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Novel Coronavirus Response
and Coordination Centre

MacauDaily 澳門每日時報® Times

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**CHARITY ORGANIZATIONS ARE
TAKING STEPS INTO THE DIGITAL
REALM TO COPE WITH FUNDRAISING
DIFFICULTIES DURING COVID-19**

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**ORIANA PUN, BRUNO NUNES
DEPART LAWYERS ASSOCIATION
BOARD HINTING AT DISCORD**

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**THE COURT OF FINAL APPEAL IS LATE
TO RESPOND TO AN APPEAL FILED
BY LAWMAKER AU KAM SAN ON THE
BANNED TIANANMEN VIGIL**

P7

AP PHOTO



China yesterday announced two new cases of coronavirus, both from abroad. No new deaths were reported and just 73 people remained in treatment, while another 518 remain under isolation and observation for either suspected of having the virus or testing positive without showing any symptoms. China has reported a total of 4,634 deaths from Covid-19 among 82,995 cases.

South Korea yesterday reported its biggest jump in coronavirus cases in more than 50 days, a resurgence that health officials warn is getting harder to track and risks erasing some of the nation's hard-won gains. 67 of the 79 new cases reported were from the Seoul metropolitan area. The government decided to shut public facilities such as parks, museums and state-run theaters in the metropolitan area over the next two weeks to slow the spread of the virus.

AP PHOTO



India yesterday reported more than 6,500 new virus cases, another single day record. The surge comes as Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government prepares a new set of guidelines to be issued this weekend, possibly extending a two-month lockdown in the worst-hit areas while also allowing some economic activity. The Health Ministry also reported another 194 deaths, bringing the country total to 4,531.

More on backpage



QUEEN PANSY

takes the helm of
a family empire
in dire straits

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**AUTONOMY IN PERIL
CHINA VOTED
TO RULE OVER
HONG KONG**

AP PHOTO



P10-11

Death of Macau's King of Gambling gives

ABOUT an hour after the death of Stanley Ho, the billionaire who built the Chinese territory of Macau into the world's biggest gambling hub, his large clan gathered in front of the Hong Kong Sanatorium & Hospital to break the news. They were also there to send a clear message of unity.

The 98-year-old tycoon fathered 16 recognized children with four women he considered wives. Outside the hospital in front of cameras and journalists, it was Pansy Ho - the 57-year-old eldest daughter of his second wife - who was given the honor of announcing his passing as they flanked her.

Ho, a former socialite, is already chairman of one of Macau's biggest conglomerates and co-chairman of casino operator MGM China Holdings Ltd., having become her father's favored successor years ago.

With the death of the trailblazer who catapulted Macau past Las Vegas to become the world's gambling epicenter, the pressure is now on her to unite the interests behind the Ho family's \$15 billion fortune, rejuvenate an aging casino franchise and lead the empire through the coronavirus pandemic that's caused gambling revenue to plunge by more than 90%.

And with a fractious family held in check only by a delicate balance of power, Ho will need to chart a careful path forward.

"While Stanley was alive, things were in limbo - it would have been disrespectful for someone to take the helm," said Ben Lee, Macau-based managing partner at gaming consultancy IGamiX. "Now that he has gone, what we'll ultimately see is one person leading a reincarnated Ho empire. This paves the way for Pansy."

A MACAU FAMILY

A significant new alliance created last year gave Pansy Ho and her allies control over the family's core casino franchise, SJM Holdings Ltd. None of the other children or three surviving wives have publicly contested the agreement, though investors and analysts remain wary of internal tensions.

Shares of SJM fell as much as 4.8% in Hong Kong yesterday,



Handover: Pansy Ho between the founding fathers of modern Macau, Stanley Ho and Edmund Ho (no relation), at the opening ceremony of the MGM Grand Macau.

after rising 7.6% in the two days after Ho's death.

With her father's passing, Pansy Ho is now expected to consolidate control over a complicated network of business interests, which include 20 casinos under SJM's umbrella, the Chinese arm of American casino operator MGM Resorts International, and even the ferry and helicopter routes that link Macau and Hong Kong.

That would be a challenge in boom times. But Macau is now in the midst of a historic free-fall due to the pandemic, with basically empty casinos losing more than \$1 million a day.

Gaming revenue plummeted by a record 97% last month compared with the same period a year ago, and a recovery is un-

likely as long as virus containment measures prevent Chinese travelers - the enclave's lifeblood - from entering the territory.

With the outbreak seemingly curbed in mainland China, Macau and Hong Kong, analysts are hoping that border and visa restrictions will be eased starting next month, followed by a summer recovery.

But with casinos now desperate to regain lost ground, competition will be fiercer than ever, and SJM had already been losing market share to more dynamic operators before the pandemic.

The industry will try to relaunch in a slow reopening that may start with a "travel bubble" of tourists to ease movement between Macau and neighboring Hong Kong and China's Guang-

dong province, as reported this week by Macau Daily Times.

SMALLER PIE

SJM's complex division of power - holdings are split between three branches of the family, including Pansy's - has made it slower-moving than rivals and it's steadily lost market share. It was the last among Macau's six operators to build a casino on the territory's swanky Cotai strip and has had to delay the opening of that new project, the \$5 billion Grand Lisboa Palace, to March next year from end-2020.

Internal maneuvering is also a constant distraction. Angela Leong, Ho's fourth and latest wife who's seen as a competitor to Pansy, holds an 8% stake

in the holding company that controls SJM, a possible future flash-point.

In 2018, Daisy Ho, Pansy's sister from Ho's second wife, joined SJM as chairman. At 55, she's the youngest board director and came with no casino experience, leading many to presume that she's allied with Pansy, said Lee of IGamiX.

SJM has an "entrenched management" and is steeped in "dysfunction" trying to placate various interests, wrote Sanford C. Bernstein analyst Vitaly Umansky in a note Tuesday.

Investors are now looking to SJM's June 9 annual general meeting - where four incumbent board members including Angela Leong are seeking re-election - for any signs of brewing division.

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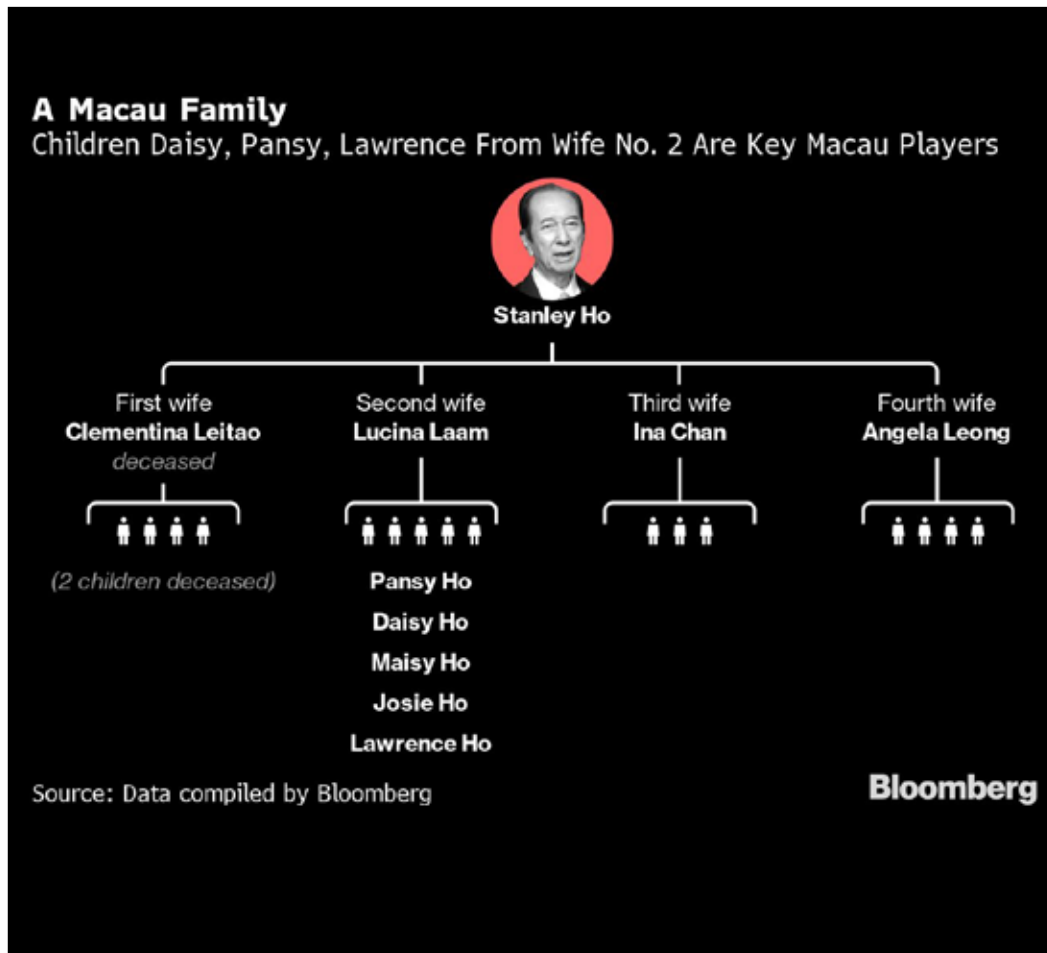
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empire reins to daughter



Stanley Ho in December 2007



Lawrence Ho, the brother

alliances with other shareholders in order to get rid of her known fierce internal enemies and get control of the board.”

The second generation will also face challenges in managing the empire as Stanley Ho’s political and business connections may not pass on to his children.

“It is of utmost importance for the new leader of the Ho group to identify new sources of competitive advantage and transform its business and managerial teams that can no longer depend on Ho’s legacy,” said Joseph Fan, a professor at the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

THE BROTHER

Representatives at Shun Tak Holdings Ltd., a conglomerate Pansy Ho is chairman of, didn’t respond to requests for comment on plans for the family’s various businesses. A spokesperson for SJM also didn’t immediately respond to a request for comment.

Lawrence Ho, chairman of another Macau casino franchise, Melco Resorts & Entertainment, and Pansy’s brother, is another potential competitor. He has said he is focused on building his own brand, which is expanding to the Philippines and seeking a resort license in Japan, and stays out of family succession issues. But his high profile and solo business success has meant that some see him as a dark horse in the family race.

