

The Macao SAR Government urges:

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

Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Centre

MacauDaily 澳門每日時報® Times

FOUNDER & PUBLISHER Kowie Geldenhuys

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF Paulo Coutinho

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"THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN' "

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DESPITE PRICE HIKES AND CALLS TO BOYCOTT SUPERMARKETS, 1 IN EVERY 5 PATACAS SPENT USING THE E-VOUCHER HAS GONE TO THE SUPERMARKET INDUSTRY P2

GOV'T TO STEP UP WASTE SEPARATION BY PARTNERING WITH CONDOMINIUMS P4

ACROSS THE GLOBE, THE PANDEMIC HAS LEFT INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AT PARTICULAR RISK BECAUSE SO MANY HAVE POOR HEALTH AND PRECARIOUS HEALTHCARE P6

AP PHOTO



China's exports rebounded in April to rise 3.5% over a year earlier, but forecasters warned that strength is unlikely to last as the coronavirus pandemic depresses global consumer demand. Exports to the United States rose 2.2%, while imports of American goods fell 11% in a sign of weak Chinese industrial and consumer demand despite the lifting of most anti-virus controls, government data showed yesterday.

China is touting its assistance to countries struck by the coronavirus, saying it has provided direct government aid to 150 nations, including millions of testing kits. China has been providing within its means, including, 3.3 million testing kits, 2.6 million gowns, 53 million masks and 729 ventilators, among other supplies. Additionally, \$50 has been donated directly to the World Health Organization.

South Korea is expanding its humanitarian shipments of masks to other countries amid waning domestic cases of the coronavirus. The food and drug safety minister, Lee Eui-kyung, told reporters yesterday that a total of 70 countries had requested mask shipments. Lee says South Korea will focus on assisting countries with bigger outbreaks that urgently need masks. She says diplomatic and security relations will also be considered.

AP PHOTO

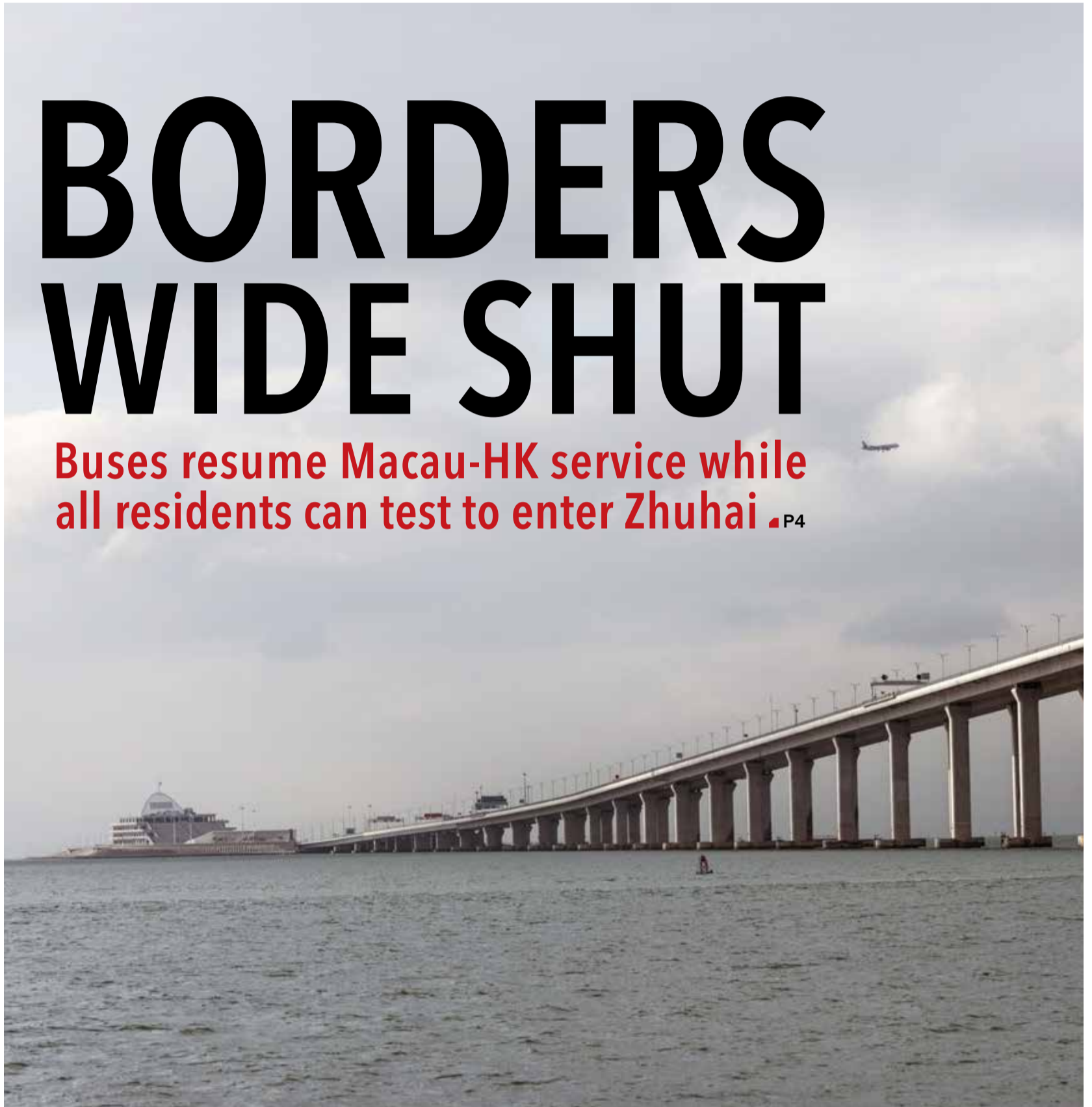


Singapore The number of people infected in Singapore surged past 20,000 as more foreign workers living in crowded dormitories were diagnosed. The city-state reported 788 new cases to take its total to 20,198. Foreign workers living in dorms accounted for nearly 90% of the cases. Officials expected the upsurge as they test residents in the locked-down dormitories.

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A PRIEST LEAST HOLY

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BLOOMBERG



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EDUCATION BUREAU TO RELEASE FURTHER DETAILS ON LUNCH PROVISION

ANTHONY LAM

THE Education and Youth Affairs Bureau (DSEJ) and educators across Macau are in regular communication in respect to providing lunch to small children under special daycare services, the bureau stated in a reply to the Times.

The Times became aware of the issue when it received an email from a group of readers. In the email, the readers expressed their concerns over lunch for their children under the 'friendly measure' employed by the DSEJ, which refers to the special daycare that it has "recommended" schools provide.

Senior secondary education resumed on May 4, while junior secondary levels will start a week later on May 11. Resumption for other education levels is still pending.

In response to this special situation, the DSEJ has instructed schools with children's facilities to offer daycare services to families with such needs.

In fact, many families have dual working parents with no grandparents or domestic helpers to help take care of small children in their families. As a result, the DSEJ came up with the 'friendly measure' idea.



Usually for lunch periods, working parents who cannot retrieve their children from school for lunch, due to either geographical distance or work arrangements, can buy lunch services for their children from their children's schools or nearby tuition centers.

Not all schools provide lunch

services, therefore tuition centers with such services normally fill this gap in the market. However, according to Macau Daily Times readers, "the DSEJ does not allow tutorial centers to provide lunch services."

The education regulator indirectly admitted the existence

of such conditions at a government daily press conference. Wong Ka Ki, head of the Department of Education at the DSEJ, stated that the bureau would announce further details "at an appropriate time."

Nonetheless, the readers fear that the issue will deteriorate after the resumption of junior

secondary schools, because older children, who might care for their younger siblings, will be at school during daytime, leaving nobody at home to take care of younger children.

The readers hope the DSEJ will ask all schools that provide special daycare services to offer lunch to children or resume meal services at tuition centers.

"Otherwise, the friendly measure will be ironic - it is not friendly at all," the group of readers wrote. "Working parents who are working far away [or] do not have the same lunch time [as] their kids are helpless [regarding a lunch arrangement]."

