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WEDNESDAY T. 25°/30° Air Quality Bad
09 Jun 2021

“THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN’”

MOP 8.00
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PRO-BEIJING LAWMAKERS CALLED FOR MORE SUPPORT FOR TNR IN LIGHT OF TIGHTENED EPIDEMIC CONTROL MEASURES

P2

SUNCITY TO OFFER UP TO 15-MONTHS' SALARY FOR EXIT PACKAGE

P5

TOURISM ASSOCIATION HEAD ESTIMATES DAILY TOURIST ARRIVALS MAY FALL TO UNDER 10 THOUSAND IN JUNE

P2

AP PHOTO



China's wandering elephants are becoming international stars. Major global media are chronicling the herd's more than yearlong, 500-kilometer trek from their home in a wildlife reserve in mountainous southwest Yunnan province to the outskirts of the provincial capital of Kunming. Twitter and YouTube are full of clips of their various antics, particularly those of two calves who slipped into an irrigation ditch and had to be helped out by older members of the group.

NO MASS TESTING, NOT YET

Health chief denies 'rumors,' saying that no date set yet for citywide Covid-19 test

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RENATO MARQUES



AP PHOTO

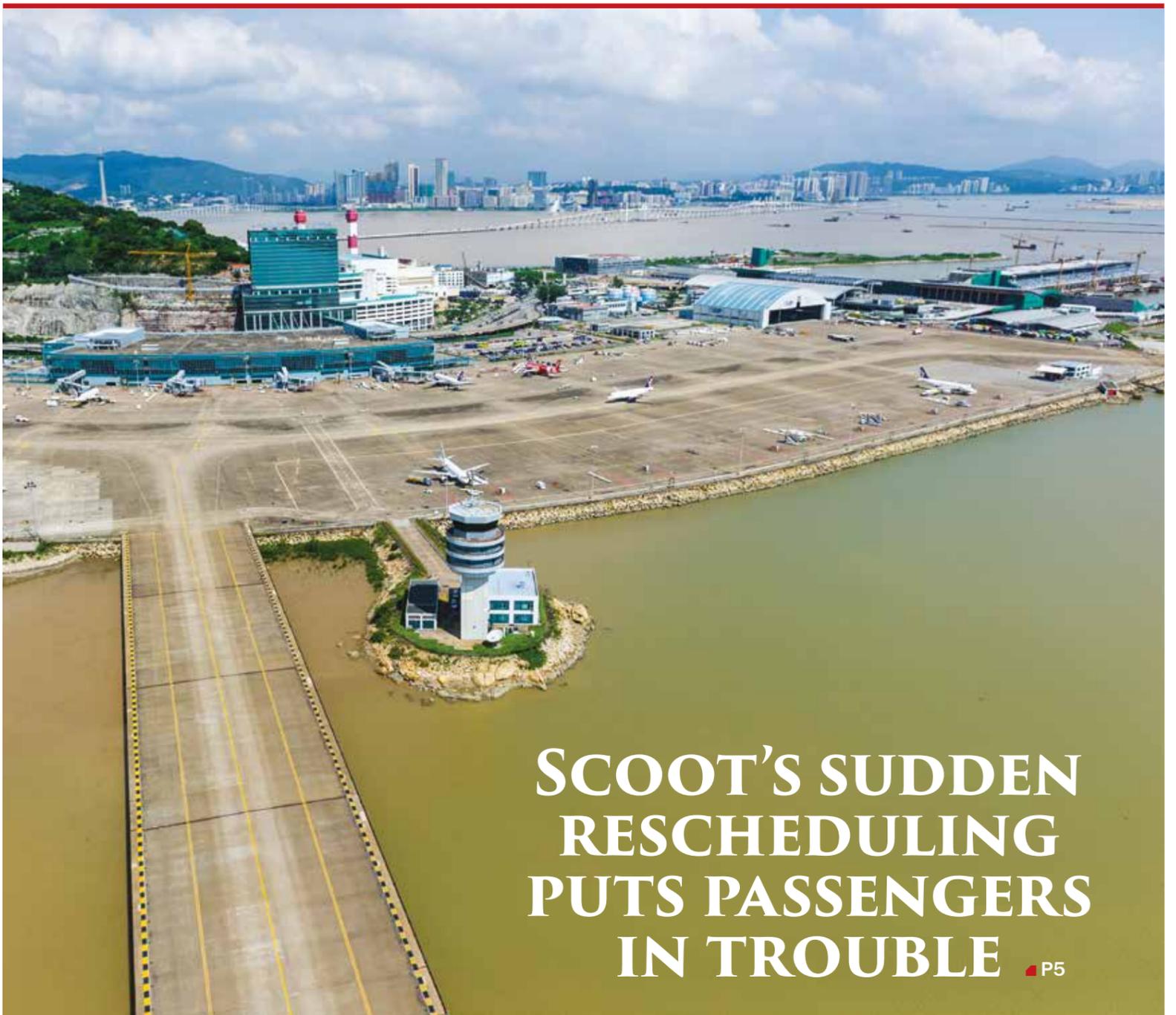


North Korean leader Kim Jong Un presented economic plans to senior ruling party officials before an upcoming meeting to review efforts to overcome hardships brought about by the pandemic, state media said yesterday. The Korean Central News Agency said Kim held his consultations Monday in preparation for a meeting of the Workers' Party's powerful Central Committee at which they will discuss state affairs for the first half of 2021. The meeting was set for early June and could take place as early as this week.

AP PHOTO



Thailand Three journalists from military-ruled Myanmar who were convicted of illegal entry after they fled to Thailand have been sent to a third country where they are safe, their employer said yesterday. The three staff members of the Democratic Voice of Burma, better known as DVB, were arrested on May 9 in the northern Thai province of Chiang Mai along with two other people from Myanmar described as activists. On May 28, they were each sentenced to a 4 \$128 fine and seven months' imprisonment, suspended for a year.



SCOOT'S SUDDEN RESCHEDULING PUTS PASSENGERS IN TROUBLE

P5

More on backpage

ELECTRIC MOTORBIKE BATTERY CABINET ROLLS OUT IN 3 GOV'T PARKING LOTS

The Transport Bureau has permitted battery exchange facilities for a brand of electric motorbike to be placed at three local parking lots within the designated area for motorbikes. The parking lots at which the battery exchange facilities can be accessed are the Mong Sin Building Public Parking, the Mong In Building Public Parking and the Nam Van Public Parking. The bureau stressed that the cabinets are for battery exchange purposes only and have no charging functionality. User guides have also been posted on the cabinets. The bureau pledged to further progress similar cabinets for other brands.

IAM AIMS TO FINISH DESIGN ON ZAPE PROMENADE PHASE 2 THIS YEAR

The Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) is attempting to finalize the design for the second phase of the popular coastal leisure promenade at ZAPE this year. In a response to lawmaker Agnes Lam's inquiry, the IAM disclosed that work commenced last year. Once the design is finalized, construction will take place in phases with the coordination of other government entities. The IAM will monitor the use of the shared football-basketball grounds at the promenade to ensure that use for each sport occurs in one-hour alternate intervals.

CROWDS AT BORDER GATE AS 2-DAY PCR VALIDITY PERIOD KICKS IN

Yesterday the government reduced the validity period of negative Covid-19 test results, required for Zhuhai-Macau interaction, to two days. The move has resulted in crowds at the Border Gate as extra officers were needed to confirm the validity of tests and ensure that each traveler was checked. To ensure all travelers are notified of the sudden decision before entering the immigration hall, the government has displayed banners and is making announcements over loudspeakers before the Border Gate.

LAWMAKERS VOCAL ON ACCOMMODATION FOR TNRS

LAWMAKERS Ho Ion Sang and Leong Sun Lok both called for more support for non-resident workers in light of the tightened epidemic control measures.

As the pre-requisites for border crossings tightened between Macau and Guangdong, Ho pointed out that the updated measures will have a greater impact on cross-border teachers and students, as well as non-resident workers and local residents who reside on the mainland.

He stressed that the interactions between the province and the Special Administrative Region are exceptionally close. Despite this, considering the current condition in some cities in Guangdong, the lawmaker suggested that local residents reduce unnecessary border crossings.

If they must cross the border, they should prioritize the collective safety of the local population and strictly abide by enacting rules and regulations.

In order to reduce inter-jurisdictional movement, the lawmaker suggested that capable employers arrange temporary accommodation for their non-resident employees. He also recommended that the government

MACAU PHOTO AGENCY



take the lead in encouraging these employers to achieve this.

Leong made a similar suggestion, calling for capable employers, with particular reference to the gambling concessionaires, to establish "friendly policies" and provide special financial assistance to non-resident employees.

His suggestion was made in light of the fact that non-resident workers who choose to spend their time off in mainland China and only come to Macau to work will be required to take the Covid-19 test every two days.

Leong additionally reminded

employers and schools to make contingency plans for the new Covid-19 testing requirement to reduce the impact on employees and students.

