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AP PHOTO



Philippine president has threatened to order the arrest of Filipinos who refuse Covid-19 vaccination and told them to leave the country if they would not cooperate with efforts to end a public health emergency. President Rodrigo Duterte, who is known for his public outbursts and brash rhetoric, said in televised remarks Monday night that he has become exasperated with people who refuse to get immunized amid a health crisis then help spread the coronavirus.

AP PHOTO



Sri Lanka Nearly a hundred carcasses of turtles with throat and shell damage, as well as a dozen dead dolphins and a blue whale, have washed ashore in Sri Lanka since a container ship burned and sank, raising fears of a severe marine disaster. Ecologists believe the deaths were directly caused by the fire and release of hazardous chemicals while the Singapore-flagged X-Press Pearl burned for 12 days and sank last week off Sri Lanka's main port in the capital Colombo.

AP PHOTO



Afghanistan Taliban fighters took control of a key district in Afghanistan's northern Kunduz province and encircled the provincial capital, police said, as the insurgent group added to its recent battlefield victories while peace talks have stalemated. The Taliban's gains came as the Pentagon reaffirmed the U.S. troop withdrawal was still on pace to conclude by early September. Fighting around Imam Sahib district began late Sunday and by midday Monday the Taliban had overrun the district headquarters.

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WEATHER DELAYS

Parents have slammed the weather bureau for the delayed issuance of heavy rainfall signals. The education bureau, meanwhile, brushed off responsibility P2,3



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PARENTS UNHAPPY WITH DELAYED WEATHER FORECASTER'S RAINSTORM REACTION

ANTHONY LAM

COMPLAINTS about the slow reaction of the local weather bureau to yesterday's heavy rainfall went viral on the Internet, with parents slamming the bureau for causing inconvenience to them.

Yesterday morning, the city recorded a peak rainfall of 80mm. The Meteorological and Geophysical Bureau (SMG) issued the yellow rainstorm warning signal at 7:10 a.m., and the red rainstorm warning signal at 7:50 a.m.

With most primary and secondary schools commencing at about 8 a.m., many parents were unhappy with the timing of the SMG warnings, criticizing it for not issuing the signals either earlier or later.

The red signal triggered the

school suspension mechanism for kindergartens and primary schools.

Many parents complained, as on many similar occasions before, that the SMG did not issue the signal earlier, implying that they would not have sent their children to school had they been given sufficient notice.

Some added that because of the weather bureau's delayed reaction, their children were soaked when they arrived at school.

In contrast, some social media users stressed that it was not the first time Macau saw such heavy rain. "When we were small, we put on casual wear as we departed for school and brought our uniforms to get changed into once we arrived at school,"

one social media user recalled.

Nonetheless, it was worth noting that a social media user wrote on a group that their child's school had forced them to pick up their child when the signal was on. The parent wrote that they had cited the education bureau's guidelines on rainstorm warning signals to dispute the school's call.

The guidelines stipulate that schools should remain open for students under rainstorm signals, implying that students should not be forced to go home.

As of press time, the social media user did not reveal which school it was.

The SMG forecasts that the low-pressure trough will continue to impact Macau in the coming days.



GAMING

Rigorous HK-Macau travel bubble prompts JP Morgan to scale down GGR forecast

HONEY TSANG

JP Morgan scaled down its gross gaming revenue (GGR) prognosis for the third and fourth quarters of this year to 43% and 58% of pre-pandemic levels, vis-à-vis the earlier prediction of 50% and 66% respectively. The reduction, the brokerage stated, is owing to the "stricter-than-expected" travel bubble measures announced by the two SARs on June 21.

In response to the proposed cross-city travel plan, the global investment banking firm said in a statement released yesterday that "we couldn't help but be somewhat disappointed by the seemingly limited scale (at least initially) of the travel bubble plan, as well as the slower-than-expected timing of the launch."

On Monday, Macau authorities announced at the Covid-19 media briefing



that the Hong Kong-Macau border will be reinstated — provided that Hong Kong has not registered any locally transmitted cases for 28 consecutive days, or until July 5.

However, a set of preconditions apply in this quarantine-free regime, including that only fully vaccinated individuals will be granted entry to Macau, multiple Covid-19 tests will be required

for travelers before and upon arrival, and limited quotas set for daily arrivals — which Hong Kong's Chief Executive Carrie Lam Cheng Yuet Ngor said will only be a small number ini-

tially but will be progressively increased in phases.

From the brokerage's point of view, a long list of prerequisites may curtail the prospect of a strong uptick in GGR in July and probably even August, "leading us to curb our enthusiasm for the summer holiday."

JP Morgan also cut back its forecast for Macau's GGR recovery pace for 2021 by around 5% to reach 42% of 2019's levels, with the predicted recovery in mass and VIP segments standing at 51% and 26%, respectively.

Hong Kong is an "important" and "the second-largest feeder market" to Macau, the brokerage stressed. Hong Kong's travelers take up around 15-20% of tourist arrivals and approximately 10% of GGR for Macau.

"Hong Kong's importance lies in its position as a key channel for travelers and capital flows from the mainland," JP Morgan added.

The brokerage estimates that Hong Kong, including Hong Kong holidaymakers and mainland travelers coming through Hong Kong, may contribute over 20% of Macau GGR for the mass segment in the pre-pandemic era.

Should there be an more large-scale reopening, the brokerage expects that this could give rise to a "step change in the demand run-rate."

JP Morgan is anticipating a "likely poor June GGR," owing to the resurgence of Covid-19 in Guangdong province.

Another brokerage, Sanford C. Bernstein, is forecasting the city's GGR to dip 40% from May, and around 70% from the same period in 2019, according to a report by GGRAsia.

According to the latest official data compiled by the Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau (DICJ), Macau registered around MOP10.45 billion in GGR in May, up 24.3% from MOP8.40 billion in April. The uptick was mostly driven by the spike in demand during the May Golden Week.

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

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

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ADMINISTRATOR & CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Kowie Geldenhuys kowie@macaudailytimes.com

OFFICE MANAGER_Juliana Cheang juliana@macaudailytimes.com

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

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

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DSEDJ brushes off responsibility over rainstorm signals

RENATO MARQUES

THE Education and Youth Development Bureau (DSEDJ) refuted yesterday any responsibility over the timing of weather condition warnings for parents and schools.

Speaking to the media during a briefing after the Non-Higher Education Committee Plenary Meeting, the Chief of the Department on Non-Higher Education from DSEDJ, Wong Ka Ki explained that the Bureau has no power in the issuing of severe weather warnings, noting that the task is the sole responsibility of the Meteorological and Geophysics Bureau (SMG).

"The timing of the issuing of the [rainstorm] signal is a competency of the SMG. We can't control this. It is out of our competency," Wong said, adding, "We received the information from SMG at 7:50 a.m. and we immediately issued

a notice for the students, parents, and schools. We became aware of the issuing of the red level warning of a rainstorm at this time, which is the same time that the media gets it."

The official brushed off any responsibility on the part of the Bureau in response to criticisms on social media from parents and guardians that the warning issued yesterday morning came too late, at a time when most students had

already arrived at school or were on their way.

"We have issued a warning to the parents and schools and also alerted the schools to keep the doors open in case students were coming to school," the department chief added. Wong noted that the DSEDJ had also previously communicated with schools regarding the need to introduce some degree of flexibility and tolerance where students arrived late to school during the yellow level of the rainstorm warning signal.