“The role of Lawrence is one of the unanswered questions on how the future will look,” said Carlos Lobo, a gaming consultant and Macau lawyer who’s advised the government. “I just don’t see how he fits in such a solution of Pansy being at the helm.”

Although the last public family spat over business control was in 2011 - Stanley Ho accused family members of trying to take over his stake and sued - other smaller disputes are ongoing.

Still, Pansy Ho has earned credibility and respect within the industry and the reins are hers to lose, say analysts.

Educated in the U.S, she has experience managing casinos as well as insight into the tourism, property and transportation industries of the region via her work at Shun Tak, another family business. The company controls ferry and helicopter services between Macau and Hong Kong.

She’s also responsible for striking an alliance with MGM, the American casino operator, whose franchise in Macau operates under a sub-concession under SJM’s primary concession.

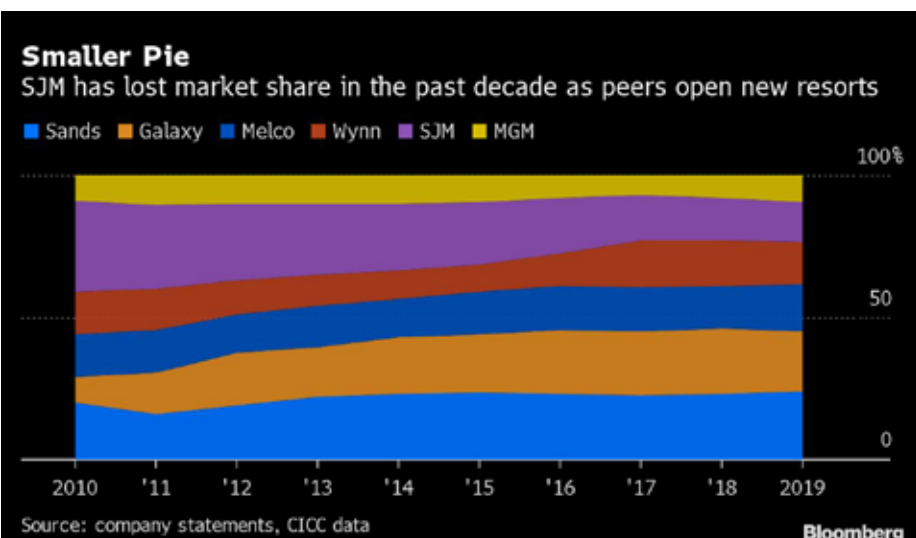
Gaming law dictates that a shareholder who holds a 5% share or more in one gaming concession is not allowed to hold more than 5% in another operator, which means that Pansy will need to step away from MGM China if she consolidates control over SJM.

At MGM China, Ho has put her “impeccable taste” into the resort’s interior design, said Jim Murren, former MGM Resorts International chief executive officer. He hinted that people may underestimate her.

“People don’t have the full picture of Pansy, of her having tremendous business insight,” Murren said. “She’s fearless, she’s an incredibly intense business person.”

The coming months will likely see the family make public its full plan for the empire’s various businesses, which should have allocations for every branch of the Ho family tree, said IGamiX’s Lee.

“It looks like family members have realized that the in-fighting that occurred several years ago wouldn’t benefit any of them individually or collectively,” said Lee. “Having someone strong like Pansy with the ability to reignite the empire would benefit all of them.” **MDT/BLOOMBERG**



Who Has Holdings in SJM?

The company is one of Asia’s oldest gambling businesses

Direct/indirect interest in SJM (%)

Second wife and children	14.3
Third wife and children	8.6
Fourth wife and children	11.8

Source: Company filings

Note: Calculations of indirect interest are based on STDN’s 54.11% stake in SJM

Bloomberg

TAIPA MARKET TO BE CLOSED ON JUNE 1 FOR RENOVATIONS

The Taipa Village Municipal Market will be temporarily closed on June 1 from 11 a.m. before reopening on June 2 from 7 a.m., the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) has advised in a statement. The closure is necessary to accommodate ongoing renovation work that includes the installation of a brand-new electricity network in the market building. During the same period, sellers will be allowed to install temporary sales stalls outside the market building to continue operating from 11 a.m. on June 1 until midnight on June 3. The IAM reported in the statement that during the period the market's public toilet facilities will remain open.

BABY WIPE PRODUCTS FOUND TO CONTAIN ALLERGENICS

The Macau Consumer Council and the Zhuhai Consumer Council have together found allergenic preservatives in five different samples of wet baby wipes, the former revealed in an official statement. To meet the objective of gradually merging consumption behaviors of consumers in the Greater Bay Area, the two organizations jointly sampled wet baby wipes sold on each of their markets. Ten brands available in Macau and 21 labels sold in Zhuhai were sampled. All samples showed satisfactory pH levels, ranging between 3.6 and 7.2. Mainland China requires the concerned product's pH levels to be between 3.5-8.5. The pH of newborn babies' skin is approximately 6.5. Currently, the two types of preservatives widely used in cosmetics and considered highly sensitizing are MIT and CMIT. A high concentration of either one may cause discomfort, such as itching or a rash on the skin. This joint test found that three products in Zhuhai and two from Macau contain MIT, although the dosages were all below China's maximum MIT concentration of 100 ppm.

MACAU DELEGATION STRONGLY ENDORSES MAINLAND JUSTICE

THE Macau delegation of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) has endorsed mainland China's justice system, in particular the Supreme People's Court of China as well as the Supreme People's Procuratorate of China.

According to a statement released by the Liaison Office in Macau, the Macau CPPCC members showed their support for the two work reports recently issued by the two highest juridical institutions of mainland China.

The two reports contain summarized statistics of Mainland China's prosecution affairs and court affairs over the course of the past decades. Both documents emphasised that their purpose was to provide judicial services to ensure mainland China's goal of completely eliminating poverty by 2020.

Macau delegates, including Lao Ngai Leong, Chui Sai Peng, and Kou Hoi In, among others from the local business and politics sectors, acknowledged the two orga-



nizations' services to justice.

Lao Ngai Leong, a prominent businessman from Macau's construction and real estate sector, said that "the two reports [...] are rigorous and objective, and reflect the determination and confidence to keep the last shred of defense of justice and fairness."

The chairman of the Legislative Assembly (AL), Kou Hoi In, also described the

mainland court and prosecution authority as a just organization serving the people.

"The court promotes righteousness and wins popular support from the people through trial and law enforcement," said Lok Po, director of Macao Daily News.

Nonetheless, Lam Sio Wan, Si Ka Lon and other CPPCC Macau members presented their proposals to Beijing relating to the im-

provement of the mainland's judicial work. Lam, a local lawyer, asked for increased protection for judges, prosecutors and lawyers. In turn, Sio Chi Wai, a local businessman and former lawmaker, urged the further protection of underage citizens. Currently, lawmaker Si Ka Lon hopes that the mainland can enhance works in the aim of developing a corruption-free government. **JZ**

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

NATIONAL SECURITY LEGISLATION FOR HKSAR: A FUNDAMENTAL GUARANTEE FOR THE LONG-TERM SMOOTH IMPLEMENTATION OF 'ONE COUNTRY, TWO SYSTEMS'

On 28 May, the third session of the 13th National People's Congress (NPC) of the People's Republic of China passed the "Decision on Establishing and Improving the Legal Systems and Implementation Mechanisms for Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region" with an overwhelming majority of votes. It is in accordance with the trend of history, and it is what the greater national interests entail and what all Chinese people aspire for. The Decision, which is of great significance and far-reaching influence, fully reflects the central government's strong will and firm determination to safeguard national security and demonstrates the resolute defense of and utmost care for the overall interests of Hong Kong and the fundamental well-being of Hong Kong compatriots.

To safeguard national security is an essential part of the "one country, two systems" principle. Without national security, there will be neither lasting peace and stability for China nor long-

-term prosperity and stability for Hong Kong. "One country, two systems" will also lose its very foundation. At a time when national security in Hong Kong SAR faces a real threat and gets seriously undermined, and when it becomes clear that the SAR government can hardly complete the required legislation by itself, the NPC has no choice but to come forward and act decisively at the State level to establish and improve a legal framework and enforcement mechanism for safeguarding national security in Hong Kong. It is a timely and necessary move to plug the legal loopholes and put in place the relevant enforcement mechanism for safeguarding national security in Hong Kong. The Decision makes every sense and can stand up to scrutiny.

In all countries, unitary and federal alike, only the State legislature has the legislative power on issues concerning national security. Article 23 of the Basic Law of the Hong Kong SAR is a special arrangement made pursuant to "one country, two systems". It

does not change the fact that only the State legislature has the legislative power on issues concerning national security. The central government has the primary and ultimate responsibility for national security in all its administrative regions. It also enjoys and exercises all necessary power accordingly. This is the basic theory and principle of national sovereignty, and an established practice followed by countries in the world.

According to China's Constitution and the Basic Law of the Hong Kong SAR, safeguarding national sovereignty, security and development interests is the shared responsibility and statutory obligation of all Chinese, Hong Kong compatriots included. National security legislation for the Hong Kong SAR aims to deter and punish the few "Hong Kong independence" elements and perpetrators of violence seeking to endanger national security. It will serve to protect the overwhelming majority of law-abiding Hong Kong residents. The NPC decision is an example of the rule-of-law principle. It is made for Hong

Kong residents to better enjoy and exercise their statutory rights and freedoms.

Over the past week, people of all sectors in Macao have expressed firm support and spoke highly of the decision of the NPC. They are proud of the prosperity and stability in Macao, and believe that the hard-won situation deserves to be cherished. Some foreign nationals residing in Macao pointed out that the legislation move by the NPC is a strong response to the repeated challenges to the bottom line of the rule-of-law in the Hong Kong SAR. These all demonstrate that the legislation is what people long for.

Since Macao's return to the motherland, people in Macao have wholeheartedly supported the "one country, two systems" principle, recognizing it as the best institutional arrangement to ensure Macao's long-term prosperity and stability. It has become the consensus of the entire society that safeguarding national security is an important and fundamental prerequisite to guarantee its stability and development. As a city of frequent exchan-

ges with the world and an international free port highly dependent on the outside, Macao has been consolidating the foundations of "one country" and at the same time enjoying the benefits of "two systems". Macao is now one of the world's safest cities. Its social stability and harmony provides crucial guarantee for its steady progress made in building the region into "a world tourism and leisure center, a commercial and trade cooperation service platform between China and Portuguese-speaking countries, and a base for exchange and cooperation where Chinese culture is the mainstream and diverse cultures coexist". Macao's image of an open and free international city, its leapfrog economic development and sustained rise of people's living standards are guaranteed as well.