He also reminded workers in industries with closer ties with tourists, such as the gambling, tourism, retail and catering industries, to build a safe environment by incorporating additional disease control measures.

Leong also voiced worries that the lawmaker had previously received enquiries seeking advice on alleged disease control loopholes in casinos.

He revealed that some crou-

piers received warnings from their employers after reminding gamblers to wear their masks properly. Recently, Leong received information that some casinos were struggling to uphold requirements such as mask-wearing and social distancing as gamblers simply ignored the requirements.

Leong thus asked the government to try their best to ensure that disease control measures were implemented effectively. The police should be approached, he said, if customers refuse to abide by disease control measures enforced under the law. **AL**

Tourism group estimates daily tourist arrivals may fall to under 10K

FOLLOWING the updated disease control measures, estimates on the daily tourist arrival counts made by Andy Wu Keng Kuong, Chairman of the Travel Industry Council of Macau, may fall below 10,000 in June.

Both the Guangdong and Macau governments have updated their respective epidemic control measures in light of the recent increase in Covid-19 cases in the neighboring province. The validity period for Covid-19 polymerase chain reaction (PCR) negative test results used for traveling between Guangdong and Macau have been

VINCENT CHAN



shortened to two days.

Guangzhou, the capital city of the province, has seen single digit increases

in the number of new Covid-19 cases, while Foshan, a city with close interactions with the provincial

capital, has seen about a dozen new cases in the previous days.

Following the discovery of new cases in the neighboring province, the daily tourist arrival count has fallen from 30,000 to 10,000. The fact that there have been no long holidays recently in mainland China should also be taken into account.

Wu stressed that the new measure will definitely have an impact on the revival of the city's tourism industry, although he admitted that the restriction is inevitable. He disclosed that after the announcement of new cases in

Guangdong, the tourist arrival numbers were floating around the 10,000 per day mark.

He expects that the new restriction will discourage tourists from visiting Macau for leisure. As such, he foresees the tourist arrivals may fall further to under 10,000 per day.

Despite the severe impact on the local tourism industry, Wu said that counter-disease measures must be prompt, tough and accurate. The only hope he has is that the situation stabilizes as soon as possible, so that Guangdong-Macau interactions can improve.

He is still optimistic regarding tourist arrival numbers in the second half of the year because he is confident in the mainland's effort to contain the virus. **AL**

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Times

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HONEY TSANG

In yesterday's Covid-19 media briefing, director of the Health Bureau (SSM) Alvis Lo rebutted the rumors circulating online and reaffirmed that the government has yet to set a specific date for the proposed citywide Covid-19 testing scheme for all Macau residents.

"The scheme is still in its preparatory stage, and we still have not determined a timeframe for that yet," Lo emphasized.

His confirmation came one day after the government announced a decision to conduct mass testing for all residents in Macau, should the situation in nearby cities continue to deteriorate.

Decisions on whether to implement a citywide testing regime and who would be required to undergo testing as part of the scheme all come down to the "actual pandemic situation" at the time, Lo said.

"If a confirmed case with only limited contact with others is detected in Macau, we may only organize smaller-scale and regional testing for some people. In that case, citywide Covid-19 testing is not needed," he explained.

If the pandemic escalates in the future, Lo stated that the government has not ruled out the possibility that only those who have been

No date set for citywide Covid-19 test yet: Alvis Lo confirms



fully vaccinated will be granted entry to Macau from Guangdong Province.

He pointed to the stark difference in vaccination rate between Macau and Zhuhai. In Zhuhai, 90% of the population aged 18-60 have received at least an initial dose, compared to 2% for Macau.

In the wake of the worsening

Covid-19 situation in Guangdong Province, the Macau SAR government has also mandated tighter controls in its entry requirements. As of 10 a.m. on June 8, the government reduced the validity period of a negative SARS-CoV-2 polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test result from seven to two days, for those entering Macau from Guangdong

Province.

He reiterated that the authorities would continue to work on identifying the 30 sample collection stations for the proposed citywide testing regime, which the government said has a targeted completion within four days.

On those four days, the government also intends to restrict

particular high-risk activities and prevent crowds from gathering. Meanwhile, the city's vaccination activities will be halted to facilitate the progress of citywide testing.

Lo took the occasion yesterday to encourage the public to get inoculated as quickly as possible to prepare for the worst and help protect the community.

Gov't tightens measures to minimize contagion risk from Guangdong

HONEY TSANG

The Health Bureau has tightened its controls on anti-pandemic measures, requiring all individuals to present their valid green health code whilst entering designated venues.

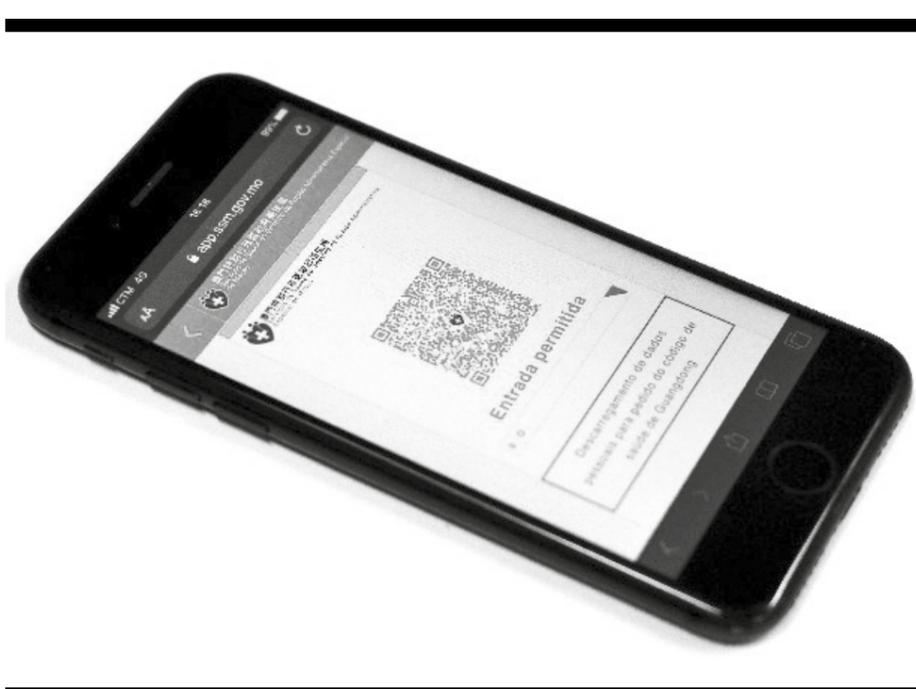
The news was announced by Leong Iek Hou, coordinator at the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, during yesterday's Covid-19 briefing.

The new regulations are a response to the ongoing Covid-19 situation in Guangdong province.

To comply with the new measures, visitors are required to present a green health code to be granted entry to casinos, hotels and guest houses, immigration halls and other related buildings, and medical institutions.

Other premises like offices of Government departments and agencies, shopping malls and restaurants should require visitors to show green health to allow their access to the venues.

Managers of other premises are allowed to decide



— based on their own operating conditions — to request a valid health code shown by patrons, she added.

TRANSPORTATION REGULATIONS

In alignment with the new anti-pandemic control measures, the Transport Bureau (DSAT) has enforced a new regulation as of yesterday that

prohibits individuals with red and yellow health codes from getting onboard public transportation, including buses, taxis and light rail.

Drivers and public transport staff now have additional authority to scrutinize a passenger's health code and have the right to refuse to offer a ride to those with yellow or red codes.

NEW ENTRY GUIDELINES FOR IAM

In the same briefing, the spokesperson from the Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) announced a new prevention measure mandating the display of a green code for an individual to gain access to the fourth and fifth categories of food and beverage

establishments regulated and licensed by the IAM. Such a measure is effective from today onwards.

In response to a media query about what eateries are classified within IAM's fourth and fifth categories, IAM's spokesperson said, "Simply put, they are the establishments offering congee, noodles and rice."

Those with a red or yellow health code are banned from entering these types of eateries.

6,000 TESTED ON JUNE 8

From June 7, the health code of those who visited Guangzhou or Foshan within the past 14 days changed from green to red. Those affected by the

rule were required to undergo a Covid-19 test by 6 p.m. yesterday.

According to the official data, there were around 6,000 people who had to undergo nucleic acid testing yesterday, exceeding the government's original estimation of 5,332.

The Health Bureau made a preliminary estimate on the number of people required to undergo testing based on declaration data from the health code system on June 6. However, a number of people who went to the two regions over the last 14 days but did not apply for their health code that day resulted in the original estimation being exceeded.

NEW CENTER TO OFFER FREE COVID-19 TEST FOR CROSS-BORDER STUDENTS

A new Covid-19 testing center, located at the Centro de Juventude da Areia Preta, has been designated as a temporary center to offer complimentary nucleic acid testing for cross-border students, starting today. The station will open from Monday to Friday from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. The government calls on students to

make bookings online to secure a slot. It comes as a relief to those who previously raised concerns that cross-border students would be subjected to an additional financial burden now that the validity period for a negative Covid-19 test result has been shortened from a week to two days.

