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SJM HOLDINGS RECORDED AN INCREASE OF 19% IN ITS NET GAMING REVENUE IN H1 AMOUNTING TO HKD5.1 BILLION P5

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CHINA'S WORST CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK SINCE THE START OF THE PANDEMIC ESCALATED WITH DOZENS MORE CASES AROUND THE COUNTRY P6

India is sending four navy ships for exercises and port visits with the Philippines, Vietnam, Singapore, Indonesia and Australia to strengthen cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region, its navy said yesterday, as China's maritime power grows in the area. The Indian ships will spend more than two months in the region, the navy said in a statement.



AP PHOTO

Afghanistan A bombing attack that targeted the acting defense minister killed at least eight people and wounded 20, authorities said yesterday. The deputy minister was not hurt in the attack claimed by Taliban insurgents. The blast went off late Tuesday in a heavily guarded upscale neighborhood of the capital of Kabul. It was followed by a gun battle that also left four militants dead, authorities said.

Syria An explosion at the entrance of military barracks on the western edge of the Syrian capital yesterday set a bus on fire, killed its driver and sent black smoke billowing over the area, Syrian state media reported. Initial reports on state media said the explosion in the gas tank of a bus at the entrance of the barracks near Qudsaya, west of Damascus, caused the fire. It said three others were injured and were hospitalized.

Israel Three rockets were fired from Lebanon into Israeli territory yesterday and the army fired back, Israel's military said. There was no immediate information on damages or casualties. The announcement came after sirens sounded in northern Israel warning of a possible rocket attack from Lebanon. Two rockets landed inside Israeli territory, the army said, adding that it fired artillery back into Lebanon.

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COVID-19

CE urges people to stay calm, hopes to return

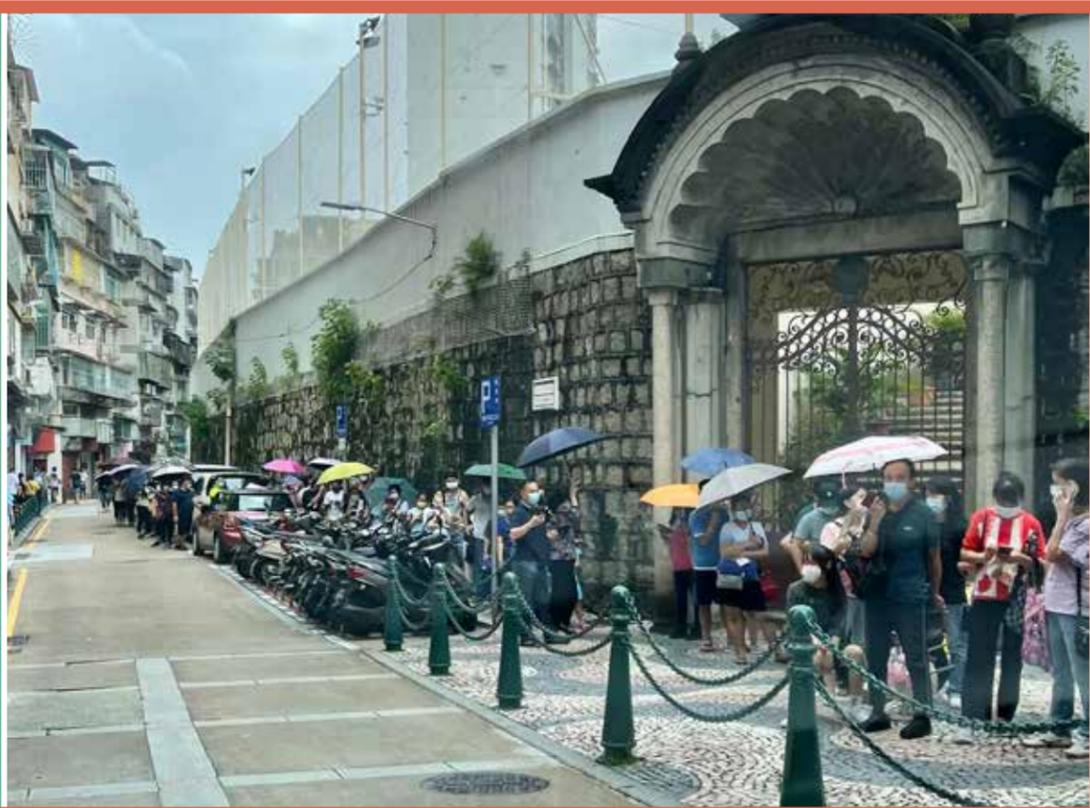
RENATO MARQUES

CHIEF Executive (CE) Ho Iat Seng has urged Macau to stay calm during this period of "immediate prevention status," reassuring the city that there is no reason for panic.

In a special press conference held yesterday at the government's headquarters, the CE emphasised that the Covid-19 pandemic situation in Macau is under control. He added that, from the 1,900 nucleic acid tests (NAT) performed by all those in close contact with the four Covid-19 infected, over 1,500 had negative results.

"Regarding the tests [NAT] done until now [Wednesday morning], we have collected around 1,900 samples from the students; and members of the group [that traveled together with the resident suspected to be the cause of the infection]; and also from their family members — and we already know that over 1,500 tests had a negative result. Besides, another 10 people [including students from the dance group who are currently out of Macau] also underwent testing in the mainland and Hong Kong, and their results are also negative. There is no vague data, but accurate data that we already managed to obtain and confirm," the CE said.

He went to express satisfaction with the collaborative work that was done from noon of August 3 (the time of the first notification from Zhuhai) to the evening of the



same day.

Ho also informed the media that the current immediate prevention status is expected to remain in force for a period of 14-days, after which he believes the situation in Macau can return to normalcy.

"If our prognosis is correct [on what the source of the first infection was], we can be rest assured because the source [of infection] is at least not from Macau. So, in principle, within 14 days, we [will]

have the situation returning to the normal [as per what it was] before this scenario and be [again] considered as a region of low risk [of contagion]," the CE concluded.

FLIGHT LABELED AS THE SOURCE OF INFECTION

Citing conclusions reached during an online meeting between the CE, local, regional and national health authorities, and Dr. Zhong Nanshan, a reputable Chi-

nese expert on pneumology and virology, Ho said that the source of the Covid-19 infections should have been the flight on which the local student traveled to Xi'an.

"We have learned that, from the same flight, a person from Zhongshan and another from Zhuhai also tested positive [...] Both traveled in row 54 of the airplane, the same row where the local student was seated. So, for the time being, we can consider as the first

conclusion that the source of the infection was in the flight and occurred at row number 54," Ho explained. He added that the results obtained from the tests — namely the anti-bodies test — matches with such a source of infections.

FAILURES ON HEALTH CODE SOFTWARE

The CE also took the opportunity during the press conference to apologize for the problems that oc-

BUSINESSES REPORTED TO HAVE REDUCED EMPLOYEES' SCHEDULES AMID OUTBREAK

LYNZY VALLES

A few businesses are reported to have already reduced the working hours of its employees due to the Covid-19 outbreak in the city and in response to new restrictions from the government, according to sources.

A restaurant was said to have reduced operation hours, which cut the number of working hours of its employees by half.

Instead of working six

days per week, the staff are now told to work three days — which has led to a significant salary cut.

Employees in the catering and aviation sectors also saw similar changes.

According to a source, his working schedule for this month has already included 10 no-pay leave days, cutting his salary down to a third.

Another part-time employee said that hers and some other colleagues' schedules were also cut

in half. This is due to the number of canceled flights.

