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ROSÁRIO AT THE AL: PUBLIC WORKS CANNOT ADVANCE WITHOUT LONG-AWAITED MASTER PLAN

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MAINLAND VISITORS MAY RETURN LATER THIS MONTH: ANALYST

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COVID-19 TESTS WILL BE CONDUCTED ON LOCAL RESIDENTS WHO NEED TO MOVE BETWEEN MACAU AND THE MAINLAND

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AP PHOTO



China Senior students returned to classes yesterday in Wuhan after no new cases or deaths were reported from the outbreak that had prompted a 76-day quarantine in the city of 11 million. More than 120 schools re-opened to senior students after the facilities were thoroughly cleaned. Returning students were required to show they were healthy before being allowed inside.

China's ambassador to U.N. hopes the United States will have "second thoughts" about a Trump administration halt to funding for the World Health Organization. Chen Xu also announced China's support for a WHO initiative led by European countries and philanthropic groups like the Gates Foundation to expedite vaccines and COVID-19 treatment to developing countries. The United States has not aligned with the "Access to COVID-19 Tools" (ACT) Accelerator that aims to help vulnerable countries.

AP PHOTO



Taiwan's exclusion from the upcoming World Health Assembly would harm the global response to the coronavirus pandemic and cannot be excused by mere rules of procedure, the island's health minister said yesterday. Chen Shih-chung (pictured) told international media that global health officials "have not been honest and failed in their responsibilities," in an apparent reference to WHO. More on p7

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LRT: BARRA STATION ON TRACK

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TOURISM

BEIJING THOUGHT LIKELY TO APPROVE HO IAT SENG'S REQUEST FOR IVS RESUMPTION

LYNZY VALLES

THE Individual Visit Scheme (IVS) for mainland tourists intending to travel to Macau may be resumed after the upcoming 13th National People's Congress (NPC) this month, which was delayed from early March.

The two-weeks of annual meetings, to begin on May 22, are largely ceremonial, with the legislature rubber-stamping decisions previously reached by Communist Party leaders.

Earlier, the Chief Executive said that the local government would request that the central government resume the issuance of the IVS and increase the number of cities covered by the scheme.

The scheme allows mainland residents to visit Macau as independent travelers. It is the primary type of visa for mainland gamblers seeking to enter Macau.

Although its resumption will depend on whether the Covid-19 situation has completely stabilized across the country, it is likely that Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng's request for resumption will be approved, according to commentators.



Political commentator Larry So is confident that the central government will grant Ho's request as the city provides a safe environment for tourists.

Yesterday, the Times reported that some analysts suspect the number of mainland visitors to Hong Kong will not return to 2018 levels quickly, because of underlying tensions with the mainland that make the city appear less safe for Chinese tourists. However, Macau has not had any protests akin to those in Hong Kong last year.

"I'm quite sure that the central

government will allow the resumption of this visa. [...] We will have the IVS visitors coming in somewhere around the time the NPC meeting [ends]," So predicted in comments to the Times.

Another opinion, from Leonardo Dioko, director of the Macao Institute for Tourism Studies' Tourism Research Center, suggests this might not be the proper moment to reinstate the scheme as the city is still "struggling to find the safest and most secure way to relax border crossing barriers with our immediate neighbors, as a first step."

The IVS is considered to have been instrumental in aiding Macau's recovery from SARS 17 years ago. The IVS system was first implemented in four cities of the mainland's Guangdong province in 2003.

"The novel coronavirus has completely upended what we regarded before as normal - we now do not know what the new normal will be like," said the scholar.

While the public is keen to undertake so-called "revenge travel" to make up for the lockdowns of the past few months, public health and safety in destinations will still be the main consideration in steering policy, Dioko explained.

"Countries will likely be promoting domestic tourism more, followed by regional or cross-border tourism, before a return to international travel patterns," he explained.

Despite the possibility of resuming the IVS later this month, tourist spending will not be as high as normal as mainland tourists are also recovering from the economic effects of Covid-19.

According to So, the re-issuance of the IVS will not be an assu-

rance that the spending power will be as high, at least in the remaining quarters of the year.

"We will not have the money that we did have in recent years because we know that the economic [situation] now in China is not so good. People do not have that kind of spare money to come and gamble," said So.

In late January, the central government halted the issuance of IVS visas as part of its measures to contain the pandemic outbreak.

However, the individual visas already issued by mainland authorities remained valid despite the issuance halt.

These are the visas that mainland tourists have used to enter Macau during the past few months, as tour groups from mainland China to the SAR are still suspended.

Last year, the total number of Chinese IVS visitors totaled nearly 13.1 million, the largest number of IVS visitors in a year. In 2017 and 2018, the city registered a total of 10.6 million and nearly 12.3 million tourist arrivals respectively under the scheme.

TOURISM AUTHORITY CONFIRMS IT IS HELPING FOREIGNERS EXIT MACAU

SOME foreigners currently stranded in Macau have approached the local tourism authority for assistance to leave, Inês Chan, a representative of the Macao Government Tourism Office recently revealed.

"Recently, some foreigners [have expressed their desire] to leave Macau," Chan said the daily press conference for Covid-19-related matters.

For the time being, travel or entry restrictions are still in place in many countries, such as the requirement for negative Covid-19 test results, the imposition of a 14-day quarantine or total entry bans.

For example, neighboring Hong Kong, through which most travelers must travel en route to or from non-regional destinations, has imposed a

mandatory 14-day quarantine on any non-Hong Kong entrant. This has made many foreigners think twice about planning their trips back home.

In addition to the services offered by consular offices in the two SARs, the Macau tourism official said that the Macau government would offer as much assistance as possible to these travelers.

"The Tourism Crisis Management Office has provided assistance to foreigners in Macau at the request of several consulates," the tourism official disclosed, "namely the consulates-general of Portugal, of Italy, of Thailand and of Indonesia."

This assistance appears to be administered on a case-by-case basis, as the Portuguese Consulate-general in Macau

has since issued a statement to deny claims that the country is arranging a general repatriation operation.

The Macau tourism official revealed for the first time that travel costs for those given permission to travel between Macau and Hong Kong will be borne by the individual. Travel may be deemed necessary for a Macau resident in situations such as attending a funeral in Hong Kong. Otherwise, requests for travel will not be entertained by either authority.

The fare of HKD6,400 or Macau patacas, depending on the origin of the traveler, is the charge quoted by the operator of the intercity shuttle bus, or the golden bus, to charter a single bus, which is necessary given current travel restrictions. **AL**

TOURISM BOARD CALLS OFF INT'L FIREWORKS DISPLAY CONTEST

THE Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) has announced the cancellation of the 31st Macao International Fireworks Display Contest, originally to be held this September and October.

The popular annual contest is the latest event in Macau to fall victim to the coronavirus pandemic, after the Macao Arts Festival and Art Macao were officially called off during the first quarter of the year.

The contest invites fireworks teams from around the world to Macau. However, owing to the impact of the pandemic this year,

"the office was [...] unable to confirm the lineup of contestants in accordance with the schedule," the MGTO said in a statement yesterday.

"It is also [anticipated] that the transportation of fireworks materials and related equipment will be affected," continued the MGTO, concluding that "the situation is unfavorable to the preparations for the contest."

In addition to the cancellation of the main event, contest organizer MGTO has also called off the complementary outreach programs, including the Student Drawing

Contest, Photo Contest, and the Fireworks Carnival.

As for other events normally held in the third and fourth quarters of the year, the MGTO noted that it "plans to readjust its lineup of events, [...] if conditions allow, in accordance with the goal of stimulating the economy."

Consequently, the 8th Macao International Travel (Industry) Expo will be postponed until September, while the Macao Light Festival, normally held every December, may be brought forward to between late September and October. **DB**

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Times

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Computer rendering for the land reclamation zones project currently under construction

POLICY ADDRESS

Master plan is the essential piece missing in city planning puzzle

RENATO MARQUES

THE lack of a master plan for the urban development of Macau was considered the most important barrier to the completion of several projects in both the public and private sectors, the Secretary for Transport and Public Works, Raimundo do Rosário acknowledged yesterday at the Legislative Assembly (AL), where he was answering the questions of legislators on the sectorial policies from his secretariat.

