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CTM 40th ANNIVERSARY

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**ATTACKS ON CHINESE-RUN FACTORIES IN MYANMAR DREW DEMANDS FROM BEIJING FOR PROTECTION FOR THEIR PROPERTY AND EMPLOYEES**

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AP PHOTO

**China's** capital and a wide swath of the country's north were enveloped yesterday in the worst sandstorm in a decade, forcing the cancelation of hundreds of flights. Skyscrapers in the center of Beijing appeared to drop from sight amid the dust and sand. Traffic was snarled and more than 400 flights out of the capital's two main airports were canceled amid high winds and low visibility.

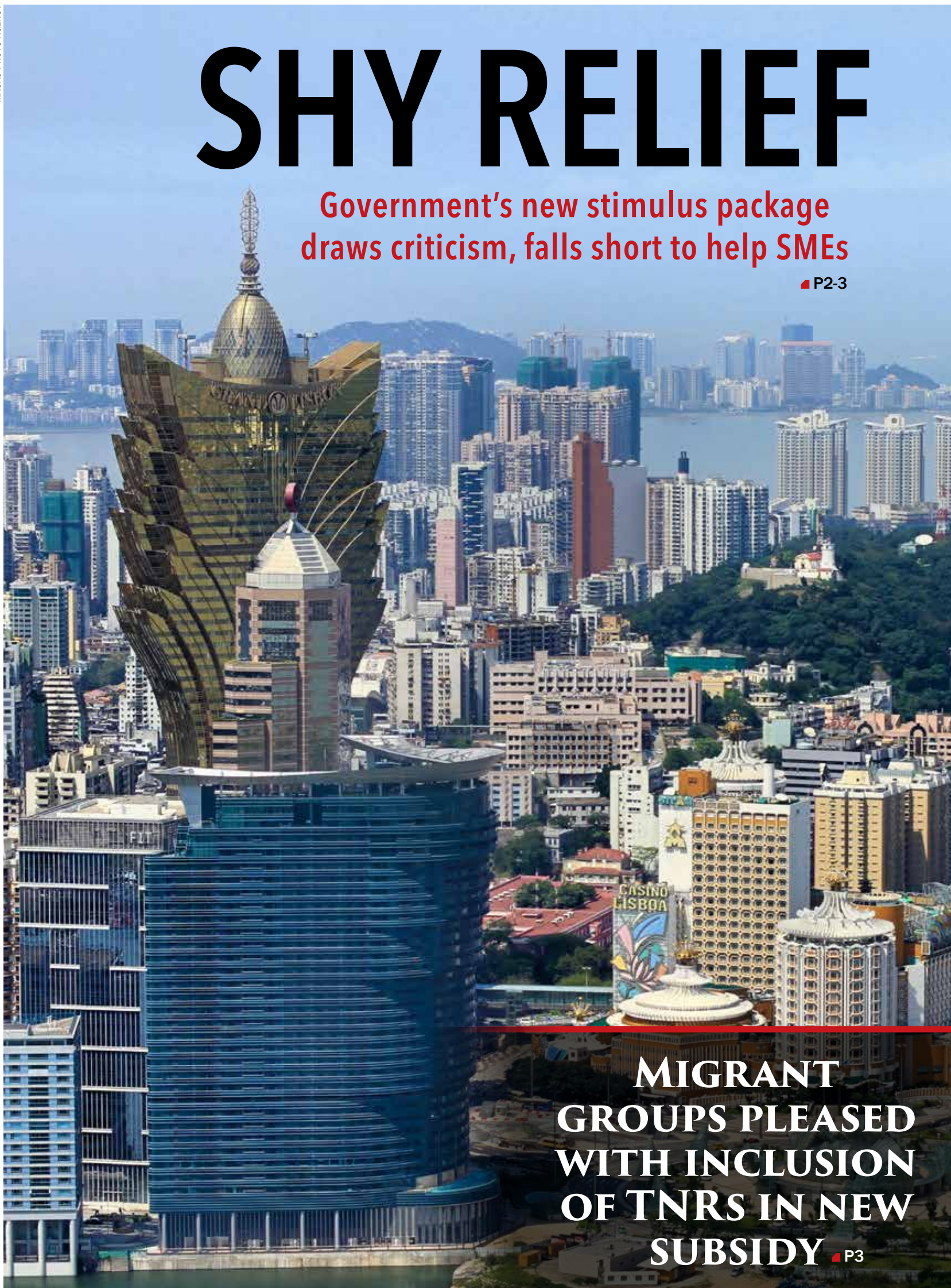
**Israel** The Defense Ministry on Sunday said it has completed development of a new guided mortar system, giving the army a formidable new weapon against enemies embedded in crowded urban environments. Officials said the "Iron Sting" system, using both GPS and laser technology, would provide Israeli land forces a new level of precision while minimizing the risk of harming nearby civilians.

**Middle East** Arms imports to the Middle East rose by a quarter in the decade to 2020 even though arms sales globally remained stable over the same period, a Swedish watchdog said Monday. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, or SIPRI, said the Middle East figures were driven chiefly by the world's largest arms importer, Saudi Arabia, which increased its purchases by 61%. Egypt's imports rose 136% and Qatar's 361%.

**US** The reading of the nominations for next month's Academy Awards has begun. Priyanka Chopra Jonas and husband Nick Jonas are announcing the nominees during a presentation that's streaming live on Oscars.org and Oscars.com and the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences' digital social platforms. The nominees for best supporting actress are: Maria Bakalova, "Borat Subsequent Moviefilm"; Glenn Close, "Hillbilly Elegy"; Olivia Colman, "The Father"; Amanda Seyfried, "Mank"; Yuh-Jung Youn, "Minari."

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MACAU PHOTO AGENCY



# SHY RELIEF

**Government's new stimulus package draws criticism, falls short to help SMEs**

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**MIGRANT GROUPS PLEASED WITH INCLUSION OF TNRS IN NEW SUBSIDY**

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# Third round of stimulus package set to roll out

HONEY TSANG

**T**HE details regarding the new round of the much-anticipated stimulus packages were made public yesterday morning, but experts say that the rules for this digital voucher scheme are complicated, which may reduce its efficiency to foster the economy when compared to the previous two rounds of financial subsidy.

The particulars of the MOP29.2 billion stimulus package was released by officials yesterday morning. The scheme adopts a four-pronged approach, including the MOP7.24 billion cash handout scheme, MOP5.69 billion domestic spending facilitation scheme, MOP334 million vocational training scheme and MOP15.96 billion tax incentive and allowance scheme.

In yesterday's media briefing, Secretary for Economy and Finance Lei Wai Nong stressed that this financial stimulus will follow a different tactic which necessitates the consumption power "initiated" by local consumers, when compared to the previous two rounds launched last year — which were designed to play as a financial lifeline handed out by the government to help individuals

and business weather the economic fallout brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The previous two rounds of financial measures, particularly the e-voucher schemes, were intended to inject capital into Macau's economy, which were considered as "emergency" approaches, Lei addressed the media.

"But this round of stimulus package demands a combined effort of the government and the whole society, in a bid to generate a more efficient and lasting cycled economic benefits in Macau," he added.

## DETAILS OF FOUR-PRONGED APPROACH

In the forthcoming plan, the cash handout scheme will be considered as the priority. Similar to the first round of stimulus announced in February 2020, the government is set to roll out an early cash distribution of MOP10,000 and MOP 6,000 to each Macau resident and non-Macau resident, respectively, starting from April.

Pre-pandemic, the SAR government originally distributed cash handouts to individuals during the summer period.

The domestic spending facilitation scheme — comprised of three sub-programs: the e-voucher, the spending discount for seniors and the domestic travel programs — will be considered



as the second focal point. Such scheme is slated to last from May to the end of 2021.

The SAR government has earmarked MOP5 billion in the e-voucher program, the bene-

the GGR tally as well.

## THE WELL-INTENDED SCHEME DRAWS CRITICISM DUE TO ILL PREPARATION

**T**HOUGH the government has injected a hefty sum of MOP29.2 billion into this round of stimulus to drive domestic spending and stabilize the local economy, it has drawn a lot of criticism from the public, with the negative judgments thrown upon the e-voucher scheme being the most pronounced.

"The details regarding how to receive and redeem the e-voucher is far too complicated for a local to fathom. It had taken me a lot of time too to understand," lawmaker Agnes Lam told the Times yesterday.

With such a convoluted concept, it may be more difficult for the subsidy to trickle into the market, she added.