"We have already issued these recommendations to the schools," Wong said noting that the Bureau has received "a few inquiries from parents on this matter."



BUREAU PREPARING ADJUSTMENTS AHEAD OF NEW TEACHERS' STATUTE ENFORCEMENT

THE DSEDJ is currently preparing the adjustments needed for the administrative regulations to match the provisions of the new teachers' statute (Law 4/2021), approved in late April by the Legislative Assembly and published last month in the government official gazette.

According to the Chief of the Department on Non-Higher Education from DSEDJ, Wong Ka Ki, the bureau is already preparing the necessary amendments to be ready before the entry into force of the new law, which will come into effect from September 1, 2022.

Gov't claims no increase in requests for help on students' mental health

RENATO MARQUES

THE director of the Centre of Psycho-pedagogical Support and Special Education from the Education and Youth Development Bureau (DSEDJ), Chow Pui Leng, said to the media yesterday that the number of requests for help regarding students' mental health has not increased.

The statement came yesterday in a reply to a question from the media during a briefing on the sidelines of the Non-Higher Education Committee Plenary Meeting.

Questioned whether recent occurrences – and in particular the pandemic – prompted more requests for help, the official replied that the bureau did not register an increase in the number of requests for help in response to the matter.

Nevertheless, the mental and physical health of students was one of the main topics



on the agenda during yesterday's meeting.

According to DSEDJ information, in the meeting, the Chief of the Department of Non-Higher Education from DSEDJ, Wong Ka Ki, presented the work on eight specific areas in that field.

Since January this year, the DSEDJ together with Health Bureau, the Social Welfare Bureau, and other non-governmental entities

have created a task force to follow-up on youth mental and physical health. According to the DSEDJ, the task force has developed 65 work plans, including several sharing sessions that are included on the Database for Moral and Civic Education.

Wong explained that the idea of including other associations and groups in this task force comes from the un-

derstanding that "youngsters have different needs," leading DSEDJ to expand the work from the schooling system to the wider community.

Questioned on what currently constitute major concerns, Wong said, "Internet addiction is one of the matters that we have been addressing in the last few years and have to do with the changes in the society."

TENDER FOR HZMB SEWAGE PLANT TO COMMENCE BY EARLY 2022

HONEY TSANG

THE Environmental Protection Bureau (DSPA) affirmed that the government is striving to invite tenders for the construction of a new sewage treatment plant on the artificial island of Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge (HZMB) from the end of this year to early 2022.

The DSPA is now working on the tender documents for the project, DSPA director Tam Vai Man said in a written reply to a query by lawmaker Lei Chan U.

Earlier, Lei indicated that the city's capacity to handle sewage has not kept pace with the city's development, resulting in deteriorating water quality surrounding Macau.

According to DSPA's official website, the plan for building a sewage treatment plant at HZMB

was first proposed by the government in 2016 as a long-term approach to tackle the growing amount of discharge and waste.

The construction of the new plant is expected to conclude in 2026 at the earliest. However, no details on the timeframe for construction have been released, Lei noted.

In response to this, Tam disclosed the expected timeframe for the tender process, but not the timeframe for construction.

The DSPA director also stated that the construction of another sewage treatment plant at Zone E1 will only be commenced if there is an identified need, as the speed of development and amount of sewage from Zones C, D, and E are relatively modest and can be handled by the current sewage treatment facilities at Cotai.



GOV'T URGED TO DESIGNATE PART OF YAT YUEN CANIDROME FOR NEW SCHOOLS

HONEY TSANG

LAWMAKER Ella Lei has urged the government to reinstate the original plan to remodel the Macau Yat Yuen Canidrome — once a greyhound racing stadium located in Senhora de Fátima on Macau Peninsula — into a site for educational institutions.

She delivered the request to the government through a written inquiry, in which she pointed out that the proposal would help to resolve the long-lasting predicament most schools on the podiums of buildings have been facing — which is the shortage of space.

The Macau government reclaimed the field at the Macau Yat Yuen Canidrome back in 2018. In August that year, the Land, Public Works and Transport Bureau (DS-SOPT) revealed its plan for the former greyhound racing venue in which it proposed that the plot be used for social, cultural, and recreational purposes, as well as a construction site for schools.

LYNZY VALLES



At the end of 2018, the government clearly stated that it would set aside 8,000 square meters of the field purely for education facilities, with four schools expected to relocate there.

However, authorities backpedaled on the plan in May 2020,

saying that the proposed use for the land plot required further review after the Urban Master Plan 2020-2040 was officially launched.

Lei argued that the public consultation on the Urban Master Plan did not have many men-

tions of the Macau Yat Yuen Canidrome.

Due to an increased birth rate during 2010-2014, a surge in student numbers in primary schools (which is expected to affect high schools within the next few years) has been observed. As such, Lei

stressed that there is a pressing need to plan for additional educational facilities to accommodate the anticipated increase in student numbers.

It is expected that the number of local students will reach 84,651 in the coming new academic year, up 2,660 from this year. This is equivalent to 70 more classes.

Lei called on the government to speed up the resumption of its planning efforts for the former greyhound racing venue.

She also questioned the authorities about how many “podium schools” had been left unresolved in Macau and whether the current timeframe would be sufficient for the city’s high schools to carry out any enhancement and/or expansion projects necessary to cater to a greater demand for facilities later.

In 2016, the government launched the Blue Sky Project, intending to progressively iron out the problems for podium schools located at 15 buildings in 15 to 20 years.

PUBLIC FUNDING

Sonia Chan admits discrepancy between laws and reality

RENATO MARQUES

THE laws that regulate the use of public funds granted to associations are currently obsolete and ineffective, the coordinator of the Office for the Planning and Supervision of Public Assets, Sonia Chan, acknowledged in a reply to lawmaker Sulu Sou’s written inquiry.

In the reply, Chan said that the two operative laws “no longer correspond to the current social situation and increasingly do not fulfill the demands of society regarding the supervision, rationality and transparency in the use of public funds.” She added, “Therefore, it is necessary to globally review, update and improve the regime.”

Chan further explained that such regulations have been in force for over 20 years and were created for Macau’s social situation at that time.

“At that time, the autonomous funds with



[the capacity] to provide financial support to associations were mainly the Macau Cooperation and Development Foundation and the Macao Foundation,” she noted, explaining that the law was initially written at a time when the number of registered local associations was around 1,700.

Nowadays, the number of autonomous funds

has grown to over 20 and the number of associations has risen to around 10,000. According to Chan, there is now an urgent need to amend this legal regime.

Chan, a former Secretary for Administration and Justice in the previous government headed by Chui Sai On, also added that such an amendment has been

planned and is part of the Policy Address from the government. Chan stated that her office “already initiated the preliminary work for the legal production to establish a basic and unified regime for the evaluation and granting of financial support.”

Sou has addressed the topic of supervision and control over the government’s financial support to associations for several years, dubbing the existing use of public funds non-transparent, ineffective and wasteful on multiple occasions.

For Sou, the need to change this regime has been a call for many years from society, which previous governments have ignored.

The lawmaker also recalled that he has attempted to bring the topic to debate in the Legislative Assembly plenary, but this bid was rejected by the majority of the lawmakers that compose the hemicycle.