Hong Kong, under the "one country, two systems" practice, enjoys the backing of the motherland and is fully open to the world. It therefore has many favorable conditions for development and distinctive competitive advantages. In

particular, China's continuous and rapid development over the past 4 decades since the reform and opening-up provides an invaluable opportunity, an inexhaustible source of strength and broad space for Hong Kong's development. As long as we adhere to the "one country" principle and respect the differences of the "two systems", both uphold the overall jurisdiction of the central government over Hong Kong SAR and ensure a high degree of autonomy in Hong Kong, both give play to the role of the mainland as a staunch supporter of Hong Kong and enhance Hong Kong's own competitiveness, lay a solid foundation for national security, maintain social stability and harmony, focus on development and consolidate Hong Kong's status as an international financial, shipping and trading center, Hong Kong will have a better future!

Shen Beili
Commissioner of the
Ministry of Foreign
Affairs of China
in the Macao SAR



Research suggests luxury groups rethinking online presence post Covid-19

LYNZY VALLES

THE outbreak of the novel coronavirus is forcing companies to rethink almost every aspect of their businesses as it becomes increasingly difficult to keep up with the effects of Covid-19.

Fflur Roberts, head of Luxury Goods Research at Euromonitor International, London said uncertainty is here to stay as consumer confidence has been hit by the pandemic outbreak.

Speaking at the webinar session of the France Macau Chamber of Commerce yesterday, she noted that due to the prolonged global lockdown, luxury hotels and tourism will continue to be disrupted, and that consumers are looking to trade down their luxury items.

According to the group's study, 68% of luxury goods, in value terms, is set to experience an immediate drop followed by a long-term shift. Due to the forced closure of hotels, restaurants and minimization of travel flows, experiential luxury will feel the biggest blow, the study suggested. Personal luxury will see a faster recovery, supported by demand from the Chinese middle class, millennials, Gen Z and the continued adoption of digital channels.

Last year, the Asia Pacific region led in global sales of luxury goods spending with over \$400 billion spent on the goods, with China alone making up of 68% of the region's sales.

Roberts said that China is set to experience a loss in its sales to the tune of \$67 billion with severe economic damage experienced as expectations for spending in Asia remain low. However, this may lead to increase in the domestic spending of Chinese consumers.

She noted that when the lockdown and social distancing measures are lifted in many countries, they will still experience deep recessions. However, she expects that luxury sales are likely to bounce back in the medium-term, especially for personal luxury.

"I think luxury brands will be investing a lot more in their digital presence. So while consumers from mainland China will be traveling less, they may do 'revenge shopping' [in their regions]," said the expert.

"This will have huge implications in markets like France, Italy and the U.K. because they rely a lot on spending from tourism," she added.

The research head suggested that brands should focus on their online channels and on the digital ser-

vices they offer.

"Brands need to focus their assets on ensuring that they can communicate well with consumers through digital but also that the digital platform in terms of selling is very strong and secure and in place," said Roberts.

Meanwhile, Hong Kong's luxury goods market was already suffering the impact of widespread protests, even before the pandemic outbreak.

According to the research, 90% of spending from tourists in Hong Kong is on personal luxury goods originating from mainland China.

Therefore, it may take a while for the market to get back to normal. However, "there will always be that element of luxury and experiential elements of going luxury shopping in Hong Kong, similarly for Macau."

"Once the market opens, more travelers from mainland China will start to at least move around in Asia," said Roberts.

"We may see a recovery and it would actually benefit Hong Kong because they won't be traveling to further destinations. Similarly, they may have more money to spend because they are not spending on travel," she added.

AD



Congratulations TIS Graduates!

The International School of Macao would like to extend its warmest congratulations to the Class of 2020. TIS is proud of the achievements of all our graduates, past and present, who have been accepted to almost 350 colleges and universities worldwide, including:

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* Bold denotes Class of 2020

We wish you every success as you pursue your academic careers.

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CHARITIES TURN TO WEB FOR FUNDRAISING AS PANDEMIC PERSISTS

ANTHONY LAM

CHARITY organizations in Macau have been taking steps to advance digital initiatives, including but not limited to fundraising, to help manage the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

At least three such organizations interviewed by the Times have said that they have turned their sights to digital channels for communication, work and fundraising.

"This year, for the first time, we're introducing e-raffle tickets," said Isabel da Silva, director of development for the Macau office of Orbis International, the global sight-saving organization that owns a "Flying Eye Hospital" – an aircraft for performing eye surgeries as well as medical training and public education.

The organization runs an annual raffle to attract donations and familiarize the general public with their work. But digitizing the long-standing physical campaign has not been easy. "It was a little challenging to find someone to work with," the director said. "[But] we are planning to do a bit more on that in the future."

Despite being hard-hit by the pandemic, the organization's Macau office decided to do whatever was required. "We're still continuing with our campaign because I think it's important to continue to let people know what we're doing," the director said. "I think it's more important to keep the message there and keep people's support. It's not about how much."

She admitted that the organization's initiatives in Macau



have been heavily affected by the pandemic. She also addressed the fact that it has had an impact on all walks of life and that charitable donations have been affected as a result.

"It's been really tough for the whole Macau economy," she said. "But I must say there are still a lot of people helping different NGOs, and Orbis of course, but it's not been easy, for sure."

She revealed that resources have been directed to combating Covid-19 globally, making donations for other initiatives tighter than usual. "It's not been easy for us and [there's] been a drop," she said.

Given that people around the world have been encouraged to stay home at one time or another, and social distancing is being promoted in many parts of the world, the organization has employed different strategies to retain its exposure.

"It has been tough, but we've continued to reach out," da Silva said. "We have tried to use this time to employ more digital means to reach out to people and to let more people know about us."

Social media is a popular means of promotion today, and has been employed by Orbis's Macau office as well.

"We have more regular posts on our WeChat, Facebook page and Instagram," she said. "We want to reach more people; and ... obviously digitally you can reach more people. We have perhaps even been able to reach the younger generations."

Besides these initiatives, Orbis's Cybersight program, which started in 2003, has helped the organization's work globally. "As the Flying Eye Hospital has been grounded due to the pandemic, the program has helped the organization a lot in terms of providing online training and consultation," da Silva explained. "We're ac-

tually using technology to take our work to another level."

Another international charity organization, Caritas Macau, which has a much longer history in the territory, has also moved certain work online to continue to help the community.

"We have been doing much work online," said Paul Pun, secretary-general of the organization's Macau chapter. "Our website has been promoting our donation channels. We have also used online channels to disseminate information to different groups of people in order to let them know assistance is within reach. Our centers, which help non-resident workers, have drawn much attention and thus helped quite a lot of people."

Pun has changed his WhatsApp profile picture to a poster of the organization that highlights the various bank accounts held by it. It is for the purposes of encouraging people to make donations without leaving home.

Pun admitted that online channels have taken on an important role in their work in the past few months, as people cannot gather for meetings or even support groups.

However, that does not mean that donations have continued at previous levels. This year, for example, Caritas Macau had to cancel an annual Mother's Day Charity Lunch sponsored by a local low-profile philanthropist, which has been held uninterrupted for the past two decades or so.

As for the annual charity bazaar, the secretary-general stated that it would, for the time being, go ahead in November. There is still some time until then, and while the development of the pandemic is unpredictable, Pun is only able to say that it may be postponed or canceled if the situation deteriorates.

CRIME

Police bust HK drug shipping schemes involving local teenagers

JULIE ZHU

THE Judiciary Police (PJ) has cracked down on two separate drug trafficking cases this week involving local teenagers, who were sent packages containing illegal narcotics.

According to the PJ, due to the impact of Covid-19 on border controls, drug traffi-

ckers have been relying more on shipping parcels to transport drugs to Macau, rather than transporting the narcotics with people. Previously, most teenagers found involved in drug trafficking were Hong Kong residents.

In the first case, the PJ apprehended two local teenagers responsible for drug trafficking.

On May 23, the PJ apprehended the first teenager, Cheang, 18. Cheang received a parcel containing electrical appliances and drugs. The PJ seized the drugs, weighing 0.4 grams, from Cheang's home. The teenager was supposed to deliver the substance to another person.

The next day, the PJ apprehended the second teenager, who planned to receive the drugs from Cheang and then sell the substance. Both local teenagers were offered 2,000 patacas as payment. Cheang was tested as positive for drugs, whereas the second suspect tested negative.

The PJ announced a second case on Wednesday involving a 23-year-old man and a 17-year-old girl. They were both hired by Hong Kong drug dealers, who mailed them a total of 29 small bags (13.2 grams of cocaine) in a single parcel. The parcel contained a radio-controlled car containing the drugs. The cocaine is estimated to be worth 44,000 patacas on the black market, according to the PJ.

The PJ intercepted the parcel while the duo was picking it up from the shipping company in question.

The young man claimed this was his first experience with drug trafficking and that he was paid 3,000 patacas to complete the job. He was hired to sell the drugs in Macau.

The girl denied her involvement in drug trafficking, stating that she was aware of the contents of the parcel but only accompanied the suspect, who is her boyfriend, during the pick-up.

Both individuals' drug tests returned positive results. The PJ has forwarded their case to the prosecution authority.



Clockwise from left: Jorge Neto Valente, Oriana Pun, Bruno Nunes

'Musical chairs' at lawyers association hints at disharmony

RENATO MARQUES

TWO members of the board of directors of the Macao Lawyers Association (AAM) have left the association in one stroke. Oriana Pun and Bruno Nunes requested to leave their positions immediately during a meeting held yesterday.

The requests were accepted by the General Assembly, which has already co-opted Wong Pou Ngai and Luís Cavaleiro Ferreira as replacements, the president of the board of directors, Jorge Neto Valente told the Times.

Questioned on the reasons given for the resignations, Neto Valente mentioned that Pun had justified the decision based on "health-related issues." No mentions were made on Nunes's decision, but the intention of leaving the board had been previously announced as connected to his personal disagreements with some of the association's decisions.

