



BRITAIN HAS APPOINTED CAROLINE WILSON AS ITS NEW AMBASSADOR TO CHINA IN A TIME OF ‘OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES’

A DRUG THAT CURES COVID-19 PATIENTS HAS BEEN SUCCESSFULLY TESTED IN ENGLAND WHERE A TRIAL BEGINS FOR CORONAVIRUS VACCINE

‘MACAO READY GO! LOCAL TOURS’ SET TO TAKE PLACE BETWEEN JUNE 22 AND SEPTEMBER 30 WILL HOLD A TOTAL OF 15 ITINERARIES: MGTO

China-India At least three Indian soldiers were killed in a confrontation with Chinese troops along their disputed border high in the Himalayas where thousands of soldiers on both sides have been facing off for over a month, the Indian army said. The incident — in which neither side fired any shots — is the first deadly confrontation between the two Asian giants since 1975. The Indian army said in a statement that a “violent faceoff” took place in Galwan Valley in the Ladakh region “with casualties on both sides.”



China Citing technical reasons, China has delayed the launch of the final satellite to complete its Beidou Navigation Satellite System constellation that emulates the U.S. Global Positioning System. Xinhua News Agency said the mission aboard a Long March-3 rocket from the southwestern satellite launch base of Xicheng was scrubbed after pre-launch checks discovered “product technical problems.” No details or a new launch date were immediately announced.



New Zealand is no longer free from the coronavirus after two women who flew from London to see a dying parent tested positive. The cases sparked a round of testing for anybody who might have been close to them, including their flight’s fellow passengers and crew, staff members at a hotel and a family member. The women are isolated and have delayed the funeral of their parent until they have recovered.

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KIM BLOWS UP KOREA'S LIAISON OFFICE



AP PHOTO

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ANDRIK LANGFIELD

CARETAKERS IN NEED OF CARE STUDY WARNS 32% SUFFER FROM DEPRESSION

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MGTO TO FEATURE 15 ITINERARIES FOR LOCAL TOUR SCHEME

ANTHONY LAM

In collaboration with three local tourism associations and the Macao Foundation, the Macao Government Tourism Office's (MGTO) "Macao Ready Go! Local Tours" scheme scheduled to take place between June 22 and September 30 is set to hold a total of 15 itineraries as part of the campaign.

Each Macau resident will be sponsored with a total of MOP560 to join two tours, with MOP280 allocated to each. The 15 itineraries in the scheme are separated into two categories – six for "Community-based Tours" and nine for "Leisure Tours". The two-time grants must be used on tours from different categories. If participants signed up for two programs from the same category, only one program will be funded and the participant will need to pay the full price to enjoy another program.

Details on the itinerary can be found on the Facebook Page "Stopover Macao".

Sightseeing, catering, tour guide services, insurance fees, and the like are already included



within those programs. After using up the sponsored funds, residents can pay by themselves to continue joining the tours.

Those itineraries will be further negotiated and changed in order to involve different activities and organizations. Some itineraries will possibly include a series of recreational

activities hosted in July.

By hosting the scheme, the Macau government hopes to gradually stimulate Macau's tourism activities. Relevant data will be collected to evaluate the scheme's effectiveness, which will serve as a reference for the formulation of tourism promotional strategies and tour route design in

the future.

Registration for the scheme starts today.

Meanwhile, visits to Air Macau's backend operation area may be expanded to welcome adults who are interested in the aviation industry, Wu Keng Kuong, president of the Travel Industry Council of Macau, said yesterday.

One of the 15 itineraries currently offered features a site tour to the backend area of Air Macau. The tour, however, is a parent-child targeted feature and will only include parents with children. In other words, individual adults are not eligible for the visit, even if they are interested in the aviation industry.

When questioned by the Times on that point, the council president said the organizers would consider an expansion.

"The Air Macau tour was only realized with the strong support of the airline company," Wu explained. "[The tour] is an exclusive arrangement."

But he added that the suggestion of expanding to other adults is constructive. "I believe we'll continue our negotia-

tion with Air Macau to determine [whether] further expansion is possible."

On the other hand, at Monday's Novel Coronavirus press conference, Vice Director Cheng Wai Tong of the MGTO said that non-residents are also welcome to participate in the local tour, just that they will not receive tour fare subsidies from the government.

In addition, tour guide services will be provided in Cantonese, Mandarin, Portuguese and English.

As of yesterday, promotional materials were only available in Chinese. When questioned as to why there was a discrepancy, Cheng stressed that the tour scheme targets local residents.

After a brief pause, he reiterated that non-resident workers can also register for the tours, but that they will need to pay the full fee.

Then he deferred to Wu for further explanation. Wu added that due to time constraints, the materials have not yet been translated into English and Portuguese.

On how non-Chinese speakers can register for the tours, since the MGTO vice director reiterated "people who have [travelled] have travel agencies they frequent," both Cheng and Wu noted that any of the participating travel agencies will suffice.

IC to hold series of activities in celebration of 15th anniversary of World Heritage inscription

ANTHONY LAM

Six phases of activities will be held in July to celebrate the Historic Centre of Macao's inscription as a World Heritage site 15 years ago, the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) announced in a statement.

The program features a total of 28 activities, which include a thematic festival, the "World Heritage Open Day," the "Heritage City Tours - Guided Tours and Illustration Workshop," "Fun Sharing Cultural Heritage" lectures, a story-writing competition and a WeChat game.



On July 11 and 12, a thematic festival will be held at the "World Heritage Youth Education Base" located in Mandarin's House.

The Festival features a variety of special activities, including game booths, family workshops, thematic exhibitions, the sale of cultural and creati-

ve products, a lucky draw, various performances and special photography spots.

Furthermore, as part of the activity "World Heritage Open Day", the IC will arrange five visits for the public to have an experience at World Heritage sites that are rarely open to the public, such as enjoying afternoon tea at the Sir Robert Ho Tung Library, experiencing the panoramic view of the Ruins of St Paul's and taking part in a treasure hunt at Mandarin's House.

Following that is the "Heritage City Tours - Gui-

ded Tours and Illustration Workshop." The city tours will be led by professional guides, who will lead participants on a guided visit to different World Heritage buildings.

The activity will also feature illustrators who will teach participants how to create a travel diary, so that they can capture moments of their tours.

The series of activities also includes a Story-Writing Competition entitled "Memorable Moments of World Heritage," "Fun Sharing Cultural Heritage" lectures in schools and

districts, the "World Heritage Modeling Workshop," and a WeChat Game, "I am a Cultural Heritage Expert," which gives participants a chance to win prizes with their knowledge of cultural heritage.

Other special activities with free admission will also be held in July. To safeguard the health of participants, IC will deploy appropriate measures according to the anti-epidemic guidelines of the Health Bureau, such as increased cleaning and sanitization at activity venues. All participants must wear masks, undergo body temperature checks, present a Macau health code of the day and follow crowd-control measures on site. The activities may be adjusted based on the pandemic situation.

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Study shows 32% of caretakers suffer from depression

JULIE ZHU

A study conducted by the Fuhong Society of Macau and the University of Macau (UM) has drawn attention to the mental health of those who care for people with a disability.

Recently, the institutions released a survey report. From March 2019, the association has been working with a research team from UM to investigate the burden and mental health status of caregivers in Macau.

16 college students from UM's Department of Psychology and Social Workers collected information from those who care for people with intellectual or mental disabilities. In total, 234 valid questionnaires were collected.

The study found that 31.7% and 46.6% of caregivers experience moderate-to-severe depression and anxiety symptoms respectively.

It was also identified that the government is not providing adequate support to the caregivers of people with intellectual or mental disabilities and people undergoing rehabilitation for mental or physical disability.

These caregivers exhibit anxiety in the process of seeking help. Nursing difficulties and the lack of adequate financial support are

JEREMY WONG



the key factors causing their depression and anxiety.

In addition, the study also found that, faced with traditional Chinese values, some caregivers suffer from an even greater level of depression. The study specifically drew attention to the classical Chinese conscience, stipulating that women ought to be in charge

of domestic matters, with men taking care of non-domestic matters, and family scandals being kept to the family only.

