump said states should "seriously consider" reopening their public schools before the end of the academic year, even though dozens already have said it would be unsafe for students to return until the summer or fall.

"Some of you might start thinking about school openings, because a lot of people are wanting to have the school openings. It's not a big subject, young children have done very well in this disaster that we've all gone through," Trump said.

Trump also admitted the number of virus deaths could reach 70,000 in the U.S., after citing 60,000 several times this month.

The number of confirmed infections in the U.S. has risen to nearly 1 million and the confirmed death topped 211,000, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University. The true toll of the pandemic is likely much higher because of limited testing, mild cases that are missed, flaws in counting the dead and governments that may be trying to conceal the extent of their outbreaks.

Italy, Spain, France and Britain accounted for more than 21,000 virus-related deaths each.

In Brazil, President Jair Bolsonaro has insisted that COVID-19 is just a "little flu" and there is no need for the type of restrictions that have slowed the infection's spread in Europe and the U.S. but upended their economies.

Brazil, Latin America's most populous country with 211 million people, has reported 4,600 deaths and 67,000 confirmed infections. But the true numbers are believed to be vastly higher given the lack of

testing and the many people who haven't sought hospital care.

Medical officials in Rio de Janeiro and at least four other major cities have warned that their hospital systems are on the verge of collapse or are too overwhelmed to take any more patients. There are also signs that a growing number of Brazilian victims are dying at home.

## In Europe and elsewhere, the key question of when to reopen schools loomed as nations seek to ease lockdowns and restart their battered economies

"We have all the conditions here for the pandemic to become much more serious," said Paulo Brandão, a virologist at the University of Sao Paulo.

Bolsonaro has said Brazilians need to resume their lives

to prevent an economic meltdown but most state governors have adopted restrictions to keep people home and slow the spread of the virus.

New Zealand reported just three new infections yesterday. Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said people had done an incredible job of breaking the chain of transmission but cautioned they needed to remain vigilant.

"There may still be some smoldering ashes out there, and they have the potential to become a wildfire again, if we give them the chance," she said, quoting a microbiologist.

Her government loosened its lockdown, which had shuttered schools and most businesses. Surfers hit the waves at dawn,

builders returned to construction sites and baristas fired up espresso machines. Most students will still keep studying at home, employees must work from home if possible and everyone is required to main-

tain social distancing.

In Australia, authorities reopened Sydney's iconic Bondi Beach to swimmers and surfers yesterday and hundreds of people returned to the water. People can only use the beach during daylight, cannot linger and are limited to ensure social distancing. Australia has only 83 confirmed virus deaths, less than the death tolls in at least half of the U.S. states.

But in Japan, a top medical expert said he thinks it will be difficult to hold the rescheduled Summer Olympics even in 2021 without an effective coronavirus vaccine.

"I hope vaccines and drugs will be developed as soon as possible," said Yoshitake Yokokura, president of the Japan Medical Association.

Japan and the International Olympic Committee agreed to postpone the Tokyo 2020 Summer Games until July 2021 due to the pandemic. Japan is under a monthlong state of emergency amid a rapid increase of infections throughout the country, where hospitals are overburdened. **AP**



AP PHOTO



# Guterres: Extremists using Covid-19 to recruit online youths

EDITH M. LEDERER,  
UNITED NATIONS

**U**.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned yesterday [Macau time] that extremist groups are taking advantage of COVID-19 lock downs to intensify social media efforts to spread hatred and recruit young people who are spending more time online.

Even before the coronavirus pandemic, he said, one of every five young people was not getting an education, training or working, and one of every four was affected by violence or conflict. And he lamented that every year, 12 million girls become mothers when they are still children.

Guterres told a U.N. Security Council meeting on youth, peace and security that "these frustrations and, frankly, failures to address them by those in power today, fuel declining confidence in political establishments and institutions."

"When such a cycle takes hold, it is all too easy for extremist groups to exploit the anger and despair, and the risk of radicalization climbs," he said.

But despite these challenges, the U.N. chief said young people "are still finding

ways to engage, support each other, and to demand and drive change" — including in the fight against COVID-19.

