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SEVERAL FORMER EMPLOYEES OF GAMING OPERATORS ARE DISTRESSED AT NOT BEING ABLE TO RETURN TO THE CITY TO RETRIEVE THEIR BELONGINGS

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TRAVEL BUBBLES ARE LAST HOPE FOR A SUMMERTIME TOURISM RECOVERY AT A TIME WHEN MOST BORDERS WORLDWIDE ARE SEALED

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China reported seven new virus cases, all tied to Chinese returning from abroad. Just 81 patients remain hospitalized in the country with Covid-19, and another 408 are in isolation and being monitored for being either suspected cases or having tested positive for the virus without showing any symptoms.



Philippines As about 24,000 Filipinos who lost their jobs abroad are being transported by land, sea or air to their provincial homes, the president warned local officials not to refuse them entry out of coronavirus fears. The workers returned to the country in recent months as jobs dried up worldwide due to the pandemic.

India For a seventh consecutive day India reported a record single-day jump in new virus cases. The health ministry counted a total of 145,380 cases, a one-day gain of 6,535, and said 4,167 people had died. Most of the cases are concentrated in two neighboring states in central India, Maharashtra, home to financial hub Mumbai, and Gujarat, PM Modi's home state.



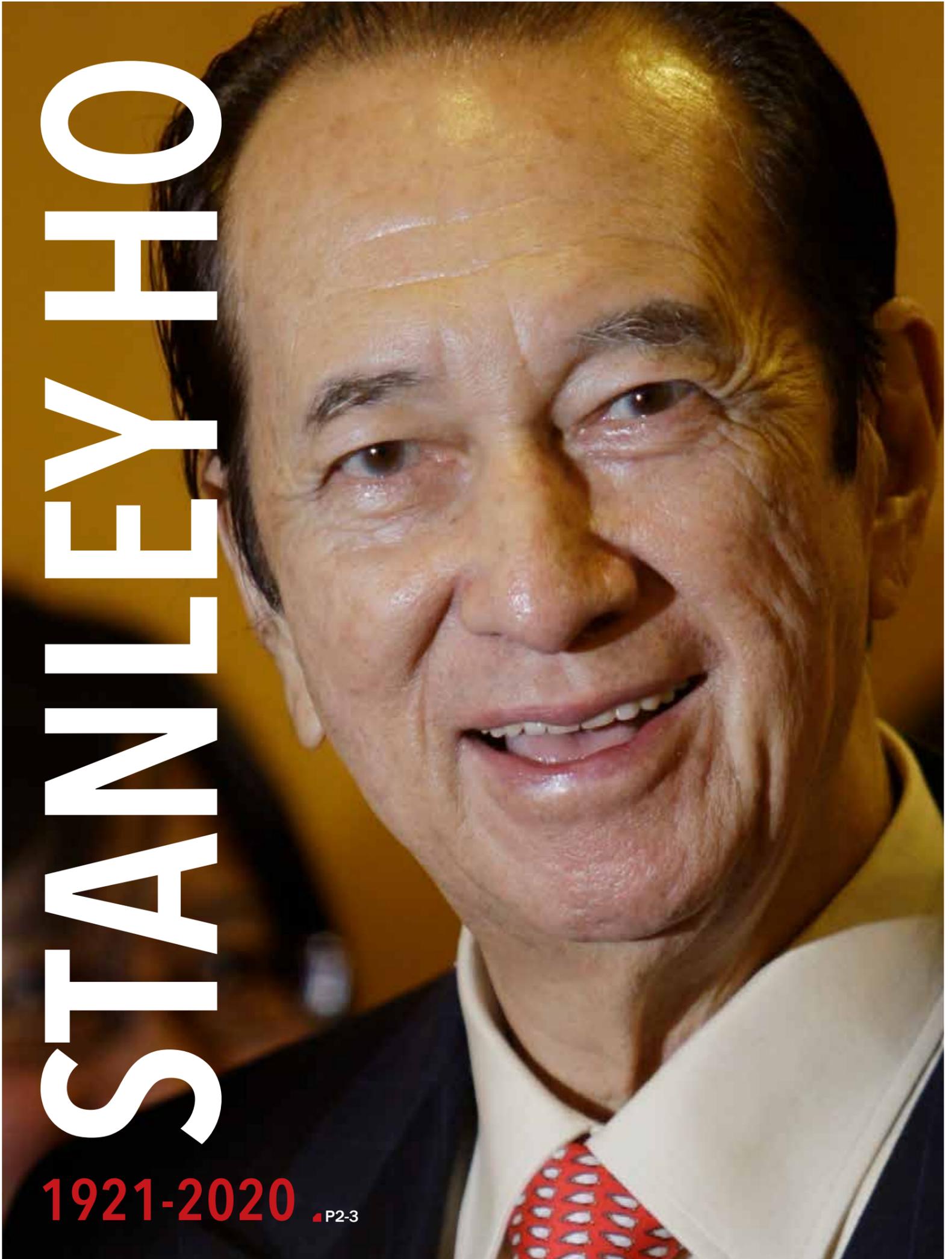
Thailand's Cabinet has agreed to extend until the end of June a nationwide state of emergency that was imposed to combat the spread of the virus. The extension was approved amid mounting criticism that its real purpose is to curb political activity. Political and human rights activists have been warning that the broad powers authorized under the emergency decree, such as limitations on speech and gatherings, could be used to silence critics.

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AP PHOTO

STANLEY HO

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editorial

Paulo Coutinho



Larger than life; the

UNCLE STANLEY

STANLEY Ho has been a household name in Macau and East Asia for seven decades. His trade: gambling, although, as the legend goes, he never gambled himself and would always advise those around him not to gamble. I heard that directly from him after one press conference in the 80s.

As any other gambling magnate, he knew the rule of thumb in games of fortune and hazard: the house always wins.

Stanley was the house, holding a gambling monopoly in Macau for over four decades, most of that time through his business conglomerate STDM. And in that capacity, he played his odds well.

He courted the Portuguese governors, one after the other, trading favors beneficial to both parties in which he would always hold the upper hand. What is good for STDM is good for Macau, so the legend was born.

And during the entire remaining Portuguese administration from the 70s onwards that was pretty much the case.

Ho was influential in several business initiatives involving Portuguese and Chinese interests, mostly his own, of which probably the most emblematic is the closure of the Baia da Praia Grande or Nam Van – an ambitious urban engineering project that would transform the bay for good.

When I arrived in Macau in the mid-1980s, the Praia Grande bay was a mesmerizing sight of historical resonance. However, its waters were stagnant, dark and muddy, and in the dry season it would exhale a putrid smell. It was infested with a million rats and dirt.

In the nineties, a project financed by both Stanley Ho and the public coffers, commissioned late architect Manuel Vicente to redesign the bay and, in conjunction with experienced Portuguese engineers, find a solution with dams and floodgates to pump water into two artificial lakes to restore and upgrade the area giving the city a refreshed and salubrious seaside front. It worked.

In the late 80s, Stanley Ho would have a stake or say in all the projects that would involve infrastructure, transport and land. Apart from his own fleet of ferryboats to serve the Macau-Hong Kong route, Ho would become involved in all the so-called major infrastructure projects: the ferry terminal, the airport, the sea port, the air flag-carrier, you name it.

At the same time, his Casino Lisboa (now dubbed Old Lisboa) and the satellite-casino network was ripping billions mostly from Hong Kong and Asian patrons, at a time of great prosperity in the region, when the Asian Tigers, Hong Kong included, were thriving.

With a Midas touch, he bought the decaying Trotting Club from Yip Hon and transformed it into a lucrative Jockey Club in a matter of years that would turn a profit year-after-year, until its demise over the past ten years when he was no longer in control.

By the turn of the century, old Stanley was well prepared for what came next when Edmund Ho, the first Chief Executive, put an end to the gaming monopoly and promoted an international tender for gaming concessions.

After the handover, Stanley Ho asked Edmund Ho (not related) to give him a “moratorium” of three years so he could reorganize his company to bid in the tender. If there was a moratorium, we may never know, the matter of fact is that the first casino outside of Uncle Stanley’s orbit opened around three years later, the Sands Macao. The rest is history.

A flamboyant and complex character, famous for his bold statements, Ho once proposed an alternative destiny for his homelands of Hong Kong and Macau: that they should be governed autonomously under the auspices of the United Nations. Over the years, he dropped the idea and became more and more intimate with Beijing circles and involved in the cause of reunification.

RENATO MARQUES, ANTHONY LAM

AT 98-years, Stanley Ho passed away in Hong Kong yesterday, not living long enough to see the opening of the last property of the empire he helped to build, the Grand Lisboa Palace in Cotai. A family statement said he died peacefully in his sleep, but did not give a cause of death.

Tall, handsome and of mixed Chinese and European heritage, Ho fathered 17 children with four women, an extended family that engaged in high-profile squabbles over his legacy during his later years.

A nephew of one of Macau’s as well as Hong Kong’s most influential people in both business and philanthropy – Sir Robert Ho Tung – Stanley Ho Hung-sun was a Hong Kong and Macau business magnate and best known for being Macau’s first and most influential gaming tycoon.

Founder and Chairman of SJM Holdings until 2018, when he officially retired, leaving the company in the hands of his daughter Pansy Ho, Stanley built up an impressive portfolio of investments, owning a total of nineteen casinos in Macau, including the historic Hotel Lisboa.

Over the years, Ho was nicknamed the “King of Gambling,” an unofficial title that gained fame during the government-granted monopoly era he held for about 40 years.

Another company that he established, Shun Tak Holdings, where he held the post of Chairman Emeritus, issued a statement to officially confirm the tycoon’s death on behalf of the company.

“Dr Ho has been a respected personage of virtue, vision, innovation, and invincibility,” the statement said.