In a statement issued yesterday by the AAM, the board of directors confirmed the information aired by Neto Valente, taking the opportunity to publicly thank the contribution of both former board members.

Despite the orderly statement, the resignation of two board members hints at possible disharmony within the association.

That is the opinion of the lawyer Jorge Menezes who told the Times, "it is an intriguing series of events."

"First, Oriana Pun's husband, lawyer Nuno Mata, called for a renewal in the AAM in an interview with TDM Radio last weekend, which was interpreted as criticism of the president and, for some, a possible move supporting his wife's candidacy [to the post of president] because he didn't voice similar concerns two years ago" when the last elections occurred.

With just a few months remaining before the end of the term, two members out of seven stepping down from the board can only mean that something is about to happen, according to Menezes.

"They were elected and accepted to hold a position of public interest. The AAM is possibly the only democratic institution in Macau. I believe they owe their fellow lawyers whom they represent, and the Macau community, the ethical duty of explaining why they are stepping down," Menezes added. "Whatever their reasons, we deserve to know what happened, because they represent us, and their roles

matter to Macau. And so should the president."

For Menezes, the two former members of the board "may have done the right thing, we don't know. Bruno Nunes, whom I know better, is someone I see as understanding the obligations attached to his role. But transparency is important."

The Times also asked for lawyer Sérgio de Almeida Correia's interpretation of the move. Correia, who tried to oppose the hegemony of Neto Valente during the last presidential election in 2018, said he did not want to address the topic as he was not aware of the reasons that motivated the lawyers' decisions.

"I don't know the reasons. But the AAM board has been [...] for a long time only serving the interests of those who are on the board and especially the interests of the president," Correia said.

Although Correia did not formerly present a list to run for the presidency in the 2018 election, on account of a lack of support from his fellow lawyers, it was the first time in many years that Neto Valente's double-decade hegemony had been seriously challenged.

At the time of the last reelection, Neto Valente told the Times that this would be his last term, saying that he hopes that new candidates that can gather the consensus of the professional sector and take the post.

In the recent interview with TDM Radio, Mata expressed the will to do so. The lawyer said he could contribute to the renewal of the association, but only if it became more transparent.

The Times attempted to reach Pun for clarification on her decision to leave the Board but it was not possible to obtain any comment until press time.

TUI late to respond to vigil cancellation appeal

RENATO MARQUES

THE organizers of the annual June 4 vigil, headed by lawmaker Au Kam San, say that the appeal filed to the Court of Final Appeal (TUI) regarding the decision of the Public Security Police Force (PSP) to ban the event has gone unanswered for seven days. The court is required to communicate a final decision to the organizers within five calendar days, as stated by Article 12 of Law 16/2008.

The vigil, which aims to keep alive the memory of the occurrences at Tiananmen Square in Beijing on this day in 1989, was initially banned after health



authorities expressed the opinion that it could put public health at risk.

On a previous occasion, Dr. Alvis Lo from Conde

de São Januário Medical Center, speaking on behalf of health authorities, said that since the beginning of the outbreak, the autho-

rities have recommended that citizens avoid all types of gatherings. This, he said, justifies the decision of the PSP on the vigil.

Lo refused to advance any further comments regarding the case of this particular event, nor regarding the fact that Macau has not detected any cases for one and half months.

The same health authorities have continuously reaffirmed during the daily press conferences of the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Center that all cases detected in Macau (45) were either imported cases (43) or, in two cases, people in close contact with the imported cases. This has been used to

justify the claim that "there was no outbreak of Covid-19 in the community."

Legally, civil assemblies and protests do not require an application for permission, although the authorities have the right to make special arrangements for various reasons.

In the appeal presented to the TUI, Au pointed out that there are no legal grounds on which the authorities can ban a legal civil event.

According to the lawmaker, the PSP denied approval for the event, citing Article 3 of the Law on Prevention and Control of Contagious Diseases, which states that "individuals and public or private enti-

ties have the obligation to legally cooperate closely with the entities in-charge" on matters related with the prevention of and response to outbreaks.

In his appeal to the TUI last Thursday, Au opposed the decision of the police, citing Article 2 of Law 2/93/M, which reads: "Without prejudice to the right to criticize, shall not be allowed assemblies and protests with purposes contrary to the law."

Furthermore, the lawmaker also noted that the police authorities, while making use of the Law on Prevention and Control of Contagious Diseases, did not explain how the vigil would violate such stipulations, adding that the organizers had all intentions of cooperating with adjustments and guidelines provided by public entities.



Sands China ensures safety and well-being

SANDS China has taken a series of preventive measures to ensure all team members have a safe working environment amid the pandemic outbreak as the group considers the 29,000 team members as its upmost valuable asset in the company.

The company has been following the local government's guidelines on infection-prevention measures in the light of the novel coronavirus threat. Therefore, a series of preventive measures were set in place to ensure a safe and healthy working environment.

In these trying times, the company has greatly attributed the success of its operations to the hard work of its large number of team members who have tirelessly worked amid the pandemic and were committed to continually provide an excellent standard of service.

Although the properties have scaled down operations – heeding to the call of the government to minimize gatherings to combat the spread of the virus – the company still largely enforces existing preventive measures.

“Sands China is so proud of its team members for their dedication and perseverance during this difficult time of the pandemic,” said Dr. Wilfred Wong, president of Sands China Ltd.

“Whether frontline staff or behind the scenes, management or rank and file, all of our team members have been playing a vital role in keeping

operations running smoothly while implementing the many new measures that are keeping everyone safe. It is a challenge to which they have risen admi-

rably,” added Dr. Wong.

To express their gratitude towards its team members that are continually working for the company to continue its opera-

tions, Dr. Wong and Sands China senior executives visited team members at the back-of-house and public areas of Sands China properties to cheer, motivate and

COMPANY FULLY TAKES CARE OF TEAM MEMBERS' NEEDS

DURING the pandemic, Sands China has tirelessly committed itself to the wellbeing of its team members to help them feel more at ease physically and mentally by offering a 24/7 hotline and WeChat online counseling service for team members and their family to relieve their stress.

In these trying times, the gaming operator introduced yet again a series of measure to ensure that its team members would not have to fear nor worry about their while health while working.

MEAL ARRANGEMENTS

Special menus at team member dining rooms.

To show appreciation to team members, the team member dining

rooms have prepared a variety of specialties to express the company's gratitude for team members' continuous contributions. In addition, team members' health is a key consideration for the company. During the pandemic, the team member dining rooms have been serving an array of healthy food and fresh cut fruits, such as watermelon and lemon slices, healthy soups and herbal tea to boost team members' immune systems.

New guidelines for dining at team member dining rooms.

To eliminate the risk of transmission, the company has implemented flexible meal hours to avoid large gatherings. Team members were also encoura-

ged to bring their own containers so they can take food away to enjoy at their work stations. To deter the spread of Covid-19, the company has rearranged the table setting at team member dining rooms that is according to the hygiene guidelines issued by health authorities. They have also recently placed transparent acrylic screen partitions on tables to avoid any spread of droplets.

Frequent sanitization.

Sanitization and additional cleaning plays a key role in battling infection risk. To ensure team members having a safe dining environment, the cleaning team has increased the frequency of cleaning and disinfecting, in compliance with government guidelines.

TRANSPORTATION ARRANGEMENTS

Some preventive measures to ensure the safety of team members when commuting to and from work have been launched. The company has increased the frequency of its shuttle bus service, and team members are required to wear masks when boarding the bus, to avoid transmission. The company has also arranged shuttle buses to pick up expatriate team members from Zhuhai to Macao prior to Macao's casino closure.

ACCOMMODATION ARRANGEMENTS

The company takes the health and wellbeing of team members very seriously. During the novel coronavirus outbreak,

Sands China has provided an array of welfare measures, such as offering hotel accommodations for non-resident employees in need of temporary housing in Macau.

The move was in response to the government's call for companies to provide lodging for its non-resident workers that live in the neighboring city, Zhuhai.

The measure was designed to reduce the risk of a further coronavirus outbreak among those commuting between the two cities.

Sands China has made its way to immediately implement the measure to effectively continue the highest service it could provide to its team members and visitors.



of its team members amid pandemic crisis

encourage team members.

They took the lead to wear facemasks, reminding team members to wear masks and maintain good personal hygiene.

The management was working hard along with all team members during that time to ensure the health and safety of its team members.

For Sands China, it was the wellbeing of the team members that matters the most as the pandemic outbreak has fueled fears and worries among the local labor market during this difficult time the city is facing.

Dr. Wong also recorded two short videos to extend his gratitude to all team members who remained with the company when the casinos were shut down for 15 days, and to encourage team members to walk together with the company to overcome the challenges posed by the novel coronavirus.

Meanwhile, in response to the government's call of ensuring the health and safety of team members working amid the pandemic outbreak, the gaming operator has implemented a series of measures for its team member's well-being.

As a socially responsible company rooted in Macao, the management team has worked hard to make their team members feel safe in their workplaces.

MOBILE PLATFORM FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Sands China's mobile application allows for effective communication between the company and team members during emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The application regularly alerts team members on the status of the pandemic and provides real-time updates on transportation-related information.

CONDUCTING TEMPERATURE CHECKS, PROVIDING HAND SANITIZERS AND FACEMASKS

Since the early stages of the COVID-19 outbreak, Sands China's procurement team has spared no effort to purchase COVID-19 relief items from all over the world. These items include facemasks, hand sanitizer and temperature scanners. Temperature scanners are setup at all team member entrances and hand sanitizer have been placed in all departments and at the back-of-house team member areas, as per government guidelines. The company has been providing complimentary facemasks to all on-duty team members every day since early February, with over 3.1 million facemasks distributed to date.

FLEXIBLE LEAVE PROGRAM AND WORKING HOURS

When schools were closed from February to May, Sands China offered a Voluntary Leave Reward Program and flexible working hours to team members, so that they could have more flexibility to take care of their families.

HYGIENE PATROL TEAM TO ENSURE WORKPLACE SAFETY

In line with the government's hygiene advice, Sands China organized a "Hygiene Patrol Team" in March, to inspect the places team members frequently visit, such as the team member dining rooms and rest areas, to remind team members to keep a one-meter distance and to wear facemasks. The seating of the rest areas have also been rearranged at fixed distances to eliminate the risk of transmission.