Guterres pointed to young people in Colombia, Ghana, Iraq and several other countries joining humanitarian workers in delivering supplies to front-line health workers and people in need, keeping communications open within communities while maintaining social distancing. He said young people are also supporting his March 23 call for a cease-fire in all conflicts in the world.

Jayathma Wickramanayake, the secretary-general's envoy on youth, criticized the media for focusing on "the small minority of young people who disregarded guidelines" and put people at risk by going to beaches, pubs and parties — and for "completely sidelining the thousands of young people who were already fighting in the front lines of the crisis."

She pointed to young people in Kenya and Cameroon who immediately adopted their peacebuilding organizations and networks to help their communities face COVID-19, the many young health workers and medical students attending to coronavirus patients in China

and Italy, the Scouts, Girl Guides and Red Cross youth volunteers running environment and hand-washing campaigns in Jordan and elsewhere, and young people making face masks and fundraising in the United States.

Wickramanayake dedicated her speech "to all the young people who are putting their communities ahead of themselves within war zones, within refugee camps, within favelas and within settlements, showcasing grit and leadership that sometimes we even fail to see in our own political leaders."

Secretary-General Guterres and many Security Council ambassadors stressed the impact of COVID-19 on young people, from a suspension of their education to lost jobs, family stress, mental health issues and other hardships.

According to the U.N. chief's recent report to the council, there are 1.85 billion young women and men aged 10 to 24 in the world in 2020, 90 percent of them living in developing countries and many in conflict areas.

"Young people are a huge source of new ideas, solutions and innovation," Estonia's U.N. Ambassador Sven Jürgenson said. "During the current pandemic, however,

they can be among the greatest victims."

He cited estimates that an additional 42 million to 66 million children could fall into "extreme poverty" as a result of COVID-19 and an analysis from the U.N. Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization showing that 91 percent of the world's students are affected by school closures, and more than 1.5 billion students in 191 countries have trouble continuing their studies normally.

"This will lead to increased educational gaps, serious damage to the prospects for a better future and can potentially lay seeds of radicalization among young people, constituting a threat to peace and security," Jürgenson warned.

U.S. Ambassador Kelly Craft added that the more than 400 million young people directly affected by violence or conflict are most vulnerable.

"Now, the imperative to protect them is even greater: on top of social, education, and health systems that (are) already weakened by conflict or disaster, the COVID-19 pandemic is triggering multiple, interlinked crises impacting hundreds of millions of young people," she warned. **AP**

## this day in history



### 1992 LA IN FLAMES AFTER 'NOT GUILTY' VERDICT

Fierce rioting has broken out in Los Angeles following the decision by a jury to acquit four white police officers accused of beating black motorist Rodney King.

The decision, made by an all-white jury, caused a political outcry, and provoked fury in the predominantly black neighbourhoods of south-central Los Angeles.

An angry crowd, chanting "Guilty! Guilty!", tried to storm police headquarters in the business district, before setting fire to shops and vehicles.

Motorists were dragged from their cars and beaten, cars were overturned and set alight, and at least five people were shot dead.

The violence is the worst in the city since the Watts riots of 1965, in which 34 people died. The Governor of California, Pete Wilson, has declared a state of emergency, and called in reinforcements from the California Highway Patrol.

In a brief televised statement, President Bush said the "murder and destruction" on the streets of the city must be stopped. He also spoke of his concern at excessive use of force by the police.

The case centred on a video, taped by an amateur cameraman in March last year, which caught the scene as the four police officers beat, kicked and clubbed unemployed labourer Rodney King for 81 seconds while other officers looked on.

The tape was on television networks across the world a day later, and became a focus for accusations of racist brutality against the LAPD.

Throughout the two-month televised trial, the four accused police officers - Laurence Powell, Stacey Koon, Timothy Wind and Theodore Briseno - argued that they acted in self-defence to restrain Mr King, who they said was aggressive and resisted arrest.

Following the verdict, Mr King's lawyer said his client was "speechless - in a state of shock and outrage". He plans to go ahead with his \$56 million private suit against the city and police force.