"Because of Chinese culture's high regard of 'saving face,' female family members are taken for granted in supporting [the family's reputation]. Therefore, worrying that they might make the fa-

mily lose face is one of the reasons [contributing to] mental pain for these caregivers," the survey concluded.

78% of the survey respondents were women. 30% of the respondents spent 40 hours taking care of people with mental disabilities, 50% of the interviewees had a monthly income of approximate-

ly 5,000 patacas, more than half of them cared for people aged above 61 years old, while 36% cared for people aged between 51 and 60 years old.

The association proposed to the local government the implementation of a pilot program for caregivers, with the program granting caregivers a subsidy of 2,000 patacas, equivalent to 10% of the median income of a Macau resident in the fourth quarter of 2019. Applicants are mainly Macau permanent residents who do not work for government subsidized nurseries.

The association also suggested that the local government should allow the caregivers, as well as the recipients of the care, to be simultaneously eligible for other subsidies.

The association wants the local government to adjust the subsidies every two years.

Meanwhile, commenting on the results of the study, Brian Hall, director of the Global and Community Mental Health Research Group at UM remarked, "The main conclusions are that there exist mental health problems in caregivers of people with disabilities, and that support measures are needed, which may cost less to the government if they are applied preventively."

Hall further explained that prevention is less costly than a cure, particularly in terms of the wider healthcare costs and demand for services.

As of September last year, 3,200 people among Macau's licensed residents with a disability are mentally disabled, including 440 with autism and 410 with dementia.

PJ allowed to keep drugs, fake banknotes for training purposes

RENATO MARQUES

UNDER the new law that will govern the activities and competencies of the Judiciary Police (PJ), the police will be allowed to keep several items seized during police operations for the purposes of staff training. Among such items are new drugs, forged currency and objects such as mobile phones and computers, the president of the First Standing Committee of the Legislative Assembly (AL), Ho Ion Sang said yesterday in a media briefing following a meeting of the Committee to discuss the details of the new law before it goes to a plenary session for final approval.

Speaking to the media about a meeting which Ho considered to be very productive towards the final committee opinion on the bill, the president said th-

MACAU PHOTO AGENCY



se present had discussed a new version of the working document sent by the government to the AL early this month, in which the executive promoted changes according to the opinions previously voiced by the Committee.

One of those changes has to do with the possibility of the PJ keeping some objects relating to investigations: "Now the government clarified that the need for the PJ to keep

some of these objects so they can be used for staff training needs to be subjected to authorization by the courts. We think that it is logical and acceptable that the PJ can make such a request to the courts [after all judicial procedures are concluded]."

Ho remarked that, in total, four major changes were made to the document. The other three changes related to compliance with data protection laws by perso-

nal data assessments, new disciplinary measures to be enforced to PJ staff, and a clear definition of which PJ departments and divisions will be accorded the status of criminal police.

Regarding the disciplinary measures to be enforced by the new law, which will be complemented by a new career regime of the PJ, will be the high importance to be given to situations in which PJ staff members are found to be under the

influence of alcohol during their duties. Such circumstances "will [now] be considered as a very serious disciplinary offense," according to Ho.

In the same chapter, the committee decided to retain the rule stating that PJ staff can be prosecuted for their unlawful misconduct up to 10 years from the date of the events.

The committee's president also noted that, due to the particularity of this law, which is connected to others relating to the careers of PJ staff, the committee will not propose a certain period for the law to become operative. Instead, Ho explained, it will be defined as one particular day on which both laws will enter into force at the same time.

The possibility of promotions and appointments of staff to be specially

authorized by the Chief Executive and exempted from publication in the government official gazette is a topic that has previously raised some concerns. In response to questioning on this topic, Ho clarified that such cases are special and rare and must be related to work duties.

"This has to do with personal security reasons or due to the special nature of the duties - for example, when the nature of the work performed does not allow the disclosure of the name of the person that does it," he said. He clarified that the rule will only apply to those who are already working with the force and does not apply to the recruitment of new staff members.

According to Ho, the bill will likely be ready to be sent to the final plenary discussion at the beginning of next month.

CENTRAL BANK TO TIGHTEN CONTROLS ON CASH TRANSACTIONS

China's central bank (PBOC) is tightening the screws on cash transactions across the country, starting with pilot programs in Shenzhen, Zhejiang, and Hebei. From July 1, all cash deposits and/or withdrawals above 100,000 yuan a day (cumulative) in these three jurisdictions will be reviewed. Shenzhen was reportedly chosen because of the large volume of yuan that flows across its border with Hong Kong. The new measures are being touted as a natural follow-on from previous measures, which took aim at large-volume transactions between bank accounts and online third-party payment providers since 2017.

SINGAPORE ALLOWS MACAU VISITORS TO SERVE OUT QUARANTINE PERIOD FROM HOME

The Singapore Department of Health has announced new entry-exit regulations to be applied from tomorrow. According to the notice, travellers entering Singapore from 11:59 p.m. today who remained in Australia, Brunei, mainland China, Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan in the 14 days prior to their entry will no longer be required to serve their 14-day quarantine at its designated facility. The new regulation will also apply to visitors from New Zealand, Japan, Korea and Vietnam. These tourists, however, will still be subject to a compulsory Covid-19 test and will have to pay for the test, which costs up to 1,147 patacas.

OFFICIAL BACK TO OFFICE AFTER PROBE

The former Director of Cartography and Cadastre Bureau (DSCC), Cheong Sio Kei, who has been investigated for abuse of power, has been reinstated as a deputy director in the bureau's department, All About Macau reported. Secretary for Transport and Public Works Raimundo Arrais do Rosário said yesterday that Cheong had been cleared from any wrongdoing by a local court. In the Commission Against Corruption report issued in March last year, the bureau indicated that the former director of the Environmental Protection Bureau (DSPA) had an extramarital affair with a female colleague and that public funds were used to pay for their leisure, such as hotel and overseas travel costs. Cheong resigned from his position at the DSPA following the allegations.

SARS STILL EXCEPTIONS TO CHINA'S CRACKDOWN ON RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

RENATO MARQUES

THE latest report from the United States Department of State on International Religious Freedom, which was published recently, still notes the Macau and Hong Kong Special Administrative Regions as exceptions to the Chinese government's crusade against religion in the mainland and namely in the regions of Tibet and Xinjiang.

Regarding Macau, the report notes that the local Basic Law "grants residents freedom of religious belief, freedom to preach and participate in religious activities in public, and freedom to pursue religious education."

The same law also protects the right of religious assembly and the rights of religious organizations to administer schools, hospitals, and welfare institutions and to provide other social services.

One of the facts that contributed for the classification of Macau as a region enjoying religious freedom is the local operation of the religious group "Falun Gong," which in Macau, "continued to hold rallies and protests against Chinese Communist Party (CCP) treatment of Falun Gong practitioners in mainland China."

Conversely, the U.S. Department of State notes an episode occurred during the celebrations in Macau of the 70th anniversary of communist rule in



China, when the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) hosted a video-mapping event in which CCP symbols were projected onto the Ruins of Saint Paul's facade.

The event triggered a response from several sectors of the society, including from the Ca-

tholic Diocese of Macau, which stated concerns over the government's use of historically religious sites for secular purposes.

In the section of the report dedicated to Macau, and also contributing to the final classification attributed to the region, the U.S. governmental depart-

ment noted the continuous and unchanged financial support provided by the local government to non-governmental organizations operating in the SAR, "regardless of religious affiliation," as well as allowing and providing support to several kinds of activities hosted by them.

The 2019 report's section on religious persecution in China is considerably longer and more detailed than in previous years, as a result of the many actions taken by the central government regarding the implementation of its five-year plan to "Sinicize" the state-sanctioned religions.

In the 2019 report, the State Department also records the discoveries of the last year regarding the detainment, re-education, abuse, and torture of more than one million Uyghurs, ethnic Kazaks, Hui, Uyghur Christians, and members of Falun Gong.

The report, published annually to Congress, discusses the status of religious freedom in every country over the course of the previous year. For each country, the report looks at the relevant state's government and its policies regarding religious practice and belief, the country's religious demography, the social status of its various religious beliefs and practices, and any associated activity by the U.S. government to promote religious freedom in the area.

GDI receives 19 proposals up to MOP422m for Zone A

ANTHONY LAM

PROPOSALS for the works to be conducted on Lot B4 of the New Urban Zone A were unveiled yesterday by the Infrastructure Development Office.

