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CTMA 40th ANNIVERSARY

A WOMAN FILED A COMPLAINT WITH THE JUDICIARY POLICE CLAIMING TO HAVE LOST AROUND HKD3.7 MILLION ON AN ONLINE BETTING WEBSITE

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E-VOUCHER SCHEME KICKS OFF TODAY, 540,000 RESIDENTS REGISTERED

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CHINA FORCED BANKS TO HOLD MORE FOREIGN CURRENCIES IN RESERVE FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MORE THAN A DECADE, IN AN ATTEMPT TO REIN THE SURGING YUAN

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THREE-CHILD POLICY

China leadership lifts cap on births in major policy shift to counter the aging population

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Sri Lanka A special police team has begun investigating a fire on a ship anchored off its capital, as the government seeks to take legal action against the vessel's owners over the incident, which has caused severe marine pollution, officials said yesterday. The fire on the MV X-Press Pearl has been burning since May 20, ravaging the ship, which officials said is only about five months old. Firefighting tugboats continue to spray the vessel, with support from vessels from the Sri Lankan navy and Indian coast guard.

AP PHOTO



Nepal A Chinese climber who became the first blind Asian to scale Mount Everest says he aims to climb the highest peaks on all seven continents and then travel to the North and South Poles. Zhang Hong, 44, is also the third blind climber internationally to reach the world's highest peak. Following his guides and Sherpas, he reached the summit on May 24 and returned safely to Kathmandu.

AP PHOTO



Thailand was redoubling efforts to stop the spread of coronavirus in labor camps, factories and markets as the number of new reported cases surged yesterday to the highest level so far. A government spokesman said public health officials were meeting with labor and industry officials to discuss better ways to curb infections that are clustered in crowded, high-risk places.

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editorial

Paulo Coutinho



**THE TIMES
TURNS 14
AMIDST ANXIETY
AND FEAR**

WE enter our 14th anniversary with mixed feelings. On the one hand, we rejoice for such an achievement in a place and an era so full of historical news and events – here in this gaming town, in China and the world. On the other hand, we can't help but feel anxiety and fear well over one year into the Covid-19 pandemic, economic hardships and political upheavals.

Almost a year and a half after the new coronavirus was first discovered in Wuhan, its origins are still unknown and reason for controversy and discussion all over the world, especially between the U.S. and China. No conspiracy is fact until it is proven by science and investigators. This is a matter of intelligence and security as it is of health and science. But the investigators, especially those of the WHO, should be granted access to all the available evidence.

Another cause for alarm is the poor rate of vaccination in Asia – and that is causing constant setbacks in solving the health crisis for herd immunity is our only hope to end the pandemic. In Macau, in particular, it's a shame that we have achieved so little so far. The community at large shows little interest in the jabs because of the minimal cases of infection here and other non-sensical reasons. But the government's slow development of the vaccination program, making it more easily available, didn't help either. There are tens of thousands of jabs that will miserably be destroyed after they expire.

There is also fear in our industry following the TDM case of editorial interference and, in general, the growing sense of self-censorship fueled by politics of fear – in a time when the local press, published mostly by SMEs, is enduring major financial difficulties. Not only hundreds of jobs are at stake, the freedom of the press is, and so are our fundamental rights.

With the continuous support of our readers, advertisers, partners and friends that helped us reach this far, we shall overcome. Congratulations: It's your anniversary too.

COVID-19

GOV'T DEFENDS UNINTERRUPTED MOVEMENT WITH GUANGDONG

ANTHONY LAM

DIRECTOR of the Health Bureau (SSM), Alvis Lo, said that due to the more effective tracing of Covid-19 cases in Guangdong, Macau has decided to retain uninterrupted interactions with the province.

Lo's comments come following requests that he justify why entrants from Hong Kong and Guangdong are treated differently, as recent new cases have been recorded in Guangzhou, the provincial capital, as well as its nearby Foshan City.

The health official stressed that all control measures were decided upon and implemented based on scientific facts and proof. He recapped an earlier disclosure by his superintendent, Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture, Elsie Ao Ieong, that communications are constantly taking place between Macau and Hong Kong, and emphasized that seamless interactions between the two Special Administrative Regions may be possible.

However, he said, disease control measures in mainland China have been prompt and resilient. "For example, when a new case is spotted, mainland authorities can identify immediately that the



AP PHOTO

location is of mid-risk," Lo said, adding, "Furthermore, authorities can also cordon off a district and conduct district-wide PCR testing within a very short period of time."

In addition, he said, the epidemiological investigative ability of the mainland is "quite strong." He then pointed to the recently quarantined local who went to a tourist attraction in mainland China and was within three meters of a close contact to a recent Guangzhou patient as an illustrative example. Guangzhou now requires individuals to have negative PCR results issued within 72 hours in order to leave the

city. This is seen by the local health official as a "powerful" measure.

Last but not least, Lo noted that the Macau-Zhuhai collaborative prevention and control mechanism provides real-time data to both jurisdictions so that updates on measures can come punctually.

"When problems arise, we will put corresponding measures in place," Lo said. "It has precedents proving so."

Ao Ieong added that individuals who can enter Macau without quarantine are from low-risk areas, "Whether we're talking about Hong Kong or Macau."

RESIDENTS MAY BENEFIT FROM DSEDJ PLATFORM

As of 5pm yesterday, 1,700 individuals have filled out the Education and Youth Development Bureau online form to express their desire to return to Macau. Among these are 1,161 Macau students currently studying in Taiwan, 440 of whom have already bought flight tickets.

Recent data indicates that the peak time of return for Macau students in Taiwan falls during June and July, with 459 in the former month and 415 in the latter. Moreover, 539 Macau students studying in other places have also filled out the online form.

For the time being, the online form is only open to Macau students studying outside of the city; but future change has been hinted at.

Ao Ieong disclosed that the government is hoping to open the online form to other Macau residents who are not students, "Because we know there will be other non-student residents who want to get home during the summer holiday." Ao Ieong went on to note, "Therefore we need to make preparatory measures to inspect how we can handle their quarantine-upon-arrival and how they can return to Macau."

China re-imposes travel curbs on province after virus cases

CHINA yesterday re-imposed anti-coronavirus travel controls on its southern province of Guangdong, announcing anyone leaving the populous region must be tested for the virus following a spike in infections that has alarmed authorities.

Guangdong, which borders Macau and Hong Kong, recorded 20 new confirmed cases, all contracted locally, in the 24 hours through midnight Sun-

day. Guangdong's numbers are low compared with many places in the world, but the rise has rattled Chinese leaders who thought they had the disease under control.

People leaving Guangdong by plane, train, bus or private car after 10 p.m. yesterday must present results of a nucleic acid test within the past 72 hours, the provincial government announced. It said testing stations for truck dri-

vers would be set up on major roads.

The government of the provincial capital, Guangzhou, a business center of 15 million people, ordered mass testing after locally acquired infections were found beginning May 21. The government said 700,000 people had been tested through last Wednesday.

China had relaxed most restrictions on domestic travel after the ruling Communist

Party declared the virus under control last March. Travelers arriving from abroad still must be tested.

On Saturday, residents of one Guangzhou neighborhood were ordered to stay at home for door-to-door testing. In some areas, outdoor markets and child care facilities were closed and in-person grade school classes and indoor restaurant dining canceled.

China reports a handful of new cases every day but says almost all are believed to be people who were infected abroad. The mainland's official death toll stands at 4,636 out of 91,099 confirmed cases. **MDT/AP**

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Congratulations
on the 14th Anniversary
of Macau Daily Times

永利 永利

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

MOST PATIENTS WITH FEVER WILL BE TESTED FOR COVID-19 FROM TODAY

ANTHONY LAM

PATIENTS who have a fever, except those with whose ailment has an obvious cause not related to SARS-CoV-2, will be tested for Covid-19 when they seek medical assistance at the three largest local hospitals, the Conde de São Januário Hospital, the Kiang Wu Hospital and the University Hospital at the Macau University of Science and Technology, Alvis Lo, director of the Health Bureau (SSM), announced yesterday.

The health official did not explain why the private Yin Kui Hospital, which is located within a commercial building, is not included.

A polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test will be conducted on patients who present a fever, regardless of their travel history or their occupational risks.

Once a sample is collected from the patient, their Macau Health Code will immediately be changed to yellow, indicating



that they should practice self-health management and avoid crowded places. They will also be barred from entering resorts, hotels and casinos.

"They are suggested to stay home," Lo added.

If a negative Covid-19 result is returned, their Health Code will be changed to green.

At first, the health official

said that PCR test would be conducted on all patients who have a fever. Later, when he was asked to confirm this with particular reference to whether newborns and infants are included, he then clarified that there are spaces for exceptions, saying, "For example, if the patient is suffering an acute appendicitis, of which fever is a symptom, we will not conduct PCR test on this patient."

The new measure is in place as the health authority wants to identify potential Covid-19 patients as early as possible. Lo stressed that it aims at pick out those who may have a fever caused by SARS-CoV-2.

When asked whether non-Macau residents can acquire a Covid-19 vaccination in Macau, the medical doctor explained that if a non-Macau resident who is not a non-resident worker or a foreign student in Macau has stayed for more than three months in Macau across the preceding six months, they can receive the jab at their own expense.

GOV'T CLARIFIES 'FAKE NEWS' ON IVS SUSPENSION

Yesterday the government issued a statement to clarify a piece of old news about China's suspension of the Individual Visitor Scheme (IVS), a screen cap of which has been circulating online.

