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THE IMPORTANCE OF THE MANGROVE: A NEW EXHIBITION AT THE USJ SHEDS LIGHT ON THIS ESSENTIAL ECOSYSTEM P4

AP PHOTO



Philippines Fitness gyms, barber shops and internet cafes were allowed to reopen partly in Manila as the government further eased quarantine restrictions despite the country having the most coronavirus infections in Southeast Asia. President Rodrigo Duterte, however, placed the southern city of Iligan under a mild lockdown after a rise in community infections, underscoring how COVID-19 cases have spread away from metropolitan Manila, the epicenter of the country's outbreak.

India added nearly 70,000 new coronavirus cases, its lowest daily increase in the last six days, driving its total near 3.7 million. The Health Ministry yesterday also reported 819 deaths in the past 24 hours, taking total fatalities up to 65,288. India's increases have been the highest in the world almost daily for nearly three weeks. It is conducting nearly 1 million tests every day. The federal government also announced Parliament will resume from Sept. 14 with strict social distancing.

AP PHOTO

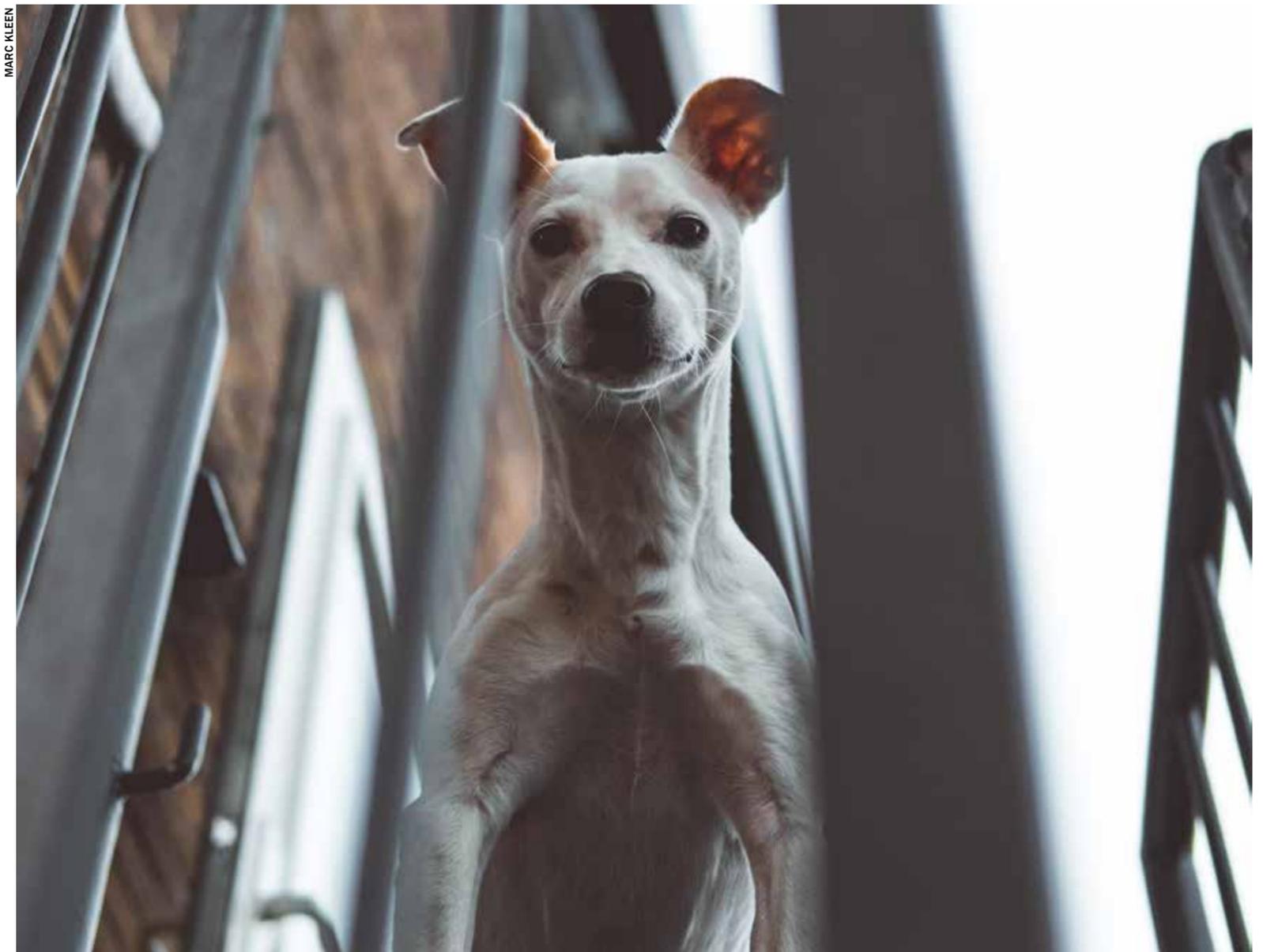


Chinese students began a full return to regular classes yesterday following two weeks without new cases of local transmission in the country. About 75% of students had already returned to school. Temperature checks, social distancing and masks were reportedly used, but rules varied by region. China's National Health Commission reported 10 new cases of coronavirus yesterday, all of them brought from outside the country.

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A new instruction for cleaning dog urine from public areas has left owners scratching their heads P4



MARC KLEEN



NO RELIEF FOR CASINOS AFTER AUGUST FAILS TO BRING REVENUE BOUNCE P3

BLOOMBERG

AP PHOTO

HONG KONG BEGINS MASS TESTING FOR VIRUS P5



CONSTRUCTION OF NEW PSP HEADQUARTERS TO START IN 2021

Construction will begin on the new headquarters of the Public Security Police Force (PSP) in the first half of next year. Yesterday, the Infrastructure Development Office (GDI) opened the tender process for the project. Seventeen bids were received. The maximum construction period is 1,000 workdays. The new PSP headquarters is adjacent to the new building of Special Duty Units, occupying an area of 7,000 square meters. The U-shape project will consist of three buildings, all occupying a construction area of 80,000 square meters. The project will accommodate rooms for the PSP's 999 action center, press conference room, and installations to monitor the entire city's electronic surveillance system. The new building will be located at New Urban Zone E1 by Pac On in Taipa.

LO SONG MAN APPOINTED AS TDM CHAIRMAN

Veteran journalist Lo Song Man has been appointed as Chairman of the Executive Committee of Teledifusão de Macau (TDM), the public broadcaster, the company has announced. The new chairman of TDM replaces Manuel Pires, who has retired. Lo, a member of the TDM Executive Committee since 2012, has been working for the television and radio company since 1990. Lo also worked as a journalist in the Chinese news department and later as a Chinese News Controller. The board of directors of TDM includes the director of Government Information Bureau, Inês Chan Lou, the president of the Holy House of Mercy, António José de Freitas and legislator-cum-lawyer Vong Hin Fai. Frederico do Rosário, John Lai, Cristina Ho Hoi Leng and Lo Sang Man are the present members of the TDM Executive Committee.

CUSTOMS SEIZED 240 KILOGRAMS OF FOOD IN AUGUST

The Macao Customs Services seized a total of 240 kgs of uninspected food in August, according to a statement released by the department. At the Border Gate, the customs authority intercepted 27 individuals who were illegally bringing food materials to Macau from mainland China. Some 21 local Macau residents and six mainland residents were responsible for these incidents. The seized materials consisted mostly of meat, poultry and seafood. The customs department believes that the majority of the smuggled food was for self-consumption. However, some of the individuals were paid to transport the food to Macau. The department has already prosecuted the people involved.

RENATO MARQUES



Lawmakers Chan Chak Mo (left) and Wong Kit Cheng

AL COMMITTEE CALLS ON GOV'T TO SOLVE LICENSE OWNERSHIP ISSUES

RENATO MARQUES

THE members of the Legislative Assembly's (AL) Second Standing Committee have expressed concerns to the government about the license ownership of establishments and the termination of rights to such licensing.