The New Urban Zone A is the piece of reclaimed land situated between the Macau border area of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge and the main peninsula, off the coast from the city's Main Reservoir. The total area of the zone is 1.38 km², which makes it the largest of the six pieces of land in the five New Urban Zones.

In this phase, the public tender offered will only

cover the foundational works and the three-floor basement construction of the land plot. A notice from the government showed that, for the time being, Lot B4 is the last land plot to be worked on. Works on other land plots will be handled in later phases.

All proposals have been accepted by the Office for consideration. Construction companies quoted prices from MOP368 million to MOP422 million and pledged work periods from 399 to 425 workdays.

The tender has no price ceiling.

A total of 19 proposals have been received for this tender. The govern-

ment expects work will commence in the fourth quarter of this year.

With an area of 10,698 m², Lot B4 will be home to a social housing estate, which will include residential units, a public parking lot, and commercial and community facilities. Tenders for the various construction works will be separately categorized.

As introduced by the Office's internal civil engineer, Moses Leong, this current tender will cover piling foundations, soil retention, excavation for the construction of deep shoe rails and protective support, reinforcement of concrete structures and



improvements to the terrain, among other works.

The tender requirements state that the works must be concluded within 450 workdays. The floor construction of the basement's three levels has a maximum construction period of 195 workdays, while the piling works carry a maximum period of 160 workdays. Design work for the ground construction is now in progress.

According to government plans, Zone A will be home to residences for a maximum of 96,000 people, with 32,000 residential units planned. It is only allotted to residential and community facilities, which include the fourth bridge connecting Macau and Taipa that is currently under construction and the East Line of the Light Rapid Transit, more commonly known as the Light Rail or the LRT.

Former UK Consul General to Macau appointed to key role in Beijing

LYNZY VALLES

BRITAIN has appointed the former Consul General to Hong Kong and Macau as a new ambassador to China – a move that is being described as a time of “opportunities and challenges” with Beijing.

Caroline Wilson is expected to take up her appointment in September, as cited in a statement issued by the UK government. She succeeds Barbara Woodward, who has completed her tour.

The diplomat, who speaks fluent Mandarin, was previously Europe director at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office from October 2016 until July 2019.

“It is an incredible opportunity to be asked to represent the UK in China at this critical time. As



major economies and leading members of the global community, the UK and China must continue to work together to develop our partnership,” said the diplomat, who carried out her diplomatic posting in Macau and Hong Kong

from 2012 to 2016.

“I look forward to returning to China to take the relationship forward,” she added.

Wilson took up her first role overseas at the British Embassy in Beijing from 1997 to 2000.

Commenting on the appointment, UK's Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab remarked, “This is an important juncture in the UK's relationship with China, with both opportunities and challenges. Caroline is an outstanding diplomat, who will help us navigate the path ahead.”

Meanwhile, when Wilson was concluding her diplomatic posting in Hong Kong in 2016, she expressed optimism about the “One Country, Two Systems” policy, according to a report issued by South China Morning Post.

“In any place, there are challenges [...] I am absolutely confident that Hong Kong and China will overcome any small challenges and Hong Kong will continue to prosper and flourish,” she previously told an audience of Hongkongers, as cited in the report.

DSSOPT RECEIVES 10 BIDS FOR GUIA PEDESTRIAN TUNNEL

JULIE ZHU

THE Land, Public Works and Transport Bureau (DSSOPT) received a total of ten bids in the public tender for the design and construction of the Guia Hill pedestrian tunnel.

The local government is expecting to commence the design of a pedestrian tunnel passing through Guia Hill in the fourth quarter of this year. The maximum anticipated time for the design and construction period is 800 working days.

The tunnel will pass through Guia Hill, connecting ZAPE and Avenida de Horta e Costa. One side will end at the gas station next to Avenida Dr. Rodrigo Rodrigues, while the other side will end at Flora Garden. Once the tunnel is built, the distance between the two places will be shortened to approximately 400 meters, from the current 1,100 meters.

The contractor will build a pedestrian tunnel, footbridge, and elevators, as well as other facilities.

DSSOPT will select a contractor based on their proposal. The proposed length of construction period, work plan, previous experience of the contractor, and the bidding price represent 20%, 30%, 10% and 40% of the criteria, respectively, during the evaluation process.

Previously, lawmaker Leong Sun Iok had proposed that the local government decorate the Guia Hill pedestrian tunnel with Macau historical cultural elements. Earlier this year, the local government announced plans to excavate a tunnel through Guia Hill for the exclusive use of pedestrians.

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HONG KONG

DELEGATE TO NPC HOPING FOR STABILITY WITH SECURITY LAW

HONG Kong's sole delegate to China's top legislative body said Monday that many Hong Kong residents support a new national security law being imposed by Beijing in the hopes that it will help the city regain stability, despite concerns that it will be used to curb opposition in the semi-autonomous Chinese territory.

Tam Yiu Chung, Hong Kong's representative to the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, said that over 1.8 million Hong Kong citizens signed a petition last month indicating their support of the legislation.

"In the past year, many things have happened in Hong Kong, especially violent incidents," Tam said in an interview, referring to pro-democracy protests last year that often led to clashes between demonstrators and police. "Many citizens do not want to see such violence happening again."

"They put their hope in the Hong Kong security law — that if it can be launched and passed, it may lead our society back to stability," he said ahead of a Standing Committee meeting in Beijing later this week.

The national security legislation is aimed at curbing secessionist, subversive, terrorist and foreign interference activities that Beijing says fueled the months-long anti-government protests. The Standing Committee has yet

to put the legislation into Hong Kong's constitution, known as the Basic Law, or offer details on it.

Tam, who was a window display designer in his youth and cut his teeth in politics by rising in the ranks of one of Hong Kong's largest trade unions, said he had initially supported the 1989 student-led pro-democracy demonstrations in Beijing's Tiananmen Square that were crushed by China's military with deadly force.

But while at first he saw students standing up to the government, he said "the nature of the incident turned to something else."

He said that if there currently are threats to national security in Hong Kong, the "one country, two systems" framework — under which the former British colony was given freedoms not found in mainland China following its return to Chinese control in 1997 — will be difficult to keep intact.

Anti-government protests have picked up steam in recent weeks to oppose the new legislation.

On Monday, pro-democracy activist Lee Cheuk-yan sharply rebuked the law, as he and 14 other activists who were arrested on charges of organizing the protests last year showed up for their second court appearance.

"It is a total disruption of the rule of law that we cherish so much, and now they want to change it to complete rule by China," Lee said. **AP**

AP PHOTO



HONG KONG

CARRIE LAM URGES PEOPLE NOT TO 'DEMONIZE' SECURITY LAW

HONG Kong leader Carrie Lam said yesterday that she hopes opponents of a new national security law being imposed by China do not "demonize and stigmatize" the legislation because doing so would mean pitting themselves against residents of the semi-autonomous Chinese territory.

"The people of Hong Kong want to see stability again, they want a safe environment where they can work and live," Lam told reporters.

She said people were "sick and tired" of violence in Hong Kong and intervention by foreign forces in the city.

China's ceremonial parliament in May approved the decision to enact a national security law in Hong Kong, aimed at curbing subversive, secessionist, terrorist and foreign intervention activities in the city following months of anti-government protests last year.

"We are part of the People's Republic of China, but we don't have a mechanism to protect national security," Lam said. "This is a risk not just to over 7 million people in Hong Kong, it's also a risk to 1.4 billion people in the country."

Lam spoke ahead of a meeting this week by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, which exercises legislative

power in China. The law is not on the meeting's agenda, but Hong Kong delegate Tam Yiu Chung said in an interview Monday that items could be added.

Critics consider the imminent legislation an attack on the "one country, two systems" framework in which China promised Hong Kong a high degree of autonomy and freedoms not found on the mainland when the former British colony was returned to Chinese control in 1997. They fear that the law will be used to curb any dissent in Hong Kong.

Details about the law have not been disclosed, though Lam said the specifics will be established. She said people "don't need to worry" about this because at the end of the day, it is for Hong Kong's authorities to enforce the law.

"Please accept and understand why we have to do it," she said. "The only purpose of this task is to protect Hong Kong and the country."

