

For your health and the health of others
Get vaccinated against COVID-19

Vaccination booking system



Please scan QR code or visit website
<https://eservice.ssm.gov.mo/covidvacbook>
Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Centre

3地2網1卡GO

"321" Monthly Plan FREE
Mainland China Mobile No.
service for 12-month

Details



Note: CTM reserves the right to make the final decision in case of any disputes.

CTM 40th ANNIVERSARY

CHIEF EXECUTIVE HO IAT SENG PROMISED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WILL CONTINUE ITS SUPPORT FOR THE KAIFONG ASSOCIATIONS

P4

ONE REPORT, FOUR THEORIES SCIENTISTS MULL CLUES ON CORONAVIRUS' ORIGIN

P11

A TWO-SESSION FORUM ON LIFE SCIENCE AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE WAS HELD AT MUST AS PART OF THE UNIVERSITY'S 21ST ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

P6

AP PHOTO



Philippines The military has ordered more navy ships to be deployed for "sovereignty patrols" in the South China Sea, where a Chinese flotilla has swarmed around a disputed reef and ignored Manila's demand to leave the area. It did not say how close the Philippine navy ships would maneuver from the Chinese vessels, whose presence Lorenzana has been called an "incursion" and "provocative action of militarizing the area."

AP PHOTO



Japan Activists submitted a petition with over 106,000 signatures to Japan's ruling party yesterday, calling for an LGBT equality law to be enacted before the Tokyo Games, saying Japan as host nation should live up to the Olympic charter banning gender and sexual discrimination. Their action came on the day the Olympic torch relay began in the northern prefecture of Fukushima counting down to the Games that start in July.

AP PHOTO



Australia Two men trapped in vehicles hundreds of kilometers apart have become the first fatalities of record flooding on Australia's east coast. A car got trapped in floodwater northwest of Sydney and emergency services later recovered it with a body inside, officials said. The body, believed to be that of a 25-year-old Pakistani national, has yet to be formally identified.

More on backpage

SIZE MATTERS

A recently established communications association sees high-potential in small Macau as new technology testing ground, its founders told the Times in an exclusive interview

P6-7

MACAU PHOTO AGENCY



MGTO EXTENDS PROMOTION BEYOND GBA TO DRIVE LENGTH OF STAY

P2

GAMING

NEW SOCIAL-DISTANCING RULE FOR STANDING BET PERPLEXES MANY

P3

2.2 MILLION RED PACKETS COLLECTED

Throughout their red package recycling campaign, the Environmental Protection Bureau (DSPA) collected nearly 2.2 million Chinese New Year red packets, weighing over 6.48 tonnes. Of the packets collected, roughly 410,000 were selected to be repurposed in the future. The campaign was concluded on March 6 and is estimated to have saved around 86 trees.

DSED T INSPECTED 5,320 SHOPS TO MONITOR COMMODITY PRICES

The Economic and Technological Development Bureau (DSED T) and the Macao Consumer Council carried out a joint effort to review the prices of goods in local stores to monitor commodity prices. From May 1, 2020, to March 24 of this year, the DSED T conducted a total of 5,320 random inspections, surveying 52,130 items. The effort was undertaken in response to recent social media reports by locals who claimed to have observed some abnormal prices on local goods.

MORE STUDENTS PURSUE LOCAL TERTIARY EDUCATION DURING COVID-19

The Education and Youth Development Bureau (DSEDJ) has announced that over the course of the Covid-19 pandemic, Macau has seen an increasing number of local students pursuing tertiary education in the city. Authorities have affirmed that local universities have enough places to welcome around 4,200 local high school graduates this year.

MGTO EXTENDS PROMOTION BEYOND GBA TO DRIVE LENGTH OF STAY

HONEY TSANG

THE Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) is launching a new promotion to encourage mainland tourists from non-Guangdong cities to visit Macau using the High-Speed Rail network. MGTO director Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes announced the promotion in Hangzhou yesterday to trade representatives at a seminar focused on tourism in Macau. It was a lead-off event for the "Macao Week in Hangzhou" roadshow which commenced today.

"Our [promotional] strategy will encourage visitation from [mainland] cities with a [better] transportation network [connecting to Macau]," the director said. The tactic to focus on mainland tourists beyond the Greater Bay Area (GBA) is intended to increase the average length of stay in the city.

"Although Macau has welcomed a large number of tourists from Guangdong province, they have not tended to stay overnight in Macau. Holidaymakers outside Guangdong province are more likely to stay overnight for several days," she clarified. Fernandes stressed the MGTO will not apply a cookie-cutter approach to draw tourists from non-Guangdong cities. They



will instead showcase a range of tourism offerings and tourist destinations, including lesser-visited tourist spots in Macau, to enable visitors from mainland regions outside GBA to have a more immersive travel experience.

The mainland cities along the High-Speed Rail line and within the GBA have been identified as regional priorities for MGTO this year.

The MGTO will focus on other cities with higher air connectivity with Macau as well, she added.

According to the latest data from the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC), total visitor arrivals to

Macau in February 2021 stood at 427,122, down 23.3% month-to-month, yet, up 173.1% year-on-year.

There were 380,649 visitors from China in February, 250,912 of whom hailed from Guangdong Province and accounted for roughly 65.9% of the total share. They were followed by 15,507 visitors from Fujian Province (4.1%), and 12,641 visitors from Shanghai city (3.3%).

Yesterday, MGTO and the Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM) hosted a Macao tourism and Meetings, Incentives, Conferences & Exhibitions (MICE)

presentation seminar in Hangzhou. The presentation seminar was held to promote Macau as a "healthy, safe and quality destination," and help industry partners in Hangzhou keep tabs on tourism trends.

Throughout the seminar, Fernandes encouraged tourism industry representatives from both Macau and Hangzhou to collaborate more closely within the tourism and MICE sectors, to create new tourism offerings that encourage visitation from new sources. The "Macao Week in Hangzhou" roadshow was organized by the MGTO and commenced today.

Unpaid leave not against the law: DSAL confirmed

HONEY TSANG

THE Labour Affairs Bureau (DSAL) has refuted speculation that the implementation of forced unpaid leave by local firms is a violation of employment law.

The DSAL's comments were made in response to an earlier written inquiry by Lawmaker Sulu Sou, who questioned whether no-paid leave might have breached Article 10 (5) of the Macau Labour Relations Law, which prohibits an employer from lowering an employee's base wages unless both reach a mutual agreement, confirmed in writing and notified to DSAL within 10 days.

"Unpaid leave basically



alters the work duties and conditions stated in the employment contract, which in turn diminishes the originally promised pay [terms and conditions]," Sou

challenged earlier.

However, DSAL contradicted Sou's statement, arguing that the principle of unpaid leave differs from that of a salary reduction.

The decision to take unpaid leave is that reached "mutually" between the employer and staff.

Moreover, employees are not paid on the days they

are on leave based on the fact that they do not carry out any business of the firm.

"As a result, the handling of [cases of unpaid leave] will differ accordingly," DSAL clarified in the statement.

However, DSAL stressed that it is not acceptable for an employer to dismiss staff due to a failure to reach a mutual agreement on no-paid leave. In such circumstances, the employer is required to pay the staff member employment termination compensation.

According to official data, DSAL registered 214 cases related to salary reductions in 2020 involving 156 local enterprises and 2,450 workers.

www.macaudailytimes.com.mo

REACHING OUT!

+20,000

Like us on facebook.com/mdtimes



MacauDaily 澳門每日時報
Times

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF (DIRECTOR) Paulo Coutinho paulocoutinho@macaudailytimes.com
ASSISTANT EDITOR_Lynzy Valles SENIOR WRITER_Honey Tsang
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS_Leanda Lee, Severo Portela, Sheyla Zandonai

NEWSROOM AND CONTRIBUTORS Albano Martins, Annabel Jackson, Anthony Lam, Emilie Tran, Irene Sam, Ivo Carneiro de Sousa, Jacky I.F. Cheong, Jenny Lao-Phillips, João Palla Martins, Joseph Cheung, Juliet Risdon, Linda Kennedy, Paulo Cordeiro de Sousa, Renato Marques, Richard Whitfield, Viviana Segui
DESIGNERS_Eva Bucho, Miguel Bandeira | ASSOCIATE CONTRIBUTORS_JML Property, MdME Lawyers, PokerStars, Ruan Du Toit Bester | NEWS AGENCIES_Associated Press, Bloomberg, MacauHub, MacauNews, Xinhua
SECRETARY_Yang Dongxiao amy@macaudailytimes.com

SEND NEWSWORTHY INFORMATION AND PRESS RELEASES TO: NEWSROOM@MACAUDAILYTIMES.COM WEBSITE: WWW.MACAUDAILYTIMES.COM.MO

A MACAU TIMES PUBLICATIONS LTD PUBLICATION

ADMINISTRATOR AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Kowie Geldenhuys kowie@macaudailytimes.com

OFFICE MANAGER Juliana Cheang juliana@macaudailytimes.com

ADDRESS Av. da Praia Grande, 599, Edif. Comercial Rodrigues, 12 Floor C, MACAU SAR

Telephones: +853 287 160 81/2 Fax: +853 287 160 84

Advertisement advertising@macaudailytimes.com

For subscription and general issues:

general@macaudailytimes.com | Printed at Welfare Printing Ltd

New social-distancing rule for standing bet perplexes many

HONEY TSANG

THE new social-distancing rule imposed on local casinos for the reinstated standing bet, which forces standing bettors to keep at least 1 meter apart from each other, is likely to encumber dealers and wagerers alike, a local expert said.

"I can see how difficult it would be to enforce that. This rule puts the dealers and floor staff in unenviable positions of deciding when the one meter distance has been breached," Ben Lee, managing partner of IGamiX Management & Consulting told the Times yesterday.

According to a report published by GGRAsia, the Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau (DICJ) has confirmed that standing bets had resumed

from the period before Chinese New Year in February this year.

The DICJ sanctioned the relaxation of the rule after seeing the pandemic risk in China had remained low. The requirement for maintaining a one-meter distance between players is a strategy to minimize contagion risk.