When asked by the media following the press conference if an individual can receive double benefits if he or she holds two various mobile payment accounts, Tai Kin Ip, director of the Economic and Technological Development Bureau did not respond to the question directly and said: "It depends on the payment behavior of each individual. Some may have one e-payment account and some may have two."

Lam, who had been offering advice upon the drafting of this round's relief measures, suspected that the confusion is caused due to the haste to launch the packages.

"The stimulus was launched weeks earlier than planned. The officials might not even ponder about the problem of overlapped subsidy for a person who has more than one mobile payment accounts," Lam stressed.

"There are many limitations upon the usage of the e-vouchers as well. The scheme favors those who are financially able, instead of those who are scraping by and cannot afford daily expenses in Macau," the lawmaker added.

She suggests for the government to clarify the details of the e-voucher scheme later and launch targeted relief measures, such as a cash handout, exclusively to the underprivileged groups, who are the unemployed and those who are forced to take no-pay leave.

Nonetheless, she acknowledged that this round succeeds in offering the much-needed succor to some target groups, including the tourism and casino sectors, and the elderly.

The stimulus has sparked many negative critiques on social media platforms. Most of them condemned the e-voucher scheme that it has made many perplexed and cannot benefit the impoverished residents.

When asked if the stimulus will help stimulate the city's gross gaming revenue (GGR) and push the government's GGR forecast of MOP130 billion for 2021 higher, Secretary for Economy and Finance Lei Wai Nong said that Macau's gaming business has been on the "growth trajectory," ever since the resumption of quarantine-free travel between Macau and China in September 2020, but the industry still takes times to recover.

"The government has been evaluating this year's GGR figure, and we are still working on it," Lei said, adding that the vaccination scheme is expected to help bolster

the GGR tally as well.

"We don't believe the latest stimulus will impact the GGR at all, [as] we expect that the latest with even more restrictions than the previous [financial measures] will not be redeemable in the casinos," Ben Lee, managing partner of IGamiX Management & Consulting, told the Times.

The officials also rebutted the rumors that this round of stimulus was released earlier than scheduled to console the public following the protest at the Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL) by hundreds of construction workers last Friday.

Lei said the government will double down on helping the affected workers to land a job. But he also commented that the budget allocated by the government on public construction projects, involving MOP18.5 billion, is "sufficient" in 2021. However, there are usually different phases that demand different construction professions in each construction project, and this may lead to some local construction workers staying unemployed. HT

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# in phases from April



ficiaries of which are extended to all people residing in Macau, including all Macau ID holders, blue cardholders, and foreign national students.

In comparison to the two previous electronic consumption voucher schemes — which distributed MOP3,000 and MOP5,000 to every Macau ID holder in May and August 2020 respectively — this year's e-voucher scheme requires an individual to spend first before being granted an e-voucher. It also involves more constraints regarding the granting and redemption of e-vouchers.

For instance, an individual can receive five MOP10 coupons after spending MOP50 through one of the city's eight digital payment platforms. In addition, a practice of "3-times boosting effect" will be applied to the redemption of the e-voucher, meaning an individual can redeem one MOP10 coupon whenever they spend at least MOP30 in each transaction. Each coupon is only valid for 15 days, with a monthly limit of MOP600 and a daily limit of MOP200.

When taking into account the payment pattern among the elderly, most of whom are more inclined to use cash, Lei said, the government will also launch a dedicated consumption program for the city's seniors aged 65 or above. The move involves an investment of MOP567 million.

The eligible elderly can enjoy an instant discount of MOP10 when they spend MOP30 on each transaction through their contactless

payment cards, the Macau Pass — also known as their senior citizen cards. Moreover, the seniors can enjoy benefits through this program and the aforementioned e-voucher programmer simultaneously.

Through the third sub-program, the MOP120 million domestic travel program, a Macau resident can enjoy a subsidy of MOP280 and MOP200 when spending on domestic tours and local accommodation, respectively. The move is to encourage locals to travel domestically and foster the city's tourism industry.

The third focal point will be centered on the MOP334 million vocational training scheme, in which the government will offer subsidized vocation training programs to local employees. This year's scheme — with no limit set in terms of the quota of participants and allowing those who are on unpaid leave to apply even without the referral by the employers — is deemed as an enhanced version, said the director of the Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL), Wong Chi Hong. It is extended to benefit casino staff for this round as well.

The MOP15.96 billion tax incentive and allowance scheme will be the last focus. It covers measures like the rebate of 70% occupational tax paid in 2019; exemption of 5% tourism tax for tourism-related businesses; deduction of the income supplementary tax for 2020 for the small and medium enterprises; and allowances for medical, educational purposes and so on.

MACAU PHOTO AGENCY



## Migrant groups pleased with inclusion of TNRs in new subsidy

LYNZY VALLES

**M**IGRANT group associations are delighted over the announcement of the new financial relief measure yesterday, which includes non-resident workers (TNRs). This is the first time that these group of workers in the region are included in the stimulus package contrary to the past two rounds.

Some of the region's migrant group associations have assisted their fellow workers during the peak of the Covid-19 pandemic where many of them, particularly those who are in the hospitality industry, experienced a pay cut due to the no-pay leave scheme.

These associations began to raise funds among themselves, along with the support of several private groups and individuals, to stretch their support to those unemployed.

"This assistance has been

[an answer to] our prayers since the start of the pandemic, especially to those who have lost their jobs. I'm amazed that they have considered to assist and include blue card holders this time," said Jassy Santos, chairperson of the Progressive Labor Union of Domestic Workers.

For Yosa Wariyanti, president of the Migrant Workers Union (IMWU), the inclusion of the blue card holders marks a "history" among the community.

"The government is making history again. We are happy to receive this news," said Wariyanti.

"During these hard times, we actually needed some help as this pandemic really impacted us." Up until now, the group is still distributing small packs of groceries at their shelter for those who have been laid off and are still stranded in the region due to

the absence of flights.

Many are still taking the risk of residing in the region in hopes of acquiring new jobs despite the new employment law for non-resident workers. The new employment law does not allow them to be hired by local employers directly as they would need to leave the city and return with a work permit — something that is impossible now due to the border closure.

However, many migrant workers refuse to go back home — despite repatriation flights — as they would face another hurdle in seeking employment in the city once the border reopens and would need to pay agency fees.

It has been over a year since the pandemic and it has caused massive layoffs due to economic downturn. Last year, there were a total of 177,663 non-resident workers registered in Macau, down 9.6%, or 18,875 fewer year-on-year.

## GOV'T TO PROVIDE UP TO MOP20M FOR COMPANY UPGRADE, RENTAL

**C**OMPANIES will be able to get up to MOP20 million in government subsidies to upgrade their equipment and offset their rental costs, a Chief Executive Dispatch yesterday stipulated.

The details announced are crucial in commencing the government's company upgrade boost scheme.

The government will subsidize the interest on loans obtained for the purpose of upgr-

ding corporate equipment. In another type of subsidy, it will subsidize the rental of a company. Both subsidies are set at 4% of the interest rate or the rental.

The scheme has two ceilings set at different levels concerning different types of subsidies. The interest subsidy has a ceiling of MOP600 million per year. At the same time, the ceiling for the rental subsidy is set at MOP200 million per year.

As for the maximum subsidy each successful subsidy applicant will be able to obtain, the government has set it to MOP10 million for each type of subsidy.

The scheme was established, as stated in the Executive Order 7/2021, to encourage companies to improve their competitiveness, so as to make progress in economic diversification and sustainable development. **AL**



# CE: PATRIOTS GOVERNING MACAU A SOCIAL, POLITICAL FOUNDATION

LYNZY VALLES

**T**HE Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng emphasised yesterday the determination of the SAR government to adhere to the fundamental principle of “patriots governing Macau.”

In a bid to maintain Macau's long-term stability and prosperity, the city's top official highlighted that it is vital to persist in the principle of “patriots governing Macau,” calling on government officials to pay close attention to the aspirations set out in the recent annual meeting of the National People's Congress (NPC) and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC).

In a briefing session held yesterday to share information on policies and aspirations outlined in the recent Two Sessions



in Beijing, Ho stressed the need “for unswerving effort to ensure ‘patriots governing Macau’” as it is the “social and political foundation of the city.”

“This would ensure the steady progress in Macau of the ‘One country, two systems’ principle,” he said.

He also reminded that the upcoming Legislative Assembly elections in Macau, set for September 12, must be held in line with the political principle and standard of having patri-

ots at core.