ONGOING CLINIC AND LAUNDRY SERVICE

During the pandemic, Sands China has been offering non-stop medical clinic and uniform laundry services to team members, in order to ensure their health and safety.

BACK-OF-HOUSE ROADSHOWS TO SUPPORT LOCAL SMES

As part of the company's ongoing support to local Small and Medium Enterprises, especially during this difficult time of the pandemic, Sands China has invited nine local SMEs to hold back-of-house roadshows between May 11 until today, offering a variety of nearly 300 of their products and services.

It is the goal of the company to show support to local SME suppliers especially in these trying times.

The SMEs are accepting consumer e-vouchers in support of the government's latest initiative. Vendors benefit from direct access to more than 28,000 team members and the opportunity to raise their brand awareness and increase sales, while team members benefit from having the convenience of shopping for necessities at a discounted prices during their breaks. The company plans to host second round of roadshows in the near future as it continues to view them as strategic partners.

SALARY INCREASE

In recognition of team members' contributions, the company increased the salaries of eligible team members effective March 1, 2020, benefiting 99% of Sands China's more than 29,000 team members.

WHAT THEY SAY...

"The company has really shown its care to team members living in Zhuhai during this period of time, and I am very thankful. I feel so blessed to have all these arrangements made by the company. As a Sands China team member, I am more than happy to make my contribution in the fight against the virus."

LAURA LUO
Housekeeping supervisor

"During my three-month stay at The Venetian Macao arranged by the company, I felt very secure, and it was like I was at home. The company provided me with all necessary daily support, including meals and laundry, and I could deeply feel that the company really spared no cost in ensuring team members' health and safety, both while at work and while off duty."

LIN XIQIAO
Housekeeping attendant

US Congress approves China sanctions over ethnic crackdown

CONGRESS voted yesterday [Macau time] to toughen the U.S. response to a brutal Chinese crackdown on ethnic minorities, adding another factor to the increasingly stormy relationship between the two countries.

The House passed a bipartisan bill that would impose sanctions on Chinese officials involved in the mass surveillance and detention of Uighurs and other ethnic groups in the western Xinjiang region, a campaign that has drawn muted international response because of China's influence around the world.

The measure already passed the Senate and needs a signature from President Donald Trump, who said this week he'll "very strongly" consider it amid U.S. anger over China's handling of the coronavirus outbreak and tension over a Chinese plan to restrict civil liberties in Hong Kong.

Both issues emerged, along with other sore points in the China-U.S. relationship, as Republican and Democratic members of Congress spoke in support of the bill. No one spoke against it, and it passed by a 413-1 vote.

"Beijing's barbarous actions targeting the Uighur people are an outrage to the collective conscience of the world," House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said in a floor speech in support of the bill.

support of the bill.

It was the first bill in history to pass with proxy votes after House Democrats, over Republican objections, adopted a measure allowing such votes in response to the coronavirus outbreak.

Congress late last year voted to condemn the crackdown in Xinjiang, where Chinese authorities have detained more than a million people — from mostly Muslim ethnic groups that include Uighurs, Kazakhs and Kyrgyz — in a vast network of detention centers.

This new legislation is intended to increase the pressure by imposing sanctions on specific Chinese officials, such as the Communist Party official who oversees government policy in Xinjiang.

The legislation also requires the U.S. government to report to Congress on violations of human rights in Xinjiang as well as China's acquisition of technology used for mass detention and surveillance. It also provides for an assessment of the pervasive reports of harassment and threats of Uighurs and other Chinese nationals in the United States.

A provision that would have imposed export restrictions on surveillance and other equipment used in the crackdown was initially passed in the House but then stripped out in the version that passed in the Senate earlier this month.

Despite the limitations, the legislation amounts to the first concrete step by a government to penalize China over the treatment of the Uighurs since the existence of the mass internment camps became widely known in recent years, said Peter Irwin, a senior program officer at the Uighur Human Rights Project.

"It signals that a member of the international community is actually taking some steps to address the problem," Irwin said. "The legislation itself has to spur the rest of the international community, particularly the European Union and other powerful blocs of states, to actually take this as a template and pass their own legislation."

Rep. Michael McCaul, a Texas Republican and chairman of the House China Task Force, called what's happening in Xinjiang a "cultural genocide" of Uighurs and other mostly Muslim ethnic groups. The passage of the bill with strong bipartisan support would "show the Chinese Communist Party and the entire world that their treatment of the Muslim Uighurs is inexcusable and will not be allowed without serious consequences," McCaul said. AP

MENG WANZHOU

CANADA JUDGE RULES HUAWEI CFO'S EXTRADITION CASE CAN PROCEED

A Canadian judge ruled yesterday the U.S. extradition case against a senior Huawei executive can proceed to the next stage, a decision that is expected to further harm relations between China and Canada.

The Chinese embassy in Ottawa later warned Canada to drop the case and accused the United States of trying to bring down the Chinese tech giant.

Canada arrested Meng Wanzhou, the daughter of Huawei's founder and chief financial officer of the company, at Vancouver's airport in late 2018. The U.S. wants her extradited to face fraud charges. Her arrest infuriated Beijing. Canadian officials have emphasized the country's judicial system is independent.

Associate Chief Justice Heather Holmes said in her decision the allegations against Meng could constitute a crime in Canada as well as the extradition could therefore proceed.

The U.S. accuses Huawei of using a Hong Kong shell company to sell equipment to Iran in violation of U.S. sanctions. It says Meng, 48, committed fraud by misleading the HSBC bank about the company's business dealings in Iran.



dealings in Iran.

Meng's lawyers argued during a hearing in January that the case is really about U.S. sanctions against Iran, not a fraud case. They maintain that since Canada does not have similar sanctions against Iran, no fraud occurred under its laws. The judge disagreed.

"Ms. Meng's approach to the double criminality analysis would seriously limit Canada's ability to fulfill its international obligations in the extradition context for fraud and other economic crimes," Holmes wrote.

Holmes said Canada did not have economic sanctions against Iran at the time but noted the sanctions used by the U.S. "were not fundamentally contrary to Canadian values."

Her legal team is scheduled to be back in court June 3 to set dates for when her lawyers will argue that Canada Border Services, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the FBI violated Meng's rights while collecting evidence before she was actually arrested. Extradition cases typically take years in Canada.

The ruling against Meng is expected to erode already damaged relations between Beijing and Ottawa. "China hereby expresses strong dissatisfaction and firm opposition to this decision, and has made serious representations with Canada," the Chinese embassy in Ottawa said in a statement.

"The purpose of the United States is to bring down Huawei and other Chinese high-tech companies, and Canada has been acting in the process as an accomplice of the United States."

China's embassy also warned Canada to "immediately release Ms. Meng Wanzhou to allow her to return safely to China, and not to go further down the wrong path." AP

AP PHOTO



ANALYSIS

HONG KONG'S BUSINESS HUB STATUS IMPERILED BY SECURITY LAW

ZEN SOO & JOE MCDONALD, HONG KONG

A national security law proposed by China could imperil Hong Kong's status as one of the world's best places to do business.

The law, approved yesterday in Beijing, led Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to say Washington will no longer treat Hong Kong, already reeling from anti-government protests and the pandemic, as autonomous from Beijing.

The Chinese government has not given details of the law, which is aimed at suppressing secessionist and subversive activity in the former British colony.

After 11 months of protests, Chinese leaders say it's needed to combat unspecified threats in the semi-autonomous region of 7 million people. But business groups, lawyers and financial analysts say potential repercussions range from loss of business for Hong Kong's financial markets and law firms to travel restrictions on its residents.

Hong Kong is highly regarded for its skilled workforce, business-friendly legal system, Western-style free speech and

ease of movement. But global companies already were shifting some operations out of Hong Kong due to rising costs and uncertainty after prolonged, sometimes violent clashes between police and pro-democracy protesters.

Scott Salandy-Defour, founder of clean-tech startup Liquidstar, has been considering moving out of Hong Kong, and the security bill is the "last straw," he said. "I don't see how it gets any better from here."

"When we say we're a Hong Kong-based company when talking to investors, it's just not as attractive as it was as a year ago," said Salandy-Defour, whose company provides sustainable battery rental and charging services for developing countries.

"We're potentially cutting ourselves off from a lot of different funding avenues, like grants from the U.S. government," he said.

Hong Kong's leader Carrie Lam has tried to reassure companies and the public that its civil liberties won't be affected. But the law shows Chinese President Xi Jinping is determined to tighten control.

"Hong Kong is riskier than it used to be," said Tara Joseph, president of AmCham Hong Kong. "There is a big worry that there are two buses careening towards each other, and that's the U.S. and China, and that this could have a profound impact in Hong Kong," Joseph said.

Critics say the law undermines the "high degree of autonomy" promised when Britain handed control to China in 1997. That autonomy meant Washington and other governments have treated the city as a separate territory for trade, travel and other affairs.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said yesterday [Macau time] those changes are significant enough that Washington will no longer treat Hong Kong as autonomous.

The loss of Hong Kong's trade privileges could mean Hong Kong identity card holders might lose their ability to visit the United States without applying for a visa in advance. Washington also could revoke its promise to exchange Hong Kong dollars for U.S. dollars, potentially disrupting the city's financial system, Deutsche Bank economist Michael Spencer said in a report.

The financial sector would take a big hit if companies such as MSCI reclassify Hong Kong as an emerging market like Shenzhen and Shanghai instead of a developed market, Spencer said.

"A very large share of capital invested in the Hong Kong market will have to leave," he said.

Hong Kong's uncertain future is putting it at a disadvantage with other Asian destinations that are competing to attract foreign investment, such as Singapore and Tokyo.

"Over time, people get nervous, and think that this place may not be, my money may not be, as safe as it once was, and I'm going to think about going somewhere else," said William Reinsch, senior adviser at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. "It sends a signal that Hong Kong is no longer a safe and reliable place to put your money or to do business."

The national security law has added to worries that Hong Kong's legal system is losing

its independence. The Hong Kong Bar Association says the method for enacting it is a threat: China is circumventing the territory's legislature by changing its mini-constitution, the Basic Law, to require its government and courts to enforce security measures, regardless of what local lawmakers decide.

Beijing has shown little regard for such considerations, said Reinsch.

"China is not a rule-of-law state, it's a state where the party makes decisions about what's going to happen, those are arbitrary decisions, and if that's what's going to happen in Hong Kong, it doesn't bode well for the economy or for the people," he said.