With regards to that, Wong said that his bureau has contacted schools that provide daycare services to allow their students to bring simple meals to school for lunch, although the bureau will remain in contact with stakeholders about further arrangements.

This arrangement will allow these children to have their own lunches at schools or tuition centers, depending on where they normally stay during lunchtime. "We'll try our best to make the arrangements as similar to normal as possible," Wong said.

Supermarkets popular choice for e-voucher spending

DESPITE criticism of price hikes and calls to boycott local supermarkets, 1 in every 5 patacas spent using the e-voucher has gone to the supermarket industry over the first five days of card use, the Macao Economic Bureau (DSE) announced yesterday. As far as transaction quantity is concerned, the industry is ranked second, with the most money spent in the food and beverage industry.

Supermarkets were criticized by netizens this week for allegedly taking advantage of the e-vou-

cher scheme by raising the price of their merchandise right at the start of the scheme.

The e-voucher, widely referred to as the consumption card, is a project initiated by the government in the hopes of helping small and medium-sized enterprises in the city with the impacts caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, which has cordoned off cities and suspended travel due to border closures, quarantine measures and social distancing requirements.

The first five days of card use has generated

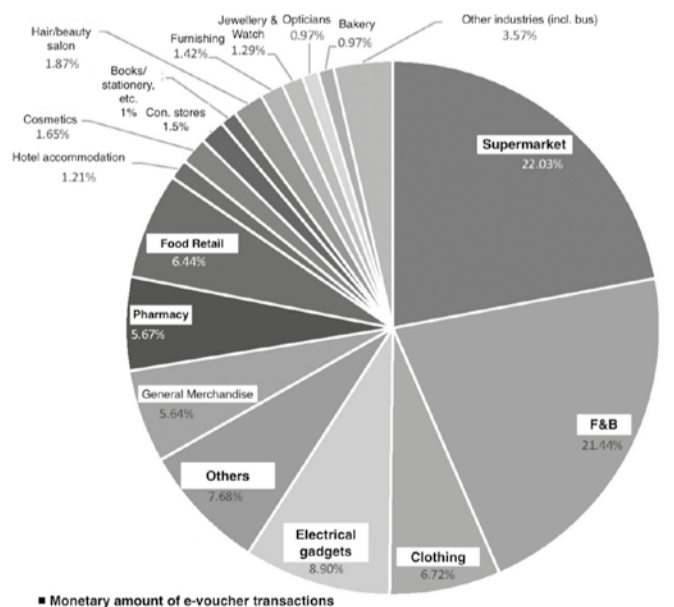
MOP295 million in the market, in a total of 2.37 million transactions. The supermarket industry alone has absorbed 22% - which equates to MOP65 million - of the city's e-voucher income in the said period.

The majority of the residents have opted to use the card when they dine, as nearly one in three e-voucher transactions went to the food and beverage industry, which has generated MOP63 million from 653,000 transactions.

Many have also used the card to purchase elec-

trical appliances. Some MOP26 million has been spent in this industry in slightly more than 94,000 transactions. The industry has benefited from the third-highest proportion of money spent relating to the scheme.

The first phase of the scheme, which started on May 1 and will be in effect until July 31, will put MOP3,000 into each registered Macau resident's pocket, with a daily spending cap of MOP300. The second phase will start directly after, with an overall individual spending amount of MOP5,000. AL



■ Monetary amount of e-voucher transactions

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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF (DIRECTOR) Paulo Coutinho paulocoutinho@macaudailytimes.com
MANAGING EDITOR Daniel Beitler daniel@macaudailytimes.com
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS Leanda Lee, Severo Portela, Sheyla Zandonai

NEWSROOM AND CONTRIBUTORS Albano Martins, Annabel Jackson, Anthony Lam, Emilie Tran, Irene Sam, Ivo Carneiro de Sousa, Jacky I.F. Cheong, Jenny Lao-Phillips, João Palla Martins, Joseph Cheung, Julie Zhu, Juliet Risdon, Linda Kennedy, Lynzy Valles, Paulo Cordeiro de Sousa, Renato Marques, Richard Whitfield, Viviana Segui
DESIGNERS Eva Bucho, Miguel Bandeira | ASSOCIATE CONTRIBUTORS JML Property, MdME Lawyers, PokerStars, Ruan Du Toit Bester | NEWS AGENCIES Associated Press, Bloomberg, MacauHub, MacauNews, Xinhua
SECRETARY Yang Dongxiao amy@macaudailytimes.com

SEND NEWSWORTHY INFORMATION AND PRESS RELEASES TO: NEWSROOM@MACAUDAILYTIMES.COM WEBSITE: WWW.MACAUDAILYTIMES.COM.MO

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ADMINISTRATOR AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Kowie Geldenhuys kowie@macaudailytimes.com

OFFICE MANAGER Juliana Cheang juliana@macaudailytimes.com

ADDRESS Av. da Praia Grande, 599, Edif. Comercial Rodrigues, 12 Floor C, MACAU SAR

Telephones: +853 287 160 81/2 Fax: +853 287 160 84

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Covid-19 testing expands to serve anyone wishing to cross the border

ANTHONY LAM

STARTING today, Covid-19 testing will be extended to all Macau residents who want or have a need to cross the border into mainland China. Just a day earlier, the Health Bureau (SSM) had announced that the tests would only be available for those that work or study on one side, but live on the other.

Lo Iek Long, medical director of the Conde São Januário Hospital, explained during yesterday's daily press briefing on Covid-19-related matters that the decision was made "after seeing the seamless implementation of the new measure," hinting that the authority should be able to handle requests for testing.

Moreover, because "authorities in Zhuhai are terminating test services at the borders from tomorrow [today, May 8]," if Macau residents need to visit the neighboring city, they will have no way to take the test to meet Zhuhai's border-crossing requirement.

"However, I must reiterate that other travel restrictions are still in place in Zhuhai. It doesn't mean that this test will exempt Macau residents from meeting extra criteria," Lo stated, referring to the 14-day quarantine measures still in place in the neighboring city.

Authorities in Zhuhai have only waived such measures for



two types of people, namely cross-border students and workers (including teachers) in Macau, Zhuhai or Zhongshan, as well as a parent or guardian of a cross-border student.

With that said, people trying to cross the border will be required to undergo a 14-day quarantine period before moving around in Zhuhai and Zhongshan.

For the time being, the test will only be available to Ma-

cau residents, who will need to present their Macau ID cards. Foreigners and non-resident workers will not be included in the scheme.

The first test will be free-of-charge, with subsequent tests each priced at MOP180. For cross-border students and workers, a test must be conducted every seven days to renew their border-crossing eligibility.

The medical doctor also stressed that Macau residents,

if they think they need to do the test, should ensure they can make their appointment before booking. Failure to show up for a testing appointment will waive their first free-of-charge test.

These tests will be required for cross-border students and teachers for the foreseeable future, health officials said. Tests are conducted in collaboration with the China Certification and Inspection Group (Macau) Co. Ltd., a state-owned enter-

prise providing inspection services.

The test 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.

Results of the test will be issued on the Macau Colored Health Code platform. The SSM reminds residents that after a week's validity, the test result will disappear automatically on the platform.

Regarding complaints of the test site being inconvenient, the hospital medical director suggested cross-border students residing in Zhuhai and Zhongshan take the test in designated hospitals in mainland cities instead of in Macau, which should be more convenient for them.

"They do one test on a weekend and use the result for a week," the doctor suggested. "On the next weekend, they do another test in Zhuhai, and the result is valid for another week." The medical doctor, however, did not explain how such test results would be shown on the Macau Colored Health Code platform, which is different from, and not connected to, the counterpart platform for Zhuhai and Zhongshan.

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 upon new residents and group housing facilities, such as aged-care homes and prisons.

Catholic priest removed from post for alleged misconduct

LYNZY VALLES

A Macau-based priest who left for the Philippines on January 26 was formally removed from his post this week as the leader of the Catholic Pastoral Center for Filipino Migrants due to sexual misconduct and alleged embezzlement.