To resolve this critical issue, the Secretary announced that the government will finally launch a public consultation on Macau's urban master plan this year.

According to Rosário, "the consultation text, although it does not address every location in detail, will clearly define the direction that we want to follow."

"When I took office as Secretary of this sector I [set out] as the main priority the definition of urban planning that the city is lacking," the Secretary said in reply to lawmaker Sulu Sou who had asked for details on the development of several land plots, namely in the Nam Van area.

"Although for several reasons, it was not possible yet to conclude the master plan, the prelimi-

nary project is ready to be submitted to public consultation," said Rosário.

The Secretary advanced that the public consultation is likely to be launched in late September or early October this year.

But the public consultation on the city's master plan is not the only consultation that the Secretariat for Transport and Public Works plans to hold.

During his introductory overview of the policies for the year, Rosário also announced that he is also launching another public consultation, this time for the route of the East line of the Light Rapid Transit (LRT) that aims to connect the Taipa line (at Pac On) to the Border Gate checkpoint passing through Zone E and Zone A of the new landfills and with a link to the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge Port.

This project is, according to Rosário, of "utmost importance for the future of the city."

During yesterday's plenary sessions, the work of Rosário was highly praised by a large number of lawmakers that took time from their interventions to summarize the advances and positive results over the past five years. Some also took the opportunity to highlight the fast response of the Secretary to the situation caused by the Co-

vid-19 epidemic and the capacity to organize, start and, in some cases, conclude necessary road works that were initially planned to be done over the summer, minimizing in this way the inconvenience to the population.

OLD BRIDGE HINDERS BUS MODERNIZATION

The Governador Nobre de Carvalho Bridge, the first road link between the Peninsula and the Island of Taipa that entered into operation in 1974, is considered an obstacle for the development and modernization of public transport in Macau, the Secretary said during yesterday's AL session.

Replying to a question by lawmaker Ng Kuok Cheong, who had asked if Macau plans to follow the trend of replacing fuel-powered buses with electric-powered ones, Rosário noted that a large number of bus routes pass through the bus hub of Praça Ferreira do Amaral and many then head to Taipa via the Governador Nobre de Carvalho Bridge.

"Electric buses are much heavier than traditional buses and [for that reason] cannot circulate on the Governador Nobre de Carvalho Bridge, which is being used mostly for public transportation," answered the Secretary. "If we adopt this type of bus, we

would have to alter the routes so they could travel to Taipa on one of the other bridges. I am sure this would cause a lot of disruption and that many people would complain about that."

On the same topic, several lawmakers including Ng, Wong Kit Cheng, and Lei Chan U also wanted to know the latest updates concerning the new bus service contracts. The existing contracts are due to expire at the end of this year.

On the topic, the Secretary said he was well aware that the extension granted to the service operators will expire this year. Rosário said that his staff are working on the details and conditions for the new contracts, but he refused to disclose any details during yesterday's session.

"I cannot reveal the details yet," said Rosário, "but what I can promise you is that I will have that work done before August 15, before the AL goes into summer recess."

LRT PROJECT TO ADVANCE QUICKLY IN FUTURE

The situation of the Light Rapid Transit project, which briefly entered into operation at the end of last year before it was suspended during the pandemic outbreak, was also on the agen-

da of several lawmakers.

The Secretary said that he expects that the LRT project will move at a faster pace to make up for some of the lost time in this initial phase.

"The LRT will definitely interlink with buses," Rosário said, answering a specific question about the sharing of payment infrastructure between public transportation services. "This is the kind of work that we will be doing now. I admit that we had a delay to this project, but we are moving forward faster and I hope to have the contract awarded for the construction of the Hengqin line completed this year."

Questioned by lawmaker José Pereira Coutinho on the current status and conclusion date for the Barra Station that will extend the Taipa line to the Peninsula, Rosário said, "do not worry, Barra Station is currently on time and budget." He said that it will be ready by 2023.

MACAU READY FOR MORE ANTI-PLASTIC LAWS

Rosário also said yesterday that he is pleased with the results of the plastic bag law that came into effect last November. He said that the results obtained over the five months of implementation show that Macau is now in the position to move forward with further restrictions against other disposable products.

The Secretary described the policy as a success because, according to him, the majority of the public is now using reusable shopping bags.

"I agree that the plastic bag law has achieved good results," he told lawmakers this afternoon. "I'm happy to note this when I go to the supermarket and see that the majority of people are using reusable bags."

The plastic bag law requires all vendors in retail locations to charge 1 pataca for each plastic shopping bag. Food and medicines without packaging are exempted from the bill, as are products purchased in certain areas at the airport.

Lawmakers Wong Kit Cheng and Sulu Sou inquired as to whether the government would extend similar measures to other environmentally harmful products, including plastic water bottles and single-use utensils.

The Secretary said that he thinks Macau is now in the position to move forward with these additional restrictions and his departments would continue to work on the matter.

Last year, research conducted in the SAR suggested that each Macau resident uses 2.2 plastic bags per day on average. The government said it expected the plastic bag law to reduce the use of plastic bags by at least 50%.

HONG KONG SALIVA TESTS FOR TRAVELERS BRINGS BIOETHICS INTO QUESTION

JAMIE TARABAY

LAYLA Keith had just gotten off a flight from Singapore when she and her fellow passengers were met at the gate by Hong Kong government officials and ushered onto buses that shuttled them to a nearby convention center.

There, they were handed forms to fill out and given small containers to spit into.

"They just put all the samples in a tray and told us to go," said Keith, a junior at an international high school in the semi-autonomous Chinese territory. "I mean, we just didn't really have a choice."

Those who tested positive for the coronavirus were sent to a hospital for treatment; others were allowed to go. But the data from their saliva stayed behind in a government database.

In the global battle to curb Covid-19, governments have collected troves of data from testing and contact-tracing apps to try to find the disease and stop its spread. Even as many are willing to surrender personal information amid the crisis, privacy experts worry about who controls the data and what will happen to it after the crisis ends.

Hong Kong began imposing stricter measures on travelers after a rebound in coronavirus cases was brought on by residents returning from more severely stricken areas. Non-residents were banned from entry, and a mandatory quarantine was required for those returning home.

In addition, on April 8, incoming travelers were required to submit "deep throat saliva" tests, after being shuttled to a nearby center. Starting April 22, asymptomatic passengers had to wait for their test results before being allowed to leave.

Even as contact tracing apps have raised concerns about state surveillance, the involuntary surrender of DNA or other biodata takes it a step further, providing governments with sensitive and unchangeable fragments of personal identity. Saliva samples are used by DNA testing companies, for instance, to glean insights on ancestry, certain traits and predisposition to certain health ailments.

In Hong Kong, where pro-Democracy protests continue, some worry that the pandemic may give government officials the opportunity to make restrictions on privacy permanent. How Hong Kong uses the biodata it collects from travelers could provide some detail on whether or how that might happen.

"The problem of collection of biodata in the age of artificial intelligence and big data is a concern

BLOOMBERG



globally, especially in the administration of cross-border travel, where governments around the world are increasingly collecting and storing travelers' data, from fingerprints to facial recognition to saliva," said Maya Wang, a senior researcher at Human Rights Watch.

"Travelers, and in particular foreigners, don't have rights to challenge this collection or this use or storage, and have very little ability to seek redress," she said.

Biodata can be particularly revealing and therefore valuable to hackers or repressive governments. It could expose medical histories or contribute to selective surveillance of political activists. It could also compromise a person's ability to get insurance or open a bank account, experts warn. In China, authorities are already using DNA data to keep track of the Uighur population.

Hong Kong's health ministry told Bloomberg News it would dispose of the saliva samples according to laboratory protocols, but it didn't say what those were. In forms travelers fill out on arrival at the airport, they are told the government "will take all practicable steps to ensure that personal data is not kept longer than necessary."

The ministry also said the data would be accessible to government departments where deemed necessary. However it wasn't clear whether this referred to the passengers' travel and personal history, or the data yielded from

the saliva samples. The ministry didn't respond to repeated requests for clarification.

Authorities should be using saliva to determine if someone is infected with Covid-19 and then disposing of the sample, said David Murdoch, dean of the University of Otago in Christchurch, New Zealand, and a specialist in infectious diseases. Governments shouldn't try to pull additional information from such a sample without a person's consent, he said.