NEW MACAU ACCUSES GOV'T OF RUSHING PROPOSAL THAT 'SHAKES MACAU'S FOUNDATIONS'

RENATO MARQUES

THE New Macau Association (ANM) is categorically against the proposal, recently addressed by the Legislative Assembly's (AL) third standing committee, that aims to ease the conditions for non-residents to reach a residency status, the Association expressed in a press conference held yesterday.

"On May 24, we had a meeting [with the third standing committee]. At this meeting, the government proposed a new amendment to the bill [Legal Regime for Immigration Control, Residence and Residence Permits in the Macau Special Administrative Region]. The most relevant content [of this amendment] is that there is completely new content on article 43," vice president of the ANM and lawmaker Sulu Sou explained.

He added, "This is a very sudden decision by the government as they also suggested loosening the requirements for temporary [non-permanent] residence, allowing those who come to Macau frequently or regularly for school, work or business to be regarded as having habitual residence [in Macau] even if they are not staying overnight."

Sou added that the proposal from the government that has been discussed behind closed doors and is gathering support from many legislators will have the effect of changing the conditions to be fulfilled by any person wanting to be granted residency status in Macau.

At the same time, the proposal is contrary to the definition of "habitual residence," which has been used as the main criteria for over 20 years to define if someone meets the requirements to become a resident.

For Sou, this is a very important change and has led the ANM to express its opposition. The proposal completely changes the existing principles which stipulate that "someone who does not stay overnight in Macau and does not spend



at least 183 days in Macau per year cannot see his residency status renewed," he remarked, noting the many cases and court rulings on the matter over the past 22 years.

"This [proposal] undoubtedly shakes the foundation of the existing residency [application and granting] system," Sou said, adding that such change not only does not have any consensus or support from society but can also "pose an [immediate] significant social risk."

During the same committee meeting, Sou added that are several lawmakers who are calling on the government to make even further changes.

"There were several legislators – at least six – who are trying to push the government to go even further, wanting the government to establish a period for which the new law will have retrospective effect, allowing it to benefit between

500 to 700 cases that are currently pending in judicial appeals or administrative procedures," Sou remarked.

"They even want people who never come to Macau, do not work in Macau or study in Macau, to have the possibility of having their resident status granted due to an alleged 'relevant contribution to Macau,' and we do not know what this is nor [has the term] ever been defined."

On the same topic, another vice president of ANM, Rocky Chan, added that this "last minute" proposal to amend the Immigration Law was never subjected to any public feedback or consultation since, "when the draft bill was subjected to public consultation back in 2018, this proposal did not exist and was not presented to the citizens," noting also that the government's practice of trying to rush this amendment is precisely inten-

ded to avoid public scrutiny on the matter.

"The sudden amendment is not a responsible [act] and is procedurally inappropriate," Chan said, adding that the government is planning to have a public con-

sultation on the legal system concerning the "introduction of high-level talents" by September this year. This would represent a good opportunity to include this new idea and subject it to broad public opinion.

CCAC REPORT AND IPIM COURT CASE ARE REASONS BEHIND THE AMENDMENT

QUESTIONED on the topic, Chan remarked that the ANM believes that the sudden proposal to amend the Immigration Law are grounded in the conclusions of the July 2018 report by the Commission Against Corruption (CCAC), which noted that there was a loophole in the regulations governing the need to comply with the 183 days per year rule to see temporary residency status renewed.

Later, during the court case that involved several high-ranked officials of the Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM), including president Jackson Chang, the courts also analyzed the criteria and flaws of the Institute in evaluating the cases. Such evaluation led the IPIM to stop the approval of any residency application renewal until they could amend and establish new internal procedures that would comply with the law.

New mandate at AL is a decision from citizens, Sou says

RENATO MARQUES

THE possibility of being re-elected for a new mandate as a lawmaker at the Legislative Assembly (AL) is a matter that requires evaluation and is a decision for the citizens of Macau, lawmaker Sulu Sou says.

Questioned on whe-

ther he is confident about his re-election for a new four-year term as a legislator, Sou said, "I can't say we are confident because there are many uncertainties that arise from a democratic election, especially in Macau nowadays. But we know that we need to keep working and try our best to do

good things every day as if it is the last day."

For Sou, the possibility of being able to secure the votes that were achieved back in 2017 is the whole purpose of the election.

"Every four years, the citizens should review our performance and they have the chance to [either] change their

vote or keep voting [for the same candidate]. That's the importance of an election," Sou said. He added that independently of whether or not citizens feel happy, they should vote and use their vote to express their feelings regarding the lawmakers' work.

"We tried our best

during the past four years – we were like [a convenience store] working around the clock. We also know that there is still a lot of space to improve and we keep improving, keep studying, and keep working. But we also think citizens have had many opportunities to get to know our work and

they have placed their trust in us before [too]."

For the lawmaker, who will soon present his political platform for the September 12 elections, "It's not about using words to say how good we were. It is about showing the actual work done and our performance to the public," he concluded.

Suncity to offer up to 15-months' salary for exit package

HONEY TSANG

MACAU'S junket investor Suncity Group Ltd will provide exit bonuses for staff who have signed up for the group's voluntary resignation package, according to a report published by GGR Asia yesterday.

In an e-mailed reply to GGR Asia, a spokesperson of Suncity Group said the final tally for the exit bonus could be as high as 15 months' worth of each employee's salary — but different amounts would be awarded based on the staff member's position.

The firm attributed the decision to cut manpower to the adverse impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic and gloomy outlook for the VIP businesses in Macau.

"In order to cope with the changing market environment, the company needs to optimize its structure and reduce manpower," the group told GGR Asia.

The news about the group's voluntary resignation program



— also dubbed the "Career Re-orientation Plan" — was first circulated across local media in early June.

As stated in an announcement delivered by Suncity's chairman, Alvin Chau Cheok Wa, to his employees on June 4, the voluntary

resignation package will comprise exit bonuses and benefits. Staff aged 60 years or above will enjoy additional allowances and a full

refund of their provident fund contributed by the company.

In the release, Chau calls on employees to "proactively consider [the plan], and utilize the time during the pandemic to enrich and reorient their personal life."

Both the pandemic and China's tighter control on overseas gaming activities have dealt blows to Macau's VIP market.

From March 1 this year, China enacted an amended bill to criminalize anyone who "organizes [for] citizens of mainland China to participate in gambling outside the country (or border), which involves a hefty sum or cases with serious consequences."

Experts commented that the harsher regulation has severely suppressed the business of junkets in Macau, who act as middlemen for high rollers from China.

Earlier in April, Galaxy Entertainment Group Ltd launched its own voluntary resignation program. Under this program, Galaxy will dole out a sum of MOP380,000, together with exit compensation to each pit supervisor from the table games department who is willing to resign on their own accord.

In May, Melco Resorts and Entertainment Ltd also announced the "New Chapter" voluntary resignation program, offering a competitive package for departing staff.

SCOOT'S SUDDEN RESCHEDULING PUTS PASSENGERS IN TROUBLE

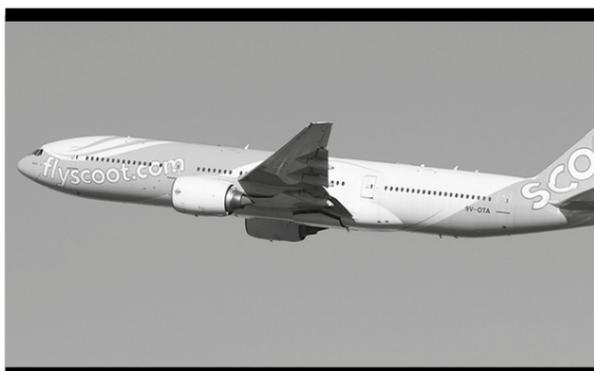
HONEY TSANG

THE Times was told that the flight by Scoot Airlines (SQ8345), originally scheduled to depart from Macau to Singapore this Saturday, June 12, was re-scheduled to take off on Sunday midnight on the spur of the moment.

The change was announced yesterday by Singapore-based airline Scoot to the affected passengers via a digital memo, and the decision was attributed by the company to "operational constraints arising from the growing scale of the Covid-19 outbreak."

The amendment came after, on June 7, the Macau SAR government announced that a collaboration deal was made between the authorities and Scoot Airlines to deploy two weekly flights to help Macau residents return home by transiting via Singapore's airport.

In an interview with Sara Ng, manager of local travel agency, Sincerity travel, she said that the airline's



sudden change of plan has caused significant troubles for the agency and passengers.

"Due to the changed schedule, some passengers suddenly found themselves unable to catch another flight from Singapore Changi Airport to other European countries like Paris," Ng said.

Scoot Airlines is a subsidiary of Singapore Airlines — the flag carrier airline of Singapore. Ng told the Times she had made queries to Singapore Airlines for the reason behind the rearrangement but had not received any responses.

When asked if Scoot's rearrangement has any-

thing to do with the government's deal with Scoot, Ng said she is not certain of the link between the two events.