“The Legislative Assembly election should be held in a law-based, fair, just, open, and clean manner, while making sure the ‘One country, two systems’ principle was steadfastly applied in Macau without being bent or distorted,” said the CE.

In addition, Ho said that the government would firmly adhere to the holistic view of national security, “devoting effort to staying highly vigilant and fortifying com-

prehensively the work relating to safeguarding national security.”

In his speech, the CE also remarked that there is a need for Macau to proactively align with the national 14th Five-Year Plan, which was released at the Two Sessions, in order to engage further in the national development effort.

Macau's second Five-Year Development Plan would be formulated with a view to Macau's practical situation, and in line with national strategies, Ho revealed, adding that the SAR would spare no effort in seizing development opportunities presented by the country.

This includes complementing Macau's respective advantages with those of the mainland, and advancing – in a coordinated way – development mechanisms.

## 4 RETURNEES TEST POSITIVE FOR COVID-19

LYNZY VALLES

**F**OUR local residents who flew from Europe via Taipei tested positive for Covid-19, the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Centre announced in a statement last night.

On Sunday (March 14), a total of 30 residents flew back to Macau and were subjected to a nucleic acid test (NAT). The results of these tests were negative and the passengers were sent to a quarantine hotel to undergo medical observation.

Yesterday, all the returnees tested for antibodies, of which four of them had abnormal results and were sent to the public hospital.

The first individual is a 36-year-old man who is a clerk in England. On December 17, he was diagnosed with Covid-19 in the UK and was subjected to home isolation treatment. The NAT carried out on February 8 and March 12 were negative.

The second individual is a 20-year-old student in England and was diagnosed at the end of October with Covid-19. At that time, he developed fever and underwent self-isolation. He also took two NATs on March 10 and 11, which both tested negative. On March 12, he took a train from England to Paris to catch the flight to Taipei.

The third individual is a 44-year-old female who was also diagnosed with Covid-19 in December.


The NAT carried out on February 25 and March 12 were negative.

The fourth individual is a 52-year-old businessman who has been working in Ghana. On February 25, he took a flight from Kotoka International Airport to Amsterdam and stayed in the region until March 12.

The NATs he took on February 25, March 8 and March 12 all tested negative.

He flew from Amsterdam to Paris to catch the flight to Taipei.

AD



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# Doors to the mainland open for blue card holders

ANTHONY LAM

**N**ON-RESIDENT workers (TNRs) and other non-Macau residents in the city on legal permits are now allowed to enter mainland China and return to the Special Administrative Region under certain conditions, a Chief Executive Dispatch stated yesterday.

To qualify, the non-Macau residents need to bear a valid Chinese visa issued by the Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Macau Special Administrative Region and must enter mainland China from Macau. They must return to Macau within the validity period of the visa.

In order to reenter Macau, they must not have travelled anywhere in the 21 days prior, except to mainland China and Macau.

Prior to these new arrangement, TNRs and non-Macau residents were barred from entering Macau, meaning that once they left the city, they were not allowed to reenter.

In the same dispatch, the Chief Executive has also suspended the entry ban on these non-Macau residents.



Previously, residents of Bangladesh, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Vietnam were required to hold a Macau SAR visa in order to enter the city. The Chief Executive has also suspended the visa requirement on these foreign residents as long as they fit in the definitions of TNRs or non-Macau residents on legal passes, and also bear a special legal entry permission is-

sued by the Macau government.

The dispatch is seen as a supplementary move as mainland China has resumed the applications of new visa to non-residents currently in Macau.

However, at yesterday's weekly health press conference, Leong Iek Hou, coordinator at the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, was asked if these non-resident groups can enter

Macau from other countries after spending 21 days in the mainland.

She was asked, for example, if a tourist can travel to Macau from Indonesia with a valid Chinese visa and undergoes a 21-day quarantine in the mainland. Leong stressed that the dispatch does not state that the doors are opened these travelers.

Leong explained that given the complementary statements in the dispatch, although these tourists do spend 21 days in mainland China, they will not meet the requirement of entering the mainland from Macau; neither will they meet the requirement of bearing a visa issued by the Macau Office of the Foreign Affairs Ministry Commissioner.

## ASTRAZENECA HAS 'GREATER BENEFITS THAN RISKS'

Several countries have suspended the administration of the AstraZeneca vaccine due to blood clots in about three dozen recipients.

Dr Tai Wa Hou, coordinator of the Health Bureau's Covid-19 Vaccination Operation, addressed the topic when he was asked about it, as Macau has also purchased 400,000 doses of the vaccine.

Tai pointed out that the health authorities in Europe have investigated the cases. According to him, they did not find any clear connection between the blood clots and the vaccine. "They have concluded that getting the AstraZeneca vaccine has greater benefits than risks," Tai said.

Although he said the local health department will closely monitor the development, the introduction of the vaccine in Macau should go as planned for the time being.

In a recent severe adverse event following immunization (AEFI), a 69-year-old man has developed acute coronary syndrome after being vaccinated. The case was ruled out to be a side effect from the vaccine by the health authority.

Upon being asked why the authorities had reached a conclusion so quickly, Tai said the causality was determined through investigation. In contrast, some incidents happen whether or not the jab is administered.

"Matter of coincidence is the most debated type of AEFI," Tai pointed out.

Regarding the 69-year-old resident, Tai attributed the cause of the AEFI to the patient's own constitutional complications.

When questioned about the reliability of the pre-jab health assessment, Tai hinted that for the time being, the nine questions asked are sufficient to evaluate the risk level of a jab recipient. He stressed that if a person has to be completely healthy to qualify for the jab, nobody will be able to take it.

# Corruption watchdog receives reports on election malpractice

**R**EPORTS on malpractices during election campaign have been received by the Commission Against Corruption (CCAC), commissioner Chan Tsz King recently told the press.

As the Chief Executive revealed the date for this year's parliamentary election, which will fall on September 12, a hotline jointly operated by the CCAC and the Electoral Affairs Committee was established as well.

Since the hotline was established, the CCAC has received a single-digit figure of complaints, mostly concerning campaign violations. In addition, the CCAC has also run checks on dinner receptions by local associations. The au-



thority did not find any breach so far.

The commissioner said that he has confidence in members of the public having the knowledge of what should be done, given the parliamentary election has been held many times.

Assistant commissioner Ao Ieong Seong has also said that the CCAC

will not only investigate the reports received, but it will also conduct proactive checks on event venues. There is no limit to the frequency of such checks, she added.

Meanwhile, both officials stressed that the CCAC will, when suspected violations are found, first remind the entity or individual to

rectify the problems. As to how many chances will be given before filing a charge, the two officials remarked that it is on a case-by-case consideration.

Chan said that the CCAC had received reports on an entity allegedly campaigning through its elderly care hotline. Investigation is now in progress and Chan did not rule out the possibility of issuing a reminder to the entity.

He also stressed that members of the public should not panic when seeing social media posts. He also said that the law has stipulations governing distribution of red packets over electronic platforms, hinting that the CCAC is being vigilant against such acts. **AL**

# GOV'T THINK TANK TO PRIORITIZE CITY'S FIVE-YEAR PLAN

**T**HE new director of the Policy Research and Regional Development Bureau (DSEDPR) Cheong Chok Man was officially sworn in yesterday and has announced that his leadership would focus on codeveloping the SAR's Five-Year Plan for 2021-2025.

Back in September 2016, the official document for the Five-Year Development Plan of the Macau SAR (2016-2020) was launched. It is a strategic plan for Macau's development in the short, medium and long term.

The Five-Year Plan aims to meet the needs of livelihoods and steady economic growth, optimise the industrial structure, and increase exchanges and co-operation between Macau and mainland China.

Cheong said that it would grab opportunities set forth

in the national 14th Five-Year Plan during the Two Sessions.

The government think tank would work on boosting the SAR's relations with Hengqin.

In the recent launch of national 14th Five-Year Plan, it announced that it aims for high-quality development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area and to improve policy measures to enable local residents to develop and live in the Mainland.

Cheong said that the development and cooperation concerning Hengqin is of importance, therefore, it would divulge the projects it has in accordance with Hengqin.

"The region will create many opportunities for employment and between national integration," said Cheong. **LV**



## Statement

Liu Xianfa\*



### IMPROVING ELECTORAL SYSTEM: A CRITICAL STEP IN MAINTAINING HONG KONG'S LONG-TERM PROSPERITY AND STABILITY

On 11 March, the fourth session of the 13th National People's Congress (NPC) overwhelmingly approved the 'Decision of the National People's Congress On Improving the Electoral System of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region'. The Central Government, through revising and improving the electoral system of the Hong Kong SAR, plugging the institutional loopholes, fully implementing the principle of "patriots administering Hong Kong", takes a critical step in maintaining Hong Kong's long-term prosperity and stability.