" Governments around the world are increasingly collecting and storing travelers' data, from fingerprints to facial recognition to saliva.

MAYA WANG
HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

Some governments, like Singapore's, have vowed to delete any private data or anonymize as much as they can.

In Hong Kong, authorities have recently stepped up efforts to rein in the pro-democracy camp with arrests of prominent activists and lawmakers, while Beijing has asserted the right to comment on the city's politics. That has spurred worries among some lawmakers that departments outside of health authorities wouldn't use that data, and further, that Beijing's representatives in the territory might also lay claim to that information.

"I have to say that not a lot of

people have really thought about it yet, the potential implications for collecting this data," said Charles Mok, a member of Hong Kong's Legislative Council who represents the information technology constituency.

"We should get clarification from the government, at the very least it should tell us how they're going to dispose of the data and tell us this is the only test they're carrying out with the samples," he said.

One problem is that Hong Kong's personal data and privacy law, which hasn't been updated since it was enacted in 1996, makes no accommodation for facial images or biodata, said Wang, of Human Rights Watch.

"That's why the privacy data ordinance needs to be updated," Wang said. "The government hasn't given us any satisfactory information on why it hasn't been enacted all these years."

James Hazel, a research fellow at Vanderbilt University Medical Center, who studies privacy policies concerning the collection, use and sharing of genetic data, said the European Union tends to have stronger regulations on how biodata such as DNA can be used. In the U.S., he said, the secondary use of such data depends on the context - rules governing physicians or researchers are generally more strict than those for a DNA company receiving voluntarily samples from customers.

Hong Kong isn't the only place

where personal data and politics are interwoven. At least one other country, Vietnam, currently greets travelers with swab tests on arrival. Vietnamese officials said that the records of every test result are retained but that it is against the law to reveal anyone's name.

But as other countries move to loosen restriction on travelers, Hong Kong - where cases have nearly trickled to a halt - offers one model for how to track the infection in people entering the country.

Some travelers into Hong Kong didn't seem too concerned, based on recent comments on Facebook support groups discussing Hong Kong's arrival process. People swapped tips on keeping children entertained and suggested bringing food and additional water for obligatory hotel stays managed by the government for afternoon arrivals.

But what happened to their saliva, or the forms they've signed agreeing to submit the samples, weren't a topic of conversation.

And while arriving at a European airport that is protected by stringent privacy laws might be less intrusive on travelers, anyone wanting to do business in Hong Kong - 71 million people traveled through the international airport last year - will have to spit in a cup, at least for now.

"If nothing else, it is important for Hong Kong to be transparent about the details of the program so travelers can use that information in determining whether they want to travel to Hong Kong or not," said I. Glenn Cohen, a Harvard University law professor and expert on the intersection of bioethics and the law. **BLOOMBERG**

Tests for locals will facilitate cross-border living, health officials say

ANTHONY LAM

COVID-19 tests will be conducted on cross-border students and teachers, as well as Macau residents who need to move between Macau and the mainland, Tai Wa Hou, coordinator of border medical checks of the Health Bureau (SSM) announced yesterday.

Under this new scheme, the local authority will consider cross-border students and people residing and working on different sides of the border as having the need to move across the border.

This group of Macau residents can register for a test from May 7. The first test will be free-of-charge, with subsequent tests priced at MOP180 per test. In order frequently cross the border, a new test must be taken every seven days. These tests will be required for cross-border students and teachers for the foreseeable future, health officials said.

Tests will be conducted in collaboration with the China Certification and Inspection Group (Macau) Co. Ltd., a state-owned enterprise providing inspection services.

The Special Administrative Region government has been notified



LYNZY VALLES

by its Zhuhai counterpart that the Covid-19 test stations at the city's border frontiers will be removed starting tomorrow.

The commencement of the Macau test scheme will therefore connect seamlessly with the closure of the test scheme in Zhuhai.

To take the test, Macau residents must possess three identification documents, namely the Macau ID card, the Mainland Travel Permit, and the Mainland Residence Card, which must be issued in Zhuhai or Zhongshan.

The Mainland Residence Card is

issued in many cities on the mainland. However, Macau ID holders who have registered normal residence in, for example, Guangzhou or even Shanghai will not be eligible for this scheme.

Figures from the government estimate that there are 15,000 cross-border students and workers holding Macau ID card, who are eligible for this scheme. The SSM will set a daily quota of 4,000 tests per day.

Bookings are necessary for the test, which will be conducted at the Taipa Ferry Terminal, near the Immigration Service Building of

the Public Security Police Force, between 9 a.m. and 9 p.m. every day.

Once a sample is taken, certification will be issued to individuals as evidence they have taken the test. Twenty-four hours later, the test result will be posted on the Colored Health Code platform.

People who take the test can cross the border between Macau and Zhuhai with either the test certification or the negative test result, shown as a green code on the Colored Health Code platform.

The authority has not disclosed whether there will be an end date for the scheme.

Previously, the government has mandated such tests for teachers, employees of social welfare organizations and fishery workers returning to Macau.

Yesterday, the SSM disclosed that the next phase of testing will be conducted on new residents to group housing facilities, such as aged-care homes and prisons.

MASK DISTRIBUTION SCHEME TO LAST THROUGH MAY

THE Macau government has made assurances that there is sufficient supply of face masks for the public distribution scheme to continue for the remainder of the month. In a statement issued yesterday, the government said it would monitor the general supply of masks for standard purchase in local shops, and take this into consideration this when reviewing whether the public

distribution scheme should continue. The scheme, which is currently in its 11th round, makes packs of 10 face masks available to residents and non-resident workers every 10 days at a fixed price of 8 patacas per pack. As of yesterday, Macau had not recorded any new Covid-19 cases for the prior 28 days. The total number of confirmed cases recorded in Macau stands at 45.

Jellyfish spotted by Coloane beaches

REPORTS of jellyfish being spotted in waters around Coloane, especially near the city's two beaches, Hac-sa and Cheoc Van, were made by the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) recently.

It is unclear when the IAM spotted the jellyfish, but at least two readers have reported to the Times that jellyfish were sighted at the beaches. Another reader took a photo of a white object that appears to be a jellyfish in some coastal waters.

In response to the sightings, the IAM has raised the yellow flag at both beaches, signifying that swimming is not recommended. The government has also opted to make amplified public announcements at beaches to remind people to stay out of the water.

In addition, the government reminds people to avoid making physical contact with the marine animal. Any jellyfish sightings should be reported to the lifeguards on duty. If stung by a jellyfish, victims should approach a paramedic or lifeguard for immediate assistance.

Jellyfish inject a venom when they sting and some types of venom injected by certain species can be fatal. Being stung by a jellyfish will result in sensations ranging from mild discomfort to extreme pain, depending on the species of jellyfish.



Meanwhile, the IAM reminds beachgoers to review real-time online feeds to decide whether they should go to the beaches.

The past long weekend that included Buddha's Birthday and Labor Day drove many residents, who have been reminded to stay home and conduct social distancing for the previous three months or so, to the beaches and other outdoor recreational areas.

The weather has warmed up over the weekend and into the week, prompting the official weather forecaster to issue a heat notice. Photos depicting both beaches packed with people have been posted on social media. **AL**

EPIDEMIC CONTROL MEASURES

HOUSEHOLD PRECAUTION

The virus outbreak is still severe. Every household should take necessary precautions to ensure environmental hygiene in the community.

Adequate ventilation

- ★ Ensure good ventilation in the house
- ★ If there is no window, a functioning ventilation system should be guaranteed

Bathroom

- ★ Maintain good hygiene in the bathroom
- ★ Close the toilet seat lid before you flush
- ★ Soap and disposable toilet paper should be provided in the bathroom
- ★ Ensure good pipe drainage and make sure there is no leakage. Pour half a cup to one cup of water into floor drain holes every day to ensure the functioning of the U-trap drain

Household Cleaning

- ★ Furniture surfaces, walls, floors, door handles, computer keyboards and mobile phones should be cleaned frequently with diluted bleach (1:100)
- ★ If floors, carpets, walls or other surfaces are soiled by bodily fluids or waste, such surfaces should be disinfected immediately (hand gloves should be worn while disinfecting)
- ★ Disposable items, especially face masks, should be disposed of properly
- ★ Towels, bed linens and clothing should be washed and disinfected regularly

JCS 新聞局
Gabinete de Comunicação Social

CHRIS BLAKE, BANGKOK

EVEN as countries moved forward yesterday with easing their coronavirus restrictions and restarting their economies, a large cluster of infections linked to a market in India and the first lockdown of a major Brazilian city highlighted that the battle against the pandemic was far from won.