State Senator Ed Davis, himself a former city police chief, said he was "shocked and flabbergasted" by the verdict. "Having seen the video, like millions of other people," he said, "I cannot accept this as police conduct for California."

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

The riots in Los Angeles lasted several days. The violence killed 55 people, and included revenge attacks against whites and Asians. About 2,000 were injured, with a further 12,000 arrested.

Property damaged cost an estimated \$1bn to repair, and the National Guard was deployed to restore order.

The four acquitted police officers faced a second trial a year later, on federal charges of violating Rodney King's civil rights.

Stacey Koon and Laurence Powell were found guilty: each served two years in jail. Timothy Wind and Theodore Briseno were cleared. All four left the police force, and have since found it difficult to get work elsewhere. Rodney King won \$3.8m damages from the City of Los Angeles. Much of it went to pay his lawyers, but he used the rest to found a rap record business, the Straight Alta-Pazz Recording Company.



MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

## YOUR STARS



### ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

Purchases will be well worth it and they will last a long time. Don't rely on others to handle the workload. Try to keep to yourself; work diligently on domestic chores and responsibilities.



### TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

Keep an open mind when listening to the opinions of others. You will have a greater involvement in groups; however, they may not be to your advantage. Take a look at investment opportunities.



### GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

Someone you work with could try to undermine you. Beware of colleagues who don't have your best interests in mind. Your pursuits may end up being fruitless.



### CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

You can make money if you work on personal investments. Get back to basics and reevaluate what is important in life. Pamper yourself; the self-esteem it brings you will be most gratifying.



### LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

You could find yourself left with someone's dirty laundry today. Include friends and family members in your redecorating plans. Use your energy wisely. You may need it later.



### VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

You are best to travel or attend lectures or seminars. Some of that extra energy you have stored up might just be put to good use. Try to compromise rather than having an all out battle.



### LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

Your determination may make you a little overbearing when dealing with others. Communication must be open, precise, and honest. You may have difficulties at an emotional level with mates.



### SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

You may find yourself in an emotional fix if you interfere in other people's problems. Direct your energy into physical entertainment. You may need a good friend to lean on.



### SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

You may not be as well received in group endeavors if you try to force your will on others. Romantic opportunities will be plentiful if you get out and mingle. You may be more emotional than usual.



### CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

Be diplomatic when dealing with in-law. Expect your workload to be heavy. Take that long overdue vacation if you can. It may be a while when you ad love ones can enjoy one together.



### AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

Try to do your job and then leave. Avoid functions that will bring you in contact with those you find difficult to get along with. Stop those bad habits.



### PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Your emotions will be touched off concerning recent encounters with your lover. Put your energy into learning new skills or picking up valuable information. Your partner may be erratic today.

## The Born Loser by Chip Sanson



## SUDOKU

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

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

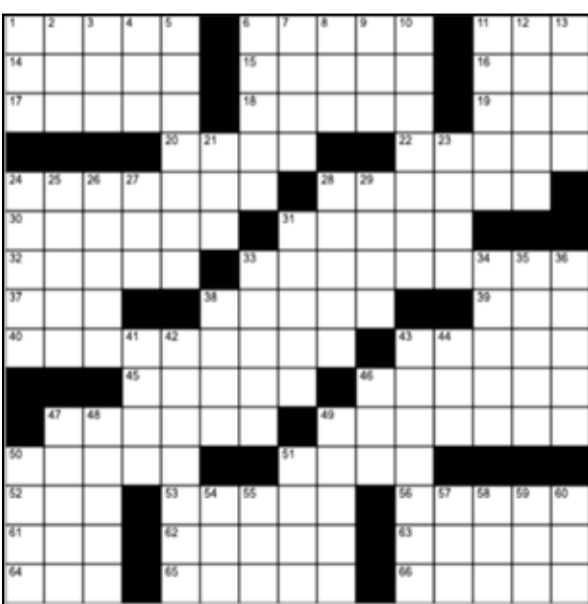
## WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
<b>CHINA</b>			
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
<b>WORLD</b>			
Moscow	1	8	drizzle
Frankfurt	0	8	cloudy
Paris	2	10	clear
London	5	13	cloudy
New York	3	10	cloudy