Though a partnership has been made between Scoot and the SAR government, it is not a government-led operation. Ticketing affairs must be handled by the travelers themselves.

The SQ8345 flight was originally to depart at almost 6 p.m. on June 12 from Macau and arrive in Singapore at around 10 p.m. on the same day. However, it was substituted by another flight (TR905) which will depart at 00:15 on June 13 and arrive at around 4 a.m. that day in Singapore.

AD


DIRECÇÃO DOS SERVIÇOS DE TURISMO
ANÚNCIO

A Região Administrativa Especial de Macau faz público, através da Direcção dos Serviços de Turismo, que, de acordo com o Despacho do Ex.^{mo} Senhor Secretário para a Economia e Finanças, de 20 de maio de 2021, se encontra aberto, pelo Fundo de Turismo, o Concurso Público "N.º 1/CON/DPP/2021 – Prestação de serviços de produção do mensário What's On em versões chinesa e inglesa para os anos 2022 e 2023".

Desde a data da publicação do presente anúncio, durante o horário normal de expediente, os interessados podem consultar o Processo do Concurso Público (incluindo o Programa do Concurso e o Cartão de Encargos) no balcão de atendimento da Direcção dos Serviços de Turismo, sita em Macau, na Alameda Dr. Carlos d'Assumpção, n.º 335-341, Edifício "Hotline", 12.º andar, ou pagar uma quantia equivalente ao custo da sua reprodução – MOP200,00 (duzentas patacas) para obter cópias do Processo do Concurso, ou descarregar o mesmo através dos Avisos Públicos da Página Electrónica da Indústria Turística de Macau (<http://industry.macaotourism.gov.mo>) da Direcção dos Serviços de Turismo.

CrITÉrios de apreciação e factores de ponderação:

CrITÉrios de apreciação	Factores de ponderação
Conteúdo editorial e concepção do layout	40%
Experiência dos membros constituintes da equipa	30%
História e currículo do concorrente	10%
Preço	20%

O limite máximo do valor global da prestação do serviço é de **MOP2.200.000,00 (dois milhões e duzentas mil patacas)**.

Para quaisquer esclarecimentos, os interessados podem, até ao dia **21 de junho de 2021**, apresentar o pedido de esclarecimento por escrito, na área de Informação Relativa às Aquisições da Página Electrónica da Indústria Turística de Macau (<http://industry.macaotourism.gov.mo>) da Direcção dos Serviços de Turismo, sendo as respostas, também, dadas na mesma.

O concorrente deverá apresentar a proposta à Direcção dos Serviços de Turismo, sita na Alameda Dr. Carlos d'Assumpção, n.º 335-341, Edifício "Hotline", 12.º andar, Macau, durante o horário normal de expediente e prestar uma caução provisória de MOP44.000,00 (quarenta e quatro mil patacas) até às **13:00 horas do dia 12 de julho de 2021**.

A caução provisória deve ser prestada mediante: 1) depósito em numerário à ordem do Fundo de Turismo, no Banco Nacional Ultramarino de Macau (n.º de conta 8003911119); ou 2) garantia bancária.

O acto público de abertura das propostas será realizado no Auditório da Direcção dos Serviços de Turismo, sito em Macau, na Alameda Dr. Carlos d'Assumpção, n.º 335-341, Edifício "Hotline", 5.º andar pelas **10:00 horas do dia 13 de julho de 2021**.

Os concorrentes ou os seus representantes legais deverão estar presentes no acto público de abertura das propostas para efeitos de apresentação de eventuais reclamações e/ou para esclarecimento das dúvidas dos documentos apresentados ao concurso, nos termos do artigo 27.º do Decreto-Lei n.º 63/85/M, de 6 de Julho.

Os concorrentes ou os seus representantes legais poderão fazer-se representar por procurador devendo, neste caso, o procurador apresentar procuração notarial conferindo-lhe poderes para o acto público de abertura das propostas.

Em caso de encerramento destes Serviços por causa de tempestade tropical ou por motivo de força maior, o termo do prazo de entrega das propostas, a data e a hora de abertura das propostas serão adiados para o primeiro dia útil imediatamente seguinte.

Direcção dos Serviços de Turismo do Governo da Região Administrativa Especial de Macau, aos 24 de maio de 2021.

A Directora
Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes

ASEAN MEETING

CHINA PLEDGES FURTHER COVID-19 AID TO SOUTHEAST ASIA

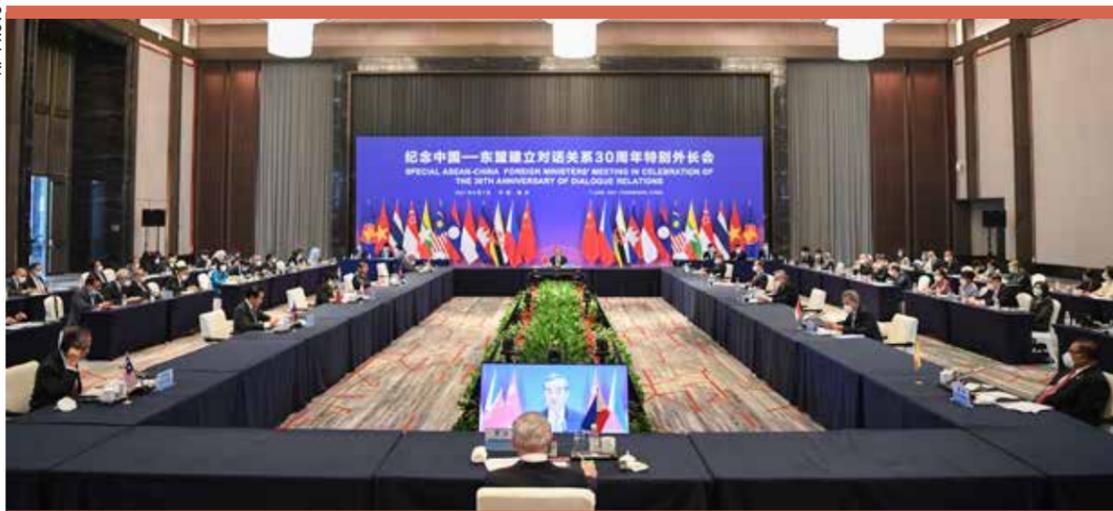
CHINA yesterday pledged further assistance to Southeast Asian nations in battling the coronavirus pandemic as it seeks to boost influence with the region where the United States is also looking to strengthen ties.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi told his counterparts from the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations that China had already delivered 100 million vaccine doses to ASEAN nations along with other pandemic-fighting materials and technical help.

Wang likened the challenge to earlier economic crises, the 2003 SARS outbreak and the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, saying all were faced with "practical action arising from feelings of brotherly concern and the care of watchful neighbors."

"In the process of jointly overcoming challenges, we have deepened friendship, mutual trust and common interests," Wang told the ministers, assembled in the southwestern Chinese megacity of Chongqing for meetings marking the 30th anniversary of

AP PHOTO



formal relations between China and ASEAN.

Beijing has been building influence with ASEAN, despite frictions with some members of the bloc over competing territorial claims in the South China Sea. China's construction of islands and its military operations in the sea have brought complaints Beijing is militarizing the waterway.

China's economic and diplomatic heft has helped override

such concerns, however, while the bloc has been unable to form a unified stand in the face of opposition from Chinese allies within it, primarily Cambodia.

Wang said yesterday that the sides should explore establishing an expert panel to strengthen cooperation throughout the vaccine process, from research to use, and work to build production and distribution centers to help make vaccines affordable and accessib-

le in the region.

He said China would "urgently implement" the China-ASEAN Public Health Cooperation Initiative, continue to support the ASEAN Emergency Medical Materials Reserve and strengthen regional public health capacity-building.

"China will work with ASEAN to overcome the outbreak as soon as possible," Wang said.

Though COVID-19 was first de-

tected in China in late 2019, the nation has largely stamped out domestic transmission, although it has been accused of insufficient transparency or even seeking to conceal the origins of the pandemic.

Wang made no direct reference to Myanmar, an ASEAN member where the military seized power Feb. 1 and has cracked down on widespread opposition to the coup. He said China supported ASEAN's non-interventionist approach.

China has also been criticized for building dams upstream on the Mekong River, affecting water levels and fisheries downstream on a waterway that is crucial to the economies of several Southeast Asian nations.

Foreign Ministry Zhao Lijian defended China's policies on management of the river, known as the Lancang in China. Beijing attached "great importance to the concerns of downstream countries," had released water to help countries dealing with drought and was willing to work with them on how best to promote sustainable use of water resources, Zhao told reporters at a later briefing.

"There are numerous hydraulic and hydropower facilities in various countries along the river. Its water volume is affected by multiple factors," Zhao said. MDT/AP

AD



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China dispatches vaccine, syringe aid to 66 countries

CHINA has completed dispatching COVID-19 vaccines and syringes to 66 countries and one international organization as of Sunday amid efforts to provide vaccine aid and strengthen international cooperation, the Ministry of Commerce (MOC) said.