The priest from the Society of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity (SOLT) was removed due to his relationships with women and alleged embezzlement of funds, as cited in a letter by a local group, Federation of Catholic Filipinos of Macau, to which TDM Radio had access.

Fr. Peter Marselek, the



superior of SOLT, based in Corpus Christi, United States, confirmed to the media outlet the veracity of the accusations made in the letter, revealing that the priest himself admitted to the allegations.

In the letter dating from March, Fr. Andrew Virtuz de Vera was also accused of embezzling donations from masses and funds raised for migrants in the SAR – although this matter was not confirmed by Marselek.

Marselek added that he learned of the case at the end of January, and that the regional superior of SOLT in the Philippines was scheduled to meet with the Bishop of Macau in early February to ad-

dress the case.

However, due to travel restrictions, the meeting did not occur.

Thus, in view of the "gravity of the actions," SOLT started the process of removing the priest from the congregation.

A source told the Times yesterday that de Vera left for the Philippines on January 26 and that he had already "submitted a request for dispensation as he has left the priesthood."

On Wednesday, the Diocese of Macau announced that the former priest of the Society of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity is no longer associated with the Diocesan

Catholic Pastoral Center for Filipino Migrants.

In a Chancery Notice, it noted that Bishop Stephen Lee Bun Sang has authorized the release of de Vera.

"He does not exercise any ministry in the Catholic Diocese of Macau, nor is he permitted to perform any sacraments or solicit any form of donation or stipends from the faithful for religious services with immediate effect (cf. Code of Canon Law cc. 678; 682, 2)," the notice read.

The Times sought comment from the Diocese of Macau, but was only advised to refer to its Chancery Notice.

ELECTRIC BUSES POSE NO PROBLEM TO MIDDLE BRIDGE, LOCAL ENGINEER SAYS

RENATO MARQUES

MACAU'S electric-powered buses (EV-Buses) should pose no significant threat to the stability of the Governador Nobre de Carvalho Bridge, a local civil engineer has told the Times.

In a reply to legislator Ng Kuok Cheong at the Legislative Assembly on Wednesday, Secretary for Transport and Public Works, Raimundo do Rosário, pointed out that the weight of the EV-Buses is a restricting factor in considering the replacement of fuel-powered buses with more eco-friendly ones.

Questioned by the Times on this issue, the local engineer, who requested not to be identified, said the weight should not be very different. "I find it strange," said the engineer. "The weight of the buses [EV-Buses] should be the same or very similar to the ones powered by natural gas or diesel and since the passengers also

weigh the same, [I don't see any difference]."

According to information provided by the Chinese manufacturer, Changsha BYD Coach Co., Ltd, one of the world leaders in the sale of electric vehicles, a current 12-meter EV-Bus model has a curb weight of 13,800 kilograms. A similar size diesel-powered bus has a curb weight that ranges between 11,000 and 11,500 kilograms, according to several manufacturers' specifications.

Dutch EV-bus manufacturer "EBUSCO" also said that their Model 2.2 has a curb weight of 12,850 kilograms. This shows that an EV-Bus, on average, is 18% heavier than a diesel bus. The total weight difference is reduced since the fuel tank in diesel buses carry about 300 liters of fuel when at full capacity.

In the light of such facts, the engineer added that he sees no relevant difference to justify the concerns expressed by the Secre-

tary over the bridge's capacity to sustain the buses' weight.

In his opinion, which the engineer has previously expressed to the relevant authorities, the Governador Nobre de Carvalho Bridge "[in the future] should be dedicated to bicycles, motorcycles and pedestrian traffic only." He added that this would be possible, "when the underwater tunnel [linking] the landfill by the bridge (currently used as bus parking area) to Taipa Island [...] is built."

For the engineer, the six-lane tunnel should have one lane which is exclusively reserved for public transportation use.

The Governador Nobre de Carvalho Bridge is the first road link between the Macau Peninsula and Taipa and entered into operation in 1974.

After being closed to all traffic in 2005, the bridge was reopened in 2006 but for the exclusive use of public buses, taxis, and emergency vehicles.

MACAU PHOTO AGENCY



ENVIRONMENT

Gov't to step up waste separation by partnering with condominiums

RENATO MARQUES

To increase environmental protection works and the collection of recyclable domestic waste, the Environmental Protection Bureau (DSPA) will start a program in partnership with several condominiums, DSPA director Raymond Tam said at the Legislative Assembly this week.

Responding to lawmaker Ma Chi Seng, Tam said that the DSPA has already invited about one-third of all condominium management buildings to commence a selective project for the collection of recyclable waste.

According to Tam, the condominium building's management will provide help to separate the recyclable waste, which DSPA will collect directly from the buildings. This will make it easier for the public to locate suitable recycling collection points.

Tam admitted flaws



in the current system, stating that the existing recycling collection points are "too small" and the bureau will be working on the installation of new models as well as increasing the number of recycling points around Macau to raise awareness of waste and recyclables.

Meanwhile, evaluating the program for the recycling of electronic equipment, Tam said that, so far, the program, which was initiated at the end of 2017, has collected a total of 9,500 pieces of electronic equipment from which 2,000 were of a large size.

The program expectations have fallen short of its goals at launch in October 2017, the chief of the Environmental Infrastructure Management Centre of the DSPA, Chan Kwok Ho told the Times. The program aimed to collect at least 50,000 electronic devices, including computers, mobile phones, sound systems, and other communication devices during the trial run period of one year.

Since the beginning, the program has received a lot of criticism from the public, who considered the procedures too bureaucratic.

Many also noted that people would have to subject themselves to a long process of paperwork and form-filling and receive nothing in exchange for their efforts. This is the reason that most people continue to just discard their devices together with common domestic waste.

Secretary for Transport and Public Works, Raimundo do Rosário, also admitted that environmental protection has not been a top priority over the last five years since "there were so many problems related to lands, housing and transport to solve," which were more pressing issues.

Replying to the lawmakers, Tam also added that the government would analyze the need to enforce a new tax for waste collection to cope with the growing amount of waste, as well as the difficulties and expenses incurred in treating and discarding them.

GOLDEN BUS SHUTTLES RESUME ON DELTA BRIDGE

THE shuttle bus service operating between Macau and Hong Kong via the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge recommences operations today, a month after being suspended.

The bus will operate on limited schedules starting from 10:30 a.m., followed by services at 12 p.m., 4 p.m., 6 p.m., and 8:10 p.m., the operator announced in a statement.

Commonly known as the Golden Bus due to the color of the company's vehicles, the shuttle bus deployed its final service on April 6, which left no options for passengers who wanted to travel between the two SARs, as ferry services were also suspended.

Usually, the Golden Bus runs 24 hours a day and seven days a week.

Ferry services between Macau and Hong Kong have been suspended indefinitely as of midnight, February 4.

Meanwhile, previously announced travel and quarantine measures for local residents, non-resident workers and tourists are still in place.

Macau Resident Identity Card (BIR) holders can enter into Macau but will have to undergo a 14-day quarantine measure, while blue card holders are still completely prohibited from entering Macau.

Non-resident workers who are from mainland China (except Hubei), Hong Kong and Taiwan are also not allowed entry if they have been in foreign countries or regions (outside China) for the 14 days prior to entering the SAR.

Meanwhile, foreign tourists are banned from entering Macau, but citizens of China, Hong Kong and Taiwan are not.

There has not yet been a date announced for when the ban will be lifted. **AL**

XINHUA



GAMING

WYNN REPORTS \$154 MILLION IN FIRST QUARTER LOSSES

LOCAL casino operator Wynn Macau has reported \$154.1 million (1.23 billion patacas) in losses for the first quarter of this year, down from \$190.6 million in profit a year earlier.

However, adjusted EBITDA remained positive at \$29.4 million, even as it was down 92.4% from the \$386.5 million a year earlier.

The drastic shift in net profit is in line with other casinos operators in the SAR, which have struggled to adjust to near-zero levels of tourism caused by the onset of the coronavirus pandemic.

Most of the operator's income is thought to have come in the first month of the year, after February and March reported a collapse in visitation to the SAR.