Ho was regarded as an example, the statement noted. “Dr Ho has educated and inspired us a lot,” it said. He has taught people to thirst for knowledge and yearn for exploration, according to the statement.

“He has also reminded us to treasure our culture and our traditions, as well as to love our country,” noted the statement.

The family said that although they understood the day would eventually come, the pain cannot be described.

“The departure of a philosopher has left inexplicable devastation,” ended the statement.



NO EASY START

Despite being born into privilege, his story did not have a smooth start. On November 25, 1921, the future tycoon was born to parents of wealth. His father was a comprador at E.D. Sassoon & Co., which later became a founding stakeholder of the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation. His mother was a daughter of a wealthy family.

The tycoon received his education at Queen’s College in Hong Kong, before successfully enrolling in the University of Hong Kong with scholarships. The story did not develop well, for his father was forced to leave Hong Kong for Vietnam due to financial problems. After, his mother had to pawn her jewelry to raise him.

In 1941, when Japan invaded Hong Kong, Ho was left no choice but to flee the city to Macau, which was declared to be neutral by the then Portuguese government. He was hired by a grocery company in Macau owing to his aptitude for English.

A large bonus was awarded to him two years later when he risked his life to save the contents of a cargo ship. He allegedly faced gunfire and a gre-

nade while carrying out his duties.

With the large bonus, he set foot in the fuel refinement industry. The refinement company became a main supplier for the Macau power plant in those days. His business became so successful that it attracted the interests of a local gangster.

The gangster negotiated with Ho on a partnership. Later threatening him, the gangster deployed gunmen to the refinement plant to intimidate him.

In 1953, the gangster expelled Ho from Macau, threatening to take his life if he refused to leave the city. Despite leaving unwillingly, he felt determined to return when the tensions eased.

Back in Hong Kong, he invested widely in real estate. Prior to his arrival, residential properties in Hong Kong were sold as entire buildings. He made himself a pioneer in breaking down the titles and selling properties per unit.

The time then came for him to be allowed to return to Macau. It was then that the Portuguese-Macau government, as it then was, decided to reopen the bid for casino operations.

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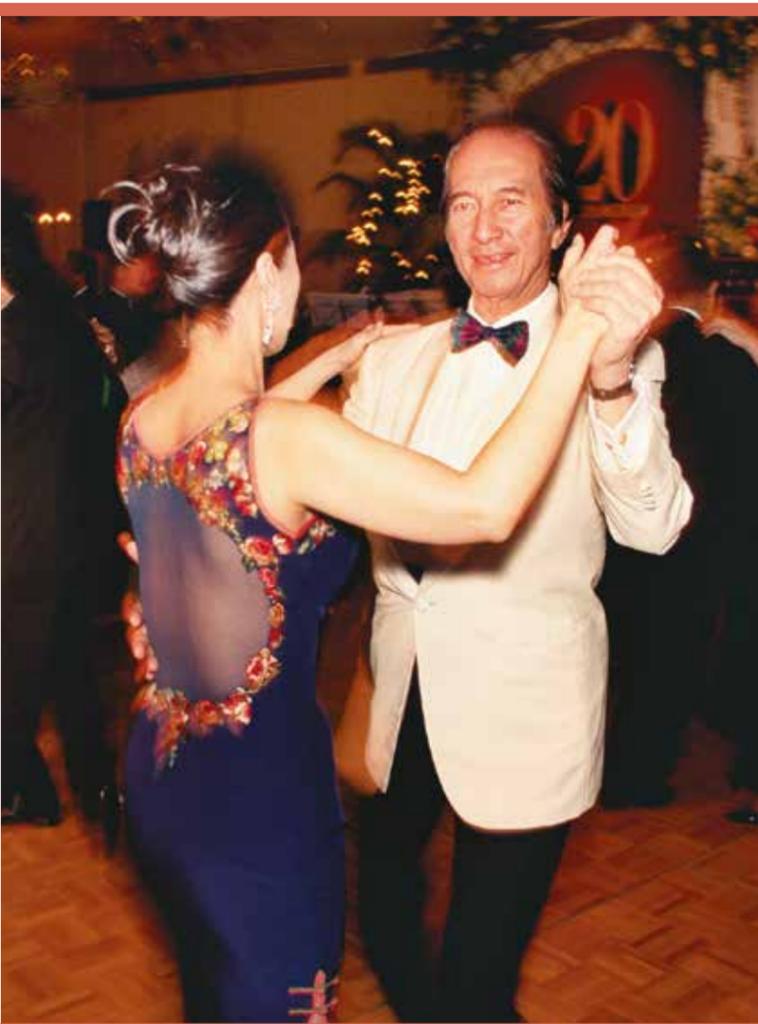
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passing of a legend



Partnering with late businessmen Henry Fok, Teddy Yip and Yip Hon, Ho succeeded in bidding for the concession.

His enemies threatened to kill him once again, apart from seven other astonishing threats, with the most famous, or infamous, being the gathering of crowds of beggars at the entrance of Ho's new casino. Ho's reaction was to offer free rice with Char-siu – Cantonese barbecued Pork – to the beggars.

Meanwhile, he spread the word that whoever could kill the conspirer of his death would be awarded 1 million patacas. The move created a stalemate situation.

After breaking these ties, Ho moved on to build his empire but transformed the then-existing Estoril Swimming Pool into a casino on New Year's Day, 1962. In May of that year, the four businessmen inaugurated the Sociedade de Turismo e Diversões de Macau, more commonly known as the STD, which has played an essential role in Macau's tourism industry.

Eight years later, on June 11, 1970, STD opened Macau's first 5-star hotel, the Hotel Lisboa, which houses the globally-renowned Casino Lisboa.

FAMILY COMPROMISE

Stanley Ho was also the founder and Chairman of Shun Tak Holdings, through which he owned a large portfolio of businesses including entertainment, tourism, shi-

pping, real estate, banking, and air transport. Some of these businesses have already been carved up among his descendants.

In 1948, Ho married Clementina Leitao, daughter of a prominent lawyer in Macau with ties to Portugal and to Macau high society, connections that may have helped him win the casino monopoly in 1962. About the same time, Ho married Lucina Laam under a Qing dynasty code allowing men to take multiple wives that Hong Kong outlawed in 1971.

Ho fathered children with two other women, Ina Chan and Angela Leong, whom he also referred to as his "wives." Ho reportedly met Chan, a nurse, when she was hired to care for Leitao, who died in 2004.

He met Leong, a dancer and former ballroom dancing instructor, through his love of dance.

The decline of Stanley Ho at the helm of his business empire started when, in July 2009, the magnate suffered a stroke that left him partially incapacitated for a long period of time and left him with permanent ailments from which he would never fully recover.

During the long period of recovery that followed his hospitalization, Ho was away from the limelight and consequently far from the leadership of the companies, leading to the decision in 2010 of taking his first steps in the delegation of powers and sharing of wealth among his closest family.

A family feud saw several branches of the family pitted against one another, leading to an uneasy compromise arranged by Ho himself.

Ho disputed a supposed transfer of his entire stake to five of his children and one of his wives, calling it a "robbery" contrary to his desire to divide the fortune equally among various family members. The dispute eventually was settled after several lawsuits, and Ho transferred most of his SJM shares to family members while officially remaining chairman.

In this process he granted his daughter Pansy, son Lawrence and wife Angela significant shares of the business and, with that, net values of USD5.3 billion (MOP42.3 billion), USD2.6 billion (MOP20.8 billion) and USD4.1 billion (MOP32.7 billion), respectively, according to Bloomberg Billionaire Index.

According to estimations made in 2018, when he stepped down from the leading role, his businesses employed around 25% of all Macau's workforce.

Apart from Hong Kong and Macau, the companies held by Stanley Ho also possess several investments in the mainland, as well as abroad, in countries such as Portugal, North Korea, Vietnam, the Philippines, Mozambique, Indonesia, and East-Timor, among others.

After he stepped down at the age of 96, his public appearances de-

creased and on several occasions, over the past two years, it was rumored that his health had declined even further. News about his admittance to hospitals in the neighboring region of Hong Kong hinted about his potentially critical condition, the latest coming in mid-February this year, although the family always refuted the idea that Ho's condition was serious.

FROM DANCING TO VIDEO GAMES

Apart from his qualities as a businessperson, Stanley Ho had a reputation for being a great dancer.

Occasionally he would be spotted on the dance floor in performances of the cha-cha, waltz, tango and swing.

He was also one of the known supporters of Hong Kong's dance and arts scene and held, until his death, the patronage of the Hong Kong Ballet and the International Dance Teachers Association.

In Macau, back in 2008, the local government acknowledged Stanley Ho's achievements and contributions to the territory by naming the road that links Avenida da Praia Grande in the center of Macau's business district to the Macau Tower as Avenida Doutor Stanley Ho, translated to English as Dr Stanley Ho Avenue.

In a life full of events, Stanley Ho's path is said to have served as inspiration for a movie titled "Casino Tycoon," filmed in 1992

and starring Hong Kong's renowned actor Andy Lau in the role of Benny, a young man fleeing Japan for Macau, who becomes the head of a gambling mafia. The film was followed by a sequel, "Casino Tycoon 2," which gave way to a computer game version of the movie, released in 2001.

STANLEY'S TOY

At the end of "his" avenue stands one of Ho's investments, if not gifts, to Macau, which would make it onto the list of his favorites too: the Macau Tower.

The story told about the Macau Tower is that the casino tycoon was once in the Southern Hemisphere country of New Zealand.

He spent some time in one of the country's largest cities, Auckland, where he saw and fell in love with the city's renowned icon, the Sky Tower, which stands on the summit of a low-rising hill in the city's central business district.