On Sunday evening, some social media users made an effort to clarify the content, saying that the screen cap was from a news report posted on January 28, 2020, during the period when the outbreak intensified across mainland China.

The clarification from the Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Center was similar to social media users' clarification, offering identical dates and content about the news item.

However, the center emphasized the collaborative prevention and control mechanism set up by both Macau and Guangdong Province. It explained that, given the interactions between the two places are so dynamic, any change to the existing immigration measures will be announced immediately.

Similar to most government clarifications, the center also warned that any individual disseminating false information would be subject to criminal prosecutions. Such information, it stressed, can invoke social confusion and emotional disturbance.

AD

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GREAT TIMES

MGM COTAI
Lion Mask Painting Workshop

RAWR! Calling for all the little artists to unleash their endless talent and creativity! To resonate with the innovative ethnic dance drama "MGM Awakening Lion" Dance Drama Residency Show, 'M Art at MGM COTAI has specially introduced the Lion Mask Painting Workshop to showcase the culture of Lingnan through contemporary art.



During the fun-filled workshop, our little artists will learn about the cultural allusions of the eastern and western lions, follow by a series of interesting stories related to the history of the ancient China. There are two types of lion masks for the children to paint with, one is a modern and lovely lion from the west and the other one is a traditional Chinese Mascot.



Lion is regarded as a symbol of courage, bravery, royalty, and chivalry in both eastern and western cultures. This majestic and powerful animal has appeared in art form and other sacred places in China throughout the centuries and people believed that lions protect humans from evil spirit and have worshiped them as a Chinese Mascot which brings fortune to people.



This creative workshop is perfect for budding little artist of all ages. Each color used on the mask represents different Chinese culture. By using the colorful paints and different painting tools, children can create the wild and wonderful lion masks with references to the culture of the East and the West.

Let's put the mask on and have fun mimicking the Mighty Lion at 'M Art, located at the brand-new location at Lion Lobby at MGM COTAI!



For more details, please visit mgm.mo

CRIME

LOCAL WOMAN CLAIMS LOSS OF HKD3.7M ON ONLINE BETTING SCHEME

RENATO MARQUES

A 27-year-old local woman has filed a complaint to the Judiciary Police (PJ) claiming to have lost a sum of around HKD3.7 million on an online betting website, a PJ spokesperson informed yesterday.

According to the complaint filed with the PJ, the case dates back to October last year, when the woman met an individual claiming to be a man via an online communication platform. The man introduced her to the online betting platform, claiming to be a user himself and saying that she could win a large amount there.

Following the man's instructions, the woman opened an account and transferred HKD3,000 to the account of a banking institution in Hong Kong.

She then started to use the betting platform with initial success, which led her to increasing the amounts she bet on the platform.

According to the report, between January this year until the end of March, she invested a total of around HKD2 million in the online platform, from which, including winnings, she had a balance of HKD3,707,000.

In late March, an alleged staff member from the on-



line betting website contacted her, noting that the page was going change its name, but all accounts and earnings would be auto-

matically transferred to the new platform.

She began to have concerns about the platform and contacted the same

staff, requesting to withdraw the money.

At that time, the alleged staff member requested that she pay several fees, which they claimed were deposits, taxes, and commissions, among others, for her to be able to withdraw the money. This led her to suspect that she had been involved in a scam.

On May 18, she finally decided to report to the PJ, as she learned that the online betting platform had been closed and the website did not exist anymore.

This case is still under investigation.

MAN SCAMS ILLEGAL CURRENCY EXCHANGER OUT OF HKD750,000

A 28-year-old man from the mainland is being accused of scamming another man, also from the mainland, out of a total amount of HKD742,700, the Judiciary Police informed yesterday during the regular press conference of the police forces.

The case occurred on May 27 when the casino-goer approached the victim, wanting to exchange RMB262,000 for HKD300,000 to gamble at a casino in Cotai.

The victim accepted, and the suspect handed over RMB6,000 but then claimed he did not have enough money at the time. He promised to transfer the cash later that day, saying that a friend had money.

Since the victim had known the gambler for a long time and had made several exchanges with him in the past, he trusted him and gave him HKD300,000.

Later, after losing the HKD300,000 at casino tables, the suspect returned to the victim asking for more money – this time, requesting HKD450,000.

He then also gambled away that money, and was unable to repay the debt as promised, prompting the victim to press charges against him.

The illegal currency exchanger claims to have lost a total of HKD742,700. The suspect has been presented to the Public Prosecutions Office on May 29 and is accused of aggravated fraud. **RM**

CRIME

University student duped by phone scam involving pandemic fake news

RENATO MARQUES

A 22-year-old non-resident worker, studying at a higher education institution in Macau has been targeted by a phone scam, the Judiciary Police (PJ) reported.

According to the PJ, although the phone scam followed the same modus operandi of previous scams, this case had a particular twist as the scammers, pretending to police officers from the mainland,

used the initial pretext of contacting the student due to an alleged SMS sent via a mobile registered under her name that contained false information about the pandemic.

According to the victim's report, the call came from a blocked number. The caller claimed to be an officer and said that an SMS had apparently been sent from a number registered to her name, which contained false information about the pandemic develop-

ment. He noted that sending such a message was a punishable crime under the mainland laws.

That person noted that the police suspected it was not the student sending the SMS but someone who used her name to register a mobile phone, and asked if she wanted to file a complaint against whoever it was.

She immediately accepted the offer, and her call was forwarded to a second man who also claimed to

be an officer and asked her to provide all her personal information.

This second person subsequently claimed that she was involved in a financial crime and that to prove her innocence, she needed to deposit RMB58,000 in a nominated bank account.

After she transferred the money, she mentioned the case to her university colleagues, and they informed her that it was likely to be a scam, prompting her to file a case with the PJ.

CONGRATULATIONS ON
THE 14TH ANNIVERSARY OF
MACAU DAILY TIMES



INTIMIDATION OF HK JUDGES MUST BE PUNISHED SEVERELY: CHINA SPOKESPERSON FOR SARs

A spokesperson for the Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office of the State Council on Sunday denounced the recent intimidation against a judge in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), saying the lawless acts must be punished severely.

After handing down sentences on Jimmy Lai and nine other defendants who were convicted of organizing and inciting others to participate in an illegal assembly, the office of the judge in charge received phone calls that threatened to harm her and her family.

Such intolerable acts have posed a serious threat to the personal security of judges, blatantly flouted the HKSAR's judicial system, and violated the SAR's criminal code, as well as the Law of the People's Republic of China on Safeguarding National Security in the HKSAR, the spokesperson said.



Zhang Xiaoming, deputy director of the Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office of the State Council

The spokesperson stressed the importance of verdicts delivered by many HKSAR judges in relation to illegal acts that took place during the disturbance over proposed legislative amendments in Hong Kong, saying they have significantly safeguarded the authority of the law and boosted the confidence of Hong Kong residents and the international community in the rule of law in the SAR.

However, a few anti-China individuals seeking to destabilize Hong Kong have perpetrated a number of assaults, smears and acts of intimidation against these judges, and have attempted to impede the impartial delivery of justice, a matter that should be resolutely tackled, the spokesperson said.

The spokesperson emphasized that the rule of law is the cornerstone of Hong Kong's long-term prosperity

and stability, which is safeguarded by the judges.

The central government firmly supports the HKSAR's judges in impartially administering justice in accordance with the Constitution, the Basic Law and the national security law in the HKSAR, and supports efforts by the HKSAR to bring to justice those criminals whose acts infringe upon the safety and dignity of judges, the spokesperson added. **MDT/XINHUA**

COVID-19 BNU ANNOUNCES VACCINATION INCENTIVE SCHEME

BNU is launching an internal program today to encourage bank employees to take the Covid19 vaccine, providing a varied set of benefits for those who are fully vaccinated with the two doses by the end of September 2021.

In a statement, the Portuguese bank noted that the goal is to "join forces with Macau Government to create a group immunity in Macau and make vaccination a priority for all the employees of the bank."

BNU has already coordinated with the Health Bureau (SSM) so that on June 4, a relevant group of employees of the bank will attend an educational seminar about Covid-19 and the importance of vaccination, presented by a SSM representative.

In addition, all employees who are vaccinated with the two jobs by the end of September this year will be entitled to two extra days of vacation.

"And if a certain minimum number of fully vaccinated employees is reached, there will also be a raffle of various prizes, such as attractive uncut banknotes, cash coupons of different amounts to enjoy at a selected Macau Resort, commemorative banknotes and many other prizes, which will cost the bank nearly MOP1 million," the bank stated. **LV**

AD

"Success is the sum of small efforts - repeated day in and day out." - Robert Collier

WE WISH THE MACAU DAILY TIMES CARRY ON ITS SUCCESS.

HAPPY 4th ANNIVERSARY

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MELCO

IAM URGES HIKERS TO NOT DAMAGE DISTANCE POSTS

The Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) calls on the public to not damage the panels of distance posts in hill forests. During recent inspections, IAM found that multiple panels of distance posts had been damaged, as cited in a statement. The bureau said that it has established distance posts with panels that carry geographic information along the walking trails in hill forests. They serve as supplementary location facilities to safeguard the safety of hikers. IAM urges hikers not to damage them to avoid losing their rescue function.