Visitor arrivals in March dropped 93.7% in year-on-year terms in March, marking only a minor improvement over February, when casinos were forcibly closed for 15 days.

In its 2019 annual report filed last month, American parent Wynn Resorts said the coronavirus was having an "adverse effect" on the group's business and that it was not certain that demand for gambling in Macau would recover quickly even after certain business conditions improve.

On Wednesday, Wynn Resorts announced that it had suspended its quarterly dividend program "due to the financial impact of the coronavirus pandemic." **DB**

ANALYST: INVESTORS SHOULD BRACE FOR HIGH VOLATILITY AMID STOCK PURCHASES

A Sanford C. Bernstein analyst suggests that gaming stocks in the Macau SAR are "terribly strong buys," however investors should be prepared to weather high volatility over the course of the next year.

Bernstein analyst Vitaly Umansky has said that the gaming hub can return to the numbers achieved in 2019 by 2021 - if the economy continues to stay strong.

"At a longer-term perspective, if you look 12 months or 18 months out, all these stocks [...] seem to me to be very terribly strong buys at a longer term view. Now the problem you're going to get is there are a lot of uncertainties over the next couple of quarters through the end of this year," Umansky told CNBC.

"Buying opportunities exist but in the shorter term we will have high volatility. [...] I think investors looking into the sector are going to be stuck with fairly volatile security holdings over the next six to 12 months as the recovery slowly progresses," he added.

The analyst attributed the 97% year-on-year gaming revenue plunge to the travel restrictions imposed by the central government and Hong Kong, which has left Macau with very few players. Once travel restrictions are lifted, Umansky expects that these numbers will quickly start to escalate. **LV**



BLOOMBERG

MGTO discards tourism tax idea

LYNZY VALLES

FOLLOWING the review of a study from last year, the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) has announced that it will no longer consider the possibility of imposing a tourism tax.

In considering the city's goal of sustainable tourism development, MGTO has concluded that "regulating [the] increase in visitor numbers by levying tourist tax may not be the most effective measure applicable to Macau."

"After comprehensive contemplation of the study's findings, the characteristics of local tourism as well as the turn of the situation, the SAR government decided to end its consideration of tourist tax imposition," MGTO said in a statement.

"At the current stage, the SAR government is striving to bolster recovery of the [tourism] trade through different measures such as tax reduction and economic support, and avoid bringing any adverse effects upon the tourism industry," MGTO added.

Last year, the bureau completed the Feasibility Study on Tourist Tax Imposition, which showed that 95% of local residents said they support the imposition of a visitor tax, whereas just 5% opposed the measure.

The findings revealed a divergence of opinions among different stakeholders in society. The study drew reference to eleven improvement strategies proposed by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) to cope with overtourism, and revealed that more cities opted for the strategies of "promoting the dispersal of visitors within the city and beyond" and "improving urban infrastructure and facilities."

Visitor arrivals in Macau have plunged in recent mon-

ths, weighing heavy on tourism-related industries.

Overshadowed by the disruption caused by the Hong Kong protests last year, monthly visitor arrivals in 2019 experienced a gradual decline in terms of year-on-year comparisons.

In the wake of the Covid-19 outbreak this year, visitor arrivals dropped even more drastically; from 2.85 million in January down to only 210,000 in March.

The plunge in tourist arrivals was a massive blow to the local tourism industry, affecting other related sectors including hotel, catering and retail industries.

Previously, MGTO warned that the imposition of a tax could affect a range of factors in the SAR including the health of the city's economy and its "destination image." It also said that collection of the tax would prove an administrative challenge.

The tourism authority had implied that the tax might not serve to achieve its purpose of moderating the number of visitors to Macau.

MGTO's director Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes has previously hinted that the purpose of the tourism tax, if levied, would not be to reduce the number of visitors. The director has also said on several occasions that she opposes the introduction of a tourism tax.

AD

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Pandemic poses special threat to indigenous health, culture



Indigenous peoples from the Buntao' community in Indonesia's North Toraja regency in South Sulawesi Province use a wooden barrier to block off their village

VICTORIA MILKO, JAKARTA

IN Indonesia's easternmost province, felled trees are stacked to block a road that leads to Papuan villages. On the Thai-Myanmar border, the Karen people have also made makeshift barricades and marked them with signs warning visitors away.

Across the globe, the coronavirus pandemic has left indigenous peoples at particular risk because so many have poorer health and less access to health care than their non-indigenous peers.

While there are, of course, vast differences among indigenous groups, including lifestyle and socioeconomic factors, the United Nations estimates that the life expectancy of indigenous people can be up to 20 years lower than that of their counterparts. A recommendation from the Australian government underscored the disparities. A message sent in March warned: "People over aged 70, ages over 60 with preexisting conditions, or Indigenous people aged over 50 should stay home whenever possible for their own protection."

The more stringent recommendation for indigenous people is likely because so many have the kinds of health problems that experts say can result in more serious consequences if they contract the coronavirus.

According to U.N. data, more than half of indigenous adults over 35 worldwide have Type 2 diabetes. Indigenous people also experience "disproportionately high levels" of cardiovascular disease, HIV/AIDS and illnesses such as tuberculosis.

For most people, the virus causes mild or moderate symptoms. But for some, especially those with health problems and older people, it can cause more severe illness and lead to death.

Genetics may play a part in poorer health among indi-

genous people, Mason Durie, a professor of Mori Studies at Massey University who is himself Mori, but social factors are generally considered more important.

Aware of the added risks, many indigenous people — especially those living near or in urban centers — are seeking isolation, said Rudolph Rýser, an indigenous activist and executive director of the Center for World Indigenous Studies.

"Many people that are able to are simply running back into the forest, running back up the mountain, trying to get away from the urban settings to get away from potential vectors," he said. "They simply closed down, put up obstacles, and block the roads going into their territories."

That has raised the possibility that members who don't typically live in traditional villages could bring the disease back with them. And some communities, like aboriginal ones in Australia, may be ill equipped to keep people safe because of poor infrastructure and crowding in homes, said Dr. Mark Wenitong, an aboriginal general practitioner and adviser to aboriginal health councils in Australia.

Some indigenous communities are practicing social distancing that closely resembles what's happening outside them. In Indonesia, groups including Papuans and the Buntao' in South Sulawesi province are blocking access to their villages. Elsewhere, others, like the Karen people, are also adding in traditional practices, such as performing rituals to remove bad luck or marking village entrances with culturally significant symbols.

While many marginalized groups are finding themselves at risk, the stakes may be even higher for indigenous people who were already struggling to maintain their traditions and keep the world at bay, like those

in the Amazon rainforest who have long contended with encroachment on their lands by loggers, miners and farmers.

The disease poses a serious risk, but restrictions to curtail the pandemic are also threatening the way of life of some groups and disrupting important cultural practices for others.

In Uganda, the military is trying to prevent the Batwa, who are going hungry under lockdown, from slipping across the border into Rwanda to get food from relatives, said Faith Tushabe, who works with a local NGO. Long evicted from their forest homes, the Batwa usually trade labor for food — and can't right now.

Restrictions on movement have also made it difficult for some of the Mbororo — semi-nomadic pastoralists in Cameroon — to survive, said Sali Django, a program coordinator for Mboscuda, a non-governmental group that supports the Mbororo.

"They need to look for food to eat," he said.

The Maasai, a semi-nomadic indigenous group in Kenya and Tanzania, meanwhile, have been forced to halt important rituals that bring clans together, including the graduation of warriors into young men who can marry and own property.

The outbreak is forcing major changes, said Benyamin Timaiyo, a Maasai youth leader.

"It will totally interfere with culture and tradition — and we are living through culture and tradition," he said.

While some countries have earmarked emergency funds to help indigenous peoples, the virus still poses a major threat, said Rukka Sombolinggi, general secretary of the Indigenous People Alliance of the Archipelago (AMAN) in Indonesia.