The MOC, along with relevant government bodies, will ensure that vaccines are delivered to recipient countries as soon as possible, said Qian Chunying, an official with the ministry this week.

China is organizing and carrying out vaccine aid work for 88 countries and four international organizations, Qian said.

Official data showed the country has exported COVID-19 vaccines to more than 40 countries and has pledged to provide the first batch of 10 million COVID-19 vaccine doses to COVAX, an initiative aimed to promote equitable access to vaccines.

The MOC encouraged four vaccine manufacturers, granted conditional marketing authorization for COVID-19 vaccines, to actively expand exports and strengthen communication and



cooperation with the World Health Organization (WHO) and COVAX.

"So far, three Chinese enterprises have carried out joint vaccine production with eight countries, while they are discussing cooperation issues with ten countries," said Mao Junfeng, an official from the Ministry of Industry and In-

formation Technology, in a Monday interview.

According to Mao, there has been a significant increase in vaccine supply as manufacturers went all out to produce vaccines. The Chinese authorities also enhanced support on vaccine capacity construction, transportation, allocation, and

quality supervision.

China will continue to encourage its vaccine manufacturers to transfer technology to more developing countries, Mao said.

The country will also support these firms in actively applying for the WHO's certification for more production lines and dosage forms, Mao added. **MDT/XINHUA**

TAIWAN REPORTS 219 COVID-19 CASES, 22 DEATHS

TAIWAN yesterday reported 219 cases of COVID-19, all of which were local infections, as well as 22 deaths from the disease, the island's disease monitoring agency said.

Of the new local cases, their onset of symptoms occurred between May 22 and yesterday.

The 22 fatalities included individuals aged in their 30s to 100s who died between May 30 and yesterday.

Taiwan is struggling to contain its worst outbreak of COVID-19, with its mortality rate exceeding 2.4 percent from May 15 to June 6.

The total number of confirmed cases on the island since the epidemic began has risen to 11,694, including 10,493 local cases. A total of 308 deaths have been recorded, the agency said. **MDT/XINHUA**

XINHUA FOCUS

Xi's care for intangible cultural heritage bears fruit

XI Jinping, general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, has stressed developing more local specialty industries and achieving better development through innovation.

Xi made the remarks on Monday afternoon when visiting a company producing Tibetan carpets during an inspection tour of northwest China's Qinghai Province.

Tibetan carpet is a traditional handicraft on the Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau with a history of more than 2,000 years. In 2006, the Jiaya Tibetan carpet weaving skills were inscribed in China's first group of national intangible cultural heritage items.

Yang Yongliang is an inheritor of Tibetan carpet weaving skills from Huan-gzhong District of Xining, the provincial capital. He started learning to make Tibetan carpets in childhood.

"I have been in the trade for over 40 years. Once



People buy food at a Singapore's Tekka hawker

I considered myself just an ordinary craftsman," said the 59-year-old. "But now, I am the inheritor of a national intangible cultural heritage. The country has put an important responsibility on us. I will work my best to preserve and pass on the craft."

In recent years, Yang has taught over 200 students from across the province.

Tibetan carpets were used by early herders in hi-

gh-altitude regions to keep warm, but today, many people use them to decorate their houses.

"They are now not mere household items, but also art pieces with rich history and culture," said Xue Ting, chairperson of Shengyuan Carpet Group Co., Ltd. in Xining.

The firm has built on the traditional craftsmanship of the carpets and adopted new machine weaving te-

chniques to create innovative, fine patterns at a fair price.

According to industrial statistics, the varieties of Tibetan carpets in Qinghai have increased from 26 to 130 over the years, with more than 1,000 patterns developed.

During a visit to the southern province of Guangdong in October 2020, Xi noted that proactive efforts should be made to train inheritors of the intangible cultural heritage.

The Chinese government has paid great importance to the preservation of cultural heritage and ethnic cultures.

China boasts 42 intangible cultural heritage items on the UNESCO's Lists of Intangible Cultural Heritage as of late December 2020, ranking first in the world, according to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

The country has established a tiered system of intangible cultural herita-

ge, spanning the national, provincial, municipal and county levels.

More than 100,000 items have been registered in the system, including 1,372 at the national level. A total of 3,068 individuals are identified as representative trustees of national intangible cultural heritage, official statistics show.

In July 2019, after watching local artists perform the "Epic of King Gesar" during an inspection tour of north China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, Xi stressed the importance of preserving and promoting the culture of ethnic minority groups.

Today, the government of Bairin Right Banner, known as the home of Gesar culture, in Inner Mongolia, organizes regular trips to bring the performance of "Epic of King Gesar" to local schools.

Otgenhuaar, who leads a performance team to the schools, said she started learning about Gesar

in 2014 and has since then trained 34 Gesar performers.

From 2016 to 2019, the Bairin Right Banner has organized seven training sessions for inheritors of intangible cultural heritage like her, with more than 400 people participating.

"Through the campus trips, we learn not only about the performance, but also the stories behind it," said Suld, a 13-year-old student and one of the young fans of the traditional art. "We get to know more about the history and culture."

In recent years, Xue's company allows customers to customize their own carpets and see the final products in several hours thanks to smart manufacturing.

"So far, Tibetan carpets have been exported to over 40 countries," said Xue. "We hope to continue to pass on the ancient craft with technological and managerial innovations." **XINHUA**

AP PHOTO



Maldivian Foreign Minister Abdulla Shahid

Maldives foreign minister elected as UN assembly president

FOREIGN Minister Abdulla Shahid of the Maldives won election as the next president of the U.N. General Assembly yesterday, and pledged to push for equal access to coronavirus vaccines, a stronger and greener economic recovery, and stepped up efforts to tackle climate change.

He defeated a former Afghan foreign minister, Zalmay Rassoul, in a 143-48 vote by secret ballot, with two of the assembly's 193 member nations not voting. Diplomats from member nations, all wearing masks because of the pandemic, were called to the front of the assembly chamber one-by-one to deposit their ballot in a large wooden box.

Turkey's Volkan Bozkir, the current assembly president, said Shahid brings to the job "extensive experience in multilateral diplomacy," serving his Indian Ocean island nation twice as foreign minister and for 10 years before that as chief of staff to the president.

Shahid has been "a strong voice in calling attention to the impact on small island developing states" by the pandemic and by climate change, which threatens people's

lives and livelihoods, Bozkir said.

Shahid, 59, said he was "deeply humbled" by the trust shown by the U.N. members and the honor given to his island nation of 26 atolls, population about 550,000, which lies in the Indian Ocean southwest of Sri Lanka and India.

Saying he has "an undying belief in multilateralism with an ardent desire to serve the international community," Shahid said his aim is to launch "a presidency of hope" and "to hit the ground running on day one in September as soon as I take my oath of office."

"This is a crucial time for the United Nations and for the world," Shahid said. "There is very little time to spare."

He pointed to the past year's "disease, despair and devastation" as a result of the pandemic, along with increasing "inequality, injustice and instability" and the "suffering" of the planet from climate change.

Shahid said his priorities during his year-long presidency of the 76th session of the General Assembly are to recover from the pandemic, both by making vaccines available to all people everywhere,

and rebuilding economies stronger and greener and "and ensuring no country is left behind."

He said it can also be "a super session for nature" and to "seize momentum on responding to the needs of our planet," citing upcoming conferences and meetings on climate change, the oceans, biodiversity, sustainable transport and food systems as examples. This is a major priority for the Maldives, whose leaders have warned that the country's existence is threatened by rising seas from climate change.

Shahid said he will also focus on "respecting the rights of all," revitalizing the United Nations, and engaging the media and civil society. "I will raise my voice against gender discrimination, advocate for gender equality ... (and) not participate in any panels that are not gender balanced," he said.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres congratulated Shahid, saying the General Assembly is the U.N.'s most representative organ, the foundation of its work, "and essential to our effectiveness as an organization."

"In 2021, the world needs that effectiveness more than ever," Guterres

said. "We are a world in mourning for the millions of people we have lost to the COVID-19 pandemic."

Guterres said the 76th session will grapple with the impact of COVID-19 on peace, development and human rights., stressing that "until everyone, everywhere, has access to vaccine it continues to pose an enormous threat."

While the presidency of the General Assembly is largely ceremonial, it is also prestigious.

The body controls the U.N. budget, adopts treaties, addresses global issues from poverty to corruption, and passes numerous resolutions that while not legally binding almost always reflect global opinion.

It is also the U.N. organ where countries large and small can speak -- and the scene of the only annual gathering of world leaders, historically in person. Last year, however, there were video speeches from leaders because of the pandemic, and no announcement has been made yet of this year's arrangements. In recent months, the assembly has allowed in-person meetings with two representatives from each country allowed in the vast chamber, where social distancing is observed.

Shahid said in response to a question on future meetings that it would be prudent to maintain a cautious approach. "But as soon as possible, yes, it should be in our interest and the interest of this organization to come back into the normalcy if at all possible."

The selection of the assembly president follows a regional rotation mandated by the world body, and it was the turn of Asia to preside over the next year-long session.