According to the chairman of the Committee, lawmaker Chan Chak Mo, several issues can influence both the continuation of business operations as well as the rights of shop owners, which should be addressed by the government at this time, he said during a media briefing following yesterday's committee meeting.

Chan noted that there are long-term problems that have been identified by the industry and that the government has not yet managed to tackle adequately. Among them is the so-called "scammer tenants" issue directly related to the ownership of the establishment's licensing.

According to Chan, what happens is that when establishments located outside the hotel premises close or cease operations, their operation

license continues to be valid and, since the ownership rights belong to the applicant, the landlords of the shops in which they had been operating will not be able to rent the space out to other businesses to start operations unless the previous tenant cancels the license by his or her own initiative.

"Out of hotels, the cases are very frequent, [forcing] the shop owner to negotiate with the license owner. They often request compensation [to cancel the license]," Chan said. "There are some people that even renew the license [of the establishment] to stop the landlords to continue to rent the shop to another person."

To resolve such a problem, the committee is recommending the introduction of a new rule that allows landlords to request the cancellation of the licenses of former tenants in cases where it is "proven that the tenant has stopped using the shop," i.e. when the rental contract has been terminated.

Chan noted that in the first version of the law text there was an attempt from

the government to establish a procedure in which the landlord could request the cancellation from the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO), which would then notify the license holder, giving them 20 days to respond to such a request.

"But in this current version of the law text, the government decided to remove that rule, since the MGTO said that in most cases it is difficult to notify the license holders, especially if they are not from Macau or are not based in Macau," Chan said, adding that in reply to the committee, the government promised to evaluate this matter and find a resolution to the situation.

"Probably this will be included in the new law text version that the government will present after the legislative holidays," he said.

The committee also questioned the government as to what would happen in other circumstances, for example the transfer of the commercial rights of an establishment to another person, in case of death of the license holder or closure of the company.

Chan said the government had responded by saying that in cases where a license holder is a person and there are legal successors who wish to continue the business, the license could be transferred to them. Regarding the cases in which the establishment is operated by a company, the government did not have an immediate response and told the committee that they will conduct an evaluation and communicate the solution at a later stage.

Yesterday's meeting marked the last meeting of the committee on this topic before the legislative holidays, and according to Chan there will now be a period in which the law text will be in the hands of the legal advisors of both the AL and the government to discuss some "technical issues."

"Our goal is still to be able to conclude this law this year. But it will depend also on other factors. We know that we usually have the Policy Address in November [which can delay the plenary voting scheduling] but we hope we still can conclude this law this year," said Chan.

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BLOOMBERG

GAMING

Macau awaits travel recovery as August revenue falls 95%

MACAU casinos suffered further pain as gaming revenue dropped more than 90% for the fifth straight month in August, with executives awaiting a recovery after China's gradual relaxation of travel and visa restrictions.

Gross gaming revenue was 1.33 billion patacas (\$167 million) in August, down 94.5% from a year earlier, according to data from the Gaming Inspection and Coordi-

nation Bureau. That was in line with the median analyst estimate for a 93% decline, as reported by Bloomberg over the weekend.

Year-to-date revenue now amounts to 36.39 billion patacas, down 81.6% from the 198.21 billion patacas recorded in the first eight months of 2019.

Revenue has tracked at near-zero levels since February, when the impact of Covid-19 began to be felt in Macau. Visitor arrivals from the mainland plummeted

after China enforced city-wide lockdowns and canceled its visa programs for travel into the special administrative region in late January.

In fact, January was the only month of the year to mostly avoid the fallout from Covid-19. Gross gaming revenue fell 11.3% to 22.1 billion patacas, yet that month alone still accounts for nearly two-thirds of 2020 revenue to date.

Macau needs to see the return of gamblers from the mainland in

order to break its 11-month slump in gaming revenue. While casinos have reopened after a shutdown in February, their main customers in China have been kept out of Macau because of travel restrictions and visa bans.

Those restrictions are now slowly being eased. Tourist visas to Macau are being resumed in phases by China, expanding to the entire mainland by September 23. A two-week quarantine imposed on Macau travelers upon their

return to the mainland was lifted throughout the country from August 12, although visitors still need to show a negative Covid-19 test result to cross the border and enter Macau casinos.

Analysts are expecting to see signs of recovery in September, followed by a more solid pickup in gaming revenue later in the year. The rebound in VIP business will come faster than mass visitors due to pent-up demand and easier access to travel among such VIP customers.

Some analysts' predictions for full-year gross gaming revenue imply a strong recovery in the final quarter. Others say that it will take at least another year before gross gaming revenue returns to anywhere near pre-Covid-19 levels.

Despite the gradual travel relaxation, Macau may still face challenges, as China is tightening regulatory controls of outbound capital flow. Also, liquidity continues to be tight in the enclave, with junkets seeing significant capital withdrawals.

The Bloomberg Intelligence Index of Macau casino operators rose 16% in August amid the easing of restrictions. The benchmark Hang Seng Index advanced 2.4% in the same period.

Last year, the casino business directly accounted for about half of Macau's economy. The lucrative industry is the primary source of tax revenue for the government and a lifeline for many small businesses in the SAR. **DB/BLOOMBERG**

EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES LAW TO ENTER INTO FORCE NEXT YEAR

RENATO MARQUES

THE Third Standing Committee of the Legislative Assembly has reached a consensus on the amendment bill for the law regulating the operations of employment agencies in Macau. As a result, the bill will be forwarded to the plenary for final approval, committee chairman Vong Hin Fai announced last Friday.

The committee proposed that the bill, which will soon be voted on in detailed terms, should enter into force from March 15 next year.

Although the final report from the committee included a petition handed in by representatives of several migrant workers associations calling for the cessation of charging fees to workers, the request was

disregarded by the government who decided not to include such a rule in the new law.

In the petition, the migrant workers' associations noted that charging fees to workers goes against the standards set by the International Labour Organization, a United Nations agency.

According to the justification given by the government to the committee, such conventions do not apply to Macau.

Although the collection of fees by agencies from job seekers is still an open possibility in the law, the new bill clearly defines a range of jobs that are subject to the payment of such fees, in addition to defining a ceiling of 50% of the basic salary to be collected on the first month after employment.

INT'L TRADE FAIR TO GO AHEAD THIS OCTOBER, SAYS IPIM

THE Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM) has confirmed that this year's Macao International Trade and Investment Fair (MIF) and the Portuguese-Speaking Countries Products and Services Exhibition (Macao) will go ahead, as in previous years.

The two events will be held simultaneously between October 22 and 24 this year. Although they have been given the green light, certain aspects will be adjusted given the circumstances surrounding the Covid-19 pandemic.

As travel restrictions and quarantine-upon-arrival are still practiced in many places, this year's fair and exhibition will not see as many overseas exhibitors as in previous years. As such, the focus of this

year's event will be adjusted accordingly.

Previous events focused more on business-to-business transactions, while this year, they will focus on attracting local consumers. Not only will they promote Chinese products to lusophone countries, the events will also familiarize Chinese audiences with lusophone products.

Seminars will not be held physically this year, but will be moved online and broadcast on social media platforms.

The government entity has also announced that the 6th Ministerial Conference of the Forum for Economic and Trade Cooperation between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries, which should have been held in June this year, has been cancelled. **AL**

AVERAGE EARNINGS PLUNGE BY NEARLY 12% IN SOME SECTORS

THE average earnings of full-time employees in the Macau SAR dropped by up to 11.8% year-on-year during the second quarter, according to data provided by the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC).

The Survey on Manpower Needs and Wages shows that those working in the retail trade (40,189) recorded a decrease of 2.2%, while their average salary fell by 11.8% year-on-year to MOP12,290.

Transport, storage and communications activities had 13,265 persons engaged, a drop of 5.7% year-on-year. Average earnings of full-time employees decreased by 11.5% year-on-year to MOP20,030 in June.

Meanwhile, security activities had a total of 13,530 employees, up by 9.7% year-on-year, while their

average earnings in June went down by 4.8% year-on-year to MOP12,420.

Meanwhile, 926 persons were engaged in public sewage and refuse disposal activities, where its average salary slightly dropped 1.7% year-on-year to MOP18,450.