Last year, amid the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak, the city saw a significant number of workers experience unpaid leave — some lasting to several months.

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

The DSAL remarked this in reply to an interpellation

made by lawmaker Sulu Sou, who questioned whether no-pay leave might have breached Article 10 (5) of the Macau Labour Relations Law. This law prohibits an employer from lowering an employee's base wages unless both reach a mutual agreement, confirmed in writing and notified to the DSAL within 10 days. Last year, the government registered 214 cases related to salary reductions, involving 156 local enterprises and 2,450 workers.



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to normalcy in 14 days



Ho also noted that yesterday the number of people crossing borders reduced to about 25% of normal border movement, which leads him to believe that in the upcoming days the system will be stable and there will not be any further operational issues reported.

SCHOOL COMMUNITY SHOULD TAKE RESPONSIBILITY

Questioned on the Hou Kong Middle School's assumption of responsibility over the school trip to Xi'an that resulted in the first community Covid-19 infection in Macau, the CE explained that the whole school community should take responsibility for the incident.

"Everyone, including the school, teachers, students, and even the parents, should assume their responsibilities as there was already news that in Nanjing, the-

re was a situation of the pandemic outbreak and they still moved forward with the trip. I think they should not have done that," the CE said. He noted that, although Xi'an was not considered as a high-risk area at the time, the flight taking the group of students to Xi'an started from Nanjing and made a stopover in Zhuhai before heading to Xi'an.

The CE also clarified that the government is not considering any form of punishment for the school but remarked that he hopes that people have learned from this serious incident

NO NEED TO RUSH FOR NAT, BOOKING IS ESSENTIAL

During the same press conference, the Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture, Elsie Ao Ieong, urged citizens to not rush to the NAT sample collection points and not to gather in long queues at these venues if they do not have a scheduled NAT.

Ao Ieong reaffirmed that those who walk-in will not be able to do the NAT. She has asked those who have difficulties completing the on-

line application to seek help from the Social Welfare Bureau staff.

She also called on citizens to remain calm and not to rush to do the NAT on the first day of the citywide mass testing, unless they need to cross the border into the Mainland or exit the region via the airport.

According to figures updated by the health authorities, as of 4 p.m. yesterday, a total of 286,000 NAT had been already scheduled for the upcoming three days, following the earlier call from the Secretary and CE for people not to rush to testing venues.

The health authorities also added that around 50,000 samples have been collected during the same period.

Ao Ieong remarked that gathering in long lines under the sun or in rain is both counterproductive and unnecessary, as there is enough time for everyone to get tested without any hassle.

Replying to a question from the media, the Secretary also clarified that everyone in Macau should be tested, including children and newborns.

curred yesterday morning with the Health Code software.

Ho explained that the problems in the operation of the system were due to last-minute measures enforced by the Zhuhai authorities, who further reduced the validity period of NAT from the original 24 hours to just 12 hours.

"I am sorry that the software system was not working as it should [yesterday] morning. [This is because] when we changed it to the

24 hours [validity] of the tests, there were no problems. But then last night, Zhuhai [authorities] communicated that the restrictions to cross the border should be stricter and so we had to change from 24 hours of validity of the NAT to just 12 hours and due to that the system had operational problems. We had to change [the validity] from 7 days to 24 hours and then to 12 hours," the CE explained and apologized for the hassles caused to the population.

CASINO CLOSURE REJECTED

FOR the time being, the CE has rejected the idea of taking further measures, including the closing of casinos and other services. He justified his stance by saying that such venues are where high standards for the health of entrants is enforced, and that the residents who are infected with the virus were not associated with any casino activities.

"For the time being, we are not going to close the casinos because the problem did not happen in the casinos. [Previously], we closed the casinos because the people involved were casino workers, and that is why we took the measure of closing them for 15

days. But now the case involves a worker in a fruit stall, and that is why those stalls and shops in the surroundings need to be closed," Ho explained, adding that any other measures might be addressed gradually and on a case-by-case basis, not in a general manner.

When asked about the decision to close other entertainment venues such as karaoke, bars and saunas, the CE explained that, in this case, what is being considered is the fact that in these types of establishments people do not need to wear a facemask at all times, unlike in casinos. **RM**

People forced to sleep on streets while awaiting PCR results

ANTHONY LAM

FOLLOWING the rush to update their polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test results to return to Zhuhai, many test-takers were forced to sleep on the streets overnight while they waited for their PCR results.

The scenario was first discovered by local media All About Macau. Photos posted by the media outlet's social media page showed that people were lying either on the floor or benches near the Border Gate from Tuesday to yesterday morning in an attempt to get some rest overnight.

Authorities in Zhuhai have shortened the validity period of the PCR test for border crossing to 24 hours, meaning that most of the existing PCR test results were voided when the new



A screenshot of individuals who slept near the Border Gate

validity came into place.

People residing on the other side of the border, including non-resident workers and Macau residents, rushed to the Border Gate to return to Zhuhai.

Many of those who missed the deadline of Tuesday, 3.30 p.m., had to take a new PCR test at the Workers' Stadium on the side of the Border Gate.

As there was intermit-

tent rain last night, some individuals who slept near the exits opened their umbrellas to protect themselves from the rain.

This occurred because the PCR test results would only be available six to seven hours after the sample was collected. They were not able to make trips to Zhuhai before their new results were out.

The local media spoke with some of the non-resident workers. They shared how they had lined up for nearly six hours before getting their secretion samples collected for the PCR test.

Considering the need to wait for six to seven hours prior to the release of results, they decided to find a public place near the Border Gate to get some rest. Upon receiving their test results, and once the border

checkpoint opened, they could head back to Zhuhai.

At a Chief Executive Press Conference yesterday, the government head was asked about the situation and the lack of management provided.

Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng revealed that the government has disaster shelters for these non-resident workers.

However, throughout the night, no relevant information was released by the government.

At the same press conference, Secretary for Security Wong Sio Chak said that no request to use the disaster shelter was received. Despite the justification, he added that his branch would follow up with the situation. He also pointed out that some non-resident workers "waited outdoors

for their PCR results," but did not address the fact that non-resident workers were taking naps without shelter in public.

Meanwhile, Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture, Elsie Ao Ieong, concurred with Wong's comment, stating that no request had been received to open the shelters. She added, however, that she received pictures of the scenes late Tuesday night. She ordered "the competent bureaus" to open the shelters right away.

She stressed that "the shelters were not opened as per people's requests but the government's proactive response."

Even so, she also did not address the lack of promotion regarding the availability of the shelters to non-resident workers.

LYNZY VALLES



COVID-19

ALL 29 DANCE GROUP MEMBERS AND TOUR GUIDE TESTED NEGATIVE

HONEY TSANG

ALL 29 members of Hou Kong Middle School who engaged in dance-related activities in Xi'an in late July have tested negative for Covid-19 for the first round of sampling. These students were fellow travelers with the 12-year-old girl who caught the Delta variant on a flight from Zhuhai to Xi'an on July 19 during the trip.

Of those in contact with the girl, 19 members and a mainland tour guide are now in Macau, with 18 of them having tested negative for serology tests. The remaining two members tested positive for serology tests but were diagnosed as "normal reaction after vaccination", Leong Iek Hou, coordinator at the Center for Disease Control and Prevention said yesterday.

Another 10 members are currently in either the mainland or Hong Kong. They have also tested negative for Covid-19, according to the relevant city governments.

The news, announced at the Covid-19 briefing yesterday, came as a slight relief amid the greatest turmoil since Macau's citywide lockdown last year.