"They could become extinct," she said. "Not only the people, but also their culture." AP

AP PHOTO

Fractures in many nations widen as virus lockdowns e

JILL LAWLESS, ANGELA CHARLTON & ELAINE KURTENBACH, LONDON

REGIONAL and political fractures are emerging in many nations over how fast to lift the lid on coronavirus-imposed lockdowns, as worries about economic devastation collide with fears of a second wave of deaths.

French mayors are resisting the government's call to reopen schools, but Italian governors want Rome to ease lockdown measures faster. As the British government looks to reopen the economy, Scottish leader Nicola Sturgeon has warned that acting too fast could let the virus wreak havoc again.

Sturgeon cautioned that "for the moment we do need to stick with the current lockdown restrictions."

Britain — the European country hit hardest by the pandemic — is expected to extend its nationwide lockdown, but hopes cautiously to ease some restrictions on economic and social activity next week.

Restrictions allowing people to leave home only for essential errands, shopping and exercise were imposed in the U.K. on March 23. They are expected to remain in place at least until Sunday, when Prime Minister Boris Johnson plans to set out a roadmap for "phase two" of the outbreak.

The U.K. government has said gradual loosening measures will include more road space to walk and cycle while maintaining social distancing, and encouragement for sectors including construction to get back to work.

The U.K.'s official COVID-19 death toll stands at 30,076, second only to the United States. Johnson's government is facing intense criticism for its about-face on coronavirus testing and contact tracing — abandoned in March but now a priority — and failure to ensure a steady supply of personal protective equipment to medics.

FRANCE

In France, more than 300 mayors in the Paris

region have urged President Emmanuel Macron to delay the reopening of schools scheduled for Monday. Many mayors around the country have already refused to reopen schools, and many parents will keep their children at home even where they are functioning again.

The mayors called the timing "untenable and unrealistic," saying they were put on a "forced march" to get schools ready without enough staff or equipment, and complained that the government guidelines were too vague and slow in coming.

But governments are also under pressure to reopen faster and kick-start economies that have been plunged into hibernation.

Italian regional governors are pressing to open shops and restaurants, just days after the country began easing its two-month lockdown, allowing 4.5 million people to return to work in offices and factories.

Governors are seeking to be allowed to present their own plans for reopening, tailored

ns US ease



to the rate of infection and economic needs of their regions.

GERMANY AND RUSSIA

In Germany, whose 16 state governments are responsible for imposing and loosening lockdowns, some governors have been more impatient than others to open up businesses such as restaurants and hotels.

At a meeting with Chancellor Angela Merkel, it was agreed that state leaders would have wide leeway to decide when to open more sectors of the economy. They also will have to reimpose restrictions locally if coronavirus infections rebound.

In Russia, where the number of new infections is growing fast, President Vladimir Putin delegated the enforcement of lockdowns and other restrictions to regional governments, leading to wide variations across the country.

Mikhail Vinogradov, head of the St. Petersburg Politics think tank, told the Vedomosti newspaper that the Moscow government was sending mixed messages

that governors find hard to decipher — wanting a victory over the virus, while also encouraging easing of the lockdown.

US

Fractures are also evident in the U.S., where about half of the 50 states are easing their shutdowns, to the alarm of public health officials.

Many states have not put in place the robust testing and contact tracing that experts believe is necessary to detect and contain new outbreaks. And many governors have pressed ahead with reopening before their states have met one of the key benchmarks in the administration's guidelines for reopening — a 14-day downward trajectory in new infections.

"If we relax these measures without having the proper public health safeguards in place, we can expect many more cases and, unfortunately, more deaths," said Josh Michaud, associate director of global health policy with the Kaiser Family Foundation in Washington.

Researchers recently

doubled their projection of deaths in the U.S. to about 134,000 through early August. So far the U.S. has recorded over 70,000 deaths and 1.2 million confirmed infections.

Worldwide, the virus has infected more than 3.6 million people and killed over a quarter-million, according to a Johns Hopkins University tally, which experts agree understates the dimensions of the pandemic because of limited testing, differences in counting the dead and concealment by some governments.

Europe and North America are looking nervously to Asian nations that are well on the way to reopening.

CHINA AND OCEANIA

China, where the virus emerged late last year, reported just two new cases yesterday, both from overseas, and said the whole country now is at low risk of further infections after confirming no new deaths from COVID-19 in more than three weeks.

China also fired back against claims by U.S.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo that there is "enormous evidence" that the coronavirus originated in a Chinese laboratory.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Hua Chunying accused Pompeo of "making up lies and covering up a lie by fabricating more lies."

Strict social distancing also appears to have vanquished the outbreak in the remote island nation of New Zealand, where Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern outlined plans for further relaxing lockdown rules, with a decision coming perhaps next week.

New Zealand would keep its borders shut, restrict gatherings to 100 people or fewer and hold professional sports events without spectators. Masks and other precautions would be required as restaurants and schools reopen, she said. But Ardern called for vigilance.

"We think of ourselves as halfway down Everest," Ardern said. "I think it's clear that no one wants to hike back up that peak." AP

Ship tied to Australia virus deaths sails into Manila Bay

A cruise ship being investigated in Australia for sparking coronavirus infections anchored in Manila Bay yesterday to bring Filipino crew members home.

The Ruby Princess joins at least 16 other cruise ships at anchor waiting for their more than 5,000 Filipino crew members to be tested for the coronavirus before disembarking.

Coast guard spokesman Armand Balilo said 214 Filipino crew members on the Ruby Princess will be tested but may have to wait behind those from other ships.

The Ruby Princess has been linked to 19 deaths in Australia and two in the United States. The Australian investigation is trying to determine why 2,700 passengers and crew were allowed to disembark in Sydney on March 19 before the test results of sick passengers were known.

Many passengers flew from Sydney overseas. Two died at home in the United States, including Los Angeles resident Chung Chen, whose family is suing Princess Cruises for more than \$1 million in a lawsuit alleging it failed to alert passengers to the risk.

An initial batch of 300 Filipino crew left the ship last month and were taken to Sydney to catch a charter flight to Manila.

The cruise ships have been asked to wait in a Manila Bay anchorage area instead of docking in nearby ports as part of strict precautions against the virus. Medical and coast guard teams in protective suits travel by motorboats and carry out tests on board each anchored ship in a laborious effort before the Filipi-

no crewmen can disembark for treatment in a hospital or to stay in further quarantine depending on the test results.

"The protocols are strict. Our teams get onboard, undertake swab tests then the crewmen wait for three days," Balilo said by telephone. "If they test positive, we bring them to a hospital but if they're OK, we release but they should still go into some days of isolation."

More than 24,000 Filipino workers, including nearly 17,000 ship crew and personnel, have returned by air and sea after being displaced by the coronavirus pandemic and lockdowns worldwide. They have overwhelmed quarantine facilities in metropolitan Manila.

Philippine officials have stopped incoming international flights for a week starting May 3 in an effort to decongest the quarantine facilities in metropolitan Manila and prepare for the arrival of tens of thousands more returning Filipino workers in the coming weeks.

The Philippines is a major source of global labor and the huge income remitted by millions of workers have kept Manila's economy afloat for decades and served as a lifeline for impoverished families.

Nearly 2,000 Filipinos have been infected by the coronavirus in 46 foreign countries and 215 have died, many of them workers, according to the Department of Foreign Affairs in Manila. A large number of Filipinos has faced layoffs due to business closures abroad and the government has struggled to bring many of them home. AP



Uber, Airbnb lay off thousands as virus upends sharing economy

CATHY BUSSEWITZ,
NEW YORK

IN a world where the coronavirus pandemic has turned social distancing into a new way of life, companies whose business models bank on people's willingness to share their personal space are now struggling.

Uber said yesterday it's cutting 3,700 full-time workers, or about 14% of its workforce, as people fearful of infection either stay indoors or try to limit contact with others to minimize risk when they do venture out. Rival Lyft and home-sharing service Airbnb have also announced cuts because of falling usage.

The layoffs and related costs like severance will cost about \$20 million for Uber, which had already imposed a hiring freeze. The San Francisco-based company has offered up to 14 days of financial assistance to drivers and delivery workers who were diagnosed with the COVID-19 disease, or placed in quarantine.