ASSOCIATION LAUNCHES PETITION TO OPPOSE REVISION OF MIGRATION BILL

LYNZY VALLES

THE New Macau Association (ANM) is petitioning to oppose the government’s revision of the migration bill, which proposes to relax the requirements for temporary residency status.

Yesterday, the pro-democratic association launched “Civil Petition and One Person One Letter Campaign” to allow residents to voice their opinion to the government and the Legislative Assembly (AL).

The Standing Committee of the AL is currently reviewing the Legal Regime for Immigration Control, Residence and Residence Permits in the Macau SAR bill.

This bill will allow residency permit holders who come to Macau frequently and regularly for school, work, or business to be regarded as “habitually residing” in Macau, even if they are not staying overnight in Macau.

“The current proposal of the amendment will undoubtedly shake the foundation of the existing residency system,” the association stated.

“The government has never raised the issue of relaxing the requirements for residency in the public consultation held in 2018, nor has it been included in the bill submitted to the Legislative Assembly for general discussion this year,” it added.

The association also recalled that in July 2018, the Commission Against Corruption’s (CCAC) investigation report revealed flaws in the immigration application examination and approval process, especially the use of skilled or major investment immigration loopholes to obtain the right of residence by fraudulent means.

The report criticized the lack of stringency given that the authorities did not consider the length of time the applicants had stayed in Macau as a criteria for reviewing and approving their residency renewal applications, and for “pointing out the loopholes under which some applicants’ residency could be renewed even if they had not been in Macau for a long time,” ANM recalled.

Art Exhibition presents crossover between installation and performance

THE third edition of the “Curiouser and Curiouser” exhibition was recently inaugurated, presenting a crossover between installation and performance art created by artists and performers from Macau.

Showcased at the Macau Tower Convention and Entertainment Center, “Curiouser and Curiouser” is a project inspired by Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland by Lewis Carroll.

Each year, the artists bring the public into a new chapter of the fictitious world of Lewis Carroll’s wonderland. This year presents the third chapter, in which the character of the Dodo will take the public into “A Curious Race with Alice.”

Mel Cheong Hoi, curator of the exhibition, said, “Our performances are still one of



the best ways to gather people over the weekend.

“During the first year, Macau Tower had more tourists coming and [they would] take photos and share them on internet. These two years, we have more locals coming instead, so that means when a door

is closed, you have another one that opens,” she told the Times.

For Cheong, artists’ collaboration during the pandemic was strengthened among the community.

Previously, the curator said that there are lot of good artists in the city.

However, some may just not have good marketing or organizing skills to make the whole project suitable for a commercial area.

This exhibition is organized by the Ieng Chi Dance Association, co-organized by the Macau Tower Convention and Entertainment Center and sponsored by the Cultural Affairs Bureau.

Chloe Lau, a representative of Ieng Chi Dance Association, mentioned that the association has been established for more than 20 years and has the vision of promoting dance as an art form, by creating a common ground for the arts and providing inspiration to the field of contemporary dance.

For her, the ongoing exhibition is a collaboration that represents the vision of the association. **LV**

CRIME

NON-RESIDENT WORKER STEALS MOTORCYCLE FOR ‘FUN’

RENATO MARQUES

A 60-year-old non-resident worker from the mainland working as a security guard for a commercial store has been detained by the police after taking a motorcycle that did not belong to him from a street parking spot on the Estrada da Baia da Nossa Senhora da Esperança in Cotai, the Judiciary Police (PJ) reported.

The owner reported the theft to the police on June 17.

Police reviewed surveillance footage from the area and observed that around 11:30 a.m. that day, the suspect rode a motorcycle to that location and parked alongside the motorcycle.

After parking, he

rode off on the other motorcycle and parked it nearby at the Avenida Cidade Nova, in the Cotai area.

Through the vehicle registration of the first motorcycle, which belonged to the suspect, the police found his address. They detained him at his home at the Estrada Marginal da Areia Preta on June 19.

The man told the police that while parking, he saw the motorcycle had its key in the ignition, and so he decided to take it “just for fun.”

He was presented to the Public Prosecutions Office on June 21, being accused of the crime of misappropriating a vehicle, which is punishable by imprisonment for up to two years or a monetary fine equivalent to up to 240 days.

AD

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- 2010** Launch of 100Mbps fiber broadband service
- 2007** Launched 3G mobile service
- 2000** Launched broadband service
- 1995** Launched Internet Service
- 1995** Official launch of GSM digital mobile telephone service in Macau
- 1991** Local telecommunications network fully digitalized
- 1988** Launched analogue mobile telephone service
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HONG KONG

POLICE ARREST MAN FOR SEDITION OVER PROTEST FLAG

ZEN SOO, HONG KONG

HONG Kong police have arrested a 40-year-old man on suspicion of using seditious words after a flag with a banned protest slogan was seen hanging outside his apartment.

Police received a report on Monday from a passerby who spotted the flag bearing the banned slogan "Liberate Hong Kong, the revolution of our times" hanging from a laundry rack outside the apartment in the Mong Kok neighborhood in Kowloon, police said Tuesday.

Officers arrested the man, who remains in detention, police said. He was not identified. If charged and convicted of sedition, first-time offenders face up to a 5,000 Hong Kong dollar (\$644) fine and two years' imprisonment.

The slogan "Liberate Hong Kong, the revolution of our times" was often chanted by protesters during months of anti-government demonstrations in 2019 as they demanded broader democratic freedoms during a time when China be-

FLORIAN WEHDE



gan exerting more control over the semi-autonomous city.

The government later outlawed the slogan following the implementation of a tough national security law, which criminalizes subversion, secession, terrorism and foreign collusion endangering national security. The law covers protester actions such as calls for Hong Kong independence.

A government notice last July said the "Liberate Hong

The slogan "Liberate Hong Kong, the revolution of our times" was often chanted by protesters during months of anti-government demonstrations in 2019

Kong, the revolution of our times" slogan connotes a call for independence and subver-

sion of state power.

"If the police have reasonable suspicion (of sedition), by

hanging a flag saying "Liberate Hong Kong" [...] did it mean to liberate Hong Kong people from the existing regime? That would be seditious," said pro-Beijing lawmaker Regina Ip.

"I can't say that the police have overreacted. But ultimately whether that person has committed the offense of sedition, that is for the courts to decide," she said.

Authorities have cracked down on dissent in the city since the 2019 protests, arresting over 100 people under the national security law and bringing charges against most of the city's major pro-democracy activists, many of whom are now behind bars or have fled abroad.

Last week, police arrested five top editors and executives at the pro-democracy paper Apple Daily and froze \$2.3 million in assets of three companies linked to the paper. The newspaper says it may have to close this Saturday as a result.

Today, Tong Ying-kit, who flew a flag with the protest slogan while driving his motorcycle into a group of police officers last July, is to go on trial for allegedly inciting secession. He is the first person to stand trial under the national security law since the legislation came into effect last June. **MDT/AP**

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HONG KONG

Carrie Lam says US 'beautifying' security offenses

ZEN SOO, HONG KONG

FOREIGN governments are "beautifying" acts that endanger national security in Hong Kong when they criticize the recent crackdown on a pro-democracy newspaper, the leader of the semiautonomous Chinese territory said yesterday.

Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam's comments come as some countries including the U.S. condemn the arrest of editors and executives at Apple Daily and the freezing of its assets as the latest examples of eroding freedoms in the former British colony.