The anti-government protests had subsiding during coronavirus restrictions, but have returned to the city in recent weeks, even though social distancing measures remain in place.

Lam said Hong Kong will relax its measures gradually.

"It would be risky if we completely lift the measures," she said. "In recent ti-

mes in some cities such as Beijing, we have seen imported cases and some countries have seen an influx of cases after relaxing measures."

Hong Kong's secretary for food and health, Sophia Chan, said yesterday that the ban on public gatherings will be relaxed from eight to 50 people.

Restaurants will no longer be limited by capacity. For establishments such as bars and karaoke lounges, the maximum number of guests per table will be doubled from eight to 16.

"The relaxation is made in light of the easing of the epidemic. We also realize that certain activities must resume," said Chan, who stressed that there was "no political consideration" involved in limiting the number of people allowed in public gatherings.

Separately, a group of over 50 protesters gathered in a shopping mall in the city's Causeway Bay shopping district despite heavy riot police presence, shouting slogans and holding up flags that said "Liberate Hong Kong, Revolution of our times."

Police stopped and searched several people near Victoria Park, where protests were initially supposed to take place but were later canceled. They did not appear to make any arrests. **AP**

AP PHOTO



Tam Yiu Chung

PANDEMIC

Beijing expands lockdowns as cases top 100 in new outbreak

CHINESE authorities locked down a third neighborhood in Beijing yesterday as they rushed to prevent the spread of a new coronavirus outbreak that has infected more than 100 people in a country that appeared to have largely contained the virus.

The resurgence in China highlighted public health expert calls for vigilance as many nations move forward with easing virus restrictions to revive their economies.

New Zealand, which hadn't seen a new case in three weeks, said it is investigating a case in which two women who flew in from London to see a dying parent were allowed to leave quarantine and drive halfway across the country before they were tested and found to be positive. And the Philippines reimposed a strict lockdown on the city of Cebu after a rise in cases.

China reported 40 more coronavirus infections nationwide through the end of Monday, including 27 in Beijing, bringing the total to 106 in the nation's capital since Thursday. At least one patient was in critical condition and two were in serious condition. Four cases were also reported in neighboring Hebei province, with three linked to the Beijing outbreak.



AP PHOTO

Most of the cases have been linked to the Xinfadi wholesale food market, and people lined up around the city for massive testing campaigns of anyone who had visited the market in the past two weeks or come in contact with them. About 9,000 workers at the market were tested previously.

The initial spread happened

among market workers, Wu Zunyou, the chief epidemiologist at the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, told state broadcaster CCTV. He said that authorities detected the outbreak early enough to be confident they can contain it.

"For those who were infected, they will start showing symptoms

either tomorrow or the day after tomorrow," he said. "So, if there's no sharp increase of newly reported cases tomorrow or the day after tomorrow, the outbreak this time will basically stay at the current scale."

Authorities locked down seven residential compounds in Beijing's Xicheng district, where the

first case was confirmed on Thursday. They also barring residents of areas considered high-risk from leaving Beijing and banned taxis and car-hailing services from taking people out of the city.

The number of passengers on buses, trains and subways will also be limited and all are required to wear masks.

Fresh meat and seafood in the city and elsewhere in China was also being inspected, though experts have expressed doubt the virus could be spread via food supplies. Nonetheless, Chinese media reports said that salmon had been pulled from shelves in 14 cities including Beijing after the virus was found in a sample taken from a salmon chopping board at Xinfadi market.

The market has been closed for disinfection, as has a second market where three cases were confirmed. Residential communities around both markets have been put under lockdown, affecting 90,000 people in a city of 20 million.

China had relaxed many of its coronavirus controls after the ruling Communist Party in March declared victory over the virus, which was first detected the central Chinese city of Wuhan late last year.

The two women in New Zealand had been allowed to leave quarantine for compassionate reasons and traveled from Auckland to Wellington by car. Director-General of Health Ashley Bloomfield said that as part of their travel plan, they had no contact with any people or any public facilities on their road trip. **AP**

Australia blasts China for creating 'disinformation' in pandemic

AUSTRALIAN Foreign Minister Marise Payne criticized China for creating "disinformation" during the coronavirus pandemic, saying it "will cost lives."

"It is troubling that some countries are using the pandemic to undermine liberal democracy to promote their own more authoritarian models," Payne said in a speech in Canberra yesterday. She cited a European Union report that said foreign actors including Russia and China had spread misinformation, along with Twitter's ban of accounts linked to alleged disinformation campaigns from China, Russia and Turkey.

"The disinformation we have seen contributes to a climate of fear and division when what we need is cooperation and understanding," she said.

Payne's comments may exacerbate diplomatic ten-



Marise Payne, Australian Foreign Minister

sions with China, Australia's largest trading partner, after she raised Beijing's ire in April by calling for an independent probe into the origins of the coronavirus that was subsequently backed by the World Health Assembly.

Since then, China has imposed new tariffs on Australian barley and a ban on beef from four meat plants.

It also warned its citizens that they risk racist attacks should they study in Australia, raising Canberra's concerns that the Chinese government was retaliating with "economic coercion."

Payne yesterday defended her government's decision to call for the independent probe, which saw Beijing accuse Australia of

doing the bidding of closely the U.S.

She also rejected China's claims that its students are being singled out for racist attacks. While Australia's borders are currently closed to non-residents due to the pandemic, the education warning could have a big impact on the economy once travel restric-

tions are lifted.

Last year, more than 200,000 Chinese students studied in Australia, making it the nation's largest education services export market. China accounted for 27% of international students in Australia as of March this year, and the higher education sector generated A\$15.9 billion (\$11 billion) in international student tuition fees in 2018-19, according to research firm IBISWorld.

The Australian government had "repeatedly called out racist behavior," Payne said, adding that Prime Minister Scott Morrison had gone to considerable lengths to remind Australians that Chinese-Australians returning from China in the early period of the pandemic provided the nation with one of the greatest defenses against the spread of the virus.

Australia's diplomatic

ties with Beijing were already under stress before its call for the virus probe. The government cited Beijing's "meddling" in national affairs as a catalyst for its anti-foreign interference laws passed in 2018, the same year it banned Huawei Technologies Ltd. from helping build its 5G network.

Payne also said Australia wants a stronger, more transparent World Health Organization that's more independent.

"We cannot let the vital and practical work that the WHO does on the ground be overshadowed by questions about the approach of its headquarters in Geneva," she said, adding that the pandemic had exposed the magnitude of consequences if multilateral institutions are not "fit-for-purpose, accountable to member states and free from undue influence." **BLOOMBERG**

North Korea blows up inter-Korea office, raising tensions

KIM TONG-HYUNG &
HYUNG-JIN KIM, SEOUL

AP PHOTO

NORTH Korea blew up an inter-Korean liaison office building just north of the heavily armed border with South Korea yesterday in a carefully choreographed display of anger that sharply raises tensions on the Korean Peninsula and puts pressure on Washington and Seoul amid deadlocked nuclear diplomacy.

The demolition of the building, which is located on North Korean territory and had no South Koreans working there, is largely symbolic. But it's still the most provocative thing North Korea has done since it entered nuclear diplomacy in 2018 after a U.S.-North Korean standoff had many fearing war. It will pose a serious setback to the efforts of liberal South Korean President Moon Jae-in to restore inter-Korean engagement.

North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency said the nation destroyed the office in a "terrific explosion" because its "enraged people" were determined to "force (the) human scum and those, who have sheltered the scum, to pay dearly for their crimes," apparently referring to North Korean defectors living in South Korea who for years have floated anti-Pyongyang leaflets across the border.

The agency did not detail how the office in the border town of Kaesong was destroyed.

South Korea's government later released a military surveillance video showing clouds of smoke rising from the ground as a building collapsed at a now-shuttered joint industrial park in Kaesong, which is where the liaison office stood.

South Korea expressed "strong regret" over the destruction and warned of a stern response if North Korea takes additional steps that aggravate tensions.

The statement, issued following an emergency National Security Council meeting, said the demolition is "an act that betrays hopes for an improvement in South-North Korean relations and the establishment of peace on the Korean Peninsula."



Smoke raising in the North Korean border town of Kaesong is seen from Paju, South Korea, yesterday

South Korea's Defense Ministry separately said it closely monitors North Korean military activities and was prepared to strongly counter any future provocation.