IC CALLS FOR 'HUSH! 300 SECONDS' PARTICIPANTS

The "hush! Full Music Summer Concert" will be held from June 26 to July 11 in different districts across the city, featuring music performances, music workshops, local booths and art installation. A short video competition will be launched this year titled "hush! 300 Seconds," which provides the public an online platform public to showcase their musical talent, according to the Cultural Affairs Bureau. All interested parties may submit the application forms together with a video of their own music or vocal performance from June 7.

THIRD STIMULUS

E-VOUCHER SCHEME KICKS OFF TODAY, 540,000 RESIDENTS REGISTERED

RENATO MARQUES

THE third round of economic stimulus, distributed through electronic consumption kicks off today. From June 1 until December 31, residents will be able to enjoy a total subsidized sum of MOP8,000 for a variety of purchases made via electronic payment.

As of yesterday, 540,000 residents have registered to receive the government subsidy. For 405,000 of those, the benefit has already been confirmed and is ready to use from today.

The consumer benefit package includes an initial amount of 5,000 patacas and an extra amount of 3,000 patacas for an immediate and automatic 25% discount.

This means that while the discount balance remains, residents are able to use up to 400 patacas (300 from the initial and 100 from the discount balance) per day.

According to the entities responsible for the plan, the Economic and Technological Develop-

MACAU PHOTO AGENCY



ment Bureau (DSED) and the Monetary Authority of Macao (AMCM), a total of 237,000 residents have opted to receive the benefits via one of the eight available mobile payment platforms, while some 303,000 preferred to continue to use the method used for the first two rounds, the electronic consumption card.

The DSED and AMCM also reminded the public that the benefits package is used simul-

taneously and users cannot control when to use or not use the discount balance.

"When making a purchase, 25% of the transaction amount (that is, the 25% discount) will be deducted from the 'discount' balance, and the remaining 75% will be deducted from the 'initial' balance," as stressed by the bureaus in a joint statement. The same entities also clarified that in cases where residents

have used the entire initial balance of 5,000 patacas but still have funds on the discount balance, they can reload money to continue to enjoy the 25% discount balance.

Residents who have chosen to receive the benefits through the consumer card can reload the card when the initial balance reaches 10 patacas or below.

Balances will be displayed at all times on receipts after any payment and can also be checked on the mobile payment applications, and on an exclusively dedicated webpage for the consumption cards.

Aiming for a smooth start to the plan, the AMCM has had meetings with the banks and entities responsible for the payment apps to ensure that they are prepared, in order to support a stable and steady system and avoid any problems during the use of the benefits.

The AMCM also noted that these payment platforms have conducted several tests in the last few days ahead of the plan's commencement.

AD

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MACAU DAILY TIMES ON
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MERCHANDISE EXPORT, IMPORT SURGE IN APRIL

THE city's total merchandise export amounted to MOP1.06 billion in April 2021, up 71.9% year-on-year, according to the latest data from the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC).

The latest DSEC report indicated that the value of re-exports rose by 70.2% to MOP906 million patacas in April, with that of watches; wine; and diamonds and diamond jewelry surging by 505.7%, 377.4% and 118.5% respectively.

Meanwhile, the value of domestic exports grew by 82.4% to MOP154 million.

From January to April this year, the total value of merchandise export increased by 24.8% year-on-year to MOP4.52 billion, of which the value of re-exports (MOP3.94 billion) and domestic exports (MOP579 million) rose by 24.1% and 29.2% respectively. The total value of merchandise imports expanded by 116.6% year-on-year to MOP43.43 billion.



Merchandise trade deficit totalled MOP38.91 billion for the first four months of 2021, up by MOP22.48 billion from MOP16.43 billion a year earlier.

In April alone, merchandise imports swelled by 265.7% year-on-year to MOP13.74 billion.

DSEC said that the imports of gold jewelry, perfumes, handbags and wallets, and beauty, cosmetic and skin-

care products rocketed by 4,814%, 1,395.1%, 1,165.5% and 1,137.4% respectively, whereas that of other made-up textile articles declined by 56.2%.

The merchandise trade deficit in April totalled MOP12.68 billion.

From January to April this year, the total value of merchandise imports expanded by 116.6% year-on-year to MOP43.43 billion. **LV**

AP PHOTO



CROSS-BORDER VEHICULAR TRAFFIC SOARED 730% IN APRIL

IN the first four months of 2021, cross-border vehicular traffic (1,430,457 trips) and gross weight of containerized cargo by land (8,489 tonnes) increased by 76.3% and 17.2% year-on-year respectively.

According to the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC), cross-border vehicular traffic in April soared by 733.7% year-on-year to 381,069 trips, attributable to a boost of 1,499.8% in light automobile trips (352,556).

Also, from January to April, the number of arriving and departing commercial flights fell by 51.1% year-on-year to 4,193 trips, while air cargo rose by 58.8% to 12,572 tonnes.

Arriving and departing commercial flights totalled 1,418 trips in April, an upsurge of 775.3% year-on-year.

DSEC also indicated that licensed motor vehicles in Macau totalled 244,327 as at end-April 2021, up by 1.9% year-on-year. In the first four months of 2021, new registration of motor vehicles increased by 40.7% year-on-year to 4,477. Number of traffic accidents in April totalled 1,022, with 377 persons injured. In the first four months of 2021, there were 4,097 traffic accidents, which caused 1,394 injuries.

Meanwhile, internet subscribers in April rose by 5.7% year-on-year to 641,810. Total duration of internet usage in April went up by 1.6% year-on-year to 138 million hours, whereas the duration in the first four months of 2021 dropped by 1.1% to 534 million hours. **LV**

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MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

China's manufacturing holds steady, rebound leveling off

CHINA'S manufacturing held steady in May, a survey showed yesterday, adding to signs a post-pandemic rebound is leveling off.

A monthly purchasing managers' index issued by an industry group and the national statistics agency stood at 51 on a 50-point scale on which numbers above 50 show activity increasing. That was little-changed from April's 51.1.

Measures of production and imports rose while new orders and employment declined, according to the China Federation of Logistics & Purchasing and the National Bureau of Statistics.

That indicated "market demand is insufficient," economist Zhang Liqun said in a statement released by the Federation.

Chinese manufacturers benefited from the relatively early reopening of the economy

in 2020, while exporters got a boost from global demand for masks and other medical supplies. They have gained global market share while foreign competitors still face anti-disease restrictions on business.

China's economic growth surged to 18.3% over a year earlier in the first three months of 2021 as consumer and factory activity revived. But forecasters warned the explosive rebound was ending because the gain compared with the previous quarter at the end of 2020 was just 0.6%.

Consumer spending is back above pre-pandemic levels but has recovered more slowly than manufacturing and exports.

"Now that the economy is already above its pre-virus trend, we think the pace of growth will wane this year," said Julian Evans-Pritchard of Capital Economics in a report. **MDT/AP**

Beijing takes its most visible measure yet to curb yuan's gain

CHINA forced banks to hold more foreign currencies in reserve for the first time in more than a decade, its most substantial move yet to rein the surging yuan.

The nation's financial institutions will need to hold 7% of their foreign exchange in reserve from June 15, according to a central bank statement yesterday. That's an increase of 2 percentage points, and the first such hike since 2007. The move, which the People's Bank of China said will help liquidity management, effectively reduces the supply of dollars and other currencies onshore - putting pressure on the yuan to weaken. The Chinese currency fell 0.2% at 5:42 p.m. in Hong Kong yesterday.

Although analysts said the direct impact may be small, the move is the clearest signal by the PBOC that it's unhappy about



the yuan's surge to a three-year high against the greenback. Authorities had until now limited their response to rhetoric: a former central bank official and a state-media commentary talked down the currency over the weekend.

"The PBOC wants to show the

market - if the rally keeps going, it has many measures to slow it down and the market will fail if it wants to make speculative bets," said Zhou Hao, an economist at Commerzbank AG in Singapore.

Betting on the yuan has been a successful strategy in the past year. **MDT/BLOOMBERG**

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Lan Kwai Fong nightlife area in Hong Kong

Hong Kong turns to businesses to fix foundering vaccine push

IAIN MARLOW, CHLOE LO & FELIX TAM

WHEN bar and nightclub owners in Hong Kong met with city officials this month, they expected to hear how the government planned to coax more of the largely resistant population to get vaccinated, with their businesses only allowed to open to inoculated people.

Instead, officials turned the tables - asking them what they were going to do to help boost one of the slowest Covid-19 vaccine takeups among global cities.

"They only asked us if we have any ideas or plans to boost the vaccination rate," said Liu Wai, who represents the industry as chairman of the Federation of Hong Kong and Kowloon Ballroom and Nightclub Merchants. A fifth of nightclubs have closed down in the five months of closure and the rest are only getting 10% of regular revenue after re-opening, he said, making them desperate to see immunization rise.

Carrie Lam's administration is increasingly leaning on local businesses and institutions to help get people vaccinated, as her Beijing-backed government struggles to convince reluctant residents in an atmosphere of mistrust following widespread anti-China protests in 2019. Major companies, restaurants, and even colleges have started offering cash payouts, extra time off, even the chance to win a \$1.4 million apartment.

"Government officials haven't been able to find a way of enga-

ging with the community to build momentum for vaccination," said Karen Grépin, an associate professor at the University of Hong Kong's School of Public Health. "That's where they've faltered. But it's also really challenging for them to lead on it, from a political perspective. It doesn't mean they should give up. They should find ways. But it means working through more trusted agents."

More businesses and institutions are coming to the fore. Last week, the city's international airport announced it would give away 60,000 flight tickets to people who got vaccinated before a September deadline. The Hong Kong Jockey Club, which runs racecourses and betting facilities, has offered up to three paid special leave days and additional insurance coverage for employees who get their shots.