Those arrested at the newspaper have been accused of breaching sweeping security legislation imposed by Beijing last year by colluding with foreign countries to endanger national security.

"Don't try to underplay the significance of breaching the National Security Law, and don't try to beautify these acts of endangering national security, which the foreign governments have taken so much to their heart," Lam said.

Lam took particular aim at comments made by U.S. State Department spokesman Ned Pri-



ce saying Hong Kong authorities were using the law to suppress the media and silence dissent. Price said that "exchanging views with foreigners in journalism should never be a crime."

"What we are talking about is not exchanging views between foreigners and journalists," Lam said. "It is violating the law as defined in the National Security Law and based on very clear evi-

dence which will bring the case to court."

In a police operation last week, authorities arrested five Apple Daily editors and executives and froze \$2.3 million worth of assets of three companies linked to the paper. Apple Daily has said that if some of its funds are not released by Friday, the paper may cease operations this weekend.

Yesterday, Apple Daily had en-

ded its English news and online financial news services.

The newspaper and its executives were vocal supporters of the pro-democracy protests that roiled Hong Kong for months in 2019. The protests were sparked by concerns that Hong Kong was losing the freedoms that Beijing promised it could maintain when it was handed from British to Chinese control in 1997. **MDT/AP**

NEW JUDICIAL RULES TO STRIKE TELECOM FRAUD

CHINA'S judicial and law enforcement agencies yesterday jointly issued a legal document to stop telecom fraud "on every link and dimension."

The 17-entry document, jointly issued by the Supreme People's Court (SPC), the Supreme People's Procuratorate, and the Ministry of Public Security, clarifies significant issues such as how to define the severity of an offense and an accomplice in a telecom fraud case, the SPC press release said.

China still sees a high incidence of telecom fraud and faces several new obstacles in containing them, said Li Ruiyi, a senior judge with the SPC.

For instance, said Li, many telecom fraud rings have moved their operations abroad and can still easily obtain mobile phone SIM cards and credit cards in China, two essential tools for these crimes.

The document pays particular attention to illegal transactions of SIM cards and payment accounts.

People who buy, sell, or lease credit cards, bank accounts, and SIM cards for or to telecom fraud rings will be considered accomplices, the document said.

"When offered such deals, one should be aware of the serious legal consequences and not surrender to petty profit," Li said.

Those who open mobile phone accounts, credit cards, bank accounts, and accounts of other payment platforms by fake or stolen IDs will be subject to criminal prosecution, the document said.

The severity of an offense by a fraud suspect usually depends on the amount of money he or she steals. Sometimes, however, it is difficult for prosecutors to identify the actual figure in a telecom fraud case.

To address the issue, the document regulates that a suspect who pays multiple visits to telecom fraud dens abroad or stays there for more than 30 days in a year will be considered as a serious offender.

Telecom fraud caused an economic loss of 35.37 billion yuan (5.47 billion U.S. dollars) across China in 2020, Li said. **MDT/XINHUA**

CHINA'S biggest banks promised Monday to refuse to help customers trade Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies after the central bank said executives were told to step up enforcement of a government ban.

Regulators appear to worry that despite the 2013 ban on Chinese banks and other institutions handling cryptocurrencies, the state-run financial system might be indirectly exposed to risks. Beijing also worries users might evade efforts to monitor and control the financial system.

The four major state-owned commercial banks and payment service Alipay promised to step up monitoring of customers and block use of their accounts to buy or trade crypto-currencies.

"Customers are asked to be more aware of risks, safeguard bank accounts and not to use virtual currency-related transactions," China Construction Bank Ltd. said on its website.

Chinese banks promise to step up cryptocurrency ban



Similar promises were issued by Industrial and Commercial Bank of China Ltd., Bank of China Ltd., Agricultural Bank of

China Ltd., Postal Savings Bank of China Ltd. and Alipay, operated by Ant Group.

Promoters of crypto-

currencies say they allow anonymity and flexibility, but Chinese regulators warn that might aid money-laundering or

other crimes.

Bank executives were summoned to a meeting at which they were questioned about their activities and told to "maintain financial stability and security," the central bank said in a statement.

It said cryptocurrency trading "disrupts normal economic and financial order" and can facilitate money laundering and other crime.

Regulators tightened prohibitions against handling cryptocurrencies in 2017 and publicly reminded banks about their potential risks in May, possibly reflecting concern cryptocurrency mining and trading was continuing.

Regulators in several Chinese regions have ordered cryptocurrency mining operations to shut down.

The Chinese central bank is developing an electronic version of the country's yuan that could be tracked and controlled by Beijing. **MDT/AP**



DIPLOMACY

Kim sister derides US official, dismisses chances for talks

HYUNG-JIN KIM & KIM TONG-HYUNG, SEOUL

THE powerful sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un dismissed prospects for an early resumption of diplomacy with the United States, saying yesterday that U.S. expectations of talks would "plunge them into a greater disappointment."

Kim Yo Jong's blunt statement indicates that the diplomatic impasse over North Korea's nuclear program is likely to continue unless the North suffers greater pandemic-related economic difficulties and needs urgent outside assistance, some experts said.

Hope for a restart of nuclear talks flared briefly after Kim Jong Un said last week that his country must be ready for both dialogue and confrontation, though more for confrontation. U.S. National Security adviser Jake Sullivan called Kim's comments an "interesting signal."

Yesterday, Kim Yo Jong derided Sullivan's response.

"It seems that the U.S. may interpret the situation in such a way as to seek a comfort for itself," the of-

ficial Korean Central News Agency quoted her as saying. "The expectation, which they chose to harbor the wrong way, would plunge them into a greater disappointment."

Shin Beomchul, an analyst with the Seoul-based Korea Research Institute for National Strategy, said North Korea has been communicating the same message for months -- that it has no intention to return to talks unless the United States offers meaningful concessions, likely in the form of eased economic sanctions. The Biden administration, for its part, doesn't want to budge either, he said.

"Both parties are locked in a waiting game -- North Korea wants the United States to make concessions first, and the United States has no intentions to match a level of action the North is demanding," Shin said.

On Monday, during a visit to Seoul, Sung Kim, the top U.S. envoy on North Korea affairs, said Washington is willing to meet the North "anywhere, anytime without preconditions." But he stressed that the Biden administration would continue to pressure Nor-

th Korea with sanctions over its nuclear and missile ambitions.

Just before Kim Yo Jong's statement was released, Sung Kim met South Korean Unification Minister Lee In-young and said Washington and Seoul remain committed to seeking the complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula through diplomacy. Lee said he hoped North Korea would return to the negotiating table at an early date and called the current situation "a very good chance" to resume talks.

Sung Kim later met South Korean President Moon Jae-in, and the two said they would strive to resume U.S.-North Korea talks, Moon's office said. The South Korean government didn't immediately comment on Kim Yo Jong's statement.

As a precondition for the talks' resumption, North Korea has repeatedly called on the United States to lift its "hostile policy" toward it, an apparent reference to the U.S.-led sanctions and regular military drills with South Korea. But experts say the Biden administration won't ease sanctions or make

other major concessions before North Korea takes concrete steps toward denuclearization.

North Korea may only ease its stance if it can no longer endure its ongoing economic hardship, some experts said. Kim Jong Un has admitted North Korea faces what he described as its "worst-ever" crises, due to drastically reduced international trade caused by pandemic-related border closings, mismanagement, the economic sanctions and crop-killing storms last year.