Ever since a family of four tested positive for coronavirus on Tuesday, local residents and cross-border workers were dashing around town for groceries, for Covid-19 tests, or waiting for a whole night at control points just to go back home.

The government earlier identified 72 people and other 328

people as "Close Contacts" and "Secondary Close Contacts" with the affected family. All of them also tested negative, director of the Health Bureau (SSM) Alvis Lo confirmed.

TRAVEL ADVISORY BY DSEDJ

During the briefing, a reporter questioned authorities as to whether the Education and Youth Development Bureau (DSEDJ) gave detailed guidelines to local schools regarding education-related outbound trips during the pandemic prior to the emergence of the four cases.

In response, a DSEDJ representative said that the bureau issued an appeal to institutions across Macau on June 8, advising them to cancel all outbound trips to medium and high-risk areas in the mainland. However, they are not restricted to travel to other areas in China classified as less risky.

Since the cases were reported, the DSEDJ issued a travel advisory to all schools to suspend all activities and outbound trips from August 4 onwards.

The DSEDJ also vows to continue to communicate with schools and help raise awareness towards similar activities among all local schools.

SCHOOL'S HANDLING

Many locals also doubt whether teachers of Hou Kong Middle School discovered the symptoms of the 12-year-old girl during the

trip and, if so, reported the problem to doctors. A proper handling of the situation could have precluded the entire incident from happening.

On this matter, Leong confirmed that the girl had not mentioned any details of her health status to teachers, as she thought a slight cough and dry throat during the trip were caused by environmental factors.

Authorities called on the public to be considerate and forgiving as she is only a "little girl," who is not mature and informative enough to fathom the severe implications of the symptoms.

The girl experienced a loss of taste and smell. However, Leong explained that this is a medical concept hard to understand for children. To the girl, the symptoms — albeit obvious to many others — came across as an increased craving for strong-flavored food.

Since the family were found to be positive, hate speech against them has circulated online. Lo urged all locals to stop the condemnations as the girl and her family, who were the "victims" of this unpredictable pandemic. None of them would have thought the daughter would catch the Delta variant during the trip.

DOCTOR'S MISCONDUCT

It was found that the girl's brother, after developing symptoms, went to the Centro Hospitalar Conde de São Januário to seek

emergency medical treatment on July 28, but the doctor did not ask him to undergo a Covid-19 test.

In June, SSM made an amendment to the anti-pandemic measure which clearly stipulates that doctors must conduct nucleic acid testing on every person, even those deemed low risks, as long as they have a fever without a known reason.

In the preliminary investigation, the doctor in charge did not require the boy to undergo a Covid-19 test, as he had no outbound travel history and had no contact with a confirmed case, which put him under the "low-risk" group.

The authorities yesterday confirmed that the doctor did not follow the required protocols and vowed that they will conduct an in-depth investigation into the case, which is classified as misconduct.

Leong also clarified that the girl's family went to the Federal Restaurant before their daughter came back to Macau, instead of on July 25 as mentioned earlier.

HEALTH CODE GLITCHES

Media also questioned why the health code had not changed from green to blue, as the government stated would occur. The colour change would be used as an indicator to show that an individual has still not yet participated in the massive Covid-19 testing.

Lo stated that the health code had experienced a glitch yesterday morning. Thus, the technicians thought it was best to stay put and not make new changes to the system to avoid further technical faults.

The government also confirmed that the girl's parents were fully inoculated with the Sinopharm vaccine.

The media also criticized the government that its advice for residents to avoid unnecessary travel is not enough of a deterrent to stop people from traveling during this critical period — which in part led to the emergence of these four cases.

CROSS-BORDER FLOW IMMENSELY IMPEDED DUE TO NEW MEASURES

ACCORDING to the Public Security Police (PSP), Macau saw a sharp fall in cross-border people flows on August 3 — the first day that the government mandated all people leaving Macau to present proof of a negative Covid-19 test result conducted within 24 hours.

The total number of passenger flows stood at 193,700 on August 3, down 39.7% from the previous day.

Of all 117,700 inbound arrivals that day, 39,600 were Macau residents, down 32.1% day-to-day. The other 12,900 were tourists, plunging by 46.1%. The remaining 63,500 were bluecard holders, down 16.6% from the previous day. Outbound passengers totaled 76,000. Around 30,500 were local residents, representing a huge drop of 46.8%, day-to-day.

GAMING

SJM records 18.9% revenue increase in H1

LYNZY VALLES

SJM Holdings recorded an increase of 18.8% in its net gaming revenue in the first half of the year (H1) amounting to nearly HKD5.1 billion, up from HKD4.28 billion in the same period last year.

The company's adjusted EBITDA improved by 48.2% to negative HKD510 million from last year's negative HKD984 million.

According to a statement, the loss attributable to owners of the company was HKD1.47 billion, 3.8% greater than HKD1.41 billion in the same period last year.

Mass-market gross gaming revenue (GGR) of the group increased by 33.2% and VIP GGR showed a decrease of 37.5% during the first half of 2021, compared with the year-earlier period. During H1, slot machine gross revenue increased by 12.7% compared with the year-earlier period.

SJM Resorts, S.A. had a 11.6% share of Macau's gaming revenue, including 15.6% of mass market table GGR and 5.0% of VIP GGR.

The Group had cash, bank balances, short-



-term bank deposits and pledged bank deposits of HKD2.71 billion as of June 30.

The GGR at the Group's flagship Grand Lisboa casino decreased by 9.7% to HKD1.198 billion from HKD1.33 billion in the year-earlier period, while attributable loss improved by 48.3% to a negative HKD231 million from a negative HKD446 million.

Adjusted Casino Property EBITDA was negative HKD170 million, a 54.1% improvement from negative HKD369 million in the year-earlier period.

The group's newest re-

sort in Cotai, Grand Lisboa Palace, partially opened on July 30. This was a month later than expectations set by its operator SJM Resorts, whose revised predictions indicated that it would open in the first half of the year.

Chairman and executive director Daisy Ho has expressed confidence that the grand opening will go ahead despite the latest Covid-19 outbreak in mainland China, which has caused the SAR government to impose quarantine measures on arrivals from some cities.

SJM Holdings is set to reallocate 118 gaming

tables from other properties to its new resort. The government granted the new property 150 gaming tables for mass market.



RESIDENT DEPOSITS IN JUNE DECREASES

THE broad money supply fell in June with a stable share of patacas. At the same time, deposits of residents decreased compared to May, while loans to residents increased.

Official statistics show resident deposits decreased 1.2% from the preceding month to MOP675.7 billion, whereas non-resident deposits rose 2.4% to MOP359.9 billion, according to the Monetary Authority of Macao (AMCM).

Public sector deposits with the banking sector recorded a slight increase.

As a result, total deposits in the banking sector edged up by 0.1% from May to MOP1,302.5 billion. The shares of MOP,

HKD, RMB and USD in total deposits were 19.2%, 52.8%, 5.2% and 20.5%, respectively.

In the same announcement, the AMCM said that domestic loans to the private sector grew 1.9% from May to reach MOP554.0 billion in June, while external loans grew by 5.1% to MOP796.4 billion. As a result, total loans to the private sector went up by 3.8% from May to MOP1,350.4 billion in June.

"At end-June, the loan-to-deposit ratio for the resident sector rose from 57.3% at end-May to 58.8%. Meanwhile, the ratio for both the resident and non-resident sectors increased from 100.0% to 103.7%," the authority said. **MDT**

Women's Federation calls for better maternal care

DURING this year's World Breastfeeding Week, the Women's General Association of Macau has expressed hopes that the government can support maternal care through policy.