In the United States, President Donald Trump emphasized his determination to see a quick return to normalcy with a visit to an Arizona mask factory that was expected to kick off his regular travels as the nation emerges from seven weeks of virus-imposed isolation. The push to ease stay-at-home orders comes even as U.S. infection rates outside the New York metropolitan area are rising.

In India, which partly eased its lockdown Monday, health authorities were rushing to contain an outbreak of the virus at one of Asia's largest markets for perishable goods. The market in the southern city of Chennai, spread over more than 250 acres, had remained open throughout the lockdown and is now tied to at least 1,000 cases.

Another 7,000 people connected to now-shuttered Koyambedu market were being traced and quarantined, a huge task given that the facility is critical to the food supply across Tamil Nadu and neighboring states.

The market cluster contributed to India's biggest single-day increase in virus infections yet, with authorities on Tuesday reporting 3,900 cases and 195 deaths. The health ministry attributed the spike to reporting delays by state governments, but experts remain worried about a potential health catastrophe in a country of

Struggles in India, Brazil, US show



New York City

1.3 billion people and a medical system strained even in the best of times.

The capital of Brazil's tropical Maranhão state ground largely to a halt yesterday [Macau Time], becoming the first major city in the country to enter a lockdown in the hopes of preventing the coronavirus from overwhelming the

health care system of one of the nation's poorest states.

Some 1.5 million people in São Luís and three neighboring cities have been confined to their homes, except for a handful of essential tasks. The vast majority of businesses have been shuttered, as have schools and public transport. Parks are closed, and resi-

dents cannot go out to exercise.

The decree from the state governor will last 10 days to start and applies to one-fifth the state's population. It comes despite President Jair Bolsonaro's insistence that only the elderly and other high-risk populations should stay home. The president and his followers have repeatedly criti-

zed local leaders who imposed more stringent restrictions in the face of surging coronavirus cases.

Elsewhere, Britain's official death toll, at more than 29,000, topped that of Italy to become the highest in Europe and second-highest in the world behind the United States. The official number of dead worldwide surpassed

Seoul reports panic buying in N. Korea amid economic woes

THE coronavirus pandemic has likely taken a heavy toll on North Korea, forcing leader Kim Jong Un to avoid public activities and his people into panic buying for daily necessities, South Korea's spy agency told lawmakers yesterday.

Although North Korea has taken intense quarantine measures, it maintains there are no domestic infections. Many outside experts are skeptical and warn that an epidemic could be dire because of the North's fragile health care system.

South Korea's National Intelligence Service told a closed-door parliamentary committee in Seoul that the

pandemic is one of the reasons why Kim Jong Un has made much fewer public appearances this year, according to Kim Byung Kee, one of the lawmakers who attended the spy agency meeting.

As of Wednesday, Kim Jong Un appeared in public 17 times this year, compared with an average of 50 appearances in the same time period each year since he took power in late 2011, the lawmaker said, citing the NIS.

The NIS said it cannot rule out a virus outbreak in North Korea because traffic along the China-North Korea border was active before

the North closed crossings in January to try to stop the spread of the virus, according to the lawmaker.

The NIS declined to confirm Kim's comments in line with its practice of not commenting on information it provides to lawmakers. Kim did not discuss how the NIS obtained its information.

Last Friday, Kim Jong Un ended his 20-day public absence when he appeared at a ceremony marking the completion of a fertilizer factory near Pyongyang. His time away triggered rumors about his health and worries about the future of his country.

The NIS repeated a South

Korean government assessment that Kim remained in charge of state affairs even during his absence. His visit to the factory was aimed at showing his resolve to address public livelihood problems and inject people with confidence, Kim Byung Kee cited the NIS as saying.

The NIS said the virus pandemic is hurting North Korea's economy, mainly because of the border closure with China, its biggest trading partner and aid provider. China accounts for about 90% of North Korea's external trade flow.

The trade volume between North Korea and China in the first quarter of this



People queuing during a food shortage in Pyongyang in 2010

year was \$230 million, a 55% decline from the same period last year. In March, the bilateral trade volume suffered a 91% drop.

This led to the prices of imported foodstuffs such as sugar and seasonings skyrocketing, Kim Byung

Keel quoted the spy agency as saying.

The NIS said prices in North Korea "are being stabilized a little bit" after authorities clamped down on people cornering the market, Kim said in a televised briefing. MDT/AP

virus fight far from won



Manaus, Amazonas

a quarter-million, according to a count by Johns Hopkins' University, though the true toll is believed to be much higher.

On his visit to Arizona, Trump acknowledged the human cost of returning to normalcy.

"I'm not saying anything is perfect, and yes, will some people be affected? Yes. Will some people be

affected badly? Yes. But we have to get our country open and we have to get it open soon," he said.

On Monday, a model from the University of Washington nearly doubled its projection of COVID-19 deaths in the U.S. to around 134,000 through early August, with a range of 95,000 to nearly 243,000. Dr. Christopher Mur-

ray, director of the institute that created the projections, said the increase is largely because most states are expected to ease restrictions by next week.

Trump, asked about the projections before traveling to Arizona, disputed the accuracy of models in general and said keeping the economy closed carries dea-

dly costs of its own, such as drug abuse and suicide.

New confirmed infections per day in the U.S. exceed 20,000, and deaths per day are well over 1,000, according to Johns Hopkins figures. And public health officials warn that the failure to lower the infection rate in places could lead to many more deaths — perhaps

tens of thousands — as people are allowed to venture out and businesses reopen.

"Make no mistakes: This virus is still circulating in our community, perhaps even more now than in previous weeks" said Linda Ochs, director of the Health Department in Shawnee County, Kansas.

According to an Associated Press analysis, the numbers show that when the New York metropolitan area's progress against the coronavirus is taken out of the equation, the rest of the U.S. is moving in the wrong direction.

When the still-locked-down area is included, new infections in the U.S. appear to be declining, according to the AP analysis. It found that the five-day rolling average for new cases has decreased from 9.3 per 100,000 people three weeks ago on April 13 to 8.6 on Monday.

But subtracting the New York area from the analysis changes the story. Without it, the rate of new cases in the U.S. increased over the same period from 6.2 per 100,000 people to 7.5.

While the daily number of new deaths in the New York area has declined markedly in recent weeks, it has essentially plateaued in the rest of the U.S. Without greater New York, the rolling five-day average for new deaths per 500,000 people dropped slightly from 1.86 on April 20th to 1.82 on Monday.

New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo said the national debate over when to reopen ultimately boils down to the value placed on people's lives.

"The faster we reopen, the lower the economic cost — but the higher the human cost, because the more lives lost," he said. "That, my friends, is the decision we are really making." AP

Taiwan makes new push for inclusion in World Health Assembly

TAIWAN'S exclusion from the upcoming World Health Assembly would harm the global response to the coronavirus pandemic and cannot be excused by mere rules of procedure, the island's health minister said yesterday.

Chen Shih-chung told international media at a news conference that global health officials "have not been honest and failed in their responsibilities," in an apparent reference to the U.N. World Health Organization that oversees the assembly.

"As I said since the beginning of the epidemic,

no one is able to accurately predict how the situation will be," Chen said. "So the most important thing in the world pandemic is transparency. Each one has to share what they know about it."

Taiwan is claimed as part of Chinese territory by Beijing, which has excluded it from the United Nations and its subsidiary organizations. China's growing influence in the U.N. has made officials wary of crossing it, even while the U.S. has withdrawn from or suspended funding for some of its bodies, including WHO, which it accuses of

mishandling the outbreak and displaying a pro-China bias.

Chen said he acknowledged that U.N. member states would have to approve Taiwan taking part at the World Health Assembly, to be held in Geneva beginning on May 17.

However, he said there were questions as to whether the WHO's "procedural justice was manipulated."