Since its enforcement in February last year, the scrapping of the prohibition on standing bets should have stimulated the city's demand for gambling, as DICJ stated, Asian players are usually more inclined to make bets at an occupied gaming table.

However, Lee said that the new social distancing regulation may be counterproductive when asked about whether the relaxation may help drive the city's gross gaming revenue (GGR).

"I don't believe this standing-back betting will improve the GGR as all it does is to encourage the concentration of gambling action on a fewer number of tables," he explained.

Arguments are circulating in the casino realm that the relegation may "have the opposite effect of increasing the volatility of table revenue as players flock to tables with player winning streaks," he added.

From a revenue stability perspective, the tactic to distribute players over a greater number of tables is always more conducive to driving gaming revenue, Lee commented.

Cloe Chao, the president of the New Macau Gaming Staff Rights Association, told the Times that since its enforcement, the social distancing regulation has confused many

mainland bettors.

"The restriction is considered too stringent at the moment. It has intimidated and turned some mainland bettors off," she said.

Chao also pointed out that the new rules make it hard for local casinos to accommodate the recently increased number of punters.

She added that it has been quite challenging for casino staff to implement the social-distancing rules. The regulation even caused quarrels between staff and patrons on some occasions.

She urges the government to lift the social distancing requirement as soon as possible, given the casino has already implemented strict safety protocols, such as mandatory mask-wearing for all guests, to combat Covid-19.



Jorge Silva

TDM APPOINTS SILVA AS PORTUGUESE TV CHANNEL NEWS DEPARTMENT CHIEF

YESTERDAY, the public broadcaster Televisão de Macau (TDM) Executive Committee appointed veteran journalist Jorge Silva as the new news department coordinator of the Portuguese TV channel, the Times learned.

The appointment, which is effective immediately, comes after last week's resignation from the previous department head, João Pedro Marques.

Silva, a news anchor at TDM since 1986, has performed several duties over

his 35 years working at the local TV station, including the role of Portuguese news editor.

Silva confirmed the appointment to the Times, but declined to make any further comments regarding the new post saying only that "it is a challenge."

According to TDM's Executive Committee order, Marques will return to his previous career post within the public broadcaster, with the effective date backdated to March 17. **RM**

AD

MOP **228*** per person

TWO-COURSE SET MENU

MOP **248*** per person

THREE-COURSE SET MENU

Book Now | **+853 8111 9200**
brasserie.reservation@sands.com.mo

SHOP 3312, LEVEL 3,
THE PARISIAN MACAO



*Prices are subject to 10% service charge. Photo for reference only.

巴黎人 BRASSERIE 法式餐厅



SAVOUR
A TASTE OF FRANCE

Tuck into a delectable lunch and delight your palate with the authentic flavours of France.



CE PLEDGES TO EXTEND SUPPORT TO RESIDENTS' UNION

At the reception celebrating the 37th Anniversary of the General Union of Neighborhood Associations of Macao (UGAMM), Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng remarked that the government "will continue its support" for the group.

"The Macau SAR Government will continue to support the UGAMM in the development of its activities, namely with regard to the improvement of equipment and facilities necessary for the provision of community services and that of the quality and diversification of its services," the CE pledged in his speech.

He also expressed his hope, on behalf of the government, that the General Union will continue to provide more specific and multifaceted services with an innovative and explorational spirit, in order to make new contributions to the prosperity and stability of Macau.

Ho has also highlighted the group's commitment to patriotism. "The UGAMM, founded in 1983, has always persisted in the tradition of love for Mother-



land and Macau, as well as in the support for 'One Country, Two Systems' Principle, making historical contributions to the successful return of Macau to the

Motherland," the CE remarked.

The UGAMM, he said, has united residents and has always been at the service of the population in a pragmatic way and

for the sake of their well-being, playing a fundamental role in the management and provision of services to the public.

He added that the group has

trained generations of political personages under the guidance of patriotism.

On the prospects of the coming year, Ho encouraged the group to be prepared for "opportunities and challenges." He reiterated that this year marks the beginning of the implementation of the 14th Five-Year Plan of the country, which is based on a new pattern of development of "double cycles."

"The 14th Five-Year Plan includes several policies and measures to support the development of Macau with a view to integrating it into the context of national development," he stressed. "In view of Macau's situation, we will promote the appropriate and diversified development of its economy, promote the construction of a strong cooperation zone between Guangdong and Macau in Hengqin and participate in high-quality development of Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area, with a view to our integration towards national development."

The CE also expressed his "great joy" for the celebration of the anniversary. "I wish the General Union further progress in its development. I also wish you all health and happiness," the government head remarked. **AL**



Galaxy invites NPC and CPPCC delegates 'to share Two Sessions' spirit'

INSPIRED by the Fourth Plenary Session of the 13th National People's Congress (NPC) and the 13th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), known as the Two Sessions, which was held in Beijing earlier, Galaxy Entertainment Group (GEG) hosted a sharing session at the JW Marriott Hotel, the company said in a press release last night.

Kou Hoi In, Deputy of the NPC; Ho Teng Iat,

Member of the CPPCC; and Francis Lui, Member of the CPPCC and Vice Chairman of GEG were invited to share with Galaxy's senior executives their insights on the Two Sessions, which this year marks the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China and the release of the 14th Five-Year Plan. The sharing session was also attended and advised by Zuo Xianghua, Deputy Director General of the Economic Affairs Department

of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Macau SAR.

According to the GEG statement, "a total of 200 executives from different regions from GEG's offices in Macau, Hong Kong and Mainland China, and its subsidiary - K. Wah Construction Materials, took part in the event by joining either the in-person or online live broadcast event."

These included Jorge N. Valente, Group Advisor; Philip Cheng, Director; Robert Drake, Group

Chief Financial Officer; Eileen Lui, Group Director of Human Resources and Administration; and Kevin Kelley, Chief Operating Officer in Macau.

During the sharing session, Kou Hoi In, Ho Teng Iat and Francis Lui gave an overview on the Two Sessions, and detailed many of the Central Government's work reports and priorities for the 14th Five-Year Plan, which is considered as the starting point on a new journey to build China into a modern

socialist country.

They also shared their views on post-pandemic economic recovery, opportunities for Macau to integrate with the overall development of the country, long-term benefits of practicing "One country, two systems," and insights on how Macau can leverage its successful implementation of this policy to integrate with the developments in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area amid the country's "dual circulation" economic strategy.

The note to the press said that the participating GEG executives were also given the opportunity to ask the three keynote speakers some questions

during a Q&A session, during which the speakers held a more in-depth discussion on the spirit of the Two Sessions and its significance for Macau's overall development.

At the occasion, Kou Hoi In revealed that the Macau delegation presented many views and suggestions on various topics, including the country's handling of the pandemic, the "new normal" economic development, and the in-depth cooperation between the Mainland China and Macau.

Through different initiatives, such as this one, GEG "actively promotes national education and China's development to its team members," the company said in the statement. **MDT**

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER



ACKNOWLEDGING the importance of national education, Melco Resorts & Entertainment launched its Splendors of China learning program in 2016 to promote patriotism among colleagues and the community. Earlier this week, Melco invited the Economic Affairs Department of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Macao SAR as Adviser and invited delegates of the National People's Congress (NPC) and Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) Mr. Alexandre Ma Iao Lai, Member of the Standing Committee of the CPPCC National Committee, President of the Board of the Macao Chamber of Commerce; Ms. Tina Ho Teng Iat, Deputy Director of the Committee for Liaison with Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan and Overseas Chinese of the CPPCC National Committee, Member of the Standing Committee of the All-China Women's Federation, and Chairwoman of the Women's General Association of Macau; Ms. Ung Pui Kun, Member of the CPPCC National Committee, Hospital Director of Kiang Wu Hospital Mr. Lok Po, Member of the NPC, Director of Macau Daily News; Mr. Kevin Ho King Lun, Member of the NPC, President of the Industry and Commerce Association of Macau; and Mr. Lawrence Ho, Member of the CPPCC National Committee, Chairman & CEO of Melco to share the Spirits of the Fourth Session of the 13th NPC

SPLENDORS OF CHINA

Melco promotes patriotism among colleagues and the community

and the Fourth Session of the 13th CPPCC, also known as the "Two Sessions" at its Splendors of China Leadership Forum.

Mr. Zuo Xianghua, Deputy Director-General, Economic Affairs Department of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Macao SAR and Mr. Wong Ka Kei, Head of Department of Non-tertiary Education and Youth Development Bureau attended as Guests of Honor. Melco senior executives including Mr. Clarence Chung, Board Director and Dr. Kent Wong, Chief Advisor welcomed guests to the event.

Promoting an in-depth understanding of China's cultural heritage, economic policies, social systems and values, the Leadership Forum was hosted at Studio City with an audience comprising Melco management and non-management colleagues and representatives from

Macau's educational institutes, including professors, teaching staff and students. The event was also broadcast live to Melco colleagues in Hong Kong.

Guest speakers discussed topics including the strategic significance of the 14th Five-Year Plan for Macau's integra-



“ Although Macau was seriously impacted by the pandemic last year, the active response from the Macau SAR to control and contain the situation helped to promptly restore order to the city's economic and daily life. All of this is a testament to the successful practice of 'One Country, Two Systems' in Macau and the importance of 'Loving the Motherland and Loving the Country' – as well as Macau's boundless potential for further development.

LAWRENCE HO

tion into the overall development of the country; ways to stabilize the effectiveness of Macau against the epidemic in the new stage of normalized epidemic prevention and control; how Macau can lead by example in the new practice of "One Country, Two Systems" and consoli-

date its achievements in loving the country and Macau; and how Macau can give full play to its advantages to deepen cooperation with cities in the Greater Bay Area such as Hengqin for diversified development.