Bob Broadfoot, managing director of Hong Kong-based research firm Political and Economic Risk Consultancy, said companies might shift legal work to Singapore or other countries.

"Singapore's going to get more business as a dispute resolution center," said Broadfoot. "Its legal system, which is a bigger earner, will benefit from Hong Kong's problems."

Hong Kong's troubles and broader global economic uncertainty due to the pandemic also may make it harder for businesses there to attract and retain talent.

Still, some experts believe the concerns over a possible loss of Hong Kong's special status are overblown.

Many big companies have sizable operations in both the mainland and Hong Kong, and most of Hong Kong's manufacturing base shifted to China years ago, said Nicholas Lardy, a fellow at the think tank Peterson Institute for International Economics.

"The real economic consequences are fairly limited," Lardy said.

Hong Kong is still an attractive base for many companies, said Andrew Bishop, a partner with Signum Global Advisors, a risk advisory firm.

Last year's protests gave businesses time to think, he said.

"At this point, continuing operations in Hong Kong has become a matter of careful calculation rather than a gut reaction to a surprise shock." AP

NPC

Lawmakers endorse Hong Kong national security law

CHINA'S legislature endorsed a national security law for Hong Kong yesterday that has strained relations with the United States and Britain and prompted new protests in the territory.

The National People's Congress approved the bill as it wrapped up an annual session that was held under intensive anti-coronavirus controls. The vote was 2,878 to 1 with six abstentions, in line with the high-profile but largely ceremonial body's custom of near-unanimous support for all legal changes decided by the ruling Communist Party.

The law will alter Hong Kong's mini-constitution, or Basic Law, to require the territory to enforce measures to be decided by the NPC's standing committee, a small body controlled by the ruling party that handles most lawmaking work.

The law reflects the determination of President Xi Jinping's government to tighten control over Hong Kong following 11 months of anti-government protests. Activists in Hong Kong say the law will undermine the "high degree of autonomy" promised to the former British colony when it was handed back to China in 1997 under a "one country, two systems" framework and might be used to suppress political activity.

Premier Li Keqiang, the country's No. 2 leader, defended the law as consistent with Beijing's promises.

"The decision adopted by the NPC session is designed for steady implementation of 'one country, two systems' and Hong Kong's long-term prosperity and stability," Li said at a news conference.

The law and the way it is being enacted prompted U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Wednesday to announce Washington will no longer treat Hong Kong as autonomous from Beijing. That could hurt the territory's attractiveness as a business center.

Pompeo's notice adds Hong Kong to the Trump administration's conflicts with China over trade, technology, religious freedom, Chinese handling of the coronavirus pandemic and the status of Taiwan, the self-ruled island Beijing claims as its own territory.

Li called for mutual respect and Sino-U.S. cooperation to



promote "extensive common interests" in resolving global problems and promoting trade, science and other fields.

"Both countries stand to gain from cooperation and lose from confrontation," Li said.

Yesterday, three pro-democracy lawmakers were ejected from Hong Kong's legislative chamber during a debate over a bill that would criminalize insulting or abusing the Chinese national anthem.

Also yesterday, the NPC approved a government budget that will increase spending to generate jobs in an effort to reverse an economic slump after Chinese industries were shut down to fight the coronavirus pandemic.

Private sector analysts say as much as 30% of the urban workforce, or as many as 130 million people, lost their jobs at least temporarily during the shutdown. They say as many as

25 million jobs might be lost for good this year.

The budget calls for giving local governments 2 trillion yuan (\$280 billion) to spend on meeting goals including creating 9 million new jobs. That is in line with expectations of higher spending but a fraction of the \$1 trillion-plus stimulus packages launched or discussed by the United States, Japan and Europe.

Li, the premier, said Beijing is in a "strong position to introduce new measures" if necessary but wants to avoid flooding the economy with too much money. He said 70% of planned spending is aimed at putting wages in workers' pockets in order to support consumer spending, the biggest driver of the economy.

"We will do our utmost to keep China's economic growth stable," Li said. "At the same time, we must make sure that all measures taken are well calibrated." AP

AD



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AP PHOTO



US death toll from coronavirus surges past 100,000 people

CARLA K. JOHNSON,
SUSAN HAIGH
& LISA MARIE PANE,
HARTFORD (CONN.)

THE U.S. surpassed a jarring milestone in the coronavirus pandemic: 100,000 deaths.

That number is the best estimate and most assuredly an undercount. But it represents the stark reality that more Americans have died from the virus than from the Vietnam and Korean wars combined.

"It's a striking reminder of how dangerous this virus can be," said Josh Michaud, associate director of global health policy with the Kaiser Family Foundation in Washington.

The once-unthinkable toll appears to be just the beginning of untold misery in the months ahead as Las Vegas casinos and Walt Disney World make plans to reopen, crowds of unmasked Americans swarm beaches and public health officials predict a resurgence by fall.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, the nation's top infectious disease expert, issued a stern warning after watching video of Memorial Day crowds gathered at a pool party in Missouri.

"We have a situation in which you see that type of crowding with no mask and people interacting. That's not prudent, and that's inviting a situation that could get out of control," he said during an interview yesterday [Macau time] on CNN. "Don't start

leapfrogging some of the recommendations in the guidelines because that's really tempting fate and asking for trouble."

Worldwide, the virus has infected more than 5.6 million people and killed over 350,000, with the U.S. having the most confirmed cases and deaths by far, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University. Europe has recorded about 170,000 deaths, while the U.S. reached more than 100,000 in less than four months.

The true death toll from the virus, which emerged in China late last year and was first reported in the U.S. in January, is widely believed to be significantly higher, with experts saying many victims died of COVID-19 without ever being tested for it.

Critics have said deaths spiked because Trump was slow to respond, but he has contended on Twitter that it could have been 20 times higher without his actions. He has urged states to reopen their economies after months of stay-at-home restrictions.

Las Vegas casinos can welcome tourists again on June 4. SeaWorld and Walt Disney World plan to reopen to limited numbers of tourists in Orlando, Florida, in June and July. And people who have been cooped up indoors began venturing outside in droves, often without practicing social distancing or wearing masks.

Kelly Hove, 79, of Twin Falls, Idaho, an internatio-

nally known pianist, died at a nursing home on April 12 of complications from COVID-19 after a long battle with dementia. Her sister-in-law Jan Hove fears that more will die as states start lifting restrictions.

The virus exacted an especially vicious toll on Trump's hometown of New York City and its surrounding suburbs, killing more than 21,000. At the peak, hundreds of people were dying per day in New York City, and hospitals, ambulances and first responders were inundated with patients.

There is no vaccine or treatment for COVID-19, though several emergency treatments are being used after showing some promise in preliminary testing.

Worldwide, about a dozen vaccine candidates are starting to be tested or getting close to it. Health officials have said studies of a potential vaccine might be done by late this year or early next year.

Only half of Americans said they would be willing to get vaccinated if scientists are successful in developing a vaccine, according to a poll released Wednesday from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

Among the 100,000 fatalities was 74-year-old Michael Ganci of Newington, Connecticut, who died March 21. He was a public school teacher, a grandfather and father of four, and a 4th-degree belt Sensei in Kyokushin karate.

Ganci, who had a com-

promised immune system, died at a hospital in Hartford three days after showing symptoms. His family was not allowed to be with him and tried to text and talk with him on his cellphone during his final days. His wife of 48 years also tested positive for COVID-19 and had to grieve alone.

For their daughter, 45-year-old Joanna Ganci of Beverly, Massachusetts, the milestone is important to understand the scope of the virus.

"But at the same time, I think the danger of counting, the danger of statistics, is that it just minimizes the human element," she said. "It's like, what number is going to make an impact for people who haven't been touched by it?"

It's not even clear when the coronavirus turned deadly in the United States. Initially, it was believed the first U.S. deaths from the virus were in late February in a Seattle suburb. But by mid-April, it was determined that two people with the coronavirus died in California as many as three weeks earlier.

Comparing countries is tricky, given varying levels of testing and that some coronavirus deaths can be missed. According to figures tracked by Johns Hopkins University, the death rate per 100,000 people is lower in the U.S. than in Italy, France and Spain but higher than in Germany, China, South Korea, Singapore, Japan, New Zealand and Australia. **AP**

this day in history



1953 HILLARY AND TENZING CONQUER EVEREST

The New Zealander Edmund Hillary, and the Nepalese Sherpa Tenzing Norgay, have become the first to reach the summit of Mount Everest on the Nepal-Tibet border.

They reached the top of the world at 1130 local time after a gruelling climb up the southern face.

The two men hugged each other with relief and joy but only stayed on the summit for 15 minutes because they were low on oxygen.

Mr Hillary took several photographs of the scenery and of Sherpa Tenzing waving flags representing Britain, Nepal, the United Nations and India.

Sherpa Tenzing buried some sweets and biscuits in the snow as a Buddhist offering to the gods.

They looked for signs of George Mallory and Andrew "Sandy" Irvine who had disappeared in 1924 in a similar attempt to conquer Everest, but found nothing.

Then they began the slow and tortuous descent to re-join their team leader Colonel John Hunt further down the mountain at Camp VI.

When he saw the two men looking so exhausted Col Hunt assumed they had failed to reach the summit and started planning another attempt.

But then the two climbers pointed to the mountain and signalled they had reached the top, and there were celebrations all round.

Col Hunt attributed the successful climb to advice from other mountaineers who had attempted the feat over the years, careful planning, excellent open-circuit oxygen equipment and good weather.

Mr Hillary described the peak, which is 29,028 feet (8,847 m) above sea level, as "a symmetrical, beautiful snow cone summit".

He was one of the members of the expedition led by Eric Shipton in 1951 that discovered the southern route to the top of the mountain.

A year later, Tenzing reached the record height of 28,215 feet (8,599 m) during a Swiss expedition led by Raymond Lambert.

Mount Everest was named after Sir George Everest, the surveyor-general of India who was the first to produce detailed maps of the Indian subcontinent including the Himalayas.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

News of the conquest of Mount Everest did not reach the outside world until 2 June, the eve of the Queen's coronation.

Colonel Hunt and Edmund Hillary were knighted on their return.