By tradition, the U.N.'s regional groups usually nominate a single candidate who is then rubber-stamped by the assembly. But this year the election was contested because Asian countries couldn't agree on a nominee.

Bozkir, Shahid and Guterres paid tribute to losing candidate Rassoul, who served as Afghanistan's foreign minister in 2010-2013 and was one of the top three contenders to replace Hamid Karzai as president in 2014, losing out to Ashraf Ghani. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1958 QUEEN OPENS REVAMPED GATWICK



The Queen has opened London's new and extended airport at Gatwick on the Surrey-Sussex border 25 miles (40km) south of the capital.

Her Majesty and the Duke of Edinburgh arrived by air from London Airport at Heathrow.

Wearing a fitted blue coat and a blue and white hat, she was greeted by Lord Munster, the Lord Lieutenant of Surrey, and the Minister of Transport and Civil Aviation, Harold Watkinson.

The Queen and the Duke inspected a guard of honour of 10 airline captains.

Then they walked to the main airport building through the pier or "finger" that allows passengers to get to their planes under cover - the first such structure ever built at a British airport.

The government decreed Gatwick London's second airport five years ago and it has been closed until now for major re-development.

The royal couple were shown models and plans of the new layout before the Queen made a speech at a restaurant overlooking the airfield and unveiled a commemorative plaque.

More than £7m has been spent rebuilding the airport and adding a railway station - Gatwick claims to be the first in the world to combine airport, trunk road and rail facilities into one unit.

But the ambitious venture has not been without its detractors.

Referring to the controversy caused by the expansion, Her Majesty said in her speech: "I sympathise with all those people whose lives are going to be affected by this airport, but I hope that there will be some measure of compensating advantage to local inhabitants when it is in full operation."

Mr Watkinson then reminded those present that the Queen had inaugurated the central terminal at London Airport two and a half years ago, marking a major step in the development of British civil aviation.

"Nobody will know better than your Majesty the fascinating possibilities in front of us as new types of aircraft bring the Commonwealth, and indeed the whole world, closer together.

"We hope that this new airport at Gatwick has been planned to fit the new air age that lies ahead," he said.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Gatwick Airports Ltd began operating in May 1936 with a scheduled service to Paris. Its official launch followed a month later with the opening of the world's first circular air terminal. During World War II Gatwick was under military control, but reopened as a civilian airport in 1946. Rebuilding work began in 1956, and services recommenced in 1958. In 1988 the North Terminal, costing £200m, was opened and the main terminal was renamed the South Terminal. Gatwick became the busiest single runway airport in the world, the second largest airport in the UK and the world's sixth busiest international airport. By 2005, 32.6 million passengers were passing through the airport's two terminals. Around 90 airlines operate from the airport, serving around 200 destinations. In 1979, when the last major expansion took place, an agreement was reached with the local council not to expand further before 2019, but recent proposals to build a second runway at Gatwick led to protests about increased noise and pollution and demolition of houses and villages. Gatwick's owners, BAA, published a master plan in March 2005 to show how the airport could develop over the next 10 and 25 years. The document can be viewed on the BAA Gatwick website.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

The moon tiredly wanders through her waning phase in reflective Gemini, lowering energy levels and prompting you to find closure on topics that have emerged over the past month.



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

The universe is working to open that door today, as the moon floats through mentally sharp Gemini and forms a supportive link with self-disciplined Saturn.



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

Listen to your body today. You tend to become totally immersed in your mental world, so let the moon's nurturing presence in your sign work to re-acquaint you with your physical needs.



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

As a Cancer, you regularly need to withdraw into your shell to recover your serenity. Pull away from everyone's needs and focus on quietly healing yourself today.



LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

Take it easy today, Leo. The cosmic fuel tank is running low, as the heady Gemini moon marches through her waning phase and begins to prepare for tomorrow's eclipse.



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

Big things are coming your way on the work front, Virgo. To make room for them, aim to release nagging or outgrown elements of your current job circumstance today.



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

Your career path is of utmost importance this time of year, Libra. In order to find your next step, it's important to keep stretching your possibilities and defining your vision.



SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

Today's skies help you rebalance yourself emotionally, Scorpio. The moon floats tiredly through reflective Gemini, preparing to close shop for tomorrow's powerful eclipse.



SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

Something needs to be released in order for new growth to emerge. The waning Gemini moon suggests a low-energy day focused on completion and closure of the last month's main engagements.



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

The moon floats through her waning phase in preparation for tomorrow's eclipse, which considerably lowers energy levels all around. Accomplish what you can, but don't strain yourself!



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

Where can you bring things to completion in that arena? The reflective Gemini moon encourages you to release what is no longer serving you in terms of uncertain confidence around your skills.

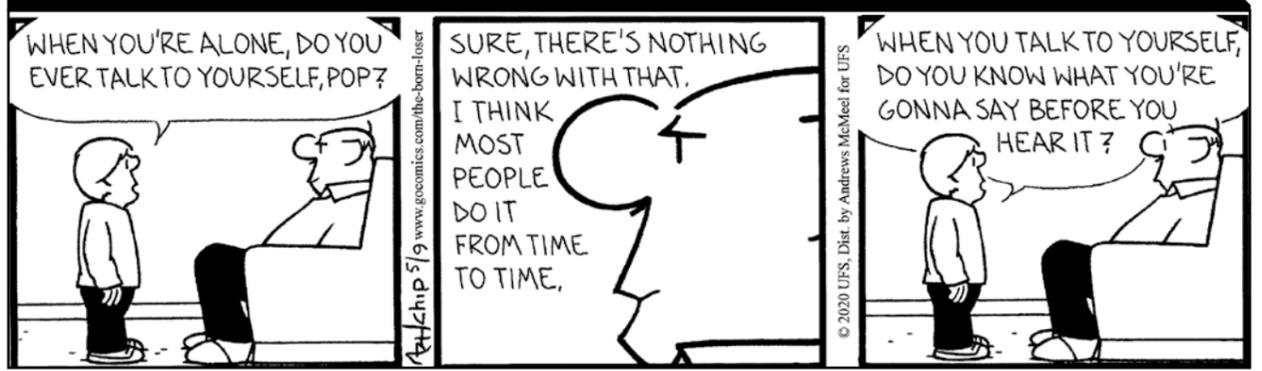


PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Spend the day away from the noise, Pisces. You're ready to release some ancient baggage around your family story, as tomorrow's potent eclipse begins to stir feelings around this arena.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

EASY

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

EASY+

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

MEDIUM

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

HARD

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

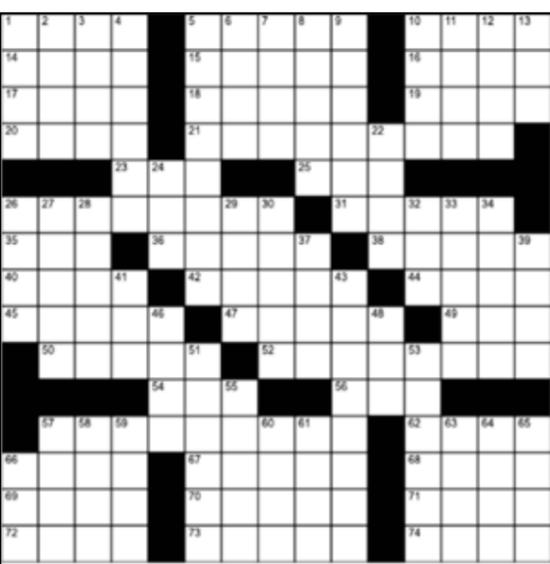
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	21	27	thunderstorms
Harbin	17	28	thunderstorms
Tianjin	23	34	rain
Urumqi	19	25	showers
Xi'an	22	25	rain
Lhasa	17	22	overcast
Chengdu	24	31	rain
Chongqing	25	33	thunderstorms
Kunming	25	32	overcast
Nanjing	18	28	cloudy
Shanghai	25	32	rain
Wuhan	24	31	rain
Hangzhou	17	26	thunderstorms
Taipei	20	32	overcast
Guangzhou	14	25	rain
Hong Kong	24	33	cloudy
WORLD			
Moscow	15	23	thunderstorms
Frankfurt	14	24	thunderstorms
Paris	14	26	overcast
London	12	24	overcast
New York	22	30	rain

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Strong criticism; 5- Prices paid; 10- City in Western Nevada; 14- Burt's ex; 15- ___ a time; 16- Hip bones; 17- Seed cover; 18- Stone marker; 19- Ball game; 20- Tablet; 21- Aircraft with one set of wings; 23- End for Siam; 25- Wedding page word; 26- Private feud; 31- Scoff; 35- Clinch; 36- Heat home; 38- Roofing items; 40- Nobelist Wiesel; 42- Frog sound; 44- "Peter Pan" pooch; 45- Bet; 47- Ire; 49- NFL scores; 50- Iota preceder; 52- Stupid; 54- Ram's mate; 56- Sugary suffix; 57- Severity; 62- Word that can precede war, biotic and climax; 66- "That smarts!"; 67- Peace goddess; 68- Salamander; 69- A shivering fit - often a precursor to malaria; 70- Navigation acronym; 71- General ___ chicken; 72- Bristle; 73- Run away with a lover; 74- Greek peak;