The North said last week that it was cutting off all government and military communication channels with the South while threatening to abandon bilateral peace agreements reached during North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's three summits with Moon in 2018.

Some outside analysts believe the North, after failing to get what it wants in nuclear talks, will turn to provocation to win outside concessions because its economy has likely worsened because of persistent U.S.-led sanctions and the coronavirus pandemic. North Korea may also be frustrated because the sanctions prevent Seoul from breaking away from Washington to resume joint economic projects with Pyongyang.

The South Korean response to yesterday's demolition was relatively strong compared to past provocations. Moon's government has faced criticism that it didn't take tough measures when North Korea performed a series of short-range weapons tests targeting South Korea over the past year.

Moon, a liberal who champions greater reconciliation with North Korea, shuttled between Pyongyang and Washington to

help set up the first summit between the Kim and President Donald Trump in June 2018.

The liaison office has been shut since late January because of coronavirus concerns. The office, built with South Korean money, was opened in September 2018, to facilitate better communication and exchanges. It was the first such office between the Koreas since they were divided into a U.S.-backed South Korea and a Soviet-supported North Korea at the end of the World War II in 1945. The office was considered a symbol of Moon's engagement policy.

North Korea had earlier threatened to demolish the office as it stepped up its fiery rhetoric over what it called Seoul's failure to stop civilian leafleting campaign. South Korea said it would take steps to ban the leafleting, but North Korea argued that the South Korean response lacked sincerity.

On Saturday night, Kim Yo Jong, the influential sister of North Korea's leader, warned that Seoul will soon witness "a tragic scene of the useless North-South liaison office (in North Korea) being completely collapsed." She also said she would leave to North Korea's military the right to take the next step of retaliation against South Korea.

The North has threatened to dismantle the shuttered Kaesong factory complex completely and abandon a

2018 bilateral tension-reduction agreement, which observers say could allow the North to trigger clashes along the land and sea borders.

Earlier, North Korea's military threatened to move back into unspecified border areas that have been demilitarized under agreements with South Korea and "turn the front line into a fortress." Experts say this suggests North Korea may try to tear down factory buildings and equipment at Kaesong, mostly South Korean assets.

On Monday, Moon urged North Korea to stop raising animosities and return to talks, saying the two Koreas must not reverse the 2018 inter-Korean summit deals.

North Korea has a history of taking highly visual symbolic steps for political gains. It invited foreign journalists to watch the detonation of its underground nuclear testing tunnels in 2018 and the demolition of a cooling tower at its main nuclear complex in 2008. Both events were an attempt by the North to show it was serious about denuclearization amid rampant outside skepticism about its commitment.

"It's hard to see how such behavior will help the Kim regime get what it wants from the world, but clearly such images will be used for domestic propaganda," said Leif-Eric Easley, a professor at Ewha University in Seoul. AP

this day in history



1980 GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCES MISSILE SITES

The locations for the first US nuclear cruise missiles to be stored on British soil have been revealed by the government.

Secretary of State for Defence Francis Pym told the House of Commons the 160 missiles would be located at RAF Greenham Common, Berkshire, and the disused RAF Molesworth in Cambridgeshire.

Mr Pym said neither of the bases would be used as a launch site. In times of crisis the American-owned warheads will be moved to secret launching sites within 50 miles (80 km) of their storage silos.

Although there is no "dual-key" system to launch the weapons, the minister assured the Commons the United States would not use them in an attack without Britain's assent.

The ground-launched missiles will be stored in purpose-built shelters and security will be considerably upgraded at both sites.

The UK will contribute 220 personnel to help guard the bases and the cost to the country will be £16m.

In an attempt to reassure local communities, Mr Pym said nuclear warheads would not be carried on exercises and no test flying would take place.

But the military would regularly practice the dispersal of the weapons to their launch sites after consultation with local authorities.

Most of the missiles will be stored at the Greenham Common base.

Residents in nearby Newbury vigorously opposed the basing of noisy tanker aircraft so close to them, but seemed resigned to the arrival of the American arms.

"If it has to be - so be it," said the District Council Chairman.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Protests against the decision to use the base for cruise missiles began in the summer of 1981.

The women's peace camp that remained there for almost 20 years became one of the most enduring symbols of the campaign against nuclear weapons.

Missiles were kept at the base from November 1983 to March 1991 when the 1987 Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty started a gradual process of nuclear disarmament.

The women finally dismantled their peace camp in September 2000.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

Try not to let your focus on future plans keep you from getting a job done right today. You have to try to stay focused on the present and live this day conscientiously.



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

You can reach an important compromise in a power struggle with an authority figure if you follow the path of least resistance. But this isn't the same as giving in.



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

It's been difficult to muster up support for the way someone has radically changed. Their life is different, but it doesn't look like much of an improvement from where you're standing.



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

Imagining how things could be different is a fun way to stay flexible and open-minded, but if all you do is think about change all day long, you're never going to make any.



LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

You're in a new situation right now, and it's very exciting! But you're still learning the ins and outs of what you need to do and what you can expect, so try to be patient with yourself.



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

When you're trying to figure out who you are, you can't be held back by who other people think you are. You have to forge your own way in life, so why not start now?



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

Communication will be fun but a little bit complicated today. A culture clash could occur when you're trying to talk to someone from a very different background.



SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

A frustrating person who usually makes you cringe is actually going to make you think today. They have radical views that can be hard to swallow, but there is some brilliance in them.



SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

You've got more freedom in your social life right now than ever before. Are you making the most of it? If you're single, take advantage of your ability to do whatever you want to do.



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

Just be sure not to stray too far from your usual routines, or else you will get too preoccupied with managing people's reactions! You might still shop at the same online stores for your outfits.



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

Someone who has been trying to get to know you a little bit better could make a major overture today, so be ready to receive increased amounts of their attention!

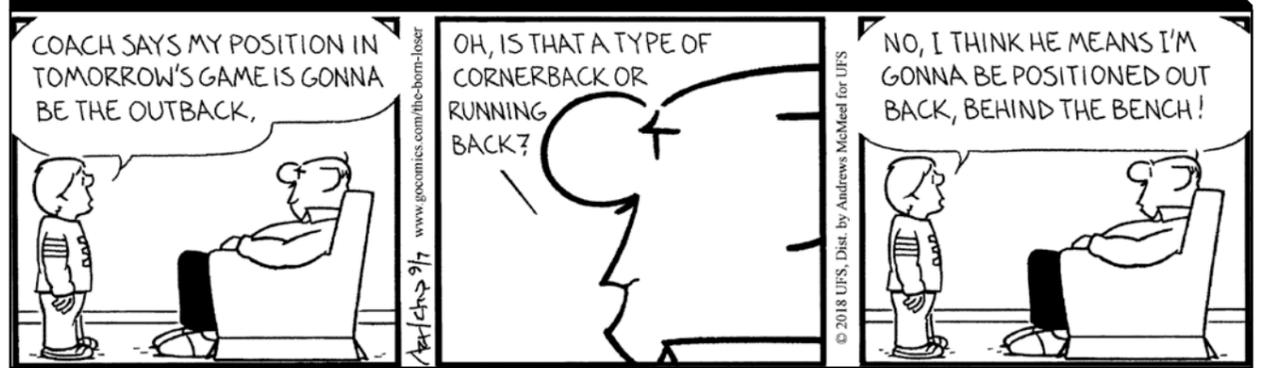


PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

In your social life, you could lose concentration when a special someone is talking to you and miss out on an important revelation! Get used to asking for people to repeat things or explain things one more time.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