Beijing's Communist leadership has increasingly shut Taiwan out of gatherings such as the World Health Assembly as part of a diplomatic

and military drive to force Taiwan's independence-leaning President Tsai Ing-wen to recognize the self-governing island democracy as a part of China.

Beijing has threatened military force to bring Taiwan under its control and has been courting its handful of remaining diplomatic allies to isolate it internationally. That has drawn a strong response from Washington, with whom Taiwan has strong but unofficial ties and which is its main guarantor of security.

At the same time, Taiwan has been praised



In this image made from a video, Taiwan's Health Minister Chen Shih-chung speaks at a press conference in Taipei yesterday

over its handling of the pandemic, despite being just a short flight from China where the virus was first detected late last year.

As of yesterday, the island of more than 23 million people had recorded just 438 cases of COVID-19 and six deaths.

In Beijing, Chinese fo-

reign ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying accused Tsai's government of seeking to use the pandemic for political gain.

"We are firmly opposed to this plot of the Taiwan authorities, and we also believe that such attempts will never succeed," Hua said at a daily news conference. AP

AP PHOTO



Ghaliya Abdel-Wahab died from COVID-19 on April 6 at 73

LIVES LOST

Generous Egyptian grandma was family 'jewel'

SAMY MAGDY, BAHTIM

GOLD and silver streamers fluttered in the breeze, hung from house to house down the alley, a festive sign of the holy month of Ramadan.

Usually, Ghaliya Abdel-Wahab would be giving out food to her neighbors for the holiday — big platters of stuffed cabbage leaves or cakes or buttermilk flatbreads. There wasn't a family on the street who hadn't enjoyed her food.

But the alley in Bahtim, just outside Cairo, was silent. Abdel-Wahab, 73, and two of her sons were dead. The novel coronavirus struck her family, infecting 45 relatives. It forced the lockdown of some 2,000 neighbors to their homes for weeks.

Fear of the virus left the beloved grandmother's relatives scrambling to find a way to bury her — after some in the district she'd lived in all her adult life barred her body from the local cemetery.

"All my memories with her were sweet ... She was always helping us, always looking after the whole street's people as her children," said one of her neighbors, Umm Gouda, fighting back her tears.

Umm Gouda was Abdel-Wahab's best friend for 40 years, ever since Umm Gouda moved in across the alley. From the start, Abdel-Wahab opened her home, letting Umm Gouda's kids come over to take baths as her

friend finished building her house.

For the next four decades, they lived together across a street so narrow one of them could practically lean out her window and arrange the other's laundry dangling on the line. They watched each other's children grow up. They cooked and shopped at the nearby street market together.

The daughter of a farming family in the Nile Delta, Abdel-Wahab came to Bahtim in the 1960s with her husband not long after they married. The government was turning the area — a stretch of small towns amid green fields and canals from the Nile just north of Cairo — into an industrial hub. The young couple were among the rural villagers who flowed in to work in the new state-run fabric, metal and ceramics factories.

Her husband found a job as a worker at Industrial Projects and Engineering, a government steel conglomerate. Abdel-Wahab raised chickens at home as a second income. They had eight children — four sons, most of whom also found jobs in the nearby factories, and four daughters who were married off and soon had families of their own.

Over the decades, the factories declined, neglected as the state moved from socialism to privatization. The area became poorer, and more migrants from the impoverished countryside

flooded in. Abdel-Wahab found her district transformed into a decrepit sprawl of densely populated, illegally built concrete towers stretching for miles, the sewage systems decaying, the canals paved over or choked with garbage.

The grandmother's generosity always shined through. When the husband of another neighbor, Zeinab Ismail, was sent to prison a while back, Abdel-Wahab stepped in to help, giving her money to pay school fees for her daughters.

"She helped without being asked," Ismail said. "Hajja Ghaliya did everything, gave me money, food and anything I needed."

Her husband died in 2018, but Abdel-Wahab had her family close by — her sons and their families all lived in the same building with her. One of her grandchildren, Sayed Naser, called her "the jewel of the family."

"My grandma was very kind, unbelievable kindness with all people, relatives or non-relatives," he said.

The virus first hit her son, Abdel-Raouf, in March. At the hospital, the doctor said his fever was just a common flu and sent him home. Within days, he'd worsened and was rushed to a fever hospital.

But it was too late. The virus was racing through the family.

Abdel-Wahab got a fever and had trouble breathing. On April 4, one of her neighbors, Atif Ghoneim, rushed

her to the hospital in his car. The whole way, she prayed and recited the Quran "as if she was aware that this was the end," he said.

Once her test results came back, the doctors ordered her taken to quarantine. She never made it. In the early hours of April 6, she died in the ambulance on route.

When health workers and two of her grandchildren took her for burial, they found a group of Bahtim residents blocking the entrance to the cemetery.

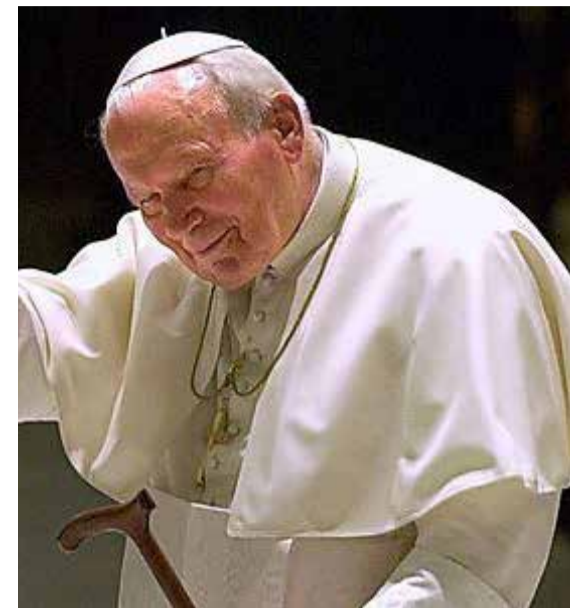
"They were waiting for us," Naser said. "They said, 'You will not bury anyone here. Do you want to get us sick?'"

They took her to her ancestral village, Kafr Kala al-Bab, in the Delta. There, too, residents initially tried to block the burial. Her body waited in the ambulance for more than 15 hours as police got involved and finally allowed her to be buried.

The next day, her son Abdel-Fattah died, followed later by her eldest son, 54-year-old Hisham. They were buried in unmarked graves in a charity cemetery. At least 45 family members were infected. Naser's 21-year-old sister, Yasmine, was pregnant with her first child when she was infected and gave birth in quarantine. They named the boy Yamen — and nicknamed him "Corona."

"Our family is in war with the coronavirus," said Naser. "This is a test, a test from God." AP

this day in history



2001 THOUSANDS GREET POPE IN SYRIAN VISIT

Thousands of people have turned out to greet Pope John Paul II on his historic visit to Syria.

The pontiff drove in his popemobile through the narrow streets and was greeted by Syria's top Muslim cleric Sheik Ahmad Kuftaro.

Sheik Kuftaro said: "This is an occasion that goes beyond history and will begin the process of putting peace to work in the world."

The pontiff replied: "For me, too, it is a very important day. I am very happy."

Vatican and Syrian flags decorated the Umayyad Mosque in the old walled city of Damascus.

Security officers held back a crowd of curious on-lookers from a nearby souk who were craning for a look at the visitor from Rome.

The Pope, who called on Muslims, Christians and Jews to work together to bring peace to the Middle East, became the first pontiff to enter a mosque.

As required by Muslim custom, John Paul II removed his shoes and put on white slippers before entering the mosque.

The 80-year-old, who has Parkinson's disease, stumbled slightly at the threshold of the mosque and again crossing the main hall.

John Paul II asked for a joint act of contrition, saying: "For all the times that Muslims and Christians have offended one another...we need to seek forgiveness from the Almighty and offer each other forgiveness."

At the tomb of St John the Baptist the Pope paused for a minute's silent meditation. He spent 95 minutes in the mosque, which was built in AD 705 on the site of a Christian church.

The pontiff also met Agnatios Hazim IV, the Syrian-Greek Orthodox archbishop, at the Church of St Paul on the Wall in the Syrian capital.

Earlier in the day, the Pope attended a four-hour Mass in a Damascus stadium.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

The Pope's visit to Damascus was overshadowed by a furious row between Syria and Israel.