The deadlock "could be prolonged unless there's a change in the conditions facing the North, such as greater economic or pandemic-related difficulties," Shin said.

Analyst Cheong Seong-Chang at the private Sejong Institute in South Korea said Kim Yo Jong's statement suggested North Korea isn't ready to rejoin talks anytime soon.

"A mutual distrust and antagonism run so deep that the resumption of the North Korea-U.S. talks is difficult. Even if the U.S. and North Korea meet, it'll never be easy to find common ground," Cheong said.

Last Thursday, Kim Jong Un ordered officials to prepare for both dialogue and confrontation, "especially to get fully prepared for confrontation," in order to protect national security and dignity.

In an interview with ABC News, Sullivan said Sunday that "His comments this week we regard as an interesting signal. And we will wait to see whether they are followed up with any kind of more direct communication to us about a potential path forward."

U.S. officials have suggested Biden will take the middle ground between former President Donald Trump's direct dealings with Kim and ex-President Barack Obama's policy of "strategic patience." Details of Biden's North Korea policy haven't been publicly released.

U.S.-led diplomacy aimed at stripping North Korea of its nuclear program has stalled since February 2019, when the Americans rejected a North Korean demand for major sanctions relief in exchange for a partial surrender of its nuclear capabilities during a summit between Kim and Trump. **MDT/AP**

this day in history

1972 CHANCELLOR ORDERS POUND FLOTATION



The Chancellor, Anthony Barber, has announced his decision to temporarily float the pound.

The news comes only a day after the bank lending rate was increased by 1% - and four days after an interview on the BBC's Panorama programme in which he denied Britain was in danger of devaluation.

Labour MPs will see his decision to float the pound - rather than trade within a broad band linked to other currencies - as a first step towards devaluation.

Mr Barber told MPs the trade balance had deteriorated in the past couple of months and it had become necessary to shore up sterling by using the Bank of England's reserves.

He told MPs he was determined not to "allow ourselves to slide into a situation where we would have to borrow substantial sums".

"One of our underlying causes of this situation has undoubtedly been the concern about inflation... To curb inflation remains our first priority," he added.

The immediate crisis was sparked by heavy selling of the pound on the markets, which began on 16 June.

Investors' unease about high inflation in Britain has been exacerbated by recent highly publicised pay settlements for coal miners and railway workers, taking the average public sector wage increase to 9%. The Government has also become locked in two disputes over its industrial relations act, further damaging its image abroad.

Conservative jeers

The Chancellor accused his shadow Denis Healey of adding to pressure on the pound by speculating about a possible devaluation in a speech on Monday evening. In it, Mr Healey said there would be a devaluation by July or August.

Amid Conservative jeers, leader of the opposition Harold Wilson denied his shadow chancellor's remarks had anything to do with the pressure on the pound.

Labour front benchers also claimed the decision to float was in direct contradiction of the Government's agreement to keep the pound's exchange rate within a narrow band as a first step towards economic and monetary union with the other Common Market countries.

Mr Barber insisted the flotation would be temporary. The foreign exchange market will be closed today (Friday) and Monday in order to prepare for the new arrangements.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

The Chancellor went to Luxembourg on 26 June to explain his decision to float the pound to the finance ministers of the six Common Market countries.

He assured them the pound would return to operating within fixed trading bands in time for Britain to join its European partners in 1973.

Britain did join the Common Market, but the economy went from bad to worse. Mr Barber imposed a 90 day price freeze from 6 November.

1973 saw more industrial action and petrol rationing as a result of a Middle East oil embargo.

Prime Minister Edward Heath was finally forced to call a snap election in February 1974 - which he lost to Harold Wilson.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS

ARIES
Mar. 21-Apr. 19
Try not to use emotional blackmail. Your fickle nature may cause jealousy. You will need a little competition today. Get involved in activities that will stretch your stamina.

TAURUS
Apr. 20-May. 20
You don't want to give anyone fuel for the fire. You may have major blowups with someone you love if you don't back down. You will have a problem dealing with groups.

GEMINI
May. 21-Jun. 21
Disharmony in the home will be extremely stressful. Fitness or weight loss programs will help your self esteem. Your tendency to dramatize may be a little much for your partner to take constantly.

CANCER
Jun. 22-Jul. 22
Look into residential moves that will give you more space. You need to keep busy doing things that you enjoy. Go out with close friends who understand your situation and your needs.

LEO
Jul. 23-Aug. 22
Take time to listen to children and help them with projects that seem impossible to them. Communicate with relatives who may need advice in order to find solutions to their existing problems.

VIRGO
Aug. 23-Sep. 22
You need adventure and excitement in your life. Find out more, if you want to start your own business. Don't forget family obligations. Try to accommodate them without infringing on your own responsibilities.

LIBRA
Sep. 23-Oct. 22
You must get out and mingle. You may want to make changes that will turn your entertainment room into a real family affair. You must be careful not to trust just anyone.

SCORPIO
Oct. 23-Nov. 21
Don't let friends convince you that you should contribute to something you don't believe in. Your energy will be high; however, if not channeled suitably, temper tantrums may erupt.

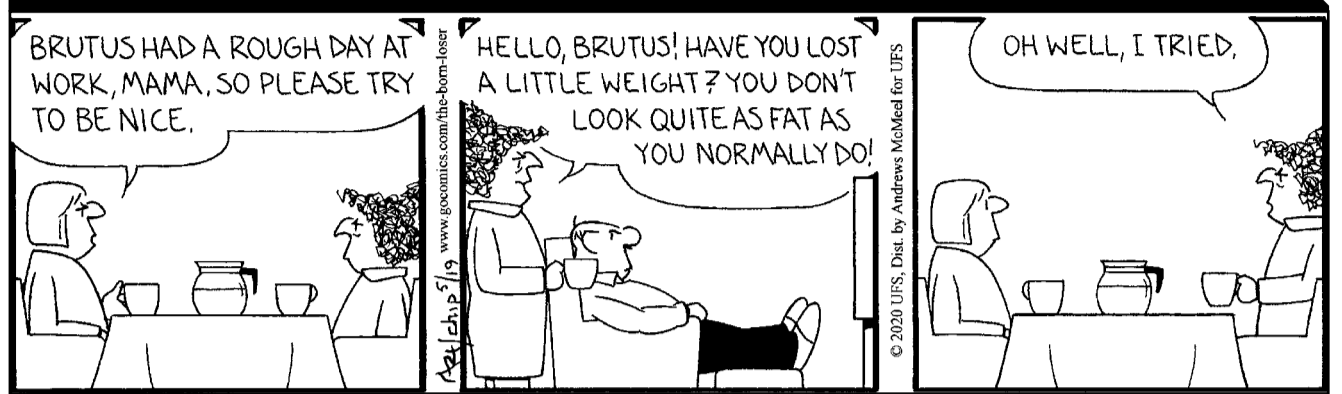
SAGITTARIUS
Nov. 22-Dec. 21
You can learn a great deal more if you listen rather than rant and rave. Deception is apparent. You are ahead of your time, and trying to stay in one spot could be asking too much.

CAPRICORN
Dec. 22-Jan. 19
Secret affairs will only lead to deception. You may have difficulties with family members if you get involved in petty arguments. Be discreet about your personal life or whereabouts.