The Week is celebrated during the first week of August each year.

The entity explains that better maternal care will assist social sustainability, on top of an intimate relationship between mother and infant. The association added that breastfeeding has positive impact on the mental

health of both the mother and the infant.

The association hopes that Macau can become friendlier towards maternal care and breastfeeding.

According to the group, the social environment for breastfeeding in Macau can be improved, so that mothers can feel more comfortable while breastfeeding or lactating.

To support breastfeeding and lactation, the association stated that policies can be developed in two directions: paid

lactation hours and longer maternity leave.

Therefore, the it called for the government to institutionalize "paid lactation hours" by law, meaning that mothers can collect milk during office hours without being punished by their employers.

In addition, the entity believes maternity leave should be extended. It would not only provide more time for the mother's recovery, but would also help encourage mothers to breastfeed their infants. **AL**

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CHINA SEALS CITY AS ITS WORST VIRUS OUTBREAK IN A YEAR GROWS

CHINA'S worst coronavirus outbreak since the start of the pandemic a year and a half ago escalated yesterday with dozens more cases around the country, the sealing-off of the city of Zhangjiajie and the punishment of its local leaders.

Since that initial outbreak was tamed last year, China's people had lived virtually free of the virus, with extremely strict border controls and local distancing and quarantine measures stamping out scattered, small flareups when they occurred.

Now, the country is on high alert as an outbreak of cases connected to the international airport in the eastern city of Nanjing touched at least 17 provinces. China reported 71 new cases of COVID-19 from local transmission yesterday, more than half of them in coastal Jiangsu province, of which Nanjing is the capital.

In Wuhan, the central city where the first cases of COVID-19 were identified in late 2019, mass testing has shown some of its newly reported cases have a high degree of similarity to cases discovered in Jiangsu province. Those cases

AP PHOTO



have been identified as being caused by the highly transmissible delta variant that first was identified in India.

Meanwhile, another COVID-19 hotspot was emerging in the city of Zhangjiajie, near a scenic area famous for sandstone cliffs, caves, forests and waterfalls that inspired the on-screen landscape in the "Avatar" films.

The city ordered residential

communities sealed Sunday, preventing people from leaving their homes. In a subsequent order on Tuesday, officials said no one, whether tourist or resident, could leave the city.

The city government's Communist Party disciplinary committee yesterday issued a list of local officials who "had a negative impact" on pandemic prevention and control work who would be

punished.

The city itself has only recorded 19 cases since last week, three of which were people with no symptoms, which are counted separately. However, individual cases linked to Zhangjiajie's outbreak have spread to at least five provinces, according to the Shanghai government-owned newspaper the Paper.

Far higher numbers were re-

ported in Yangzhou, a city next to Nanjing, which has recorded 126 cases as of Tuesday.

After announcing last week that they were suspending issuance of passports for travelers except for those with an urgent need, officials at the National Immigration Administration reiterated the message again yesterday at a press briefing.

As of Tuesday, China has given more than 1.71 billion vaccine doses to its population of 1.4 billion. It's not clear how many of those are first or both doses, but at least 40% of the population is fully protected, according to earlier announcements.

Chinese companies have not publicly shared real-world data on how effective their vaccines are against the delta variant, though officials have said the vaccines prevent severe disease and hospitalization.

In addition to the 71 cases of local transmission, 25 travelers from overseas have COVID-19 and have entered quarantine, making the total for Wednesday 96 new cases. The National Health Commission also said 15 people tested positive for the virus but have no symptoms.

China has reported 4,636 deaths and 93,289 cases of COVID-19 overall, most of them from the original outbreak in Wuhan that peaked early last year. **MDT/AP**

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INDONESIA

Country surpasses 100,000 deaths amid new virus wave

INDONESIA surpassed 100,000 confirmed COVID-19 deaths yesterday, a grim milestone in a country struggling with its worst pandemic wave fueled by the delta variant, amid concerns the actual figure could be much higher.

It took 14 months for Indonesia to exceed the 50,000 death mark at the end of May, and just over nine weeks to double it. The Health Ministry recorded 1,747 new deaths of COVID-19 in the last 24 hours, bringing the total to 100,636.

Those figures are believed to be an undercount.

Since the beginning of June, more than 2,800 people have died during self-isolation at home, according to LaporCOVID-19, an independent virus data group that keeps track of deaths at home. Some of those deaths are reflected in official figures but others are not, he said.

"They were rejected by the hospitals, so they went back home and did the self-isolation at home with limited access to medicine, no oxygen and no monitoring from doctors until they died," said



AP PHOTO

Ahmad Arif, one of the LaporCOVID-19 founders.

WHO says hospitals are in need of isolation rooms, oxygen supplies, medical and personal pro-

TECTIVE equipment, as well as mobile field hospitals and body bags.

Lia Partakusuma, secretary general of the Indonesia Hospital Association, said intensive care

beds continue to be in very short supply, especially outside of Java, where she said her association has received many reports of people dying at home.

"It is very rare that patients come and get into the ICU directly," she said. "Many of them refuse to wait in the emergency unit, maybe they feel uncomfortable, so they decide to go back home."

In Bogor, south of Jakarta, Pramirtha Sudirman's infected brother and parents decided to isolate at home because local hospitals were too crowded in early July.

They consulted with a doctor ahead of time and had a plan to rush to the hospital if the symptoms got worse, the 32-year-old said.

"We knew the risk of doing self isolation," she said.

After seeming to be on the road to recovery, her father suddenly took a turn for the worse and died at home before they could get him to the emergency room. Her mother and brother have since recovered.

"We tried our best. We do not have any regret as we also know that the hospital was full too," she said.

Indonesia, the world's fourth most populous country, has recorded more than 3.5 million COVID-19 cases since March 2020. July was its deadliest month since the pandemic began, with more than 30,100 deaths — more than triple the 7,914 reported in June. Its current per capita death rate is one of the worst in the region, second only to Myanmar. **MDT/AP**

ASEAN ministers pick Brunei diplomat as envoy to Myanmar

JIM GOMEZ & EILEEN NG,
KUALA LUMPUR

SOUTHEAST Asian foreign ministers yesterday picked Brunei Second Foreign Minister Erywan Yusof as their special envoy to Myanmar, in a breakthrough after months of delay for regional mediation to help end the country's deepening crisis.

In a joint statement after their annual meeting, foreign ministers of the Association of Southeast Asians said Erywan will begin his work in Myanmar to "build trust and confidence with full access to all parties concerned."

The 10-nation bloc has been under increasing international pressure to act on violence and instability in Myanmar, an ASEAN member where the military in February toppled the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi and cracked down on opponents.

The ministers reiterated their concerns, including reports of fatalities and violence. But they stopped



AP PHOTO

Brunei's minister Dato Erywan Pehin Yusof

short of calling for the release of political detainees, saying only they "heard calls" for their freedom, in a reflection of the sensitivity over the issue.

The regional group is hamstrung by its bedrock policy of noninterference in the domestic affairs of member nations and in its decision-making by consensus, meaning just one member state can shoot down any proposal.

Erywan was among at least four candidates pro-

posed by the grouping, and Myanmar was believed to have preferred a former Thai diplomat. Its decision to cave in to the grouping's demands indicated the military rulers are still hoping to rely on ASEAN support as they face international condemnation.