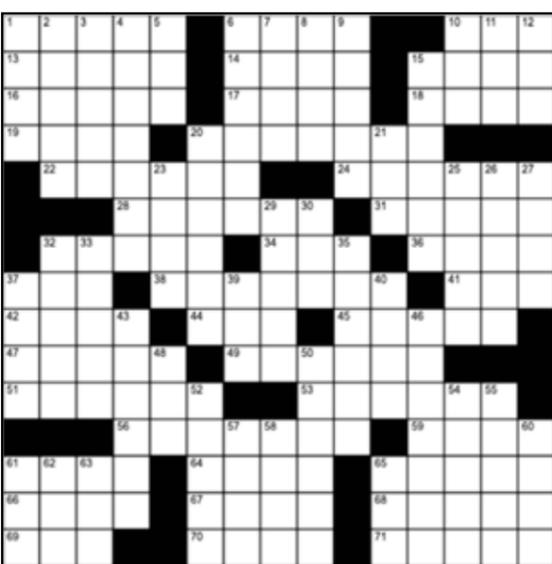
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	24	32	cloudy
Harbin	17	25	thundershower
Tianjin	25	34	cloudy
Urumqi	21	31	clear
Xi'an	18	24	drizzle
Lhasa	14	25	cloudy
Chengdu	20	28	shower
Chongqing	24	33	moderate rain
Kunming	19	27	shower
Nanjing	20	31	thundershower
Shanghai	22	31	overcast
Wuhan	27	34	drizzle
Hangzhou	25	36	cloudy
Taipei	26	31	overcast
Guangzhou	26	33	thundershower
Hong Kong	27	32	shower
WORLD			
Moscow	18	32	clear
Frankfurt	15	22	drizzle
Paris	15	21	drizzle
London	13	23	drizzle
New York	17	26	cloudy

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS: 1- ___ ware (Japanese porcelain); 6- Prepare for publication; 10- Bus, bigwig; 13- Israeli desert; 14- Raise to third power; 15- Dairy product; 16- Instant; 17- Med. care providers; 18- Vegas line; 19- Greasy; 20- Mafia; 22- Computer expert; 24- Caught; 28- Timmy's dog; 31- Still in the game; 32- Designer Simpson; 34- HBO alternative; 36- Devil's doing; 37- Cold call?; 38- Unpredictable; 41- Packed away; 42- Coup d'___; 44- Gal of song; 45- Unit of magnetic induction; 47- Skater Harding; 49- Sermon; 51- Commotion; 53- Egg yolk; 56- Ailment; 59- Actor Neeson; 61- Tip, as a hat; 64- 'Johnny Mnemonic' actor; 65- Shout of exultation; 66- Inwardly; 67- Adriatic port; 68- Red as ___; 69- Alphabet run; 70- Camaro model; 71- Center;

DOWN: 1- Excited about; 2- Worth; 3- Like a ballerina; 4- Adapt for new use; 5- "___ had it!"; 6- Resounds; 7- Stupid; 8- Native Nigerians; 9- Trials; 10- Heston's hero, with Loren: El ___; 11- Antiquity, old-style; 12- Gives the go-ahead; 15- Mental condition; 20- Money-grubbers; 21- Bambi's aunt; 23- Patriot Nathan; 25- Competitor; 26- Patti LuPone role; 27- Remove from text; 29- Author Calvino; 30- CPR giver; 32- Threepio's buddy; 33- Pipe cleaner; 35- Large towns; 37- Playwright Henley; 39- Go, team!; 40- Red or white, in the blood; 43- Exemplify; 46- Course outlines; 48- The works; 50- Of occult character; 52- Cover story; 54- Greased; 55- Division of the United Kingdom; 57- Tenn. neighbor; 58- Architect Saarinen; 60- Feminist Lucretia; 61- Bad-mouth; 62- N.Y. neighbor; 63- Causes chills, fever, malaise; 65- Ark passenger.



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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



FOR SALE

One Central 2 Bedroom Views Over Nam Van Lake
HK\$11,800,000 1,269 ft² 2 1/2 2 1/2

FOR RENT

Retail Shop, Barra Area Macau
\$48,000/mth 1,968 ft²

FOR SALE

- [Macau] One Oasis modern studio 2 1/2 1 1/2
691 ft² \$6,357,000 (ref: n/a)
- [Taipa] Chun Fuk apartment 2 1/2 2 1/2
834 ft² \$8,998,000 (ref: 20036002)
- [Taipa] Buckingham 2 1/2 2 1/2
1,439 ft² \$11,770,000 (ref: 19045004)
- [Cotai] One Grantai 4 1/2 2 1/2
2,556 ft² \$25,600,000 (ref: 19096001)

FOR RENT

- [Taipa] Delightful 1 Bed 1 1/2 1 1/2
820 ft² \$9,500/mth (ref: 20051001)
- [Taipa] Traditional Apartment 2 1/2 1 1/2
600 ft² \$9,900/mth (ref: n/a)
- [Macau] One Central 2 1/2 2 1/2
1,269 ft² \$25,000/mth (ref: n/a)
- [Taipa] Private house 2 1/2 3 1/2 3 1/2
4,266 ft² \$45,000/mth (ref: 19055006ST)

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IMPERIAL COLLEGE

UK BEGINS CORONAVIRUS VACCINE TRIAL; FRANCE PLEDGES FUNDING

MARIA CHENG & ANGELA CHARLTON, LONDON

SCIENTISTS at Imperial College London will start immunizing people in Britain this week with their experimental coronavirus shot, while pharmaceutical company Sanofi and the French government announced more than 800 million euros (\$890 million) in investment yesterday as part of the worldwide race to find an effective vaccine.

About a dozen vaccine candidates are currently in early stages of testing in thousands of people. There are no guarantees any will work but there's increasing hope that at least some could be ready by the end of the year.

Many scientists have warned that the pandemic that has already infected at least 8 million people and killed over 437,000 worldwide might only be stopped with an effective vaccine, which typically takes years to develop.

In a statement, the British government said 300 healthy people will be immunized with two doses of the COVID-19 vaccine candidate developed at Imperial, which has been backed by 41 million pounds (\$51 million) in government funding.

Robin Shattock, who is leading the vaccine research at Imperial, said the advantage of their vaccine is the small amount required: their dose is one hundredth of the dose being tested by the NIH and Moderna Inc. That means millions of doses could be relatively quickly manufactured.

"If the U.K. government wants to purchase enough vaccine for the U.K. population, we already have that infrastructure in place to deliver that in the first two quarters of next year," he said.

Sanofi, meanwhile, is working on a vaccine that it hopes to test on humans later this year and win approval next year.

The company pledged to invest 610 million euros (\$680 million) in a vaccine production site and a new vaccine research center in France, to be able to produce in greater scale and "quickly respond to future pandemic risks."

French President Emmanuel Macron visited a Sanofi lab alongside CEO Paul Hudson, and announced 200 million euros in government investments to reduce France's dependence on other countries for vaccines and other medicines.

Macron said France will "re-localize" production of some drugs as part of broader government efforts to revive the virus-battered economy and bring more manufacturing production back to



French President Emmanuel Macron listens to a researcher as he visits an industrial development laboratory at French drugmaker's vaccine unit Sanofi Pasteur plant in Marcy-l'Etoile, near Lyon

France.

Last month, Sanofi prompted outrage in France by promising to give the United States first access to the company's eventual vaccine, because the U.S. had invested more in its research. Sanofi later backtracked and said it would be available in all countries.

Macron has pushed for vaccines to be considered a "common good" for humanity that must not be subject to market pressures.

The Imperial vaccine uses synthetic strands of genetic code based on the virus. Once injected into the muscle, the body's own cells are instructed to make

copies of a spiky protein on the coronavirus. That should in turn trigger an immune response so the body can fight off any future COVID-19 infection.

Dr. Doug Brown, chief executive of the British Society for Immunology, said the technology used by Imperial College Lon-

don should theoretically lead to long-term immunity against the coronavirus but now needs to go through rigorous testing. He was not linked to the trial.

Oxford University recently began an advanced study involving 10,000 volunteers, and the U.S. is preparing for even larger studies in July that involve 30,000 people each testing different candidates, including Oxford's and one made by the National Institutes of Health and Moderna Inc.

Scientists have never created vaccines from scratch this fast and it's far from clear that any will ultimately prove safe and effective. Still, numerous countries, including Britain, France, Germany, the Netherlands and the U.S., have already placed advance orders for millions of vaccines.

Shattock said the Imperial vaccine, if effective, would not be licensed to any particular pharmaceutical, but various manufacturing partners around the world would be given permission to produce it as part of a "social business" that does not make any profits.

"We can't provide it at no cost because it takes money to make," he said. "We'll provide it at cost of goods with a small percentage—and that small percentage will vary depending on the economic status of the country."