During the event, Melco Chairman & CEO Mr. Lawrence Ho said, "National Education is a core segment of Melco's Whole Person Development strategy, and the Company's Splendors of China program was launched in 2016 with the aim to support the Macau SAR government's furthering of the spirit of 'Loving the Motherland and Loving Macau'. We are

honored to invite esteemed NPC and CPPCC delegates to share the Spirits of the "Two Sessions" with us – enabling our colleagues to gain a better understanding of the latest government policies and the significance of the practice of 'One Country, Two Systems', which will allow

us to better understand and seize opportunities to integrate into the country's overall development and continue contributing to the city's diversified development and economy."

For colleagues, Splendors of China aims to create deeper insight into understanding the majority of Melco's clientele, as well as appreciating the achievements of Macau's mother country. A total of 40 colleagues from the Melco management team also recently toured the 'Loving the Country, Loving Macau Education Base for Young People' located at the Handover Gifts Museum of Macau to strengthen national knowledge and identity and to gain a deeper understanding of Macau's developments and achievements. Looking ahead, each Melco colleague in Macau will have the opportunity to visit the patriotic education base as the Company rolls out regular tours.



Scan to follow Melco CSR Facebook Page



Communications Association sees high-potential

MACAU PHOTO AGENCY



RENATO MARQUES

THE Macao Communications Development Association (MCDA) believes that Macau's geographic location and size could be an advantage for the implementation and testing of new technologies, which could lead not only to the higher development of information and communication technologies locally, but also to boost economic diversification.

Such opinion was aired to the Times in an exclusive interview with several association members. "Macao, given its geographic size, would be the ideal place not only to implement some of those new innovative technologies [like the 5G network] that [find many challenges being implemented in other regions], but we could be used as a testing ground for several [other] technologies that are being developed and that could help in further developing the market," Carlos Rui Marcelo, the association's General Assembly Vice-President told the Times, adding that this was one of the primary factors that united the founders of the association, established in April 2019.

For MCDA members, the fact

that Macau is small in scale, often seen as a disadvantage, can be turned into an important advantage as the Special Administrative Region functions at the scale of a metropolis. The investment needed to test new technologies linked to Smart Cities would be far less than in any neighboring city.

THE LOST EDGE

One of the areas the association is focusing its work on is the regaining of Macau's prior status as an advanced city in terms of technology and communications.

Before the handover, Macau was regarded as one of the most advanced cities in the region, and even the world, in terms of communications, and was also on the vanguard of the internet, a status that quickly subsided due to a lack of tenacity in continuing to pursue higher goals.

"Maybe 20-plus years ago we used to be at the forefront of technology. Macau used to be a very innovative city and in recent years we lost that edge," Marcelo told the Times, adding, "We didn't lose it because we didn't have the skillsets or the knowledge, we lost it because the aggressiveness in terms of implementation of innovation and new technologies sub-

MUST holds forum to discuss life science, AI

ANTHONY LAM

A two-session forum on life science and artificial intelligence was held yesterday at the Macau University of Science and Technology (MUST) as part of the institution's 21st Anniversary celebrations.

Senior experts and scholars in the fields of biomedicine and artificial intelligence from Shenzhen, Hong Kong and Macau were invited to lecture at the forum, with a focus on cutting-edge fields of knowledge including life and health, brain science and artificial intelligence. They also jointly discussed the new model of life science and artificial intelligence technology innovation and industrial collaborative development in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area (GBA), which is one of the new tracks for the development of the integration of regional economies and technology.



From the perspective of life sciences and artificial intelligence, this forum jointly discussed the prospects of scientific and technological cooperation between Shenzhen, Hong Kong and Macau, and played a positive role in promoting the construction of an international scientific and technological innovation center in the GBA.

The forum is also expected to bring more and improved operations and models to the development of life sciences and artificial intelligence industries in the Greater Bay Area, which is of great significance for new and high-quality development.

The purpose of this forum, according to MUST, is to thoroughly

implement the spirit of President Xi Jinping's important instructions on scientific and technological work, while further realizing "Science and Innovation in China" proposed by the China Association for Science and Technology, and promoting the construction of a "Science and Innovation China" pilot city.

Another goal of the fo-

rum is toward constructing the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area and Shenzhen Socialism Pilot Area - collectively known as the "dual zone" - and the comprehensive reform of the pilot demonstration zone, as well as continuously deepening exchanges and cooperation in science and technology innovation between Shenzhen,

Hong Kong and Macau.

Prior to the forum, MUST held an opening ceremony. Chair Professor Joseph Lee Hun-wei, President of the university, stressed at the ceremony that the construction of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area is a major development strategy for the reform and opening up of the country in the new era. It is of great significance to the country's implementation-driven development.

The forum was held under the guidance of the Youth Work Department of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, the Department of Economic Affairs of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Macao Special Administrative Region, Shenzhen Science and Technology Association, the Macau University of Science and Technology and the Hong Kong Information Technology Joint Council.

in Macau as new technology testing ground



From left: Harun Hamja, Carlos Rui Marcelo, Windus Lam

sided throughout these years and that's why we think it is extremely important that we become much more aggressive in the next few years."

For the MCDA Vice-President, one of the ways in which the Covid-19 pandemic contributed to highlighting flaws within the system is through "showing us that collaboration tools have become extremely important for the livelihood of citizens and if we don't have an infrastructure that makes that possible it's going to be extremely challenging."

A FREE MARKET WOULD BOOST TECH ADVANCES, SERVICES

For the MCDA, one of the most important aspects that could shift technology back onto the right track involves the establishing of a free market for communications in which all players could compete fairly, presenting new services and technological advancements that would benefit everyone.

"Everybody nowadays is paying [for goods and services] using a mobile phone. We used to have a percentage of the online market that was roughly [a few years ago] maybe around 15 to 18% but it has jumped at least to 30% last year, or in the last couple of years, and that gives us a clear indication of what is important to address," Marcelo said, adding, "Data is a very important part and so we need to have an infrastructure that supports that sort of behavior. I'm pretty sure that all the operators in Macau are willing to support that.

A free market is an important tool to facilitate competition and to facilitate innovation."

To this end, both decision-makers and stakeholders cannot continue to blame any of the players, but instead "find ways to collaborate and promote healthy competition because that will help the market. We know there are several important problems with the current system but what is important to understand is that without the support or proper guidance in regards to how we can move from A to B, it is going to be very challenging [to move past the current state] and to be at the forefront of innovation. That is what Macau could be good at," Marcelo reaffirmed, adding that one of the important focuses for the association is to provide help and expertise in the field to encourage collaboration between parties.

The lack of competition and its consequences was also addressed in the same interview by another MCDA board member, Board of Directors President Windus Lam, who to the Times stated, "Officially home broadband and business broadband has been liberalized for over 20 years. But what this means [in reality] is that anyone can apply to provide that service. However, this is a very limited opportunity as our connection is very limited and we need to rely on international connectivity. At that time, the liberalization was not followed by an encouragement to investment [in the ne-

work] and to encourage the sole-operator to open up the facilities to other competitors. That is what created the situation we have right now in which you don't have a choice," explaining that such lack of action from the government limited possible investment in and consequent development of the products and services available in Macau for people and businesses.

Questioned by the Times if the current telecommunication infrastructure is enough to support the growing demand for data and online services, Lam said, "It depends if you are analyzing [from] today's [point-of-view] or if you are looking from today and forward. For most people (for individual use) we can say that the current speed and service are probably enough but people are using more applications that are bandwidth-hungry such as video streaming and others. With added demand, the natural consequence is the degradation of the quality of the service," adding "at the backend what drives the bandwidth capacity is the infrastructure and we are talking about both the local network and the overseas network and that is the bigger problem for the implementation of the 5G network."

As Lam explained further, "In the past, we only needed one network, but the infrastructure needed to support 5G or 6G may easily need to double or triple [at the start], and increase to 6-fold or even 10-fold, and that is why there is an issue regarding the

investment needed," leading him to conclude that if the government does not take the lead to change the competitive environment, it will be impossible to attract other players to invest in this market as well as to attract talent in this field from other parts of the world to Macau.

"Regulations are causing us to lag behind because the 'door is not open at all' and traditionally, we have been pointing the finger to the potential players saying that they are not working hard enough and that is not the case. It's the environment itself that is limiting any new players from competing as fair players," Lam concluded.

HR IS A CHALLENGE FOR THE MARKET

Another big challenge as a hindering factor in the development of the market in Macau is the lack of human resources (HR) in the field.

"I think there are a few challenges in the market. One [of them] is actually about how to create the incentive for new people to find the industry attractive after they finish their [university] studies. Because [historically] it has been easy for people to go into tourism and find jobs where skillsets are also scarce in Macau and are paid quite well. What we have assisted in the last 10 to 20 years, particularly with the liberalization of the gaming industry, is that people tend to find jobs in areas for which they did not have specific [college] training" Marcelo said.

These factors point to another direction for the MCDA which elected as one of the goals to help drive incentives within the industry for professionals, trained in technology and telecommunications, to continue to promote and implement innovation.

"Some parts of this sector are not that interesting, but the innovative technologies are, and that is why 5G and subsequent technologies play an important role in the future of the industry because they bring ways of use technologies that not only communicate with other sectors but also bring a cohesiveness," Marcelo said.

For instance, he added, "the Internet of Things, which is an important aspect of technology that can be supported by these new tools and applications is not possible if we don't bring together a convergence of technologies."

TO CHANNEL KNOW-HOW TO KEEP COMPETENCE

Founded by communication professionals with a vast knowledge of the industry and experience of over 30 years, the MCDA aims to channel this knowledge to the current and future generations to benefit the industry. They believe it has great potential to become one of the sectors that can contribute to Macau's economic diversification.

"If we don't channel this knowledge into new professionals in the market, we will be extremely dependent on external competency and manpower, and companies that might want to come to Macau and invest in Macau will be limited to a certain technology that might be imposed upon the market," Marcelo said, adding to the comments by MCDA Board of Directors Vice-President, Xequé Harun Hamja.

Hamja was discussing how the existing know-how is important not only to promote new advancements, but to maintain some of the existing technology.

"If any company wants to hire a Switch engineer that is impossible. There is none locally," he said, adding "the old ones are all retiring and the new generation has no training in this field. I believe that [unless we do something about it now] within the next 5 to 10 years there will be no local people working in this sector in Macau."