Even regulators are getting involved. The Hong Kong Monetary Authority urged banks to give two days paid vaccination leave to their employees, local newspaper Apple Daily reported yesterday. The HKMA, which declining to comment specifically on the talks, confirmed that it made the request to facilitate immunizations.

Hong Kong developers Chinese Estates Holdings Ltd. and Sino Group's philanthropic arm Ng Teng Fong Charitable Foundation are also giving out a brand-new HK\$10.8 million (\$1.4 million) apartment to residents who have been vaccinated.

Vaccine appointments surged to the highest in three weeks after the apartment lottery was annou-

nced, with some 17,700 people reserving slots for the BioNTech SE shot on Saturday, while another 10,500 booked appointments for Chinese maker Sinovac Biotech Ltd.

Hongkong and Shanghai Hotels Ltd., which runs the city's historic Peninsula Hotel, has offered its 1,500 Hong Kong-based employees HK\$2,000 to get inoculated, and an additional HK\$2,000 if it's able to vaccinate 70% of its local workers.

Local colleges are also taking steps to encourage shots, with the Chinese University of Hong Kong requiring students staying in dormitories to get vaccinated, or else pay for their own Covid tests every two weeks.

As many places around the world scramble for more vaccines, Hong Kong's government is in the unique position of having hundreds of thousands of unused doses of the mRNA vaccine developed by BioNTech SE and Pfizer Inc. set to expire. If the vaccination rate doesn't climb, the city risks being left behind as some other global hubs resume meetings and travel.

The government has tried to make vaccines more convenient, even allowing businesses to schedule on-site vaccination sessions. In mid-May, Deloitte announced 170 staff were inoculated at one such session.

Just 13.4% of Hong Kong residents have been fully inoculated despite being one of the few places in the world where Covid shots are available to all adults, according to Bloomberg's Vaccine Tracker. That's well below other

finance centers including Singapore, at 28.3%, and London, at 28.6%.

Leader Lam, who has long brushed off suggestions to offer residents cash or similar incentives, argued last week that her government had already done its job by buying enough vaccines and making them freely available.

"We hope that economic incentives can be provided by institutions or employers," she said. "For the government, we will focus on the policy side."

'CAN'T SURVIVE'

But some business-owners and experts argue that the government's reluctance to take concrete measures -- such as relaxing mask mandates or traveler quarantine requirements of 14 to 21 days -- dilute private efforts, and in some cases contradict them.

David Webb, a prominent Hong Kong investor and corporate governance activist, mocked the airport's offer of free flights for vaccinated people on Twitter last week, noting that anyone who won a ticket would still need to shell out for quarantine. Hong Kong requires all inbound travelers to quarantine in hotels, even if they have homes in the city.

"Get vaccinated, win a chance to pay for 2 or 3 weeks hotel quarantine when you return?" Webb wrote. "Hardly a compelling offer from this state-owned enterprise."

These moves to restore freedoms for vaccinated people are increasingly being undertaken worldwide. U.S. and South Korea have both lifted outdoor mask

mandates for vaccinated people, while the European Union has said it will welcome vaccinated Americans as tourists this summer without quarantine requirements.

The Hong Kong government says it can't use such incentives because of the low protection rate among the population, and the risk of new variants spreading - though South Korea's vaccination rate is currently lower than the former British colony's. On Friday, city officials said they would allow quarantine exemptions for a small number of senior bankers traveling for business.

"If we can't have a vaccination rate of about 70%, I don't think we can relax substantially on traveling, on masking, on all the social distancing measures. We'll be left behind," said Lam Ching Choi, a medical doctor and member of the Executive Council that advises Carrie Lam.

Hong Kong's complex relationship with mainland China, which wants the city to stamp out local transmission before it'll reopen the economically vital border, is also driving officials' conservative stance.

Like a handful of other Covid havens in the Asia-Pacific region that have brought local cases down to zero, the city risks being left behind in its bid to keep out all infections, especially as other economies accept that Covid-19 is endemic, and move on.

That's frustrated people who say that despite being fully inoculated, they've still been subjected to overly harsh restrictions. For others who haven't yet gotten their shots, the lack of easing has raised questions about why they should bother.

"You can't survive like this when there's zero business," said Chin Chun-wing, Chairman of the Hong Kong Bar and Club Association. "No one will get vaccinated just to have a drink." **MDT/AP**

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DOWN UNDER LEADERS MINIMIZE CHINA SPILT, URGE VIRUS PROBE

NICK PERRY, WELLINGTON

THE leaders of New Zealand and Australia downplayed their differences over China and urged more investigation into the origins of the coronavirus yesterday after their first face-to-face meeting in more than a year.

The two leaders also indicated an Australian-born mass murderer would remain imprisoned in New Zealand.

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison met with his New Zealand counterpart Jacinda Ardern in the tourist resort of Queenstown. Morrison was the first major world leader to visit New Zealand since both countries closed their borders last year to contain the virus.

Australia has taken a hard stance against China in recent years and the relationship between the nations has deteriorated. New Zealand has opted for a more diplomatic approach at times, which some say is too soft.

But Morrison said he and Ardern had similar philosophies.

"Australia and New Zealand are trading nations," Morrison said. "But neither of us would ever trade our sovereignty or trade our values. We have stood side-by-



Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison (left) and New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern prior to talks in Queenstown yesterday

de to defend and protect and promote these values. Not just on the beaches of Gallipoli but in Afghanistan and so many other places around the world."

Ardern said New Zealand maintained a strong and principled stance with China on human rights and trade, and its positions were very similar to Australia's.

She said New Zealand remained a committed member of the

Five Eyes intelligence-sharing alliance with Australia, the U.S., Britain and Canada.

"That is not in question, not in doubt," she said.

Morrison said Australia worked closely with New Zealand in the Five Eyes partnership and many other international forums.

"I think as great partners, friends, allies, indeed family, there will be those far from here who

would seek to divide us," Morrison said. "And they will not succeed."

Morrison said it was self-evident there was increased strategic competition between the U.S. and China but that didn't need to lead to conflict.

Both leaders said they hoped the World Health Organization would continue its investigation into the origins of the pandemic.

"It's got nothing to do with global politics," Morrison said. "This has nothing to do with anything other than ensuring that the global pandemic, which has caused such havoc around the world, stealing lives and livelihoods, that we understand how this occurred so we can do everything we possibly can to ensure that it does not happen again."

New Zealand and Australia opened a quarantine-free travel bubble last month, allowing Morrison's visit to take place. Both leaders said the next logical step in the gradual reopening of their borders would be to expand the bubble to include some other South Pacific island nations.

The two leaders also indicated that Australian white supremacist Brenton Tarrant, who two years ago slaughtered 51 worshippers at two Christchurch mosques, would continue serving his sentence of life without parole in New Zealand.

Ardern said the guidance on where the terrorist should be imprisoned needed to come from survivors and loved ones, and the informal feedback she'd received from them was in favor of him staying in New Zealand.

"And I understand that," Ardern said. "There's something about the proximity in ensuring that the sentence that was handed down is served."

Morrison said he, too, wanted to respect the wishes and interests of those affected. **MDT/AP**

YANG HENGJUN

Writer urges Chinese judge to reject torture-tainted evidence

A Chinese Australian writer tried in Beijing for alleged espionage said he pleaded to a judge to reject evidence of what he had said while being tortured by interrogators.

Yang Hengjun faced a closed trial last Thursday and the court deferred its verdict to a later date.

The Australian government on Friday labeled his incarceration since he arrived in China in January 2019 arbitrary detention.

The Associated Press yesterday saw the crime novelist and blogger's account of the legal proceedings circulated among his supporters over the weekend.

Yang said he had a meeting with his trial judge three days before his one-day trial. The judge refused his request to submit evidence and call witnesses during the trial, but

agreed to include almost 100 pages of defense documents in his case file.

"I made a plea to the judge to exclude my interrogation records from the court proceedings," Yang said.

"It's illegal. Torture. They had hidden camera records," Yang added.

Yang does not say how the judge responded to his request.

Chinese Criminal Procedure Law prohibits confessions forced by torture or threats.

The prosecution case, "according to legal facts, is groundless," Yang said.

Yang said he was "tired and confused" during the hearing and "didn't have the spirit to speak enough."

He estimated he spoke for less than five minutes in his own defense, but said the hearing "gave me a sen-

se that things are OK."

"The interrogations I had been subjected to, where I was told I had to confess, and the treatment I received for the first one-and-a-half years was (sic) much worse," Yang said.

Chinese authorities have not released any details of the charges against Yang, who reportedly formerly worked for China's Ministry of State Security as an intelligence agent.

Yang told his supporters at the weekend: "I served China when I was young, even secretly."

Yang has denied the accusation against him, and while a conviction is virtually certain, it isn't clear when the verdict will be handed down. The espionage charge carries penalties ranging from three years in prison to the death penalty. **MDT/AP**

HONG KONG

TIANANMEN CRACKDOWN EXHIBIT OPENS

THE organizer of Hong Kong's annual Tiananmen Square candlelight vigil has opened its yearly exhibit of photographs and paraphernalia from the bloody 1989 crackdown in Beijing on those calling for democracy in China.

The opening comes even as Hong Kong authorities have for the second year in a row banned the annual June 4 vigil, which normally draws tens of thousands of people into the streets. Authorities have cited the risk of the coronavirus, though the cancellation coincides with a broader crackdown on political activism and dissent in the city.