Improving Hong Kong's electoral system is within the power and responsibility of the Central Government. In a unitary state, the central government makes decisions for sub-national units regarding their electoral systems, a political practice commonly enshrined in their constitutions. China is no exception. It is within the Central Government's power to create a special administrative region and establish its systems. It is the Central Government's constitutional power and responsibility prescribed in both the Constitution of the People's Republic of China and the Basic Law of the HKSAR to decide on the electoral system of Hong Kong according to its realities. The moves of the NPC and its Standing Committee in improving the electoral system of the HKSAR are completely in line with the provisions of the Constitution and the Basic Law, and thus have unquestionable legitimacy, rationality, constitutionality and lawfulness.

Improving the electoral system under the guiding principle of "patriots administering Hong Kong" is in line with the principle of "one country, two systems" and the general international practice. "Patriots administering Hong Kong" is a necessary requirement and the core meaning of the "one country, two systems" policy. Moreover, it is also a necessary requirement of China's resuming exercise of sovereignty over Hong Kong, a prerequisite of comprehensively implementing the policy of "one country, two systems", and a reliable pillar supporting Hong Kong's long-term prosperity and stability. Strict requirements on patriotism and related political qualifications of the administrators is a general international practice. Adhering to the principle of "patriots administering Hong Kong" is not a high requirement, but the minimum standard for "Hong Kong people govern Hong Kong". It is also not a unique requirement for Hong Kong, but a norm widely adopted in the whole world.

Improving Hong Kong's electoral system is to ensure the sound development of Hong Kong's democracy. Under the colonial rule, there was no democracy to speak of in Hong Kong. Since its return to the motherland, Hong Kong has started its democratic development. However, in recent years, especially after the turbulence over the amendment bill in 2019, anti-China, destabilizing forces and radical localists in Hong Kong have openly called for "Hong Kong independence". They used the electoral platforms of the Hong Kong SAR and the deliberation platforms of the Legislative Council and the District Councils or their position as public servants to blatantly carry out anti-China and destabilizing activities. They resorted to every possible means to paralyze the functioning of the Legislative Council, and grab the power to administer Hong Kong to challenge the authority of the Central Government. The rioting and turbulence that occurred in the Hong Kong society reveals that the existing electoral system in the Hong Kong SAR has clear loopholes and deficiencies. The latest moves of the Central Government are to ensure that Hong Kong's democracy can develop in a healthy and orderly manner.

Improving Hong Kong's electoral system is an important guarantee of the long-term prosperity and stability of the HKSAR. The 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) for National Economic and Social Development and the Long-Range Objectives Through the Year 2035 passed by the NPC outlines a set of important objectives to maintain the HKSAR's long-term prosperity and stability, and makes specific arrangements to deepen cooperation between the mainland and the HKSAR. It fully demonstrates the determination of the Central Government to safeguard Hong Kong's long-term prosperity and stability. Hong Kong has no chance to seize the opportunities if the endless turbulence and internal friction continue. Now the Central Government is taking steps to improve its electoral system and implement the principle of "patriots administering Hong Kong" with the aim of let those who truly love China and Hong Kong lead Hong Kong out of its predicament. Looking around the world, most countries are trying to seize the opportunities brought by China's development. Hong Kong, with the support of the motherland and a world vision, as well as many favorable development conditions and unique competitive advantages, has every reason to seize the opportunities of the motherland's development and forge a new future.

Improving Hong Kong's electoral system by the Central Government has won broad understanding and support from the international community. The Macao SAR government and all sectors of society have also voiced their support for the decision and practice of the Central Government. As to Macao, under the leadership of the Central Government, the Macao SAR has, in accordance with the Constitution and the Basic Law of the Macao SAR, gradually promoted the development of the democratic political system, established electoral regimes for the Chief Executive and the Legislative Assembly that correspond to the realities of Macao. It legally protects the democratic rights of the residents in Macao, forms a sound situation of "patriots administering Macao", ensures that the practice of "one country, two systems" has always been advancing on the right track. The Commissioner's Office will continue to strictly guard against and resolutely prevent external forces from interfering in Macao affairs in accordance with the requirements of the Central Government and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, resolutely safeguard the hard-won situation of Macao, and unswervingly defend the long-term prosperity and stability of Macao.

\*The author is the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the Macao Special Administrative Region

BLOOMBERG



## HONG KONG

# ACTIVISTS SAY DEMOCRACY FIGHT TO CONTINUE ABROAD

**H**ong Kong democracy activists have launched a new push to continue their fight among residents living abroad in the wake of a sweeping crackdown by Beijing and changes to the semi-autonomous Chinese city's electoral system aimed at shutting out opposition voices.

In a letter titled the "2021 Hong Kong Charter," the activists stated that, "Numerous Hongkongers have no choice but to leave in exile, while those remaining in their city are living with the constant fear of being politically persecuted on any day."

"The 2021 electoral reform imposed by the Chinese Communist Party further annihilated the democratic elements in our elections, putting the last nail in the coffin for "One Country, Two Systems," the letter said, citing the framework for running the city after its handover from British colonial rule in 1997.

The letter, cosigned by eight prominent opposition figures, calls for international support to counter

what they called the "global aggression" of China's ruling Communist Party, along with reforms to the government and police force and the abolishment of a sweeping national security law imposed last year. Dozens of activists including former lawmakers have been charged under the law, prompting many to seek asylum abroad.

"Under such high pressure from China, the diaspora from Hong Kong have more responsibility than ever to speak out and ensure we continue to draw international concern," Nathan Law, who now resides in the U.K., said during an online news conference yesterday [Macao time]. "We hope our overseas communities can continue to fight until the day we can elect our own leaders."

Hong Kong was rocked by months of antigovernment protests in 2019 that were met with increasingly repressive measures by security forces and the authorities in Beijing.

China's legislature last week approved changes to

election rules in the city that will virtually eliminate the influence of any political opposition, bringing strong criticism from the U.S. and the U.K., which ruled Hong Kong as a colony for 156 years. The changes tighten Beijing's control over the selection of Hong Kong's leader, along with the makeup of its legislative council.

China had pledged to allow the city to retain freedoms not permitted elsewhere in the country for 50 years, but its recent steps are seen as a betrayal by the opposition and the former colonizer.

British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab on Saturday said Beijing's decision to "impose radical changes to restrict participation in Hong Kong's electoral system [...] is part of a pattern designed to harass and stifle all voices critical of China's policies."

Raab said the moves amount to the third breach of a 1984 agreement between the sides that Britain hoped would protect Hong Kong's freedoms after the handover of power. **MDT/AP**



ON THE ROAD TO ALASKA

# Two key US cabinet members visit Japan for China-focused talks

MARI YAMAGUCHI, TOKYO

**S**HARED worry about China's growing influence in the Indo-Pacific region will take center stage when President Joe Biden's defense chief and secretary of state visit Japan for their first in-person talks with their Japanese counterparts.

U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin arrived yesterday, with Secretary of State Antony Blinken to join him later in Tokyo for meetings meant to reaffirm America's commitment to the region and to the two nations' alliance following former President Donald Trump's more confrontational approach.

The two secretaries are holding so-called "two plus two" diplomatic and security talks on Tuesday with their Japanese counterparts, Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi and Defense Minister Nobuo Kishi.

"The United States is now making a big push to revitalize our ties with friends and part-



ners — both in one-to-one relationships and in multilateral institutions — and to recommit to our shared goals, values, and responsibilities," Blinken and Austin said in a piece published in The Washington Post.

The U.S. and others share the

values and principles of keeping an open Indo-Pacific region, but China is "all too willing to use coercion to get its way," the two ministers said. "Here again, we see how working with our allies is critical."

The U.S. will lead with diplo-

macy, maintain America's military might "and renew our alliances and ensure they're fit for purpose to address the threats and opportunities of our time," Blinken and Austin wrote. Together they can hold China accountable for its "human rights abuses" and other problems in Xinjiang, Tibet, as well as Hong Kong and Taiwan, they said.

In a move meant to signal his intention for the U.S. to return to the Asia-Pacific region, Biden on Friday held a first summit of the leaders from Australia, Japan, India and the U.S. known as the "Quad" virtually and emphasized Washington's commitment to the region.