## CROSSWORDS

ACROSS: 1- Shades; 6- Ascends; 11- Kind of poodle; 14- Fool; 15- Out of line; 16- Farm female; 17- Conger catcher; 18- Congo, once; 19- Retrovirus component; 20- Langston Hughes poem; 22- Prescribed amounts; 24- Cork; 28- Came down; 30- Approached; 31- Have a feeling; 32- Chipped in; 33- Murderer; 37- How about that!; 38- Capital city of Yemen; 39- 6, on a phone; 40- Robust; 43- Markers; 45- Suspicious; 46- Knitted shoe; 47- Ring comb; 49- Skill; 50- Make into a statute; 51- Seemingly forever; 52- French connections; 53- San Marino surround; 56- Render weaponless; 61- Back muscle, briefly; 62- Scandinavian; 63- Motion picture; 64- Bond, for one; 65- Private Pyle; 66- Gnu cousin;

DOWN: 1- Bind; 2- Lyric poem; 3- Goose egg; 4- Fair-hiring abbr.; 5- Like barber poles; 6- Sharp-edged instrument; 7- Golfer Aoki; 8- Hit the slopes; 9- Always, poetically; 10- Start for fish, meatballs, or massage; 11- Concise; 12- Had; 13- Some votes; 21- English poet Hughes; 23- Doozy; 24- Catches; 25- Principle; 26- Western; 27- Historic beginning; 28- Put a new price on; 29- Organization to promote theater; 31- Nice days, usually; 33- Africa's most populous city; 34- Leaves out; 35- Pays to play; 36- We're Off \_\_\_ the Wizard; 38- Gush; 41- Novelist Waugh; 42- Necking; 43- Devour; 44- Garden tool; 46- Coal container; 47- Available; 48- Beastly; 49- Lobby of a theater; 50- Electric fish; 51- More; 54- In addition; 55- Escort's offering; 57- Cambodia's Lon \_\_\_; 58- Actress Gardner; 59- Oysters \_\_\_ season; 60- Kind of school;



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

## USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

- Emergency calls 999
- Fire department 28 572 222
- PJ (Open line) 993
- PJ (Picket) 28 557 775
- PSP 28 573 333
- Customs 28 559 944
- S. J. Hospital 28 313 731
- Kiang Wu Hospital 28 371 333
- Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) 28326 300
- IAM 28 387 333
- Tourism 28 333 000
- Airport 59 888 88
- Taxi 28 939 939 / 2828 3283
- Water Supply - Report 2822 0088
- Telephone - Report 1000
- Electricity - Report 28 339 922
- Macau Daily Times 28 716 081



AD

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[Coloane] Large 3/4 bedroom 2 3睡 2廁  
2,530 ft² \$12,980,000 (ref: 19096000)

[Macau] Seaview Garden 3睡 2廁  
1,420 ft² \$10,900,000 (ref: 20016004)

[Coloane] Hellene Gardens 1睡 3睡 2廁  
1,663 ft² \$8,200,000 (ref: 19025577)

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

### FOR RENT

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

[Coloane] Grand Coloane Resort 1睡 1廁  
710 ft² \$10,000/mth (ref: 20021002)

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

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

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MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

# LIQUOR GIANT MOUTAI SEES PROFIT GAIN DESPITE VIRUS LOCKDOWNS

DANIELA WEI

**L**IQUOR giant Kweichow Moutai Co.'s buoyant first quarter earnings is the latest sign that China's demand for luxury goods is resilient, a relief for global brands dependent on the Asian nation to drive growth.

The maker of fiery baijiu drink reported a gain in profit for the first quarter as demand held up in the face of restrictions and travel curbs that kept people from social gatherings. First-quarter net income for the world's most valuable distiller rose 16.7% to 13.1 billion yuan, the company said in a filing on Monday. Total revenue rose 12.8%.