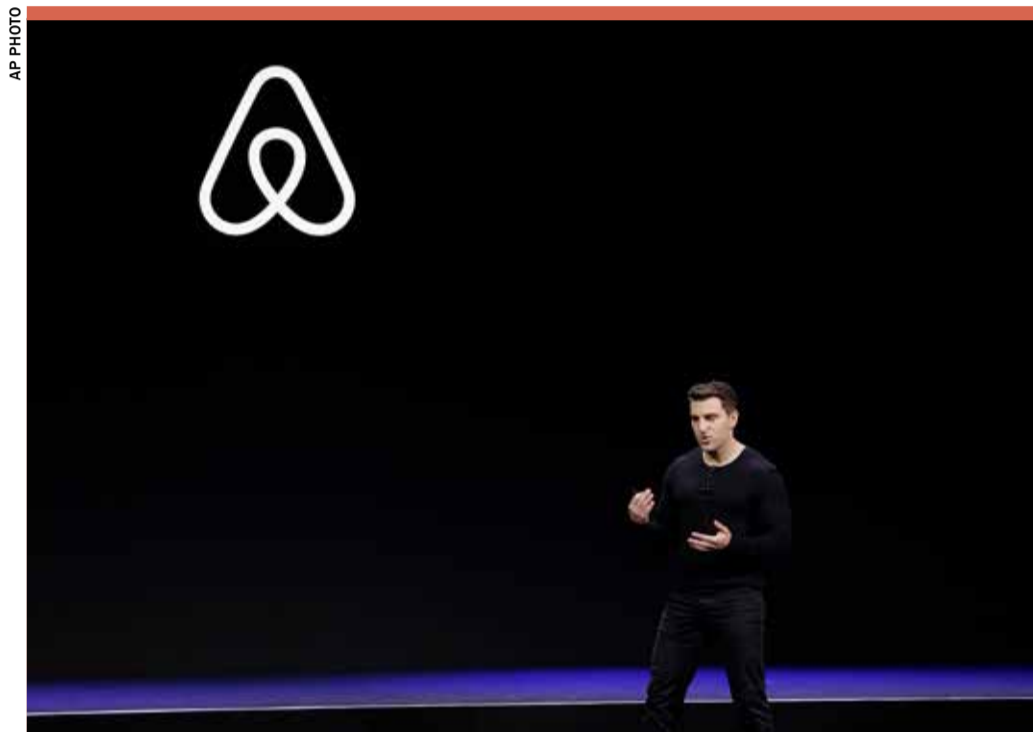
Those ride-hailing drivers still on the road are trying to avoid infection and patch together enough fares to put dinner on the table even as ridership plummets.

"A lot of us are living on the razor's edge of homelessness," said Jerome Gage, 28, who drives for Uber's rival Lyft in Los Angeles. "We have to work or we don't eat."

Gage, who as a contract worker does not have paid sick leave or health insurance, has seen his income plummet as the number of rides he provided fell about 75%. He got one disposable mask and a few small bottles of sanitizer from Lyft, but said it's not enough to keep him safe.

"Any trip, you could contract the virus," Gage said. "So every single day we're on the road we're in harm's way."

Lyft announced last month it would lay off 982 people, or 17% of its workforce in the face of sinking ridership. The San Fran-



Airbnb co-founder and CEO Brian Chesky

cisco company expects to spend \$28 million to \$36 million on expenses related to employee severance and benefit costs.

Lyft's revenue grew 23% to \$955.7 million in the first quarter, which doesn't capture the full extent of the outbreak. The number of active riders grew just 3%, the company said yesterday. Lyft lost \$398.1 million, which was better than the year-ago loss of \$1.1 billion when the company had higher expenses related to its IPO.

"While the COVID-19 pandemic poses a formidable challenge to our business, we are prepared to weather this crisis," said Logan Green, co-founder and CEO, in a statement. "We are responding to the pandemic with an aggressive cost reduction plan that will give us an even leaner expense structure and allow us to emerge stronger."

Ride-hailing companies are facing pushback from drivers who want to be classified as employees instead of independent contractors, which some say would speed the process of getting unemployment benefits. California sued Uber and Lyft on Tuesday, alleging they misclassified their drivers as independent contractors under the state's new labor law.

Both Uber and Lyft are trying to conserve cash so they can weather the pandemic's fallout, in part by emphasizing deliveries of food and other goods. Lyft, which in the past touted its singular focus on transportation, started a temporary service called "Essential Deliveries" last month to deliver goods such as groceries to food banks and senior centers. Uber is expanding Eats, its restaurant delivery service, into 20 international markets this year.

But the success of their businesses depends on people being willing to open up their cars, and drivers in some parts of the country can make more money collecting unemployment benefits, said Stephen Beck, managing partner of cg42, a management consulting firm.

The psychology of riders' decision-making is also shifting. Ride-hailing companies were banking on people deciding they would rather hitch a ride than own a car, a belief that has changed for some consumers during the pandemic. Riders also will be making decisions about what's safest, and would have to trust that a shared vehicle less risky than a bus or train.

Even in its worst-case scenario - an 80% decline in ridership through 2020 --

Uber has said it would end the year with \$4 billion in cash. That would still mean burning through almost \$7 billion this year, which could create problems for Uber's larger ambitions such as self-driving cars and air taxis.

Airbnb is slashing staff as the thought of opening living spaces to strangers begins to feel like an anachronism.

Yesterday [Macau time], the company announced it was cutting a quarter of its workforce, some 1,900 people. The San Francisco-based company expects its revenue to drop by more than half this year.

It was not so long ago that Airbnb was poised to cash in on a soaring stock market with its highly anticipated public offering. But with the market now reeling and few people looking to anywhere but home, Airbnb is reportedly racking up millions of dollars in losses.

When consumers eventually resume traveling, Airbnb CEO Brian Chesky anticipates they will spend less and stay closer to home. Earlier this year, after the company told guests they could cancel their stays without penalties, it agreed to pay furious hosts \$250 million to make up for some of their lost income. AP

this day in history



1945 REJOICING AT END OF WAR IN EUROPE

The Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, has officially announced the end of the war with Germany.

In a message broadcast to the nation from the Cabinet room at Number 10, he said the ceasefire had been signed at 0241 yesterday at the American advance headquarters in Rheims.

Huge crowds, many dressed in red, white and blue, gathered outside Buckingham Palace in London and were cheered as the King, Queen and two Princesses came out onto the balcony.

Earlier tens of thousands of people had listened intently as the King's speech was relayed by loudspeaker to those who had gathered in Trafalgar Square and Parliament Square.

In it he paid tribute to the men and women who had laid down their lives for victory as well as to all those who had "fought valiantly" on land, sea and in the air.

The act of unconditional surrender is to be ratified in Berlin today - but in the interest of saving lives the ceasefire came into effect yesterday.

In his speech, Mr Churchill said: "We may allow ourselves a brief period of rejoicing; but let us not forget for a moment the toil and efforts that lie ahead. Japan with all her treachery and greed, remains unsubdued."

"We must now devote all our strength and resources to the completion of our task, both at home and abroad. Advance Britannia."

Even after dark, floods of people continued to converge on some of London's great monuments, floodlit specially for the occasion. There were fireworks, too, and effigies of Hitler burned on bonfires around the capital.

Later Mr Churchill was greeted by cheering crowds as he made his way to Whitehall and appeared on the flag-bedecked balcony of the Ministry of Health.

"God bless you all," he said over the loudspeaker, which was greeted with further cheering and waving from the crowd and a round of "For he's a jolly good fellow".

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

The act of surrender was signed again in Berlin the following day before Marshal Georgi Zhukov, representing the Russian High Command.

Also present at the signing were Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Tedder, Deputy Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force, General Carl Spaatz of the United States Air Forces and General Jean-Marie de Lattre de Tassigny of the French First Army.

The Soviet leader, Joseph Stalin, refused to accept the surrender signed in Rheims - probably because he suspected the motives of the Western Allies and Germany. He insisted the treaty was ratified in Berlin the following day, so Moscow celebrated VE Day one day later than the rest of Europe, on 9 May.