Rumor has it that he immediately decided that he would build one in Macau, on an even larger scale. That's why the Macau Tower, despite similarities with its New Zealand brother, is taller and possesses a larger floor area.

GOVERNMENT REACTION

Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng expressed his condolences upon Stanley Ho's death in a statement.

The Chief Executive commended the businessman for his contributions to the community, not only commercially but also philanthropically. "He has made important contributions to the prosperity and stability of Macau," the government head said in the statement.

Meanwhile, former Chief Executive and incumbent Vice Chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, Edmund Ho, noted in a statement that he was saddened by the news of Stanley Ho passing away.

Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam issued a statement to mourn the departure of the businessman, who has throughout his life invested greatly in the city.

Referring to the magnate as Dr Ho, the Hong Kong government chief commended Ho as "of significant weight to both Hong Kong and Macau."

"Dr Ho loved his country. He started making investments on the mainland back in the 1970s, supporting fully the country's Reform and Opening," Lam said. "He has energetically participated in the city's development of social services and supported the Community Chest, as well as other charity organizations."

"I am saddened by the passing of Dr Ho," the Hong Kong government head added.

The Macau International Airport turned its website to grayscale to mourn its shareholder and former vice chairman.

The websites of Grand Lisboa Hotel and Hotel Lisboa have also turned grayscale to honor Ho.

CPPCC

Macau members urge Beijing to resume tourist visa scheme

JULIE ZHU

FOUR Macau members of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) have expressed their wish to welcome mainland visitors to the region sooner than planned.

During the 13th CPPCC in Beijing, four Macau delegates, Ho Sut Heng, Sio Chi Wai, Lau Ngai Leong and lawmaker Chui Sai Peng, made a joint proposal relating to the current border restrictions, having expressed their concerns for Macau's economy.

According to the proposal, the four Macau representatives asked mainland China to remove immigration restrictions for Macau, if not for both of the SARs. Then, gradually, mainland China would resume the granting of Macau travel permits to mainland visitors, starting from the nearest province

then moving further inland, before fully rebooting all types of travel permit services, such as group tour visas and Individual Visit Scheme visas.

Currently, in order to freely move about the mainland, travelers must obtain a health code. Macau and Guangdong have been sharing one health code system, which includes a person's Covid-19 test results. The four Macau representatives hope that all of mainland China's health codes can be mutually recognized by Macau.

They also recommended establishing an authority specifically in charge of Greater Bay Area matters.

In addition to these four members, other Macau CPPCC members voiced various proposals to Beijing, ranging from matters such as patriotic education to Greater Bay Area cooperation.

Alex Lao, President of

Multinational Holdings Group, made five points to support his opinions on patriotic education to Macau students. Patriotic education aims to instil pro-establishment sentiment and political obedience in young children.

The five methods Lao proposed were establishing a patriotic education research and study zone; including relevant content into school education; adopting online methods; training teachers in the relevant concepts; and portraying specific individuals as patriotic role models. Lao believes that once these five steps are completed, students will love the country and be proud of their own culture.

Chui Sai Cheong, together with Liu Chak Wan, brought one proposal to Beijing. The duo hopes that mainland China can provide opportunities for Portuguese-speaking students in Macau

to undertake internships in the Greater Bay Area.

Lau Ngai Leong, Kou Hoi In and Sio Chi Wai proposed, in another joint suggestion, that freight between Macau and Zhuhai should be smoother.

The group complained that Macau local SMES cannot develop cross-border e-commerce businesses in mainland China because of immigration difficulties, and that Macau residents also encounter difficulties in receiving or returning online shopping parcels to and from mainland China.

They hope mainland China can support Zhuhai in establishing a special zone in Hengqin to allow a faster package-returning process for Macau residents. They also want the mainland to support Zhuhai in launching tax benefits to attract overseas e-commerce platforms to expand branches in Hengqin.

CPPCC

PROPOSAL WOULD SEE MACAU LRT CONNECTED TO ZHUHAI METRO

FIVE Macau members of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) have brought a joint proposal to Beijing, requesting that the government connect the railway networks of Macau and Zhuhai.

The five, including Sio Chi Wai, Ho Sut Heng, and Lau Ngai Leong, recommended connecting 'Macau's Light Rapid Transit (LRT) to the Zhuhai railway network (inter-city) and to Zhuhai metro (within Zhuhai) as well.

Zhuhai Railway Station is the only major train station in that city. The services running from this facility transport passengers between Zhuhai and other mainland cities.

Zhuhai currently does not have a railway network within the city. It is expected that only in 2024 will Zhuhai have its own metro transit infrastructure.

The five Macau CPPCC members want Macau to have a railway station inside the special administrative region and they hope that Macau LRT and Zhuhai's future metro can be linked. JZ

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CPPCC

Football can develop cultural industry exchange: Liu, Chui

ANTHONY LAM

FOOTBALL and related industries should be utilized as a medium to promote cultural exchange between China and Lusophone countries, Liu Chak Wan and José Chui Sai Peng have co-proposed to the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC).

The CPPCC is holding its annual plenary meeting in Beijing. The meeting is set to close this afternoon.

As members of the CPPCC, Liu and Chui took the opportunity to make proposals with regards to Macau's position as the strategic link between China and Lusophone countries.

Pointing out that sports have been used to facilitate cultural exchange between countries and ethnicities, they proposed more work be done on developing foot-

ball in particular. Macau has a significant quantity of skilled individuals possessing fluency in both Chinese and Portuguese, who, in their opinion, would be able to help China and Lusophone countries develop sporting industries together.

They hope the mainland can provide further help at a national level with sports events in Macau, to make the city a base of Chinese-Lusophone sports exchange.

In addition, they proposed the popularization and implementation of Chinese medicine in Lusophone countries. They also suggested introducing quality Chinese medical products to those countries, and even to others in the European Union.

Their justification was that Chinese medicine is part and parcel of the "Healthy China" strate-

gy. They also noted that Chinese herbal medicine has helped significantly against Covid-19.

Finally, they proposed more work be done in Macau to strengthen its position as the base for skilled Portuguese-speakers. The roadmap that they proposed stipulated that the work would be led by the Central Government to further promote student recruitment in Lusophone countries by Macau's higher education institutions. These prospective students, they said, should be offered a greater range of study disciplines.

In addition, they noted that mutual recognition of education between Macau and Lusophone countries should be institutionalized, in order to attract more students to Macau and other parts of the Greater Bay Area.

LYNZY VALLES

SEVERAL former employees of gaming operators are distressed at not being able to return to the city to retrieve their belongings after being made redundant while in their hometown.

These non-resident workers (TNRs) travelled back to their hometowns between February and March, agreeing to their employers' offer to take a month of leave in exchange for half a month's salary.

However, as the hotel and gaming industry has faced a fall in business as a result of the pandemic outbreak, these companies have fired some of their employees who had already returned to their home countries.

A significant number of migrant workers went home in February and March, aiming to take the opportunity to stay with their families for several weeks and still get paid half a month's wages – just as the companies had guaranteed.

However, they were not expecting to lose their jobs while in their hometown.

They currently face a difficult situation, as they are still obliged to pay monthly residential rent in Macau for their belongings to be kept in their rooms.

Since the government announced strict entry restrictions forbidding blue card holders and tourists from entering the SAR from March 19, these workers are left with no option but to remain in their hometown and continue to pay for their accommodation in the city.

Due to the sensitivity of the matter, the people with whom the Times spoke declined to disclose their identities.

"They have asked us to apply for voluntary leave. We were advised that if we don't apply for the leave, it will lead to losing our jobs," said one.

"Sadly, the company decided to cut our visas even though we were

DISMISSED TNRs STRUGGLE TO PAY RENT WHILE AWAY FROM THE CITY

out of Macau, which I'm very disappointed [about], but I also understand," she added.

Several of them told the Times that when they were contacted by the human resources office of a gaming operator, it was not disclosed why they were being fired despite their contracts only being due to expire at the end of next year.

"They said they will terminate our contract even if it will not expire until May 2021. They didn't tell us the reason that they were doing so but I guess it was due to unprofitable business," said another, who used to work as a room attendant in one of Cotai's hotels.

An unprecedented 15-day casino closure in Macau began on February 5, which led to a significant fall in the city's casino industry, followed by the travel restrictions imposed by the central government on its citizens, which has made it nearly impossible for Chinese visitors to enter the region.

Meanwhile, the difficulty of the situation also persists for sub-tenancy landlords as the former non-resident workers have been unable to receive their salaries, suggesting that the main tenant would have to pay rent first on latter's behalf.

"All the belongings are still stuck in Macau, even our salaries. There is no other way we could get it. We still need to pay for the rent. Either we pay the monthly rent or they will [dispose of] all our belongings," said a Nepalese worker who used to work as a casino service bartender.

According to the recently-fired worker, he has contacted his company's human resources office to ask whether they could assist in transferring his wages to his bank

account in Nepal, yet was told that they could not assist him with such a situation.

The worker pays 1,800 patacas for a room, which means that he currently owes his landlord 5,400 patacas for three months' accommodation – an amount that will continually increase until travel restrictions are lifted.

The earlier quoted blue-card holder who used to work as a room attendant does not face the same situation in terms of rental concerns as her friend has helped retrieve her things. Still, her possessions occupy a small compact room, which is the normal living quarters for migrant workers in the city.

"I have an arrangement with my employer regarding my things in the locker. They will wait for me to collect them and surrender the items that belong to the company," she said.

Another employee, who is currently employed, yet is stranded in the Philippines, said that he also continues to pay his rent with the monthly allowance given by the company.

The worker, employed in the food and beverage department, explained to the Times that the allowance pertains to 15 days of paid work in a month.