Official data previously showed that the city's general unemployment rate from May to July 2020 stood at 2.7%, while the unemployment rate of local residents is 3.8%. Both showed minor increases from the previous three-month period, between April and June.

Meanwhile, as regards vocational training in the surveyed industries, a total of 30,626 participants attended 935 training courses provided by the establishments in the second quarter of 2020. **LV**

OWNERS PERPLEXED BY IAM'S NEW DOG URINE CLEANING RULE

ANTHONY LAM

At least two dog owners find the Municipal Affairs Bureau's (IAM) new instruction that requires them to wipe their dogs' urine dry with absorbent materials "inconsiderate and impractical." The new instruction took effect yesterday.

In its first version, the IAM's new instruction aimed to require dog owners to place diaper-like absorbent materials under their pets to contain the urine.

Although the IAM started advertising the new instruction about a month ago, many dog owners found it full of grey areas and wondered if they were abiding by the requirement.

Indeed, the General Regulations Governing Public Places has been in place for a decade or so, in which the stipulation that requires owners to "clean up after their dogs" has been promulgated. Failure to do so will result in a fine of MOP600.

The stipulation, however, has never been made as clear as the new instruction issued by the IAM. That raises concerns over its lega-



lity and whether the IAM has the authority to issue that instruction.

As the main group being impacted by the new instruction, many dog owners find the requirement impractical and a source of annoyance. On top of that, Josephine Lau, vice president of the Abandoned Animals Protect Association of Macau, describes the new instruction as environmentally unfriendly.

"The [proposal] of absorbent materials is both environmentally unfriendly and ineffective," a dog

owner, surnamed Lau, who keeps a German Shepherd, told the Times. "I may need to use three pieces every time my dog pees."

With that said, if enacted, the new instruction may also impose an excessive financial burden upon dog owners.

Another owner, surnamed Cheang, expects difficulties when practicing the new instruction, although she has not yet tried it as of press time. She thinks the new instruction inconsiderate as well.

"When a dog pees there's not

much [of an] angle [to] place the diaper underneath," Cheang explained. "Also, you can't tell when a dog wants to pee."

Lawmaker Sulu Sou has been helping a group of dog owners in respect to the matter. He agrees with owners helping to maintain a clean environment, stressing that the General Regulations have never pinpointed a particular "way of cleaning." He finds the IAM's new instruction confusing, as it will make people think not absorbing the urine will result in a fine.

In response, the IAM noted that wiping urine clean with absorbent materials is only a recommended way as the bureau finds it more effective than simply rinsing the urine with water. It stresses that the violation criterion is whether or not owners "clean after their dogs."

Meanwhile, a lobbyist, surnamed Chan, has started a petition against the IAM's new instruction. Chan has collected more than 1,000 signatures to present to the IAM. He also proposed the IAM adopt a popular method used in some European cities, which involves rinsing away urine with water blended with white vinegar.

To support the campaign, local animal welfare organizations cited research conducted by the University of Birmingham in the U.K., which proved that as low as 1.6% acetic acid is capable of stopping the formation of biofilms. It can be achieved by using white vinegar solution.

But the lawmaker revealed that the IAM was not convinced by the results, mocking the history in which people boiled vinegar in the hopes of killing "bacteria" during the SARS outbreak. Like Covid-19, however, SARS is caused by a virus rather than bacteria.

Nonetheless, the IAM has agreed to conduct a study on the proposed method of using vinegar solution.

Exhibition highlights role of mangroves in coastal environment

LYNZY VALLES

The University of Saint Joseph kicked off an exhibition yesterday about mangroves in a bid to further spread awareness on the value of the mangrove ecosystem.

Organized by the university's Institute of Science and Environment, the "Macau's Mangroves: A Coastal Treasure Exhibition" features a series of photographs, artworks, scientific display boards, interactive tank models, installations and videos on the city's mangroves.

The Macau SAR is home to a thriving mangrove forest that spans approximately 4km of the Taipa-Cotai coastline.

Since mangrove forests are considered one of the most valuable ecosystems and a significant natural coastal treasure, given it protects coastlines from rising sea levels and extreme weather events, the institute has been promoting awareness of the ecosystem for several years.

"We have also been



doing science promotional activities focused on environmental education to educate our young generation to protect our environment, especially mangroves which are quite marginalized compared to other beautiful ecosystems like coral reefs," said Karen Tagulao, a senior lecturer at the Institute.

Meanwhile for David Gonçalves, dean of the Institute, the mangroves that exist in Macau are a little-known ecosystem in spite of being very relevant to the territory.

The scholar noted that

this exhibition, along with the other activities it had developed throughout the years, aims to raise awareness of the existence of the "fragile ecosystem that has not been very well treated in this part of the world," particularly in the Pearl River Delta.

"We think that they are very relevant in terms of what the future should be, which is a future that is more green and sustainable," said Gonçalves.

"It's a significant exhibition that brings [to light] one side of the research that we do, which is rela-

ted to the mangroves, that is sometimes not so visible because it stays within the scientific community and does not necessarily translate to the community," the scholar added.

The Institute has also been conducting trips to mangrove areas - led by Tagulao - targeting local students from different schools, and has even launched a campaign to plant mangroves in different areas of the city involving these students.

Meanwhile, in June, the government had dropped its plans to plant mangro-

ves along the coast of Areia Preta as it had submitted a report to the Central Government, expressing its desire for land reclamation in the vicinity of the Oriental Pearl area.

The plan was announced last year by the Environmental Protection Bureau by which it aimed to fertilize rows of mangroves along the northern coast of the Areia Preta area in order to reduce wastewater and malodorous pollution in this part of Macau.

When questioned by the Times regarding this matter, Gonçalves suggested that

the public should make an effort to restore the city's ecosystems, which were once abandoned.

"These ecosystems provide a number of relevant services for the community in terms of coastal protection, reducing pollution and increase in biodiversity," said the dean.

"We hope that [an expansion of mangrove areas] can be integrated into the development of the Greater Bay Area, which has not been the case in the past as a contraction [of these areas] is what has been happening until now," he added.

Meanwhile, the Institute is confident that through these kinds of activities, the heightened awareness of the public will change the ways these matters have been progressing.

The exhibition, which will run until September 30, also highlights that mangroves are vulnerable to the impact of coastal development and other human activities including logging, climate change, coastal development and pollution, among others.



Hong Kong begins mass testing for virus amid public doubts

ZEN SOO

HONG Kong tested thousands of people for coronavirus yesterday at the start of a mass-testing effort that's become another political flash point in the semi-autonomous Chinese territory.

Volunteers stood in lines at some of the more than 100 testing centers, though many residents are distrustful over the resources and staff being provided by China's central government and some have expressed fear DNA could be collected.

The Hong Kong government has dismissed such concerns, and leader Carrie Lam urged the public to see the program in a fair and objective light and appealed to critics to stop discouraging

people from being tested since participation was crucial to the program's success.

Priscilla Pun, a sales manager, got tested to give herself peace of mind. "I don't see any reason not to do it, and this way I can let my family in Canada know that I am safe," said Pun, who was tested at a center in the eastern Quarry Bay neighborhood.

Others, like Giselle Ming, said that she decided to take part to support the Hong Kong government's initiative even though she was not worried that she might be a carrier of the coronavirus. "In this bad situation of the coronavirus, I hope I can do something to help the society," she said.

Lam said at her weekly news conference that over 10,000 people, including most of Hong Kong's government ministers,

had been tested by yesterday morning.

"This large-scale universal community testing program is beneficial to fighting the epidemic and beneficial to our society. It will also help Hong Kong come out of the pandemic unscathed and is conducive to the resumption of daily activities," Lam said.

More than 500,000 people in the city of 7.5 million signed up in advance for the program, which will last at least a week. It is aimed at identifying silent carriers of the virus — those without symptoms — who could be spreading the disease.

The government expects 5 million people will take part in the program, which could be extended to two weeks depending on demand.

Hong Kong's worst outbreak in

early July was blamed in part on an exemption from quarantine requirements for airline staff, truck drivers from mainland China and sailors on cargo ships.