A Southeast Asian diplomat said foreign ministers had picked Erywan at their meeting Monday but couldn't announce it as Myanmar hasn't given the nod.

The ministers held another session earlier Wednesday and finally managed to persuade the military government, said the diplomat who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because of a lack of authority to speak publicly.

Even with the envoy's appointment, it remains uncertain if and when the Myanmar military leaders would allow access to Suu Kyi, who has been detained with other political leaders and put on trial on a slew of charges, diplomats have said.

More than 900 people have been killed by Myanmar authorities since the February takeover, many in anti-government protests, according to a tally kept by the independent Assistance Association for Political Prisoners. Casualties are also rising among the military and police as armed resistance grows in both urban and rural areas.

Myanmar's troubles have deepened with its worst co-

ronavirus surge, which has overwhelmed its crippled health care system.

ASEAN leaders have called for an end to the violence and the start of a dialogue among parties to be mediated by an ASEAN envoy. Myanmar's military leader Min Aung Hlaing has repeated his pledge to hold fresh elections in two years and cooperate with ASEAN on finding a political solution.

In another touchy issue, the ministers said that the bloc and China have completed the preamble for a proposed "code of conduct," a nonaggression pact the two sides have been negotiating since 2017 to prevent armed conflicts in the disputed South China Sea.

China, Taiwan and ASEAN members Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam have overlapping claims in the disputed waters and have been locked in increasingly tense territorial standoffs for decades. China turned seven disputed reefs into missile-protected island bases

in recent years, ratcheting tensions with rival claimants, along with the United States and its allies.

Two Southeast Asian diplomats said the preamble consists of principles that will reflect the rival claimant states' adherence to international law, including the 1982 U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea.

An analyst said he has little hope the proposed pact can effectively restrain aggression in the disputed sea, given China's insistence on its vast territorial claims and penchant to interpret agreements in a way that will buttress its claims.

"I hold no illusion that the code of conduct, when it comes to pass, will be of meaningful effect in constraining Chinese coercive behavior in the South China Sea," said Hoang Thi Ha of the ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute in Singapore.

China has refused to recognize an international arbitration ruling in 2016 that invalidated most of Beijing's claims in the South China Sea. **MDT/AP**

AP PHOTO



CLIMATE CHANGE

This year's summer of weather extremes hits wealthier places

SETH BORENSTEIN & FRANK JORDANS

As the world staggers through another summer of extreme weather, experts are noticing something different: 2021's onslaught is hitting harder and in places that have been spared global warming's wrath in the past.

Wealthy countries such as the United States, Canada, Germany and Belgium are joining poorer and more vulnerable nations on a growing list of extreme weather events that scientists say have some connection to human-caused climate change.

"It is not only a poor country problem, it's now very obviously a rich country problem," said Debby Guha-Sapir, founder of the international disaster database at the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters at Catholic University of Louvain in Belgium. "They (the rich) are getting whacked."

Killer floods hit China, but hundreds of people also drowned in parts of Germany and Belgium not used to being inundated. Canada and the Pacific Northwest of the U.S. had what climate scientist Zeke Hausfather

called "scary" heat that soared well past triple digits in Fahrenheit and into high 40s in Celsius, shattering records and accompanied by unusual wildfires. Now southern Europe is seeing unprecedented heat and fire.

And peak Atlantic hurricane and U.S. wildfire seasons are only just starting.

When what would become Hurricane Elsa formed on July 1, it broke last year's record for the earliest fifth named Atlantic storm. Colorado State University has already increased its forecast for the number of named Atlantic storms — and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration will update its season outlook yesterday.

For fire season, the U.S. West is the driest it has been since 1580, based on soil moisture readings and tree ring records, setting the stage for worsening fires if something ignites them, said UCLA climate and fire scientist Park Williams.

What happens with U.S. hurricane and fire seasons drives the end-of-year statistics for total damage costs of weather disasters, said Ernst Rauch, chief climate and geo scientist for insurance giant Munich Re. But so far this

year, he said, wealthier regions have seen the biggest economic losses.

But when poorer countries are hit, they are less prepared and their people can't use air conditioning or leave so there's more harm, said Hausfather, climate director of the Breakthrough Institute. While hundreds of people died in the Pacific Northwest heat wave, he said the number would have been a much higher in poor areas.

Madagascar, an island nation off East Africa, is in the middle of back-to-back droughts that the United Nations warns are pushing 400,000 people toward starvation.

Though it's too early to say the summer of 2021 will again break records for climate disasters, "We're certainly starting to see climate change push extreme events into new territories where they haven't been seen before," Hausfather said.

The number of weather, water and climate disasters so far this year is only slightly higher than the average of recent years, said disaster researcher Guha-Sapir. Her group's database, which she said still is missing quite a few events, shows 208 such disasters worldwide through

July — about 11% more than the last decade's average, but a bit less than last year.

Last year, the record-shattering heat that came out of nowhere was in Siberia, where few people live, but this year it struck Portland, Oregon, and British Columbia, which gets more western media attention, Hausfather said.

What's happening is "partly an increase in the statistics of these extreme events, but also just that the steady drumbeat, the pile on year-on-year ... takes its cumulative toll on all of us who are reading these headlines" said Georgia Tech climate scientist Kim Cobb.

"This pattern of recent Northern Hemisphere summers has been really quite stark," said University of Exeter climate scientist Peter Stott.

While overall temperature rise is "playing out exactly as we said 20 years ago, ... what we are seeing in terms of the heat waves and the floods is more extreme than we predicted back then," Stott said.

Climate scientists say there is little doubt climate change from the burning of coal, oil and natural gas is driving extreme events.

Aside from dramatic floods and fires, heat waves are a major risk to prepare for in the future, Guha-Sapir said.

"It's going to be a very big deal in the Western countries because the most susceptible to sudden peaks of heat are older people. And the demographic profile of the people in Europe is very old," she said. "Heat waves are going to be a real issue in the next few years." MDT/AP

this day in history

1962 MARILYN MONROE FOUND DEAD



Screen icon Marilyn Monroe has been found dead in bed at her Los Angeles home.

The 36-year-old actress' body was discovered in the early hours of this morning by two doctors who were called to her Brentwood home by a concerned housekeeper.

The doctors were forced to break into Miss Monroe's bedroom after being unable to open the door. She was found lying naked in her bed with an empty bottle of Nembutal sleeping pills by her side.

The local coroner, who visited the scene later, said the circumstances of Miss Monroe's death indicated a "possible suicide".

Marilyn Monroe was born Norma Jeane Mortenson on 1 June 1926 in Los Angeles.

Her mother, Gladys Baker, had mental problems which resulted in Norma Jeane spending most of her childhood in foster homes and orphanages.

She wed her neighbour, Jimmy Dougherty in 1942, but the marriage failed in 1946 due to Norma Jeane's new-found fame as a photographic model.

In 1944 while her husband was serving in the South Pacific with the Merchant Marines, Norma Jeane was discovered by photographer David Conover.

By 1946 she had signed her first studio contract with 20th Century Fox and changed her name to Marilyn Monroe.

Since 1947 she has appeared in 30 films, including *The Prince and the Showgirl*, *Bus Stop*, *The Seven Year Itch*, *How to Marry a Millionaire* and *Some Like it Hot*, for which she won a Golden Globe for Best Actress in a Comedy.

Her 1954 marriage to baseball star Joe DiMaggio lasted just nine months and on 29 June 1956 the star married playwright Arthur Miller.

But that marriage ended in 1961. Miss Monroe's romantic life has long been the subject of speculation and she has been linked with President Kennedy.