According to data from the association, the market in Macau for the telecom and information technology sectors already presents a deficit in manpower of about 40 to 50% of the demand in the sector.

Hamja also noted that nowadays, telecom services are as important a commodity as water or electricity.

AP PHOTO



Chief Executive Carrie Lam receives the second dose of the Sinovac Biotech COVID-19 vaccine

ANALYSIS

HONG KONG VACCINATION DRIVE STRUGGLES TO GAIN PUBLIC TRUST

ZEN SOO, HONG KONG

HONG KONG'S sudden suspension of a COVID-19 vaccine developed by Pfizer and BioNTech is another blow to a vaccination program already struggling against a wall of public distrust.

Hong Kong on Wednesday suspended use of the Pfizer vaccine, distributed by Chinese pharmaceutical firm Fosun Pharma, after defective packaging such as loose vial lids and cracks on bottles were found in one of two batches of the vaccine.

For now, Hong Kong residents can only get the Chinese-made Sinovac vaccine, which is reported to have an efficacy rate of 62%, compared with Pfizer's 97%. Wariness toward the Sinovac shot has grown after seven people who were vaccinated with it died, though authorities say the deaths were not linked to the vaccine.

When the government launched the vaccination drive in February, 66-year-old Chan Yuet Lin was eager to get inoculated. A mainland Chinese immigrant in the semi-autonomous city, she hoped vaccination would help her eventually visit her family in the Chinese mainland, whom she had not seen since the pandemic began, without

enduring onerous quarantines.

But after seeing reports on television that several people with chronic illnesses had died days after having the Sinovac vaccine, Chan decided against getting inoculated.

"I have high blood pressure, high cholesterol and high blood sugar. Right now with my health condition I don't think I can get the shot, I will wait and see," she said, adding that she planned to seek her doctor's advice at her next appointment.

Since vaccinations began on Feb. 26, about 5.7% of Hong Kong's 7.2 million residents have gotten inoculated — a far cry from a goal of vaccinating 70%. The slow uptake trails Singapore's. It started giving COVID-19 shots just days before Hong Kong and has administered vaccines to more than 13% of its population of 5.7 million.

The government has expanded the range of people who can get the shots, allowing those 30 and above after initially prioritizing those 60 and older, and employees from essential industries. It is considering giving the shots to anyone older than 16.

Slow progress on vaccinations could slow the city's economic recovery. Hong Kong is still grappling with coronavirus outbreaks and stringent social distancing measures that are especially hard on bars, restaurants and the tourism industry. The jobless rate climbed to 7.2% in February, the highest level since 2004.

Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam and health officials are urging people to get vaccinated. They

Since vaccinations began on Feb. 26, about 5.7% of HK's 7.2m residents have gotten inoculated — a far cry from a goal of vaccinating 70%

insist the shots, including the Sinovac vaccine, are safe. Hong Kong, a former British colony, relies heavily on tourism but has been closed to foreign visitors since March 2020 and Lam has said social distancing precautions and border controls can only be relaxed after most people have gotten the shots.

"If we can't control the epidemic, there's nothing we can do about the economy," she told lawmakers last week.

Hesitancy toward the vaccines partly reflects growing mistrust of the government, as Beijing has asserted growing influence following months of anti-government protests in 2019. Authorities have arrested and jailed dozens of pro-democracy activists under a tough new national security law.

Some residents are worried by the seven deaths that occurred after Sinovac shots.

"According to the government, none of the deaths are related to the vaccine. Most of the patients had cardiovascular conditions, so there must be some association, but the government seems to be trying to dissociate it," said Belinda Lin, a Hong Kong resident in her 30s.

"It's an issue of responsibility, the willingness to take responsibility — I haven't seen this yet," said Lin, who does not plan to get the vaccine as she says there is a lack of studies showing long-term effects.

"From what we've seen in the news so far it seems like people have more side effects from the (Sinovac) vaccine that's less ef-

fective," said Agnes Wong, a sales executive in Hong Kong who also had no immediate plans to get vaccinated.

Unease over the vaccines, which were developed in under a year using varying levels of clinical trials, are not confined to Hong Kong.

In Europe, reports of problems with blood clotting following the AstraZeneca shot raised concerns. So have questions over some of AstraZeneca's clinical data.

The number of people who have booked but failed to show up for their Sinovac vaccine appointments currently stands at around 20%, up from about 11% a week into the program. That compares with a 5% no-show rate for the Pfizer shot before those were halted.

Martin Wong, a professor at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, co-authored a survey published in January that showed only 37% of Hong Kong residents were willing to get a COVID-19 vaccine. He says the technology used, a manufacturer's track record and reports of side effects can all affect willingness to get the shots.

The government has advised people with chronic illnesses to ask their doctors before getting the COVID-19 vaccines. That can be difficult for many underprivileged Hong Kong seniors, said Ivan Lin from the rights advocacy group Society of Community Organization.

"The public health system should be more proactive in providing advice," said Lin. "For many of these elderly, their long-term illnesses are taken care of by public hospitals where appointments take place every three months, so they are not able to get (timely) medical advice."

Policies that would reward people for getting vaccinated are essential, says Wong.

"New incentives may be required such as exemptions from certain travel bans or issuance of a certificate of vaccination that can be used for different purposes," he said.

Lam, the city's leader, has said the government might considering such measures, such as relaxing certain social distancing restrictions. Hong Kong is also discussing with Chinese authorities on easing restrictions for travelers who are vaccinated.

That might work for some.

Bilal Hussain, a doctoral student at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, signed up to receive his first shot of the Sinovac vaccine after learning that China had eased its policy to allow foreign workers and their families to apply for visas into the country.

Hussain's wife and 5-year-old son are in China. He hasn't seen them since January 2020.

"I'm hoping that maybe in the near future, China will open up their borders for students who have been vaccinated," he said. AP

AP PHOTO



JOE McDONALD, BEIJING

CHINA'S ruling Communist Party is lashing out at H&M and other clothing and footwear brands as it retaliates for Western sanctions on Chinese officials accused of human rights abuses in the Xinjiang region.

The attacks began when the party's Youth League on Wednesday called attention on its social media account to an H&M statement in March 2020 that it would stop buying cotton from Xinjiang in China's northwest. The Swedish retailer, in words also used by some other brands, said it was "deeply concerned" about reports of forced labor there.

Yesterday, a party newspaper, the Global Times, cited Burberry, Adidas, Nike and New Balance as having made "cutting remarks" about Xinjiang cotton as early as two years ago. A separate Global Times report cited what it said was a statement by Zara that it had a "zero-tolerance approach towards forced labor."

Celebrities including Wang Yibo, a popular singer and actor, announced they were breaking endorsement contracts with H&M and Nike.

Beijing often attacks foreign clothing, auto, travel and other brands for actions by their governments or to pressure companies to conform to its official positions on Taiwan, Tibet and other sensitive issues.

Companies usually apologize and change websites or advertising to maintain access to China's populous market. But Xinjiang is an unusually thorny issue. Western brands face pressure at home to distance themselves from possible abuses.

China attacks foreign clothing, shoe brands over Xinjiang

More than 1 million people in Xinjiang, most of them from predominantly Muslim ethnic groups, have been confined to work camps, according to foreign researchers and governments. Beijing denies mistreating them and says it is trying to promote economic development and stamp out radicalism.

On Monday, the 27-nation European Union, the United States, Britain and Canada jointly announced travel and financial sanctions on four senior Chinese officials blamed for abuses in Xinjiang.

Beijing retaliated by saying it would impose unspecified penalties against European legislators and a German researcher who has publicized information about the detention camps.

H&M's statement last March cited a decision by the Better Cotton Initiative, an industry group that promotes environmental and labor standards, to stop licensing Xinjiang cotton because it was "increasingly difficult" to trace how it was produced. In September, H&M announced it would stop working with a Chinese manufacturer that was accused of using forced labor in a unit unrelated to the Swedish brand.

In January, Washington

imposed a ban on imports of cotton from Xinjiang, a major supplier to clothing producers for Western markets.

China's official outrage has focused on Europe, possibly because relations with the EU were relatively amicable amid rancor with Washington over trade disputes and accusations of Chinese spying and technology theft.

Official criticism of H&M reflected that tone of grievance at being hurt by a friend.

How can H&M eat Chinese rice and then smash China's pot?

CCTV COMMENTARY

"How can H&M eat Chinese rice and then smash China's pot?" state television said in a commentary on Wednesday.

On its social media account, H&M Group said the company "doesn't represent any political standpoint" and "respects Chinese consumers."

The company said it deals with 350 Chinese manufacturers to make products that "comply with the principles of sustainable development." H&M said it "is committed to long-term investment and development in China."

Yesterday, H&M pro-

ducts were missing from China's two most popular online retailers, Alibaba Group's Tmall and JD.com. News reports said they were removed due to public criticism over its Xinjiang statement. Spokespeople for Alibaba and JD didn't immediately respond to requests for comment.

Internet users pointed to clothing brands Uniqlo of Japan and The Gap of the United States as other possible offenders. It was unclear how many of those accounts were members of the public and how many were operated by the ruling party's vast propaganda apparatus.

Pop star Wang Yibo's announcement that he was quitting as a Nike "brand ambassador" didn't mention Xinjiang. It said he "firmly resists any words and actions that pollute China."

Others including singer and actress Song Qian, a former member of Korean pop group f(x) who also is known as Victoria Song, and actor Huang Xuan announced they would end endorsement contracts with H&M. Actress Tang Songyun said she was breaking ties with Nike.

Chinese athletic shoe brand ANTA announced it was pulling out of BCI, the industry cotton group. **MDT/AP**

Facebook finds hacking operation targeting Uyghurs, no links to Chinese gov't

HACKERS in China used fake Facebook accounts and impostor websites to try to break into the computers and smartphones of Uyghur Muslims, the social network said yesterday [Macau time], adding that it found no direct links to the Chinese government.