On his arrival, Syrian president Bashar Assad accused Israel of trying to "kill the principles of all religions with the same mentality in which they betrayed Jesus Christ and...the Prophet Mohammed".

This sparked a stern response from Israel, who urged world leaders to "condemn" such statements.

Israel called on Roman Catholic leaders to reject such statements "with revulsion" but a papal spokesman said: "The Pope will absolutely not intervene. We are guests of this president and he has expressed his opinion."

The Pope's visit was part of a six-day pilgrimage in the steps of St Paul, whose conversion occurred on the way to Damascus. His trip also included Greece and Malta. The Pope died at 2137 (1937 GMT) on Saturday 2 April 2005 after he failed to recover from a throat operation.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

Spend some time with people you love to laugh with, and take plenty of time today to talk about lighthearted matters. Forget about things you have no control over.



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

One of the many good things about having so many people in your life right now is that you always have tons of feedback available at your fingertips. So why aren't you taking advantage of this abundance of honesty?



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

Either your flexibility skills are at an all-time high, or the changes you expected weren't so drastic. Either way, you can breathe a great big sigh of relief today.



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

Accept the whole person - the good and the bad. Ending a relationship because of one event or conversation is shortsighted. Embrace differing opinions and contrary viewpoints.



LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

There will always be obstacles in your life - that's just a fact. Your attitude will make all the difference, so put a shine on your outlook! Whenever you need a lift in life, just remember all the successes you've had.



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

Inspiration will flood over you today - enjoy having your curiosity tickled and excited. You are extremely open to new ideas right now, so why not try a few new things?



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

You may think that you are judged by the company you keep, but that is not necessarily true. Today, don't worry about people basing assumptions about you on whom you are with.



SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

If you are in a mood to hide from the world, then today will offer you the perfect opportunity. The people in your life are a bit distracted with other things right now.



SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

Your daily life is currently being polluted a bit by someone whose maturity level leaves a lot to be desired. Luckily, you will find the right words today to help this person grow up a bit.



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

You basically have all the time you want, especially right now - your schedule is under your exclusive control for a limited period of time, and you should make the most of it!



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

You feel strong, and you are strong - but you're vulnerable to a lot of potential problems that could pop up today if you aren't careful. Focus your energy on fixing up something around your house.



PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

To help yourself today, help other people - the overwhelming gratitude you'll receive from the people you've aided will lift your spirits higher than any retail therapy or self-indulgence ever could.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

EASY

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

EASY+

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

MEDIUM

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

HARD

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

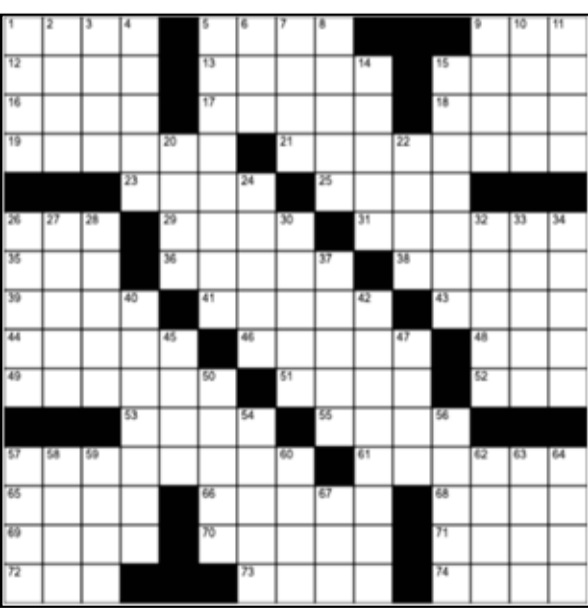
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	13	20	drizzle
Harbin	9	21	cloudy
Tianjin	15	19	moderate rain
Urumqi	6	18	clear
Xi'an	17	23	moderate rain
Lhasa	5	17	cloudy
Chengdu	21	26	drizzle
Chongqing	23	33	cloudy
Kunming	16	29	clear
Nanjing	18	26	thundershower
Shanghai	18	25	clear
Wuhan	20	25	moderate rain
Hangzhou	19	29	drizzle
Taipei	23	26	overcast
Guangzhou	27	35	cloudy
Hong Kong	27	33	cloudy
WORLD			
Moscow	9	21	drizzle
Frankfurt	8	18	clear
Paris	12	20	clear
London	9	18	drizzle
New York	8	13	clear

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS: 1- Melt together; 5- Take ___ your leader; 9- Barker and Bell; 12- South American Indian; 13- Be of use to; 15- Dad; 16- The closest one to us is the sun; 17- Big fiddle?; 18- Excited; 19- Eye membrane; 21- Courtroom jargon; 23- Poet Teasdale; 25- Stand; 26- "Hold On Tight" band; 29- Portnoy's creator; 31- Performing animal show; 35- Milne's "Mr. ___ Passes By"; 36- Like some bears and icecaps; 38- Silvery fish; 39- Part of a process; 41- Nostrils; 43- Killer whale; 44- Church instrument; 46- Organization; 48- Hosp. readout; 49- More nasty; 51- Aromatic herb; 52- Grads-to-be; 53- Red-bearded god; 55- Auction site; 57- Forbid; 61- In ___ (sort of); 65- Alley; 66- Heron, usually white; 68- ___-do-well; 69- Above, finished; 70- "Quiet!"; 71- Species of antelope found in South Africa; 72- Singer Shannon; 73- Prefix with conference; 74- Get in a hand;

DOWN: 1- Money-related; Abbr.; 2- A law ___ itself; 3- Operation memento; 4- Merits; 5- Cookie; 6- Genesis name; 7- Like some orders; 8- Fuel transport; 9- Merlin, e.g.; 10- Mil. addresses; 11- Wise one; 14- Reasoning; 15- Capital of Sicily; 20- Tombstone lawman; 22- Warts and all; 24- Collection of maps; 26- ___ salts; 27- Brit's bottle measure; 28- Last Greek letter; 30- Seraglio; 32- Roman name of Demeter; 33- Stomach woe; 34- Does' beaus; 37- Knot again; 40- Cougar; 42- Insolate; 45- Classic soda; 47- School orgs.; 50- Judges' garments; 54- Appropriate; 56- Gossipmonger; 57- Trudge; 58- Pan's opposite; 59- Like Nash's lama; 60- Faithful; 62- Dodge model; 63- Equinox mo.; 64- Buffalo's county; 67- Alien's subj.;



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

<p>FOR SALE</p> <p>The Entertainers Dream Simplex Apartment w/ Outdoor Terraces HK\$18,800,000 4,080 ft² 2 1/2 3 1/2</p>	<p>FOR RENT</p> <p>Cute One Bedroom, Central Taipa \$12,500/mth 805 ft² 1 1/2 1 1/2</p>	<p>FOR SALE</p> <p>[Macau] Waterfront Duet Studio apartment 1 1/2 1/2 469 ft² \$4,980,000 (ref: 20016001)</p> <p>[Taipa] Chun Fuk apartment 2 1/2 2 1/2 834 ft² \$8,998,000 (ref: 20036002)</p> <p>[Macau] Lakeview Tower 3 1/2 2 1/2 1,344 ft² \$11,000,000 (ref: 19126001)</p> <p>[Taipa] Buckingham 2 1/2 2 1/2 1,439 ft² \$11,770,000 (ref: 19045004)</p>	<p>FOR RENT</p> <p>[Macau] Vai Fung Triplex, Macau 2 1/2 2 1/2 1,065 ft² \$15,800/mth (ref: 19121001)</p> <p>[Taipa] Buckingham 2 1/2 1 1/2 1,100 ft² \$15,900/mth (ref: 20031002)</p> <p>[Taipa] Manhattan 3 1/2 2 1/2 1,626 ft² \$20,800/mth (ref: n/a)</p> <p>[Coloane] Ocean Garden 4 1/2 4 1/2 3,700 ft² \$35,000/mth (ref: 18040674)</p>	<p>jml 卓雅物業 property since 1994</p> <p>(853) 2835 2699 hello@jmlproperty.com www.jmlproperty.com</p> <p>f jmlmacau @ jmlproperty</p>
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CHINA'S MYBANK PLANS A \$282 BILLION LENDING SPREE AMID PANDEMIC

WITH China's economy in free fall and millions of small businesses running low on cash, the online lending platform backed by billionaire Jack Ma entered crisis mode.