Organized by the The Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China,



the museum each year shows photographs from the 1989 democracy movement as well as pictures from past candlelight commemorations in Hong Kong.

This year, visitors to the museum will also be able to lay flowers in remembrance of the victims who lost their lives in the mass-

acre that took place on June 4, 1989.

For decades, the semi-autonomous Chinese cities of Hong Kong and Macau were the only places in China where public commemoration of the crackdown was allowed. Authorities in Macau have also canceled their vigil for a second year. **MDT/AP**

CHINA's ruling Communist Party said yesterday it will ease birth limits to allow all couples to have three children instead of two in hopes of slowing the rapid aging of its population, which is adding to strains on the economy and society.

The ruling party has enforced birth limits since 1980 to restrain population growth but worries the number of working-age people is falling too fast while the share over age 65 is rising. That threatens to disrupt its ambitions to transform China into a prosperous consumer society and global technology leader.

A ruling party meeting led by President Xi Jinping decided to introduce "measures to actively deal with the aging population," the official Xinhua News Agency said. It said they agreed that "implementing the policy of one couple can have three children and supporting measures are conducive to improving China's population structure."

Leaders also agreed China needs to raise its retirement age to keep more people in the workforce and improve pension and health services, Xinhua said.

Restrictions that limited most couples to one child were eased in 2015 to allow two, but the total number of births fell further, suggesting rule changes on their own have had little impact on the trend.

Couples say they are put off by high costs of raising a child, disruption to their jobs and the need to look after elderly parents.

China, along with Thailand and some other Asian economies, face what economists call the challenge of whether they can get rich before they get old.

The Chinese population of 1.4 billion already was expected to peak later this decade and start to decline. Census data released May 11 suggest that is happening faster than expected, adding to burdens on underfunded pension and health systems and cutting the number of future workers available to support a



AP PHOTO

DEMOGRAPHICS

Party easing birth limits further to cope with aging society

growing retiree group.

The share of working-age people 15 to 59 in the population fell to 63.3% last year from 70.1% a decade earlier. The group aged 65 and older grew to 13.5% from 8.9%.

The 12 million births reported last year was down nearly one-fifth from 2019.

About 40% were second children, down from 50% in 2017, according to Ning Jizhe, a statistics official who announced the data on May 11.

A ruling party meeting led by President Xi decided to introduce 'measures to actively deal with the aging population'

Chinese researchers and the labor ministry say the share of working-age people might fall to half the population by 2050. That increases the "dependency ratio," or the number of retirees who rely on each worker to generate income for pension funds and to pay taxes for health and other public services.

Leaders at yesterday's meeting agreed it is "necessary to steadily implement the gradual postponement of the legal retire-

ment age," Xinhua said.

It gave no details, but the government has been debating raising the official retirement ages of 60 for men, 55 for white-collar female workers and 50 for blue-collar female workers.

The potential change is politically fraught. Female professionals welcome a chance to stay in satisfying careers, but others whose bodies are worn out from decades of manual labor resent being required to work longer.

The fertility rate, or the average number of births per mother, stood at 1.3 in 2020, well below the 2.1 that would maintain the size of the population.

China's birth rate, paralleling trends in other Asian economies, already was falling before the one-child rule. The average number of children per Chinese mother tumbled from above six in the 1960s to below three by 1980, according to the World Bank.

Demographers say official birth limits concealed what would have been a further fall in the number of children per family without the restrictions.

The ruling party says it prevented as many as 400 million potential births, averting shortages of

food and water. But demographers say if China followed trends in Thailand, parts of India and

other countries, the number of additional babies might have been as low as a few million. MDT/AP

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SINGAPORE

CITY-STATE PLEDGES REOPENING AS MASS VACCINATION SPEEDS UP

PHILIP J. HEIJMANS
& FARIS MOKHTAR

SINGAPORE pledged it would not be left behind as developed economies reopen, marking an intention to shift away from the strict containment approach that's helped some Asian places eliminate the virus, but which leaves them increasingly isolated.

The country wouldn't be stuck in a Covid-19 malaise, and tourists will be welcomed, people can go for sports events, even ditch wearing a mask outdoors, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong told the nation in an address yesterday. As part of its strategy to reopen, school kids would be inoculated next month, and every adult who wants a shot would have one by early August.

"In this new normal, the countries which are united, disciplined and put in place sensible safeguards, will be able to re-open their economies, re-connect to the rest of the world, grow and prosper," Lee said. "Singapore will be among these countries."

The speech comes as Singapore faces growing pressure to chart a path to normalization and revive its trade-reliant economy. It's one of a handful of Covid havens that have succeeded in limiting local transmission, though that success risks becoming a straightjacket as officials impose aggressive restrictions to try to stamp out every small flareup. These places, which include Hong Kong, mainland China, New Zealand and Australia risk being left behind as other economies accept that Covid-19 is endemic and move on.



Lee said that the city-state would eventually become more tolerant to infections and accept that the coronavirus is here to stay.

"In this new normal, we will have to learn to carry on with our lives even with the virus in our midst," he said. "As long as our population is mostly vaccinated, we should be able to trace, isolate, and treat the cases that pop up, and prevent a severe and disastrous outbreak."

RESTRICTIONS ON TRACK TO EASE

After June 13, Singapore is likely to ease restrictions that have been put in place for four weeks, if the recent outbreak driven by more contagious variants

of the virus is seen to be coming under control. Still, it's unlikely that all the recent measures will be removed as the easing will be done in a controlled manner, officials said at a briefing following Lee's speech.

The country's rise in cases, including some from a more contagious variant of the virus first identified in India, prompted authorities to reimpose some lockdown-like conditions for a month from May 16. The measures include a ban on dining-in, a return to work-from-home and limiting outdoor group sizes to a maximum of just two. Due to the spike, Singapore this month fell one place from its top notch in Bloomberg's Covid

Resilience Ranking.

"Barring another super-spreader or big cluster, we should be on track to bring this outbreak under control," Lee said, stressing the importance of testing, contact tracing and vaccination in the country's reopening strategy. "We will know for sure in another week or so."

Meanwhile, bookings for more than 400,000 students to get their shots will open June 1 with priority given to those sitting for national examinations. Inoculation for young adults aged 39 years old and younger will take place after that, around mid-June.

With faster and cheaper testing that might also involve over-the-counter DIY tests, Singapore

will be able to routinely test individuals whose jobs involve close contact with many people such as sports and fitness instructors. Lee said authorities will also routinely test people who appear well, arguing that extensive testing will allow the country to resume larger scale gatherings or events, such as concerts or wedding receptions.

VACCINATION PLANS

Lee said the nation's target is to get two-thirds of its residents vaccinated with at least the first dose and it should be able to do this by early July, provided supplies come in as planned.

He flagged there will be faster vaccine deliveries over the next two months, allowing the country to further speed up inoculation. Singapore earlier said it will lengthen the time between vaccination doses to six to eight weeks, in an effort to stretch out limited supply.

"Everyone who is eligible for a vaccination and wants one should be able to get at least their first jab by National Day," a day to mark the nation's independence which falls on August 9, Lee said.

As of May 30, nearly 2.3 million people, or about 40% of the population, have received at least the first dose of the vaccine, according to the latest government statistics.

Singapore has been on a bumpy path to reopening. Prior to the latest flareup, the city was pushing forward with high-profile initiatives designed to showcase its containment of the virus, like a travel bubble with Hong Kong and hosting international conferences like the World Economic Forum. These all had to be scrapped earlier this month as the new outbreak flared, forming clusters at the airport, a public hospital and shopping malls. **MDT/BLOOMBERG**

VIETNAM

Health authorities to test all 9m residents in largest city

VIETNAM plans to test all 9 million people in its largest city for the coronavirus and imposed more restrictions yesterday to deal with a growing COVID-19 outbreak.

People in Ho Chi Minh city are only allowed to leave home for necessary activities and public gatherings of more than 10 people are banned for the next two weeks, the government announced. Prior to the order, the city, also Vietnam's economic hub, shut down non-essential business last Thursday when cases started to increase.

Yesterday, state newspa-

per Vietnam News said the city authority is planning to test its entire population with a testing capacity of 100,000 samples a day.

The newspaper also said police had filed a case Sunday against the couple who head a Protestant church mission for "spreading dangerous infectious diseases," citing poor health protocols applied at the premises.

At least 145 cases of coronavirus infection have been reported with links to the Revival Ekklesia Mission, a Protestant sect, and the city district of Go Vap, where the church is based, has been locked



down. Vietnam has since banned all religious events nationwide.

The newspaper said church followers gathered in small space for singing and chanting without pro-

per distancing and mask wearing. Ho Chi Minh city police said the mission has 48 registered members.

The report said the husband and wife accused in the case were responsible

for leading and organizing activities at the church. They were not identified and are not under arrest.

Since the end of April, a surge in COVID-19 has spread to 31 municipalities and provinces in Vietnam with over 4,000 cases, almost double the total number that the country reported since the beginning of the pandemic.

Some recent patients in Vietnam were infected with a hybrid of the virus variants first found in India and the U.K.

Viruses often develop small genetic changes as they reproduce, and new variants of the coronavi-

rus have been seen almost since it was first detected in China in late 2019. The World Health Organization categorized the U.K. and the Indian variants, along with two others first found in South Africa and Brazil, as "variants of concern" because they appear to be more contagious.