Moutai's solid earnings, amid a pandemic that's caused a deep economic downturn worldwide, is the latest good news from luxury-goods makers. LVMH and L'Oreal SA are seeing a quick recovery in China revenue as pent-up demand fuels sales at re-opened stores on the mainland.

Moutai's stock, an investor favorite, jumped as much as 1.5% in Tuesday trading. Shares have rallied more than 20% since March 17 as China - where the epidemic first emerged in end-December - began to ease containment restrictions.

French consumer giants LVMH and L'Oreal SA said earlier this month that a recovery could start soon after the coronavirus caused sales to plunge in the first quarter, as revenue in China is already bouncing back. L'Oreal Chief Executive Officer Jean-Paul Agon said that sales in China - the world's biggest market for luxury goods - turned positive in March and were on track for a gain of 5% to 10% in April.

LVMH, the owner of Louis



BLOOMBERG

Vuitton and Dior, flagged a rapid acceleration in mainland China in April as shoppers clamored to make purchases delayed by lockdowns. Sales in mainland China turned positive in April for Gucci owner, Kering, buoyed by the repatriation of tourist spending and pent-up consumer demand.

But with the Chinese economy shrinking for the first time since at least 1992 last quarter, many

consumers are expected to rein in spending. That's cast doubt on whether the current bout of catching up on purchases thwarted by quarantine measures signals a durable rebound.

The current bounce - or rebound - in the Chinese consumer demand will help global luxury-goods makers mitigate the sales hit in the U.S. and European markets as these nations

continue to battle the virus.

The growth in Moutai's revenue, which relies almost solely on the domestic market for revenue, came despite restaurants and bars staying shut through most of the first quarter.

The scarcity of the high-end baijiu helped keep demand strong. Consumers still sought out Moutai's fiery liquor, which is highly coveted by the growing

middle class. The results are a testament to the drink's staying power throughout the crisis, and consumers' ability to get access to baijiu bottles despite the restrictions.

Citigroup Inc. analysts including Xiaopo Wei lifted their target price for Moutai by 29% to 1,450 yuan after the better-than-expected earnings and said the distiller provides a unique opportunity for investors in China's consumer staple sector, given its resilient growth amid volatile market conditions.

Moutai, like fellow premium baijiu maker Wuliangye Yibin Co., also benefited from lucky timing with Lunar New Year, traditionally their peak sales season of the year, falling earlier than usual this year with the holiday starting on Jan. 24. By the time the coronavirus epidemic broke out in earnest in China -- the central Chinese city of Wuhan was sealed off on Jan. 23 -- distributors had already completed their orders.

So when retail prices of bottles fell in February and March as the epidemic shut down China's economy, it was distributors whose profits were hurt and not the distillers.

Wuliangye reported 19% profit growth for the first quarter and Jefferies Hong Kong Ltd. analysts raised their target price and earnings estimate for the year for Moutai's rival. Wuliangye shares rose as much as 4.5% on Tuesday.

The positive results may be a hopeful sign for the rest of the year. Moutai had set a more modest sales growth target of 10% for this year, after revenue rose about 15% for 2019, missing analyst estimates for the first time since 2015. The disappointing results raised concerns that consumer sentiment in China was weakening even before the virus outbreak hit the market.

BLOOMBERG

## CORPORATE BITS

### SJM sponsors 'SEN Learning Programme'



Sociedade de Jogos de Macau, S.A. (SJM) has sponsored the "SEN Learning Programme" recently launched by the Macau Special Olympics (MSO), offering extra learning support to students with special education needs (SEN).

According to a statement issued by the gaming operator, the programme offers two professional support plans for students with SEN: a Remote Learning Plan and an Individual Education Plan.

In the Remote Learning

Plan, customised e-learning programmes and devices are designed by SEN professionals to address individual learners' needs in order to facilitate parents to assist their children with studying online from home.

In addition, MSO will partner with SEN teaching staff in delivering "1-to-1" tuition to keep the pupils fully engaged in their learning.

Daisy Ho, Chairman of the Board of Directors of SJM, said, "We are pleased to support MSO in providing additional resources for students with SEN, in response to the government's initiative of 'suspending classes without suspending learning'."