It was mid-February, near the peak of China's coronavirus outbreak, and MYbank had to decide whether to reduce its exposure or keep doling out loans. After a two-day marathon of calls and emails from self-isolation, the firm's executives agreed with 25 partner banks on a potentially risky strategy: cut interest rates and turn on the credit taps like never before.

MYbank is now on track to issue a record 2 trillion yuan (\$282 billion) of new loans to small- and medium-sized companies this year, up nearly 18% from 2019. "In face of the virus outbreak, we have not lowered our business targets," Jin Xiaolong, the firm's president, said in an interview.

While the lending surge aligns with Chinese government efforts to revive the world's second-largest economy from its pandemic-induced slump, it comes with plenty of risk for MYbank and its biggest shareholder, Ma's Ant Financial.

This year's crisis marks the first major stress test of MYbank's loan algorithms, which crunch real-time payments and other data to evaluate borrowers that often lack collateral and credit histories. If the push to boost lending causes defaults to jump, it could mean less profit for MYbank and by extension Ant, which has plans for an eventual initial public offering.

"The model is yet to be tested in a full credit cycle," said Wang Haimei, an analyst at Shanghai-based research firm WDZJ, which specializes in online lending.

MYbank is a major part of Ant's so-called open banking strategy, which also includes a consumer



MYbank president Jin Xiaolong

lending platform and a technology group that sells cloud computing and other infrastructure to lenders. Ant is on track to generate 65% of its revenue from these services by 2021, up from about 35% in 2017, according to a person familiar with the matter.

Before the coronavirus brought swathes of China's economy to a halt in the first quarter, MYbank said its 3,000-variable risk management system kept defaults at a mere 1.3% of total loans. While Jin declined to provide an updated figure on delinquencies, he said a recent uptick has been within his "expected range."

"Some small businesses are running into operational difficulties and the loan repayment rate has not been as high as before," Jin said, adding that credit quality during February and March was "predominantly healthy." MYbank finances some of its loans with its own capital, but other lenders also use the platform to reach smaller borrowers they historically shunned.

"With SMEs desperate for financing as they come out of the pandemic and try to resume normal production, profitability shouldn't be our top priority," Jin said. "We also found that more

and more banks are asking us about leveraging Ant's risk management technologies and partnering with our platform, so we can support more SMEs in need together."

The Chinese banking system's non-performing loan ratio nudged up by 0.06 percentage point to 2.04% in March from three months ago, according to official figures, even as lenders deferred payments on or rolled over a combined 1.5 trillion yuan in loans. China Merchants Bank Co., one of the country's biggest lenders to small businesses, saw its overdue micro-finance loans

nearly double from the end of last year to 6.2 billion yuan in the first quarter.

Whether delinquencies become a bigger problem will depend on how quickly China's economy recovers from its 6.8% first-quarter contraction. Slumping global demand is likely to remain a headwind for months to come, but Jin sees signs of optimism as the country rolls back its virus lockdown measures.

"We can see businesses are recovering in March," Jin said. "We are confident that we can issue more than 2 trillion yuan of loans this year." **BLOOMBERG**

NetEase picks banks for Hong Kong second listing

NETEASE Inc. has picked banks for its planned second listing in Hong Kong, according to people familiar with the matter, joining other Chinese technology companies in tapping the city's stock market for new funds.

The company is working with advisers including Credit Suisse Group AG and China International Capital Corp. on preparations for the offering and has confidentially filed a listing application with the stock

exchange, the people said. The share sale could happen as soon as the second half of this year, one of the people said, asking not to be identified because the information is private.

The Hangzhou-based online gaming and entertainment company, which currently trades on the Nasdaq, has a market value of about \$44 billion.

Shares of bourse operator Hong Kong Exchanges & Clearing Ltd. extended gains after the Bloomberg News report and were up

2.9% at the close Tuesday. NetEase's American depository receipts jumped as much as 5.5% in U.S. trading and were trading 3.4% higher at 12:15 p.m. in New York, outpacing the 2.1% rise in the benchmark Nasdaq Composite Index.

No final decisions have been made, and details of the proposed offering could change, the people said. Representatives for NetEase, Credit Suisse and CICC declined to comment.

NetEase was among the Chinese firms that

had discussed secondary listings with HKEX after Alibaba Group Holding Ltd. raised \$13 billion in its 2019 secondary share sale, Bloomberg News reported in January. Chinese e-commerce giant JD.com Inc. has also filed confidentially for a second listing in the Asian financial hub, people familiar with the matter have said.

Sales of mobile games are surging this year as coronavirus-driven lockdowns and other social distancing measures have

led to more time and money spent on gaming, according to Bloomberg Intelligence analysts Matthew Kanterman and Vey-Sern Ling. Tencent Holdings Ltd. and NetEase are the market leaders in iOS mobile games and the analysts expect the duo to maintain their leads. NetEase has a 6.1% share of the market, according to analytics firm Sensor Tower.

Games developed by NetEase are among the most popular in China,

including the hit titles Fantasy Westward Journey 3D and Knives Out. The company also operates international online games locally, such as Activision Blizzard Inc.'s World of Warcraft.

While still reliant on gaming for the bulk of its revenue, NetEase is competing with Tencent and Alibaba to provide a diverse set of online services, including music streaming and digital education, to the world's second-largest economy. **BLOOMBERG**

STEVE McMORRAN,
WELLINGTON

SPORTS | RUGBY

Sam Cane named All Blacks captain, succeeding Kieran Read

SAM Cane has been selected as the New Zealand All Blacks captain, succeeding Kieran Read, who retired from test rugby after last year's World Cup.

New coach Ian Foster made the announcement this week, even though there is no indication when the All Blacks will play again because rugby has been shut down amid the coronavirus pandemic.

The 28-year-old Cane has been a regular in the New Zealand No. 7 jersey since the retirement of Richie McCaw in 2015, appearing in more than 60 tests. His appointment as captain ahead of strong candidates such as lock Sam Whitelock is a surprise as he continues to face competition for his place in the New Zealand backrow.

New Zealand has produced some great No. 7s, among them McCaw and Michael Jones, and has routinely had a No. 7 as captain, but Cane is not of that quality yet, and is a quiet and unassuming player. While he has captained the All Blacks three times and the Chiefs Super Rugby team more regularly, his leadership skills are still relatively immature.

He was the fifth youngest All Blacks captain when, at 23, he led New Zealand against Namibia in 2015. He has also led the team against Italy and Argentina.

"As I've spent more time in the

AP PHOTO



New Zealand's Sam Cane

All Blacks and grown as a player, I've become a lot more comfortable being a leader in the team," Cane said. "The great thing about the All Blacks is that the leadership group is full of captains and experienced players already so I'm just really looking forward to working closely with that group and doing my best to lead them and the rest of the squad."

Foster said the All Blacks captaincy was one of the most im-

portant jobs in New Zealand, and Cane was ready for the responsibility.

"Sam is an experienced All Black with eight years in the team now and is a 'follow me' type of leader and a very good thinker in the game," he said. "He has a natural ability to connect with everyone in the team and is straight forward and direct when he needs to be.

"There's massive respect for

Sam among the players and management."

Cane made a remarkable recovery last year from a neck injury to resume his test career. He has played since without any obvious impediment, as a hard-working but unspectacular loose forward.

"My style as captain will be to not really change the way I do things," Cane said. "I'm just myself and will continue to be.

"I already work on building

relationships, especially with the younger guys in the squad, and everyone else connected with the team."

Foster's announcement was unexpected, coming outside any wider All Blacks squad announcement. It's timing meant it fell at a difficult time in the news cycle, after nightly news bulletins, and achieved less impact than it typically would.

Cane's appointment has been construed in part as an effort by Foster to solidify his leadership as he takes over the All Blacks after an appointment process in which he faced strong opposition from successful Crusaders coach Scott Robertson. He has been able to hand pick his assistant coaches and now his captain, ensuring a loyal leadership group.