DOWN: 1- Flutter; 2- Actress Singer; 3- Natural blue dye; 4- Deprived of life; 5- Skin preparation; 6- Savvy about; 7- Witnessed; 8- Claw; 9- The ear's "stirrup"; 10- Latvia's capital; 11- North Carolina university; 12- Egypt's river; 13- Clod; 22- Time to give up; 24- Religious sch.; 26- Scene; 27- Dazzling display; 28- Sound of a horse; 29- Skater Lipinski; 30- Encompassed about; 32- Ich bin ___ Berliner; 33- Delight; 34- Tears; 37- Othello villain; 39- Cheek; 41- Shoebox letters; 43- Liquid hydrocarbon; 46- Hwys.; 48- Apt. divisions; 51- For a short time; 53- Rough shelter; 55- Matriculate; 57- Enormous; 58- ___ above; 59- Ostrichlike bird; 60- Architect Saarinen; 61- Lose one's cool; 63- Capone foe; 64- Terrible time?; 65- ___ boy!; 66- Western Hemisphere org.;



Crossword puzzles provided by BestCrosswords.com

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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



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Ref: 2105 1002 2,158 ft² 3 3

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"We dance until it's RENTED!"

Manhattan HKD 17,500/mth
Ref: 2003 1001 1,626 ft² 3 2

AD



ECONOMY

WORLD BANK SEES 5.6% GLOBAL GROWTH IN 2021, BEST SINCE 1973

PAUL WISEMAN,
WASHINGTON

THE World Bank is upgrading the outlook for global growth this year, predicting that COVID-19 vaccinations and massive government stimulus in rich countries will power the fastest worldwide expansion in nearly five decades.

In its latest Global Economic Prospects report, out yesterday, the 189-country anti-poverty agency forecasts that the world economy will grow 5.6% this year, up from the 4.1% it forecast in January. The global economy last year shrank 3.5% as the coronavirus pandemic disrupted trade and forced businesses to close and people to stay home.

The projected expansion would make 2021 the fastest year of growth since 1973's 6.6%.

But the 2021 rebound will be uneven, the bank predicts, led by rich countries such as the United States that could afford to spend vast amounts of taxpayer money to support their economies: 90% of advanced economies are expected to return to pre-pandemic levels next year - measured by income per person - versus just a third of developing countries.

The World Bank is calling for wider distribution of COVID vaccines to low-income countries, where inoculations have gone slowly.

The bank expects the U.S. economy to expand 6.8% in 2021, up from the 3.5% it forecast in January; the world's biggest economy shrank 3.5% last year as COVID-19 brought economic activity to a near standstill in the spring. But an aggressive

vaccine rollout, along with low interest rates and massive government spending revived the economy.

China -- the world's No. 2 economy and the first to emerge from the coronavirus recession -- is forecast to grow 8.5% in 2021 after expanding just 2.3% last year.

The 19 European countries that share the euro currency are collectively expected to 4.2%, reversing last year's 6.6% drop. And Japan is forecast to post 2.9% growth this year after registering a 4.7% drop in economic output last year.

The bank notes downside risks to its forecast, including the possibility that the pandemic lingers, that inflation flares and forces central banks to raise interest rates and that countries struggle with high debt burdens. **MDT/AP**

TRADE

US DEFICIT DIPS TO \$68.9 BILLION WITH EXPORTS UP

THE U.S. trade deficit narrowed in April to \$68.9 billion as an improving global economy boosted sales of American exports.

The April deficit, the gap between what America buys from abroad and what it sells to other countries, was down 8.2% from a record March deficit of \$75 billion, the Commerce Department reported yesterday.

The improving economic situation overseas drove up demand for American goods while domestic demand for imports slowed.

In April, exports of U.S. goods and services rose 1.1% to \$205 billion while imports declined 1.4% to \$273.9 billion. Part of the boost in exports came from a \$1.4 billion increase in sales of civilian aircraft, a positive sign that a rebound in air travel from depressed pandemic levels is prompting stronger sales of jetliners.

The drop in imports reflected a \$1.1 billion

decline in purchases of foreign-made autos and auto parts.

Through the first four months of the year, the U.S. trade deficit totals \$281.7 billion, up 50.4% from the deficit during the same period in 2020, a time when the U.S. economy was essentially shut down because of the coronavirus pandemic.

The politically sensitive deficit with China fell to \$25.8 billion in April, down 6.7% from the March imbalance. But through the first four months of this year, the deficit with China, the largest the United States runs with any country, was up 37.1% over the same period a year ago.

The deficit in just goods in April totaled \$86.7 billion while the surplus in services totaled \$17.8 billion. The United States runs surpluses in services trade which help lower the goods deficit. However, the services economy, which includes travel payments such as airline fares, has been hit hard

by the coronavirus with the service surplus down 16.2% so far this year compared to the same period a year ago.

While many economists are forecasting that the trade deficit will continue to drop in coming months, some analysts are worried that the recovering U.S. economy will continue to favor foreign-made products.

"Domestic demand is roaring back amid reopening and a rapidly improving health backdrop," said Mahir Rasheed, U.S. economist at Oxford Economics. "The trade deficit is poised to widen further as the fiscally powered, consumer-driven recovery in the U.S. runs ahead of the global economic rebound."

But Michael Pearce, senior U.S. economist, said he believed trade would provide a slight boost to overall economic growth in the current April-June quarter, helped by an improving performance of U.S. exports. **MDT/AP**



CORPORATE BITS

Melco launches 3-year residency show, featuring HK superstars



Melco Resorts & Entertainment (Melco) will launch Asia's first series of residency shows, featuring an incredible lineup of Hong Kong superstars, including Aaron Kwok, Joey Yung, and Leon Lai. The three-year residency show project is a key endeavor for Melco to deliver its commitment to "diversification in Macau through world-class entertainment."

The three superstars will be performing a collective of 90 exclusive shows at Studio City from 2021 to 2024. Further first-class ar-

tists will join this lineup with their bespoke shows over the next 12 months.

"We are thrilled to bring to Macau such an amazing line-up of stars. The region's biggest names are finally coming to the city to deliver a show experience that will be unique. This is a testament to Macau's ability to drive the best talent. It also demonstrates Melco's belief in the city's diversification and its contribution to the Greater Bay Area," said the group's president, Evan Winkler.

SJM supports 2021 World Environment Day



SJM participates in the "2021 World Environment Day" in support

of the Macao Environmental Protection Bureau (DSPA) to boost

environmental awareness and to encourage employee engagement. A series of activities kicked off on 7 June, when all SJM properties switched off their exterior and non-essential interior lights for one hour from 8:30 p.m. Two other summer events, namely "Casual Summer Wear - Let's Conserve Energy" and "Non-essential Lights off at Lunch", take place from now until August 31. SJM also aims to reduce the energy consumption of air conditioners in office by setting a temperature no lower than 25°C.

All Roads - blocked off roads - lead to Tokyo Olympics

ROADS were being closed off yesterday around Tokyo Olympic venues, including the new \$1.4 billion National Stadium where the opening ceremony is set for July 23.

This is a clear sign that Tokyo Olympic planners and the International Olympic Committee are moving forward despite public opposition, warnings about the risks of the games becoming a spreader event, and Tokyo and other parts of Japan being under a state of emergency until June 20.

"Today we are only 45 days away from the opening ceremony, although the state of emergency is in effect and the situation remains severe nationwide," organizing committee President Seiko Hashimoto told an executive board meeting yesterday. "The number of new COVID-19 cases in Tokyo has started to decrease little by little and we strongly hope the situation will be under control as soon as possible."

New infections in Tokyo are



down to around 500 cases a day from 1,000 a month ago. The number of hospitalizations and the seriously ill have also decreased, but the levels are still higher than some levels of last fall when Covid-19 variants were not prevalent in Japan.

Experts last week on the Tokyo Metropolitan Government's pandemic panel said that movement of people in

central Tokyo had been rising for three weeks. They warned new infections could rebound if people continue to increase their mobility.

The Prime Minister's office said that 3.66% of Japanese were fully vaccinated as of Monday. It said 10.7% had at least one shot in what has been a slow vaccine rollout.

Japan has attributed about

13,500 deaths to Covid-19, good by some standards but not as low as many countries in Asia.

Dr. Hiroshi Oshitani, a virologist at Tohoku University and a government adviser, reminded about the potential spread of infection in Japan and in other countries after the Olympics.

"The government and the IOC [...] keep saying they're holding a safe Olympics," Oshitani was quoted saying in the Times of London. "But everybody knows there is a risk. It's 100% impossible to have an Olympics with zero risk."

Pushback against the Olympics remains strong with 50-80% opposed to the games going ahead depending how the question is phrased. Saitama prefecture, just north of Tokyo, on Monday called off plans for two public viewing areas.