The company said the sophisticated, covert operation targeted Uyghur activists, journalists and dissidents from China's Xinjiang region, as well as individuals living in Turkey, Kazakhstan, the U.S., Syria, Australia, Canada and other nations.

The hackers attempted to gain access to the computers and phones by creating fake Facebook accounts for supposed journalists and activists, as well as fake websites and apps intended to appeal to a Uyghur audience. In some cases, the hackers created lookalike websites almost identical to legitimate news sites popular with Uyghurs.

The accounts and sites contained malicious links. If the target clicked on one, their computer or smartphone would be infected with software allowing the network to spy on the target's device.

The software could obtain information including the victim's location, keystrokes and contacts, according to FireEye, a cybersecurity firm that worked on the investigation.

In all, fewer than 500 people were targeted by the hackers in 2019 and 2020, Facebook said. The company said it uncovered the network during its routine security work, and has deactivated the fictitious accounts and notified individuals whose devices may have been compromised. Most of the hackers' activities took place on non-Facebook sites and platforms.

"They tried to create these personas, build trust in the community, and use that as a way to trick people into clicking on these links to expose their devices," said Nathaniel Gleicher, Facebook's head of security policy.

Facebook's investigation found links between the hackers and two technology firms based in China but no direct links to the Chinese government, which has been criticized for its harsh treatment of Uyghurs in Xinjiang. FireEye, however, said in a statement that "we believe this operation was conducted in support" of the Chinese government. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

NORTH KOREA TEST-FIRES BALLISTIC MISSILES IN MESSAGE TO US

NORTH Korea yesterday test-fired its first ballistic missiles since President Joe Biden took office as it expands its military capabilities and increases pressure on Washington while nuclear negotiations remain stalled.

Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga said North Korea's resumption of ballistic testing threatens "peace and safety in Japan and the region," and that Tokyo will closely coordinate with Washington and Seoul on the North's military activities.

South Korean Foreign Minister Chung Eui-yong, after meeting his Russian counterpart in Seoul, expressed "deep concern" and urged the North to uphold its commitments for peace. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov called for a swift resumption of dialogue to resolve the standoff with North Korea.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said the two short-range missiles were fired at 7:06 a.m. and 7:25 a.m. on the North's eastern coast and flew 450 kilometers (279 miles) on an apogee of 60 kilometers (37 miles) before landing in the sea.

A senior U.S. official, who

AP PHOTO



spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss military observations, matched the information from Tokyo and Seoul, saying that initial assessments suggest the North fired two short-range ballistic missiles.

"This activity highlights the threat that North Korea's illicit weapons program poses to its neighbors and the international community," said U.S. Indo-Pacific Command spokesperson Capt. Mike Kafka.

The launches came a day after U.S. and South Korean officials

said the North fired short-range weapons presumed to be cruise missiles into its western sea over the weekend.

North Korea has a history of testing new U.S. administrations with missile launches and other provocations aimed at forcing the Americans back to the negotiating table.

Still, yesterday's launches were a measured provocation compared to the nuclear and intercontinental missile tests in 2017 that inspired war fears before the North shifted toward diplomacy with

the Trump administration in 2018.

Analysts expect the North to gradually dial up its weapons displays to gain bargaining power as it angles to get back into stalled talks aimed at leveraging nuclear weapons for badly needed economic benefits.

North Korea has so far ignored the Biden administration's efforts to reach out, saying it won't engage in meaningful talks unless Washington abandons its "hostile" policies.

It's unclear how the Biden administration will respond before

it completes its policy review on North Korea in coming weeks.

The missile launches followed a trip by Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin to Japan and South Korea last week as Washington pushes to restore its alliances in Asia.

During the trip, Blinken sternly criticized North Korea's nuclear program and human rights record and pressed China to use its "tremendous influence" to convince the North to denuclearize.

North Korean state media had said Tuesday that leader Kim Jong Un reaffirmed his country's traditional alliance with China while exchanging messages with Chinese President Xi Jinping in an apparent response to Biden's efforts to coordinate action on North Korea with his allies.

The negotiations over the North's nuclear program faltered after the collapse of Kim's second summit with President Donald Trump in February 2019, when the Americans rejected North Korean demands for major sanctions relief in exchange for a partial surrender of its nuclear capabilities.

Kim Dong-yub, an analyst from South Korea's Institute for Far Eastern Studies, said the flight data suggests the North possibly tested a new solid-fuel system modeled after Russia's 9K720 Iskander mobile ballistic missiles. **MDT/AP**

AD

合夥人 PARTNERS:

- 官樂怡 Rui José da Cunha
- 山度士 Álvaro Rodrigues
- 馬天龍 Nuno Sardinha da Mata
- 趙魯 Zhao Lu
- 馬傑安 João Nogueira Marques

大律師 ASSOCIATES:

- 高文軒 Adelino Correia
- 羅善齡 Zelina Rodrigues
- 白秀蘭 Susana Batalha
- 馬潔冰 Maria João Marques
- 陶義德 António Isóo de Azevedo
- 白穎怡 Iclília Berenguel
- 冼玲鳳 Mariana Afonso Esteves
- 薛明恩 Maria Antónia Giestas
- 飛嘉華 Carlos dos Santos Ferreira
- 杜力信 Nelson de Azevedo
- 馬秀文 Sofia Mendes Martins
- 宋哲言 João Gonçalves Assunção
- 巴慧雅 Vera Bastos
- 莫永誠 Rui Velez de Moura
- 安東尼 António Manuel dos Santos
- 歐文傑 Miguel Evaristo
- 陳芷喬 Joana Chan
- 顏曉蓉 Teresa Xiaorong Yan
- 諾瑪莉 Maria Noras
- 康靜雅 Viviana Hong
- 梁淑嵐 Ana Leon

實習律師 TRAINEE LAWYERS:

- 黃瀚賢 Frederico Vong
- 張偉鴻 Cheong Wai Hong
- 李莉 Lei Lei
- 陳健雄 Eurico Chan
- 吳霆鋒 Ng Teng Fong

法律專家 JURISTS:

- 羅成軒 José J. Rodrigues
- 潘卡莉 Candice Pun
- 斐彥德 Gonçalo Figueiredo
- 羅嘉慧 Emily Lo
- 陳子健 Chan Chi Kin



To protect the health and safety of our Clients and Staff, we continue implementing prevention measures at the office entrance, as recommended by the local Authorities.

為了保護客戶和員工的健康和安全，我們將繼續按照本地政府的建議在辦公室入口處實施預防措施。

A: Av. da Praia Grande 759, 3-5 Floors Office hours:
 Macau SAR, China Mon-Thu: 9:30-13:00, 14:30-18:30
 地址:澳門南灣大馬路759號3-5樓 Fri: 9:30-13:00, 14:30-18:00
 Tel: (853) 2837 2642 / 2837 2623 Sat: 9:00-13:00

WWW.CCADVOG.COM

律師事務所



C&C
LAWYERS
& NOTARIES
SINCE 1996

ONE REPORT, FOUR THEORIES

Scientists mull clues on coronavirus' origin

DARIA LITVINOVA
& JAMEY KEATEN, GENEVA

A team of international and Chinese scientists is poised to report on its joint search for the origins of the coronavirus that sparked a pandemic after it was first detected in China over a year ago — with four theories being considered, and one the clear frontrunner, according to experts.

The lengthy report is being published after months of wrangling, notably between U.S. and Chinese governments, over how the outbreak emerged, while scientists try to keep their focus on a so-far fruitless search for the origin of a microbe that has killed over 2.7 million people and stifled economies worldwide.

It wasn't immediately clear when the report will be released after its publication was delayed earlier this month. By many accounts, the report could offer few concrete answers, and may raise further questions.

It will offer a first glance in writing from 10 international epidemiologists, data scientists, veterinary, lab and food safety experts who visited China and the city of Wuhan — where a market was seen as the initial epicenter — earlier this year to work with Chinese counterparts who pulled up the bulk of early data.

Critics have raised questions about the objectivity of the team, insisting that China's government had a pivotal say over its composition. Defenders of the World Health Organization, which assembled the team, say it can't simply parachute in experts to tell a country what to do — let alone one as powerful as China.

"I expect that this report will only be a first step into investigating the origins of the virus and that the WHO secretariat will probably say this," said Matthew Kavanagh, director of Georgetown University's Global Health Policy and Governance Initiative at the O'Neill Institute. "And I expect some to criticize this as insufficient."

THE FOUR THEORIES

The Wuhan trip is billed as Phase 1 in a vast undertaking to flesh out the origins of the virus.

The WHO has bristled at depictions of the mission as an "investigation" — saying that smacks of an invasive forensic probe that wasn't called for under the resolution adopted unanimously by the agency's member states in May that paved the way for the collaboration. The WHO and China later ironed out the ground rules.

Team member Vladimir De-

AP PHOTO



Wuhan Central Hospital

dkov, an epidemiologist and deputy director of research at the St. Petersburg Pasteur Institute in Russia, summarized the four main leads first laid out at a marathon news conference in China last month about the suspected origins of the first infection in humans. They were, in order of likelihood: from a bat through an intermediary animal; straight from a bat; via contaminated frozen food products; from a leak from a laboratory like the Wuhan Institute of Virology.

Officials in China, as well as Chinese team leader Liang Wannian, have promoted the third theory — the cold-chain one — while the U.S. administration under President Donald Trump played up the fourth one, of the lab leak. But Dedkov said those two hypothesis were far down the list of likely sources.

He suggested frozen products on which the virus was found were most likely contaminated by infected people. An infected person also likely brought and spread the virus at the Wuhan market associated with the outbreak, where some of the contaminated products were later found.

"In general, all the conditions for the spread of infection were present at this market," Dedkov said in an interview. "Therefore, most likely, there was a mass in-

fection of people who were connected by location."

"At this point, there are no facts suggesting that there was a leak" from a lab, Dedkov said. "If suddenly scientific facts appear from somewhere, then accordingly, the priority of the version will change. But, at this particular moment, no."