Cane has played all of his Super Rugby for the Hamilton-based Chiefs, the team which Foster also played for and later coached. His appointment breaks a more than decade-long era in which the Crusaders provided the All Blacks captain — Read following McCaw. AP

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OPINION

World Views

Jim Bianco, Bloomberg

BUY WHEN THE FED IS BUYING WON'T WORK ANYMORE

The S&P 500 Index has rallied 28% from its low this year on March 23, with Wall Street praising the Federal Reserve for basically creating money to purchase a broad range of securities, effectively supporting asset prices. So now, many believe the bear market that saw the S&P 500 plunge 34% over the course of five weeks starting in late February is over and that major stock indexes will not revisit their recent lows. Don't count on it.

The basis for the optimistic outlook is based on three ideas, starting with "you can't go wrong co-investing with the Fed." The central bank on March 22 announced what is probably the most aggressive set of moves in its 106-year history. They included a reduction in the target federal funds interest rate by 1 percentage point to zero as well as numerous liquidity facilities to support various parts of the financial market. If the Fed, with its nearly unlimited ability to print money, is buying, how could prices ever go down? That notion alone was reason enough for investors to buy.

Optimism was further fueled by some states starting to lift shelter-in-place orders. Georgia and Texas were among the first to announce plans to begin opening their economies. About 30 other states will begin easing restrictions in the days and weeks ahead. And there is finally some hope in the battle against the spreading pandemic, with Gilead Science Inc.'s remdesivir drug being found effective in shortening hospital stays for those with the coronavirus. The Food and Drug Administration approved its use for Covid-19 patients on May 1.

Now, though, investors will increasingly need proof that these reasons for optimism are bearing fruit. In Wall Street parlance, investors "bought on the rumor," and any setbacks may cause them to "sell on the news."

When considering the potential magnitude of the economic rebound, recall that the deepest post-World War II recession was the last one, which lasted from 2007 to 2009. At its worst, real gross domestic product fell 4% from its peak. Put another way, the economy held onto 96% of its pre-recession output. That was still enough to push the unemployment up to 10%, cause the S&P 500 to fall as much as 56% and spark social unrest.

This time around, a re-opening of the economy would have to lead to an almost complete rebound in output for Fed support of asset prices to hold at current levels. This seems unlikely if the state re-openings are accompanied by de-risking, de-globalization, extended periods of social distancing and a more cautious attitude in general.

And at that level of output, highly indebted governments and companies will struggle. A 10% decline in revenue is enough to blow a big hole in government budgets, requiring massive tax hikes or bailouts. Companies would be unable to stay profitable or meet debt payments, let alone dividends.

We saw this in October 2008 when the Fed also went to unprecedented levels to support plunging markets. Along with a bailout of the banks via the Troubled Asset Relief Program, or TARP, the Fed was also trying to support asset prices at too high a level. As a result, the S&P 500 fell 25% over the following six months.

This leaves the hope of a vaccine as the sole reason to believe that economic output will soon return to 100% of 2019's level, which is the only way current asset valuations make sense. But hope is not a strategy. As cities and states begin to re-open their economies and hard data becomes available, the fear of missing out in the stock rally, or FOMO, may be replaced by the realization that a return to a pre-virus world will be much more difficult than imagined.

[Abridged]

The Disneyland theme park in Shanghai will reopen May 11. Visits will be limited initially and must be booked in advance, and the company said it will increase cleaning and require social distancing in lines for the various attractions.

The phased opening will include limits on attendance, an advance reservation system, social distancing procedures such as wearing masks, and temperature screening and contact tracing

efforts that are mandated by the government, Disney said.

With warmer weather and new virus cases and deaths falling to near-zero, China has been reopening tourist sites such as the Great Wall and the Forbidden City palace complex in Beijing.

Just two new cases and no deaths were reported yesterday. China has recorded 4,633 deaths from COVID-19 among 82,883 cases of infection, mostly in Wuhan city, the epicenter of the pandemic.

PHILIPPINE TV NETWORK'S SHUTDOWN AMID PANDEMIC SPARKS UPROAR

JIM GOMEZ, MANILA

ALARM over a Philippine government agency's shutdown of the country's largest TV and radio network heightened yesterday with a top official warning that taking a major provider of news on the coronavirus pandemic off the air could cost lives.

International watchdogs also condemned the closure of ABS-CBN Corp., which President Rodrigo Duterte has targeted in the past for its critical coverage, as a major blow to press freedom in an Asian bastion of democracy.

The National Telecommunications Commission ordered the media giant to stop operating after its 25-year congressional franchise ended Monday. It reversed a statement to Congress that it would issue a temporary permit while legislators assess a franchise renewal.

Only the House of Representatives can grant or revoke such a franchise but its hearings have been delayed, in part by the country's ongoing coronavirus lockdown.

Reflecting the extent of unease over the shutdown of the network, which went off the air Tuesday night, both the opposition and key Duterte allies questioned the commission's action. Concerns were also raised by a diverse range of groups, from top business executives to left-wing activists and Catholic church officials.

Vice President Leni Robredo, who leads the opposition, said the timely dissemination of accurate information saves lives in a crisis and helps shape an efficient response and find people who need to be helped.

"This free flow of information literally saves lives. Closing down ABS-CBN costs lives," Robredo said.



Rep. Franz Alvarez, who belongs to a pro-Duterte coalition and heads the House Committee on Legislative Franchises, said the telecommunications commission's order "is a clear encroachment on the jurisdiction of the House."

Alvarez told ABS-CBN's DZMM radio station that commission officials told lawmakers in a hearing in March that they would issue a temporary operating permit to ABS-CBN while its franchise renewal was pending based on guidance from the Department of Justice.

Concerns were raised by a diverse range of groups, from top business executives to left-wing activists and Catholic church officials

"We're really surprised why they backtracked so they have to explain," Alvarez told DZMM before it too went off air late Tuesday.

ABS-CBN has more than 11,000 news and production personnel nationwide. Aside from reporting on the coronavirus, which has infected more than 10,000 people and killed 658 in the Philippines, it has also provided truckloads of food and medical aid to more than 2 million people, company officials said.

Founded in 1953, the network was last shuttered under the rule of dictator Ferdinand Marcos and reopened after his 1986 ouster by an army-backed "people power" revolt.

Media watchdogs accused Duterte and his government of muzzling independent media like ABS-CBN that have reported critically on issues including his anti-drug crackdown, which has left thousands of mostly poor drug suspects dead. The brash-speaking leader has accused the network of not airing his paid campaign ad and favoring a rival candidate in the 2016 elections, allegations the company denied.

Phil Robertson, deputy Asia director of Human Rights Watch said ABS-CBN's shutdown was a "huge blow for press freedom in the Philippines" and deprived Filipinos of information about the epidemic from a major network. Closing the network "in the middle of the epidemic is the height of irresponsibility," Robertson told The Associated Press.

Presidential spokesman Harry Roque said ABS-CBN was free to seek legal solutions and added that Duterte would have rescued the company if the president had the power to grant franchises. AP

India Health officials are rushing to contain the spread of the coronavirus in Chennai, where a large cluster has been identified among people at one of the country's largest markets for fruit, vegetables and flowers. The busy Koyambedu market, with 500 shops, is central to the food supply chain in Tamil Nadu and neighboring states. It had remained open through India's nationwide lockdown, and hundreds of traders visited regularly until it was shut Monday after the cluster was detected.



Indonesia President Widodo signed a regulation that would move regional elections from September to December or later depending on the pandemic situation, the State Secretariat website said. The vote would elect 9 governors, 37 mayors and 224 district chiefs across the archipelago. The General Election Commission already had delayed election preparations because organizers have become ill with COVID-19.



Australia recorded 26 new virus cases overnight mainly due to clusters at a Sydney nursing home and a Melbourne abattoir. The daily increase was larger than had been usual in recent weeks but health authorities are confident they are quickly getting on top of the clusters. Sixteen deaths are connected to Newmarch House in Sydney. There have been 49 infections linked to Cedar Meats in Melbourne, but no fatalities.



South Korea reported no new cases in cities and towns yesterday, with its only two new cases detected in airport screenings. The update brought its totals to 10,806 infections and 255 deaths. With few local cases recently, the country is relaxing social distancing and preparing to reopen schools starting next week. Imported cases have declined as authorities stepped up border controls.