At its peak, Hong Kong recorded more than 100 locally transmitted cases a day, after going weeks without any in June.

The outbreak has slowed, with the city reporting just nine cases on Monday, the first time in two weeks that daily infections had fallen to single digits. However, the government and some experts say that community testing can help detect asymptomatic carriers to further stop the spread of the virus.

Respiratory medicine expert professor David Hui that even though infections have dwindled, the proportion of cases with untraceable sources of infection re-

main between 30% and 40%.

"That means there must be some silent transmission going on, so community testing has some role in picking up these silent transmitters," said Hui, who is a public health adviser to the city's government. "Hopefully if we can identify these people and isolate them for a period of time that may help to break the transmission chain in the community."

The program is more effective if most of the population takes part, Hui said.

"If only 1 or 2 million people take part, then we may not be able to achieve that objective," he said.

Other experts, such as Dr. Leung Chi-chiu, a respiratory specialist and a member of the Medical Council of Hong Kong, said that the testing program plays only a supplementary role in controlling the pandemic in the city, due to the long and variable incubation period of the coronavirus.

Leung said that mass-testing may not be the most cost-effective method, as it is not easy to pick up the disease in its early development, especially if a person is not having symptoms or have not had recent exposure to an infected patient.

Even if mass-testing could identify infected patients, they may already be past the infectious stage, he said.

Leung said that large-scale testing will not be able to replace traditional methods of social distancing and contact tracing measures, and should only be used as a complementary measure.

Some pro-democracy activists, such as Joshua Wong, have publicly opposed the program. Wong called for a boycott, citing Swedish media reports that some test kits being used had high rates of false-positive results. Lam noted that while false-positives can happen, the tests used in the program have passed quality assurance procedures. **AP**

Covid-19 test may discourage visitors from coming to Macau

JULIE ZHU

ALTHOUGH many mainland internet users say they are intrigued about visiting Macau because of the SAR government's 290 million pataca consumption coupon scheme, Covid-19 tests may have discouraged some such individuals from making the trip.

Starting from yesterday and lasting until December 31, WeChat users verified with a mainland identification card can redeem coupons for hotels and shopping to use in Macau. The

SAR government is compensating travelers with 290 million patacas in the form of this coupon scheme.

A Weibo post made by the People's Daily about the coupons has gained over 5,000 likes from mainland netizens, with the majority expressing a desire to visit Macau; however, some are "frightened" by the Covid-19 test.

"A Covid-19 test is required. I am afraid of it. I will not travel to Macau," one commented. Another wrote, "I will go [to Macau] only if a Covid-19 test is not needed." A third said, "I need to

take the Covid-19 test which is only valid for one week, which is indeed troublesome."

Covid-19 tests cost approximately 120 yuan in most mainland provinces. The price may go up to 200 yuan in some places.

According to a report by Eastmoney, a mainland news outlet, on August 11, the day China's State Council announced the gradual resumption of issuing tourism visas to Macau, mainland travel service app Ctrip recorded a skyrocket surge in terms of searches for Macau-related products.

On August 11, Ctrip App's global shopping entry recorded a growth of 120% in searches for merchandise and coupons for Macau-related shopping.

Even though these statistics indicate that the mainland market is reacting positively in terms of visiting Macau, there are still factors discouraging them from acting on their interest.

Besides the potentially troublesome Covid-19 test, mainland visitors may also find it inconvenient to travel because of the health code requirements.

Currently, different mainland provinces use different health codes in addition to accepting the nation-wide health code. When a mainlander travels between different provinces, that person must register for each province's health code or simply use the nation-wide one.

Passengers flying directly from any mainland city to Macau must present a negative Covid-19 test result. These visitors will not be able to switch their code to the Macau health code if their code is not registered in Guangdong province.

Tomorrow marks the last waiting day for some residents in Guangdong province who have applied for a travel endorsement to Macau. This means Guangdong may hold the biggest potential for visitors during the National Day holiday.

On August 26, the Guangdong police department resumed the issuing of travel endorsements to Guangdong residents, including those holding a permanent residency of any Guangdong city as well as those from other mainland provinces with temporary residence in Guangdong.



The Czech Senate President Milos Vystřil in Taipei yesterday

DEFYING BEIJING'S WRATH, CZECH SENATOR DELIVERS TAIWAN SPEECH

HUIZHONG WU, TAIPEI

DEFYING anger from China, the president of the Czech Republic's Senate addressed Taiwan's legislature yesterday, offering a strong rebuke of authoritarian politics and Beijing's increasingly aggressive foreign policy.

Milos Vystřil concluded a speech that underscored shared democratic values by proclaiming in Mandarin that "I am Taiwanese," a throwback to former U.S. President John F. Kennedy's famed 1963 anti-communist speech in a then-divided Berlin in which he declared he was a Berliner.

Beijing is furious about the Czech delegation's visit, with the foreign ministry summoning the Czech Republic's ambassador to lodge stern representations on Monday and saying the visit amounted to

"flagrant support of Taiwan independence."

China claims Taiwan as its own territory and strongly objects to any official contact between other countries and the self-governing island.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying condemned Vystřil's visit, saying, "he is openly supporting the separatist forces and separatist activities in Taiwan that seriously violate China's sovereignty and China's internal affairs."

She echoed a warning from Foreign Minister Wang Yi, who said in Europe on Monday that "the Chinese government and people will not sit by and let this go unchecked, and will definitely make them pay a heavy price for their short-sighted behavior and political opportunism."

In his address, Vystřil directly

referenced Kennedy's "Ich bin ein Berliner" speech, and emphasized democratic freedoms embraced since the Czech Republic threw off communist rule at the end of the Cold War and Taiwan emerged from martial law at the end of the 1980s.

"In 1963, the American president JFK, in his famous speech 'I'm a Berliner,' clearly opposed communism and political oppression and supported the people of West Berlin," Vystřil said. "He said 'Freedom is indivisible, and when one man is enslaved, all are not free.'"

"Please let me use the same manner to express my support to the people of Taiwan: I'm a Taiwanese," he said, speaking the last phrase in Mandarin Chinese.

Vystřil's visit follows a spat last year between Beijing and Prague, the Czech Republic's capital. The

two cities ended a sister-cities agreement because Beijing had wanted Prague to agree to the "one-China" principle, which is China's stance that Taiwan is a part of its territory.

The visit is also in direct opposition to Czech President Milos Zeman, who has taken strongly pro-China views. Vystřil is to meet Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-Wen later in the week.

Amid China's campaign of diplomatic isolation and military threats, Taiwan has been blocked from participating in major international forums and now has just 15 formal allies. Despite the lack of official ties, the U.S. remains Taiwan's closest partner and source of weaponry to counter China's threat to bring the island under its control by military means.

Following his speech, Vystřil

told reporters that his visit was consistent with Prague's interpretation of the "one-China policy" and wasn't intended as an affront to Beijing.

"And something I wish to emphasize is that we are in no way opposing mutual benefits and equal relations with the People's Republic of China as much as we want to have mutual benefits and equal relations with Taiwan," Vystřil said.

Taiwanese parliamentary Speaker Yu Shyi-kun said the Czech delegation's visit was an affirmation of Taiwan's continued presence on the world stage as well as a repudiation of authoritarianism.

"On one hand, (Vystřil's) visit is proof of the existence of Taiwan. Proof to the world that Taiwan exists," Yu said.

"At the same time, the visit makes me feel that, no matter whether it be the governments and peoples of the Czech Republic or Taiwan, we all have one thing in common, we both fight against an authoritarian regime and mutually create a future." AP

Hong Kong democracy activists urge German action on China

HONG Kong pro-democracy activists demonstrated outside the German Foreign Ministry yesterday as China's top diplomat visited the capital, urging the government in Berlin do more to try and force Beijing to address human rights issues.

Led by prominent activist Nathan Law, who fled Hong Kong for Britain shortly after China implemented a new national security law, the crowd held photos of imprisoned dissi-

dents and chanted slogans like "free Hong Kong" and "stand up for human rights."