Kaori Yamaguchi, an Olympic bronze medalist for Japan in judo in 1988 and a Japanese Olympic Committee board

member, wrote last week that Tokyo and Japan had been "cornered" into holding the Olympics.

The IOC is pressing ahead, reliant on broadcast rights for 73% of its income.

Japan has officially spent \$15.4 billion to organize the Olympics, and government audits say it's much larger. All but \$6.7 billion is private money. The IOC's overall contribution is about \$1.5 billion.

In the latest numbers provided by local organizers, 11,090 Olympians are lined up to enter Tokyo. In addition, 59,000 other people will enter for the Olympics.

They include: Olympic Family (3,000); national Olympic committees (14,800); international sports federations (4,500); Olympic Broadcasting Service and other broadcasters (16,700); media (5,500); others (14,500).

So that means 70,090 for the Olympics.

The Paralympics involve 4,400 athletes, plus 19,000 more in categories similar to the Olympic breakdown.

That's 23,400 for the Paralympics, meaning 93,490 for both events. Organizers say this number is 50% less than the original forecast of 180,000 entering for the Paralympics and Olympics. **MDT/AP**

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OPINION

World Views

Thomas Goldring Georgia State University
 MDT/The Conversation

**INTENSIVE TUTORING AND
 SUMMER SESSIONS MAY BE
 NEEDED TO CATCH STUDENTS
 UP AFTER THE PANDEMIC**

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to substantial reductions in student learning in metro-Atlanta public elementary and middle schools. What's more, these impacts have grown over time, according to our new research.

By winter of 2020-21, we found that average math achievement within a grade was up to seven months behind where students likely would have been had the pandemic not occurred. In reading, students were up to 7 1/2 months behind on average in some grades.

Students often fell further behind between the fall and winter tests, sometimes dramatically so. The effects of the pandemic varied by subject, grade and school district, complicating how districts can determine their responses to this unprecedented disruption to formal education.

We also found that the pandemic often made preexisting disparities worse.

For example, students eligible for free or reduced-price meals—a crude measure of poverty—generally experienced slower achievement growth during the pandemic than did ineligible students. Similarly, traditionally marginalized student groups, including Black students, Hispanic students and English learners, generally experienced larger reductions in achievement growth.

We wanted to understand whether the return to in-person learning would reduce the harmful effects of the pandemic. Elementary school students who returned to in-person instruction in the fall of 2020-21 experienced greater achievement growth per instructional day than students who continued to learn remotely, but their growth was still less than for comparable students before the pandemic. This could be due to student difficulty in transitioning back to in-person learning, emotional trauma or other effects of the pandemic. Alternatively, increased disparities in student achievement could make teaching more difficult. For middle school students, differences in the rate of learning between in-person and remote instruction were modest.

Many people are concerned that school closures and virtual learning during the pandemic slowed student learning. Understanding the extent of the slowdown will help districts determine what sort of intervention strategies may counteract the losses, and what resource levels will be required to meet the challenge.

Similarly, knowing how achievement growth varies by instructional mode—remote, hybrid and face-to-face—will inform decisions about the use of remote instruction, both for the remainder of the pandemic and beyond.

The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 provides school districts with funds to help students catch up to where their learning would have been had the pandemic not occurred. The most important implication of our findings is that assistance should be targeted toward students with the greatest reductions in achievement growth during the pandemic.

We recommend that districts use three strategies that prior research suggests have the greatest impact on student achievement.

First, provide high-intensity, small-group tutoring based on classroom content. This strategy comes with the highest price tag, emphasizing the need to focus on students with the greatest need.

Second, extend the school day during the regular academic year.

And third, provide learning opportunities during summer or other breaks, and use incentives like free meals and transportation to increase participation in them.

Our research group, the Metro Atlanta Policy Lab for Education, continues to dig into the effects of the pandemic on students. We are studying student engagement under remote learning and analyzing how parents chose their student's learning mode. We're also unpacking unexpected findings, such as the relatively milder impacts on girls and students with disabilities.

The German military says it has found a solution for an unusual logistics problem its troops in Afghanistan face: a glut of beer.

Defense Ministry spokeswoman Christina Routsis said that a recent decision by the German commander in Afghanistan to ban the consumption of alcohol for security reasons had resulted in a pileup of beer, wine and mixed drinks at Camp Marmal in Mazar-e-Sharif.

German soldiers are usually entitled to two cans of beer—or equivalent—per day.

Routsis said the military had found a civilian contractor who will

take the alcohol back out of the country ahead of the German troops' withdrawal from Afghanistan as the NATO mission in the country ends in the coming months.

The German army said the 22,600 liters of alcohol—including almost 60,000 cans of beer—couldn't be sold in Afghanistan due to local religious restrictions, or destroyed for environmental reasons.

Proceeds from the German contractor's sale of the beer elsewhere should cover the cost of transporting it out of the country, the army said.



AP PHOTO



AP PHOTO

Myanmar's military junta will begin presenting its case against deposed leader Aung San Suu Kyi in court next Monday, her lawyers said. Government prosecutors will have until June 28 to finish their presentation in the court in Naypyitaw, the capital, where she is being tried on five charges, after which Suu Kyi's defense team will have until July 26 to present its case, said Khin Maung Zaw, the team's senior member.

**GLOBAL STING: FBI-
 ENCRYPTED APP TRICKS
 ORGANIZED CRIME**

A global sting involving an encrypted communications platform developed by the FBI has sparked raids and arrests around the world, delivering “an unprecedented blow” to crime gangs, law enforcement authorities said yesterday.

Operation Trojan Shield involved police swoops in 16 nations. More than 800 suspects were arrested and more than 32 tons of drugs—cocaine, cannabis, amphetamines and methamphetamines were seized along with 250 firearms, 55 luxury cars and more than \$148 million in cash and cryptocurrencies.

“Operation Trojan Shield is a shining example of what can be accomplished when international law enforcement partners from around the world work together and develop state-of-the-art investigative tools to detect, disrupt and dismantle transnational criminal organizations,” Calvin Shivers, assistant director of the FBI's Criminal Investigative Division, said at a news conference in The Hague.

It was, said Australian Federal Police Commander Jennifer Hearst, “a watershed moment in global law enforcement history.”

The seeds of the operations were sown when law enforcement agencies earlier took down two other encrypted platforms, EncroChat and Sky ECC.

That meant crime gangs which traffic drugs and organize underworld hits around the world were in the market for new secure phones.

The FBI had just what they needed. An app called ANOM that was installed on modified mobile phones.

“There was a void that was created by a lack of these encrypted platforms,” said Shivers. “So that created an opportunity for collaboration with our international partners, to not only develop the specific tool but also to develop the process of gathering the intelligence and disseminating the intelligence.”

The app formed the backbone of Trojan Shield, an operation led by the FBI that also involved the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, the European Union police agency Euro-pol and law enforcement agencies in more than a dozen countries.

The ANOM app was popular and got more popular as criminals told one another it was a safe platform. Over the past 18 months, the FBI provided encrypted devices to more than 300 crime gangs operating in more than 100 countries. That allowed police to look over the shoulders of criminals as they discussed hits, drug shipments and other crimes.

Intelligence gathered and analyzed “enabled us

to prevent murders. It led to the seizure of drugs that led to the seizure of weapons. And it helped prevent a number of crimes,” Shivers said.

Authorities in Australia and New Zealand said they'd dealt a huge blow to organized crime after hundreds of criminals were tricked into using the messaging app.

Australian authorities said they arrested 224 people and seized more than four tons of drugs and \$35 million in an ongoing operation that dates back three years. New Zealand police said they had arrested 35 people and seized drugs and assets worth millions of dollars.

“Today, the Australian government, as part of a global operation, has struck a heavy blow against organized crime,” Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison told reporters. “Not just in this country, but one that will echo around organized crime around the world.”

European police last year delivered a major blow to organized crime after cracking an encrypted communications network, known as EncroChat, used by criminal gangs across the continent.

In March, Belgian police arrested dozens of people after cracking another encrypted chat system, called Sky ECC, and seizing more than 17 tons of cocaine. MDT/AP

Pakistan A gas cylinder exploded at a small roadside market in southwestern Pakistan, killing eight people and injuring two others, police said. The blast took place in Mashkel, a remote town in Baluchistan province bordering neighboring Iran, said Hasil Khan, a local police official. He said mud-brick shops collapsed in the explosion, causing casualties.



AP PHOTO

Russia has targeted nine Canadian officials with sanctions in retaliation to Canada's restrictions against Russian officials accused of involvement in the imprisonment of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny. The Russian travel ban on Canadian officials follows similar sanctions previously imposed by Moscow against U.S. and European officials in response to their restrictions against Russian officials.



AP PHOTO

Poland's prime minister vowed that the government would always support the Belarusian people struggling for democracy, weighing in after a senior member of his ruling party suggested Polish solidarity could be conditional. Poland's notoriously bickering political factions have long been united in their support for those in Belarus opposing the dictatorship of longtime President Alexander Lukashenko.