The World Health Organization noted Monday about 100,000 new infections have been reported every day for the past two weeks and that relaxed lockdown restrictions in many countries have led to a new surge of cases. AP

DEXAMETHASONE

FIRST DRUG PROVES ABLE TO IMPROVE SURVIVAL FROM COVID-19

RESEARCHERS in England say they have the first evidence that a drug can improve COVID-19 survival: A cheap, widely available steroid called dexamethasone reduced deaths by up to one third in severely ill hospitalized patients.

Results were announced yesterday and researchers said they would publish them soon. The study is a large, strict test that randomly assigned 2,104 patients to get the drug and compared them with 4,321 patients getting only usual care.

The drug was given either orally or through an IV. After 28 days, it had reduced deaths by 35% in patients who needed treatment with breathing machines and by 20% in those only needing supplemental oxygen. It did not appear to help less ill patients.

"This is an extremely welcome result," one study leader, Peter Horby of the University of Oxford, said in a statement. "The survival benefit is clear and large in those patients who are sick enough to require oxygen treatment, so dexamethasone should now become standard of care in these patients. Dexamethasone is inexpensive, on the shelf, and can be used immediately to save lives worldwide."

Even though the drug only helps in se-



vere cases, "countless lives will be saved globally," said Nick Cammack of Wellcome, a British charity that supports science research.

"Dexamethasone must now be rolled out and accessed by thousands of critically ill patients around the world," said Cammack, who had no role in the study. "It is highly affordable, easy to make, can be scaled up quickly and only needs a small dosage."

Steroid drugs reduce inflammation, which sometimes develops in COVID-19 patients as the immune system overreacts to fight the infection. This overreaction can prove fatal, so doctors have been tes-

ting steroids and other anti-inflammatory drugs in such patients. The World Health Organization advises against using steroids earlier in the course of illness because they can slow the time until patients clear the virus.

Researchers estimated that the drug would prevent one death for every eight patients treated while on breathing machines and one for every 25 patients on extra oxygen alone.

This is the same study that earlier this month showed the malaria drug hydroxychloroquine was not working against the coronavirus. The study enrolled more than 11,000 patients in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland who were given either standard of care or that plus one of several treatments: dexamethasone; the HIV combo drug lopinavir-ritonavir, the antibiotic azithromycin; the anti-inflammatory drug tocilizumab; or plasma from people who have recovered from COVID-19 that contains antibodies to fight the virus.

Research is continuing on the other treatments. The research is funded by government health agencies in the United Kingdom and private donors including the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. AP

Soccer star Rashford takes on UK leader over meals for needy kids

JILL LAWLESS, LONDON

BRITISH Prime Minister Boris Johnson was facing pressure yesterday to make a policy U-turn as opponents and allies alike rallied behind a young soccer star's campaign to help families struggling with food poverty.

Marcus Rashford, who plays for Manchester United and England's national team, wants the government to provide free meals for needy students over the summer holidays.

Rashford, 22, wrote an open letter to all of Britain's lawmakers on Sunday, describing how, as one of five children of a hard-working single mother, "we relied on breakfast clubs, free school meals, and the kind actions of neighbors and coaches."

"A black man from a low-income family in Wythenshawe, Manchester, I could have been just another statistic," he wrote. "Instead, due to the selfless actions of my mum, my family,



AP PHOTO

my neighbors, and my coaches, the only stats I'm associated with are goals, appearances and caps. I would be doing myself, my family and my community an injustice if I didn't stand here today with my voice and my platform and ask you for help."

About 1.3 million British children are eligible for free school

meals. When schools were shut down in March as part of a nationwide coronavirus lockdown, a food voucher scheme was set up to help ensure they did not go hungry. Vouchers worth 15 pounds (\$19) are available to spend each week in supermarkets.

The government plans to stop the voucher program when the

scheduled school term ends in July in England and Northern Ireland, although authorities in Scotland and Wales plan to continue it.

So far, Johnson's Conservative government has refused to budge, pointing out that it has earmarked an extra 63 million pounds (\$80 million) for local authorities to support vulnerable families. Johnson's spokesman said earlier that the prime minister planned to respond to Rashford's letter, but hadn't done so yet.

But Rashford's campaign appeared to be picking up steam, backed by celebrities, opposition politicians and some Conservative lawmakers nervous that the government appears impervious to the struggles faced by many British families during the coronavirus pandemic.

Conservative legislator Robert Halfon, who chairs Parliament's education committee, said after three months of a lockdown that has seen the Bri-

tish economy sink over 20% "so many people up and down the country are struggling to keep a roof over their heads and to feed their families."

Halfon said the meal voucher program "is not a lot of extra money ... but it's simple, it works and the public understand it."

The government is already facing intense criticism for its response to the coronavirus pandemic. Britain's official death toll of more than 41,000 is the highest in Europe, and the government is defending itself against claims it had inadequate stocks of protective equipment, lacked testing capacity and put the country into lockdown too late, costing thousands of lives.

Rashford kept up the pressure yesterday, tweeting: "When you wake up this morning and run your shower, take a second to think about parents who have had their water turned off during lockdown."

Work and Pensions Secretary Theresia Coffey replied saying: "Water cannot be disconnected though" — and was roundly criticized for such a tone-deaf response.

Rashford replied: "I'm concerned this is the only tweet of mine you acknowledged. Please, put rivalries aside for a second, and make a difference." AP

AD

仁德 CENTRO MEDICO PEDDER
◆ 仁德醫療中心 ◆



We bring high quality of medical service to Macau

General Surgery : Dr. Fok Manson, Dr. Lai Cheuck Seen Edward, Dr. Lau Wing Kee Peter, Dr. Kwong Man, Dr. Nie Fu Zhong, Dr. U Chong San, Dr. Lei Chin Chong

Breast Surgery : Dr. Leong Iat Lun

Urology : Dr. Lo Kwong Yin Richard, Dr. Zhao Yun Qiao

Paediatric Surgery : Dr. Yeung Chung Kwong

Paediatrics : Dr. Zhang Zhiqin

Obstetrics & Gynaecology : Dr. Fong Kuan Io

Plastic & Aesthetic Surgery : Dr. Lam U Lin

Orthopaedic Surgery & Sports Medicine : Dr. Lam Kun Kuan

ENT : Dr. Cheng Zheng Ang

Cardiology : Dr. Wong Kwok Yiu Chris, Dr. Jin Chun, Dr. Leong Man Kin

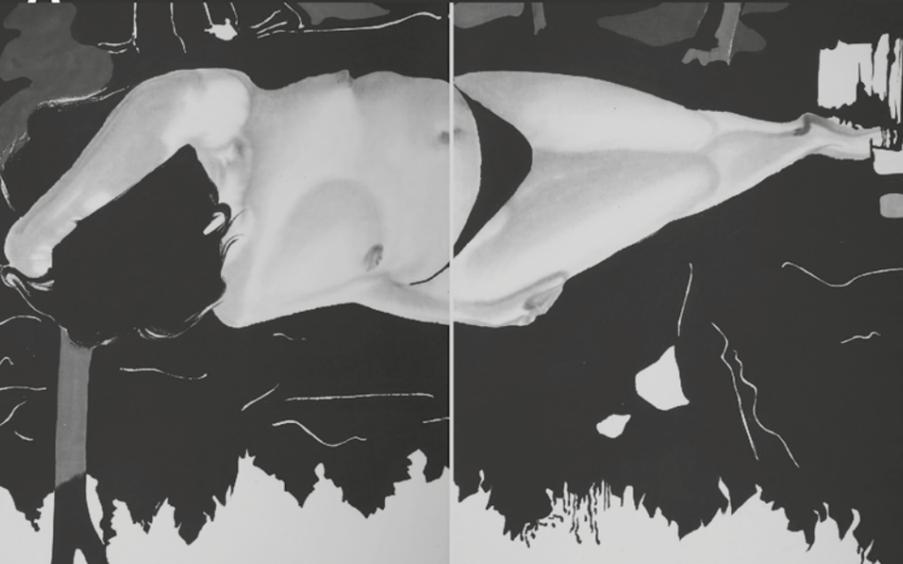
Gastroentero-Hepatology : Dr. Zhan De Juan

General Medicine : Dr. Ng Kam Hong, Dr. Lam Weng Chio

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OPINION

World Views

Nisha Gopalan, Bloomberg

**AMEX MAY FIND CHINA
 CAN LIVE LIFE WITHOUT IT**

After years of trying, American Express Co. is finally cracking into the China market. Now the hard work begins.