Sir Edmund took part in several expeditions after that including a trip across Antarctica to the South Pole in 1958. He set up a medical and educational trust for the Sherpa people in 1961 and was New Zealand High Commissioner to India in Delhi from 1984 to 1989. He died aged 88 in January 2008.

Tenzing Norgay was awarded the George Medal for his achievement and later became director of the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute, Darjeeling. He died in 1986.

The body of George Mallory who had attempted the ascent in 1924 was found on Mount Everest in 1999. By the 50th anniversary of the ascent in May 2003 over 1,300 people had reached the summit of the roof of the world.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

If your finances are getting a bit tight, your creativity can come to the rescue! Instead of falling back on your old, expensive ideas for things to do, why not get a little creative?



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

If you're asked to give up something that isn't that important to you, do it without hesitation. The person who's asking for it needs it more than you do. You shouldn't get too possessive about your stuff.



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

But you should give this thing some more time. It's way too soon to make such a drastic decision. Have a talk with the other person involved and see what they think. You're probably on the same page.



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

If you want to give your social life a shot in the arm, you need to think about how to mix your different social groups together. See what happens when friends, family members, and co-workers all socialize.



LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

It's time to invest some more energy in the most important person in your life - you! Give yourself all the positive attention you deserve, and splurge on a gift that you've been wanting for a long time.



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

Are you prepared for things to go to the next level? Whether it's a new relationship, work responsibility, or your own journey to self-awareness, things are going to get deep.



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

Someone's magnetic charm could draw you in today, but don't get drawn in too far too fast. Charm is a powerful substance, and it can distract you from important things that you need to take care of.



SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

Consider starting a small business on the side. Look for a marketable gimmick. Join a club to work off that excess energy; but consider ways of doing that without spending the money.



SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

You don't need research or planning. You need real-world experience! If you're contemplating a change but aren't sure which way to go, take a trial run in one direction and see how it goes.



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

You could be drawn to simple pleasures today, like reading or taking a long walk. Seek out quieter places and you'll be able to create a mellow day full of peace and calm.



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

They'll be flattered, and most likely they'll return the compliment. You two have a lot of things in common, and it's time for you to learn what they are.



PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Today, your job is to give your creativity some place to go. And get some exercise! The stars say you need to get involved in a new project and let your imagination do its thing.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

EASY

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

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MEDIUM

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HARD

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						5		
	8	5	3				7	4
			8					

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS: 1- Biscotto flavoring; 6- Grinder; 11- Chinese "way"; 14- Renaissance fiddle; 15- Wear down, physically or emotionally; 16- Tarzan creator's monogram; 17- Model; 18- Pluck; 19- Understand; 20- Bridal path; 22- Containing lard; 24- 1981 Neil Diamond hit; 28- Faculties; 29- Excrement used as fertilizer; 30- Rush; 32- Biblical land; 33- Shorthand taker; 35- Faithful; 39- Java neighbor; 40- Where ___?; 41- Injury; 42- ___ impasse; 43- Prince Valiant's wife; 45- "Picnic" playwright; 46- Dam extending across the Nile; 48- Piquancy; 50- Shelter for a dog; 53- Shaggy; 54- ___-foot oil; 55- Disdain; 57- Mont Blanc, e.g.; 58- Blessed sound?; 60- Norwegian dramatist; 65- Flight formation; 66- Damp; 67- Connect with; 68- Sounds of hesitation; 69- Vacant; 70- Heron, usually white;

DOWN: 1- Jackie's second; 2- Beatty of "Deliverance"; 3- May ___ excused?; 4- Neptune's domain; 5- Cream cake; 6- Brainy bunch; 7- Hurler Hershtiser; 8- Traditional passed-down knowledge; 9- Adj. modifier; 10- Joint; 11- Trials; 12- Aggregate of qualities that make good character; 13- Follows orders; 21- Frozen treats; 23- Any unnamed object; 24- Low life?; 25- Angry with; 26- ___ Gay; 27- Meditative; 28- Box-office letters; 30- Macho guys; 31- Apartment, e.g.; 34- Currency unit in Western Samoa; 36- Scope; 37- Exhorted; 38- Very hard mineral; 43- Shoe tool; 44- Petri dish gelatin; 47- Opening word; 49- Set on fire; 50- Jack; 51- Conger catcher; 52- Scruffs; 53- Like tubers; 55- Pack and send; 56- Amount to; 59- Dot follower; 61- Large; 62- Sun. talk; 63- Hot time in Paris; 64- "As if!";

Yesterday's solution

L	A	M	P	A	D	O	R	N	A	R	A	T
E	L	I	A	T	O	D	A	Y	T	O	D	A
G	A	R	R	T	R	A	I	L	M	A	T	T
S	E	E	S	T	O							
F	E	E	R		R	E	N	O				
V	O	L	C	A	N	I	C		L	E	A	P
I	T	O		K	R	A			A	L	L	O
S	H	U	T	E	Y	E			E	A	R	L
T	E	T	O	N		O	D	D		S	T	U
P	E	T	R	I		I	D	E	A	L	I	S
S	P	E	C	I	E	S			A	R	A	B
T	E	R	I		C	A	G	T	I		V	I
O	A	S	T		A	I	R	E		D	E	T
A	T	E			P	R	O	N	E		S	S

Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

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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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FOR SALE

[Taipa]	Hoi Wan Garden	2 1/2 1 1/2
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[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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BEN BRODY, MARIO PARKER
& ERIC NEWCOMER

DONALD Trump has been raging against Twitter Inc. since the social media platform that helped vault him to the presidency slapped fact-check links on a pair of his tweets.

Now, he's poised to take action that could bring a flurry of lawsuits down on Twitter, Facebook Inc. and other technology giants by having the government narrow liability protections that they enjoy for third parties' posts, according to a draft of an executive order obtained by Bloomberg.

The companies' protections against lawsuits apply when they act "in good faith" in taking down or limiting the visibility of inappropriate tweets, videos and other social media posts, but the law doesn't define bad faith. The draft order would push the Federal Communications Commission to issue rules clarifying the issue, potentially allowing users to sue over takedowns if they were inconsistent with companies' terms of service, did not provide enough notice or meet other suggested criteria.

The White House declined to comment yesterday.

The draft order would also convene, through the Justice Department, a working group of state attorneys general to look into deceptive practices and review executive ad spending on the platforms.

The move could set off a legal battle between Washington and Silicon Valley.

"Big Tech is doing everything in their very considerable power to CENSOR in advance of the 2020 Election," the president said Wednesday night - on Twitter. "If that happens, we no longer have our freedom. I will never let it happen! They tried hard in 2016, and lost. Now they are going absolutely CRAZY. Stay Tuned!!!"

Word of the executive order came a day after Twitter added links to a fact-checking page on Trump tweets asserting that mail-in-voting leads to rampant fraud.

As Trump himself has observed, Twitter gives him the power to dodge the media and speak directly to the American public. It also allows the president and his vast community of followers to instantly spread a steady stream of pro-Trump messages and attacks on his rivals, including exaggerations and outright falsehoods that not even Twitter's fact-checking links can dent.

He has no legal authority to shut down the service, as he threatened to do Wednesday morning, but doing so would mean silencing his loudest megaphone - as well as what his campaign calls "keyboard warriors" who both amplify his voice and provide him memes and other free content to broadcast to his 80 million followers.

BLOOMBERG



Trump, furious at Twitter, aims executive order at tech giants

Twitter also serves as a valuable punching bag, which he uses to generate outrage and sympathy among his supporters.

The social media platform has become even more important for Trump as the coronavirus pandemic prevents him from holding his trademark rallies, and he seeks a free outlet to attack his likely Democratic challenger, Joe Biden.

"He's going to need to continue to use this platform," said Amy Becker, a professor at Loyola University Maryland, who focuses on political communication. "It's going to be his random tweets, it's going to be him attacking whoever criticizes him, there's going to be a lot of attacks on Biden, the Democrats."

LIABILITY PROTECTIONS

The order Trump plans to sign is his latest attempt to exert control over the formidable technology industry. In 2018, he considered issuing an order instructing federal antitrust agencies to open probes into the practices of tech giants like Alphabet Inc.'s Google and Facebook. The possible measure was criticized as politicizing antitrust enforcement and it was never signed.

Trump's attacks on Twitter and other social media companies are often hyperbolic and rarely lead to immediate concrete action. The government could never silence a company like Twitter without violating First Amendment rights to free speech. However, his threats are a reminder of other significant levers that the president and the rest of the federal government have at their disposal.

Senator Josh Hawley, a Missouri Republican, wrote Twitter Chief Executive Officer Jack Dorsey on Wednesday to demand an explanation for the fact-checking links added to Trump's tweets. He accused the company of choosing to "editorialize."

Hawley repeated a threat that's been raised by other lawmakers over the years: Revoking the protections that shield Twitter and other platforms from legal liability for content its users post.

"Politicians can use the powers of government to make life very difficult for private companies and there's a long track record of politicians from both parties doing this in the last couple years to social media companies," said Jesse Blumenthal, a conservative who leads tech policy at Stand Together, part of the political network affiliated with libertarian billionaire Charles Koch.

In recent days, Trump had tweeted attacks on cable news host and former Republican Representative Joe Scarborough by pushing a baseless conspiracy theory that he was involved in the death 19 years ago of a woman who worked at his district office in Florida. Her widower sent a letter to Twitter asking the publicly traded company to delete Trump's tweets, but it chose to leave them online.

Scarborough is a frequent critic of the president.

80 MILLION FOLLOWERS, 52,000 TWEETS

The feud with Twitter comes as Trump has been under siege for his handling of the coronavirus

pandemic that's infected more than 1.6 million Americans and killed some 100,000. He trails Biden in general election polls by an average of 5.3 percentage points, according to RealClearPolitics.

There has never been a politician as prolific on social media, which he often uses to call opponents names, spread conspiracy theories, dismiss employees and announce policy changes. He has sent more than 52,000 tweets and has more than 80 million followers.

Trump has both acknowledged the power he wields when he tweets and the platform's impact on his 2016 election. At a July 2019 social media event at the White House he boasted about using Twitter to announce that the U.S. would recognize Israel's sovereignty over the Golan Heights, one of the world's most contentious foreign policy issues.

"Boom," Trump said of the March 19 tweet. "I press it and, within two seconds, we have breaking news."

At that same event he acknowledged that without the platform he might not have been elected.