Millions of fans around the world will be deeply shocked by the star's premature and tragic death.

Courtesy BBC News

IN CONTEXT

Marilyn Monroe was buried in the Corridor of Memories at Westwood Memorial Park in Los Angeles.

Two months before she died Monroe had been fired by Fox Productions for repeatedly failing to turn up on the set of the film *Something Has Got To Give*.

The production was never completed even though Monroe was re-hired by the film company on 1 August.

During the months before her death she had been seeing Joe DiMaggio and the pair had agreed to re-marry on 8 August 1962.

For 20 years after her death flowers from DiMaggio were delivered weekly to Monroe's crypt.

There has been much speculation about Marilyn Monroe's death and the causes of it. Many have suggested that it was highly unlikely she committed suicide but perhaps accidentally took an overdose of drugs.

Others have suggested that a third party may have administered the drug.

MACAU'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

YOUR STARS



ARIES

Mar. 21-Apr. 19

Low-key is the way to be under Saturday's skies, Aries. The moon is deep in its waning phase, encouraging you to focus on wrapping up projects embarked upon the prior weeks.



TAURUS

Apr. 20-May. 20

The universe has been letting outgrown elements of your life fall away. While it's not always easy or natural for you to embrace change, try to see these alterations as critical to your forward movement.



GEMINI

May. 21-Jun. 21

Try to let your quiet Twin reign supreme today. Today's skies encourage you to wrap things up and find closure around the past month's projects, as the tired moon saunters through her waning phase.



CANCER

Jun. 22-Jul. 22

Devote the loving energy you provide to everyone else back towards yourself today. The moon's presence in your sign encourages you to sync back up with your body and unexpressed needs.



LEO

Jul. 23-Aug. 22

The moon's presence in moody, broody Cancer encourages you to reconnect with your dream world and spend some time in solitude. Maybe seek out your favorite body of water and dream alongside it.



VIRGO

Aug. 23-Sep. 22

There's no need to keep everything bottled up, Virgo. The moon's presence in gentle Cancer encourages you to reach out and reconnect with your cherished friends today.



LIBRA

Sep. 23-Oct. 22

Luna's presence in empathic Cancer raises your visibility to the public, making it an ideal day to share your vision on to a larger audience or to reach out for a new position.



SCORPIO

Oct. 23-Nov. 21

The soulful Cancer moon's alignment with change-demanding Uranus encourages you to seek out new opportunities that offer self-expansion and adventure.



SAGITTARIUS

Nov. 22-Dec. 21

Your feelings are not always comfortable territory for you, Sagittarius. Let today's skies remind you that it's safe and valid to feel whatever you're feeling without judgement or question.



CAPRICORN

Dec. 22-Jan. 19

You're running especially sensitive today. While that's not always your favorite state to be in, it's important to honor it instead of keep climbing uphill.



AQUARIUS

Jan. 20-Feb. 18

As an Aquarius, you try to keep yourself calm and composed under stress. Today's skies test the functionality of this mechanism, as the moon wades into your opposite sign of loving Leo.



PISCES

Feb. 19-Mar. 20

Someone you care deeply about has been living in a bit of a fantasyland lately, and it's going to be up to you to give them the reality check they need. It's never fun to burst someone's bubble...

The Born Loser by Chip Sansom



SUDOKU

EASY

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

EASY+

8								4
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		3	4		2			
5	9		6					
	1			4				
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MEDIUM

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

HARD

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

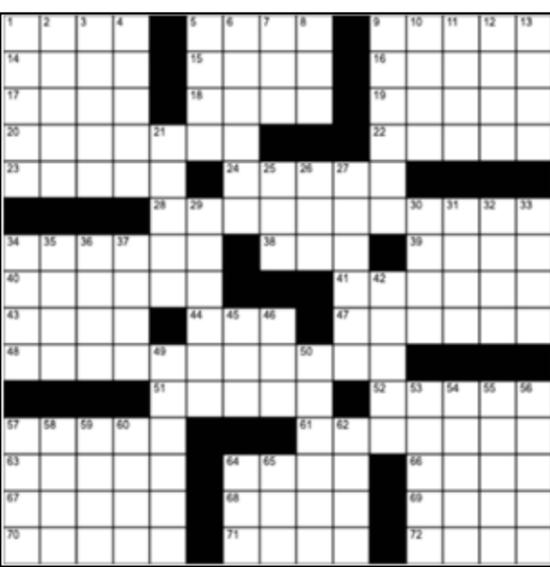
WEATHER

	MIN	MAX	CONDITION
CHINA			
Beijing	23	31	fine
Harbin	20	24	thunderstorms
Tianjin	26	38	fine
Urumqi	24	35	fine
Xi'an	27	39	fine
Lhasa	23	29	thunderstorms
Chengdu	26	34	rain
Chongqing	27	35	thunderstorms
Kunming	26	37	cloudy
Nanjing	21	33	fine
Shanghai	26	30	thunderstorms
Wuhan	25	32	rain
Hangzhou	20	26	thunderstorms
Taipei	25	33	thunderstorms
Guangzhou	15	29	cloudy
Hong Kong	22	30	cloudy
WORLD			
Moscow	18	26	rain
Frankfurt	12	22	overcast
Paris	14	23	overcast
London	13	20	rain
New York	18	25	rain

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS 1- Predicament; 5- Brown-bag stuff; 9- Carplike fish; 14- Silver salmon; 15- The last Mrs. Chaplin; 16- Main artery; 17- Chemical used on trees; 18- Breakfast chain, for short; 19- Boston airport; 20- Cooking wine; 22- Rocklike; 23- Hospital area, informally; 24- Ancient region of Asia Minor; 28- Accomplishment; 34- Bassett or Lansbury; 38- U.S. law enforcement agency; 39- Actress Spelling; 40- Linger aimlessly; 41- Potential mate; 43- "___ She Lovely?"; 44- Half a fly; 47- Lure; 48- Inconsiderate; 51- Semisynthetic textile; 52- Broadcaster; 57- False; 61- Spencer; 63- Representative; 64- Pop singer Brickell; 66- Team; 67- Characteristic; 68- Asta's mistress; 69- Employs; 70- Brief brawl; 71- Part of a process; 72- Hearing organs;

DOWN: 1- Rascal; 2- Like some bears and icecaps; 3- Chicago's airport; 4- Trunk; 5- Potting need; 6- Angora fleece; 7- Colorful card game; 8- Touch on the shoulder; 9- Aromatic ointment; 10- Plant anchor; 11- As a result; 12- ___ impasse; 13- Numerous; 21- "Forbidden" fruit; 25- Not quite right; 26- San Francisco's ___ Hill; 27- Van Gogh masterpiece; 29- Singer Kitt; 30- Busy; 31- Words of denial; 32- Gator's kin; 33- Leprechaun land; 34- Dismounted; 35- Snack; 36- Football Hall of Famer Marchetti; 37- Famous last words; 42- Retract; 45- Eye infection, pig house; 46- "Xanadu" band; 49- Cavern; 50- Full; 53- Point in question; 54- Mikhail's wife; 55- Duck with soft down; 56- Like non-oyster months; 57- Turner and others; 58- Barbarous person; 59- Milk source; 60- Irritated state; 62- Harvest; 64- Nav. officer; 65- Speck;



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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AD

HONDA REVERTS TO PROFIT ON RECOVERY FROM PANDEMIC DAMAGE

HONDA returned to profitability in April-June, recording a 222.5 billion yen (\$2 billion) profit, as better sales and costs cuts added to the Japanese automaker's bottom line.