### Sands China implements energy-efficient plant at Sands Cotai Central



Sands China Ltd. is now operating the first solar thermal-heat pump hybrid energy plant at its Sands Cotai Central integrated resort.

The energy-efficient plant generates both heating and cooling for 2,000 hotel rooms of the Sky Tower at Sheraton Grand Macao Hotel, Cotai

Strip, eliminating the need for a natural gas boiler. It is also the industry's largest such energy plant in Southeast Asia, according to a statement issued by the gaming operator.

A 520-kilowatt capacity solar thermal coupled with an 800-kilowatt capacity high-temperature water source

heat pump system generates enough hot water to meet the needs of the entire 2,000-room Sheraton Grand Sky Tower and its swimming pools, spa, and kitchens.

The new hybrid heating and cooling system improves the existing plant efficiency by over 50%, saves over 14,000 MMBTU of natural gas, and reduces carbon emissions by 1,140 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (MTCO<sub>2e</sub>) annually.

Dr. Wilfred Wong, president of Sands China Ltd said, "We are very excited about embracing renewable energy in our business operations wherever possible to mitigate the impact from fossil fuel energy sources."



MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

# Asian celebs work to combat racist attacks amid pandemic

**A**CTRESS Olivia Cheng was recently volunteering in Vancouver when she says she witnessed a man drive up to an elderly Chinese woman, roll down his window and yell, "This is your fault!" before throwing trash at her.

The incident enraged Cheng, and also served as another reason why she feels it's so important for celebrities of Asian descent to use their voices and speak up against anti-Asian attacks, which authorities say are increasing during the coronavirus pandemic.

"I don't think we can pretend that this isn't happening," Cheng, who stars in "The Stand" on CBS All Access, said in a recent interview with The Associated Press. "For now, it would not be unwise to be a little more careful, to maybe have buddy systems when possible to go get your groceries if you're not feeling safe."

The FBI reports there has been an uptick in hate crimes and harassment against Asian Americans since the outbreak of COVID-19, which first appeared in Wuhan, China, late last year.

Some people have blamed China and Asians in general for the spread of coronavirus; President Donald Trump at times has called it the "Chinese virus."

In New York, state Attorney General Letitia James has set up a hotline to report harassment or other targeted crime. Some of those inci-

AP PHOTO



This combination photo shows Asian American actors, from left, Tzi Ma, Olivia Cheng, Will Yun Lee, Jeannie Mai and Jon M. Chu

dents have been filmed and posted online.

"Tigertail" star Tzi Ma says he's been a victim of such harassment. He was entering a grocery store in Pasadena, California, recently when he was confronted by a man in a car.

"He looked at me straight in the eye and said, 'You should be quarantined' and took off," said the veteran actor, who was born in Hong Kong but moved to the United States as a child.

"I got very angry obviously, flush with this kind of cold in your body. And I started screaming at him, but

he was way too far away for him to hear me."

Actor Alain Uy, a star of the upcoming Hulu series "Marvel's Helstrom," worried early on that such incidents would occur after the virus' spread.

"Once this outbreak happened in Wuhan, we all kind of went, 'OK, we know what this is gonna mean,'" said the actor, who was born in the Philippines.

"Crazy Rich Asians" director Jon M. Chu said he's been feeling more cautious than usual.

"It's very sad when I feel a little

bit weird when I'm going to go for a walk around the block," he said.

"The Real" co-host, Jeannie Mai, who is half-Vietnamese and half-Chinese, revealed recently that for the first time, she needed someone to monitor her social media posts to delete racist comments.

"The Good Doctor" actor Will Yun Lee is even nervous about taking his baby son to the grocery store: "My wife is Caucasian, but my son is half Korean and half white. But he looks very Asian."

But Ma and other stars are speaking up and working to combat

the ignorance and harassment. Ma joined actress Celia Au and other celebrities and influencers in the recent campaign called "Wash the Hate," created by IW Group, an Asian American-focused marketing agency. The PSA features Ma, Au and others washing their hands and reminding people that hygiene, not xenophobia, is the way to help combat the virus.