Vietnam has vaccinated 1 million people with AstraZeneca shots. It has a deal with Pfizer for 30 million doses to be delivered later this year. It is also in talks with Moderna that would give it enough shots to fully vaccinate 80% of its 96 million people. **MDT/AP**

COVID-19

Find coronavirus origin or face another pandemic, US experts warn

JOHN TOZZI

THE world needs the cooperation of the Chinese government to trace the origins of Covid-19 and prevent future pandemic threats, two leading U.S. disease experts said yesterday [Macau time].

Information to support the theory that the SARS-CoV-2 virus may have escaped from a lab in Wuhan, China, has increased, said Scott Gottlieb, a commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration in the Trump administration who now sits on the board of Pfizer Inc.

China hasn't provided evidence to disprove that theory, while the search for signs that the virus emerged from wildlife hasn't yielded results, Gottlieb said on CBS News's "Face the Nation."

Not knowing how the pandemic started puts the world at risk of future outbreaks, Peter Hotez, co-director of the Texas Children's Hospital Center for Vaccine Development, said in a separate TV appearance.

"There's going to be Covid-26 and Covid-32 unless we fully understand the origins of Covid-19," Hotez said on NBC's "Meet the press."

Almost a year and half after the new pathogen was first detected spreading in a seafood market in



The Huanan seafood market in Wuhan

Wuhan, China, the precise origins of the virus remain obscure.

Scientists have hypothesized that it most likely spread from wild animals to humans. The idea that the virus may have accidentally escaped from a research lab, long promoted by some Republicans, has gotten renewed atten-

tion from the Biden administration.

In a surprise statement on Wednesday, President Joe Biden called for a renewed investigation into the virus's emergence. U.S. intelligence agencies had conflicting assessments of whether it was more likely the virus crossed

the species barrier from a natural reservoir or leaked from the Wuhan Institute of Virology, Biden said. He ordered the agencies to "redouble their efforts" and report to him again in 90 days.

Debate over the virus's origin was fueled anew by a Wall Street Journal report on May 23 that

three researchers from China's Wuhan Institute of Virology became sick enough in November 2019 that they sought hospital care for "symptoms consistent with both Covid-19 and common seasonal illness."

Scientists should be allowed to conduct a long-term investigation in China and take blood samples from humans and animals, Hotez said. The U.S. should pressure China, including with the threat of sanctions, to allow for an inquiry.

"We need a team of scientists, epidemiologists, virologists, bat ecologists in Hubei province for a six-month, year-long period," Hotez said.

Chinese officials have disputed the Wuhan lab theory. Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian on Thursday dismissed Biden's inquiry as an attempt to engage in "stigmatization, political manipulation and blame-shifting."

A World Health Organization report released in March didn't fully uncover the virus's origin but called a lab leak unlikely. The global health body called for more investigation at that time.

"As far as WHO is concerned, all hypotheses remain on the table," Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said in a statement when the March report was released. **MDT/BLOOMBERG**

BELARUS

Editor detained amid crackdown on journalists

THE chief editor of a popular Internet news site in one of Belarus' largest cities was detained and his residence searched amid a crackdown on independent journalists and opponents of authoritarian President Alexander Lukashenko.

Police said yesterday [Macau time] they were investigating Hrodna.life editor Aliaksei Shota on suspicion of extremism. The publication focuses on Belarus' fifth-largest city Grodno.

City police said the website "posted information products that were duly recognized as extremist," but did not give details. The website said he was held by police for several hours before being released, and



Aliaksei Shota, editor of Hrodna.life website

that computer hard drives were taken by police from his home.

Shota has collaborated with the country's most popular internet portal Tut.by,

which authorities closed this month after arresting 15 employees.

Belarus' crackdown escalated a week ago with the arrest of dissident journalist Raman Pratasevich and his girlfriend who were aboard a commercial flight that was diverted to the Minsk airport because of an alleged bomb threat. The flight was flying over Belarus en route from Athens, Greece, to Vilnius, Lithuania.

The move sparked wide denunciation in the West as an act of hijacking and demands for Pratasevich's release. The European Union banned flights from Belarus.

Pratasevich is charged with organizing riots, a charge that carries a potential sentence of 15 years.

The day after his arrest, authorities released a brief

video in which Pratasevich said he was confessing, but observers said the statement appeared to be forced.

The Belarusian human rights group Viasna said that Pratasevich had received a package from his sister but that an unspecified book had been taken from it.

Large protests broke out last August after a presidential election that officials said overwhelmingly gave a sixth term in office to Lukashenko, who has consistently repressed opposition since coming to power in 1994.

Police detained more than 30,000 people in the course of the protests, which persisted for months. Although protests died down during the winter, authorities have continued strong actions against opposition supporters and independent journalists. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



Biden and Moon held talks last month in Washington

DIPLOMACY

North accuses US of hostility for S. Korean missile decision

HYUNG-JIN KIM, SEOUL

NORTH KOREA said yesterday the U.S. allowing South Korea to build more powerful missiles was an example of the U.S.'s hostile policy against the North, warning that it could lead to an "acute and instable situation" on the Korean Peninsula.

It's North Korea's first response to the May 21 summit between the leaders of the United States and South Korea, during which the U.S. ended decades-long restrictions that capped South Korea's missile development and allowed its ally to develop weapons with unlimited ranges.

The accusation of U.S. policy being hostile to North Korea matters because it said it won't return to talks and would enlarge its nuclear arsenal as long as U.S. hostility persists. But the latest statement was still attributed to an individual commentator, not a government body, sugges-

ting North Korea may still want to leave room for potential diplomacy with the Biden administration.

"The termination step is a stark reminder of the U.S. hostile policy toward (North Korea) and its shameful double-dealing," Kim Myong Chol, an international affairs critic, said, according to the official Korean Central News Agency. "It is engrossed in confrontation despite its lip-service to dialogue."

"The U.S. is mistaken, however. It is a serious blunder for it to pressurize (North Korea) by creating asymmetric imbalance in and around the Korean Peninsula as this may lead to the acute and instable situation on the Korean Peninsula now technically at war," he said.

The United States had previously barred South Korea from developing a missile with a range of longer than 800 kilometers out of concerns about a re-

gional arms race. The range is enough for a South Korean weapon to strike all of North Korea but is short of hitting potential key targets in other neighbors like China and Japan.

Some South Korean observers hailed the end of the restrictions as restoring military sovereignty, but others suspected the U.S. intent was to boost its ally's military capability amid a rivalry with China.

US analysts say Biden would adopt a middle ground policy between his predecessors

The commentator Kim accused Washington of trying to spark an arms race, thwart North Korean development and deploy intermediate-range missiles targeting countries near North Korea.

The South Korean government said it "prudently watches" North

Korea's reaction, but Unification Ministry spokeswoman Lee Jong-joo wouldn't comment otherwise, since the remarks were attributed to an individual, not an official statement from the North Korean government.

The North Korean statement comes as the Biden administration shapes a new approach on North Korea amid long-dormant talks over the North's nuclear program. During their summit, Biden and South Korean President Moon Jae-in said a new U.S. policy review on North Korea "takes a calibrated and practical approach that is open to and will explore diplomacy" with the North.

U.S. officials have suggested Biden would adopt a middle ground policy between his predecessors — Donald Trump's direct

dealings with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and Barack Obama's "strategic patience." Some experts say Biden won't likely provide North

Korea with major sanctions relief unless it takes concrete denuclearization steps first.

The North Korean statement criticized the Biden administration's review indirectly, saying the new policy was viewed by other countries "as just trickery." **MDT/AP**

this day in history

2001 NEPAL ROYAL FAMILY MASSACRED

The King and Queen of Nepal have been shot dead after the heir to the throne went on the rampage with a gun before turning it on himself.



Eleven people died in the incident which started when Crown Prince Dipendra allegedly had a dispute with his mother over his choice of bride.

King Birendra, Queen Aishwarya and Prince Nirajan were among the victims of the tragedy at the royal palace in Nepal's capital, Kathmandu.

The other victims included three of the King's children, his two sisters and one more member of the family by marriage.

The King's younger brother was also hurt in the attack, but his condition is not known.

The only person left unharmed from the family was the King's middle brother Prince Gyanendra, who was out of the country at the time of the incident.

Some reports say the Crown Prince is on a life support machine in hospital.

If he lives, he is expected to be declared the successor.

Crown Prince Dipendra, who was educated at Eton College, is reported to have been in conflict with his family over his choice of bride, Devyani Rana, for some time.

Queen Aishwarya is said to have been the real power behind the throne and allegedly threatened to remove her oldest son from the line of succession, although this would not have been allowed under the constitution.

The murders are thought to be the worst mass killing of royalty since the Romanovs were put to death in 1918 during the Russian Revolution.

"This is a most unfortunate and shocking event," said Deputy Prime Minister Ram Chandra Paudel.

"Shocking is an understatement, we have been orphaned by this loss," said a vegetable seller, Janardan Sharma, who like many in Kathmandu rushed to the royal palace to try to find out more news of the tragedy.

Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the UN, issued a statement saying that he was "profoundly shocked" by the killings of King Birendra and other members of his family.

He called for calm in the country and said that he was "deeply saddened by this tragedy".

King Birendra, 55, ascended the throne in 1972.

When nationwide unrest broke out in 1990 he was forced to legalise political parties and accept a parliamentary system.

He was the last ruling Hindu monarch.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

It was later confirmed Crown Prince Dipendra had turned the gun on himself but did not die immediately and lapsed into a coma.