AQUARIUS
Jan. 20-Feb. 18
Your high energy, original ideas, and excellent memory will aid your accomplishments. If you join intellectual or cultural groups, you should meet individuals who stimulate you.

PISCES
Feb. 19-Mar. 20
Your own small business on the side could ease your financial stress. Control your temper by getting immersed in your work. Your goals will be in reach if you direct your energy wisely.

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

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

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

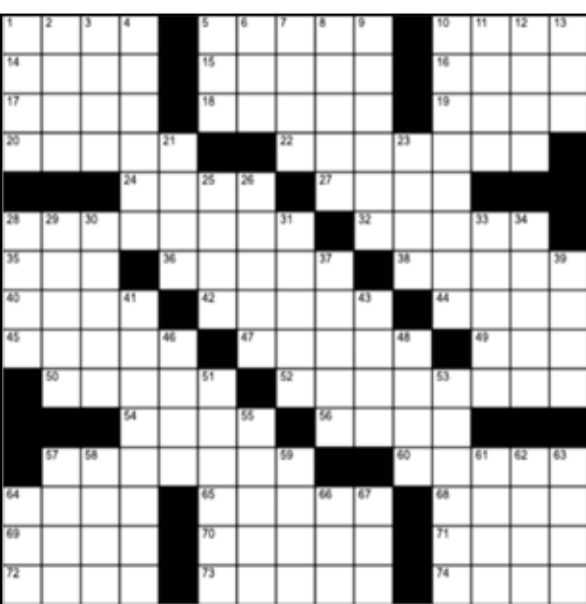
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	21	32	cloudy
Harbin	14	27	fine
Tianjin	23	33	cloudy
Urumqi	23	29	cloudy
Xi'an	24	34	cloudy
Lhasa	19	26	cloudy
Chengdu	23	28	rain
Chongqing	24	28	rain
Kunming	25	32	showers
Nanjing	19	27	cloudy
Shanghai	27	35	thunderstorms
Wuhan	21	31	fine
Hangzhou	14	28	fine
Taipei	18	31	cloudy
Guangzhou	18	29	thunderstorms
Hong Kong	24	35	cloudy
WORLD			
Moscow	13	24	cloudy
Frankfurt	18	32	cloudy
Paris	21	31	sunny
London	18	29	rain
New York	14	27	sunny

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Complacent; 5- Adjust to zero; 10- Go out with; 14- Table d'...; 15- Blessed sound?; 16- Son of Aphrodite; 17- Western writer Wister; 18- Racket; 19- Support for a broken limb; 20- Beginning; 22- Coins; 24- Emptiness; 27- "Peter Pan" dog; 28- Perforated container; 32- Nuisances; 35- Rage; 36- Ancient region of Asia Minor; 38- Lachrymose; 40- Got older; 42- Hungarian composer; 44- Small drink; 45- Paddled; 47- Ditto; 49- Hindu title; 50- Thermoplastic yarn; 52- Caribou; 54- "On the Waterfront" director Kazan; 56- What confused people don't have; 57- Marsh plant; 60- Organization; 64- Baht spender; 65- Raccoon-like carnivore; 68- Aggregate; 69- Syrup brand; 70- Greek epic poem; 71- Former spouses; 72- Amenable; 73- Nest; 74- Gossip;

DOWN 1- Beat it!; 2- Cut down; 3- Western Native Americans; 4- Swiss city; 5- Campaigned; 6- Author Umberto; 7- Type of guard; 8- Reddish dye; 9- Boot part; 10- Dead; 11- Asian sea; 12- Chuck; 13- Cornerstone abbr.; 21- Author Morrison; 23- Understood; 25- Graven image; 26- Fabric of jeans; 28- So long!; 29- Church instrument; 30- Guarded; 31- Stair part; 33- Pithy; 34- Extra; 37- Nahuatl speaker; 39- Primordial giant in Norse myth; 41- Something removed; 43- Labor; 46- Blockhead; 48- Responsibility; 51- Nicotinic acid; 53- Judged; 55- Garlic sauce; 57- Fellow; 58- River in central Switzerland; 59- Put down; 61- Cab; 62- Consumer; 63- Attention-getting sound; 64- Ring result; 66- 19th letter of the Greek alphabet; 67- Bartender's requests;



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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MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

BELGIUM BEATS FINLAND, PERFECT IN GROUP PLAY AT EURO 2020

THREE straight wins, seven goals and its top players with game time in their legs.

For Belgium, the group stage at the European Championship could hardly have gone better.

The world's top-ranked team beat Finland 2-0 on Monday to finish in first place in Group B and join Italy and the Netherlands in qualifying with maximum points.

Finland finished in third place in its first appearance at a major tournament, nipped by Denmark after its 4-1 victory over Russia in Copenhagen.

Belgium's second goal, scored by Romelu Lukaku in the 81st minute for his third at Euro 2020, could prove significant because it left the Finns as the worst third-place team in the three completed groups. They have only a small chance of qualifying as one of four best third-place finishers.

That didn't stop a vocal section of white-and-blue-clad Finland supporters from staying behind long after the final whistle at Saint Petersburg Stadium to serenade their team. The players eventually came out of their locker room and back onto the field to applaud.

"I feel somewhat empty at the

AP PHOTO



moment," Finland coach Markku Kanerva.

Finland was on its way to the draw that would have secured the team second place in the group when goalkeeper Lukas Hradecky had the misfortune of scoring a cruel own-goal in the 74th minute. A header from Belgium defender Thomas Vermaelen bounced down and hit the post, rebounded onto the outstretched hand of Hradecky, and went over the line before he had chance to scoop it away.

Hradecky fell to his knees in anguish.

De Bruyne came off in second-half stoppage time — during which period a woman ran onto the field of play before being quickly escorted away — after having set up Lukaku for his goal, which saw the striker turn his marker inside the area and shoot low and right-footed past Hradecky.

The Manchester City midfielder, back playing after facial injuries sustained in the Champions League final, also supplied the corner which Vermaelen headed toward goal for the opener and generally ran the game from central midfield.

Hazard and Witsel played the whole game after their own fitness issues, while Martinez was also able to rest first-choice players like midfielder Yuri Tielemans and defenders Toby Alderweireld and Jan Vertonghen.

A drummer in one section of the Finland supporters kept up

the beat throughout the game and there was a huge roar when the halftime whistle was blown, with their team coping fairly comfortably.

Belgium hadn't pushed too hard by then, knowing a draw guaranteed first place, but Lukaku thought he had scored in the 65th minute when he collected a pass, again from De Bruyne, and slotted home a finish from 10 meters.

It was ruled out after a video review by a marginal offside call, prompting a huge roar from the Finland fans, many of whom threw bottles toward — but not onto — the field.

They were soon to be disappointed by the two late goals Belgium scored, with Lukaku's putting him tied with Cristiano Ronaldo, Georginio Wijnaldum and Patrick Schick with a tournament-leading three goals.

"Romelu is our not-so-secret weapon," De Bruyne said. "When he's in the box, I know exactly where he is, I know exactly where to find him. It becomes difficult for defender to get in front of him — he's huge." **MDT/AP**

LATEST RESULTS

Ukraine	0	1	Austria
North Macedonia	0	3	Netherlands
Finland	0	2	Belgium
Russia	1	4	Denmark

AD



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MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

PREVIEW

France's showdown against Portugal at Euro 2020 lacks punch

FRANCE advanced without kicking a ball, and Portugal can move on as well even with a loss tomorrow.