'KEYBOARD WARRIORS'

Trump has a symbiotic relationship with his supporters on Twitter. They often create memes that go viral with his retweets. Earlier this month, he retweeted a meme of himself as the president giving a speech in the 1996 movie "Independence Day," about an alien invasion. That meme has been viewed 18 million times on Twitter.

He's repeatedly promoted a twi-

ter handle that goes by the name of @sexcounseling that reinforces his messages. Earlier this month he egged on his supporters online with the hashtag obamagate, alleging that President Barack Obama's administration improperly tried to undermine his election campaign in 2016. His supporters tweeted a series of memes with Obama and Biden.

"Thank you to all of my great Keyboard Warriors. You are better, and far more brilliant, than anyone on Madison Avenue (Ad Agencies). There is nobody like you!" Trump said in a May 14 tweet.

Tim Murtaugh, a Trump campaign spokesman, defended the president's use of Twitter.

"Most Americans have a pretty clear understanding of the way that President Trump uses Twitter," Murtaugh said Wednesday on Fox News. "Twitter is a way for the president to connect with his voters. We hear all the time from the president's supporters that they like the way that the president expresses himself on Twitter because they say to this day they say listen here's a guy who finally says the things out loud that I'm thinking to myself."

Going back to the 2016 campaign, Trump and his campaign have cultivated a relationship with his supporters online. That part of his base remains engaged, echoing and spreading his messages, said Eric Wilson, a Republican digital strategist.

"The most effective endorsement for a candidate is from someone that you already trust, that you already have a relationship with," Wilson said. **BLOOMBERG**

OPINION

World Views

Shuli Ren, Bloomberg

CHINA ISN'T USING ITS CURRENCY AS A COLD WAR WEAPON

The deterioration of U.S.-China relations is fast and furious, with Washington throwing out accusations of unfair trade practices, unlawful technology transfer and an early cover-up of the coronavirus outbreak, which has claimed over 100,000 American lives. The Chinese yuan, this year's beacon of stability, is now in risk of tumbling like other emerging markets currencies.

On Wednesday, the offshore yuan, which trades freely, flirted with its weakest level on record, dropping as much as 0.7% to 7.1965. While Thursday morning's yuan fix came in stronger than expected, the overall sentiment is downbeat.

It's tempting to theorize that a weaker yuan could become a powerful weapon in the new Cold War, yet there's little evidence of foul play from the People's Bank of China. Since mid-2017, the central bank has based its fixing on the previous day's close, dollar movement overnight against a currency basket, and what it calls the "countercyclical factor," a catch-all metric that grants wiggle room to deviate from market fundamentals. The yuan can move in a 2% trading range around the PBOC's daily target.

Take a look at Goldman Sachs Group Inc.'s estimate of the countercyclical factor. Over the last year, the PBOC has been consistently guiding its yuan stronger, not weaker, to artificially track the dollar. For all the theatrics of getting labeled a currency manipulator, Beijing wasn't making its exports any cheaper.

What's new this year is the PBOC's Zen-like attitude. Rather than playing the heroic fireman, handling one crisis after another, the central bank has been largely hands-off. It has used the countercyclical factor in a meaningful way only twice since January, on Feb. 4 when China emerged from the Lunar New Year holiday to face a national lockdown, and at the end of March when the outbreak was shaking up global markets.

And why should the PBOC adhere to the dollar anyway? The coronavirus downturn has only showcased America's exceptionalism — it prints the world's reserve currency. Haven demand for the dollar has surged, evidenced by soaring currency swap rates from the euro zone to South Korea, and the Federal Reserve's scramble to re-establish swap lines with other central banks. Looking back to 2008, the greenback only started to weaken two months after demand for "emergency dollars" peaked, data provided by Deutsche Bank AG show.

So it makes sense for China to adopt a more enlightened approach, allowing the yuan to weaken during periods of dollar strength, and catch up when global tensions recede. From the PBOC's view, the trade-weighted yuan is certainly stronger now than it was last fall, when the central bank was in fire-fighting mode. China doesn't want to spend another \$1 trillion of its foreign reserves defending its currency. The rapid drawdown in 2015 and 2016 traumatized the Chinese for good.

To be sure, the pressure of capital outflows is still there. Just look at the consistent negative value of the "net error and omissions" figures in China's balance of payment data. However, here's the beauty of the virus: The Chinese can't go anywhere. They can't come to Hong Kong to buy insurance products, and unless you're ultra-rich (with private bankers around the world apartment-hunting for you), Manhattan real estate is off-limits. The PBOC has less to worry about than before.

So now the market can test the true value of the yuan. It could easily drop below 7.30 if the phase one trade deal breaks down and the Trump administration imposes some of the tariffs it had previously threatened, estimates HSBC Holdings Plc.

Long-time China bear Kyle Bass abandoned his yuan short in early 2019 for the greenback-pegged Hong Kong dollar. He didn't profit from his yuan trade because the PBOC established powerful tools, such as selling yuan-denominated bills in the offshore market, to kill anyone betting against the currency. Now that their interests are becoming aligned, it's time for the bears to wake up.

SOUTH AFRICA EASES BANS ON ALCOHOL SALES, CHURCH SERVICES

The South African government says it will allow people to buy alcohol and attend church services starting Monday as part of its phased relaxation of the coronavirus lockdown.

Both activities will be subject to restrictions in a country with the highest number of cases in Africa.

Alcohol sales, banned since March 27, will be allowed four days a week. No alcohol can be purchased on Fridays and over the weekend and bars remain closed. Alcohol may be consumed only at home.

Churches can reopen but must limit congregation size to 50 people. Churchgoers and officials must wear masks and maintain social distancing. For those entering church, hand sanitizing and screening will be compulsory.

Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, the minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, also said cigarette sales remain banned but a national night curfew will be lifted, and outdoor exercise will be allowed at any time.

THE BUZZ

FOR LAUNCH SPECTATORS, STORMS MORE WORRISOME THAN VIRUS

AP PHOTO



A woman walks to her spot along Indian Creek Lagoon in a Titusville, Florida to watch the launch of SpaceX Falcon 9

MIKE SCHNEIDER, TITUSVILLE (FLA.)

FOR the spectators gathered along the Space Coast for an astronaut launch, the rumbling thunder, darkening clouds and then a drenching downpour were more worrisome than any pandemic.

But neither kept crowds from jamming favorite viewing spots in parks and area beaches.

At a park in Titusville with a clear view of the Kennedy Space Center launch pad 15 miles away, hundreds of spectators huddled under tents and umbrellas during on-and-off drizzle before the launch was called off because of the weather.

It would have been the first launch with astronauts from Florida in almost a decade, and the first by a private company, SpaceX. The next attempt is Saturday.

NASA and SpaceX had urged spectators to stay at home for safety reasons. But officials in Brevard County, home to the Kennedy Space Center, rolled out the welcome mat in an effort to jump-start a tourism industry hit hard this spring by coronavirus-related lockdowns.

About a third of the people at Space View Park wore masks as encouraged by health officials to help stop the spread of the

new coronavirus.

The Brevard County Sheriff's Office asked visitors to practice social distancing as they waited for the launch of astronauts Doug Hurley and Bob Behnken on a test flight of SpaceX's Dragon crew capsule.

President Donald Trump and Vice President Mike Pence traveled to the space center for the launch, while the number of visitors inside was drastically curtailed.

About a third of the people at Space View Park wore masks as encouraged by health officials to help stop the spread of the new coronavirus

About two hours before the scheduled launch time, a downpour sent many spectators running to their cars to wait out the storm. Pamela Anderson, her husband, Danny, and their granddaughter, Victoria, donned trash bags to serve as raincoats. They won't be back Saturday since they have to be back at their home in Tennessee.

"We had lightning and thunder a lot, and then my phone went off and it said 'tornado warning,'" Anderson said. "We were just hoping for the launch. It would have been a lifetime experience."

For Scott and Lisa Ward, the chance to watch a lau-

nch from Florida after a nine-year absence was worth a 125-mile drive from Okeechobee in the heart of Florida. He had watched several shuttle launches.

"That's what it's about, getting back to exploration," said Scott Ward, who is retired.

Patricia Gottenger and Nelly Marro tied a rocket ship balloon to their lawn chairs as they set up a bit away from the rest of the crowd at the park. The Venezuelan natives wore face masks and acknowledged they picked a spot on the edge of the park as a safety precaution for their first launch.

"This is historic," said Gottenger, who drove up from South Florida for the day with

Marro.

Erin Gatz came prepared for both rain and pandemic. Accompanied by her 14-year-old daughter Regan and 12-year-old son Gavin, she brought face masks and a small tent. The children have faint memories of watching one of the last shuttle launches almost a decade ago when they were small.

Even though she had soaked feet from the storm, Gatz said she would be back on Saturday.

"Hopefully better weather," said Gatz, who lives about an hour away in Deltona. "It's Florida weather. In 15 minutes, it can change." AP

Australia A Catholic archbishop has accused an Australian state government of inequitable pandemic rules by allowing up to 50 people into pubs while limiting church congregations to 10. Sydney Archbishop Anthony Fisher yesterday encouraged Catholics to sign a petition calling on the New South Wales government to treat churches the same as pubs, restaurants and cafes. New pandemic restrictions that take effect on June 1 increase the number of customers that such commercial premises can hold from 10 to 50.

Indonesia s reported yesterday 687 new coronavirus cases and a death toll at nearly 1,500, the most fatalities in Southeast Asia. Cases continue to increase even as the government prepares to relax restrictions gradually starting next week. Epidemiologists have warned that reopening the economy prematurely could trigger a second wave of infections. The government insisted the country must be ready to get back to normal by the end of July.

AP PHOTO



Thailand s state planning agency estimates that as many as 8.4 million people could end up unemployed this year due to the pandemic, with the tourism sector being worst affected. A report by the National Economic and Social Development Council did not give current unemployment figures, but projected the cumulative 8.4 million lost jobs if the economy did not rebound. An independent commission estimated last month that job losses had already totaled 7 million.

AP PHOTO



USA Fires burned and looters struck yesterday after violent protests over the death of a black man in police custody rocked Minneapolis for a second straight night, with damage stretching for miles across the city. Amid the violence, a man was found fatally shot at the previous night near a pawn shop. Asked to confirm reports that he had been shot by a store owner, police said that was "one of the theories."