China's contentious national security law for Hong Kong is seen by many as Beijing's boldest move yet to remove the legal firewall between the semi-autonomous territory of Hong Kong and the mainland's authoritarian Communist Party system.

Law told the crowd of about 100 to 150 supporters that it was "wishful

thinking" from Germany and other western nations that China could be convinced to implement democratic reforms with dialogue and engagement alone.

"This authoritarian government is going the opposite way," he said.

He said the European Union needed to increase pressure on China to respect "basic human rights" and that Germany, which holds the EU's rotating presidency, could lead the way.

"Appeasement strategies are really, really useless," he said.

The downtown protest came as German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas hosted Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi at an isolated government villa in a wooded area on the outskirts of the city, well removed from the demonstrators.

Wang is currently in the middle of a five-nation European tour, which also includes Italy, France, the Netherlands and Norway. AP



Nathan Law

AIJAZ HUSSAIN, SRINAGAR

INDIAN and Chinese military commanders held talks for a second day yesterday following a new escalation in tensions along their contested border in the Ladakh region.

Both of the Asian giants have accused the other of fresh provocations, including allegations of soldiers crossing into each other's territory, months after their deadliest standoff in decades.

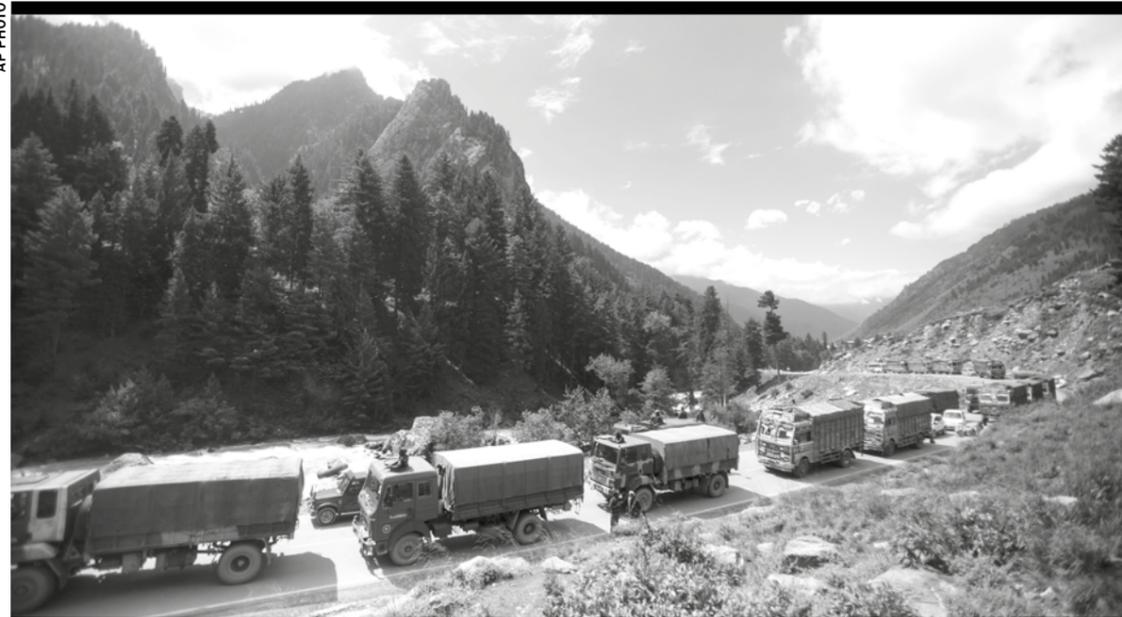
Details of the talks which resumed yesterday morning weren't immediately disclosed. The two countries have amassed soldiers and equipment in the region in recent months.

On Monday, India said its soldiers had thwarted "provocative" movements by China's military on Saturday night. In turn, China's defense ministry accused Indian troops of crossing established lines of control and creating provocations along the disputed border on Monday.

Both India and China have provided little information, but media in the two countries have given extensive coverage to the escalating tensions.

The standoff is over disputed portions of a pristine landscape high in the Karakoram mountains that boasts the world's highest landing strip, a glacier that feeds one of the largest irrigation sys-

Indian, Chinese commanders hold talks over mounting tensions



An Indian army convoy moves on the Srinagar-Ladakh highway at Gagangeer, northeast of Srinagar, Indian-controlled Kashmir, yesterday

tems in the world, and is a critical link in China's massive "Belt and Road" infrastructure project.

India unilaterally declared Ladakh a federal territory and separated it from disputed Kashmir in August 2019, ending its semi-autonomous status and straining

the already prickly relationship between New Delhi and Beijing. China was among the countries to strongly condemn the move, raising it at international forums including the U.N. Security Council.

According to some Indian and

Chinese strategic experts, India's move exacerbated existing tensions with China, leading to the deadly June border clash.

The disputed and undemarcated 3,500-kilometer (2,175-mile) border between India and China, referred to as the Line of Actual

Control, stretches from the Ladakh region in the north to the Indian state of Sikkim. The two nations fought a border war in 1962 that also spilled into Ladakh and ended in an uneasy truce. Since then, troops from opposing sides have guarded the undefined mountain border area, occasionally brawling. They have agreed not to attack each other with firearms.

Rival soldiers brawled bitterly in May, and in June fought with clubs, stones and their fists, leaving 20 Indian soldiers dead. China did not report any casualties, although unconfirmed reports based on photos of new burial grounds say Chinese losses may have topped three dozen.

Accusing each other of instigating the violence, both sides have pledged to safeguard their territory but also try to end the standoff, which has dramatically changed the India-China relationship.

Several rounds of military and diplomatic talks on ending the crisis have been unsuccessful. **AP**

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Concurso Público para o fornecimento de uniformes dos funcionários à MTR (Macau)
(Nº de referência do contrato: MTRM2/CR-2020/07/003)

Após aprovação pela Comissão Executiva da MTR na reunião da Comissão Executiva a 22 de Julho de 2020, a MTR está aberta a propostas sobre o presente Concurso de todos os fornecedores. O presente Concurso inclui, mas não se limita à aquisição dos materiais utilizados na confecção dos uniformes, à manufactura e fornecimento dos mesmos e os respectivos acessórios, à entrega dos uniformes e aos serviços de pós-venda e de adequação. Os interessados podem solicitar o modelo da proposta por email (procurement@mtr.com.mo) ao Departamento de Aquisição e Contrato da MTR (Macau) e deverão enviar a proposta devidamente preenchida pelo mesmo meio antes de 04 de Setembro de 2020.

Em caso de quaisquer dúvidas, o Departamento de Aquisição e Contrato da MTR (Macau) está ao seu dispor para consultas.

(Nota: Por favor indique o número de referência do contrato no título do email para fins de identificação.)

31 de agosto de 2020

MTR OPERAÇÕES FERROVIÁRIAS (MACAU) SOCIEDADE UNIPESSOAL LDA.

AP PHOTO



Top contender: Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga

JAPAN

Who's next? Abe's party maneuvers to pick next PM

WITH Prime Minister Shinzo Abe announcing his plans to step down due to health reasons, members of his ruling party are furiously maneuvering ahead of an internal vote that will ultimately decide his successor.

Executives of Abe's ruling Liberal Democratic Party met yesterday and decided that the Sept. 14 vote for party leader — and with it almost assuredly prime minister — will be limited to lawmakers and not broader members of the party. Some younger lawmakers had called for the latter to be included in order to make the process more open and democratic.

Whoever is chosen will fill in for the rest of Abe's term, until September 2021. The next prime minister will face a number of challenges, including the ongoing fight against COVID-19, managing the Tokyo Olympics that has been postponed to next summer, setting Japan's security policy in the face of an increasingly assertive China, and dealing with the results of the presidential election in the U.S., Japan's key ally.