"My things are still there so I need to continue to pay the rent. Since I'm still employed, I'll just wait for Macau to lift its entry restrictions for blue-card holders," he said.

Other former workers, stranded in Thailand, Indonesia, Philippines and Nepal, are just hoping for flights to resume, and for the city to ease entry restrictions so they are able to look for jobs again in the city.



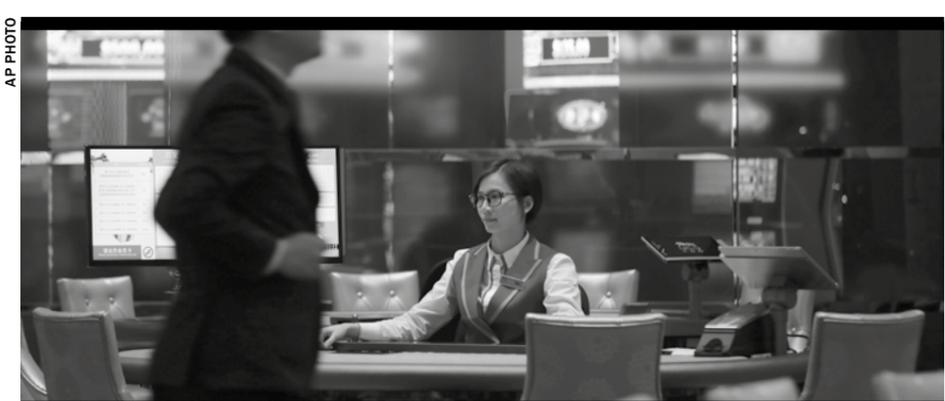
GAMING

Bernstein: average daily revenue down 103%

THE average daily rate of Macau gross gaming revenue from May 18 to May 24 fell into the negative, according to estimates from brokerage Sanford C. Bernstein.

The average daily rate stood at approximately minus 25 million patacas, implying that gross gaming revenue for the seven-day period had tumbled 103% year-on-year.

Bernstein said that the decrease was driven by a very small base of players during this pandemic outbreak which drove volatility, particularly in the VIP segment.



"VIP hold rate for last week was in the negative range, but we estimate month-to-date VIP hold rate was around the normal range," said analysts Vitaly Umansky,

Eunice Lee and Kelsey Zhu, as cited by gaming news website GGR Asia.

Since it is still uncertain when travel restrictions will be lifted, the brokerage revised

its former GGR estimate for May from a 95% year-on-year decline to a 97% decline.

The central government is still not issuing Individual

Visit Scheme visas and tour group visas, restricting mainland visitors from entering the SAR region. Last month, the city suffered from the biggest year-on-year drop to date of 96.8%.

"Our contacts we have spoken with do not see any definitive clarity on travel restrictions improvement, but we expect GGR to pick up again when travel restrictions begin to be lifted," said the analysts.

However, the analysts expect that border restrictions between Macau and Hong Kong, as well as Macau and Guangdong, could be lifted

in late May or early June.

This comes after the deliberations of the annual National People's Congress session, which will conclude tomorrow.

"The three jurisdictions remain in discussion about reducing travel restrictions, and quarantine requirements are likely to be significantly reduced for certain travellers in the near term," the brokerage said.

Meanwhile, the group said that checks with sources suggested Macau's GGR for May 1 to 24 was approximately 700 million patacas.

Previously, the brokerage said that the most critical variables in the business outlook for Macau will be when travel restrictions from China will be lifted and how quickly the Chinese economy will recover. LV

WHAT A TRAVEL BUBBLE ALONG THE PEARL RIVER WOULD MEAN FOR MACAU

DANIEL BEITLER

THE last hopes for a summertime tourism recovery are now pinned on travel bubbles, geographic areas inside which people can traverse borders at a time when most borders worldwide are at least partly sealed.

Also known as “travel corridors” or “air bridges,” travel bubbles are designed to help kickstart the economies of countries or territories where the Covid-19 pandemic has already been brought under control. The idea is proving popular in many parts of the world, though only three Baltic states have made these travel corridors a reality.

China, one of the first jurisdictions to bring the virus under control, is considering a travel bubble that would span the mainland, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macau and possibly even South Korea. But before that may or may not become a reality, many in the Pearl River Delta region expect some travel restrictions to begin easing on a more localized scale.

Efforts to standardize health check requirements between the three regions of Macau, Hong Kong and Guangdong Province are a sign that local and regional officials are working to lift border restrictions.

Authorities in Macau and Guangdong Province have begun rolling back several border crossing restrictions that have been in force since the first quarter. However, a critical requirement for all Guangdong arrivals to undergo mandatory 14-day quarantine remains in effect for the time being. As does a suspension of China's popular Individual Visit Scheme, preferred by the majority of Macau's gamblers.

An easing of local border controls would be a boon for tourism operators in the two special administrative regions, both of which have grown enormously dependent on mainland customers in the past two decades. Hong Kong stands to benefit in particular, as



In this file photo, tourists are seen visiting the Mount Fortress in Macau

many of its tourism operators are still reeling from pro-democracy protests that crippled the city's economy in the second half of last year.

Macau has not reported a new Covid-19 infection in seven weeks, but visitor arrivals and gross gaming revenue – two key indicators of the health of the economy – remain at near-zero levels.

As the local tourism industry closes out its fourth consecutive month without Chinese spending, employers across Macau are beginning to crumble. Stores in the ZAPE area, which rely on a flow of gamblers and other tourists, were seen vacating this month as the government's raft of economic relief measures proved unable to offset high rentals in the city. Meanwhile, despite Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng's appeal for casinos and other gaming-related companies to retain their staff, reports of layoffs at both the top and bottom of these organizations are becoming more common.

For some analysts, a regional travel bubble holds the potential to exploit months of pent-up travel demand across the Greater China region. An influx of Chinese spending could give local merchants the vitality to push through the economic downturn, even if visitor arrivals remain far below their historic levels.

Other regions also see potential in allowing cross-border economic activity to resume within strictly-defined geographical limits. They see travel bubbles as a way to ensure a minimum level of subsistence for tourism operators, while also keeping their citizens and residents safe from Covid-19. Here's what the rest of the world is doing:

BUBBLE IN THE BALTIC

The three Baltic countries of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are nearly a fortnight into their travel bubble experiment with no signs of an emerging second wave of infections.

The Baltic policy allows citizens and residents of the three European Union member states to move freely between one another, but anyone arriving from outside of the zone must self-isolate for 14 days.

The three sparsely-populated countries have fared better than many of their European neighbors, with a combined 4,500 cases and 150 deaths reported to date. On Monday, the trio reported a total of just 15 new cases of confirmed coronavirus infections.

MEDITERRANEAN CORRIDOR

Israel, Greece and Cyprus are in talks to build a travel corridor designed to jumpstart their respective tourism and aviation industries. The three countries reported a combined total of 23 new cases on Monday, with 17 of them in Israel.

While still at the proposal stage, the corridor could be extended to include other candidate countries, such as Georgia, Mon-

tenegro and Seychelles.

Some analysts predict a small-scale pilot project between Israel, Greece and Cyprus could launch as soon as next month, with pre-departure health checks of passengers a likely requirement.

ENTENTE TOURISTIQUE

The United Kingdom and France were briefly in talks to save the summer holidays of millions of their citizens with an “air bridge” proposal that would grant immunity from mandatory quarantine requirements.

But an agreement signed earlier this month between the countries' leaders, Boris Johnson and Emmanuel Macron, implying quarantine immunity for British and French residents, will not proceed as advertised. Dubbed an “entente touristique,” the measure was mainly aimed at truck drivers, according to the British press.

Instead, starting from June, all arrivals to the U.K. will need to undergo mandatory two-week quarantine. France has adopted a reciprocal measure, as per its policy for any European country requiring quarantine for French visitors.

CLOSE TIES DOWN UNDER

Neighbors Australia and New Zealand have been floating a trans-Tasman travel bubble proposal for weeks, though no concrete date has been proffered for its commencement.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern of New Zealand said on Monday that she expects to see Australian state borders re-open before the bubble is established. States and territories in Australia are deciding their own entry requirements, beyond general guidance for everyone to avoid non-essential travel. As of yesterday, border restrictions were in effect in more than half of the country's states and territories.

In the meantime, calls are growing for the travel bubble agreement to be extended to Pacific island nations including Fiji and Vanuatu, where tourism is a key, or even main, pillar of the economy. Both nations have expressed an interest in joining the agreement.

Hong Kong to resume airport transit services from June 1

HONG Kong's Chief Executive, Carrie Lam, said yesterday that transit services at the Hong Kong International Airport would gradually resume from June 1, according to a report by national media outlet China Daily.

Meanwhile, certain entertainment venues will reopen from tomorrow.

As with Macau in March, entertainment facilities were ordered to suspend operations due to the outbreak of Covid-19. Those in Hong Kong were recently given similar orders, but only now are karaoke bars, night clubs, bathhouses and party rooms being given the greenlight to reopen.

Although they will be allowed to resume normal operations, these venues will have to “continue to follow anti-pandemic stipulations,” the national media outlet reported.

The CE's move to ease the restrictions comes as Hong Kong slowly returns to normal after having no new local cases for

11 straight days and as schools are set to resume in phases starting today.

At present passenger transit remains banned in Hong Kong, normally a major air transport hub for the Asia-Pacific region. The Macau International Airport has also suspended transit services.

The resumption of transit services at the Hong Kong airport will not greatly impact Macau, for either people coming or going from the city. This is because when people are travelling in and out of Macau through the neighboring airport, it is considered a land or sea to air connection, not an air-to-

air transit involving passengers alighting one flight and boarding another within the same airport.