Honda Motor Co. had racked up a 80.8 billion yen loss the same period the previous year, when the entire auto industry was hurt by the coronavirus pandemic.

Honda's quarterly sales totaled 3.6 trillion yen (\$33 billion), up nearly 69% on year, as global vehicles sales recovered in North America. Its motorcycle sales jumped in India and Indonesia.

Honda's financial services improved because of the higher prices for used cars, while its aircraft operations suffered, according to the Tokyo-based maker of the CR-V sports-utility vehicle, Odyssey minivan, Gold Wing motorcycle and Asimo robot.

Honda raised its profit forecast for the year through March 2022, to 670 billion yen (\$6.1 billion), revising its previous pro-



jection upward by 80 billion yen (\$734 million), boosted by better sales and costs cuts.

But it slightly lowered its vehicle sales forecast for the fiscal year to 4.85 million vehicles from the previous 5 million vehicles. The new lower number is still better than the 4.5 million vehicles Honda sold the previous fiscal year through March.

It sold 998,000 vehicles in the April-June quarter, up from

792,000 the same period last year.

Honda's results underline the recovery at Japanese automakers, which all have been hurt by the coronavirus pandemic and a global shortage of semiconductors.

yesterday, Toyota Motor Corp. reported a record 897.8 billion yen (\$8.2 billion) profit for the fiscal first quarter, zooming more than five-fold from last year. **MDT/AP**

Toyota reports record profit, keeps forecasts

TOYOTA reported yesterday a record 897.8 billion yen (\$8.2 billion) profit for the fiscal first quarter, underlining the Japanese automaker's resilience even amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Toyota Motor Corp.'s April-June profit zoomed more than five-fold from 158.8 billion yen the same period a year earlier.

Quarterly sales soared 73% from the previous year to 7.94 trillion yen (\$73 billion), also a record for the maker of the Prius hybrid and Lexus luxury models.

Worries remained, such as the ongoing shortage of semiconductors and the rising costs of materials, according to Toyota.

Such concerns were the reason why

Toyota said it kept its forecasts unchanged for the full fiscal year through March 2022, at a 2.3 trillion yen (\$21 billion) profit, and 9.6 million vehicles in global retail sales.

That's up from nearly 9.1 million vehicles Toyota sold during the fiscal year ended March 2021. When including sales of Daihatsu and Hino group companies, Toyota expects to sell 10.55 million vehicles, up from 9.9 million vehicles the previous fiscal year.

Toyota said, on the plus side, some costs came down during the pandemic because of changes such as decreased travel and a move to online meetings.

Vehicle sales projections were hurt by

parts shortages that crimped production, meaning that, once such problems were solved, vehicles sales could beat the forecasts, according to Toyota.

The impact from foreign exchange rates added 140 billion yen (\$1.3 billion) to Toyota's operating income, which grew across all regions for the quarter, including the U.S., Europe, Japan and the rest of Asia.

While the pandemic has dented sales and demand in some global businesses, Toyota appears to be roaring back. Uncertainties remain such as the global shortage of semiconductors that's slammed the auto industry, as well as effects of COVID-19. **MDT/AP**

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AP PHOTO



Belarus runner flies to Europe after feud with team managers

A Belarusian sprinter left Tokyo en route to Europe yesterday after resisting an attempt by her Olympic team's officials to send her home to Belarus, where the athlete said she could be in danger from authorities who have relentlessly cracked down on dissent.

Krystina Tsimanouskaya boarded a plane at Tokyo's Narita International Airport that left the gate for Vienna, but she was expected to travel on to Poland. Before leaving Japan, Tsimanouskaya said she hoped she could continue her career but that safety was her immediate priority.

Several countries offered to help after the 24-year-old runner sought refuge in the European Union, and Poland has granted her a humanitarian visa.

Vadim Krivosheyev, an activist with the Belarusian Sport Solidarity Foundation, said Tsimanouskaya took the flight to Austria on the advice of Polish authorities.

"The decision to change the route and fly to Vienna was made by the Polish side for security reasons," Krivosheyev told The Associated Press.

After landing in Vienna, Tsimanouskaya was expected to head to Warsaw later Wednesday, according to Krivosheyev.

Tsimanouskaya's experience at the Tokyo Games became an international issue after she accused Belarusian team officials of hustling her to the airport several days ago and trying to put her on a plane to Belarus because she had criticized the team's management on social media. The team officials made it clear she would face reprisals back home, she said.

The officials "made it clear that, upon return home, I would definitely face some form of punishment," Tsimanouskaya told The Associated Press in a videocall interview from Tokyo on Tuesday. "There were also thinly disguised hints that more would await me."

She added that she believed she would be kicked off Belarus' national team.

"I would very much like to continue my sporting career because I'm just 24, and I had plans for two more Olympics at least," Tsimanouskaya said. But "for now, the only thing that concerns me is my safety."

Reached by phone, Dzmitry Dauhalionak, the head of Belarus' delegation at the Summer Olympics, declined comment, saying that he has "no words." MDT/AP

TOKYO 2020

Serbia rallies to reach semifinals by ousting China 77-70

TERESA M. WALKER,
SAITAMA

ANA Dabovic found a way to provide just the spark Serbia needed to keep its medal hopes alive.

Standing closer to the Olympic rings logo at half-court than the 3-point arc, Dabovic knocked down a huge shot, keying the rally that helped Serbia beat China 77-70 yesterday to reach a second straight semifinals.

"That's what she does," Serbia forward Jelena Brooks said of Dabovic. "Comes in at clutch moments and she can hit those shots. She does it all the time. It's not a shot that comes by accident. She knows the right moment."

Dabovic said it's not a shot she practices often, but she likes "to make those shots."

The Serbians (3-1) now will play the United States, a 79-55 winner over Australia, in the semifinals tomorrow and hope to improve on the bronze they won at the 2016 Rio Games.

At the final buzzer, they gathered in a circle on the court and danced and hugged in celebration after rallying from a nine-point deficit for the win. Dabovic's 3 fueled the comeback as part of 12 straight points to open the fourth quarter, and Serbia wound up outscoring China 28-12 to advance.

Serbia coach Marina Maljkovic wouldn't share what she told her team before the fourth quarter except that she wanted more energy. She liked the way they responded.

"They listened and that definitely was the key," Maljkovic said.

China (3-1) went undefeated in pool play and led 58-49 at the end of the third quarter. With Yao Ming, president of the Chinese Basketball Association, watching from the bench, the Chinese missed reaching the semifinals for the first time since the 2008 Beijing Games.

Coach Xu Limin said the disappointing loss helped identify areas the Chinese need to work on.

"I do see a lot of potential for this team. I feel comfortable and encouraged and I believe that our team is

AP PHOTO



going to go far in the future," Xu said.

Han Xu's layup tied it up at 70 with 2:13 left. Sonja Vasic hit two free throws with 1:53 to go, giving her nine straight points and putting Serbia ahead to stay.

Jelena Brooks led Serbia with 18 points. Vasic finished with 16 points, nine in the fourth quarter, and also grabbed 10 rebounds.

Shao Ting scored 17 points to lead China. Han added 15, and Li Yueru had 12.

NO ADVANTAGE

China came in with a decided height advantage with three players 6-foot-6 or taller, including the 6-9 Han; Serbia's tallest player is 6-5 Dragana Stankovic. That didn't stop Serbia from outscoring China in the paint 38-24 despite being outrebounded 37-33.