A victory parade was held in London on 10 August 1945 when once again huge crowds of cheering, flag-waving crowds took to the streets.

Following the two atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the deaths of tens of thousands of people, Japan surrendered on 14 August 1945. Victory in Japan Day was celebrated on 15 August. It is also marked on 2 September, the day Japan signed an unconditional ceasefire.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

Do an experiment today to find out. Try to avoid too much deliberation. Consider your options and then decide immediately. Find out if all the time you usually spend debating decisions is worth it.



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

Your own appearance should be carefully considered today. A new item of clothing could get you a lot of attention, but make sure it's the right kind! Give your public face a professional makeover today.



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

With their good cheer, brilliant ideas, and outside-the-box thinking, you two can achieve a lot. Combining forces is always a good way to get further faster and have fun while you're at it.



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

Don't rush, especially when you're behind the wheel. Driving isn't a competition, so don't fall into the trap of responding to aggression. Count to ten and carry on.



LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

If this friend is thinking of gambling on this idea, do your best to help them see things more conservatively. Otherwise, let them learn the fallacy of their hunch on their own. It will teach them an important lesson.



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

A new person introduced to you recently can help you make things happen. Speed is a priority, so if you understand the possible connection right now, move forward immediately.



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

You're entering a more cautious phase, which could affect your life more than you realize at first. But rest assured that all the upcoming changes are positive.



SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

To avoid getting a big head, stay in touch with the people who have known you for years - and have seen you when you weren't at your best. New attention will remind you about the true value of old friends.



SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

Everyone has an opinion on your life right now. Friends, family members, and even co-workers all have a few words of advice if you ask them what they think.



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

Temper your zeal with a healthy dose of reality. Do your research and you won't be disappointed. This isn't a time to take major risks. There's too much instability in the air.



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

The many layers of your personality make you a richer, more evolved person, but some layers aren't getting the attention they deserve. Today, it's time to reorganize the many elements that make up you.



PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

If you're involved in any type of legal matter, things could move to the next stage at some point today. Are you prepared? Get your paperwork in order and be the one to react first.

The Born Loser by Chip Sanson



SUDOKU

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

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	13	18	drizzle
Harbin	14	21	cloudy
Tianjin	13	15	drizzle
Urumqi	8	24	clear
Xi'an	16	19	overcast
Lhasa	4	14	drizzle
Chengdu	19	26	overcast
Chongqing	22	30	cloudy
Kunming	17	30	clear
Nanjing	20	26	moderate rain
Shanghai	20	25	thundershower
Wuhan	21	24	heavy rain
Hangzhou	21	32	drizzle
Taipei	24	28	overcast
Guangzhou	27	35	cloudy
Hong Kong	28	33	cloudy
WORLD			
Moscow	4	13	drizzle
Frankfurt	10	21	clear
Paris	11	21	overcast
London	10	20	drizzle
New York	9	19	drizzle

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS: 1- Prohibits; 5- Hit the mall; 9- Tablet; 13- A Baldwin brother; 14- Ancient region of Asia Minor; 16- "The Time Machine" race; 17- Author Jaffe; 18- Covenants; 19- First name in country; 20- High-pitched tone; 21- Opposite of post-; 22- Potential mate; 24- Not new; 26- "All The Way To ___", song by REM; 27- Atoll unit; 29- Longitude; 33- Relative by marriage; 34- Hue; 35- Han ___ was a "Star Wars" character; 36- Narc's org.; 37- Some change; 38- Finish first; 39- Sea eagles; 41- Chooses; 42- Icon; 44- A lawyer; 46- First American to orbit Earth; 47- Long luxuriant hair; 48- Bailiwick; 49- Shawl worn in Mexico; 52- Back in time; 53- Back of the neck; 57- Catchall abbr.; 58- Honda model; 60- Secured, as victory; 61- Autobahn auto; 62- Sheer fabric; 63- Requirement; 64- One of the Simpsons; 65- Addict; 66- Greek sandwich;

DOWN: 1- Zinger; 2- Hand cream ingredient; 3- Panamanian baby; 4- Shoulder blade; 5- Little drink; 6- Accumulate; 7- On a single occasion; 8- Cavity; 9- Time spans; 10- Belinda Carlisle's "Should ___ You In?"; 11- Timber wolf; 12- Make-up artist?; 15- Maintains; 23- Verse starter?; 25- Put in stitches; 26- Leases; 27- Lifeless; 28- Viewpoint; 29- Like some mouthwashes; 30- Herbert Hoover, for one; 31- Straighten; 32- Zilch; 33- Notion; 34- Native American tent; 37- Link; 40- East African nation; 42- ___ de France; 43- Expressive; 45- Knock vigorously; 46- Dealer in foodstuffs; 48- Nimble; 49- Authenticating mark; 50- Sewing case; 51- X-ray units; 52- Thrifty competitor; 54- ___-deucey; 55- Jury member; 56- Other name for taro; 59- Acknowledgment of debt;

Yesterday's solution

FUSE	METO	MAS
TINCA	AVAIL	PAPA
STAR	CELLO	AGOG
CORNEA	LEGALESE	
SARA	RISE	
ELO	ROTH	GIRGUS
PIM	POLAR	SMELT
STEP	NARES	ORCA
ORGAN	SETUP	REG
URANER	MINT	SRS
THOR	EBAY	
PROHIBIT	AENSE	
LANE	TGRET	NEER
OVER	SHUSH	TOPI
DEL	TELE	ANTE

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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



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www.jmlproperty.com
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DRIVE IN

An out-of-this-world experiment in 'Spaceship Earth'

JAKE COYLE, AP FILM WRITER

DURING lockdown, have you taken a moment to appreciate that at least you're not quarantined with eight free-thinking adventurers in a terrarium of depleting oxygen levels?

Matt Wolf's documentary "Spaceship Earth" provides some illuminating context to our shut-in days by going back to the early 1990s to study the Biosphere II, that quixotic endeavor in the Arizona desert in which eight men and women sealed themselves off in a 3-acre complex. The whole affair, of dubious scientific benefit but high public interest, had the look and feel of science fiction, right down to the "Star Trek"-like jumpsuits and the Buckminster Fuller-inspired architecture.

The goal of Biosphere II (Earth they considered the first Biosphere) was to create a self-sustaining colony that could be replicated on other planets and prepare this one for global-warming disaster. It was a lifeboat and laboratory

AP PHOTO



Dr. Roy Walford (foreground) with candidates for the Biosphere 2 Project from the documentary "Spaceship Earth"

in one; a fanciful ark for a fallen world.

In previous films, Wolf has shown a penchant for brilliant, bizarre Americans in pursuit of transcendence. In 2008's "Wild Combination," he profiled the avant-garde musician Arthur Russell. In his previous film, "Recorder: The Marion Stokes Project," he mined the archives and story of a woman who slavishly recorded TV news on VCRs for decades. He

makes sober movies about eccentrics who are — often admirably so — out there.

"Spaceship Earth" brings a boat load of new specimens. Foremost among them is John Allen, the leader of the group that would, before embarking on the biosphere, co-found the experimental theater troupe Theater of All Possibilities. The group, forged in '60s San Francisco, would move on to more elaborate performative

works. They started a ranch. They build a ship, named it the Heracitus, and sailed it around the world. In Kathmandu, they built a hotel.

How did they afford this all? They had a billionaire backer in Ed Bass, scion of a Texas oil family. The group's members maintain they were seeking transformation, only not through drugs or ephemeria. "We weren't a commune," says one. "We were a corporation."

The Biosphere II was their biggest gamble yet. It was covered by some networks as a historic event, while others derided it as "ecological entertainment" or -- as ABC's Peter Jennings says in the film "a tourist attraction run by questionable characters." It was, undoubtedly, as much performance art as science. And while it drew support from the Smithsonian and universities, its closed system was eventually discovered to be a fraud. Carbon dioxide scrubbers were secretly used to clear the air inside.