Hardly the heavyweight showdown many had hoped for in a match pitting defending champion Portugal against World Cup champion France, and Cristiano Ronaldo against Kylian Mbappe.

Results on Tuesday guaranteed France a spot in the round of 16. A one-goal loss for Portugal should be enough as long as Hungary doesn't win in Germany in Group F's other game.

Still, that's unlikely to alter France coach Didier Deschamps' way of thinking, and he is thinking only of first place.

"We still hold the cards," Deschamps said. "If we win then we'll finish first."

The winner of Group F will play one of the third-place finishers.

Portugal can still win the group by beating France, but it depends on what happens in Munich in the match between Germany and Hungary.

Germany and Portugal have three points and the same goal difference, while Hungary is last

with one point and must win to advance.

Portugal is having no problem scoring goals — five in two games so far, including a tournament-leading three for Ronaldo. But the Portuguese are conceding too easily, conceding four to the Germans.

It's the opposite case for France, which shut out Germany in a 1-0 victory but fluffed several chances in a 1-1 draw with Hungary.

With an attack that is the envy of most coaches, it seems odd that France is not yet clicking in attack.

Mbappe netted a career-high 42 goals for Paris Saint-Germain this season, while Karim Benzema scored 30 for Real Madrid and moved into a tie for fourth on the all-time list of scorers in the Champions League with 71.

Yet neither has scored so far at Euro 2020.

Benzema is getting more criticism than Mbappe, however, and the players are trying to sound reassuring.

After Antoine Griezmann backed him, so did left back Lucas Digne.



France's Kylian Mbappe (left) and Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo

"We all know how good he is, he's shown it for Real Madrid," Digne said of Benzema. "He does so much for the team, his movement is great. Nobody in the squad is doubting him."

France's attacking options have been reduced by a knee injury to winger Ousmane Dembele, who left the squad on Monday and won't be replaced.

All's well with Portugal's attack. The 36-year-old Ronaldo's movement remains troublesome for defenders, despite his age. He is adept at cutting in from both flanks, hard to stop running through the middle because of his close control, and dangerous in the air.

"He moves all over the attacking line. As defenders you must always communicate, so you don't leave him too much space," Digne said. "It's extraordinary what he's done throughout his career. His hard work is an example for any player."

At least France won't have to defend against him in the intense sun this time, unlike last Saturday's mid-afternoon heat and noise against Hungary.

A 9 p.m. kickoff will see to that, but it also offers Ronaldo a chance to dazzle under the lights. **MDT/AP**

UPCOMING GAMES

	Date	Time	Home	Away	City	ODDS
Thu	Jun 24	0:00	Sweden	Poland	Dublin	H 3, D 3.5, A 2.58
Thu	Jun 24	0:00	Slovakia	Spain	Bilbao	H 19, D 7.2, A 1.23
Thu	Jun 24	3:00	Germany	Hungary	Munich	H 1.2, D 8.2, A 18.5
Thu	Jun 24	3:00	Portugal	France	Budapest	H 3.95, D 3, A 2.36

ODDSCHECKER.COM

GROUP STANDINGS

Group A	PL	W	DRAW	L	GF - GA	PNT
Italy	3	3	0	0	7-0	9
Wales	3	1	1	1	3-2	4
Switzerland	3	1	1	1	4-5	4
Turkey	3	0	0	3	1-8	0
Group B	PL	W	DRAW	L	GF - GA	PNT
Belgium	3	3	0	0	7-1	9
Denmark	3	1	0	2	5-4	3
Finland	3	1	0	2	1-3	3
Russia	3	1	0	2	2-7	3
Group C	PL	W	DRAW	L	GF - GA	PNT
Netherlands	3	3	0	0	8-2	9
Austria	3	2	0	1	4-3	6
Ukraine	3	1	0	2	4-5	3
North Macedonia	3	0	0	3	2-8	0
Group D	PL	W	DRAW	L	GF - GA	PNT
Czech Republic	2	1	1	0	3-1	4
England	2	1	1	0	1-0	4
Croatia	2	0	1	1	1-2	1
Scotland	2	0	1	1	0-2	1
Group E	PL	W	DRAW	L	GF - GA	PNT
Sweden	2	1	1	0	1-0	4
Slovakia	2	1	0	1	2-2	3
Spain	2	0	2	0	1-1	2
Poland	2	0	1	1	2-3	1
Group F	PL	W	DRAW	L	GF - GA	PNT
France	2	1	1	0	2-1	4
Germany	2	1	0	1	4-3	3
Portugal	2	1	0	1	5-4	3
Hungary	2	0	1	1	1-4	1

UEFA DECLINES MUNICH APPLICATION FOR RAINBOW-COLORED STADIUM

UEFEA has declined the Munich city council's application to have its stadium illuminated in rainbow colors for Germany's final European Championship group game against Hungary tomorrow.

The governing body said in a statement yesterday that it understands the intention behind the proposal but "must decline this request" because of its political context — "a message aiming at a decision taken by the Hungarian national parliament."

Munich Mayor Dieter Reiter's application on behalf of the council made clear it wanted to protest a law passed by Hungarian lawmakers last week that prohibits sharing with minors any content portraying homosexuality or sex reassignment. The law was denounced as anti-LGBT discrimination by hu-

man rights groups.

Hungarian Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó blasted the German plan on Monday.

"In Hungary we have passed a law to protect Hungarian children, and now in Western Europe they are griping about it," Szijjártó said in Luxembourg. "They want to express this by including politics in a sporting event, which has nothing to do with the passing of national laws."

UEFA said it believes "that discrimination can only be fought in close collaboration with others" and it proposed that Munich illuminates the stadium with the rainbow colors on June 28 for Christopher Street Day or between July 3-9 for the Christopher Street Day week in the city.

The body said these dates "align better with existing events."

German soccer federation spokesman Jens Grütter had already suggested Monday that it might also be an option to display the colors in the days after Hungary's visit. Munich will host a quarterfinal match at Euro 2020 on July 2.

But the delayed action undermines the Munich's city's planned protest against what it calls "the homophobic and transphobic legislation of the Hungarian government."

Hungary's National Assembly approved the bill against sharing LGBT content with minors in a 157-1 vote last week, when one independent lawmaker voted against it and all other opposition parties boycotted the voting session in protest.

"This legislation represents a new mark in the invisibility and disenfranchisement of lesbians, gays, bisexual, transgender and

intersex people (LGBTI) and adds to the systematic restriction of the rule of law and fundamental freedoms that have been practiced for years in Hungary," the Munich council said in its application, which had cross-party support.

UEFA said it understood the council's intention to send a message to promote diversity and inclusion but stressed that it was "a politically and religiously neutral organization."

Michael Roth, Germany's minister for Europe, said UEFA's decision was "bitter, but expected" and he called for fans attending the game to show their colors in the stadium.

"Set an example for diversity and solidarity with LGBTI people in Hungary and all over Europe! LGBTI rights are human rights!" Roth wrote on Twitter. **MDT/AP**

OPINION

World Views

S. Jay Olshansky, University of Illinois at Chicago
 MDT/The Conversation

MILLIONS ARE REJECTING ONE OF HUMANITY'S BEST WEAPONS FOR SAVING LIVES: VACCINES

A federal judge has dismissed a lawsuit filed by employees at a Houston hospital who did not want to be vaccinated for COVID-19, claiming that COVID-19 vaccines are unsafe. In the June 12, 2021 ruling, U.S. district Judge Lynn Hughes rejected the lead plaintiff's claim that the vaccines are experimental and dangerous.