Suspicious about political meddling have dogged the mission, and the international team leader — the WHO's Peter Ben Embarek — acknowledged in interviews last week that unspecified "pressures" might weigh on its members. Liang, in a Chinese newspaper interview, also bemoaned political pressure on the team.

POLITICS ON THE WAY

Delays in deploying the international team to China, repeated slippage in the timing of publication of the report, and rejiggering of the plans for it — an initial summary of findings was jettisoned as an idea — have only fanned speculation that the scientists have been steered by political authorities or others.

"The last understanding we had was that it is expected to come out this week — we'll have to see if that actually happens," the U.S. charge d'affaires in Geneva, Mark Cassayre, said yesterday [Macau time]. "We have a clear

understanding that other studies will be required."

He said the U.S. was hopeful the report would be a "real step forward for the world understanding the origins of the virus, so that we can better prepare for future pandemics. That's really what this is about."

The WHO leadership, including Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, repeatedly praised the Chinese government's early response to the outbreak, though recordings of private meetings obtained by The Associated Press exposed how top WHO officials were frustrated at China's lack of cooperation.

The international team was wholly reliant on data collected by Chinese scientists after the outbreak surfaced, and Dedkov called the visit to Wuhan an "analytical trip, mainly for the purpose of retrospective analysis in the sense that we studied only those facts that were obtained earlier."

"We did not collect any samples ourselves, we didn't carry out any laboratory studies there, we just analyzed what we were being shown," he said. If some data had not been collected, it wasn't because the Chinese wanted to conceal something, he added.

The team's visit was politically sensitive for China — which is concerned about any allega-

tions it didn't handle the initial outbreak properly. Shortly after the outbreak, the Chinese government detained some Chinese doctors who sought to raise the alarm.

The report, which Ben Embarek said last week took up about 280 pages, is set to lay out recommendations and lay the groundwork for next steps — such as whether the team, or others, get new access to China for further analysis. Ultimately, the aim is to find clues to help prevent another such pandemic in the future.

Georgetown's Kavanagh said he hasn't seen the report — but has suspicions about what it will say.

"Based on what we have heard so far I expect that the report will likely lend some credence to a link between wildlife farming and COVID-19, but without full evidence about exactly how the move from animals into humans might have occurred," he said.

Dedkov said planning of "real-time research" is next, but noted there's no guarantee future trips will find all the answers.

"But one can try," he added. "Of course, if the source of the origin of the virus is found, it will help answer many questions and, in general, will dissipate this unnecessary political tension around the virus." MDT/AP



A boat navigates in front of cargo ship Ever Given

EGYPT

Stuck ship in Suez Canal imperils shipping worldwide

JON GAMBRELL & SAMY MAGDY, ISMAILIA

A skyscraper-sized cargo ship wedged across Egypt's Suez Canal further imperiled global shipping yesterday as at least 150 other vessels needing to pass through the crucial waterway idled waiting for the obstruction to clear, authorities said.

The Ever Given, a Panama-flagged ship that carries cargo between Asia and Europe, ran aground Tuesday in the narrow, man-made canal dividing continental Africa from the Sinai Peninsula. In the time since, efforts to free the ship using dredgers, digging and the aid of high tides have yet to push the container vessel aside — affecting billions of dollars' worth of cargo.

In a sign of the global turmoil the blockage has caused, the ship's Japanese owner even offered a written apology for the incident as well.

"We are determined to keep on working hard to resolve this situation as soon as possible," Shoen Kisen Kaisha Ltd. said. "We would like to apologize to all parties affected by this incident, including the ships travelling and planning to travel through Suez Canal."

Authorities began work

again to free the vessel yesterday after halting for the night, an Egyptian canal authority official said. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity as he wasn't authorized to speak to journalists, said workers hoped to avoid offloading containers from the vessel as it would be a dayslong effort to do so that could extend the closure.

So far, dredgers have tried to clear silt around the massive ship. Tug boats nudged the vessel alongside it, trying to gain momentum. From the shore, at least one backhoe dug into the canal's sandy banks, suggesting the bow of the ship had plowed into it. However, satellite photos taken by Planet Labs Inc. and analyzed by The Associated Press showed the vessel still stuck in the same location.

Bernhard Schulte Shipmanagement, the company that manages the Ever Given, said the ship's 25-member crew are safe and accounted for. Shoen Kisen Kaisha said all the crew came from India.

The ship had two pilots from Egypt's canal authority aboard the vessel to guide it when the grounding happened around 7:45 a.m. Tuesday, Bernhard Schulte Shipmanagement said.

Canal service provider Leth Agencies said at least

150 ships were waiting for the Ever Given to be cleared, including vessels near Port Said on the Mediterranean Sea, Port Suez on the Red Sea and those already stuck in the canal system on Egypt's Great Bitter Lake.

Cargo ships already behind the Ever Given in the canal will be reversed south back to Port Suez to free the channel, Leth Agencies said. Authorities hope to do the same to the Ever Given when they can free it.

Evergreen Marine Corp., a major Taiwan-based shipping company that operates the ship, said in a statement that the Ever Given had been overcome by strong winds as it entered the canal from the Red Sea but none of its containers had sunk.

An Egyptian official, who spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity because he wasn't authorized to brief journalists, similarly blamed a strong wind. Egyptian forecasters said high winds and a sandstorm plagued the area Tuesday, with winds gusting as much as 50 kilometers per hour.

An initial report suggested the ship suffered a power blackout before the incident, something Bernhard Schulte Shipmanagement denied yesterday.

"Initial investigations rule out any mechanical or engine failure as a cause of the grounding," the company said.

In Japan, Chief Cabinet Secretary Katsunobu Kato told reporters yesterday that the Suez Canal is part of a crucial international sea lane, and that the Japanese government was gathering information and working with local authorities.

Tuesday marked the second major crash involving the Ever Given in recent years. In 2019, the cargo ship ran into a small ferry moored on the Elbe River in the German port city of Hamburg. Authorities at the time blamed strong wind for the collision, which severely damaged the ferry.

The closure could affect oil and gas shipments to Europe from the Mideast, which rely on the canal to avoid sailing around Africa. The price of international benchmark Brent crude stood at over \$63 a barrel yesterday.

Overall, famed shipping journal Lloyd's List estimates each day the Suez Canal is closed disrupts over \$9 billion worth of goods that should be passing through the waterway. A quarter of all Suez Canal traffic a day comes from container ships like the Ever Given, the journal said.

The Ever Given, built in 2018 with a length of nearly 400 meters and a width of 59 meters, is among the largest cargo ships in the world. It can carry some 20,000 containers at a time. It previously had been at ports in China before heading toward Rotterdam in the Netherlands.

Opened in 1869, the Suez Canal provides a crucial link for oil, natural gas and cargo. It also remains one of Egypt's top foreign currency earners. In 2015, the government of President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi completed a major expansion of the canal, allowing it to accommodate the world's largest vessels. However, the Ever Given ran aground south of that new portion of the canal.

The stranding Tuesday marks just the latest to affect mariners amid the pandemic. Hundreds of thousands have been stuck aboard vessels due to the pandemic. Meanwhile, demands on shipping have increased, adding to the pressure on tired sailors. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1973 STOCK EXCHANGE ADMITS WOMEN



Women have been admitted to the London Stock Exchange for the first time in the institution's 200 year history.

Ten newly elected lady members entered the Stock Exchange today on the first working day since their election took place.

The decision to break a time-honoured tradition and introduce equality was announced on 1 February and ended years of campaigning by women in the financial sector.

Muriel Wood, a dedicated campaigner and newly elected member, arrived with her husband Walton, both of Sternberg, Flower.

Mrs Wood said: "There is a great deal of activity and bustle but it seems it is going on at a rather leisurely pace."

Susan Shaw said it was a breakthrough for women in finance which allowed them to forge contacts in the industry.

Although today's admission is a major victory for the debate on sexual equality the next hurdle will be allowing women dealers on to the floor.

Bookies have placed long odds - 10 to one - against this taking place in the foreseeable future.

Mr Wood said he thought it would take "a little time" before that decision was taken.

The admission of women today is the latest development in the Stock Exchange's history which has been at times a bumpy ride.

The original concept of the London Stock Exchange was first bandied around in 1760 when 150 brokers, fired from the Royal Exchange for misconduct and rowdiness, set up a club to buy and sell shares.

Thirteen years later members voted to change the name and the Stock Exchange was born.

It was not until 1801 that the exchange was regulated and it remained in action until The Great War forced the closure of the Exchange market at the end of July until the new year.

The Stock Exchange Battalion of Royal Fusiliers was formed - 1,600 volunteered, 400 never returned.

Last year the Stock Exchange moved to a new 26-storey office block with a 23,000 square foot trading floor.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

The media at the time described the London Stock Exchange as the "last bastion of misogyny" and the admission of women was a major step forward in modernising it.

But it was another 28 years before a woman landed one of the most senior posts at the London Stock Exchange.

In 2001, Clara Furse took over as chief executive, a post created 27 years earlier.

But modernity came in other guises for the LSE and one of the significant advances came in 1986 when trading was no longer carried out face-to-face on a market floor but via computer and telephone from separate dealing rooms.

It was enabled by two computer systems displaying share price information in brokers' offices around the UK.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
Mar. 21-Apr. 19
Some important people could pay attention to you today. Are you ready? Whenever the spotlight is aimed right at you, it's important to take your time. Plan your actions ahead.

TAURUS
Apr. 20-May. 20
You can finally reach a compromise in an ongoing power struggle with a friend if you choose the path of least resistance. So what if you have to give in to what you think are their unreasonable demands?

GEMINI
May. 21-Jun. 21
They could be coming from a very emotional perspective and not using logic to their advantage. You're confident enough in your point of view to not have to browbeat or be dogmatic.

CANCER
Jun. 22-Jul. 22
There could be an exciting surprise coming your way, so get ready to have your daily routine knocked on its ear! You've been waiting for an excuse to ditch your plans for a day, and now you've got it.

LEO
Jul. 23-Aug. 22
Just make the choices and actions that will make you proud of yourself, and don't worry about anyone else. If people want to compete, don't play along.