As no passenger ferry is currently running between the two Special Administrative Regions, all passengers must enter and leave Hong Kong to travel to Macau, and vice versa. **AL**

WHO warns that first wave of pandemic not over; dampens hopes

ELAINE KURTENBACH & MENELAOS HADJICOSTIS, BANGKOK

AS Brazil and India struggle with surging coronavirus cases, a top health expert is warning that the world is still smack in the middle of the pandemic, dampening hopes for a speedy global economic rebound and renewed international travel.

“Right now, we’re not in the second wave. We’re right in the middle of the first wave globally,” said Dr. Mike Ryan, the World Health Organization’s executive director.

“We’re still very much in a phase where the disease is actually on the way up,” Ryan told reporters, pointing to South America, South Asia and other areas where infections are still on the rise.

India saw a record single-day jump in new cases for the seventh straight day. It reported 6,535 new infections yesterday, raising its total to 145,380, including 4,167 deaths.

The virus has taken hold in some of India’s poorest, most densely populated areas, underscoring the challenges that authorities face in curbing the spread of a virus for which a vaccine or cure isn’t yet in sight.

Most of India’s cases are concentrated in the western states of Maharashtra, home to the financial hub of Mumbai, and Gujarat. Infections have also climbed in the east as migrant workers stranded by lockdowns returned to their native villages from India’s largest cities.

Despite this, India allowed domestic flights to resume Monday following a two-month hiatus, but at a fraction of normal traffic levels.

WHO poured cold water on the hopes of Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro and others of quickly re-opening the economy, warning that authorities must first have enough testing in place to control the spread of the pandemic. Brazil has 375,000 coronavirus infections — second only to the 1.6 million cases in the U.S. — and has counted over 23,000 deaths but many fear Brazil’s true toll is much higher.



Emergency workers transfer an elderly patient, suspected of having Covid-19, to a hospital in Manaus, Brazil

Ryan said Brazil’s “intense” transmission rates means it should keep some stay-at-home measures in place, regardless of the negative impacts on its economy.

“You must continue to do everything you can,” he said.

But Sao Paulo Gov. João Doria has ruled out a full lockdown in Brazil’s largest state economy and plans to start loosening restrictions on June 1.

In Rio de Janeiro, Mayor Marcelo Crivella, an evangelical bishop, designated religious institutions as “essential services” so they could stay open with social distancing rules despite recommendations for people to stay at home and most businesses remaining shut.

A U.S. travel ban was taking effect for foreigners coming from Brazil, moved up two days earlier than its original date. It does not apply to U.S. citizens.

In Europe, the Russian government reported a record daily spike yesterday of 174 deaths, bringing the country’s confirmed death toll to 3,807. Russia’s coronavirus caseload surpassed 360,000 — the third highest in the world — with almost 9,000 new infections registered.

The country’s comparatively low mortality rate has raised questions among experts both in Russia and in the West. Russian officials, however, vehemently deny manipulating any figures and attribute the low numbers to the effectiveness of the country’s lockdown measures.

The question of who can travel where and when remains a dilemma that offi-

cialists still have yet to solve.

Spain’s foreign minister said yesterday that European Union members should commonly agree to open borders and jointly determine which non-EU countries are designated as safe for travel. Arancha González Laya told Cadena SER radio that resuming cross-border travel should be decided collectively even if countries in the 27-nation bloc are phasing out lockdowns at different dates.

“We have to start working with our European partners to retake the freedom of movement in European territories,” she said.

The minister said Spain is eager to welcome tourists to shore up an industry that accounts for 12% of the country’s GDP but plans to do it with “health, sustainability and safety.”

South Korea began requiring people to wear masks on public transit and in taxis. The country is tracing dozens of infections linked to nightclubs and other entertainment venues as it prepares for 2.4 million students to return to school on Wednesday.

But South Korean rights groups have criticized government plans to require some businesses to register customers with smartphone QR codes. They say the country’s technology-driven approach to controlling COVID-19 has increased state surveillance too much.

South Korea’s Health Ministry said beginning in June “high-risk” businesses such as bars, nightclubs, gyms, karaoke rooms and concert halls will be required to use QR codes to register custo-

mers so they could be found more easily when infections occur.

In a joint statement yesterday, groups including privacy watchdog Jinbo Net called the move excessive.

“That’s exactly how we step into a surveillance state,” the statement said.

Tests by a U.S. biotechnology company, Novavax, have begun in Australia with

hopes of releasing a proven vaccine this year. A Novavax executive said 131 volunteers were getting injections in the first phase of the trial to test the vaccine’s safety and effectiveness.

Novavax expects the results of the Australian trial to be known in July.

About a dozen experimental vaccines are in early stages of testing or poised to start, and it’s not clear whether any will prove safe and effective. But they use different methods and technologies, increasing the odds that one might succeed.

“We are in parallel making doses, making vaccine in anticipation that we’ll be able to show it’s working and be able to start deploying it by the end of this year,” Novavax’s research chief, Dr. Gregory Glenn, told a virtual news conference from the company’s headquarters in Maryland.

Meanwhile, WHO said it will temporarily drop hydroxychloroquine — the

malaria drug U.S. President Trump said he is taking — from its global study into experimental COVID-19 treatments.

WHO director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said there would be a “temporary pause” on the hydroxychloroquine arm of its global clinical trial. The announcement came after a paper in the Lancet showed that people taking the drug were at higher risk of death and heart problems.

Still, several countries in Europe and North Africa are using chloroquine and hydroxychloroquine to treat COVID-19 patients. Brazil’s Bolsonaro has ordered an army lab to boost its production of chloroquine.

Other treatments in the WHO study, including the experimental drug remdesivir and an HIV combination therapy, are still being pursued.

Worldwide, the virus has infected nearly 5.5 million people, killing over 346,000, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University. Europe has had about 170,000 deaths and the U.S. has seen nearly 100,000. Experts say the tally understates the real effects of the pandemic due to counting issues in many nations. **AP**

Pré-qualificação de Concurso Público n.º MTRM2/CR-2020/04/002 “Fornecimento de Materiais de Marcação e Prestação de Serviços de Manutenção para a Linha da Taipa do Metro Ligeiro de Macau”

De acordo com a deliberação da Comissão Executiva da MTR, no dia 6 de Maio de 2020, procedemos à pré-qualificação de concurso público para o “Fornecimento de Materiais de Marcação e Prestação de Serviços de Manutenção para a Linha da Taipa do Metro Ligeiro de Macau”.

Os interessados podem exigir, através do envio de email para procurement@mtr.com.mo, até 29 de Maio de 2020, a documentação da pré-qualificação do referido concurso.

Os concorrentes devem enviar, por email, a documentação da pré-qualificação para procurement@mtr.com.mo, antes das 18h do dia 6 de Junho de 2020

25 de Maio de 2020
MTR Operações Ferroviárias (Macau) Sociedade Unipessoal Lda.

Xi seeks victory over Trump in race for a Covid-19 vaccine

PRESIDENT Xi Jinping's government is throwing the might of the Chinese state behind the country's vaccine developers as the world races to make a shot against the coronavirus.

The sheer scale and speed of China's effort ratchets up pressure on the U.S., where President Donald Trump's administration has launched a program called Operation Warp Speed to accelerate vaccine research and development. Xi has promised to share any successful vaccine globally, and the Chinese president would wield immense geopolitical clout if his country produces one of the world's first working shots.

In total, five vaccines developed by Chinese companies are being tested on humans, the most in any country. Beijing has mobilized its health authorities, drug regulators and research institutes to work around the clock with local companies. Communist Party leaders are overseeing some vaccine trials. Government and private equity money has gone into companies like Beijing-based Sinovac Biotech Ltd., which in May began the second stage of testing for its vaccine.

The Chinese efforts were on show late Friday, when an early-stage study published in the medical journal, *The Lancet*, showed that an experimental vaccine from China's CanSino Biologics Inc. was safe and generated an immune response. It's too early to predict the product's eventual success and investors beat down CanSino's stock amid concerns it could have shortcomings.

But the speedy publication in an international journal showed the seriousness of the Chinese efforts. China is also pursuing vaccine candidates using more traditional technologies that are more amenable to mass production.

The Asian country faces stiff competition in the U.K. and U.S., and it

remains difficult to assess which experimental products will work and cross the line first. But the nations with the earliest successful vaccines would gain an important weapon at a time when governments are attempting to emerge out of lockdowns that have fueled severe economic contractions. The virus that caused Covid-19 has already killed about 350,000 worldwide.

China would use any vaccine to show it is a responsible stakeholder in global health, said Nicholas Thomas, associate professor specializing in public health at the City University of Hong Kong. "The question that will then arise is to what extent their holding of the vaccine is used for geopolitical purposes, specifically with the United States."

Xi is attempting to burish his nation's image after global criticism about its early handling of the virus, which first emerged in the Chinese city of Wuhan. He has vowed that the country's vaccines, once approved for use, will become a global public good and accessible to other developing countries. In doing so, he's presented a contrast with Trump, who has threatened to cut off funding to the World Health Organization in a move that could disrupt vaccination and other public health initiatives in poor countries.

While China has boosted its scientific prowess in recent years, it has yet to produce a novel blockbuster drug or vaccine. Its vaccine industry has in past years also been tarnished by a series of scan-

dals involving sub-par production and safety incidents. China's National Medical Products Administration, the nation's drug regulator, didn't immediately comment.

In April, Gao Fu, director of China's Center for Disease Control and Prevention said in an interview with state-run CCTV that the country could have a vaccine ready for emergency use by September and more broadly available for healthy people as soon as early next year.

Globally, data from a slew of companies show how much work remains to be done to produce a working vaccine before companies anywhere in the world can declare victory.

In the U.S., Moderna Inc. has announced early readouts of its Phase I clinical trials, indicating that some of those getting its shot have generated neutralizing antibodies that could potentially prevent infections. Still, after an initial rally its stock has fallen on concerns that the publicly available data isn't enough to draw conclusions about the vaccine's efficacy.