This case is indicative of how many people believe that the COVID-19 vaccine could either kill or harm them in some way. But as scientists in public health, infectious diseases and vaccine development, we know that these claims are not just false – they are lethal. In the U.S. today, the vast majority of hospitalizations and deaths from COVID-19 occur among the unvaccinated.

Over the course of history, vaccines have allowed humanity to successfully combat viral diseases – some to the point of eradication. Here, we break down the role that vaccination plays in the fight against infectious disease, illustrate how the benefits far outweigh the risks and explain why everyone should be eager to be vaccinated against COVID-19.

Revvig up the immune system

Vaccines are one of the most innovative public health interventions in medical history. They activate the most effective human weapon against viruses that exists – our own immune system.

Vaccines show the immune system what the virus looks like so our bodies can manufacture specific antibodies to that virus. These antibodies then bind to and inactivate or destroy invading viruses.

In addition to antibodies, the immune system also generates immune-active lymphocytes programmed to specifically seek out, bind to and destroy invading viruses. Together, these antibodies and immune-active lymphocytes help the immune system quickly recognize viruses and often wipe them out before the host knows they've been exposed. The immune response may also reduce the consequences of infection to little more than minor symptoms.

The latest weapon against viruses: mRNA vaccines

mRNA vaccines contain only the genetic code for the spike proteins the COVID-19 virus uses to attach to cells, not the virus itself. This code primes the immune system to recognize the spike protein and manufacture antibodies against it. When the actual COVID-19 virus arrives, the immune system is then prepared to make antibodies against the invaders' spike protein and thwart its entrance into cells.

This technology is new only in the sense that it had not yet been deployed when COVID-19 emerged. Tests of mRNA technology have been ongoing since the early 1990s.

It took under a year to develop an mRNA vaccine against COVID-19. This was not because the process was rushed, but because coronaviruses had already been studied in detail for previous outbreaks. Scientists knew in advance how to block coronaviruses from infecting cells.

The short-term reactions most people experience when receiving the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines, like muscle soreness and fatigue, are from the body revving up its immune system to attack the protein it was just instructed to manufacture. This reaction is a good sign – it means that your immune system is working. Keep in mind that none of the vaccines in use today can cause the disease they were designed to prevent.

Adverse effects of vaccines

That said, viral vaccines are not risk-free. Because humanity is so diverse, there will always be a tiny fraction of the population that reacts poorly to one or more of the vaccine's ingredients. But these same risks also apply to common, frequently used medications, such as aspirin or insulin, that can't be used safely by everyone. People continue to use these medications because the benefits far outweigh the risks.

[Abridged]

German Chancellor Angela Merkel said yesterday she hopes UEFA will act "responsibly" on the issue of staging Euro 2020 matches in Britain given the spread there of the highly contagious delta variant of the coronavirus.

UEFA is discussing with the British government the possibility of increasing attendance at Wembley Stadium to 65,000 for the semifinals and final of the European Championship. The government had already agreed to increase the capacity to at

least 40,000 for the final three matches of the Euro 2020 tournament.

Merkel said she supports the British government's efforts to ensure necessary hygiene rules are respected in the 90,000-capacity venue.

"I hope that UEFA will deal (with this) responsibly and I don't think it would be good if the stadiums there are full," she told reporters in Berlin.

AP PHOTO



PHILIPPINES

DUTERTE ON POSSIBLE ICC KILLINGS PROBE: 'YOU MUST BE CRAZY'

JIM GOMEZ, MANILA

PHILIPPINE President Rodrigo Duterte said he's ready to face possible charges in any local court for the thousands of killings under his anti-drug crackdown but never before the International Criminal Court, which he has repeatedly ridiculed.

The ICC's outgoing chief prosecutor said last week that a preliminary examination found reason to believe crimes against humanity had been committed during Duterte's crackdown on drugs between July 1, 2016, and March 16, 2019. She said she had sought authorization to open a formal investigation and the court's judges had 120 days to decide.

The dates cover the period when Duterte launched his police-enforced crackdown shortly after winning a six-year presidential term up until when he withdrew the Philippines from the court.

"Why would I defend or face an accusation before white people? You must be crazy," the brash-talking Duterte said Monday night in his first public reaction to the prospects of an ICC investigation of his deadly

campaign.

He ridiculed the ICC, saying he would never get justice from the court, but added, "I will readily face a court, be accused in a Philippine court, before a Filipino judge."

The 18 judges from the ICC hail from around the world, including judges from Asia, Africa, Europe, South America and North America.

More than 6,000 mostly

More than 6,000 mostly poor drug suspects have been killed during the drug crackdown, according to gov't pronouncements

poor drug suspects have been killed during the drug crackdown, according to government pronouncements, but human rights groups say the death toll is considerably higher and should include many unsolved killings by motorcycle-riding gunmen who may have been deployed by police.

Duterte has denied condoning extrajudicial killings of drug suspects although he has openly threatened suspects with death and has ordered police to shoot suspects who dangerously

resist arrest.

"We kill them because they fight back," he said Monday.

Duterte said drug dealers were a threat to national survival that had to be dealt with to prevent the Philippines from ending up like Mexico, which he described as being "almost a failed state," where drug syndicates could field candidates in local elections.

"That's why I want to slap the judges there. You are fools," Duterte said. "You want my country to go down the drain."

Despite his administration's massive crackdown against illegal drugs, Duterte acknowledged the drugs remained a major problem. During his presidential campaign he vowed to eradicate the drug problem in three to six months, but said after winning the presidency that he underestimated the enormity of the problem.

Duterte withdrew the Philippines from the ICC in 2019 in a move critics said was an attempt to evade accountability. The ICC prosecutor said the court still has jurisdiction over crimes alleged while the Philippines was still a member of the court. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



Australia A plague of mice that has ravaged vast swathes of eastern Australia has forced the evacuation of a prison while authorities repair gnawed electrical wiring and clear dead and decaying mice from walls and ceilings. Around 200 staff and 420 inmates will be transferred from the Wellington Correctional Center in rural New South Wales state to other prisons in the region during the next 10 days while cleaning and repairs take place, Corrective Services Commissioner Peter Severin said yesterday.

AP PHOTO



Lebanon's economy ministry yesterday raised the price of subsidized bread for the fifth time in a year as the country's multiple crises worsen with no resolution in sight. The ministry said the reason behind the latest increase — an 18% hike from the last raise in February — was the central bank's ending of sugar subsidies, which in turn adds to the cost of bread production.

European Union

regulators have launched a fresh antitrust investigation of Google, this time over whether the U.S. tech giant is stifling competition in digital advertising technology. The European Commission said Tuesday that it has opened a formal investigation into whether Google violated the bloc's competition rules by favoring its own online display advertising technology services at the expense of rival publishers, advertisers and advertising technology services.

AP PHOTO



Vatican has formally opposed a proposed Italian law expanding anti-discrimination protections to the LGBT community, a leading Italian newspaper reported yesterday. Activists immediately denounced the move as "unprecedented" Vatican meddling in Italy's legislative process.