He died some 30 hours after the shootings when the king's middle brother, Prince Gyanendra was declared the new king. Devyani Rana fled Nepal and is reported to be in Europe.

Riots followed the killings as conspiracy theories about coups flourished.

Prince Paras Shah, who had suddenly become second in line to the throne as son of the new king, was blamed for the tragedy as people refused to believe Dipendra could have killed his parents.

Two leading Maoists also tried to blame India for conspiring with the Nepali government to undermine the sovereignty.

There followed an upsurge in violence led by the Maoist rebels which led to a state of emergency in November 2001.

A seven-month truce failed in August 2003 and two years later the king imposed direct rule saying the government had failed to defeat the Maoists.

In April 2006 an alliance of seven opposition parties organised national strikes and protests which led to a violent crackdown by the police. The UN human rights commissioner in Nepal urged the king to restore democracy and prevent further bloodshed.

The following month, the Nepalese government approved a plan to curtail the king's powers, oblige the royal family to pay tax and hand over control of the army to parliament which will also name the king's heir.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
 Mar. 21-Apr. 19
 Aren't you curious to know what that is? Give them some but not all of your time. Make it clear that you have boundaries that you have no intention of crossing for them, at least not yet.

TAURUS
 Apr. 20-May. 20
 Return to the people in your community today, Taurus. You need a sense of belonging amongst your friends and network, and they're ready to receive you with open arms.

GEMINI
 May. 21-Jun. 21
 The days ahead are bound to mess with your perception of reality, Gemini. Listen to the emerging messages, but refrain from getting totally pulled out to sea.

CANCER
 Jun. 22-Jul. 22
 Let yourself drift out to sea and discover what your soul is pining for. The moon departs from heady Aquarius and wades into mellow Pisces, helping you regain a sense of emotional equilibrium.

LEO
 Jul. 23-Aug. 22
 Fortunately, the moon's blissful union with optimistic Jupiter instills a sense of faith and contentment that can help you go deeper without becoming ungrounded.

VIRGO
 Aug. 23-Sep. 22
 The moon's union with big-hearted Jupiter imbues a positive, hopeful mood into the day. It's an ideal day to focus on any projects requiring collaborative efforts.

LIBRA
 Sep. 23-Oct. 22
 You have all the tools you need to take care of business. Luna's union with mood-boosting Jupiter keeps the energy light and capable, while also helping you see the big picture vision.

SCORPIO
 Oct. 23-Nov. 21
 The illuminating sun merges with the North Node of fate. This pairing shines a bright light onto critical dynamics around your intimate relationships.

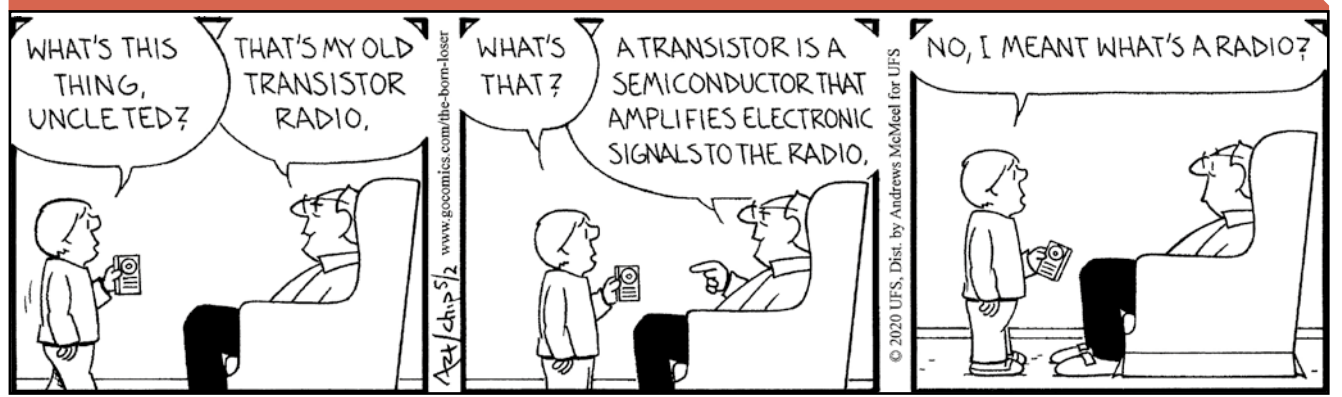
SAGITTARIUS
 Nov. 22-Dec. 21
 It's time for a break, Sagittarius. Even if the week has only just begun, it's important to slow down and listen to what your emotions are trying to express.

CAPRICORN
 Dec. 22-Jan. 19
 The moon floats into poetic Pisces this morning, pushing you to find movement in your local environment and share your voice in a meaningful way. You may get lost in a sea of texts, calls, and emails.

AQUARIUS
 Jan. 20-Feb. 18
 Are you listening to yourself enough, Aquarius? Monday's skies work to bring critical revelations around romance, relationships, and creative self-expression.

PISCES
 Feb. 19-Mar. 20
 These inward revelations guide the way forward. Elsewhere, driven Mars aligns with imaginative Neptune, allowing you to enchant anyone with your creative self-expression.

The Born Loser by Chip Sanson



SUDOKU

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

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

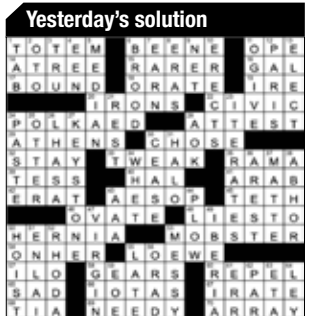
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	15	31	cloudy
Harbin	14	30	clear
Tianjin	15	21	rain
Urumqi	16	24	rain
Xi'an	20	26	cloudy
Lhasa	15	27	sunny
Chengdu	23	27	rain
Chongqing	25	31	rain
Kunming	18	23	rain
Nanjing	14	19	overcast
Shanghai	27	37	cloudy
Wuhan	17	23	rain
Hangzhou	13	30	cloudy
Taipei	14	23	overcast
Guangzhou	10	24	cloudy
Hong Kong	17	28	clear
WORLD			
Moscow	17	31	clear
Frankfurt	8	14	rain
Paris	8	15	rain
London	7	16	cloudy
New York	14	24	cloudy

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Parasite; 6- Museum piece; 11- Basketball Hall of Famer Unseld; 14- Up ___ (trapped); 15- Befuddled; 16- Actress Balin; 17- Ventured; 18- Accustom; 19- Consume; 20- The last Mrs. Chaplin; 22- Saline; 24- Mysterious; 28- One who establishes; 30- Innovation of the late 20's; 31- French wine valley; 32- Son of Abraham; 33- Damnation; 37- Part of UNLV; 38- Dense; 39- Box-office letters; 40- "St. ___," hospital TV series; 43- Hawaiian dances; 45- Swedish imports; 46- Erase; 47- Reprieve; 50- Putative; 51- Follows orders; 52- Dispatched; 53- Literary monogram; 54- Domesticates; 57- In check; 62- Done, to Donne; 63- Really bother; 64- Bar game; 65- "ER" extras; 66- Mild oaths; 67- Madame de ___;

DOWN: 1- Stripling; 2- LAX info; 3- Go off course; 4- Bee follower; 5- Pertaining to the love of sensation; 6- Coming down; 7- Sicilian smoker; 8- Baton Rouge sch.; 9- Occupational suffix; 10- Interruption; 11- Brandish; 12- Related on the mother's side; 13- Lustful deity; 21- Half and half?; 23- Work without ___; 24- Functional; 25- Like Fran Drescher's voice; 26- Category; 27- Alias letters; 28- Physical power; 29- Hog sound; 31- Dens; 33- Monetary unit of Botswana; 34- Atoll unit; 35- Pontificate; 36- Snooped (around); 38- Yonder thing; 41- Catch sight of; 42- Belted; 43- Groups of seven; 44- Eskimo knife; 46- Cubby hole?; 47- Copter part; 48- Clampett player; 49- Prophets; 50- Reposes; 52- Chair; 55- Swiss river; 56- 1959 Kingston Trio hit; 58- Tasteless items, junk; 59- Bikini top; 60- Consumed; 61- Fashion designer's monogram;



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



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EURO 2020

Croatia cancels base in Scotland over virus rules

CITING UEFA concerns about local COVID-19 rules in Scotland Croatia's soccer federation said yesterday it canceled plans to stay in St Andrews during the European Championship.

The Croatian delegation had booked to stay and train in the east-coast town that's the traditional home of golf to prepare for two Euro 2020 group-stage games in Glasgow and one in London.

Citing "a recommendation from UEFA to change the location of its team base camp, due to the potential impact of the Scottish COVID-19 regulations on the national team's daily routines," the federation said it will now stay at home in Croatia.

Officials were "unwilling to risk the possibility of positive PCR results causing a large part of the team and team staff to be issued mandatory self-isolation orders," the federation said.

UEFA has allowed teams to name 26-man squads instead of 23 to protect against disruption



Croatia coach Zlatko Dali

from infections before games.

Croatia begins its Group D program on June 13 against England at Wembley Stadium. The team then has games at Hampden Park — on June 18 against the Czech Republic and June 22 against host Scotland.

The 2018 World Cup beaten finalist will now continue training at its pre-tournament base in Rovinj and fly in for games.

"This is the best outcome that we could reach in these strange ti-

mes," coach Zlatko Dali said, "and we now have a unique opportunity to spend this tournament in our own country."

The Czech squad has also booked a camp in Scotland, at the national training center in Edinburgh.