Motegi said in a parliamentary session yesterday that he expected China to be the topic he and Blinken discussed most and that Japan being the first destination of their foreign travel signaled "the U.S. emphasis on the Japan-U.S. alliance."

"Japan, together with the U.S., will resolutely respond to China's

unilateral attempt to change the status quo," Motegi said. "But at the same time, China is the world's No. 2 economy and it is important to firmly encourage that country to act responsibly based on international rules."

Japan is in a delicate diplomatic situation because its economy, like those of other countries in the region, heavily depends on China.

But it also considers China's growing presence in the South China Sea a security threat.

China has denied it is expansionist and said it is only defending its territorial rights.

On the Biden administration's first Cabinet-level trip abroad, Blinken and Austin are also expected to discuss the coronavirus pandemic and climate change, as well as the nuclear threat posed by North Korea and the situation in Myanmar after its military coup.

While in Tokyo, they plan to have virtual meetings with business leaders, civil-society members, business leaders and others while in Tokyo before heading on Wednesday to South Korea, another key ally in the region.

China is not on Blinken's itinerary, but he is set to meet senior Chinese officials in Anchorage, Alaska, on his way back to Washington. Austin will go from Seoul to New Delhi for meetings with Indian leaders. **MDT/AP**

AD

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山度士 Álvaro Rodrigues °  
馬天龍 Nuno Sardinha da Mata °  
趙魯 Zhao Lu °  
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AP PHOTO



Black smoke billows from the industrial zone of Hlaing Thar Yar township in Yangon, Myanmar

## MYANMAR

# Attacks on Chinese-run factories worry Beijing

SAM MCNEIL  
& FU TING, BEIJING

**A**TTACKS on Chinese-run factories in Myanmar's biggest city drew demands yesterday from Beijing for protection for their property and employees, while many in Myanmar expressed outrage over China's apparent lack of concern for those killed in protests against last month's military coup.

A Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson said the Chinese Embassy had contacted authorities in Myanmar and urged that police be deployed to protect the Chinese companies and personnel.

Police and firefighters were sent to protect the factories, which are scattered across several industrial zones in Yangon, spokesperson Zhao Lijian told reporters in Beijing. He said China was closely watching and "is very concerned about the impact on the safety of Chinese institutions and personnel."

A statement posted by the Chinese Embassy to Myanmar on Facebook about the efforts to protect

Chinese businesses triggered an outpouring of fury in more than 52,000 comments.

"Does it hurt? How about people dying?" said a post from Naing Oo.

"If you want to do business peacefully in Myanmar, respect Myanmar people," said Aye Myat Kyaw. "Stop supporting terrorist army and join Myanmar people."

Many accused Myanmar police or other agitators of causing the destruction to try to incite more trouble.

More than 100 civilians have been killed by security forces since the Feb. 1 coup, according to a tally by the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners. Many more have been injured, and thousands have been arrested.

The attacks on Myanmar's garment factories have injected an extra complication into an already very complex situation. A fair share of the hundreds of garment factories in Myanmar's biggest city, Yangon, and other major cities are run by Chinese manufacturers. Most are private companies and many are suppliers to big-name fashion, sports and

household goods retailers.

Taiwan, South Korea, Hong Kong and Thailand also have a large number of manufacturers running factories in Myanmar that play a crucial role in providing jobs and exports that help keep the economy afloat.

Taiwan's representative office in Yangon recommended that Taiwan-owned companies use Burmese language signs to identify their factories as a "Taiwan Enterprise." It also advised them to hang Taiwan's national flag outside and explain to local employees and people living nearby that their factories are Taiwan-run, not from mainland China, to help minimize risks.

Myanmar's military leaders have often chafed at China's outsized influence over their economy. But Beijing's adherence to a policy of non-interference in other countries' politics has already angered many who are protesting the coup that ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi, with some calling for boycotts of Chinese products.

The protesters have been appealing for support

from other countries and the United Nations to restore civilian rule, staging protests and strikes in a massive show of civil disobedience that has nearly paralyzed the economy.

Myanmar state media have reported that martial law was declared in six districts in Yangon, including the major industrial zones of Hlaing Thar Yar and Shwepyitha. At least 38 people were killed Sunday and dozens were injured in one of the deadliest days of the crackdown on anti-coup protesters, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners.

The state-run Myanmar News Agency, which like most other media in the country is not controlled by the military, reported that five factories were set afire in Hlaing Thayar, a factory area to the west of Yangon.

It said protesters had blocked roads, hindering fire engines from reaching the blazes.

One of those named, Global Fashion Garment Factory, is a Chinese-owned supplier to the fashion retailer C&A, according to a list on the C&A website. **MDT/AP**

## this day in history

### 1953 MARSHAL TITO MAKES HISTORIC VISIT TO LONDON



Marshal Josef Tito of Yugoslavia has arrived in Britain, the first Communist head of state to visit the country.

The Duke of Edinburgh, Prime Minister Winston Churchill and Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden greeted him at Westminster at the start of his five-day visit.

He arrived by sea from Yugoslavia in the naval vessel Galeb (Seagull). He was then brought up river under Royal Navy escort.

Marshal Tito was invited to Britain last September by Mr Eden who was visiting Yugoslavia to strengthen ties between the two nations.

Talks this week are expected to centre on the aftermath of the recent death of Josef Stalin, who expelled Yugoslavia from the Cominform group of communist nations in 1948 for failing to adhere to Soviet policies.

Since that time Yugoslavia has come to rely on Western aid for certain foods and armaments.

They will also discuss ways of achieving a solution to the problem of the disputed region of Trieste, whose administration was divided last year between the United Nations and Yugoslavia.

Security was tight as the occasion has been marked by a great deal of controversy, especially among those Yugoslav exiles who regard Marshal Tito as a dictator.

Spectators were kept well away from the River Thames embankment where the marshal disembarked this afternoon.

He shook hands with the Duke and made a short speech in faltering English greeting the people of Britain and expressing hope of mutual co-operation, understanding and peace.

"I wish to assure the peoples of Great Britain that they should consider the people of my country as their staunch allies because the people of the new Yugoslavia are striving towards the same ends as the people of Great Britain," he said.

He then inspected the Guard of Honour and was taken in a bullet-proof car escorted by police motorcyclists to Downing Street.

Later in the afternoon he laid a wreath at the Cenotaph and saluted Britain's war dead.

Courtesy BBC News

## IN CONTEXT

Marshall Josef Tito formed Communist Yugoslavia in 1945. He maintained Yugoslavia's independence from the USSR and developed his own form of communism with power decentralised to workers' councils. He dealt with nationalist aspirations by creating a federation of six republics: Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia. But ethnic tensions were never far from the surface. Although the federation held together for 10 years after Tito's death in 1980, it fell apart rapidly after Slovenia's declaration of independence. In 1954 the city of Trieste in the so-called Free Territory of Trieste and the northern zone of the region were returned to Italy. The rest of the area became part of Yugoslavia.



**YOUR STARS**



**ARIES**

**Mar. 21-Apr. 19**

Your ties with your family have been looser than you may like, but they're tightening more and more as each day passes. Make a plan to get together and tell old embarrassing stories.



**TAURUS**

**Apr. 20-May. 20**

As enlightened as it may be to be open-minded and accepting of all different ways of doing things, at a certain point in any decision-making process, you have to pick one way and go with it.



**GEMINI**

**May. 21-Jun. 21**

It's only natural that a past relationship would enter your mind as you embark upon a new one. The similarities and the contrasts are just as striking.



**CANCER**

**Jun. 22-Jul. 22**

There is a bit of instability around you right now (it's nothing to be concerned about) that could put you off track for a few days if you aren't prudent in your actions.



**LEO**

**Jul. 23-Aug. 22**

Being able to fight back after a loss is something you can do with grace and fire, so why not give it a try? Once bitten, but never shy - that should be your motto!



**VIRGO**

**Aug. 23-Sep. 22**

If closure is frustratingly slow in coming, stop waiting around for it. Things are settling down nicely enough to give you a firm foundation for moving forward, so feel free to go ahead.



**LIBRA**

**Sep. 23-Oct. 22**

Reflections aren't only found in mirrors. Today, seeing your true self isn't really possible unless you take the time to be honest and accept your imperfections.



**SCORPIO**

**Oct. 23-Nov. 21**

This could include something as simple as a pair of old shoes or as complicated as a romantic partner who just doesn't have their heart in the relationship. Toss it to the curb and walk away without looking back!