VIRGO
Aug. 23-Sep. 22
Your daily routine could be slightly disrupted by someone who doesn't know the first thing about how to be flexible. They can't bring themselves to see things from any other perspective but their own.

LIBRA
Sep. 23-Oct. 22
You have more curiosity than the average cat right now, and if you follow it, you could end up having a very good time! Is there a person you've always wanted to talk to?

SCORPIO
Oct. 23-Nov. 21
Travel is on your mind now, so much so that it might be causing some real problems with your family. They want you to stick around in one place a little longer, but you need to stretch your legs!

SAGITTARIUS
Nov. 22-Dec. 21
You have nothing to worry about! Keep an open mind about this new relationship of theirs. It could bring some good things to your life in ways you don't understand just yet.

CAPRICORN
Dec. 22-Jan. 19
Doing something just because it could earn you more money is way too shortsighted. And you don't want to be stuck in a trap later and unable to break free.

AQUARIUS
Jan. 20-Feb. 18
Odd and unusual things could be very attractive to you today. You're more interested in what sticks out like a sore thumb than in what fits right in, and this mood is especially strong in terms of people.

PISCES
Feb. 19-Mar. 20
When was the last time you had an honest-to-goodness daydream? You know, the kind you used to have as a kid that were so engrossing and distracting that you didn't hear it when the teacher called on you?

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	11	16	drizzle
Harbin	-3	12	shower
Tianjin	11	17	drizzle
Urumqi	4	15	clear
Xi'an	12	19	drizzle
Lhasa	2	14	clear
Chengdu	13	18	overcast
Chongqing	15	20	drizzle
Kunming	12	26	clear
Nanjing	13	25	cloudy
Shanghai	12	20	overcast
Wuhan	13	19	drizzle
Hangzhou	10	24	cloudy
Taipei	17	23	cloudy
Guangzhou	17	28	cloudy
Hong Kong	20	25	clear
WORLD			
Moscow	-2	6	cloudy
Frankfurt	3	11	drizzle
Paris	5	10	clear
London	8	12	drizzle
New York	11	15	drizzle

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Gum; 6- Painter Rousseau; 11- Sailor; 14- Make amends; 15- Pungent bulb; 16- Feel bad about; 17- ___ de Leon; 18- Thaws; 19- Adj. modifier; 20- Antlered animal; 22- Beast of Borden; 24- Light-producing beetle; 28- Intoxicating liquor; 30- Ill will; 31- Playwright Clifford; 32- Fauvist painter Dufy; 33- Crescent-shaped pastry roll; 37- Hill dweller; 38- Swedish imports; 39- Armed conflict; 40- Penniless; 43- "The Family Circus" cartoonist Bil; 45- Busy; 46- Lure; 47- Having three unequal sides; 50- Voted into a seat; 51- Stopwatch-holder; 52- Nile wader; 53- ___ Maria; 54- Big brass; 57- Oozes; 62- Tease; 63- Icon; 64- Partner of each; 65- Nipper's co.; 66- Biblical brother; 67- Occupied;

DOWN: 1- Knock vigorously; 2- DDE's command; 3- Male offspring; 4- Business abbr.; 5- Necessary; 6- Cozy; 7- Cabinet dept.; 8- Goose egg; 9- Decay, waste away; 10- Six legged creatures; 11- Refuse; 12- Recording of acoustic signals; 13- Have a ball; 21- Overhead trains; 23- A pitcher may take one; 24- Capacitance unit; 25- Mindlessly stupid; 26- Mob scenes; 27- Large flightless bird; 28- Sun-dried brick; 29- Hula hoops?; 31- To talk, usually in a pompous manner; 33- Bring about; 34- Expect; 35- John ___ Garner; 36- Cornered; 38- Astound; 41- One with a glazed look, perhaps; 42- Sluggishness; 43- Parliament of Israel; 44- And so on; 46- Ivy Leaguer; 47- Fab Four name; 48- Honda model; 49- Low life?; 50- Clampett player; 52- Othello villain; 55- Actress Thurman; 56- Ingot; 58- Sister of Zsa Zsa; 59- A mouse!; 60- Historic beginning; 61- Equivalent wd.;



USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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



YOUR PROPERTY HERE

Call us for more info

jml 卓雅物業
property since 1994

(853) 2835 2699

hello@jmlproperty.com
www.jmlproperty.com

f jmlmacau @ jmlproperty

FOR SALE

Duplex in Central Macau
HK\$4,680,000 1,100 ft² 2 1 1

FOR RENT

One Central striking view
\$18,000/mth 1,301 ft² 2 1 2

Rain Dance Property
"We dance until it's RENTED!"

Manhattan E Unit, Taipa
\$17,500/mth 1,626 ft² 3 1 2



TASTE OF EDESIA

COMFORT FOOD À LA FRANÇAISE

IRENE SAM, MDT

THE wait for the reopening of one of the most traditional French restaurants in town is over. **Aux Beaux Arts**, the French brasserie of MGM MACAU, has returned. Reminiscent of an old-world establishment, the dining room is full of guests savouring French classics from the North of the country to the South, a gastronomic experience that comprises of fresh products, high quality ingredients, and the finest techniques.

Bringing back the traditions and heritage of French cooking complimented by innovative and contemporary savoir-faire, the menu begins with Aux Beaux Arts' rendition of the staple Southern French dish "Salade Niçoise" with confit fatty tuna belly and crisp greens, presenting flavours of the Mediterranean. The signature "Seafood Platter" features lobsters, oysters, king crabs, shrimps and other fresh seafood, delivers fresh-

ness from the sea straight to the table, and pairs nicely with a glass of champagne or white wine.

"Vol-au-Vent", a traditional French delicacy once served only to the royalty, is now a classic of cuisine bourgeoise. Inside the rounded fluffy case of puff pastry are foie gras, fresh lobster meat and seasonal greens, all soaked in a rich lobster sauce to bring out umami flavours from the land and the sea. The time-honoured classic Parisian "Steak Frites" with Bearnaise Sauce is recreated by combining perfectly grilled skirt steak, chosen for its lean cut with bursting flavours suitable for a French butchery standard, with homemade Bearnaise and French fries.

At the end of the meal, diners discover a sweet, buttery aroma from the showstopper "Crêpes Suzette", flambé table-side. These classic crêpes are coated in a warm, velvety caramel sauce and finished with a shower of citrus zesting.

Macau Racing Tips

By Davy Chiu, MDT



THE ANSHAN 1200 METRES TURF

2021-03-27|Sat|15:10

IT is a big day for racing this Saturday, with the Dubai World Cup on the agenda I wish my favourite horse **Midnight Sand** would run a big race on the night for our connection in there. Back to racing in MJC I would hope the same happens to KS Wong's horse **Gon Sai Baau**. He is very impressive in his morning works, as well as he is in consistent form in his last few races, there is no reason to doubt that he could not run well this Saturday. With the booking of L. Corrales; albeit the barrier draw in eight is not ideal but with a senior jockey's handling after the jump out from the gate, the outcome would be a better pay out on your investment. **Gon Sai Baau** is on the up and I believe he still has a few merit rating points edge in his class. Let's support him on Saturday.

Race 3 | Horse no.7 Gon Sai Baau Win & Place bets





Merab Ninidze (left) and Benedict Cumberbatch in a scene from "The Courier," a Lionsgate release

DRIVE IN

In 'The Courier,' Cumberbatch is an everyman spy

LINDSEY BAHR, MDT/AP
FILM WRITER

THE new Cold War film "The Courier" about a Soviet whistleblower and the British businessman who helped transport information to Western intelligence agencies is both based on real events and people and also is very much the product of a screenwriter's imagination. That's not to criticize the film written by Tom O'Connor ("The Hitman's Bodyguard") and directed by Dominic Cooke ("On Chesil Beach"). It's simply to say that it is more historical fiction than it is history. The whole truth of this extraordinary chapter has likely died with the principal characters and/or been obscured and distorted by the people who write these things down.

What we know is that there was indeed a Soviet official named Oleg Penkovsky, played in the film by Georgian actor Merab Ninidze, who was an essential source for the Americans during the Cold War and the leadup to the Cuban Missile Crisis. One of Penkovsky's contacts was a British civilian named Greville Wynne, who wrote an autobiography about his experiences. Even the reliability of that account has been questioned. Still, it provided an intriguing jumping off point for O'Connor to write a classic espionage thriller that opens in select theaters Friday.

In "The Courier," after Penkovsky makes an initial outreach to the West, MI6 and the CIA are at a loss for how to cultivate him as a source. They decide a civilian who might do business in the Soviet Union is the best bet and somewhat casually land on Wynne.

Cumberbatch, who we've

seen play suave, cruel and egotistical many times over the years, plays Wynne as an ordinary middle class schlub just trying to keep his family afloat and club memberships intact. He doesn't suspect he's dining with spies when his government friend Dickie (Angus Wright) and an American CIA agent, Emily (Rachel Brosnahan), sit down with him to recruit him into service. He reacts with a boyish giddiness as though it was Ian Fleming himself sitting across the table.

Emily is one of the inventions of the film. O'Connor has said he just decided to make the CIA agent a woman. It certainly breaks up the monotony of such a male cast and it's always a delight to see Brosnahan in 60s garb. But it also feels a little insincere to just insert women in specific historical settings where they weren't. It was also done with the Felicity Jones character in "The Aeronauts" and the effect is often the opposite of empowering. Since "The Courier" is so fictionalized, however, it's easier to accept here. Plus, she gets to be the more persuasive agent.

"The Courier" is a story we haven't seen on film but it still feels very familiar most of the time, with espionage film tropes and cliches to spare. While it might not be on the same level as "Bridge of Spies," it's solid, well-acted and enjoyable nonetheless. Just don't use it as the text for any history reports.