Meanwhile, AstraZeneca Plc received more than \$1 billion in U.S. government funding to develop a Covid-19 vaccine candidate from the University of Oxford, and said it has supply agreements for 400 million doses. The Oxford shot is one of the world's fastest-moving, and AstraZeneca has said it expects to have doses ready as soon as September.

Still, a former Harvard University research scien-

tist, William Haseltine, has said in a blog that results of an animal test of the Oxford vaccine were weaker than those of a vaccine being developed by Sinovac. The Oxford researchers say the comparison isn't suitable for studies carried out with different types of vaccines given in varying doses in monkeys with different levels of infection.

CanSino makes its vaccine using a genetically modified cold-causing virus to carry the genetic material of the novel coronavirus, similar to the approach employed by Oxford.

The research on the CanSino vaccine was conducted in Wuhan and the company has teamed up with Chen Wei, a prominent military researcher. CanSino previously worked with Chen on an Ebola vaccine that was approved for emergency use in 2017.

While the results in the *Lancet* study represent a milestone, they should be interpreted cautiously, Chen said in the report. "The challenges in the development of a Covid-19 vaccine are unprecedented, and the ability to trigger these immune responses does not necessarily indicate that the vaccine will protect humans from Covid-19." Bloomberg Intelligence analyst Sam Fazel said in a research note that the study on the CanSino vaccine was "promising, but no cause for celebration." The data showed shortcomings, including the possibility of older patients having a lower response to the vaccine, he said. **BLOOMBERG**

Chinese Developer	Type of vaccine candidates	Progress
CanSino Biologics Inc. /Institute of Biotechnology, Academy of Military Medical Sciences, China	Adenovirus Type 5 Vector	Phase II
Wuhan Institute of Biological Products, China National Biotech Group	Inactivated	Phase I/II
Beijing Institute of Biological Products, China National Biotech Group	Inactivated	Phase I/II
Sinovac Biotech Ltd	Inactivated	Phase I/II
Institute of Medical Biology, Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences	Inactivated	Phase I

NOTE: PHASE I TRIALS USUALLY STUDY SAFETY IN A SMALL NUMBER OF PATIENTS. PHASE II INVOLVES LARGER HUMAN TESTING.

SOURCE: WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION.

this day in history



1964 LIGHT GOES OUT IN INDIA AS NEHRU DIES

Jawaharlal Nehru, founder of modern India and its current prime minister, has died suddenly at the age of 74.

He was taken ill in the early hours of this morning at his house in New Delhi. He had returned from holiday at a hill station near the capital the previous evening, apparently in reasonable health.

It is believed he suffered a heart attack, and although specialists fought to save him for much of the day, he passed away early this afternoon with his daughter, Indira Gandhi, by his side.

News of his death was broken to the lower house of parliament, the Lok Sabha, at 1400 local time (0830 GMT), by cabinet minister C Subramaniam.

In a broken voice, he told colleagues, "The prime minister is no more. The light is out."

Politicians openly wept as party leaders paid tribute to the man who has led India since independence from Britain 17 years ago.

The news spread quickly through the streets, and thousands of ordinary Indians began to converge on Mr Nehru's mansion in New Delhi.

Within two hours of the announcement, tens of thousands of people had gathered, and truckloads of police took up positions outside the grounds to control the rapidly growing crowd.

Mr Nehru's body was moved from his first-floor bedroom down to a makeshift bier in front of the house.

Then began a long procession which lasted through the rest of the evening and into the night, as nearly 250,000 men, women and children filed past to pay their respects.

The Home Minister, Gulzarilal Nanda, was sworn in as interim prime minister at midnight, although it is being emphasised that the appointment is temporary.

Pandit Nehru had not indicated who he would prefer to succeed him.

When the subject was raised just five days ago at a news conference, he said that although he had given some thought to the suggestion that he should retire, "my lifetime is not ending so very soon."

The man thought most likely to succeed him is Lal Bahadur Shastri, a Minister without Portfolio in Mr Nehru's cabinet with a reputation for moderation. He was a close political confidant of Mr Nehru.

Other possible candidates are Mr Nehru's daughter, Indira Gandhi, and the former finance minister, Morarji Desai.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Lal Shastri emerged as the compromise candidate to succeed Nehru after none of the other contenders could find enough support within the Congress Party. He took office on 9 June 1964, but served for less than two years until he also died of a heart attack in office in January 1966.

Lal Shastri was succeeded by Pandit Nehru's daughter, Indira Gandhi.

This began the long Nehru-Gandhi dynasty which has dominated the top echelons of Indian politics to this day. Jawaharlal Nehru, the son of a lawyer, was a key figure in the struggle for independence from Britain.

He was a confidant of Mahatma Gandhi, and was imprisoned several times.

Independence was finally granted to India in 1947, and Nehru became India's first prime minister.

Over the next 17 years he took India along a socialist path, although he refused to align the country to either the Soviet Union or the United States in the Cold War. Although some of his policies have been discredited in recent years, he remains a legendary and much-loved figure in his country's early history, and is justifiably known as the architect of modern India.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

There may have been some positive changes in your earning ability, and your wallet could be heaving a sigh of relief right about now. Just make sure that you stay ahead of the curve!



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

You're feeling good this morning, which bodes well for the entire day. Add a bit more flirtation and flattery to a few serious conversations and watch what happens.



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

There are some obstacles to overcome before you can get closer to someone you've had your eye on for a while, but those walls are going to start tumbling down soon.



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

Your generosity is legendary, and it could come into play in a big way today. You're going to use it to help lots of people before you even eat your lunch! But putting smiles on faces will make your day.



LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

You're learning to appreciate the fact that when a goal is too easy to attain, it isn't as valuable as something that takes sweat and toil to reach. Don't hesitate to take a more difficult route than everyone else is taking.



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

There's too much at stake for you to just do whatever you feel like doing, whenever you feel like doing it. You need to be a little bit more disciplined than usual now.



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

You'll be a better friend for helping them get over the slight than getting them all riled up about it. Everything can't be completely equitable all the time, and they need to accept that.



SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

Some of the people you'll be dealing with today don't have your same priorities, so you need to double-check their work and make sure they don't have too much authority over group issues.



SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

Let people do what they want while you take care of the work you need to do. Trying to force people to do what you want them to do is a lost cause. Don't waste your energy.



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

You know you need to get a little more disciplined in your life, and today brings a great opportunity for you to find a way to do it without depriving yourself of anything.



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

At first it might look like one of your past mistakes is coming back to haunt you, but don't worry! This close call will pass you by, and you should feel free to keep smiling all day without worry.



PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Your creativity is itching for a new way to express itself, and you might find that new way in the kitchen! Cooking is a wonderful blend of order and chaos, and it lets you really express yourself.

The Born Loser by Chip Sanson



SUDOKU

EASY

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

EASY+

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

MEDIUM

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

HARD

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

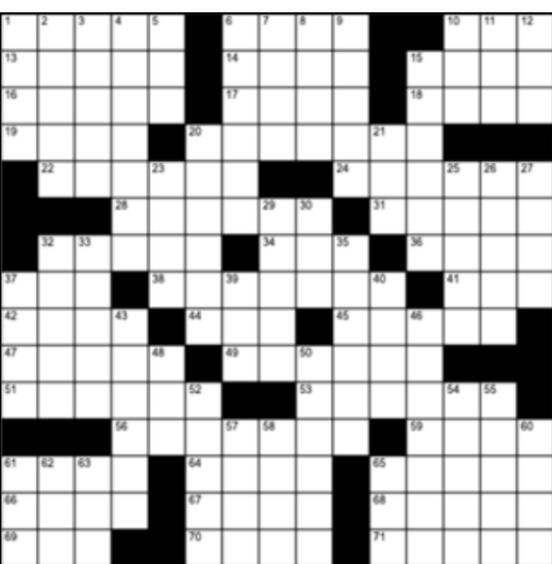
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	14	22	cloudy
Harbin	0	15	cloudy
Tianjin	14	21	overcast
Urumqi	15	26	shower
Xi'an	20	36	cloudy
Lhasa	8	17	cloudy
Chengdu	22	31	drizzle
Chongqing	23	31	drizzle
Kunming	14	27	clear
Nanjing	23	33	cloudy
Shanghai	23	32	clear
Wuhan	23	34	cloudy
Hangzhou	22	35	cloudy
Taipei	23	27	cloudy
Guangzhou	24	34	clear
Hong Kong	25	31	cloudy
WORLD			
Moscow	12	21	drizzle
Frankfurt	6	18	drizzle
Paris	10	19	clear
London	7	15	drizzle
New York	11	25	drizzle

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS: 1- Animal house; 5- School orgs.; 9- Latte spot; 13- Heron, usually white; 15- Like some excuses; 16- Small mountain; 17- Type of ray; 18- Lawyer Dershowitz; 19- Romeo's last words; 20- Madrid Mrs.; 21- Religious recluse; 23- New Orleans university; 25- Lab fluids; 26- Sick; 27- Warship; 30- MSNBC rival; 31- It's a plus; 32- Soft-shell clams; 37- Anna of "Nana"; 38- Oven option; 40- ... saw Elba; 41- Like Russia, geographically; 43- Old newsman; 44- Go wrong; 45- Fetter; 47- Sales incentive; 50- Actress Spelling; 51- Complete; 52- Visage; 53- Barker and Bell; 56- P.M. times; 57- Faucet problem; 59- Nosh; 61- Singer Laine; 62- Tops; 63- ... bleu; 64- Small gull; 65- Cravings; 66- For whom the bell tolls;