"If I can start the conversation, why not?" said Au, who was also born in Hong Kong. "If we don't talk about it, then it's not going to be talked about at all." AP

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**OPINION**

**World Views**

Cathy O'Neil, Bloomberg

**WE CAN'T GET TOGETHER  
 UNTIL TESTS GET BETTER**

The debate about when and whether the world can reopen keeps coming back to testing. If only we could test everyone all the time, the logic goes, we could isolate the ill and everyone else could go back to school, work and life as we once knew it.

Sadly, that's not quite right. The prerequisite for reopening is better tests, not just more tests.

A "good test" has three properties: It's rapid (like less than an hour), accurate and widely available. Only with all three can it be used to screen people before they go to the office, get on an airplane, or attend a class or conference. And only then — barring an effective vaccine — can authorities safely allow people to do all those things.

Current tests fall short. The turnaround time for typical nasal swabs that detect the virus's RNA can be hours or days — far too long to be useful as a screen, and plenty of time for people to get infected while awaiting the results. And even if people were willing to wait in quarantine for days, many of the available tests are not accurate.

They have very high false negative rates, meaning that they would erroneously allow a lot of sick people to interact with everyone else, all but guaranteeing more super-spreader incidents. There are some promising tests that are both fast and relatively accurate, but they require nearby expensive machines, so they won't become universally available.

Checking people's temperatures is no substitute. Thermometer guns and cameras are famously inaccurate, in part because the temperature of your face doesn't necessarily reflect your internal temperature. More important, people infected with coronavirus are highly contagious long before they show any symptoms, and many never experience a fever.

Granted, current tests do have their uses. New York, for example, recently used antibody tests to estimate that about 15% of people in the state — and about 25% in New York City — had already been infected. This might be useful for understanding whether a place is nearing "herd immunity" — but only if infection grants immunity for a significant period, which we don't know yet. Also, it's worth noting that New York's test wasn't a random sample: Participants were selected at shopping centers, so the results aren't representative of a population that is to some extent hunkering down at home.

None of this means that people shouldn't use the available tests. Done right, testing and tracing can slow the pandemic's spread. And even slow bad tests can provide some marginal risk mitigation for people working in hot spots. Hospitals should get access to the expensive machines to further mitigate risk. But the remaining danger, unavoidable in a hospital, is unacceptable in a college dormitory or industry conference. Which leaves sticking with social distancing, and requiring businesses to gear up with splash guards, partitions and credit card machines placed at a safe distance from cashiers. All imperfect, but helpful in reducing risk until a good test comes along.

I'm fantasizing about how things will look when a good test emerges, for the months or years before a vaccine. Maybe people will get up in the morning and, before going to work, spit into a "smart test" envelope that verifies their identity and shares the result with them and anyone they indicated should have access. Same for getting on an airplane, attending or teaching a college class, or whatever else involves proximity to other humans. If the tests are widely available and people take them daily, small inaccuracies will be mitigated. It will be easy to take another test to be sure.

I want good news as much as anyone. Believe me when I say that I'd very much like to know if and when my college-aged sons will ever move out. But until there's a good test, I'm not making any plans.

Brazil is emerging as potentially the next big hot spot for the coronavirus amid President Jair Bolsonaro's insistence that it is just a "little flu" and that there is no need for the sharp restrictions that have slowed the infection's spread in Europe and the U.S.

As some U.S. states and European countries moved gradually yesterday [Macau time] to ease their limits on movement and commerce, the intensifying outbreak in Brazil — Latin America's biggest country, with 211 million people — pushed some hospitals to the breaking point, with signs that a growing number of

victims are now dying at home.

"We have all the conditions here for the pandemic to become much more serious," said Paulo Brandão, a virologist at the University of Sao Paulo.

Brazil officially reported about 4,500 deaths and almost 67,000 confirmed infections. But the true numbers there, as in many other countries, are believed to be vastly higher given the lack of testing and the many people without severe symptoms who haven't sought hospital care.