"The Courier," a Lionsgate/Roadside Attractions release in select theaters Friday, is rated PG-13 by the Motion Picture Association of America for "violence, partial nudity, brief strong language, and smoking throughout." Running time: 111 minutes. ★★★★★



EASTER BREAK AT SANDS® RESORTS MACAO



Snap out of the winter chills with warm breezy spring and Easter fun! It's the ideal time to enjoy a special selection of gourmet dishes with your friends and families across our resorts. Fans of dining alfresco will adore fresh air and blue sky at the authentic French garden Le Jardin, with a picnic feast including savoury treats, sweet delicacies and refreshing drinks. Champagne is also available for those craving a glass of fancy bubbly. Alongside the picturesque Eiffel Tower is an amazing backdrop for selfies that get you more Likes! Diners can also

feast on Brasserie French menus at The Parisian Macao, The Manor Luxe Lunch and set dinner at The St. Regis Macao, or savour multi-course Omakase at The Venetian Macao.



Elevate the long weekend to a truly unforgettable staycation, our luxury hotels will have you spoiled for choice. Unwind at The Venetian suite after a romantic

Gondola serenade, wake up to the Eiffel Tower at The Parisian, or soak in the Victorian-style bathtub at brand new all-suite The Londoner Hotel, with exclusive access to The Residence which provides an international buffet breakfast, afternoon tea, snacks throughout the day and evening cocktails, all complimentary.

Join us to create perfect springtime memories!



澳门金沙度假区
Sands
RESORTS MACAO

OPINION

World Views

Andy Mukherjee, MDT/Bloomberg



LET'S CUT CAPITALISM SOME SLACK

In the annals of 21st century capitalism, Covid-19 will go down as a pressure cooker. The pandemic has put enormous strains on livelihoods, individual well-being, healthcare systems, the viability of firms and the stability of public finances. But a byproduct of this stress is that when it's finally behind us, we might decompress a little — and choose to be less devoted to the notion of peak efficiency.

We aren't there yet, but a greater tolerance of intentional slack is being built into everything from how Toyota Motor Corp. manages its inventory and Amazon.com Inc. organizes its deliveries to how Singapore puts a price on nursing talent.

As the former Morgan Stanley strategist Gerard Minack noted last year, our pre-pandemic world was primed to maximize financial returns on the assumption that nothing would go wrong. But everything went topsy-turvy when the coronavirus entered offices, factories, subways, malls, airports and schools, the hubs and spokes of modern production, distribution and consumption.

A year later, governments and companies have learned some lessons, and unlearned others. After Toyota pioneered Just-In-Time inventory management in the 1950s, Detroit eventually copied it. The same Japanese carmaker, as my colleague Anjani Trivedi has noted, is beating the global auto industry's chip shortage with stockpiles of one to four months in critical components.

This is deliberate decompression, whose value will only increase as extreme weather events show up as disruptions, such as the water shortage in Taiwan afflicting semiconductor foundries. Besides, Covid-19 hasn't gone away yet. Amazon is making delivery partners out of tiny groceries and tailoring shops in India. It's not perhaps the most efficient distribution strategy. But with a second wave of infections hitting the country, enlisting locals to cover their neighborhoods may be the most effective way to beat lockdowns.

It isn't just the private sector that's changing. Economic compression supercharged affluent megapolises into ever-powerful talent magnets, but also polarized the workforce. The wages of those who do non-routine, manual work requiring in-person interaction don't reflect their value to society, especially in bad times. Take nurses. Eight years ago, a Singapore government white paper on population described nursing as a low-skilled job. Today the Asian city-state with a reputation for fiscal prudence is raising healthcare workers' salaries in public hospitals by as much as 14%. This bump is happening even as 30% of employers in the financial center aren't planning to increase pay at all.

A test of how far governments want to push the idea of depressurization will be the future tax deductibility of interest payment. Abolishing this century-old bias in favor of firms that take on more debt — and hence have more interest payments to set off against taxable profit — will reduce financial leverage in the global economy, attacking the source of our single-minded pursuit of efficiency.

The biggest champion of tightness, of allowing for no margin of error even in complex, geographically dispersed supply chains, is the investment community. Tensions in the U.S.-China economic relationship, and the rise of protectionism globally because of high unemployment, are already throwing sand in the wheels of capitalism. Should financiers be forced to permanently lower their expectations of returns? Perhaps not.

Rapid digitization, especially in emerging markets, will compensate for decompression. When assets can be juiced more with artificial intelligence and the internet of things, shareholders earn the same returns with less debt.

Since algorithms and connected robots won't pay taxes, it's only fair that private industry doesn't come to governments with a begging bowl after every new manmade or natural crisis. Capitalism in the 21st-century will self-insure by cutting itself some slack.

PHILIPPINE LEADER ORDERS MAYORS INVESTIGATED

The Philippine president has ordered at least nine city and town mayors investigated for possible charges after they reportedly jumped ahead of a priority list led by 1.7 million health workers and got injected with COVID-19 vaccine amid a shortage in supply.

President Rodrigo Duterte said in a televised meeting with key Cabinet members that aside from the mayors, the son of an actress also got immunized. He expressed fears that the Philippines may lose the chance to get more donated vaccines arranged by the World Health Organization if its conditions would continue to be violated.

"We were told by the WHO country representative, 'if you do not follow the list of priority, you might lose the assistance of the WHO,'" Duterte said. "It wasn't followed because I heard even the son of an actress got it. It's always the favored few."

Health Secretary Francisco Duque III reported to Duterte that just slightly more than 508,000 of a total 1.7 million doctors, nurses and other health workers have been immunized and added that only 1.5 million vaccine doses, all donated by China and the WHO, have arrived in the country so far.

THE BUZZ

AP PHOTO



UK COURT REJECTS DEPP BID TO APPEAL 'WIFE BEATER' RULING

A British court yesterday refused Johnny Depp permission to appeal a judge's ruling that he assaulted ex-wife Amber Heard, saying his attempt to overturn the decision had "no real prospect of success."

Two Court of Appeal judges said the Hollywood star cannot challenge the High Court's rejection of his libel lawsuit against publisher of The Sun newspaper for labeling him a "wife beater" in an article.

The justices, James Dingemans and Nicholas Underhill, said the earlier court hearing was "full and fair" and the trial judge's conclusions "have not been shown even arguably to be vitiated by any error of approach or mistake of law."

They concluded that "the appeal has no real prospect of success and that there is no other compelling reason for it to be heard."

High Court Justice Andrew Nicol ruled in November that allegations against Depp, made in a April 2018 article, were "substantially true." The judge ruled that Depp, 57, assaulted Heard, 34, on a dozen occasions and put her in fear for her life three times.

Lawyers for Depp argued at a court hearing last week that Depp hadn't received a fair hearing and that Heard was an unreliable witness. As evidence of her unreliability, they claimed that Heard hadn't kept her promise to donate her \$7 million divorce settlement to charity. The appeals judges said

it was "pure speculation, and in our view very unlikely" that the fate of the divorce money influenced judge Nicol's decision.

"It is clear from a reading of the judgment as a whole that the judge based his conclusions on each of the incidents on his extremely detailed review of the evidence specific to each incident," they said.

"In an approach of that kind there was little need or room for the judge to give weight to any general assessment of Ms. Heard's credibility."

Depp and Heard met on the set of the 2011 comedy "The Rum Diary" and married in Los Angeles in February 2015. Heard, a model and actress, filed for divorce the following year and obtained a restraining order against Depp on the grounds of domestic abuse. The divorce was finalized in 2017.

The High Court ruling came after a headline-grabbing three-week trial in July, in which Depp and Heard gave conflicting accounts of their brief, tempestuous marriage, with each accusing the other of being controlling, violent and deceitful.

During the trial Depp acknowledged wide-ranging drug problems, but accused Heard of making up abuse allegations and insisted he was "not a violent person, especially with women."

Heard's public relations firm said in a statement that she was "pleased - but

by no means surprised" by the Court of Appeal decision.

"Mr. Depp's claim of new and important evidence was nothing more than a press strategy, and has been soundly rejected by the court," the statement said.

Jeffrey Smele of law firm Simons Muirhead and Burton, which represented The Sun's publisher News Group Newspapers, said yesterday's ruling was "a victory for the freedom of the press and for victims of domestic violence everywhere."

Depp's lawyers have said that the allegations in The Sun caused "serious harm" to the actor's reputation and "significant distress and embarrassment." In the wake of the November court ruling, Depp said he was leaving the "Fantastic Beasts" film franchise after studio Warner Bros. requested his resignation.

Depp is also suing Heard for \$50 million in Virginia over a Washington Post op-ed essay that she wrote about domestic violence. The trial in that case was recently delayed until April 2022.

Depp's British lawyer, Joelle Rich of Schillings Partners, said "there are clear and objective reasons to seriously question the decision reached in the U.K. court."

"Mr. Depp looks forward to presenting the complete, irrefutable evidence of the truth in the U.S. libel case against Ms. Heard where she will have to provide full disclosure," Rich said. AP

AP PHOTO



EU leaders were set yesterday to provide new incentives to Turkey to improve cooperation on migration and trade despite democratic backsliding in the country and lingering concern about its energy exploration ambitions in the Mediterranean Sea. Diplomats said before the videoconference summit that the leaders will offer Turkey a "positive agenda" rather than brandish threats or sanctions.

AP PHOTO



Poland's government ordered stricter pandemic measures for the two-week period surrounding Easter, describing the new rules yesterday as an attempt to limit human contacts amid a deadly surge in the coronavirus pandemic. Details of the new restrictions — which include the closure of nursery schools, furniture stores and beauty salons — come as Poland registered a record for daily coronavirus cases for a second consecutive day.

AP PHOTO



Greece's celebrations for the bicentenary of the start of the nation's war of independence culminated in a military parade and warplane flyby in Athens yesterday, the country's Independence Day. The parade featured tanks rolling down the avenue in front of Parliament in the Greek capital and military aircraft flying past the ancient Acropolis. It also includes a mounted cavalry section and marching troops from the army, air force and navy as well as members of the police, fire department and coast guard.

Colombia Thousands of Venezuelans are seeking shelter in Colombia this week following clashes between Venezuela's military and a Colombian armed group in a community along the nations' shared border. The Colombian government said 3,100 people have moved from Venezuela to Colombia in search of protection from the conflict.