The lack of oxygen didn't help anyone's mood, nor did a steady diet of beats. Infighting increased. The experiment began to more resemble a reality-TV game show. (There was even mud wrestling.) After the two-year experiment was over -- and just when you think the weirdness is subsiding -- Bass removed the top executives and brought in Steve Bannon to run things.

"Spaceship Earth," with a glowing score by Owen Pallett, doesn't cast judgment on most of its subjects. It's content to go along for the ride, marveling at all the surrealism. You'd say the story was out of this world if it wasn't so much of it.

"Spaceship Earth," a Neon release, is unrated by the Motion Picture Association of America. Running time: 115 minutes. ★★★★★

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OPINION

World Views

Shuli Ren, Bloomberg

CRAZY TRADING ON CHINA'S NASDAQ HAS ITS OWN LOGIC

Old habits die hard. China's Nasdaq-like ChiNext board has staged a comeback this year, rallying 17% to trade at an average of — yes, really — 70 times earnings. Is this misguided enthusiasm by an investor base that infamously engineered a stomach-churning crash just five years ago?

All the conventional wisdom points to irrationality. The ChiNext is composed mostly of young, small and volatile enterprises, whereas blue chips are far better placed to weather the coronavirus outbreak. First-quarter earnings reports from China's domestically listed companies just drove home the point.

The data show an irrefutable connection between market value and earnings resilience. Companies with a market cap of more than 100 billion yuan (\$14 billion) increased their sales and operating profit at the median, despite the virus-related lockdowns. By contrast, the median smaller company recorded a double-digit decline in earnings.

What's surprising, though, is that not all earnings for ChiNext members are bad. The new-economy market is a story of ice and fire. While more than half of companies reported a drop in net income, almost a quarter posted earnings growth of at least 30%. In other words, performance was either sub-zero or very hot, with little in between.

That makes the ChiNext an attractive market for stock pickers who fancy they can pick the hot prospects from the frozen waste. This makes sense for investors, since China has no equivalent of the FANGs — the mega-cap technology stocks that have made the U.S. equity market the world's best performer. In China, the well-loved large caps are in booze and drugs — and these are already richly valued and crowded.

A case in point is Kweichow Moutai Co., maker of the fiery liquor known as baijiu and the world's most valuable distiller. Moutai's 1.6 trillion yuan market value is now equal to the entire gross domestic product of Guizhou province, where the company is based. How much upside can there be left for an alcohol producer whose basic product costs just shy of 2,400 yuan, or close to \$340 a bottle? That's more than the minimum monthly wage in China's capital, Beijing. Unlike FANG members Amazon.com Inc. and Netflix Inc., Moutai surely can't be considered a play on middle-class consumption.

Chinese investors also have a different vision of value. For them, value isn't about cheap metrics such as low price-to-book or price-earnings ratios. Rather, it's determined by how fast a small cap can morph into a blue chip. This explains why investors love Contemporary Amperex Technology Co., which supplies batteries to Tesla Inc. They hope it can become as indispensable to Elon Musk's electric-car maker as Sunny Optical Technology Group Co. did to Apple Inc.

To be sure, this is all risky business. Beijing recently approved plans to move to a registration-based system for initial public offerings on ChiNext. That means a flood of new companies with even less vetting will be arriving on the board. It's also worth noting that the quarterly earnings of these young and inexperienced companies aren't audited.

But then traders on ChiNext aren't buying stocks so much as options. They're sifting for China's future FANGs.

The economic catastrophe caused by the viral outbreak likely sent the U.S. unemployment rate in April to its highest level since the Great Depression and caused a record-shattering loss of jobs.

With the economy paralyzed by business closures, the unemployment rate likely jumped to at least 16% — from just 4.4% in March — and employers cut a stunning 21 million or more jobs in April, economists have forecast, according to data provider FactSet. If so, it would mean that nearly all the job growth in the 11

years since the Great Recession had vanished in a single month. Yet even those breathtaking figures won't fully capture the magnitude of the damage the coronavirus has inflicted on the job market.

Many people still employed have had their hours reduced. Others have suffered pay cuts. Some who've lost jobs won't have been able to look for work amid widespread shutdowns and won't even be counted as unemployed. A broader measure — the proportion of adults with jobs — could plunge to a record low.

VETERAN CHINESE DIPLOMAT AND MAO ZEDONG'S INTERPRETER DIES

Ji Chaozhu, a veteran Chinese diplomat who provided English translation for leaders from Mao Zedong to Deng Xiaoping and served as an undersecretary of the United Nations, has died, the foreign ministry said. He was 90.

Ji had also served as ambassador to Britain over the course of a lengthy career that began after he left Harvard University to return to China during the Korean War, when U.S. and Chinese troops engaged in vicious combat.

After briefly studying at prestigious Tsinghua University, he was assigned by dint of his fluent English to assist with the peace talks at the village of Panmunjon between the warring sides.

That led to a job as interpreter to Premier and Foreign Minister Zhou Enlai as well as Mao, with whom he appeared on the reviewing stand atop iconic Tiananmen Gate when foreign guests were present.

After Mao's death, Ji took on a similar role with successor Deng Xiaoping. Having been dispatched by Zhou to set up an informal liaison office in the U.S. in 1973, Ji accompanied Deng to America after the establishment of formal diplomatic relations between the long-time antagonists in 1979 and later worked at the Chinese Embassy in Washington.



Ji Chaozhu (right) stands near then Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai (center) greeting then U.S. President Richard Nixon at Beijing Airport, in February 1972

That was followed by assignments as ambassador to Fiji and the U.K. and five years as a U.N. undersecretary-general for development support and management services, a position from which he retired in 1996.

His last post was as vice president of the All China Federation of Returned Overseas Chinese, from which he stepped down in 2005.

Ji was born into a wealthy family in the northern Chinese province of Shanxi in 1929 and moved with his family to the U.S. when he was 9. He and his brother attended exclusive private schools in New York where he developed the fluent English and deep knowledge of American culture that would prove him so valuable to China's drive to

confront the West and restore what it views as its traditional dominant role in Asia.

Like many high officials, Ji experienced various persecutions during the xenophobic 1966-76 Cultural Revolution, particular due to his foreign education and the fact that his brother had remained in the U.S. He chronicled his experiences in his autobiography, "The Man on Mao's Right"

In a brief notice sent to The Associated Press, the foreign ministry said Ji had died on April 29 in Beijing from an unspecified illness.

"We mourn the unfortunate passing of Mr. Ji Chaozhu and send our condolences to his family," the ministry said.

Ji is survived by his wife and two sons. AP

Sri Lanka has reimposed a 24-hour countrywide curfew until next Monday, as part of stringent measures to contain the spread of the coronavirus. The blanket curfew follows a surge in new infections during the last few days. There are now 797 COVID-19 patients in Sri Lanka including nine deaths. Of the total, 460 cases were reported after April 22, including 372 navy sailors or their close contacts. Authorities have isolated the main navy camp and quarantined about 4,000 troops there.



Italy After an outcry from the nation's Roman Catholic bishops, Italian Premier Giuseppe Conte says he has signed an accord with church officials to allow resumption of public Masses during the pandemic. Under Italy's two-month lockdown decree, no Masses for rank-and-file faithful have been permitted, although some churches could stay open for individual prayer.



UK The Duke and Duchess of Sussex have released a video of Meghan reading to their son as they mark Archie's 1st birthday and promote a campaign to help children during the coronavirus pandemic. The video shows Meghan sitting with Archie on her lap and reading one of his favorite books, "Duck! Rabbit!" Archie grabs at the pages and helps turn them during the reading. Harry, who filmed the short video, whoops and says "bravo" from behind the camera at the end.



Taiwan Mandopop superstar Jay Chou is bringing a little magic into viewers' lives with his Netflix show "J-Style Trip." Part travelogue, part magic performance, the show has Chou diving into adventures around the world with his A-list friends. "Magic is actually like music. It is a universal language," Chou told AP in Taiwan recently.

THE DECISIVE MOMENT

AP Photo/Ng Han Guan



No news... Residents walk past a shuttered newsstand in Beijing. Authorities have declared China a low-risk contagion zone. (See p6-7)