Here are the three candidates, who have either announced their intention to run or are expected to do so:

YOSHIHIDE SUGA:

Japan's top government spokesman and Abe's longtime right-hand man, the 71-year-old Suga has emerged as the favorite among ruling party heavyweights. Suga has been pegged by the party secretary general as the best caretaker who can ensure the continuation of Abe's policies. The son of a farmer in the northern prefecture of Akita, Suga is a self-made politician, rare in Japan's largely hereditary world of politics. As chief cabinet secretary, Suga is a policy coordinator and advisor to Abe. He is also the public face of Abe's government, doing twice-daily televised media briefings. He's become known as "Uncle Reiwa" after he was tasked with unveiling the new imperial era name for Emperor Naruhito last year. Suga has been a loyal supporter of Abe since his first stint as prime minister from 2006-2007 and helped his return to power in 2012. Suga had previously denied that he would run, but on Monday simply told reporters he would not comment.



FUMIO KISHIDA:

Abe's foreign minister from 2012-2017, the 63-year-old Kishida had once been considered the party's preferred choice to become the next prime minister. His status has slipped, however, after he was seen as fumbling some of the party's response to the coronavirus in his role as policy chief. In formally announcing his candidacy Tuesday, Kishida said he would be a leader who listens to the voices of the people — something Abe has been criticized for not doing enough. A low-key lawmaker from Hiroshima with somewhat dovish stance on security issues, he has been less supportive of Abe's longtime push to rewrite Japan's war-renouncing Constitution. Kishida struck a 2015 settlement with South Korea on "comfort women," victims of Japan's wartime sexual abuse. Kishida in 2017

helped arrange then-President Barack Obama's visit to Hiroshima, a first for a serving American leader.



SHIGERU ISHIBA:

A former defense minister seen as Abe's archrival within the party, the 63-year-old Ishiba is the public's favorite for the next prime minister in media surveys. Ishiba's vocal criticism of Abe, however, has hurt his popularity among ruling party lawmakers. Ishiba has criticized Abe's rule as autocratic and raised concerns about growing poverty. A soft-spoken banker-turned-politician, Ishiba is known as a defense hawk and says Japan should have stronger military capability within the current constitutional limitations. In addition to defense minister, Ishiba has also held top ministry posts in agriculture and local revitalization. He lost to Abe twice in party elections in 2012 and 2018. MDT/AP

this day in history

1951 DESIGNERS PREPARE TO DAZZLE VENICE



British fashion designers have revealed the collection they plan to send to Venice later this week as part of the city's Biennale arts festival.

Last week, they showed off an array of 40 ladies' outfits at a London restaurant before packing them up for the Venice show.

The collection aims to demonstrate the versatility of the three most favoured textiles of the year - cotton, rayon and wool.

The models and their mannequins will be flown to Italy this week by the "big ten" members of the Incorporated Society of London Fashion Designers for the Venice festival of arts and costume.

One of the evening gowns on show was of a simple but elegant design with a full skirt in checked gingham in four colours with a strapless bodice in velvet.

Another more elaborate evening dress was made of white gossamer wool with a neckline and stole embroidered in sequins.

Among the collection were more traditional tailored suits but in striking colours such as red and scarlet.

The most glamorous gown was a full-skirted wedding dress in delicate white print on pink organdie.

As well as heralding the latest fashions from around the world Venice plans to celebrate the history of clothing with a special exhibition called Costume through the Ages.

It opened today at the International Centre of Arts and Costume at the Palazzo Grassi and includes a selection of rare books illustrating the history of costume.

Also in association with the Venice Biennale there will be a Festival of Fashion and Costume in Film Production.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

British fashion in 1951 was emerging from the austere war years and designers could afford to experiment with new fabrics and styles.

London now holds its own London Fashion Week organised by the British Fashion Council set up in 1983 and showcases new and established British designers.

The Venice Biennale international art exhibition was first held in 1895.

It was expanded to include more avant-garde artists in the early 1900s. Cities around the world with their own version of the Biennale include Sao Paolo, Paris, Tehran and Tokyo.

The Venice festival closed in 1974 after accusations that it was too elite and a waste of taxpayers' money but then re-emerged when organisers focussed on social realism and environmental issues.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

It's a very liberating sensation to speak your mind no matter what the consequences may be, and it's also going to exert a very healthy influence over the group.



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

Sure, it might feel like everything you're dealing with today is confusing, but it will be confusing in a very good way! Your mind will be agitated, but it will also be firing its synapses in a whole new way.



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

Try to make time for conversation today. The topic isn't too important, but the level of discourse is. Seek out a person you think is even smarter than you. It might take a while, of course, but it will be worth it!



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

They could make your life unpleasant if you tick them off, so tiptoe around any tricky topics and play nicey-nice no matter how rude someone is being. It is the wisest tactic for now.



LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

Plus, your easygoing manner will help them loosen up and really be themselves. If you're torn between talking with an old friend or talking with someone new, opt for the newness.



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

They aren't as meaningful as people might think they are, and if you just remember not to take things too seriously, you'll end this day still feeling good about things.



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

One of the best things you can do for yourself today is be expressive, and put your whole body into it! Wave your hands, shake your head, and do a little dance if it will get your point across.



SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

You'll be in a more aggressive mood today, but you'll still have your characteristic warmth and charm to keep people feeling happy and comfortable around you.



SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

Since there are no sympathetic ears to vent your frustration to, you might as well just step back and go off on your own for a while. You need a break, and you can always count on yourself to understand!



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

To make sure, get in contact with this person and get some closure. You need to clear your mind so that you can get back to the normal pace of your life.



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

You're in a very responsible phase, getting the job done on time and doing it well, so well, in fact, that by tonight you could have little if anything on your plate.



PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Keep a lid on some drama that's about to boil over between two of your acquaintances. Do your part to keep everyone calm by not adding fuel to the fire.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

EASY

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

EASY+

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

MEDIUM

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

HARD

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

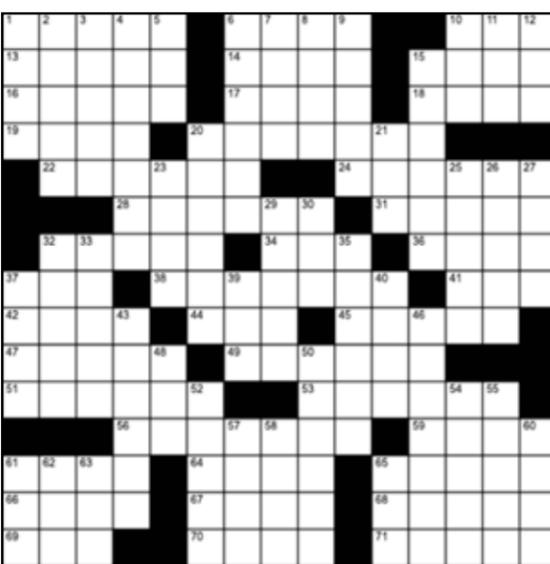
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	20	29	cloudy
Harbin	18	25	cloudy
Tianjin	23	30	cloudy
Urumqi	18	29	clear
Xi'an	18	30	clear
Lhasa	10	23	cloudy
Chengdu	22	32	cloudy
Chongqing	25	30	moderate rain
Kunming	17	27	cloudy
Nanjing	24	31	thundershower
Shanghai	26	30	drizzle
Wuhan	23	32	cloudy
Hangzhou	26	33	drizzle
Taipei	26	32	cloudy
Guangzhou	27	36	cloudy
Hong Kong	28	33	shower
WORLD			
Moscow	11	19	clear
Frankfurt	10	17	cloudy
Paris	10	18	clear
London	10	17	overcast
New York	23	26	drizzle

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS: 1- Improvise; 6- Remove from text; 10- Air-gun ammo; 13- Heat home; 14- Off-ramp; 15- Hog fat; 16- Courtyard; 17- Money; 18- Historical chapters; 19- Irritated state; 20- Storm; 22- Bayer alternative; 24- Oppose; 28- Plan; 31- Shades; 32- Office person; 34- ___ culpa; 36- Type of tide; 37- ___ kwon do; 38- Religious discourses; 41- Apt. divisions; 42- Pismires; 44- Skater Babilonia; 45- Eats to a plan; 47- Path; 49- Unless; 51- Kathmandu resident; 53- Relax; 56- 16th president of the U.S.; 59- Hwys.; 61- Matron; 64- Sphere; 65- Make one; 66- Manipulator; 67- Pond organism; 68- Nervous person, maybe; 69- Make a choice; 70- ___ Abby; 71- As ___ resort;