**SAGITTARIUS**

**Nov. 22-Dec. 21**

Work the mystery to your advantage. Any power struggles aren't going to be a real challenge for you, because deep down you know that you have all the answers (or at least you should act like you do).



**CAPRICORN**

**Dec. 22-Jan. 19**

Even though you may have your fingers in a million different pies, you'll find a way to put it all on hold if your friends need you today. Helping other people will help you.



**AQUARIUS**

**Jan. 20-Feb. 18**

The way you respect other people's privacy is admirable, but it could be limiting your opportunities. Don't be afraid to talk to the people around you about getting what you want.



**PISCES**

**Feb. 19-Mar. 20**

When you're having fun, everything is painless, including sacrifice. Be careful if someone approaches you to make a business offer you can't refuse. You can refuse - and you should refuse.

**The Born Loser by Chip Sansom**



**SUDOKU**

**EASY**

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

**EASY+**

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

**MEDIUM**

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

**HARD**

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

**WEATHER**

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
<b>CHINA</b>			
Beijing	2	13	cloudy
Harbin	-7	1	clear
Tianjin	2	12	clear
Urumqi	-5	-2	flurry
Xi'an	10	19	overcast
Lhasa	1	13	cloudy
Chengdu	16	24	drizzle
Chongqing	16	25	cloudy
Kunming	10	25	clear
Nanjing	12	16	overcast
Shanghai	11	15	drizzle
Wuhan	14	17	drizzle
Hangzhou	12	20	moderate rain
Taipei	16	23	clear
Guangzhou	20	28	cloudy
Hong Kong	20	26	cloudy

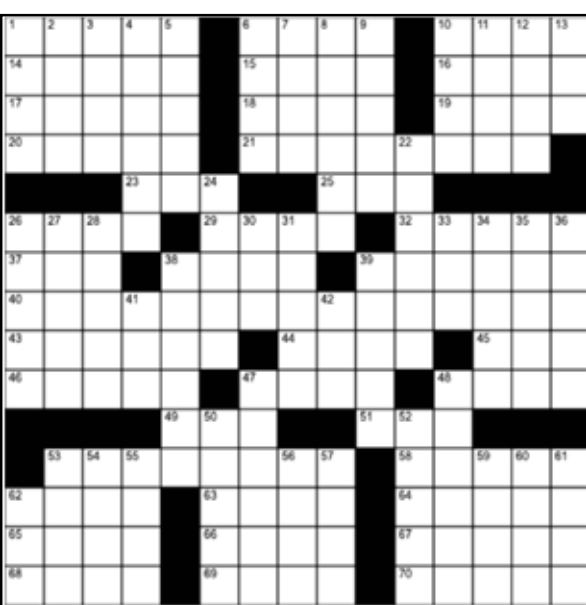
**WORLD**

Moscow	-3	4	overcast
Frankfurt	4	7	drizzle
Paris	4	9	cloudy
London	5	10	drizzle
New York	-1	3	cloudy

**CROSSWORDS**

ACROSS 1- Kid; 6- Beancurd; 10- Pocket problem; 14- Copland ballet; 15- Winged god; 16- \_\_\_ about (roughly); 17- Country album?; 18- Poet Teasdale; 19- Dark purple; 20- Designer Geoffrey; 21- Indolent; 23- NFL scores; 25- Debussy's "La \_\_\_"; 26- "The Farmer in the Dell" syllables; 29- Drinks (as a cat); 32- Of some benefit; 37- ... mouse?; 38- Old Italian money; 39- Key with no sharps or flats; 40- Boundary; 43- Insecure; 44- Whirlpool; 45- U.S. soldiers; 46- Brazilian ballroom dance; 47- Dies \_\_\_; 48- Ovid, e.g.; 49- Family; 51- Recolor; 53- Stand astride; 58- Stop on \_\_\_; 62- Nothing more than; 63- Yarn spinner; 64- Like Fran Drescher's voice; 65- Dry and waterless; 66- Self-images; 67- Talent; 68- New Mexico art colony; 69- Wine choice; 70- Eye sores;

DOWN: 1- Kvetch or whinge; 2- Table d'\_\_\_; 3- Goofing off; 4- Makeshift shelter; 5- Gave a measured amount; 6- Dick Tracy's love; 7- Like some history; 8- Public meetings; 9- Practice; 10- Kachina doll maker; 11- Responsibility; 12- Scottish body; 13- It may come before long; 22- Grouchy; 24- Goo-covered; 26- Hoax; 27- One of Chekhov's "Three Sisters"; 28- Seraglio; 30- \_\_\_ longa, vita brevis; 31- Nervous person, maybe; 33- \_\_\_ for tat; 34- Architect Jones; 35- Sarge's superior; 36- Dadaist Max; 38- Capital of Zambia; 39- Assisted; 41- Taxi; 42- Nutritional fig.; 47- Blue dye; 48- Scholar; 50- Do-nothing; 52- Jerks; 53- Lab fluids; 54- Small combo; 55- Cincinnati club; 56- Neighbor of Cambodia; 57- Gaelic language of Ireland or Scotland; 59- \_\_\_ old chap!; 60- Clublike weapon; 61- Lodge members; 62- Slip preventer;



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

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<b>Fire department</b> 28 572 222	<b>Water Supply</b> – Report 2822 0088
<b>PJ (Open line)</b> 993	<b>Telephone</b> – Report 1000
<b>PJ (Picket)</b> 28 557 775	<b>Electricity</b> – Report 28 339 922
<b>PSP</b> 28 573 333	<b>Macau Daily Times</b> 28 716 081
<b>Customs</b> 28 559 944	
<b>S. J. Hospital</b> 28 313 731	
<b>Kiang Wu Hospital</b> 28 371 333	
<b>Commission Against Corruption (CCAC)</b> 28326 300	
<b>IAM</b> 28 387 333	
<b>Tourism</b> 28 333 000	
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\$17,500/mth 1,626 ft² 3 2 1



AP PHOTO



## MARKETS

# WORLD SHARES MIXED AS CHINA REPORTS SO-SO ECONOMIC DATA

**S**HARES rose in Europe after a mixed session in Asia yesterday as China reported a variety of data that painted a complicated picture of its recovery from the pandemic.

The passage of a \$1.9 trillion aid package for the U.S. economy has added to investor confidence that the U.S. and global economy will likely experience a strong recovery from the pandemic in the second half of the year but also potentially increase the rate of inflation.

Germany's DAX climbed 0.3% to 14,546.95 and the CAC 40 in Paris added 0.5% to 6,075.54. Britain's FTSE 100 was up 0.4% at 6,789.86 in yesterday's opening hours. U.S. futures pointed to an upbeat start, with the contract for the S&P 500 up 0.3% and that for the Dow in-

dustrials 0.4% higher.

Markets got a mixed message from the data out of China, which has led the global recovery, reopening earlier than other countries from coronavirus shut-downs that emerged in the central city of Wuhan in early 2020.

Retail sales jumped nearly 36% year-on-year in January-February from a year earlier. But the surge was mostly driven by strong demand for cars, catering and jewelry, suggesting Chinese consumers were splashing out during the Lunar New Year, ING economists said in a report.

The data were exaggerated by low base effects from the shut-downs last year, they said.

Meanwhile, the jobless rate

rose to 5.5% from 5.2% a year earlier, possibly affected by flare-ups of coronavirus in some areas, analysts said.

"Travel restrictions weighed on retail sales but boosted industrial output and investment. We think activity will remain strong during the first half of this year, before giving way to a weaker second half," Julian Evans-Pritchard of Capital Economics said in a commentary.

"Domestic policy support is being gradually withdrawn. And foreign demand for Chinese goods will drop back as vaccines start to reverse the recent shift in global consumption patterns," he said.

The Shanghai Composite index fell 1% to 3,419.95. Tokyo's Nikkei 225 index edged 0.2% hi-

gher, to 29,766.97 and the Hang Seng in Hong Kong climbed 0.3% to 28,833.76. In South Korea, the Kospi lost 0.3% to 3,045.71. Sydney's S&P/ASX 200 inched 0.1% higher, to 6,773.00.

India's Sensex lost 1.3% to 50,127.98.

Investors will be watching this week for the outcome of a Federal Reserve policy meeting, which wraps up on Wednesday. Japan's central bank will be issuing a policy update on Friday.