DOWN: 1- Staying power; 2- Petri dish gelatin; 3- "The Joy of Cooking" author Rombauer; 4- Sleep stage; 5- Two-dimensional; 6- Confer; 7- Doctor's org.; 8- Lookout; 9- Hot stuff; 10- Actor Quinn; 11- Throw with force; 12- Gen. Robert ...; 14- Least feral; 22- Metal-bearing mineral; 24- Radius neighbor; 25- City in Tuscany; 26- Broadway opening; 27- Portfolio; 28- Queue after Q; 29- Manipulator; 32- Trinity member; 33- Paris "thanks"; 34- Actor Estrada; 35- Winder for holding flexible material; 36- Foal's father; 38- The date on which a person is born; 39- Hard to find; 42- Wet septet; 43- Fondle; 45- The ear's "stirrup"; 46- Ad ...; 47- Long arm; 48- Go into; 49- North American buffalo; 51- Truth; 52- Helsinki resident; 53- Speed ratio; 54- Farm measure; 55- ...Ball; 58- School of the future?; 60- Writer Hentoff;



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



FOR SALE

Manhattan D unit, High Floor
HK\$17,980,000 2,305 ft² 4 1/2 2 1/2

FOR RENT

Manhattan Apartment, Taipa
\$19,800/mth 1,626 ft² 3 1/2 2 1/2

FOR SALE

- [Taipa] Hoi Wan Garden 2 1/2 1 1/2
900 ft² \$4,900,000 (ref: 19106003)
- [Coloane] Hellene Gardens 1 1/2 3 1/2 2 1/2
1,663 ft² \$8,200,000 (ref: 19025577)
- [Taipa] Taipa Village (2 units) 4 1/2 2 1/2
1,404 ft² \$8,380,000 (ref: 19096006)
- [Macau] Seaview Garden 3 1/2 2 1/2
1,420 ft² \$10,900,000 (ref: 20016004)

FOR RENT

- [Taipa] Traditional Apartment 2 1/2 1 1/2
600 ft² \$9,900/mth (ref: n/a)
- [Coloane] Grand Coloane Resort 1 1/2 1 1/2
710 ft² \$10,000/mth (ref: 20021002)
- [Macau] One Central 2 1/2 2 1/2
1,269 ft² \$25,000/mth (ref: n/a)
- [Taipa] Great View Apartment 4 1/2 2 1/2
2,060 ft² \$28,000/mth (ref: 20031001)

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RICH CHINESE SNAPPING UP LUXURY HOMES FROM SINGAPORE TO SYDNEY

RICH Chinese home buyers are back.

Across China and in some of their familiar hunting grounds in Asia, wealthy buyers are snapping up luxury housing, in many cases to guard their wealth against anticipated inflation and a weakening yuan. The rush to add real estate has led to a jump in upmarket housing prices in China, while offering some support for Asian property markets hit hard by the pandemic.

"It's been flat-out," said Monika Tu, founder of Black Diamondz, an Australian company that caters to Chinese buyers of luxury real estate.

Since March, Tu has sold AUD85 million (\$55 million) of prime property, with about half the sales to Chinese clients who were in Australia when the pandemic hit. That's a 25% jump from earlier in the year. The homes, priced between AUD7.25 million and AUD19.5 million, are all in Sydney's well-heeled, ocean-front suburbs such as Point Piper.

A gradual easing of virus restrictions is making it easier for wealthy Chinese to view properties and complete purchases in nearby Asian hot spots like Shanghai, Seoul and Sydney. In another favorite Singapore, virtual tours and photos have been enough to seal multi-million dollar deals, pointing to how transactions are evolving. That's in contrast to London and New York where real estate remains sluggish amid lockdowns.

Chinese buyer inquiries for South Korean property increased 180% in the first quarter compared with the fourth quarter of 2019, while inquiries on New Zealand homes jumped 75%, according to data from Juwai Iqi, a real estate



The city skyline of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (left) and Singapore's Marina Barrage (right)

firm. Searches dropped 32% in the U.K. and 18% in the U.S.

Foreigners can only buy new homes in Australia, though the very rich can get around these restrictions by applying for "significant investor" visas, which give them an easy path to residency, allowing them to buy existing real estate as well.

The high-end demand is bolstering prices in China and tempering declines in other markets. Prices for top-end homes in the four biggest Chinese cities rose 1% in April, led by the biggest jump in two years in the tech hub of Shenzhen.

Even in Singapore, where a partial lockdown remains in place, activity is picking up via online platforms. Three Chinese clients bought six apartments worth a combined S\$20 million (\$11 million) at Marina One Residences this month without any virtual tours, said Clarence Foo, a property agent with APAC Realty Ltd.'s unit ERA. One investor spent about S\$12 million on three separate three-bedroom units in the same development, a five-minute walk to the iconic Marina Bay

Sands hotel and casino.

"Some buyers may want to divert their funds to other countries as the yuan may be devalued further to combat the weakening of their economy," said Christine Sun, the head of research and consultancy at OrangeTee & Tie Pte in Singapore.

Hong Kong used to be a favored destination due to its proximity to mainland China and fewer market restrictions. But the pro-democracy protests have prompted many rich Chinese to turn to Singapore as an alternative, undeterred by the higher taxes. Hong Kong luxury home prices dropped 4.5% in the first quarter, double the decline in Singapore. The new security proposal from Beijing last week has led to more concerns about capital flight, sparking a sell off in Hong Kong stocks and the dollar Friday.

"They view Singapore's property market as a safe haven because of its stability. It's a more regulated market compared to say Hong Kong," ERA's Foo said.

Outside Asia's major financial centers, inquiries are also rising. Malaysian real estate agent

Zulkhairi Anwar, who specializes in luxury properties at Azmi & Co., conducted viewings this month with two Chinese nationals looking at apartments and bungalows in the \$2 million to \$5 million range in the capital Kuala Lumpur.

The potential Chinese buyers, who stayed in Malaysia when countries started to close their borders, began viewing properties after Malaysia eased restrictions, said Zulkhairi. He's confident the spark of interest will last.

"I don't think the pandemic would deter the Chinese from coming back," Zulkhairi said. "Malaysia appeals to them because there's a substantial local Chinese population here, making it easier for them to integrate, and our luxury properties are still cheaper than the likes of Singapore."

Affluent Chinese buyers are also starting to shop at home, where lockdowns began gradually lifting two months ago.

Homes priced at about 20 million yuan (\$2.8 million) in the country's biggest cities have emerged as among the most popular since April, when authorities started to ease credit to help revive the

economy, according to China Real Estate Information Corp.

In Shenzhen, developers sold a record number of luxury residences last month, according to Landz Realtor, which tracks high-end sales. BayHouse, a project in the free-trade zone of Qianhai, sold its 135 units for at least \$3 million each. Demand flared up so quickly that an initial promotion with a free opt-out clause was dropped.

In Shanghai, demand exceeded supply by fivefold for \$2.4 million apartments at the Oriental Garden project south of the Bund waterfront promenade. Green Residence, in an upscale ex-pat community, sold out within a day even though buyers were only allowed to view mock-up houses online.

"These buyers are adding haven assets through real estate as the economy slows and inflation rises," said Yang Kewei, a research director at the China real estate agency. "They either think that property is the best hedge against inflation in China, or assume that authorities will eventually loosen property curbs to prop up the economy." **BLOOMBERG**

CORPORATE BITS

MGM attains major global and regional HR awards

Casino operator MGM's work in talent development and human resources has once again been recognized both regionally and globally, with the institution receiving several awards from four renowned institutions in the first five months of 2020.

The accolades include the global BEST Award from the Association of Talent Development (ATD), three awards from Guangdong HR Management Association, two from China Training Magazine and one from Human Resources Director Asia.

Ms. Wendy Yu, Executive Vice President of Human Resources of MGM, as well as the winner of "HR Pioneer Award" of South China HR Excellence Award, expressed her gratitude for the award, according to a statement from MGM.

"MGM has always strived to provide the most ideal working environment and resources for our team members, and they are motivated to unleash their full potential and achieve their career aspirations," said Yu. "All of these awards attest to our dedication to providing maximum develop-

ment opportunities for team members, particularly local staff, to prepare them for the challenges ahead."

In addition, Francis Tan, Vice President of Learning and Talent Management of MGM, was among the 12 regional stellar HR professionals on the Human Resources Director Asia Hot List 2020. This annual award recognizes HR leaders in Asia who have showcased their commendable dedication to the HR field, and who have demonstrated their dedication to enhancing HR's reputation both within their organizations and the wider industry.



MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

Branson's Virgin Orbit fails on first rocket launch attempt

JOHN ANTCAZAK, LOS ANGELES

RICHARD Branson's Virgin Orbit failed yesterday [Macau time] in its first test launch of a new rocket carried aloft by a Boeing 747 and released over the Pacific Ocean off the coast of Southern California.

The inaugural launch had appeared to be going well until moments after the rocket was dropped from beneath the left wing of the jumbo jet dubbed Cosmic Girl.

"We've confirmed a clean release from the aircraft. However, the mission terminated shortly into the flight. Cosmic Girl and our flight crew are safe and returning to base," Virgin Orbit said in its official Twitter commentary on the launch.

There was no immediate word on what went wrong with the rocket, which carried a test satellite.

Will Pomerantz, Virgin Orbit's vice president for special projects, commented during a preflight briefing Saturday that about half of first rocket launches fail.

AP PHOTO



A Virgin Orbit Boeing 747-400 aircraft named Cosmic Girl prepares to land back at Mojave Air and Space Port in the desert north of Los Angeles

"History is not terribly kind, necessarily, to maiden flights," he said.

Chief Executive Officer Dan Hart said during the briefing that there had been numerous tests, discussions and introspection to verify that the system was ready.