Some scientists said over 1 million in Brazil are probably infected.

ONE GOOD THING

**NAPLES' BELOVED PIZZA  
 IS BACK AFTER VIRUS  
 SHUTDOWN EASES**

**WOOD** is burning again in Naples' pizza ovens, giving a symbolic and savory boost to Neapolitans after two months of lockdown meant an end to their most iconic and favorite food.

Pizzerias reopened last night in the birthplace of pizza, albeit under restrictions and for home delivery only.

Whereas pizzerias in Rome and elsewhere were allowed to operate for take-out and delivery service, they were banned in Naples out of fears that such a congested, high-density city could fast become a new hot spot for COVID-19 infections.

Campania's governor, Vincenzo De Luca, enforced strict lockdown measures, knowing that the region's hospitals couldn't handle a major influx of sick. In the end, Campania had a relatively manageable outbreak of about 4,300 people infected, half of whom didn't need to be hospitalized.

With Italy as whole gradually reopening, De Luca lifted bans on pizza deliveries as well as home deliveries from bars, pastry shops and ice-cream parlors and



AP PHOTO

restaurants.

"Surely this is a little restart for the entrepreneurs, important for us and for our region, our city and our nation," said Giovanni Pezzuto, owner of a Neapolitan pizzeria. "This is a symbol of hope for the little firm that slowly can restart."

It's not a total reopening, however. Clients can only place orders by phone — not in person — and all business must close at 10 p.m. The pizzerias have to be cleaned regularly and workers must wear gloves and masks.

Vincenzo Capuano, owner of pizzeria Capuano, said even the partial reopening will help Campania's economy because all his ingredients are sourced locally.

"To make pizza I have to buy the local flour from Naples, (local) San Marza-

no tomatoes, I have to buy the potatoes, the onions," he said.

Without this support to the local economy, "after the health crisis we could have a much worse economic crisis."

Italy was the first country in the West to be slammed by the outbreak, and its death toll is the highest in Europe and second only to the U.S., which has more than five times the population. Italy's epicenter, however, was based in the north and officials say the south was largely spared because the government locked down the whole country in time.

Nationwide, bars and restaurants are expected to be allowed to reopen in June for in-house service, but only with strict social-distancing and sanitation measures in place. AP

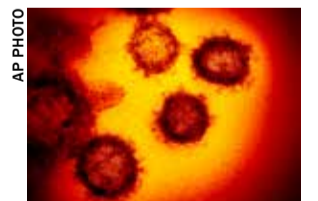


AP PHOTO  
**South Korea** has repeated calls for joint efforts with North Korea to fight the coronavirus. A South Korean presidential official said yesterday that Seoul doesn't expect possible efforts to clash with sanctions against North Korea over its nuclear program. South Korean President Moon Jae-in said earlier that joint anti-virus efforts could provide a "new opportunity" for inter-Korean engagement. But the North has ignored the calls.



AP PHOTO  
**Germany's** disease control center said the country's rate of coronavirus infections has slightly increased but the number of new infections remains at a manageable level. Lothar Wieler (pictured) says the "R" factor - the number of people infected by every person with COVID-19 - is now 0.96. Authorities have said they want to try to keep it below 1 to keep the pandemic manageable for the health care system.

**Austrian** officials say the rate of coronavirus infections has steadied and it can soon enter a phase of relaxing lockdown measures. Health Minister Rudolf Anschober says the country will begin winding down restrictions, starting May 1 through the end of June. Tourism minister Elisabeth Koestinger says restaurants will reopen on May 15.



AP PHOTO  
**Olympics** The head of Japan's medical association said it will be difficult to hold the Olympics without coronavirus vaccines. "I hope vaccines and drugs will be developed as soon as possible," Japan Medical Association President Yoshitake Yokokura told a video news conference in Tokyo. The Tokyo 2020 Games have been rescheduled to July next year.

**THE DECISIVE MOMENT**

AP Photo/Andy Wong



People wearing protective face masks to help curb the spread of the new coronavirus walk by human sculptures on display outside an art gallery in Beijing yesterday.