DOWN: 1- Rock blasters; 2- Roman goddess of the moon; 3- Caesar's tongue; 4- Copy; 5- Short life?; 6- Respectable; 7- Test; 8- Speech issue; 9- Early anesthetic; 10- Place for ordering alcoholic drinks; 11- Bikini part; 12- Radical '60s org.; 15- Reveals; 20- Coupon; 21- A collection of articles; 23- Mercury and Saturn, e.g.; 25- Lifeless; 26- Joins; 27- Cookbook ams.; 29- Mingle; 30- Corp. honcho; 32- Boat often made of birchbark, canvas, or fiberglass; 33- Cessation; 35- Like llamas; 37- Mountain lake; 39- Actress Charlotte; 40- Drinks slowly; 43- Less fresh; 46- Endless; 48- ___ Lilly and Company; 50- Underground room; 52- Out of favor; 54- New York city; 55- For ___ sake!; 57- Racer Yarborough; 58- Gymnast Korbut; 60- Spanish muralist; 61- The Righteous Brothers, e.g.; 62- Viper; 63- Assembled; 65- ___ Lazy River;



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
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- Electricity - Report 28 339 922
- Macau Daily Times 28 716 081



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- [Macau] One Central 2 1/2 2 1/2
1,269 ft² \$11,580,000 (ref: 19070000)
- [Taipa] Buckingham 2 1/2 2 1/2
1,439 ft² \$11,770,000 (ref: 19045004)
- [Taipa] Nova City 3 1/2 2 1/2
1,494 ft² \$12,880,000 (ref: 17050001RT)

FOR RENT

- [Taipa] Waterfront Duet New studio 1 1/2
469 ft² \$9,000/mth (ref: 20081001)
- [Taipa] Old Taipa Village 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 \$20,460/mth (ref: 20021002)
- [Macau] One Central 2 1/2 2 1/2
1,269 ft² \$25,000/mth (ref: n/a)

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MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER



JAPAN, AUSTRALIA AND INDIA TO LAUNCH SUPPLY CHAIN INITIATIVE

THE trade ministers of Japan, India and Australia agreed yesterday to work toward achieving supply chain resilience in the Indo-Pacific region, following reports that the three nations are looking to work together to counter China's dominance on trade.

The ministers instructed their officials to promptly hammer out details for an initiative to strengthen supply chains for launch later this year, according to a joint statement.

Japan's Hiroshi Kajiyama, India's Piyush Goyal and Australia's Simon Birmingham attended the video conference Tuesday afternoon, the statement said. They also called on other countries in the re-

gion with shared views to participate in the initiative.

The three nations are seeking to build stronger supply chains to counter China's dominance as trade and geopolitical tensions escalate across the region, Bloomberg reported in August, citing people in Tokyo and New Delhi with knowledge of the matter.

Along with the U.S., Japan, Australia and India are members of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, or Quad, a loose grouping for national security consultation. A senior U.S. diplomat said Monday that the U.S. would like to start formalizing that grouping as the base for a broader security alliance in the region. **BLOOMBERG**

DUTERTE WON'T BAN CHINESE COMPANIES FROM PHILIPPINE PROJECTS



PRESIDENT Rodrigo Duterte will not ban Chinese contractors from the Philippines' infrastructure projects, his spokesman said, rejecting a proposal from the nation's top diplomat to end deals with Chinese companies involved in South China Sea reclamation.

Projects involving Chinese companies - including the Sangley airport of state-owned China Communications Construction Co. and Philippine billionaire Lucio Tan's MacroAsia Corp. - will push through, Duterte's spokesman

Harry Roque said at a televised briefing yesterday. "We need investors from China," he said.

Foreign Affairs Secretary Teodoro Locsin last week said he will recommend to terminate government projects involving Chinese entities which the U.S. sanctioned.

Duterte has warmed ties with China since he was elected in 2016. In his annual address in July, he said he wants to pursue diplomacy with China while protecting the Philippines' claims in the South China Sea. **BLOOMBERG**

FACEBOOK SAYS IT CAN BLOCK CONTENT TO AVOID REGULATORY RISK

FACEBOOK Inc. yesterday told users it can take down or block any content that could increase regulatory or legal risks for the social media giant around the world - even if the content itself isn't illegal.

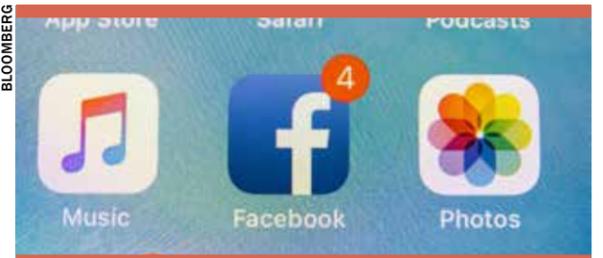
The broad language of a global change to its terms of service, which takes effect Oct. 1, gives the U.S. giant room to do whatever it deems necessary to maintain its business objectives in a shifting regulatory environment.

Facebook said the change allows it to block people and publishers in Australia from sharing news, pushing back

against a proposed law forcing the company to pay media firms for their articles. But a company spokesperson said the tweak applies globally.

"We also can remove or restrict access to your content, services or information if we determine that doing so is reasonably necessary to avoid or mitigate adverse legal or regulatory impacts to Facebook," the smartphone notification sent to users yesterday read.

The update stands in contrast to Chief Executive Officer Mark Zuckerberg's public statements about the importance of free speech. **BLOOMBERG**



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MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER



FOOTBALL

IBRAHIMOVIĆ SIGNS ONE-SEASON DEAL WITH AC MILAN

AC MILAN is hoping a full season from Zlatan Ibrahimović will result in a return to the Champions League after a seven-year absence.

Seven-time European champion Milan announced yesterday [Macau time] that the 38-year-old Ibrahimović signed a one-season contract.

The deal is reportedly worth 7 million euros (\$8.3 million).

Ibrahimović began his second stint with Milan in January on a six-month contract and helped turn the Rossoneri's season around with 10 goals in 18 Serie A matches.

Milan finished sixth in the Italian league this month and earned a Europa League spot.

Serie A opens on Sept. 19, although Ibrahimović could make his season debut two days earlier when Milan visits Shamrock Rovers of Ireland in the Europa League's second qualifying round. **AP**

FOOTBALL

Waiting for Messi, Barcelona to start season vs Villarreal

WITH or without Lionel Messi, Barcelona already knows it will start its season at home against Villarreal at the end of September.

The Spanish league announced its calendar yesterday [Macau time], and the first round is scheduled for the second weekend of September. But Barcelona and other teams who played later into this past season will have some of their games postponed so they have time to prepare.

All matches will continue to be played in empty stadiums. The league hoped at least some fans would be allowed into matches, but Spain has been struggling to contain a new surge of coronavirus cases.

Messi, who last week told Barcelona he wants to leave, skipped the team's first day of training. He had already



been a no-show on Sunday as the squad underwent coronavirus testing at the club's training center. He wants to leave on a clause that allows him to leave for free at the end of the season, but Barcelona said that clause has expired. It wants the Argentine great to stay at least until the end of his contract in June 2021.

There is no sign of how long the dispute is going

to last, as neither the club nor the player appear to be willing to make concessions.

Barcelona's first match would have been against promoted Elche at Camp Nou Stadium, with the second against Athletic Bilbao.

The first clásico against Real Madrid will be in late October, also at Camp Nou. The second will be on April 11 in Madrid.

Real Madrid, which also

returned to training this week, will debut in the second round at Real Sociedad. Only Madrid's first-round game was postponed as it didn't reach the Champions League quarterfinals.

Atlético Madrid has been given the first two rounds off, and will start against Granada at home.