"In the end the questions are always, has everything been thought about and are there any gaps or seams, and those are the ques-

tions you only learn when you commit to flight," Hart said.

The highly modified jumbo jet took off from Mojave Air and Space Port in the desert north of Los Angeles and flew out just beyond the Channel Islands, where the drop occurred.

The rocket was supposed to fall for a few seconds before the first of its two stages ignited and hurtled it down the coast toward

the South Pole for insertion of its demonstration payload into a low Earth orbit.

The purpose of the flight was to gather data on every step of the launch process rather than to have a useful satellite in orbit; the demonstration payload was described as an inert mass and the intended orbit was very low to avoid contributing to the problem of space junk.

The attempt followed five years of development of the 70-foot-long (21.3 meter) LauncherOne rocket.

How long the setback will affect the company was not immediately clear. It has six additional rockets under construction in its factory.

"The team's already hard at work digging into the data, and we're eager to hop into our next big test ASAP," the company tweeted. "Thankfully, instead of waiting until after our 1st flight to tackle our 2nd rocket, we've already completed a ton of work to get us back in the air and keep moving forward."

A successful launch by Virgin Orbit would have marked a dramatic step in getting back on track after the coronavirus pandemic sent most employees home earlier this year while work spaces, procedures and mission control were adjusted.

Virgin Orbit is targeting the market for launching satellites ranging in size from toasters to household refrigerators.

The time is right for the small satellite launch market, Hart said on Saturday.

Technology advancements have enabled satellites much smaller than traditional payloads to do "real work" in space, typically from low Earth orbit, and for markets ranging from commercial to national security, he said. AP

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OPINION

World Views

Faye Flam, Bloomberg

**THE MORE COVID-19
 VACCINES, THE MERRIER**

The way the Covid-19 crisis ends is with vaccines — not a vaccine. More than one horse can win this race. Some of us might end up getting a shot of a more traditional vaccine, which uses parts of an inactivated virus to stimulate immunity. Others might get vaccines based on emerging technologies that use synthetic versions of the virus's genetic code.

One such novel candidate, based on RNA and made by Moderna, showed promising results in early human trials, though critics warned the evidence is preliminary. Meanwhile, a different prototype based on DNA made headlines for an experiment that showed it worked in monkeys.

In the end, some vaccines might be extremely effective but harder to scale; others the opposite. Even a less-effective vaccine might work well enough to provide herd immunity in a wider population. Other vaccines might be more appropriate for health care workers, who have to risk exposure on the job, and need protection as soon as possible.

Scientists have created more than 70 vaccine candidates so far. "If we end up with two, three, or four vaccines, that's good, since we have seven billion people," says Harvard vaccine researcher Dan Barouch, who led the development of one of the vaccines featured in recent news. His group began working on a vaccine in January, after the virus started spreading in China.

There are good reasons for him and other scientists to be optimistic. "For Covid-19, it's clear most humans who get infected recover ... that alone shows the human immune system can eliminate the virus," he says. That makes it a much easier target than HIV, which he calls unprecedented in the history of vaccinology for its ability to evade the immune system. And the SARS-Cov2 virus doesn't have the fast mutation rate that makes flu viruses a moving target.

Art Krieg, a physician and founder of Checkmate Pharmaceuticals, says he's very optimistic that because the human immune system can successfully battle the virus, so will one or more of the many experimental vaccines.

All vaccines have to provide a danger signal to "prime" the immune system into acting against an invader. In 1995, Krieg reported the discovery one of these danger signals — called CpG DNA — which has been used in several vaccines, including one for hepatitis B, and is in some of the experimental candidates against the virus that causes Covid-19.

Next, the vaccine has to mimic the invader in order to get the immune system to create specific antibodies that target the intended enemy. Vaccine designers using genetic material (DNA or RNA) have to stimulate the immune system enough to generate those antibodies, but not so much that the immune system destroys the vaccine before it can complete its mission.

DNA and RNA aren't our only options. Yet another vaccine concept, made by Dynavax, uses the spike protein itself and stimulates the immune system using a synthetic DNA danger signal — the CpG DNA. These protein-based vaccines would have to be produced in bulk in fermentation vats, which Krieg says is something the biotech industry is equipped to do.

Krieg says all the novel vaccines work through the same well-established scientific principles, and are very likely to be safe. Still, he says, it's well known that vaccines don't work as well in the elderly and immunocompromised. Imperfect vaccines could still eradicate the virus through herd immunity but only if the bulk of the population gets vaccinated. Once the technical hurdles are overcome, there will be social hurdles — already, there are movements among anti-vaxxers to resist — but it's not too soon to plan to surmount them.

Barouch says the ordinarily competitive nature of science has changed, as everyone understands how much is at stake in terms of lives and economic damage. In retrospect, critics might be able to criticize approaches that didn't work, but right now, we need all the ideas we can get.

[Abridged]

A junior British government minister quit yesterday over Prime Minister Boris Johnson's failure to fire his top aide for allegedly breaching coronavirus lockdown rules.

Johnson has stood by Dominic Cummings over his decision to drive 250 miles to his parents' house at the end of March, despite a national order for people to remain at home. Cummings says he traveled so that extended family could care for his 4-year-old son if he and his wife, who both had suspected coronavirus infections, fell ill.

But many Britons say Cummings made a mockery of the sacrifices

of people who followed the rules to stop the spread of the disease, even when it meant staying away from loved ones.

Scotland Minister Douglas Ross said in a resignation letter that "the vast majority of people" didn't agree with Cummings.

Senior police officers said Cummings' interpretation of the rules made it harder to enforce the lockdown, and scientists said it could undermine messaging about the importance of social distancing.

Johnson has stood staunchly by his adviser, saying Cummings "followed the instincts of every father and every parent."

**HONG KONG BRACES FOR
 DOWNTOWN PROTESTS
 ON CHINA-BACKED LAWS**

AP PHOTO



Hong Kong is bracing for what could be its biggest day of protests in months, with pro-democracy groups calling for a general strike against China's latest moves to increase control of the city.

Protests are planned for today near the Legislative Council building in central Hong Kong, where lawmakers plan to hold a hearing on a bill that would criminalize disrespect toward China's national anthem. They are also fighting against China's plans to impose a national security law that opponents fear will curtail essential freedoms and criticism of the Communist Party.

The Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions, which represents 145,000 members, has called for a general strike. More than a dozen high school student groups have also issued a joint statement urging their peers - newly returned to campuses following months of closures induced by the coronavirus - to strike.

The Communist Party "is blatantly targeting Hong Kong people's revolution in the past year, spelling an end to the people's democratic autonomy and freedom of expression," they said in the statement, which was shared on the Facebook page of leading activist Joshua Wong's pro-democracy group, Demosisto. "Hong Kong students will not be able to speak freely in the future and instead be

scrutinized for every word and be at risk of incarceration."

Hong Kong's police force has readied 3,500 riot officers in anticipation of the protests, local Cable TV reported, citing unidentified people. Television footage showed newly added metal and water-filled barricades near the city's legislature, Central Government Offices and People's Liberation Army garrison building.

Chen Daoxiang, commander of the PLA garrison in Hong Kong, said

**Chen Daoxiang,
 commander of
 the PLA garrison
 in Hong Kong,
 said that the army
 'firmly' upheld
 the NPC's plan**

yesterday that the army "firmly" upheld the NPC's plan.

The decision "shows our firm determination in safeguarding the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity," Chen said in an interview with China's official military news site. "The garrison will firmly implement China's decisions and plans, comprehensively implement the 'one country, two systems' principle and discharge defense duties in accordance to the law."

The fresh round of protests comes days after Beijing announced it would bypass Hong Kong's legisla-

ture to implement national security legislation banning subversion, secession, terrorism and foreign interference in the former British colony. Key details about the bill remain unclear.

Reuters, citing unidentified people familiar with the matter, said Tuesday the legislation is set to block foreign judges in Hong Kong from handling national security trials. Central and city government security agencies would also set up in Hong Kong as part of the legislation, which is subject to change and expected before Hong Kong legislative elections in September, the report said.

Despite criticism from foreign governments, Chief Executive Carrie Lam defended the security law yesterday, asserting that local residents supported it. She said it was untrue that the new measure would ban street protests or calls for her dismissal, and pledged that Hong Kong's freedoms would be preserved. She said earlier this month that the anthem bill would get priority in the city's legislature.

"We are a very free society, so for the time being, people have the freedom to say whatever they want to say," she told reporters. "Hong Kong's vibrancy and core values in terms of the rule of law, the independence of the judiciary, the various rights and freedoms enjoyed by people will continue to be there." **BLOOMBERG**

Indonesia will deploy 340,000 security personnel to enforce health protocols as the world's fourth most populous nation prepares to reopen its economy. Soldiers and police will be stationed in 1,800 locations such as markets, public transportation, malls and tourist spots. Large-scale social restrictions are expected to end in Jakarta on June 4.

AP PHOTO



South Korean rights groups have criticized government plans to require some businesses to register their customers with smartphone QR codes as part of new anti-virus measures. They say the country's technology-driven approach to Covid-19 has reached a point where an increase in state surveillance powers is a legitimate concern.

AP PHOTO



The Czech Republic. Hungary and Slovakia are set to start reopening their borders for their citizens to travel. The Czech Republic and Slovakia announced a deal for their citizens to travel across their common border and not to face a mandatory quarantine and tests for the coronavirus if they return in 48 hours. The measure will become effective today.

AP PHOTO



Britain's medicines agency has authorized the use of the experimental drug remdesivir for Covid-19 patients, in a move that may shorten the time some patients spend in the hospital. Clinical trials testing the antiviral to determine whether or not it is effective are still under way globally, but initial results have suggested it can speed up the recovery time for people infected with the new coronavirus.