On Saturday, AmEx got the green light to start processing yuan payments, making it the first of the big three U.S. card companies to get access to the mainland. The license, initially approved in 2018, gives AmEx a portal to some of the world's biggest spenders, and will pit the company against state-backed China UnionPay Co., which dominates the market. Currently, holders of AmEx, MasterCard Inc. and Visa Inc. cards can only use them for foreign-currency payments outside China or on overseas websites.

Competition will come not just from UnionPay cards, which dominate the market, but also mobile-payment apps, where Ant Financial's Alipay and Tencent Holdings Ltd.'s WeChat Pay are big players. AmEx's partner, LianLian, is tiny by comparison. To top it off, China is also testing out the digital yuan, another budding rival in the payment space. "Having a foreign branded card in your wallet used to mean you have made it in China, but now matters little," says Zennon Kapron, the founder of a fintech consulting firm.

Another challenge is that fees in China are lower than in the U.S., so companies need to win scale to make the big bucks: The card-clearing fee rate is 0.065% for domestic banks and the acquiring fee rate ranges from 0.5% to 1%. In the U.S., issuers like AmEx charge between 1.4% and 3.5%.

AmEx and its Chinese partner will also have to convince local banks to issue cards processed on their network, and get more merchants to accept them. Because of the high fees it charges compared with rivals, AmEx tends to be used less in Asia and Europe.

Still, there is money to be made if AmEx plays its cards right. One strategy that's worked in the U.S. is offering plenty of rewards. A large card firm told Kapron, the consultant, that even with the thinnest slice of the market, it would still be profitable. There will always be spenders who like premium cards they can use at home and overseas, he says.

Banks, too, could benefit from choice beyond UnionPay, notes James Lloyd, Asia-Pacific fintech leader at Ernst & Young LLP in Hong Kong. More competition can only be a good thing for their merchant clients and cardholders.

To AmEx's credit, just getting to this point is a step in the right direction. It's been a long slog. Both Visa and MasterCard have been waiting since 2006 to gain access to China. AmEx cleared a key hurdle in early January when regulators accepted its application to start a bank-card clearing business with LianLian. Last March, MasterCard refilled its application, raising its stake in a joint venture with NetsUnion Clearing Corp., or Wanglian, a clearing house for online payments. There's little clarity on the progress of Visa's application, which was made in July 2018 without a mainland partner.

Of course, there is a whiff of politics in the timing of all this. As tensions between Washington and Beijing intensify amid the coronavirus outbreak, China appears to be holding up its end of the phase one trade deal. The preliminary agreement signed in January included measures to speed up the opening of mainland financial markets, with plans to accelerate approvals for AmEx, MasterCard and Visa, specifically. By starting with AmEx, Beijing is picking off the low-hanging fruit; its mainland partner stands to benefit from any increased business, too.

But with Covid-19 wreaking havoc on the economy, it's going to take more than Beijing's blessing to get shopaholics back in force, beyond some revenue spending. AmEx, whose slogan is "Don't Live Life Without It," may find becoming indispensable in China its toughest sell yet.

Egyptian authorities detained a prominent local journalist yesterday [Macau time] on charges of spreading fake news, his lawyer said, in the government's latest crackdown on press freedom.

Mohamed Monir, 65, was taken by plainclothes security officers from his apartment in Giza, his family said in a statement. Over the weekend, Monir had posted surveillance footage on his Facebook page, showing scores of heavily armed police officers breaking into his home to search it when he wasn't there.

He later appeared before state security prosecutors who ordered his 15-day pretrial detention on charges of spreading fake news, joining a terrorist group and misusing social media, said his lawyer, Nabeih el-Ganadi.

Monir is editor-in-chief of al-Diyar newspaper and a former deputy editor of the pro-government Al-Youm Al-Sabae, or Seventh Day newspaper, among other outlets, his lawyer said.

The interior ministry did not respond to a request for comment on the case.

ONE GOOD THING

**FACE MASKS WITH WINDOWS
 MEAN MORE THAN
 SMILES TO DEAF PEOPLE**



**JULIE WATSON,
 SAN DIEGO**

MICHAEL Conley felt especially isolated these past few months: A deaf man, he was prevented from reading lips by the masks people wore to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

But then he met Ingrid Helton, a costume designer who sewed him a solution — masks with plastic windows for hearing people to wear, allowing lip readers to see mouths move.

She has started a business to provide the windowed masks, and she's not alone. A half-dozen startups are doing the same. They have been inundated with orders — and not only from friends and family of the roughly 48 million Americans who are deaf or hard of hearing.

"You can tell so much by a facial expression, so it's proving that it can be helpful to everybody," Helton said.

Teachers want them for English learners struggling without being able to see native speakers pronounce words. Hospitals and businesses want them to help improve communication, and so everyone can see the smiles of their workers.

"We have retailers who say, 'We want to protect our employees but our customers need to see their smile and put customers at ease,'" said Dr. Anne McIntosh, a hearing-impaired doctor

and founder of Safe n' Clear in North Carolina. The company's surgical mask with a fog-resistant window, The Communicator, was the first to be approved by the FDA.

The Communicator was developed before the pandemic to address a problem that lip readers have long faced in trying to understand masked workers in hospitals. The problem has been worsened by the pandemic; many interpreters for hearing-impaired people have been unable to go into medical facilities because of the highly contagious coronavirus.

But as masks have proliferated outside hospitals, so have the miseries of deaf people.

Conley, a San Diego museum worker, suddenly found himself cut off from the world. Unable to see mouths, he could not understand or even know when people were speaking to him. He was anxious to go to the pharmacy for his medication or the grocery store for food.

He paced outside his favorite neighborhood restaurant for 45 minutes, wondering what he would do if a masked worker asked questions after he gave his takeout order. Luckily once he walked in, the female employee recognized him and immediately pulled down her mask to talk. He was touched.

But not everyone knows him. He carries pieces of paper with him to be able to ask people to write down what they were saying — eliminating the need to remove a mask — but that means touching the same paper, and it can be uncomfortable asking others to do that.

One young man bagging his groceries refused.

"It makes you lose your confidence," said Conley, who has been deaf since birth. "It takes its toll."

After he told co-worker Chris LaZich about the challenges, she sought help from her friend Helton, the San Diego Opera costume shop manager known for making extravagant outfits out of almost anything.

Helton got busy sewing. And soon, she started her company, Happy Laugh Masks.

Conley has been moved that so many people have come together to help him regain his independence.

Several of his colleagues at the Fleet Science Center plan to don Helton's masks when the museum reopens. He and LaZich recently met to try out a prototype.

"I'm having no trouble reading your lips," Conley told LaZich, who stood 6 feet away in accordance with social distancing rules.

Through her mask's window, she flashed him a smile. **AP**

India reported a daily spike of 10,667 new coronavirus cases yesterday, as the worst-hit cities of Mumbai, New Delhi and Chennai remain swamped by the rising infections. The Health Ministry also reported 380 new virus deaths. New Delhi is emerging a cause of concern for the federal government and is being criticized for its poor contact tracing and a lack hospital beds. Prime Minister Narendra Modi said any death due to COVID-19 was "tragic."



Philippine officials placed the central city of Cebu back under a strict lockdown and retained quarantine restrictions in the capital for another two weeks as coronavirus infections continue to spike alarmingly. President Rodrigo Duterte approved the moves Monday night, saying the virus campaign was not over.

South Korea has reported 34 new cases of COVID-19, half of them in the densely populated Seoul metropolitan area where health officials have been scrambling to stem transmissions. The figures by South Korea's Centers for Disease Control and Prevention yesterday brought the country's caseload to 12,155 infections, including 278 deaths. Thirteen of the new cases were linked to passengers arriving from abroad.



Indonesia's government said it recorded more than 1,100 new virus cases in the past 24 hours, taking the country's total to more than 40,000. Nevertheless, the government said schools located in areas classified as 'green zones' will be allowed to open. Only 6% of students lived in such areas. He said students have right to continue home learning if their parents are concerned about potential transmissions of the virus at school.