On Friday, a late-afternoon burst of buying helped nudge the S&P 500 0.1% higher to 3,943.34, extending its winning streak to a fourth straight day. The Dow Jones Industrial Average added 0.9%, to 32,778.64, lifted by industrial sto-

cks like Boeing and Caterpillar. The tech-heavy Nasdaq fell 0.6%, to 13,319.86.

The Russell 2000 index of smaller company stocks advanced 0.6% to 2,352.79. It ended the week 7.3% higher, outpacing the S&P 500's 2.6% gain for the week.

The bond market again was the dominant force in pulling tech stocks mostly downward, because as yields push interest rates higher, they make high-flying stocks look expensive.

After remaining stable for most of the week, the yield on the 10-year Treasury note jumped to 1.62% from 1.52% a day earlier. Investors had sold off stocks late last week after that yield crossed above the 1.60% mark. Yesterday, the 10-year Treasury was at 1.61%.

The increase in bond yields came as President Joe Biden signed into law the \$1.9 trillion stimulus plan, which will include \$1,400 checks for most Americans and additional payments for those with children or those who collected unemployment benefits last year. President Biden also laid out a plan, in a primetime speech Thursday, to expand vaccine eligibility to all Americans by May 1.

Some economists fear that inflation, which has been dormant over the past decade, could nudge higher under the extra demand generated by the stimulus package. Others disagree, given that there are 9.5 million fewer jobs in the American economy than there were before the pandemic hit a year ago. They contend that unemployment will keep a lid on inflation.

In other trading yesterday, benchmark U.S. crude oil climbed 57 cents to \$66.18 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. It lost 41 cents to \$65.61 per barrel on Friday. Brent crude, the international standard, added 57 cents to \$69.79 per barrel.

The U.S. dollar rose to 109.06 Japanese yen from 109.02 yen late Friday. The euro fell to \$1.1931 from \$1.1949. **MDT/AP**

## CORPORATE BITS



### The Parisian Macao offers Easter promotions

The Parisian Macao is offering special festive menus at the Brasserie, picnicking at Le Jardin and pampering spa treatments promotions at Le SPA'tique.

The French Brasserie restaurant is offering delicious Easter lunch and dinner set menus from April 1 to 6 with an option of a three-course lunch menu and a five-course dinner menu.

A children's menu is also offered, which includes a

selection of fresh egg pasta or crepes as the main course, with desserts and a drink.

During the same period, guests can enjoy an alfresco experience at The Parisian Macao's French garden for a picnic package which includes festive items including "Easter devilled eggs, Rabbit's Carrot pot pastries and more," the hotel announced in a statement.

Award-winning Le SPA'tique is offering a range of relaxing body and facial treatments from now until May 31. Guests can indulge in a 90-minute Lemon and Kale Detox Facial, which begins with an oolong and lime blossom back massage followed by lemon and kale.

Meanwhile "Spring to Life" is a fully tailored, 90-minute body massage created to melt away tension using acupressure reflexology.



FOOTBALL

# Son called up for South Korea hours after injuring hamstring

JOHN DUERDEN, SEOUL

**J**UST hours after injuring a hamstring in Tottenham's 2-1 loss to Arsenal in the Premier League, Son Heung-min was selected by South Korea to face Japan in an international friendly on March 25.

South Korea coach Paolo Bento told a news conference yesterday that Son, if fit, would join South Korea's squad in the Japanese city of Yokohama.

"We will have to wait to find out the extent of his injury and the test result," Bento said.

Tottenham coach Jose Mourinho was unable to give an indication in the immediate wake of this weekend's loss of when the 28-year-old forward would be fit to return to action.

"It's muscular. Muscular is always not easy," Mourinho told reporters, but Son, "is a guy who normally recovers very, very well from any kind of injury."

AP PHOTO



Tottenham's Son Heung-min receives medical attention during the English Premier League soccer match between Arsenal and Tottenham

The national team selection could be further complicated by regulations in place for the

COVID-19 pandemic. Clubs are usually obliged to release players called up on designated interna-

tional match days but, according to rules introduced by FIFA in February, can refuse if players will

face quarantine periods of more than five days.

As an elite athlete and returning from a country not on the British government's 'red-list,' however, Son would be exempt from quarantine requirements in Britain.

Bento is also waiting to find out if German team RB Leipzig will release forward Hwang Hee-chan. Lee Kang-in of Valencia is set to make the trip.

There has been criticism in South Korea over the decision to play the friendly in the midst of a global pandemic.

In November, the national team visited Austria to play Mexico and Qatar and, during the training camp, four players tested positive to the virus. South Korean team officials are confident there'll be no repeat of that this time.

"We conducted a thorough safety review and our medical team will be much better prepared than in November," Bento said. "We don't have much time to train before World Cup qualification and I am just trying to make the best of the situation I have."

South Korea and Japan are preparing for the resumption of Asian qualifiers for the 2022 World Cup in June. The most recent games in qualifying were in November 2019. **MDT/AP**

AD



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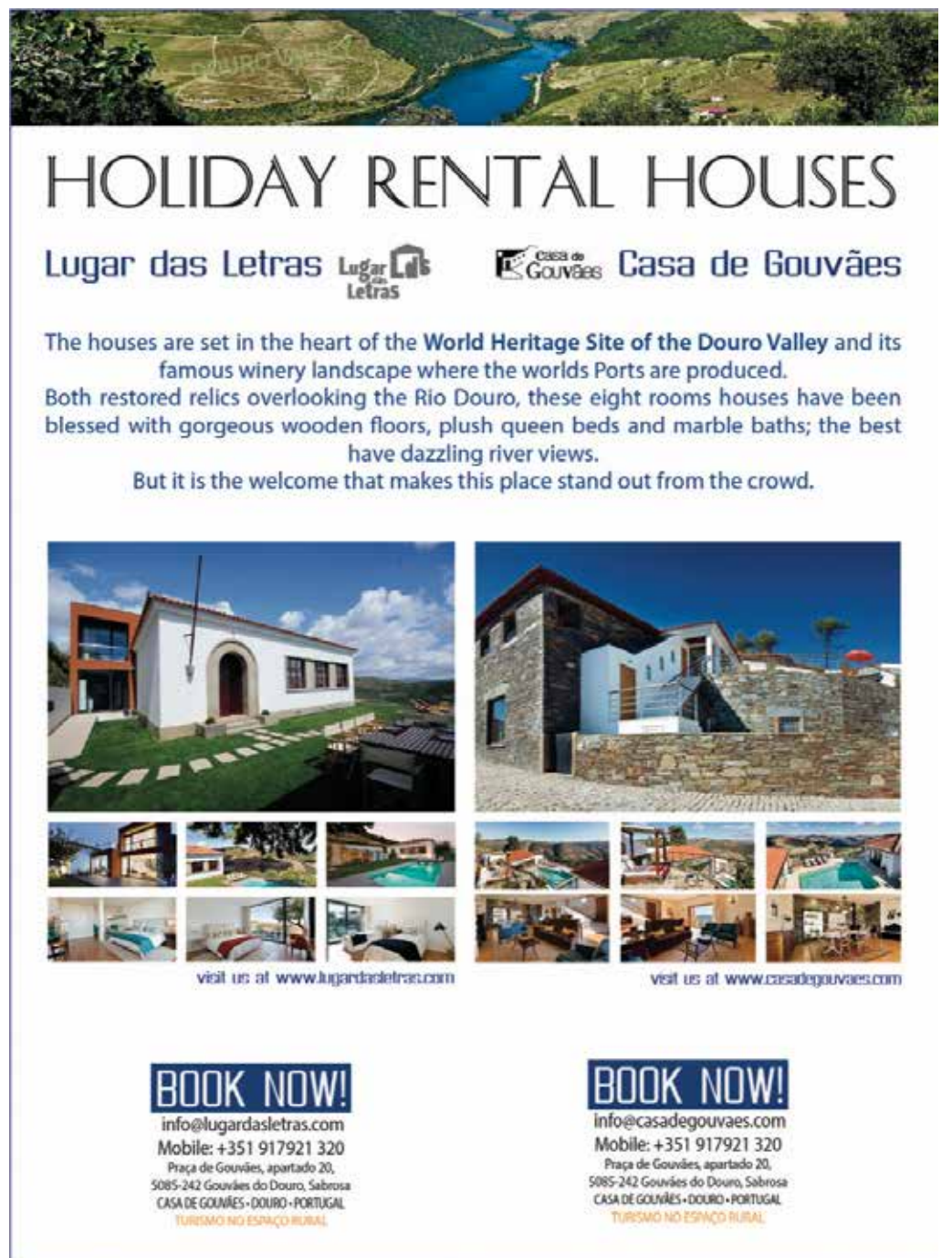
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## OPINION

### World Views

Anjani Trivedi, MDT/Bloomberg



## HONG KONG'S LATEST COVID SURGE BEGAN IN A GYM, SO IT'S TARGETING KIDS

Hong Kong's children are at the center of the city's latest ham-handed and inconsistent response to the latest outbreak of the disease. And it's not a good look for one of the world's most affluent and expensive financial centers.