BEYOND THE ARC

China came in shooting 37.5% from 3-point range, third best in pool play. The

shots didn't fall early in this game as the Chinese missed their first nine 3s. Sun Mengran finally knocked the first down with 6:12 left in the second quarter.

LINE PERFECTION

The Chinese couldn't have started better at the free throw line. China made all six attempts in the first half, then made the first nine in the quarter until Shao missed the first of her two attempts with 6 seconds left. MDT/AP

AD

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OPINION

World Views

Jasmine McNealy, University of Florida
 MDT/The Conversation

WHAT ARE DARK PATTERNS? AN ONLINE MEDIA EXPERT EXPLAINS

Dark patterns are design elements that deliberately obscure, mislead, coerce and/or deceive website visitors into making unintended and possibly harmful choices.

Dark patterns can be found in many kinds of sites and are used by several kinds of organizations. They take the form of deceptively labeled buttons, choices that are difficult to undo and graphical elements like color and shading that direct users' attention to or away from certain options.

Dark patterns in subscriptions are a common example of these kinds of design choices, given the ubiquity of online subscriptions and free trials for all kinds of products and services. This kind of dark pattern might make it difficult for a user to unsubscribe, or it might automatically convert a free trial into a paid subscription.

To demonstrate how common these kinds of design practices are, and to illustrate the various harms they can cause, designer and public interest technologist Stephanie Nguyen and I launched the zine *I, Obscura*. The zine publishes case studies of different dark patterns and what can and should be done to protect users from these practices. *I, Obscura* was launched with help from student authors Ryan Tan, Kaylee Doty and Kally Zheng, and in collaboration with the Stanford University Digital Civil Society Lab and the UCLA Center for Critical Internet Inquiry.

The inability to unsubscribe from a service results in a specific monetary harm: It makes people spend money they didn't intend to. But dark patterns can cause other kinds of harms, as well.

These can take the form of emotional manipulation, like when a site places a countdown clock on an offer to accelerate a customer's decision-making, even though time has no bearing on the sale or the use of the product or service. Or the harm could be the loss of privacy, as when an app forces users to turn off data collection in two different settings instead of making privacy settings easy to find.

A power imbalance exists between users and organizations, which makes it nearly impossible for individuals to always protect themselves from deceptive design practices. We created *I, Obscura* to help educate web users about the possibilities.

Consumer protection is important, as well. The Federal Trade Commission and state attorneys general have enforced consumer protection regulations against organizations that use deceptive design practices, especially those with apps that target children. It is important for policymakers to prohibit the use of dark patterns and to require organizations to make interactions as transparent and simple as possible.

New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo faced mounting pressure to resign, including from President Joe Biden and other onetime Democratic allies, after an investigation found he sexually harassed nearly a dozen women and worked to retaliate against one of his accusers.

"I think he should resign," Biden told reporters yesterday (Macau time), echoing House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and New York's U.S. Sens. Chuck Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand, all Democrats.

The leader of the state Assembly, which has the power to bring impeachment charges, said it was clear Cuomo could no longer remain in office. Speaker Carl Heastie, a Democrat, said he would move to complete an impeachment inquiry "as quickly as possible."

Cuomo remained defiant, saying in a taped response to the findings that "the facts are much different than what has been portrayed" and that he "never touched anyone inappropriately or made inappropriate sexual advances."



AP PHOTO

BRITISH NAVY WARNS OF 'POTENTIAL HIJACK' OF SHIP OFF UAE COAST

ISABEL DEBRE & JON GAMBRELL, FUJAIRAH

THE British navy warned of a "potential hijack" of a ship off the coast of the United Arab Emirates in the Gulf of Oman yesterday [Macau time], though the circumstances remained unclear.

The incident comes amid heightened tensions between Iran and the West over Tehran's tattered nuclear deal with world powers and as commercial shipping in the region has found itself caught in the crosshairs. Most recently, the U.S., the U.K. and Israel have blamed Iran for a drone attack on an oil tanker off the coast of Oman that killed two people. Iran has denied involvement.

The British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations initially warned ships Tuesday that "an incident is currently underway" off the coast of Fujairah. Hours later, the authorities said the incident was a "potential hijack," but provided no further details.

Shipping authority Lloyd's List and maritime intelligence firm Dryad Global both identified the vessel involved in the incident as Panama-flagged asphalt tanker *Asphalt Princess*. The vessel's owner, listed as Emirati free zone-based Glory Inter-

national, could not immediately be reached for comment.

Satellite-tracking data for the vessel showed it slowly heading toward Iranian waters off the port of Jask early Wednesday, according to MarineTraffic.com.

The U.S. military's Middle East-based 5th Fleet and the British Defense Ministry also did not immediately return calls for comment. The Emirati government did not immediately acknowledge the incident.

Earlier, six oil tankers announced around the same time via their Automatic Identification System trackers that they were "not under command," according to MarineTraffic.com. That typically means a vessel has lost power and can no longer steer.

"At the same time, if they are in the same vicinity and in the same place, then very rarely that happens," said Ranjith Raja, an oil and shipping expert with data firm Refintiv. "Not all the vessels would lose their engines or their capability to steer at the same time."

One of the vessels later began moving.

An Oman Royal Air Force Airbus C-295MPA, a maritime patrol aircraft, flew in circles for hours over the waters, according to data from FlightRadar24.com.

Apparently responding to the incident, Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh called the recent maritime attacks in the Persian Gulf "completely suspicious." He denied that Iran was involved.

"Iran's naval forces are ready for help and rescue in the region," Khatibzadeh said.

From Washington, State Department spokesman Ned Price told reporters it was "too early for us to offer a judgement just yet" about the events unfolding in the Gulf of Oman. But citing the recent assault on an oil tanker linked to an Israeli billionaire that killed two crew members in nearby waters, Price said, "We have seen a very disturbing pattern of belligerence from Iran, including belligerence in the maritime domain."

The West has blamed Iran for launching the drone strike last week on the oil tanker off the coast of Oman, which marked the first known attack to have killed civilians in the years-long shadow war targeting commercial vessels in the region. Iran denied playing any role, though Tehran and its allied militias have used similar "suicide" drones in past attacks.

Israel, the United States and United Kingdom have vowed an unspecified "collective response" to the attack. **MDT/AP**



AP PHOTO

Lebanon An international conference yesterday aims to raise hundreds of millions of dollars in aid to meet the country's humanitarian needs, one year after the massive explosion at Beirut's port. The virtual event, co-hosted by France and the United Nations, is meant to show support for the Lebanese people, French President Emmanuel Macron said. France will provide 100 millions euros in the coming months.



AP PHOTO

Russia Space engineers will analyze whether a glitch that caused the International Space Station to spin out of its normal orientation could have impacted any of its systems, a Russian space official said yesterday. Sergei Krikalev, the director of crewed space programs at the Russian space corporation Roscosmos, emphasized that last week's incident did not inflict any observable damage to the space station, but he said that experts would need to study its potential implications.



AP PHOTO

Czech Republic Two passenger trains collided in the southwest of the Czech Republic yesterday, killing three people and injuring dozens of passengers. Czech Railways said a local passenger train and an international high-speed train that was heading from Munich to the western Czech city of Plzen and the Czech capital of Prague were involved in the collision.

Vatican Pope Francis resumed his routine of holding weekly audiences with the general public a month after he underwent bowel surgery, and during the much-awaited appearance yesterday he recalled the anniversary of the devastating Beirut port explosion and expressed the desire to someday visit Lebanon.