The league is scheduled to finish in May 2021. **AP**

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OPINION

World Views

Shuli Ren, Bloomberg

YOU THINK FAANG IS DISTORTING THE S&P? CONSIDER ATM

Many have lamented the lack of depth in the U.S. stock market, marveling at how a handful of big tech companies have grown to dominate almost a quarter of the S&P 500 and become responsible for all of this year's gain. But that lopsidedness is nothing next to China, where the top three stocks in the benchmark MSCI China Index now have more than a 38% weight.

At this rate, instead of buying passive funds that track the MSCI index, investors might as well just pile into China's version of FAANG, known locally as ATM: Alibaba Group Holding Ltd., Tencent Holdings Ltd. and food delivery super-app Meituan Dianping.

There's nagging unease that ATM's economic prospects aren't as sound as those of Facebook Inc., Apple Inc., Amazon.com Inc., Netflix Inc. and Google's parent Alphabet Inc. In the U.S., deeply entrenched user behavior has protected tech companies from stepping on each other's toes. Americans shop on Amazon, search on Google, and stream on Netflix.

In China, however, the competitive landscape is a lot murkier. Alibaba continues to face fierce competition from JD.com Inc. and Pinduoduo Inc. Meanwhile, Jack Ma's empire is still fighting with Tencent over mobile payments. As for Meituan Dianping, how many century stocks — companies with a market cap north of \$100 billion — have rallied more than 160% so far this year? Meituan is eclipsed only by Tesla Inc. So it's not unnatural to ask how much further ATM can go.

Passive fund flows, unleashed by the super dovish tone of the Federal Reserve, are propelling these three stocks even higher. That makes beating the benchmark MSCI China Index an impossible task. Value investing remains a losing game, because banks, the only segment big enough to tilt the index, are still struggling with bad loan writedowns.

To outperform the index and reduce reliance on ATM, then, investors have no choice but to hunt for smaller growth stocks. JD.com and Pinduoduo, for instance, are hedges against the Alibaba behemoth; both saw their market caps more than double this year. Electric vehicle startups XPeng Inc. and Li Auto Inc. have launched successful IPOs, as investors increasingly see the industry as recession-proof.

Meanwhile, bullish equity analysts are telling tall tales to justify sky-high valuations. In mid-May, Zhongtai Securities Co. published a research report arguing that the baijiu maker Kweichow Moutai Co. is gold-like as an effective hedge against irresponsible central banks printing trillions of dollars of new money. Quantitative easing tends to benefit the rich, and has only created bubbles; as a scarce asset, Moutai is a good buy, the brokerage argued. The liquor maker hit a fresh high Monday, and is now valued at an eye-popping 48 times 2020 earnings.

While it's understandable that the rich may want to celebrate their stock gains this year with a \$300 bottle of Moutai, hot-pot chain operator Haidilao International Holding Ltd.'s meteoric rise is more puzzling. The Chinese are still apprehensive about dining out, recent macro retail data show, and Haidilao posted 965 million yuan (\$139.5 million) in losses in the first half, versus 911 million yuan net profit in the same period last year.

But now Haidilao is seen as a robotics play. It opened its first smart, automated restaurant in Beijing almost two years ago. Once artificial intelligence is involved, profitability no longer matters.

There are plenty of other examples. Investors have crowded into expensive after-school education stocks as well as duty-free goods operators, all as attempts to diversify from ATM. When we're in a bull market, pigs can fly.

For months, we've been worried that a top-heavy stock market would be vulnerable to a crash. One generous line of thinking has been that value stocks will perk up once economies recover, and indexes will look more balanced. That may well be the case, but until that day comes — and it could take years — the ATMs and FAANGs of the world have already distorted stock investing into an unrecognizable form.

Health authorities in Portugal are allowing the country's Communist Party to let 16,500 people into its annual open-air festival next weekend - an unusually high number for a gathering in Europe amid the coronavirus pandemic.

The permit has caused an outcry because officials have for months slashed the number of people allowed into other public events, forcing many of them to cancel.

The announcement came as the center-left Socialist govern-

ment is seeking political support from other parties, including the Communists, for its 2021 spending plan.

The festival, called Festa do Avante, features concerts and political speeches in a fenced-off area of countryside south of Lisbon. In past years it has drawn some 100,000 people, of a wide variety of ages, over its three days.

The event is a major source of income for the Communist Party, which has 10 seats in Portugal's 230-seat parliament.

CHINESE-BORN AUSTRALIAN CCTV JOURNALIST DETAINED IN CHINA



Cheng Lei, a Chinese-born Australian journalist for CGTN

ROD MCGUIRK, CANBERRA

A Chinese-born Australian journalist for CGTN, the English-language channel of China Central Television, has been detained in China, Australia's government said.

Australian officials had a consular visit via video link with Cheng Lei at a detention facility last Thursday, Foreign Minister Marise Payne said in a statement. They will continue to provide assistance and support to her and her family, Payne said.

Australia had been informed by Chinese authorities on Aug. 14 of her detention, but made its first public statement this week.

Australian authorities have said they do not know why she was detained.

"Further comment will not be provided owing to the government's privacy obligations," Payne said.

Cheng had not been charged, but was being held under what is called "residential surveillance at a designated location," Australian media reported yesterday.

It is a form of detention in which investigators can imprison and question a

suspect for up to six months without a formal arrest.

Cheng's two young children are with family members in the Australian city of Melbourne.

"As a family, we are aware of the current situation with regard to Cheng Lei's status as advised by the (Australian) Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade," the family said in a state-

ful and difficult time for them," he added.

Australia in July warned its citizens of a risk of arbitrary detention in China, as relations between the free trade partners have soured in recent years. China dismissed the warning as disinformation.

Australia has criticized China for charging Chinese-Australian spy novelist Yang Hengjun with espionage in March. He has been detained since January last year.

Australian Karm Gilesie was sentenced to death in China in June, seven years after he was arrested and charged with attempting to board an international flight with more than 7.5 kilograms of methamphetamine. Some observers suspect that such a severe sentence so long after the crime was related to the bilateral rift.

Cheng is an anchor for CGTN's BizAsia program. She was born in China and worked in finance in Australia before returning to China and starting a career in journalism with CCTV in Beijing in 2003.

She has reported on major Chinese events including Beijing's 2008 Olympics and Shanghai's 2010 World Expo. AP

Trade Minister Simon Birmingham said the government did not know why Cheng had been detained

ment, adding that it looked forward to a "satisfactory and timely conclusion to the matter."

"In China, due process will be observed," the family said.

Trade Minister Simon Birmingham said yesterday the government did not know why Cheng had been detained.

"We are obviously engaging where we can with Ms. Cheng Lei," Birmingham told Nine Network television.

"We will continue ... to work as best we can in providing her and her family with assistance through what is no doubt a stres-

Myanmar The Southeast Asian nation has reported its highest single-day total of COVID-19 cases since its first cases were confirmed in late March. The Health Ministry announced 95 new cases, bringing the country's total to 882. Of that total, 354 have recovered and six have died. Myanmar has seen a surge over the past week, mostly in the western state of Rakhine, which borders Bangladesh and hosts several major camps for people displaced by years of civil conflict.



South Korea reported 235 new cases, mostly from the greater capital area, where officials have restricted dining at restaurants and shut down churches, nightspots, fitness centers and after-school academies to fight a viral resurgence. South Korea has added 5,412 cases during a 19-day streak in triple-digit daily jumps, accounting for more than a quarter of the nation's caseload. The spike of infections in recent weeks have raised fears about overwhelmed hospital systems and rising death tolls as more senior citizens get infected.



Sri Lanka authorities have decided to release 444 prisoners serving time for minor offenses with the aim of easing overcrowding and ensure safety from COVID 19. Prisoners who have served half of their sentence, are unable to pay fines and are older than 65 are to be released under a presidential pardon, according to the prison department. Sri Lanka's prisons are highly overcrowded with about 33,000 prisoners in facilities designed to hold fewer than 12,000.

Venice is reclaiming its place as a top cultural destination with the opening of the Venice Film Festival — the first major in-person cinema showcase of the coronavirus era after Cannes canceled and other international festivals opted to go mostly online this year. But don't be fooled. The 77th edition of the world's oldest film festival will look nothing like its predecessors.

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