The Scotland team, which qualified for the postponed tournament one year after its group rivals, is staying in the north-east of England at Middlesbrough's training base. **MDT/AP**

FOOTBALL

ASIAN WORLD CUP QUALIFIERS TO BE MOVED FROM CHINA TO DUBAI

CHINA'S COVID-19 travel restrictions mean World Cup qualifying matches scheduled for the eastern city of Suzhou this week will likely be relocated to the United Arab Emirates.

The Chinese Football Association issued a statement yesterday saying the outbreak of infections in the Maldives and Syria meant both national teams would have to undergo strict quarantine after arriving in China, and couldn't play as scheduled.

The Asian Football Confederation later issued a statement confirming a move from China, without saying where the next matches would be held.

"The Asian Football Confederation decided to move the remaining centralized Group A matches [...] from China to a neutral venue, which will be decided and announced in the coming days."

"The decision was made due to the mounting challenges faced by several participating teams in traveling to China [...] The AFC is now working in close partnership with the Chinese Football

Association and potential neutral venues, as well as the participating teams to arrange for the safe passage and well-being of all stakeholders while reiterating its commitment towards ensuring the successful completion of the Asian qualifiers.

Maldives and Syria were scheduled to play Group A games in Suzhou in the second round of Asian qualifying for the 2022 World Cup.

"Under the suggestion of the Asian Football Confederation, the CFA agreed to move the remaining Group A matches of the FIFA 2022 World Cup Asian qualifiers to Dubai," the CFA statement said.

The AFC has not announced a new schedule of matches.

Syria leads the five-team group with 15 points from five straight wins. China moved into second spot on 10 points after a 7-0 win over last-place Guam on Sunday. Maldives is in fourth place with six points. The top team in each group will advance to the third round of Asian qualifying. **MDT/AP**

AD

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What an impressive achievement!

We wish you continued success for many more years to come!

HAPPY 14th ANNIVERSARY

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OPINION

World Views

Mihir Sharma, MDT/Bloomberg



THE WORLD SHOULD LEARN FROM INDIA'S COVID-19 CATAclysm

In cities at least, India's nightmarish second wave of Covid-19 finally seems to be ebbing. Delhi has brought its test positivity rate below 2% for the first time in two months. The pandemic's scars won't be easily erased, however — and they should be a warning to other developing nations. Those countries must learn from India's experience if they don't want to repeat it.

The first and most obvious lesson is to avoid overconfidence. A relatively small change in how transmissible the novel coronavirus is can have large, non-linear effects on how fast it spreads. That means strategies that kept the pandemic at bay in 2020 won't necessarily work in 2021. As new variants emerge, health authorities might need to lock down more firmly and in a more targeted fashion to remain safe.

To do so, they'll also need to test more widely and perform more genomic sequencing so that they can track which variants are spreading in the population and where. This won't be easy. Even India, with an extensive scientific establishment, ranks 102nd in the world in the proportion of reported cases sequenced. Other emerging nations will struggle even more.

Richer nations should help. As a recent paper in Science pointed out, there are significant legal barriers to sharing of samples and data internationally. These need to be addressed so virus samples can move across borders quickly. Countries such as the U.K. that have built vast genome sequencing capacity will have to dedicate some of it to tracking samples from other parts of the world.

Emerging nations also need to learn the right lessons about limited healthcare capacity. The tragic scramble in cities such as Delhi for hospital beds, oxygen cylinders and medicines need not be replicated elsewhere. Indian states that established triage systems — telling those with symptoms whether they should go to a hospital or a care center, and which ones had beds free — managed the pressure on their creaky public health machinery better than others. Local authorities should make plans to set up similar systems in their countries, including by phone and online.

Doctors now have a wealth of data about which therapeutic treatments are most effective and which shouldn't be tried. Patients' families spent sleepless nights trying to get hold of convalescent plasma or drugs such as remdesivir before the Indian health establishment eventually admitted they were largely ineffective and dropped them from treatment protocols. High-flow oxygen therapy was overused, leading not just to a shortage of medical oxygen but to some extremely nasty additional diseases.

Similarly, other governments know now that when the curve starts steepening, a new variant is detected or test positivity rises above danger levels, they should swiftly establish a centralized task force to allocate hospital resources and prescribe the right therapies.

Finally, and most importantly, all nations should now understand that vaccines work and that interfering with their supply is dangerous. The Indian government has argued that "if just one country shuts down raw material production, the entire supply chain breaks down." Even the locally made Covaxin vaccine from Bharat Biotech International Ltd. uses 360 ingredients from 10 countries — 200 of them from the U.S. Countries such as the U.S. and U.K., which have subverted supply chains to prioritize their own needs, have a lot to answer for.

Meanwhile, Indian manufacturers' shift to supplying huge domestic needs first has meant that vulnerable countries in the rest of the emerging world are waiting too long for their shots. International cooperation over the next weeks and months must focus on ensuring that the vaccine supply chain is repaired, export bans end, more manufacturing capacity is created and the existing stock of vaccines is shared more equitably.

What happened in India could happen anywhere. But it need not if India's government, its peers in the emerging world and the world's richer nations learn the right lessons, work together — and show a little humility about this awful disease.

NATO RESTRICTS HEADQUARTERS ACCESS OR BELARUS OFFICIALS

THE BUZZ

The NATO military alliance is restricting access to its headquarters for a group of Belarus officials in the wake of Minsk's decision to divert a Ryanair passenger plane to arrest a dissident journalist earlier this month.

"We have decided to restrict the access of Belarusian personnel to the NATO headquarters based on our assessment of security measures at the headquarters," NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg told reporters yesterday.

The move is expected to involve about five officials. They will still be able to enter NATO's sprawling headquarters complex in Brussels but only as visitors, depriving them of access to some areas.

NATO ambassadors said last week that the "unacceptable act seriously violated the norms governing civil aviation and endangered the lives of the passengers and crew."

Stoltenberg has branded the Belarus move "a state hijacking."

AP PHOTO



CHINA TO SEND THREE MALE ASTRONAUTS TO ITS SPACE STATION IN JUNE

A three-man crew of astronauts will blast off in June for a three-month mission on China's new space station, according to a space official who was the country's first astronaut in orbit.

The plans for the station's first crew were confirmed to state television by Yang Liwei, the manned space program's deputy chief designer, as an automated spacecraft was launched with fuel and supplies for the Tianhe station.

The Tianhe, or Heavenly Harmony, is the third and largest space station launched by China's increasingly ambitious space program. Its core module was launched into orbit April 29.

The Shenzhou 12 capsule carrying the crew will be launched from the Jiuquan base in China's northwest next month, Yang said in comments broadcast Saturday by China Central Television.

They will practice spacewalks and conduct repairs and maintenance as well as scientific operations.

Yang, who orbited Earth in 2003, gave no details of the astronauts' identities or a flight date and said the crew will come from the program's two earliest groups of astronauts. Asked whether women would be in the crew, Yang said, "on Shenzhou 12 we don't have them, but missions after that all will have them."

The Tianzhou-2 spacecraft that docked with Tianhe on Sunday carried 6.8 tons of cargo including space suits, food and equipment for the astronauts and fuel for the station, according to the space program.

The space agency plans a total of 11 launches through the end of next year to deliver two more modules for the 70-ton station, supplies and the crew.

Beijing doesn't participate in the International Space Station, largely due to U.S. objections. Washington is wary of the Chinese program's secrecy and its military connections.

China has sent 11 astronauts, including two women, into space beginning with Yang's flight in October 2003. The first female astronaut was Liu Yang in 2012.

All of China's astronauts to date have been pilots from the ruling Communist Party's military wing, the People's Liberation Army.

Astronauts on the Tianhe will practice making spacewalks with two people outside the hull at one time, according to Yang. China's first spacewalk was made in 2008 by Zhai Zhigang outside the Shenzhou 7 capsule.

Also this month, the Chinese space program landed a probe, the Tianwen-1, on Mars carrying a rover, the Zhurong. **MDT/AP**

Egypt and Sudan yesterday concluded joint war games that involved ground, air and naval units. The six-day drill meant to showcase deepening security ties between the two neighboring countries and present a show of force amid mounting tensions with Ethiopia. The dispute stems from Ethiopia's controversial, unfinished dam on the Nile River's main tributary.

AP PHOTO



Russian military will form 20 new units in the country's west this year to counter what it claims is a growing threat from NATO. Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu made the announcement yesterday at a meeting with top military officials. He pointed to a growing number of flights by U.S. strategic bombers near Russia's borders, deployments of NATO warships and increasingly frequent and massive drills by alliance forces.

Greece and Turkey leaders will meet next month on the sidelines of a NATO summit, the two countries' foreign ministers agreed yesterday, as they seek to mend frayed ties that led to a sharp escalation in tension last year. In brief statements in Athens, the ministers said their talks were an opportunity to agree on a meeting between Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis at the NATO summit in Brussels on June 14.

AP PHOTO



THE DECISIVE MOMENT

AP Photo/Eraldo Peres



The start of a total lunar eclipse can be seen between the buildings of Brasilia, Brazil on May 26. This eclipse is the first in more than two years and coincides with a supermoon.

UK said yesterday it will make it easier for Afghans who worked with British troops to settle in the U.K., amid rising fears for their safety as foreign forces leave Afghanistan. More than 1,400 Afghan interpreters and their relatives have already moved to Britain under a resettlement scheme. The government says about 3,000 more are expected to come under new rules which broaden eligibility and make it easier for people to bring their families with them.