On Friday, following days of fear and panic after an upsurge of infections linked to a gym frequented by bankers, lawyers and stockbrokers, a class of eight- and nine-year-olds at an international school were told they were being sent to a government-run quarantine center for a period of up to two weeks. Their teacher had tested positive after being linked to the gym outbreak. The kids were told they'd be picked up over the next 24 hours or so. Already stressed from months of online-schooling, children were beside themselves. As one mother of three told me, her child said he was "going to jail" — even though the government said a parent would allowed as a companion.

The entire campus was put on mandatory testing orders. But the school and parents pushed back on the need to isolate. They explained that — following rules laid out by the government itself — all children were wearing masks and that the teacher involved was masked during the brief period of time the class was in session. Eventually the government backtracked and said that the situation had been misunderstood.

But that wasn't the only cause for consternation among Hong Kong's parents. On Sunday, after three teachers tested positive at another school, 35 students — each accompanied by a parent — were told they would have to go to the quarantine center.

And there were the infants aged 11 months to 18 months — each also to be accompanied by a parent — who were ordered to go into quarantine. The reason: A mother in a 45-minute playgroup had tested positive. Her child and family tested negative. The staff tested negative. The parents protested but this time no one could avoid quarantine. The government argued that, while all parents and teachers were masked, the toddlers weren't. It didn't matter that Hong Kong doesn't mandate mask-wearing for kids under two years of age. The playgroup had been following guidelines.

A mother, who went into quarantine with her one-year old on Sunday morning was at one point told by a quarantine officer that "this is not a vacation," as she tried to plead for empathy. As she said to me, she was "painfully aware it wasn't." It isn't clear whether the quarantine facilities have the refrigeration and supplies — milk, for example — that infants need.

The ad-hoc action by the government was especially galling and alarming because, so far, no children have tested positive. Meanwhile, the city has locked down school buildings, hazmat-suited workers walked around collecting sewage samples and people have been crowded into buses and taken to quarantine — with very little social-distancing in transit.

It is unclear why groups of young children are being ordered to quarantine versus, say, large offices that may have adults associated with the gym — though some workplaces have been put under mandatory testing. Gyms still haven't been forced to close. Instead masks have been mandated for everyone training there.

The question isn't about whether people should quarantine or not. In recent months, children have quarantined with their families if there has been close contact with a positive case. What is infuriating is the lack of clarity and consistent rules in the time of chaos. As the rest of the world seems to have semblances of plans for a return to normalcy, Hong Kong is grasping at straws.

The city is densely populated, with 7.5 million people, packed into high-rises and tiny apartments. But there are better ways to keep infections from spreading. Encouraging paranoia isn't one of them. Neither is keeping babies locked in facilities that don't provide for their basic needs. Until someone starts making sense of all this, Hong Kong's public relations will only get worse.

## VATICAN EXCLUDES GAY UNION BLESSING AS GOD 'CAN'T BLESS SIN'

The Vatican decreed that the Catholic Church cannot bless same-sex unions since God "cannot bless sin."

The Vatican's orthodoxy office, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, issued a formal response yesterday to a question about whether Catholic clergy can bless gay unions.

The answer, contained in a two-page explanation published in seven languages and approved by Pope Francis, was "negative."

The decree distinguished between the church's welcoming and blessing of gay people, which it upheld, but not their unions

since any such sacramental recognition could be confused with marriage.

The Vatican holds that gays must be treated with dignity and respect, but that gay sex is "intrinsically disordered." Catholic teaching holds that marriage, a lifelong union between a man and woman, is part of God's plan and is intended for the sake of creating new life.

Since gay unions are not intended to be part of that plan, they cannot be blessed by the church, the document said.

AP PHOTO



Thousands of people with placards and banners rally demanding justice for women in Sydney yesterday

## AUSTRALIANS RALLY AT PARLIAMENT TO DEMAND JUSTICE FOR WOMEN

ROD MCGUIRK,  
CANBERRA

AUSTRALIANS rallied in the capital and other cities yesterday demanding justice for women and calling out misogyny and dangerous workplace cultures as the government reels from two rape allegations.

Outside Parliament House in Canberra, the crowd of hundreds was mostly female and most wore black. They carried placards with slogans including "Justice for Women" and "Men, Own Your Guilt."

Prime Minister Scott Morrison refused organizers' demand that he address the crowd, and organizers said they wouldn't meet him behind closed doors.

"We have already come to the front door, now it's up to the government to cross the threshold and come to us," organizer Janine Hendry said. "We will not be meeting behind closed doors," she added.

She estimated more than 100,000 women had protested at 40 rallies around the country.

Morrison later told Parliament that he shared the protesters' frustration and concern. "This is not to suggest that good faith and genuine efforts are not being made, whether by this government or the many governments that

have proceeded us. Those efforts are being made. But the outcomes still elude us," he said.

Morrison is standing by Attorney General Christian Porter over an allegation that he raped a 16-year-old girl when he was aged 17 in 1988. Porter denied the allegation. His accuser took her own life last year after withdrawing a complaint to police.

Separately, Defense Minister Linda Reynolds has been criticized for failing to adequately support a young staffer who alleged she was raped by a more senior colleague in the minister's office in Parliament House in 2019.

Brittany Higgins said she felt she had to make a choice between reporting her allegations to police or continuing her career. She quit her government job in January and reported her allegation to police.

"I was raped inside Parliament House by a colleague, and for so long it felt like the people around me only cared because of where it happened or what it might mean for them," a tearful Higgins told the Canberra crowd.

"It was so confusing because these people were my idols. I had dedicated my life to them. They were my social network, my colleagues and my family. And suddenly they treated me differently. I wasn't a person who had gone through a life-changing,

traumatic event. I was a political problem," she added.

The Associated Press does not usually identify alleged victims of sexual assault, but Higgins has chosen to identify herself in the media.

The protests, which also took place in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Hobart, coincide with the first sitting of Parliament since the allegation against Porter became public in early March.

Reynolds has since apologized for describing Higgins to her staff as a "lying cow" and said she was referring to Higgins' allegation of inadequate support, not the rape allegation. The minister also agreed to pay Higgins an undisclosed sum as compensation.

Porter's lawyers announced yesterday that he is suing Australian Broadcasting Corp. for defamation over a news article that he said made false allegations against him. ABC said in a statement that it will be defending the action.

"Although he was not named, the article made allegations against a senior Cabinet minister and the attorney-general was easily identifiable to many of Australians as the subject of the allegations," the lawyers said in a statement.

Opposition lawmakers called on Morrison to establish and independent inquiry into the allegations against Porter. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



**US** In Massachusetts, more than half the people employed by the Department of Correction declined to be immunized. A statewide survey in California showed that half of all correction employees will wait to be vaccinated. In Rhode Island, prison staff have refused the vaccine at higher rates than the incarcerated, according to medical director Dr. Justin Berk. And in Iowa, early polling among employees showed a little more than half the staff said they'd get vaccinated.

AP PHOTO



**Netherlands** Dutch police used a water cannon and officers on horseback galloped across a park in The Hague to break up a protest against the government and its tough coronavirus lockdown on the eve of three days of voting in the general election. Hague police tweeted that they deployed riot officers to break up the protest after hundreds of people defied repeated calls to go home.

AP PHOTO



**Irish** health officials recommended the temporary suspension of the AstraZeneca vaccine after reports of serious blood clotting after inoculations in Norway. Dr. Ronan Glynn, Ireland's deputy chief medical officer, said the recommendation was made after Norway's medicines agency reported four cases of blood clotting in adults after receiving the AstraZeneca vaccine.

**Spain** Police have arrested 12 people and seized about 600 kilograms of cocaine in an operation that dismantled what investigators describe as the largest drug distribution network in the country's capital. The alleged drug trafficking gang funded the smuggling of Colombian cocaine and Moroccan hashish by selling in the Netherlands and central Europe large crops of marijuana purchased from growers across Spain, the National Police said.